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ART. I.—THE USE OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

TO Christians, who submit to our Lord's teaching as of supreme authority, and who accept the writings of Evangelists and Apostles as inspired, the use of ancient prophecy in the New Testament must afford decisive guidance; while, at the same time, the fresh series of prophecies afforded by the New Testament fall, in some respects, better within the range of our observation and judgment than many of those in the Old Testament. In respect both to the use of ancient prophecy and to the gift of new prophecy, the New Testament is perfectly continuous with the Old; and no interpretation of prophecy can be compatible with the claims of the Christian faith which is not in harmony with that of our Lord and of the Evangelists and Apostles. If it should be requisite, as some seem to have thought, to explain away the use of the Old Testament by the Evangelists, or to apologize for it, they may still afford us, of course, invaluable instruction, but their authority as inspired teachers would be gone, and some of the cardinal positions of Christian belief would have to be reconsidered. It is of the highest importance to us, therefore, alike for our own spiritual instruction, and for the defence of our Christian position, to understand their point of view, to be satisfied of its reasonableness, and of its harmony with the whole analogy of our faith. It must reveal to us, as nothing else can, the real Christian principles of the interpretation of prophecy. At the same time, in prophecies uttered by our Lord, and by His Apostles, we may expect to see prophecy at its highest point of development. They themselves tell us that, in their utterances, the last word of prophecy has been spoken, and that we have simply to

look for its gradual unfolding and ultimate development. In a word, in the New Testament we have, from the Christian point of view, at once the highest interpretation of prophecy, and the highest examples of prophecy.

In the present paper it is on the first of these subjects—the interpretation of prophecy in the New Testament—that it is proposed to offer some observations; and this subject can hardly be examined in a more crucial instance than in the Gospel of St. Matthew—in such expressions, for instance, as that which is familiar to us at Christmas. “Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, etc.” St. Matthew, it is clear, wrote primarily for his fellow Jews, and his account of the Gospel is specially adapted to meet their position and their beliefs. The opening words of his Gospel, which are too often, perhaps, passed over as a mere summary of a genealogy, are among the most pregnant words in the New Testament, and must have embodied to a Jew the whole of his past history and of his present and future hopes. “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” Those words told the Jew, at once, that in JESUS, whose birth and life and death the Evangelist was about to narrate, would be found THE CHRIST, the Messiah for whom he and his whole nation had been longing for centuries, the King who had been promised of David’s Royal Line, the descendant of the Patriarch in whom it had been promised that all nations of the earth should be blessed. The whole of Jewish history and the profoundest beliefs of the nation are flashed before the mind of a Jew in that brief phrase. It was as much as to say to him: “Listen as I proceed to tell you how the promises made to Abraham, and the oath which was sworn unto David, are at last fulfilled; how the Divine unction has at last fallen upon the heir of that great line, and how the Prophet, Priest, and King of your nation stands revealed.” That, we may venture to say, was the only way in which a Gospel to the Jews could begin. To a Gentile it might be enough to tell him of a Divine Saviour in human form. A Gospel for him might commence, like that of St. Mark, with the declaration: “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” But to a Jew there could be no revelation which was not in harmony with his old revelations, and which was not a fulfilment of them. If he was to accept a Messiah who was the Son of God, that Messiah must be also, as a first condition, the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. Thus, in this short phrase, does the Evangelist at once sum up the whole of his Gospel, and at the same time indicate to us the prophetic point of view from which he presents it.

Accordingly he goes on, in passage after passage, to illustrate the manner in which the prophecies of the past, its promises and its experiences, had been fulfilled in the person and the work of the Christ whom he proclaimed. At His birth all that came to pass was done "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel." He was born at Bethlehem, "for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel." His parents had to flee into Egypt "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son." His escape was the occasion of the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem, in which "was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet," of Rachel weeping for her children. He came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets: He shall be called a Nazarene." When the time came for Him to enter on His public ministry, He was preceded by John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, "and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven"—the kingdom to which all the prophets had looked forward—"is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." He opened His ministry at Capernaum, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon and the land of Nephthalim, . . . Galilee of the Gentiles, the people which sat in darkness saw a great light." He charged the people, after His deeds of mercy, that they should not make Him known, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold My servant, whom I have chosen. . . . He shall not strive nor cry . . . a bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench." His parables are in harmony with another prophecy of Esaias, which said, "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive." When He entered into Jerusalem before His passion, "all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass." In His betrayal, and the price put upon it, "was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet." His final words on the cross fulfilled an utterance of the Psalms; and His last words before He left the earth are a solemn declaration that that kingdom of God, which He

had begun by proclaiming, was finally established. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

These characteristic passages from the Evangelist have been recited in order that we may have before our minds, not merely some particular instances of alleged prophecy and its fulfilment, but the whole spirit and purpose of his message. The impression which they leave is not that the Evangelist is seeking for prophecies to which he can appeal in support of his cause, but that his mind is moving in a world of prophecy which is familiar to those for whom he writes, and that he notices naturally, in passing, one point after another in which the life and the Gospel of Jesus Christ answer to it and fulfil it. He does not stay to prove his instances; his reference is sometimes vague and general; it may be enough for him to say, generally, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophets," without specifying which, or their particular words. It is like the case of a man looking at the picture of some great scene he has witnessed, and saying to his companion: "There is such a point in the landscape, and there is another"—a hill, or a stream, or a house, or a familiar face—except that here the position is reversed, and the Evangelist is looking at the reality, and recalling points in the prophetic picture which he and his readers had long been contemplating. Before them is the picture, at last realized, even to many of its minute details; and the Evangelist lingers, even amidst the absorbing interest of the real life and character he is describing, over those features which help to assure him that he has at length found what he and his fellows had so long looked for—all the more, perhaps, because in some cases such features are of the nature of those slight touches which cannot be artificial, and which bespeak what is genuine and natural. In other words, the conviction in which the Evangelist's mind moves is that the whole history and prophecy of the past, all through those three series of fourteen generations which he enumerates—from Abraham to David, and from David to the carrying away into Babylon, and from the carrying away into Babylon to the Christ—had been one continuous growth, steadily unfolding the germ from which it started; and that as the traits of the father and of the father's father are to be seen in the son, so the principles and the methods, and even the external characteristics, of past Jewish life and thought are reproduced in this final birth of the sacred history. If you would understand and do justice to him, you must not begin by concentrating your attention on a few secondary particulars, questioning this, that, and the other small details: you must look at his principle and his position as a whole; and then you may judge

whether the details are in harmony with it and are justified by it. Is it not a common matter of experience that a number of details in a story, or inferences in an argument, may seem strained and unnatural if you begin with them, and look at them one by one, independently? But when the story or the argument is viewed as a whole, you see their naturalness; they fall into their places, and incidental points of verisimilitude which, standing alone, you would have regarded as fanciful and worth very little, become some of the most vivid, lifelike, and convincing features of the whole transaction.

Such is the spirit in which St. Matthew writes, and the cardinal principles of Jewish history and prophecy are his vindication. On those principles, the whole of that history had been guided by one Divine will, and moulded by one Divine hand, towards one great goal—the establishment of the kingdom of God among men, under the rule of One who is both God and man. The way had been prepared for it; the race in and through whom it was to be established had been disciplined and educated. Great spiritual and moral truths had to be planted in their souls, before they could produce representatives capable of a mission such as was entrusted to Apostles and Evangelists. For that purpose, they not merely had to undergo certain painful experiences—the captivity in Egypt, conflict with bitter enemies, severe temptations and consequent defections, exile and oppression—but they needed to be lifted and sustained from time to time by Divine guidance and comfort; above all, by glimpses of the goal towards which they were tending, sufficient to assure them that all they were suffering and experiencing was in harmony with their ultimate destiny, and that the Person who would at length be manifested as the Captain of their salvation was one with them in their nature and their struggle, though infinitely superior to them. Such was the combined effect of Jewish history and prophecy, growing as experience grew, and brightening under an ever-increasing illumination. What is recorded for us in the Scriptures of the Old Testament is not a mere natural history, interrupted from time to time by isolated prophetic voices, but one grand birth of time—the prolonged travail pangs of the daughter of Israel giving birth to her Messiah, sustained by continuous Divine assurances of the blessed issue, constantly increasing in clearness and certainty.

In this long travail, moreover, the essential circumstances remain the same, or similar, from age to age: the comparative insignificance of Israel; the great military monarchies by which she was surrounded; the necessity of a flight into Egypt or a sojourn in the wilderness; the unexpected appearance of

some deliverer, born, it might be, in a humble station, but bringing God and God's help once more near to the people in their sin and distress; or a prophet deserted and betrayed, wounded in the house of his friends, and put to death. As this experience grew and the light of prophecy brightened, the vision and the conviction grew also that all this was but the rehearsal of a great and final reality; that the Divine kingdom, for which all this was a preparation, would at length be established by a Member of the great representative line, who would combine all the experiences through which the nation itself had passed—in an humble and unexpected birth, in a lowly state, in flight, persecution, temptation, struggle, betrayal, and death, but gaining at length the final victory, for Himself and for the people of God, and establishing for ever a Divine kingdom.

This is the root from which the whole thought of an Evangelist springs who proclaims a Gospel for Jews. The Christ's wonderful birth and His Divine nature had been foreshadowed by the mysterious words of the prophet—that a virgin should conceive and bear a Son, and that His name should be called *God with us*. Those mysterious words had unquestionably been uttered centuries before; that marvellous name had been given; and whatever it may have referred to in the prophet's time, here at least was a reality which answered to it. If He had to flee into Egypt, so had the nation done in its early distress; if His escape had been accompanied by the slaughter of the Innocents, so had many a Jewish mother in past times bewailed her innocent children, slaughtered, in the course of God's mysterious purposes, by the ruthless Assyrian or Babylonian invader; if He was to live at Nazareth and share the reproach of a despised people, had it not been foreseen that the Servant of God would be a mere branch or shoot, of no form or comeliness, despised and rejected of men, so that the general effect of the predictions concerning Him was that He should be no better than a Nazarene? In the same way, did not our Lord's whole career—the manner in which He was heralded by a voice in the wilderness, His union of gentleness with power, the mysterious nature of His teaching, and eventually the character of His betrayal and of His sufferings—recall the visions of ancient prophets and the experiences of ancient saints? What they had seen and what they had felt, however dim and mysterious in their case, had been fulfilled in Him; and so, as the living parallel passes before the Evangelist's eye, and the deep spiritual similitude is fixed on his mind by the Spirit who inspired him, the exclamation rises, as it were involuntarily, to his lips—sometimes in view of a profound, and sometimes of an almost external, resemblance

—“that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet.”

In fact, if we are to appreciate the use of prophecy in the New Testament, the truth appears to be that we must directly reverse the aspect of the matter which is too often pressed upon us from a mere human point of view. We are told that the prophets looked, in the first instance, to something in immediate relation to the events of their day, and to the circumstances with which they were dealing, and that the primary meaning of prophecy is to be sought in those contemporary events, although from them it may, in some instances, be extended—some say by way of type, some by a sort of double sense—to the final Messianic realities. But, in the view of the New Testament writers, that which was primarily vouchsafed to the prophet was a vision, or a glimpse, of the ultimate reality, of the final purposes of God, of His ultimate judgment, of His final salvation, of the character of the Person through whom that salvation was to be wrought, of His sufferings, and of the glory which should follow. In proportion as that great Deliverer, that final judgment, and that ultimate salvation gleamed for a while upon the prophet's eye did their light and their example illuminate the present, and was he enabled to see the purpose and the will of that Saviour and that Judge in respect to the events and the struggles of his own time. To the prophet, in short, it was the great reality of the future which illuminated the present; it was not merely a few sparks of light from the present which enabled him to penetrate the dim and distant future. After all, we may well observe this striking and unquestionable fact, that the chief difficulties in connection with a prophecy like that of Immanuel relate to its meaning in the past rather than to its applicability in the present. The birth of Christ and the work of Christ are, beyond question, aptly described by the words which the evangelist quotes from Isaiah; but commentators of all schools, conservative or critical, old and new, are in much perplexity and confusion as to the reference which the words may bear to any event in the time of Isaiah himself. Whatever such contemporary reference they may have had, it seems to baffle our present knowledge and resources; but that the Son of the Blessed Virgin has proved to be *God with us*, this is a matter which all Christian hearts, and some hearts which are not nominally Christian, will thankfully acknowledge. In the same way, if we can but lay aside what a great writer on this subject has called “our cold, pedantic view” of measuring the visions and the thoughts of inspired men by our own range of insight and our own apprehensions, we shall

recognise it as unquestionable that the realities of the Gospel, the life and the words of our Lord, and the facts of the Christian Church, do, as a matter of fact, answer to the visions and the words of the prophets, although, at this distance of time, it may be impracticable for us to discern, in detail, the circumstances on which they throw a partial light in the days of those who uttered them.

If, then, prophecy be such a great reality as we have been contemplating; if, as the prophets, the Apostles, and the evangelists believed, not a hair fell to the ground throughout the long history of the Jewish nation without the knowledge of its God and Saviour; if every event, and every inspired utterance, was controlled and directed by that God and Saviour towards the establishment of a Divine kingdom, under a Divine and human Messiah; if human nature remained the same throughout, and the divine methods of discipline and guidance were the same also; if our Lord, as the great Head and Representative of the nation, was to share their experience—or, rather, if they, in their degree, were to share His—then the Evangelist was justified in his quick eye for resemblances between the story of the Messiah and the history of his nation, in his deep conviction that all that happened in our Lord's life—not only the great features of His character, but the very circumstances of His career—had been intimated and foreshadowed in the past, and, in a word, in believing and teaching that “all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophets.”

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ART. II.—THE PRESENT DEARTH OF CLERGY AND THE SCARCITY OF CANDIDATES FOR ORDINATION.¹

IT is hardly necessary to give proofs of the scarcity of clergy at the present time in proportion to the demand caused by the increase of our population. The falling off in, or at any rate the stationary character of, the lists of ordained clergy at the Ember periods; the difficulty of finding men to supply vacant curacies, especially in the rural districts; the cry for more men, which comes from the foreign mission fields—all reiterate the same fact, so often commented upon

¹ A paper read before the Biggleswade Clerical Association, December, 1901.