

exclude the further consciousness of oneness with God not only as a moral and religious experience, but also as a conviction of oneness of being with the Eternal. Dr. Thieme has done good service in his vindication of the first, but it is well for the reader to accept that service and to go further for himself, as the evidence leads him on to the conclusion embodied in the creed of the universal Church.

The lectures contained in this volume<sup>1</sup> are 'The Progress of Man,' 'Religion and Development,' and 'Nature-Power and the Human Will.' They are remarkable lectures, clear, subtle, and thoughtful. They are rich in interest of many kinds, and the problems discussed are living, present, and important. In the first lecture the discussion is with regard to the conception of Progress, and to its content and its history. The origin and development of progress, the meaning of progress, and the modern views regarding it and possibility of its explanation, conclude the exposition. The second lecture really is an account

<sup>1</sup> *Zur Religionsgeschichte: Drei Betrachtungen.* Von Herman Siebeck. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck). Pp. iv, 79. Price M.1.50.

of the work of Eucken on the being, content, and worth of religion. A pretty full account of Eucken's work is given, which the English reader may compare with the work of W. R. Boyce Gibson on Eucken's *Philosophy of Life*, the fullest and the best account of Eucken accessible to the English student. In the third lecture we have a new discussion of the perennial problem of the indifference of nature to man, his sorrows and his joys.

How dare ye chant, ye little birds,  
And I so weary, full of care?

is a poetic way of stating the problem. Nature goes its own way, regardless of the spiritual life of man. Our author goes on to discuss the order of nature, and its regard to law, and its worth for the spiritual life. What is the value of nature in relation to freedom? These and a number of other related questions are discussed with ample knowledge, and with insight and power, and the little book is a contribution of great value to the discussion of these burning questions. To discuss these questions adequately is impossible within our limits, and we content ourselves with this brief notice.

JAMES IVERACH.

*Aberdeen.*

## What is the Bible?

BY THE REV. A. H. M'NEILE, B.D., FELLOW AND DEAN OF SIDNEY SUSSEX COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

THE object of this paper is to suggest some lines of thought along which we may frame an answer to the question: What is the Bible? And what is its real place among men?

Whenever we try to think about God we can only do so in conceptions drawn from our own human nature. We think of Him as speaking, acting, loving, forgiving, planning; we think of Him as possessing a mind and a will. We cannot employ higher terms than those which we use to describe men; we can only say that God's attributes must be at least those of men, but each one infinitely perfect. Now a man's 'will' is something locked in the most secret depths of his personality; it is an aspect of his very self. But if he wants to manifest that will to others, to give out his hidden thoughts and wishes—if he wants to reveal his very self to his fellow-men, he can do

so because he has the power of speech. My 'word' is the means whereby I can give other people a share in my hidden self, and make known to them my will. And we can say the same of God. He gives Himself out, He reveals to men His hidden will; and using our human expression, for we have no other, we may call that self-revelation His *Word*.

When a man is in a position of authority over others, his word produces obedience in proportion to his power of exercising his authority. Of one man we should say that his word does not carry much weight; his personality is not strong enough for his word to enforce obedience. While of another man—a great headmaster, a great general, the strong head of a great firm—we should say that 'his word is law.' Carry this up to its highest point, and we can say, 'God's word *is law*.' When

God exercises His will, the result is absolutely certain.

Or look at it in another way. The thing which marks a great man is his grasp of details. Human beings are limited in power and knowledge and in memory; and the head of a great school, or army or society, or business, is obliged to leave some details to subordinates. But exactly in proportion to his grasp of details, side by side with his grasp of broad issues, he will prove himself a great leader of men. Carry this, in the same way, up to the highest point, and we are brought to the infinite Mind of God, who not only governs the world *en masse*, but exercises His will on every several detail, no matter how infinitesimally small.

Look first at the *physical universe*.<sup>1</sup> When we speak of a 'law of nature,' we mean God at work in nature, revealing His will in respect to the disposition of matter. There is a profound truth in the statement in He 1<sup>3</sup>, that the Son of God 'upholds all things by the word of his power'; or, to represent the Greek word more exactly, He *carries all things along*. At every second, and every fraction of every second, in the course of the universe, God deliberately exercises His will upon each single atom with such unswerving regularity that the results are what we call 'natural laws.' To take a single instance: If the centre of gravity of a body is unsupported, we know with absolute certainty that it will fall; and we speak of the 'law of gravitation.' Our human wills are so weak and fickle that we find it difficult to conceive of a Will which never swerves—which has no variableness. But all over the wide universe, whenever a body is unsupported, God says, 'Let it fall'—and it does fall. Such is the part which the Word of God plays in nature.

But the physical universe is only one aspect of the exhibition of His Will. Another aspect is the *course of human history*. An event in the twentieth century after Christ, and an event in the twentieth century before Christ, appear to have no possible connexion with each other. But they are joined by a continuous chain of cause and effect, of which every link is the work of God according to an eternal plan. And though we speak loosely of the 'natural' sequence of events, we really mean the sequence which His Will has determined, and

His Word has produced, at every point in the series.

So we begin to see a little of what the 'Word of God' means. It is (as the Epistle to the Hebrews says) 'living and powerful' beyond all conception.

But its meaning is not nearly exhausted. Not only God, but man also, possesses a will. Man has that innermost self-conscious personality which no other man can know except when he chooses to give himself out—to reveal himself by his word. The first beginnings of this state of things is described in the sentence, 'God said, Let us make man in our image.' And the supreme aim and end to which creation moves is that man should be so developed that his will should become one with God's will, 'perfect in one.' The highest aspect of God's will of which the human mind has any knowledge is the gradual revealing—the gradual imparting—to men of His own character, that He may raise men to become more and more divine. The 'Word' of God is the revelation of His will, partially in the physical cause and effect of the material universe, partially in the chain of events in human history, but first and chiefest in the spiritual process—the plan of salvation—by which man is being raised to God by God giving Himself out to man.

It is easy to see how steadily and surely this would have gone on had there been no sin in the world. But the marvel is that God is doing it in spite of the world's sin. He intends—and His Word is law—that man shall grow to be the perfect expression of His Will, the complete unsullied mirror of His nature. But because of sin, man would never have risen to this height unless God had given Himself out—revealed Himself with complete fulness in Manhood. By the taking of the Manhood into God in the person of Jesus Christ, God made possible the impossible, that the manhood of all men should eventually be taken into God. And because Christ revealed God perfectly—because He manifested the Father's will perfectly—He became the exact utterance, the express image of His Essence. He was, and is the Word of God; 'the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.'

If, then, the Word of God is His Will coming forth into visible, tangible, actual fact—firstly, in the whole course of the material universe; secondly, in the whole course of human history; and thirdly,

<sup>1</sup> The contents of this paragraph are repeated from the writer's article in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, September 1905, pp. 537-543.

and chiefest, in the whole course of the plan of salvation—if the Word of God means all that, *what is the Bible?* We can surely test it by these three aspects of God's self-revelation. In what relation does the Bible stand to the course of the physical universe, the course of human history, and the plan of salvation?

Now, if God created all things, and 'carries the universe along by the utterance of His power,' it is clear that every fresh item of knowledge gained by scientific investigation is a fresh glimpse into the Will of God. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as 'secular' knowledge; a man only makes his studies secular for himself when he divorces them from the thought of God. So that all the scientific experiments in the world form part of the study of one aspect of God's 'Word.' And discoveries follow one another so fast that no book remains a standard work for more than a few years. It is obvious therefore—almost too obvious to mention—that the Bible is not a standard scientific work, or a storehouse of scientific discoveries. With regard to physical science—one vast portion of the revelation of God's Will—the Bible says practically nothing. And when, further, we are told that the statements on matters of natural science, made by the men who wrote in those early ages, are not always accurate from the standpoint of modern discoveries, we can willingly admit it. It is of enormous importance to remember that *we can learn what the Bible is only from what the Bible itself says.* And the Bible makes not the slightest pretensions to being a scientific treatise, complete and up to date.

And the same is true with regard to human history. We must gather together all the several events of every minute and second in the history of all people, nations and languages, all tribes and families, and of every man, woman, and child that has ever lived or ever will live, before we can gain a full knowledge of God's action in history. Though we take into account every historical work that ever was written, the 'Word' of God—the expression of His Will—in history is known to us only in the form of a few scattered fragments, a few of the main events and epochs in the history of a few of the nations of the earth, and of a few of the most important persons in those nations. And the Bible? The Bible confines itself almost entirely to the main events in the history of a single small branch of one nation, and only

touches surrounding peoples here and there, when they come into contact with the Hebrews. It is, of course, a record of great importance, in that it relates the history of the people from whom Christianity immediately sprang. It indicates the circumstances, and thoughts, and ideas, which formed, so to speak, the seed-plot of the eternal religion revealed in the Incarnation. But it is obvious that the Bible is not a complete storehouse in which we can learn all about God's world-wide guidance of history.

But there remains the third aspect of His self-revelation, yet more important and more vast: the gradual revelation of His spiritual nature and character, leading up to its completion in Jesus Christ, by whom the same revelation may go on and increase in every one of us. And here, the Bible is the standard work which has never been superseded, never become out of date, never been found lacking.

The Old Testament relates the gradual self-revealing of God, or, in other words, the gradually increasing realization by men of what God is. Men began by thinking of Him as the protecting deity of a small tribe; Jehovah was the particular God of the Hebrews, as Chemosh was the particular God of the Moabites, or Milcom of the Ammonites, or Baal of the Phœnicians; He was a stern warrior who fought for His tribe against every other tribe; He was revengeful, sometimes even fickle and capricious. And they ended by thinking of Him as the righteous, almighty, pure and merciful Spirit who was the guide and comfort and strength of every single man who trusted in Him.

The New Testament gives the complete revelation of the Incarnate Son, and teaches how all men can through Him be made partakers of the Divine nature, and gain an ever larger share in that participation.

And all the religious books in Christendom have only been feeble attempts to understand more fully these eternal spiritual truths. No book has by one jot or one tittle added to or subtracted from the plan of salvation. *In its spiritual teaching*—in its 'reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness,' which one of its writers claims for it—the Bible is absolutely complete, one perfect everlasting whole.

And so, while we are obliged to turn, and turn with delight, to countless other books to learn of God's 'Word' in nature and in history, we turn to

the Bible alone for the best and highest. We turn to it to learn of God's holiness and purity and hatred of sin; to learn of His infinite love for His sinful children; to learn that we are His children and He is our Father; to learn of His Divine self-sacrifice in the Incarnation and Death of His well-beloved Son; to learn that in Him we

can get forgiveness of all our sins, and sympathy in all our sorrows, and in His Holy Spirit strength against all temptations; and to learn that after we have, for a little season, been tossed about on the waves of this troublesome world, we can enter into the rest which is prepared for the people of God.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. LUKE.

LUKE XIII. 24.

'Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.'—R.V.

#### EXPOSITION.

'Strive to enter in by the narrow door.'—*Strive* is a strong word. It is literally 'agonize.' It is the language of athletic competitions. Jesus refuses to answer the question. He rarely gives a categorical answer to a leading question. But here He altogether discourages the curiosity of the inquirer, who had better be attending to his own duty in the matter of his question. Indirectly Jesus sets aside the question as based on an error. There is no fixed number, few or many. The number will depend on the choice and effort of men and women. If those who now hear Jesus will strive to enter, there will be so many the more inside. It all depends on that.—ADENEY.

'Strive' refers in the parable to the difficulty of passing through the narrow opening; in the application, to the humiliations of penitence, the struggles of conversion. The 'narrow door' represents attachment to the lowly Messiah: the magnificent gateway by which the Jews would have wished to enter, would represent, if it were mentioned, the appearance of the glorious Messiah whom they expected.—GODET.

'Many.'—The word 'many' proves the connexion between this discourse and the question of v. 23. Only Jesus does not say whether there will be few or many saved; He confines Himself to saying that there will be many lost. This is the one important matter for practical and individual application. It is perfectly consistent with this truth that there should be many saved.—GODET.

'Shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.'—The futures are most important, whether we place a comma or a full stop after the second. Jesus does not say that there *are* many who *strive* in vain to enter, but that there *will* be many who *will seek* in vain to enter, *after the time of salvation is past*. Those who continue to strive now, succeed. The change from 'strive' to 'seek' must also be noted. Mere *ζητεῖν* is very different from *ἀγωνίζεσθαι* (1 Ti 6<sup>12</sup>). Cf. Jn 7<sup>24</sup>.—PLUMMER.

THE SERMON.

#### The Strenuous Gospel.

By the Rev. Thomas G. Selby.

What was in the mind of the man who asked the question, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' We can only conjecture. Perhaps he wanted to know if the precepts of the new kingdom were as rigid as rumour asserted, for, if so, only a few of the chosen nation would reach salvation. Perhaps he was thinking of the whole human race—the Greek, the Roman, the Scythian, the teeming souls of bygone generations and the generations of the unknown future.

Our Lord did not answer the question. He turned the man's thoughts from the speculative to the practical. He was not to occupy his soul with vagrant curiosity when the hour of action was striking.

The old question is still asked, and where Jesus maintained an admonitory reserve, ministers now babble of 'the larger hope.'

When we look at the question again, we see that no answer could be given which would not be misapprehended, for 'few' and 'many' are relative terms. In ages of degeneration the verdict is depressing, but the prophecies warrant us in believing that the earth *will* be covered with devout and regenerated races for thousands of years; and that would fix the ultimate ratio.

Any answer would not only have been misapprehended; it would have proved a great temptation. Had Christ said 'But few,' the Christian would exaggerate the worth of his services, saying, 'I at least shall be numbered with the elect remnant, small though it be'; and the worldly-minded man would say, 'I will take