

temptation of the wilderness regarding a sign. Ought He not to have given a sign? Or was He or the tempter right? The devil left Him for a season, but returned in the hour and power of darkness. While our Lord lived in the senses, though He also lived by faith, He longed, and naturally, for sensible proofs of His Father's presence—for believing men who would be the foundation-stones of His kingdom. When they were gone, to the senses He was left alone. And this made His submission to the will of God the decisive battle of faith with the sense-unbelief of

the world. But between the promise of the Father with its natural expectation, taken in conjunction with the leading of the Spirit, and the naked fact that He will be left alone, what wonder was it that His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death? Had He not a right, so to speak, to look for some tangible evidence of success, as the result of the expenditure of love and grace He had lavished on His followers? And failing this, what could He do but with a breaking heart cast Himself on the will of His Father, and leave results to Him?

Is the Old Testament Authentic?

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V.

WE TURN now to another division of our subject of great importance—the relation of Jesus Christ and His teaching to the Old Testament Scripture.

1. The first step in this investigation is the fact—the admitted fact—that He was in possession of it as a single volume, in the same shape as we have it now. Says Professor Ryle, the latest authority who has written on the Hebrew Canon, and whose views are on a line with the 'New Critics' (though hesitating to adopt their more extreme positions): 'The full complement of Scripture had been arrived at a century before the coming of Him who came not to destroy but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets' (*Canon of Old Testament*, p. 178). 'It was thus divinely ordered that we should be enabled to know *the exact limits of those Scriptures upon which has rested the sanction conveyed by the usage and blessing of our Divine Master*' (p. 179). '*There was never any doubt what the limits of the Hebrew Canon were*' (p. 179). Here, then, is an important fact. The book in question (no longer so many separate books, but one), separated from all others by a gulf deep and wide, it being regarded as of divine origin, and all others as of human origin, is admitted to have been in the hands of Jesus Christ; and when He spoke of the book, *He spake of it all!*

2. Next we have to deal with two questions, which must be kept distinct. The first of the two, stated plainly, is this: 'Had Jesus Christ the requisite knowledge to determine the authority,

the value, and the authorship of the Old Testament and of its separate parts? Or was he in ignorance about these things, more or less complete?' This question will by some be deemed to transgress the line of reverence, and to border on a blasphemous denial of His divine nature. By others, it will be resented as an attempt to drag the discussion into a channel which they would fain avoid. But the discussion is needful, and is involved in the assertion that Jesus Christ could have settled the whole matter had He wished to do so. We shall have hereafter to deal with the second question, whether He *did* attempt to settle it; but our present concern is with the preliminary and most important question, Whether He could in any case be appealed to as an authority?

Without considering the reply given to this question by those who do not believe in Him as '*their Lord and their God*' (for to such at present I am making no appeal), we have to do with those who, believing in His divinity, yet maintain that it was not committed to His method of speaking on such subjects.¹

There is, then, the problem to which the late Dean Plumptre painfully called attention in his last publication: What were the limits of the

¹ I refer to the Bishop of Gloucester's *Christus Compro-bator*, for a line of argument similar to what follows. There are, however, some statements on the subject made there which I think might with advantage be reconsidered. See pp. 102, 110.

Saviour's *knowledge*? 'Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature' (Luke ii. 52, *σοφία*). It may be said that inasmuch as Jesus Christ was entirely a man (as well as perfect man), he had to pass through the various stages of a man's development, intellectually as well as physically. But the mistake made in inferring from such premises that Jesus Christ must have been ignorant of some things, lies surely in forgetting the distinction between the natures and the person of Christ. The human nature grew; but the person of Christ was divine as well as human. And without attempting to define or explain the manifold relations of the person to both, or either, of the natures of the blessed Lord, we are surely entitled to say that anything of the character of error was prevented, just as anything of the character of sin was made impossible. The whole sphere of the miraculous in which Jesus Christ moved is embraced in the relations above referred to. That miraculous sphere was twofold,—one of *power* and one of *knowledge*, affecting what He did and what He said. It is the latter which more nearly affects our present subject. Was the teaching of Jesus (I should be content for the sake of the argument to say the spiritual teaching) absolutely true and free from error? If so, it was because he was divine. The truth of God was in Him. If it were not so, where are we? All that He taught us concerning God, concerning the hereafter, and concerning salvation, has an absolute guarantee; but the guarantee depends on His knowledge having been equal to perfect accuracy without mistake. Hence the human development did not invalidate the personal grasp of anything that was needful to Him as the teacher of men. We, therefore, have no doubt that it lay in the power of Jesus Christ to settle all disputed questions regarding the authority, or the meaning, or the truthfulness of the Old Testament Scriptures. He, in His divine person, knew what the truth was about these holy writings. In this connexion I must refer to an expression which has fallen from the pen of Canon Cheyne, which I cannot but think does him great injustice, and misrepresents his own position. Speaking of the theory that the Book of Jonah is a myth, he maintains that 'Jesus Christ interpreted the story as an instructive parable.' And then he adds: '*Even if he did, WITH HIS WONDERFUL SPIRITUAL TACT, so interpret it, we cannot be sure,*' etc. (*Expositor*, March 1892). Has it come to this, that our Lord

relied, in interpreting the Scriptures, on 'HIS TACT'? '*His spiritual tact!*' His 'wonderful spiritual tact'!! If this were true, we should be in sad case indeed; but the expression is one which must have dropped without reflection from the pen of its author, and cannot be seriously meant by him. Still, it is one of the most painful incidents in the whole controversy, and surely calls for an express apology.

The principle, then, on which we here take our stand is that we have absolute assurance for the spiritual teaching of our blessed Lord, and that assurance rests on His divine person. Whatever He taught was true. From Him there is no appeal. 'He taught with authority, and not as the scribes.' And whether it be the truth of our resurrection from the dead; or the truth of God the Father's love for men; or the truth that He 'gave himself as a ransom for many'; or the truth about the Old Testament Scripture,—in each and every case it is the sure revelation of God to us. Otherwise, we are hopelessly at sea. As a *man*, be it remembered, His knowledge about the unseen world was as limited as about past Old Testament history. Something more than He could have learned at school, or otherwise in Nazareth, was needful to give us assurance of God's forgiveness. He tells us Himself that the Something more was 'As the Father hath given Me commandment, even so I speak.' And that is true for all that He taught.

There is one passage which has been found difficult to explain, and may be supposed to have a bearing on the present question. It is that wherein Christ refers to his own return: 'Of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father' (Mark xiii. 32). We have here a statement that, as to this subject, Christ had 'emptied Himself,' so that, as 'Son,' He did not know and did not teach it. But there is a whole hemisphere surely between such a statement and the idea that what He *did* teach on any subject, He taught without knowing! And hence we fall back with assurance on the truth that our Lord was a teacher who could be implicitly relied on; and, as the greater part of His teaching transcended all human knowledge, and was made on His personal authority, that He drew on Divine resources when He spoke. Whatever He taught us, we must accept.