

truth. There is no knowledge of God, or of the meaning and goal of the world, but that which faith brings. When reason with its natural categories attempts to solve the riddle of the universe, it oversteps its limits, and presents not truth but falsehood.

We have thus been brought to the conclusion that the *assensus* which is proper to faith is not based on the demonstration of the theoretical reason; we have further to show that it does not rest on authority. No authority would suffice to render credible what did not commend itself by its own inherent truth. Even traditional theology recognizes in a hesitating way that faith reaches its highest power only when deference to authority passes over into spiritual insight. We need not, however, discuss the adequacy of any proposed authority to guarantee the truth of religious knowledge, for every appeal to authority is wrecked on the initial fact that it presupposes a false view of Revelation. What authority guarantees is a doctrine; and we shall see later that the revealed object of faith is not a doctrine, but a concrete spiritual magnitude. A doctrine is the expression of faith, but not its object.

The insight that forms a moment in faith is not fundamentally an intellectual act; it stands under moral conditions as strictly as the element of *fiducia*. Faith proceeds in judgments of worth; and judgments of worth are judgments of trust. When you judge that some spiritual good has an absolute worth for you, you, in effect, put your trust in it. It may be thought that such a view of faith, as being throughout morally conditioned, is overstrained. Do we not hold beliefs that have

no feeling of the inherent worth of their object lying behind them? Undoubtedly we do, for religious judgments may come to be dissociated from the feeling that originally produced them. They then become what has been called custom-judgments. But it is just as the element of feeling reawakens within a man, and produces the judgments afresh, that a *fides historica* passes into a living faith.

It has seemed to some as if such an account of faith left the objective reality of its contents a matter of indifference, or at least of doubt. The logical issue has been declared to be the subjectivism of Feuerbach. The subjective feeling of worth may possibly have no equivalent in the objective world of fact. And it is true that the certainty which faith possesses in the reality of its object is not a logical but a moral certainty. It knows nothing of that nice balancing of probabilities in which Newman found its ground. The most exquisite skill in the employment of the theoretical categories will not help a man to reach religious assurance, if he have no feeling for the worth of the supernatural life. But this moral certainty is not a lower but a higher thing than the certainty founded on theoretical demonstration. A man will stake his life on it. When we express the conviction that the supernatural life in which we share is a higher thing than nature and its laws, and its goods of a diviner rank than natural goods; and when, on the basis of such a judgment, we recognize the living God, who meets us in the Person of Christ, we have exercised the profoundest activity of which our nature is capable.

(To be concluded.)

From a Preacher's Preparation Book.

ISAIAH LXI. I.

'THE Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek [R.V.m. 'the poor'; Del. 'sufferers'; Ch. 'the afflicted'; Or. 'the lowly'];¹ he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison [R.V.m. 'opening of the eyes'; Del. 'removal of blindness'] to them that are bound.'

The Spirit is upon me, as a special gift for special service.

¹ On this word see Sanday in *Expos.* 4th ser. iii. 313, and Hort, *Village Sermons*, 9.

Me.—Whom? Either the Suffering Servant (Del., Ch., Kay, Plummer) or the prophet himself (Sk.). In favour of the Suffering Servant (of Is. 52¹³–53¹², etc.) are these points: (1) the gift of the

Spirit is his, as in 42¹; (2) his ministry is of a consoling nature, as 42³ 50⁴; (3) he delivers a message of emancipation, as in 42⁷ 49⁹. In favour of the prophet: (1) the Servant is never merely a herald, as here, but always the mediator himself of the blessings promised; (2) the message seems to be confined to Israel here, whereas the work of the Servant is for mankind; (3) the 'day of vengeance' does not elsewhere accompany the Servant. (See Skinner.)

Because.—The Spirit is on him because he is set apart to do a certain service which cannot be done without the Spirit. The Spirit *is, i.e.* abides, on him, till this work is done.

The LORD.—This is Jehovah in the Heb., as the Eng. capitals declare. It was the Spirit of Jehovah *Adonai*, the Masterful One. (See *D.B.* under *GOD.*)

Hath anointed me.—Kings were anointed when made kings that they might rule (1 S 9¹⁶ 10¹ 16¹³); and priests when set apart to serve as representatives of man to God (Ex 29⁷, Lv 7³⁶). Perhaps prophets also were anointed to their office, but the only passage is 1 K 19¹⁶, the command to anoint Elisha, and it is not recorded that it was carried out. In any case anointing becomes a figure for appointment to a special service, as in Is 45¹ Cyrus is called Jehovah's Anointed One, *i.e.* His chosen instrument, as raised up to set His Israel free.

To preach good tidings to the meek, lit. 'to evangelize (LXX *εὐαγγελισσασθαι*) the meek,' the Heb. being one word. It is translated 'that bringest (or bringeth) good tidings' in 40⁹ 52⁷.

To proclaim liberty.—This phrase is used of the Year of Jubilee; hence in Ezk 46¹⁷ the Year of Jubilee is called 'the year of liberty.' [But see Douglas in *Expos. Times*, June 1898.] The word translated 'liberty' is the same as that for 'a swallow'; so it is not 'freeing' simply, says Del., 'but 'free movement' like the swallow's easy flight; Orelli, 'free roaming about.'

To the captives, prisoners of war (so the word used in Lk 4¹⁸, and there only in N.T.). As prisoners of war they are homeless and without possession; it is a return to home and inheritance. This shows the proclamation to go beyond the Year of Jubilee, in which prisoners were not discharged.

The opening of the prison, in Heb. one word, and its meaning elsewhere is opening of the eyes, except once of the ears.

The Lord's Sermon.

As we speak of 'The Lord's Prayer' we may call this 'The Lord's Sermon.' He adopted it as His own (Lk 4^{16. 22}) as He did not the Lord's Prayer. It is the model of all sermons. It contains all that a sermon need or can contain.

i. THE AUDIENCE.—There are four classes:—

1. *The meek,* or 'the poor.'—It is the same word that is applied to Moses in Nu 12³, and it means the opposite of self-seeking. In Lk 4¹⁸ it is given as the 'poor,' the same word being used as Jesus uses when he says, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' (Mt 5³), or 'Blessed be ye poor' (Lk 6²⁰). Perhaps its meaning is best expressed by the phrase, 'poor and needy.' The 'poor' may not be blessed as such, and the rich may; but the poor are more likely to be blessed because more likely to *feel their need*. It is a gospel to them that need and know it. It is for all the young, all the helpless, all but the self-sufficient.

2. *The broken-hearted.*—These have more than a general sense of need. They have learned in the school of suffering. They can recall loss, perhaps betrayal, at least disappointment. They cannot help recalling it. For its scar is on them. They bear about in their heart the marks of wrong—wrong which they have suffered, and, yet more deeply, wrong which they have done. They are broken-hearted; they cannot receive or they cannot give restitution.

3. *The captives.*—The description grows denser. These are more needy than even the broken-hearted. They are the victims of habit, evil habit, ill-regulated deeds settling or settled down into an ill-regulated life. If women, they are such as St. Paul describes (2 Ti 3⁶), 'silly women laden with sins, led captive with divers lusts.'

4. *Them that are bound.*—It is their eyes that are bound. And so these are in worst case of all, for they cannot see their condition. They are as good as dead—dead in trespasses and sins. 'She that liveth in sin is dead while she liveth.' When Lazarus came forth from the tomb his face was bound about with a napkin, for that was the way they did with the dead. The eyes were closed and bound. These are they who say, 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,' and do not *know* that they are 'wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.'

ii. THE MESSAGE.—The message is determined

by the audience. It is fitted to be good tidings to each class, each person. To the poor and needy it is simply a *gospel*. What they need most is hope. It is the hopelessness of the poor that is the most striking, the most kenspeckle thing about them. I have watched the faces of the tramps—they are all hopeless. This is a message of hope. And it is a hope that does not die out, 'that maketh not ashamed.' To poor shepherds, working lads, came the first gospel sermon: 'To you is born this day a Saviour.' Jesus is a Saviour from hopelessness.

It heals the broken-hearted. Macbeth said to the physician, 'Canst thou not minister to a *mind* diseased?' and the physician answered, No. 'This Physician can bind up a broken heart, can heal a wounded spirit. He came as a Physician to the sick. 'They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I came to call sinners.' He healed the 'woman that was a sinner,' broken-hearted perhaps through men's sins. He healed Zacchæus, whose extortion had broken others' hearts, and sent him to restore what yet was in his power.

It is a message of liberty to the captives. Jesus did not loose any one's chain, so far as we know, when He was on earth. He sent John's messengers back again to John in prison, not with a message to open the prison door, but with 'Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.' But He gave liberty to the captive in sin. He said to the paralytic, 'Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.' He did more than break the chains of sin for the moment. He set in a large place, gave liberty to go in and out, victory over the very temptation that it became no temptation longer. He brought His banished home again, with the Father's welcome and the Son's place.

And it is a message of the opening of the eyes to the blind. None of Christ's miracles astonished more than His making the blind to see; none cost him more. In the spiritual sphere it verges on the impossible. The blindness of ignorance is removable: we are to blame if we do not remove that. But who so blind as he that will not see? Whose eyes so hard to open as theirs who say 'we see,' while yet their sin remaineth? But the things which are impossible with men are possible with God. This worker is anointed for his work.

Therefore he has the Spirit, and the Spirit will stay with him till his work is done—even to the opening of the eyes of the blind.

iii. THE PREACHER.—In a Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew, which was written in the beginning of the second century, but published in English only last year (*Expos.* 5th ser. v. 302, 443), the Christian quotes this prophecy of Isaiah, upon which the Jew remarks, 'All this is to be in the future, though the time is not yet.' That is the Jew's admission of the extraordinary wealth of promise this prophecy contains. He does not acknowledge Jesus Christ, and he sees that no one else has yet come to fulfil it. We acknowledge Jesus Christ. We know that He took this sermon and made it His. We believe that He came

the broken hearts to bind,
The bleeding souls to cure;
And with the treasures of His grace
To enrich the humble poor.

His sermon was Himself. He gave His life a ransom, His soul an offering for sin. That day this Scripture was fulfilled. He preached the sermon in Nazareth by anticipation; for He delighted to do the Father's will,—and it was as good as done already, even to the last agony.

And it is because Christ is this sermon, not because He preached it, that the prophet could preach it, and that we can preach it now. The Cross of Christ looks before and after. One arm stretches backward and gives this prophet the right to preach a sermon he has no power himself to fulfil; the other stretches forward and gives the same right to us. For the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by time or circumstance. As the prophet spoke, the Cross of Christ was already raised in His sight, and it stands erected in His sight to-day.

Thus the preacher can say, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon *me*, because he hath anointed *me* to preach glad tidings to the meek.' This is his work. It is a special work. Like every work for which one was anointed, it is honourable and glorious. He has been chosen to accomplish it. And *because* he has been chosen to accomplish this work, the Spirit of the Lord will be with him as long as he gives himself to its accomplishment.