

second, that we may not divide human life into water-tight compartments, but, recognising the essential unity of human nature, and its utter dependence upon God, and its meaninglessness apart from God, we must keep steadily before ourselves the ideal, not only of the bringing of all human powers and capacities—bodily, mental, æsthetic, spiritual—to their highest possible development (though this has in itself the sanction of His example), but also of bringing them all finally to entire consecration.

I have dealt almost exclusively with principles, because it is principles that we need in these days of our wandering in the wilderness of details. If our principles are sound, they will necessarily express themselves in our practice.

Really our difficulties resolve themselves finally into a question of proportion. There are but twelve hours in our day, and we cannot afford to waste them in misdirected effort. We dare not give to the committee-room the time and strength which belong properly to the sanctuary, nor may we give even to the Mount of Transfiguration the time and strength which belong properly to the crowd below. Most fatal of all is it to spend the precious hours, which might have been hours of prayer and thought, in railing weakly at the distracting claims upon us, to end by rushing wildly out to do something, anything, wise or unwise, so as to pass the time in activity for its own sake and to have results to show; while conscience reproaches us for doing things which might have been right after all had they been done in the right spirit.

The difficulties resolve themselves, I say, into a question of proportion; and the proportion must vary with every worker's peculiar gifts, with the needs of each one to whom he ministers, and, above all, with the particular call of God to the individual soul.

H. G. D. LATHAM.

THE OFFICE OF A PROPHET IN ISRAEL.

IN entering upon this subject it will be well to define the meaning of the word "prophet," and the sense in which the term has been used at various times. The Hebrew word which has been rendered prophet is נָבִיא, and the etymology of the word has been the subject of much controversy. Kuenen, followed by Dean Stanley and many others, derives the word from נָבַא, which Gesenius renders "to bubble up," or "pour forth," whence the word came to mean, to pour

forth exciting utterances, and also occasionally has the meaning "to rave" or "to be mad," which was no doubt suggested by the vehement manner in which the prophet sometimes delivered his message—as, for example, 2 Kings ix. 11: "Wherefore came this mad fellow to thee?" Dr. Robertson Smith, however, denies that נָבִיא can be truly derived from נָבַא, and is inclined to believe that it was a Canaanitish word of which the etymology is unknown. From 1 Sam. ix. 9 we learn that the prophet up to that time was called a רֹאֵה or seer, which would seem to denote an office distinctly inferior to that of the later "prophet." For the meaning of the word "prophet" we may notice the passages in Exod. iv. 16 and vii. 1: "He shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God"; and, "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet."

It was this word נָבִיא which the LXX. rendered by *προφήτης*, and this word has passed into the modern European languages. The prefix of the word has three meanings, "before" (of time), "in public," and also "for" or "on behalf of." The word probably includes all these three meanings, but perhaps more strictly represents the last two. In the Scriptural sense, then, a prophet may be defined as "one who spoke forth the mind of God." But owing to the very prominent position which prediction occupies in the prophetic writings, the word "prophet" has in our own time come to mean "one who foretells future events," although this was by no means the principal or most important function of the Israelitish prophets. We may, then, take the word "prophet" to mean "an interpreter of the Divine will."

The office of a prophet was not restricted to the people of Israel—for instance, we read of Balaam of Mesopotamia, and of the prophets of Baal and Ashtaroth.

But among the people of Israel, Moses is the first distinct type of the Israelitish prophet which we meet with in Scripture. After his time there comes a long interval, in which, with the exception of the prophetess Deborah, no mention is made of a prophet until the time of Samuel. He may be considered as the founder of the order of prophets in Israel, and in his time the Hebrew word for prophet, נָבִיא, first comes into general use. At this period we read frequently of the "sons of the prophets," and an unbroken succession of prophets can be traced from the time of Samuel to Malachi, the last of the prophets in the Jewish Canon. It would appear that the prophets from the time of Samuel lived together in common residences, and that these communities

gave rise to the term "sons of the prophets." Very probably such companies of prophets were organized by Samuel; but it is important to notice that not all who attached themselves to such societies were necessarily endued with prophetic gifts. Most probably, in course of time, these societies degenerated into a corrupt condition, since allusions are made to prophets who prophesied for gain; and we find that there were prophets who did not belong to any such organized society—as Amos, for instance: "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit" (Amos vii. 14).

The prophets probably first assumed a position of great importance about the close of Solomon's reign; and the action of Ahijah the Shilonite, in transferring the Northern Kingdom to Jeroboam, would naturally tend to raise the prophetic office to a position of considerable eminence and repute.

After the separation of the two kingdoms, we find that the prophets for a long time came almost exclusively from Israel, while the priests flocked to Judah on account of the sacrilegious action of Jeroboam. Joel and Hosea rank probably among the earliest of the prophets of Israel; and following after Amos in Israel, we find in Judah Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, and Zeebariah. The later prophets are Zephaniah, Obadiah, and Habakkuk, and Jeremiah is the last prophet before the captivity, as he was also the last who took a prominent part in directing the affairs both of the Church and State.

Ezekiel and Daniel were prophets of the Babylonian captivity, and after the return from exile come Haggai and Malachi, and, according to some critics, the author of some prophecies usually attributed to Zeebariah. With Malachi the prophetic succession closed until the coming of John the Baptist.

We may now briefly consider some of the chief characteristics of the prophetic office. In many respects it differed widely from that of the priest. For whereas the priest belonged to a special tribe and family (to which the office was restricted), and was set apart for the sacred office by an act of consecration, the prophet, on the other hand, was not, as a rule, appointed by any human act, and the office was not restricted to tribe or family or even sex. In fact, one of the most striking features of the office was its universality. The prophetic call came from God alone, and the prophets generally speak of a special distinct moment in which the call from God forced itself upon their consciousness; it was of the nature of a sudden intuition or impulse which came upon them with irresistible power. Very often the call was received in a vision, as in the case of the prophets Isaiah

and Jeremiah. And when once given, the prophet possessed an overpowering sense of the necessity of obeying the Divine summons, as Amos expresses it (iii. 8): "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

From the call being so often given in a vision, the title of "vision" is given to some of the prophecies, as those of Micaiah, the son of Imlah (1 Kings xxii. 17), and of Amos (vii. and viii.) and Jeremiah (xxiv.).

In the vision the prophet felt himself to be overpowered or seized. Notice the phrase which frequently occurs: "the hand of the Lord fell or was mighty upon me" (2 Kings iii. 15; Ezek. i. 3, iii. 14).

In the vision the prophet's condition resembled that of a person in a dream: the mind was only open to that which came before it from within, the power of the will was suspended, and the operation of the senses was temporarily in abeyance. But it must be noticed that the prophet differed from the heathen *μάντις* in the fact that though his will was suspended it was never unseated, his reason did not leave him, and he did not require an interpreter to make known his unconscious statements. We may observe the difference between true prophecy and the description of the alleged prophecy of Montanus as given by Eusebius (v. 16). The prophet speaks with a clear and sober mind, and is in full possession of his reason; and although the prophets speak of truth coming before them as something external to themselves, yet their own individuality is not suppressed. The Holy Spirit made use of the natural gifts with which He had endowed each individual, and used his personality, mental endowments, and imaginative power as mediums of inspiration. The teaching of the prophets, though varying in form at different periods, was usually expressed in poetic diction. It is, indeed, most probable that music and poetry were generally cultivated in the prophetic communities. We read (2 Kings iii. 15) that Elisha required a harp to be played in order to excite his prophetic power. The prophets also frequently resorted to symbols as a means of conveying their teaching.

We may now consider the importance of the prophetic office, and the reason of its institution. Up to the time of Samuel the priesthood had occupied a position of prime importance, but in course of time it had reached such a corrupt and degraded state that it had ceased to exercise that high moral and religious influence upon the people which it was intended to exert. We may form some idea of its condition from the account of the conduct of the sons of Eli. The

priesthood, we can well understand, would be held in contempt among the people, since its work had become a mere performance of the outward forms and ceremonies of religion, without any regard to its inward spirit. It was necessary, therefore, that a new power should be instituted which should exercise a strong moral and religious influence over king, priests, and people.

The prophetic office was distinctly of greater importance than that of the priest. While the priest was the ordinary minister of God, appointed in an ordained manner, the prophet was an extraordinary agent raised up by God to declare His will, and in his selection no regard was paid to race, descent, or other accidental circumstances. Men of the most varied and diverse characters and dispositions were appointed to the prophetic office: Elijah, the wild and uncurbed Gileadite; Amos, the herdsman; Isaiah, the cultured possessor of an instinctive poetical gift; Daniel, the statesman and politician.

Thus the appointment of the prophets was a forecast of the time when the priesthood would cease to exist. The prophets took an active part in political and national affairs: Isaiah and Jeremiah are among the foremost statesmen of their day, and are instances of the position which the prophets assumed in the political life of their country. They were intensely patriotic, and watched with the keenest interest the movements of the surrounding nations.

The prophets were also the theological teachers of the nation. At times, when the whole nation was relapsing into idolatry and heathenism, they witnessed to the unity and spirituality of God. They held up before men the necessity of morality and spirituality, as opposed to the mere ritual and ceremonial observances of religion. Their tendency was to disparage the Mosaic ritual, which had too often become a mere lifeless form, and to lay stress upon the inseparability of religion and morality. Many of their utterances seem almost to be foreshadowings of the Sermon on the Mount.

The prophets constantly appeal to the consciences of their hearers, and in so doing display a remarkable knowledge of the human heart. They also make constant use of the circumstances and passing events of their own day in order to convey their lesson. One striking characteristic of the prophets is their *independence*. They were deeply imbued with the sense of the Divine origin of their mission, and were determined to fulfil it in the face of all opposition. One great reason why the prophets exercise their influence upon every age is their clear and firm distinction between the eternal principles of right and wrong. They never shrink from declaring the right, and rebuking and condemning the wrong,

in spite of fear or favour. They were intensely conscious of the Almighty Power behind them, which was their support.

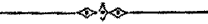
The position which the prophets occupied in the social and political life of their country was a remarkable one. Under the rule of a despotic monarchy they exercised a continual check upon the conduct of the reigning monarch. And in the highest sense of the term, the prophets were also the Socialists of their time, ever ready to champion the cause of the weak and oppressed against their tyrants and oppressors. They ever stand forward as the moral reformers of their time. On this aspect of the Hebrew prophets, John Stuart Mill remarks: "The Jews had an absolute monarchy and a hierarchy. These did for them what was done for other Oriental races by *their* institutions—subdued them to industry and order, and gave them a national life. But neither their kings nor their priests ever obtained, as in those other countries, the exclusive moulding of their character. Their religion gave existence to an inestimably precious, unorganized institution—the Order of Prophets. Under the protection, generally, though not always effectual, of their sacred character the prophets were a power in the nation, often more than a match for kings and priests, and kept up, in that little corner of the earth, the antagonism of influences which is the only real security for continued progress. The Jews, instead of being stationary, like other Asiatics, were, next to the Greeks, the most progressive people of antiquity, and jointly with them have been the starting-point and main propelling agency of modern cultivation."

Finally, let us consider the prophetic teaching with regard to the future. Prediction has erroneously, in popular opinion, come to be thought to be the chief function of the prophet, and this is, no doubt, due to the fact that the future composed a large part of the prophetic writings. The prophets, in a remarkable manner, looked forward to the future, and this gave a very progressive character to the Jewish nation. They were represented as shepherds seated on the hills, overlooking the heads of their flocks, and guiding them in the way they should go, or as watchmen standing on a lofty tower, to whom was granted a wider range of vision than to others. Their political predictions occupy a very striking position, and the remarkable and undeniable manner in which they have been fulfilled, often to the very letter, certainly affords very strong evidence as to the truth of revelation. But their Messianic predictions form the most important feature in their teaching as to the future. Christ it was to whom all the Law and the Prophets bore witness. On the promised Messiah, with regard to whom the prophecies were

ever gradually unfolding fresh truth, were the hopes of the whole nation constantly fixed.

With regard to the future of the Church, they teach continual progress; as a whole, the world is continually going forwards rather than backwards. The older prophets appear to have been almost silent with regard to the future life; they taught the Divine support in the present life, but the future seems to have been hidden from their view. To the Christian prophets of the New Dispensation was reserved the glory of making known to men the life beyond the grave.

A. HERBERT DUXBURY.



THE MONTH.

ECHOES of debates in Convocation seldom reach the world of the secular press, but a very decided exception must be made of the recent debate in the Upper House of Canterbury on "The Moral Witness of the Church." The Bishop of Birmingham moved the appointment of a Committee to consider what could best be done to strengthen "the moral witness of the Church on certain current abuses of commerce, on gambling, and on certain other prevalent offences against the moral law." In the course of the discussion some very plain things were said, especially by the Bishops of Birmingham, St. Albans, and Ely, with reference to commercial morality. Instances were given of the immoral methods of trading forced upon young men in many houses of business. This very definite speaking was quickly taken up by the alert and enterprising *Daily Mail*, which obtained from the heads of several leading firms a full and emphatic denial of the Bishops' charges so far as their houses were concerned. Then, for over six weeks, letters on both sides appeared in the paper, and the net result of the correspondence seems to show that while large and well-known firms are entirely guiltless of the charge of commercial dishonesty, the same cannot be said for many of the smaller houses. The keenness and severity of competition leads to "shady," and even immoral, transactions, which fully justify the strong language of the Bishops of Birmingham and St. Albans. And clergymen who are brought into contact with young men in business know well that employés are often called upon to say and do things which are plainly untrue and dishonest, unless they are prepared to face the certain consequences of refusal. The correspondence in the *Daily Mail* has, we feel sure, been of genuine service to the cause of integrity in