

likely to give us an account of this subject both capable and sympathetic. Ritschl's own work is at last to appear in English in something like completeness.

Mr. Murray's most promising theological announcement is the Gifford Lectures delivered at Aberdeen in 1889-1891 by Professor E. B. Tylor. The title is to be *The Natural History of Religion*. For several good reasons it must be kept separate in one's mind from Dr. Mackintosh's *The Natural History of the Christian Religion*, which was published by Maclehose in 1894.

Dr. Law Wilson of Belfast has seized a good opportunity. For we are all ready to receive a book on *The Theology of Modern Literature*. If it is well done it will be one of the most successful books of the season. Stopford Brooke has given us all a great appetite for such work.

Other books to be looked for, and even waited for, are Inge's Bampton Lectures of 1899 on *Christian Mysticism*, to be published by Methuen; a new edition of Moulton's *Literary Study of the Bible*, to be published by Isbister; a volume of Essays on the Teaching of the Church of England, entitled *Church and Faith*, to be published by Blackwood.

The Spirit of God in the Old Testament.

BY THE REV. A. B. DAVIDSON, D.D., LL.D., PROFESSOR OF HEBREW, NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH.

THE following notes, of course, make no pretension to be exhaustive. The subject is very obscure, and in the estimation of many writers of little importance, because in their view the Old Testament teaching regarding the spirit of God is merely an aspect of its teaching regarding God. Hence in some Old Testament theologies no special chapter is devoted to the Spirit.

There are two questions which one feels have to be put: *first*, What is said of the spirit of God in the Old Testament? and *second*, What is that spirit of God of which such things are said? The answer to the second question will be the general conclusion to be drawn from the answer to the first, if, that is, any certain conclusion can be drawn.

The first question, What is said of the spirit of God? has two branches: *first*, What is said of the spirit of God *ab intra*—within God Himself? and *second*, What is said of the spirit of God not within God Himself, but *ab extra*, in connexion with the world or human life?

As to the first question, considering that what is said of God is of necessity for the most part analogical, a reflexion back upon His being and application to Him of what is said and thought in regard to men, it may be useful to look at the general idea connected with 'spirit,' and at what

is said of the spirit of man in man. There is a passage in Isaiah (31²) which perhaps comes nearer expressing the idea of 'spirit' in a general way than any other: 'Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; their horses are flesh, and not spirit.' The general scope of the passage is to show the impotence of the Egyptians—they are men and not God, their horses are flesh. Flesh is weak and liable to decay, it has no inherent power in it; spirit is power, or, has power. This seems everywhere in the Old Testament the idea attached to 'spirit.' It is possible that the idea is not primary but derived. The physical meaning of spirit (רוח) is breath. Where breath is present there is life and power; where it is absent there is only flesh and weakness and decay. And thus the idea of life and power may have become connected with *ruach* by observation. But if we should suppose this to be the case, the connexion of the idea of power with 'spirit' is of such ancient date that it precedes that use of language which we find in the Old Testament.

Now in harmony with this general idea of 'spirit' is all that is said of the spirit of man in man. The original sense of spirit is breath. This was the sign of life, or was the principle of life. But by a step which all languages seem to have taken, this merely phenomenal life or visible sign

or principle was, so to speak, intensified into an immaterial element in man, the spirit of man. When this immaterial element is called spirit, it is in the main either when it is put in opposition to flesh, or when its strength or weakness in respect of power and vitality is spoken of. Hence it is said: 'God of the spirits of all flesh' (Nu 16²²); 'in whose hand is the spirit of all flesh of man' (Job 12¹⁰; cf. Is 31³); 'the spirit of Jacob their father revived' (Gen 45²⁷); 'to revive the spirit of the humble' (Is 57¹⁵); 'my days are over, my spirit is quenched, graves are mine' (Job 17¹). Hence the spirit is overwhelmed and faileth (Ps 143⁴), by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken (Pr 15¹³); 'I will not,' saith the Lord, 'contend for ever, for the spirit would fail before Me' (Is 57¹⁶).

The spirit, then, being that in which resides vitality, power, energy in general, the usage became extended somewhat further. Any predominating determination or prevailing direction of the mind was called a 'spirit' of such and such a kind, what we call a mood or temper or frame of a transient kind. Thus Hosea speaks of a spirit of whoredom being in Israel (4²³), and Isaiah of a spirit of deep sleep being poured out on them (29¹⁰), and of a spirit of perverseness being in the Egyptians (19¹⁴); and another prophet speaks of a spirit of grace and supplications (Zec 12¹⁰). So one is short in spirit, grieved in spirit, bitter in spirit, and the like. But this strong determination or current of mind might be, not of a temporary but of a permanent kind, and this is also called a 'spirit,' corresponding to character or disposition, whether it be natural or ethical. Hence one is of a haughty spirit, of a humble spirit, of a steadfast spirit, and the Psalmist prays to be upheld with a free spirit.

Thus the 'spirit' in man expresses all the activities of life and mind, the strong current of emotion, the prevailing determination of mind, whether temporary or permanent, whether natural or ethical. And the usage is not different in regard to the spirit of God in God. It expresses the fulness of vital power and all the activities of vital energy, whether, as we might say, emotional or intellectual or moral, whether constant or intermittent. In regard to His emotional nature Micah asks, Is the spirit of the Lord short, impatient (2⁷)? Another prophet asks, Who directed the spirit of the Lord? that is, His intelligence, which presided over His power in

giving weight and measure to the infinite masses of the material universe (Is 40¹³). And a psalmist expresses by the term spirit His whole omniscient and omnipresent mind, 'Whither can I go from Thy spirit?' (Ps 139⁷), while another psalmist uses the same term to express His unchanging ethical disposition, Let Thy good spirit lead me in a land of uprightness (evenness, Ps 143¹⁰), though in these last examples there is reference also to the operation of God's spirit on that which is without.

2. The other branch of the general question was, What is said of the spirit of God, not within God, but in relation to the world and men? And as in the first half of the question it was of consequence to ascertain what general ideas attached to 'spirit,' so here it is of importance to remember the general ideas entertained of God and His relation to all things, whether material or animated. The conception of secondary causes is almost entirely absent from the Old Testament; what God does He does directly and immediately. And He is over all, and in all. All phenomena are due to Him, all changes on the face of the material world, all movements in history, all vicissitudes in the life of men. The Old Testament doctrine of God is not more monotheistic than it is theistic and not deistic. That universal power within all things which throws up all configurations on the face of nature, of history, and of man's life is God. When general language is used these phenomena are said to be due to God; when more particular language is employed they are ascribed to the spirit of God. The spirit of God *ab extra* is God exerting power, God efficient, that is, actually exerting efficiency in any sphere. And His efficiency pervades all spheres alike.

First, the cosmical sphere. The spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, the watery chaos (Gn 1²). This is a realistic image which expresses the idea that God's creative power was engaged in educing life and order out of the primal chaos, which is regarded as an ocean of water covering all things. It is perhaps of consequence to distinguish between this spirit of God and the successive creative fiat—let there be light, etc. These latter express God's conscious will and determination; they are movements of the spirit of God, according to the passage (Is 40¹³) already referred to, *ab intra*. The brooding spirit expresses His efficient presence and operation *ab extra*, carrying out His voluntary determinations.

It is the case, however, that this operation of the spirit of God upon the material world is very rarely spoken of, and it is perhaps but a form of the more common idea that the spirit is the source of life. In some other passages where the spirit seems operative in nature the word should probably be rendered *breath*. The poet of Job says (26¹³), 'By the spirit (breath) of God the heavens are bright,' identifying the wind that carries off the clouds with the divine breath, just as Isaiah says, 'The grass withereth when the spirit (breath) of the Lord bloweth upon it,' identifying the withering wind of the desert with the hot breath of Jehovah (Is 40⁷; cf. Ezk 37).

Secondly, the sphere of life or vitality. The most signal instance of the power and efficiency of God is seen in His giving life to the creatures, and the spirit of God is much dwelt on in this sphere of life, whether in giving it or reinforcing it. In Gn 2 it is said of the creation of man that he was formed of the dust of the ground; and, being thus formed, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living being. This is exceedingly realistic imagery. God Himself is represented as having breath, as breathing (the breath of His nostrils in anger is frequently referred to); this breath He breathed into man; it became man's, and possessing it he lived. The passage is lofty in virtually saying that man's vital breath is identical with God's. But the difficulty in all such passages is to discover whether they contain a mere figure descriptive of the origination of what we call life, or whether the breath which God inbreathed did not carry in it the immaterial principle in man's being which we suppose the ground of life. When we speak of the Spirit of God in the highest theological sense, we are using what was originally a figure. 'The spirit doth but mean the breath' even here. But we understand the figure to express a relation of persons. And we may have to interpret Old Testament figures in a similar way. In Gn 2 there is perhaps nothing more than a figure for God's origination of life in man, without any reflexion upon an immaterial element. So Job says, 'The spirit (breath) of God is in my nostrils' (27³); and Elihu, 'The spirit of God made me, and the breath of the Almighty giveth me life' (33⁴). But when he says, 'It is the spirit in man, and the breath (inspiration) of the Almighty that giveth them understanding' (32⁸), his language seems to contain

more, for he probably speaks of creative, not prophetic inbreathing or inspiration.

The language used here is rather complicated. We have not a plain statement that it is God who originates life in man, sustains it, and causes it to cease. Neither have we a statement that it is the spirit of God who does all this, which might come to the same thing, with emphasis on the fact that the origination and upholding of life is a signal instance of the divine energy. Instead of this, what is said is, that vitality in man *is* the spirit of God in man. For the operation the operator is substituted, and the spirit of God is in a manner hypostatized. This spirit being present in man may even be called man's, or its source being considered it may be called God's. Thus Ps 104²⁹, speaking of creature life, says, 'Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled; Thou takest away *their* spirit, they die; Thou sendest forth *Thy* spirit, they are created.' Of course, the spirit of God is not divided or divisible. The spirit of life in man is not a particle of God's spirit enclosed in man, which when released returns to the great original source; it is not a spark separated from the original fire. If we must have an image it would be rather like this. As the ocean exerting its strength fills all the caves on the shore, and again when it recedes leaves them empty; so the indivisible spirit of God gives creatures life, and when withdrawn leaves them dead. Thus to put Scripture and ordinary language side by side: God's operation in giving the creature life is the entrance of His spirit into the creature—for God must be present where He operates; His continuous efficiency in upholding life is the continuous presence of His spirit; His cessation to uphold life is the withdrawal of His spirit.

3. The sphere of the human mind and history. Though this be a higher region than that of mere life or vitality, the ideas connected with life seem still in a certain way to prevail, the superhuman strength of Samson, the martial ardour of Saul, the intellectual skill of Bezaleel, and the moral power of the prophets being all, so to speak, a potentiation of life in them due to the spirit of the Lord. Two things need to be distinguished, namely, the signs or symptoms of the divine influence and the reality of it. The latter does not need to be discussed here. But that which drew the *attention* of the onlookers to such men as have just been mentioned was the fact that they

appeared animated or rather overborne by a power not their own, a force exerted on them from without—the power of God, the spirit of the Lord. And the same may be said of the prophets. The early prophets, as we see from what is related in connexion with Saul, were the subjects of a lofty enthusiasm, which sometimes became an uncontrollable excitation or ecstasy. This external affection of the prophet was probably what attracted attention, and was ascribed to the spirit. In later times, when prophecy threw off this excitation and became an ethical intercourse of the mind of man with God, as in the case of Jeremiah, who repudiates all such things as prophetic dreams, and claims for the prophet simple entrance into the counsel of the Lord, the phraseology formed in earlier days still remained with another sense; the prophet is still called in Hosea the man of the spirit (9⁷); and Micah says in significant language, ‘Truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord to declare to Jacob his transgressions’ (3⁸).

The above particulars might seem to justify the remark that the spirit of God is, so to speak, the constant parallel of God. The ideas God and spirit of God cover one another. Hence, whatever development we may trace in the doctrine of God, there will be a corresponding development in that of the spirit; a tendency to give the thought of God a prevailing direction, for example, the ethical or redemptive, will be followed or rather accompanied by the same advance and tendency in regard to the spirit of God. For it is not so much the spirit of God that is spoken of in the Old Testament as the spirit of the Lord (Jehovah), God as king of the redemptive kingdom in Israel. This very idea in itself gave a particular direction to the thought of God, and therefore of the spirit of God. The ethical and spiritual naturally came to the front. The spirit given to men such as Gideon, Jephtha, Samuel, and others was this theocratic redemptive spirit (perhaps even Samson’s inspiration may be brought in here), it was Jehovah operating in men for redemptive purposes,

saving and ruling His people. In all the early history the quality, so to speak, of the spirit of the Lord which animated the leaders of Israel can be understood from the fact that the spirit of the Lord operating in men is precisely parallel to the Angel of the Lord speaking and acting outside of them. And the more we descend the history of Israel the more the ethical conception of God, and consequently of the spirit of God, becomes the prevailing one. The spirit of God under the name of the Holy Spirit is rarely spoken of, once in Ps 51 and twice in Is 63. Both these compositions may be late. Judging from usage, e.g. holy hill, holy city, holy arm, and the like, which mean hill of God, arm of God, the phrase Holy Spirit merely at first meant divine spirit, emphasis being laid on the fact that He was the spirit of God. But as the ethical being of God became more and more prominent, the term ‘holy’ also acquired more and more ethical contents.

As to the second question, What is, or who is, the spirit of God? the question can perhaps hardly be answered on Old Testament ground. The spirit of God is always God. It is not an influence exerted by God at a point from which He is Himself distant. The spirit of God is God present and operative. No doubt it is often the visible effects or accompaniments of the operation that are spoken of, and a variety of figures is used to describe these. But the spirit is not a mere influence and something less than God. In such passages as Is 11, the spirit of the Lord in the Messiah is truly the Lord present in Him. The spirit of the Lord is like the Angel of the Lord, identical with the Lord and distinct from Him. But while there are a great many passages in the Old Testament which might very well express the idea that the spirit is a distinct hypostasis or person, it might be disputed whether there are any which *must* be so interpreted. Such words as Is 63^{10, 11}, ‘But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit,’ strongly suggest personality, but then compare Is 54⁶. Other similar passages are Is 48¹⁷ 63¹⁴, Hag 2⁵, and many others.