

ayer, as the pessimist tells us, than formerly, but ere is more writing about it. A volume onayer is nearly as sure among the month's publications as a volume of sermons. This month it comes from America, through the Fleming H. Revell Company, whose publishing office for this country is at 30 St. Mary Street, Edinburgh. Its author is Dr. David Gregg of Brooklyn.

The point of insistence in this book is the place of prayer among the forces that move the machinery of the world, and he calls it *Individual Prayer as a Working-Force* (2s. net). In the last chapter his subject is Christ at prayer on our behalf, the text being, 'I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil' (Jn 17¹⁵). How is that prayer answered? How does Christ's prayer keep us from the evil that is in the world? Following Mr. W. L. Watkinson, Dr. Gregg says in two ways. The one way is by putting in us *the instinct of peril*; the other by granting us *a hidden life filled with Himself*.

What is this instinct of peril? 'In India butterflies migrate to escape the monsoon. They have meteorological sense, which gives them an intuition of low-pressure and warns them to hasten away. It like manner God gives to all sincere men a similar instinct for moral peril—a sensibility of sin, a pain to feel it near. Goethe sets it forth in his tragedy of Faust. In that tragedy Margaret, who represents virgin-purity, cannot bear the sight of Mephistopheles. Though he is disguised as an honourable knight and she has no idea who he is, she shrinks from him. She has a keen instinct of moral peril—

In all my life not anything
Has given my heart so sharp a sting
As that man's loathsome visage.

When you begin to read a certain book, as Mr. Watkin-

son says, and you do not like it, you suspect it morally. It is certainly not high in its tone. You cannot put your objection into words, but the shrinking from it is there. That is the action of the instinct of peril. Drop the book at once. Your separation to God in this case lies in following the instinct. Guard the bloom on the peach. It is essential; for just where the bloom is rubbed off, at that precise point decay sets in. Honour the instinct of peril, and remember this: In a life of holiness there is no place for presumption.'

Turning over a New Leaf.—The Rev. L. Maclean Watt, B.D., of Alloa, who has published a volume of Communion addresses, through Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton (*The Communion Table*; 3s. 6d.), will not murmur nor complain if we say that the best of it is its poetry. The poetry is often the best thing in a sermon, and the remark is hard upon the sermon. But here the poetry is the preacher's own. Nor does it mean that he is a better poet than a preacher, for he preaches by his poetry. Opposite each sermon's opening words are found a line or two. This is the finest of them all we think—

Carry me over the long, last mile,
Man of Nazareth, Christ for me!
Weary I wait by Death's dark style,
In the wild and the waste where the wind blows free:
And the shadows and sorrows, come out of my past
Look keen through my heart,
And will not depart,
Now that my poor world has come to its last.

Lord, is it long that my spirit must wait,
Man of Nazareth, Christ for me!
Deep is the stream, and the night is late,
And grief blinds my soul that I cannot see . . .
Speak to me, out of the silences, Lord,
That my spirit may know,
As forward I go,
That Thy pierced hands are lifting me over the ford!

Christianity a Prophetic Religion.

BY THE REV. W. F. COBB, D.D., RECTOR OF ST. ETHELBURGA'S, LONDON.

THE days of Jesus were days of great expectations. The Messianic hope had been suggested by the prophets, and nurtured among the quiet in the land. It had mastered the populace, been accepted by the Pharisees, and was tolerated by the Saddu-

cean aristocracy. The further Jehovah had retired in the highest heaven, the lower the national and religious condition of Israel, the more fiercely burned the hope of the coming of the Anointed One. But that hope was of many colours. For

the most part it looked for a King, who was to be of David's line. He would be a conqueror. He should be a Judge. He was to work miracles. He was to be a Prophet. He was to apply the sacred law with authority. But Jewish thought made one significant exception. The high priest was too much of a politician to be a religious guide, and the scribe had become his too successful rival. Consequently the Messiah was not, before Christian times, thought of as a priest. That there should come a King, a Judge, a Saviour, a Prophet,—such were the hopes which were focused on Jesus, as He began preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

For us, however, the all-important question is: How far did He adopt them, and in what way did He modify them? Jewish piety had furnished the molten metal; it was Jesus who stamped it with His own seal. What then was that seal like?

In the first place, He made it quite clear that He was not another Rabbi come to comment on the Law. He spoke with authority, but not as the scribes. His whole teaching was one continuous criticism of a religion which put a book between God and man.

In the second place, He laid little or no stress on works of power. The only sign He would give would be that of Jonah, the presence of a preacher of righteousness. Those who would believe if only a miracle were wrought, He repelled as an 'evil and adulterous generation.' He declared the wisdom of God, and expected that wisdom would be justified by her own children.

In the third place, He claimed a Kingship, but a Kingship of so refined and lofty a character that to most people it seemed, and still seems, no Kingship at all. From the beginning He refused to have anything to do with a rule based on force. To use force to prop up religion was to fall down and worship Satan. His followers should not fight, nor would He. If they took the sword they should perish with the sword. He would be a King, but not in that world where competition is the law of life.

In the fourth place, He put His prophetic office in the first rank. When He was rejected, He pointed out that no prophet was acceptable in his own country. He must die in Jerusalem, for no prophet perished out of it. His chief activity consisted in the prophetic work of preaching and teaching. He told Pilate that He came to do

what every prophet does, to bear witness to the Truth. He told His mission-preachers that he who received them as prophets would be receiving Him, and warned them that they would be persecuted as all prophets before them had been. He reminded the Scribes and Pharisees that they were sons of them who slew the prophets, and bade them be true to their fathers by killing Him.

Accordingly, it was as 'a prophetic Man mighty in word and deed' that Cleopas described Him. He was the Prophet foretold by Moses, St. Peter told the men of Israel in Solomon's Porch. And what was more, His own Spirit lived on in the Church of the first three generations, and made it to be above all things a Church which either consisted of prophets, or else held them in the highest honour.

The importance of this truth to us lies in the contribution it makes to the answer to be given to a question which we are all asking to-day, 'What is Christianity?' Our age is one which is careful and troubled about many things. It is an Age of Faith, but of Faith which is bewildered by the strife of tongues. It has its own inner certainty, but it cannot give it proper expression in a society where 'each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation'; in a society, too, where men are more concerned to prove others wrong than themselves right. The confusion is not made clear by any tabulating of the conditions of Christendom as they exist to-day. It is not got rid of by systematic theology, which is, after all, but a philosophy in disguise. Even historical theology, which is one of the two tools given us to work with in our reshaping of Christian truth, is of little use by itself. One other is wanted, is indispensable, and that is the Spirit of Prophecy.

What then is this Spirit? It is, first, the faculty of inner vision. As in Euclid there are certain axioms on which the whole superstructure of Propositions is built up; so in the religious life there are certain first principles which are seen by the inner eye, and carry with them their own credentials. They are the master-light of all his seeing to him who has them; they do not rest on sense-perceptions, or on logical reasonings. The man of science may describe them as the inheritance of the race in the individual. The Man of God says they are the voice of the Spirit. In

either case they can neither be explained nor explained away.

In Jesus the Christ this Spirit dwelt in fullest strength, for God gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him. He spoke of what He saw, with a calm and matter-of-fact certainty stronger than all reasoning. As a prophet He did not argue, He affirmed. In a world where there is so much to give the lie to that Faith which holds fast to unseen Goodness, the affirmation of the Christ that, in spite of all to the contrary, God is to us as our Father, still remains the fundamental truth of our religion; and it offers and requires no further proof than the word of Him who made it common coin. He that hath seen Him hath seen God. Jesus Christ is for man the transparency of the Father. The authority with which He spoke astonished the people of His day, because of its first-hand character. He needed not to look outside Himself for truths about the Father, about life and the spirit world, for He had the witness in Himself. His sinless soul was a mirror in which the Divine found Itself perfectly revealed. What He saw there He saw clearly, and stated with certainty. He was a Prophet, yea, and more than a Prophet. To other Prophets the word of God came, but He was to man the word of God itself.

This truth explains the freedom of the way in which He treated orthodoxy. That He loved the Law and the Temple is plain; that He stood above them in sovereign freedom is plain also. His soul had been nourished on Deuteronomy, the Psalms, and Isaiah. The zeal of His Father's house consumed Him, and yet He could put His own prophetic 'I say unto you,' against what was said in the Law, 'to them of old time.' He could declare that, if the Temple at Jerusalem were destroyed, He could build up another and a better, in the hearts of those who had learned to worship God as Spirit in spirit and in truth. He accepted Church and Bible as historical products, enshrining spiritual truths, but He knew how to distinguish the earlier truth from the later, the lower from the higher. He read the Book of Leviticus and summed it up in the precept: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' He read Deuteronomy and expressed it all in the saying, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with an undivided heart.' He would leave the law of tithes unrepealed, but He would subordinate it to 'judgment and the

love of God.' He would observe the Sabbath, but only as it sprang from love and ministered to love. But He removed once and for all the obligatory character of the Law of Moses, by the far-reaching pronouncement that not what goeth into a man defileth him, but what comes out. But if He opposed the rabbinical doctrine of verbal inspiration as unspiritual, He found Himself in opposition for the same reason to the church authorities of His day. He was willing to allow official authority its place, on the one condition that it regarded itself as the instrument of religion, pure and undefiled. Where it was but external authority, maintaining social order on politic, or merely conservative grounds, He judged it by the standard set by all prophets, that of the truth of God seen within.

The example of our Lord should be a lantern to our feet to-day. To us, as to Him, Church and Bible are the precious records of God's dealings with our fathers. They have been to us all the voice of God in ways that none of us can wholly discern. They have stimulated, instructed, comforted, warned. Without them we should not be what we are. But they form but one focus of the ellipse. The inner light is the other. Without both the perfect Christian cannot be. The prophetic Church and the prophetic Bible must be interpreted by the prophetic spirit. The Church—so far as it is a Church, and not a civil polity—owed its origin and growth to the spirit of prophecy. The Bible, as a book of religion, and not of history or archæology, came from the pen of prophets. All that is precious and permanent in both is of prophetic power.

This being the case, we have to remember that it is unlawful to allow theories about Church and Bible to quench the prophetic spirit. For freedom is the very life-blood of the prophet. Never was there a time, perhaps, when liberty of prophesying for clergy and laity alike, was more needed than to-day. Never was there a time, some will say, nor a country, nor a church where this liberty was more used than in ours. That may be so, but confusion caused by the very exuberance of our life is better than stagnation. Stamp out if you will all activity which springs from conceit, self-seeking, from mere conservatism or party-spirit, but beware how you hinder in the least degree the working of the spirit of prophecy. After all, the spirit of the individual prophet is subject to the

spirit of prophecy in general. His aberrations will be corrected, and His truth recognized, by all who are prophets indeed. And besides all this, behind all prophesying is the Spirit of Truth, who will know how to safeguard His own, if only we are patient enough. Men have tried from the days of the Deuteronomist to those of *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* to formulate rules by which the true prophet shall be discriminated from the false. But from the nature of the case such rules must be useless. There is but one rule, and that given by the Master Himself. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Our God is, above all things, holy love, and he is a false prophet whose teaching tends to obscure that love. But we must often be content to give the seed time to mature into fruit before we pass judgment. And in any case we must remember that as religious history is the product of the work of prophets in the past, so each of us, humble though we may be, is adding something to that history still, that is, if the Spirit of Jesus dwell in us. By the same spirit of prophecy we shall determine our attitude towards the existing system of things in Church and State, politics, art, or science. We shall not be revolutionaries any more than the Lord Himself was. We shall treat it in every case as a valuable heirloom from the past, but as an unfinished *torso*, to which we have to contribute some perfecting touches. If, however, it claims papal authority over the prophetic spirit which is ours, we shall oppose it with all our spiritual force, for the same reasons which made the Lord pronounce His 'Woe' upon the Scribes and Pharisees.

But the second function of the prophet is that he should tell out what he has seen of God within, and this power is, as a rule, proportioned to the clearness of his vision. The prophet's

prayer is 'Speak, that I may see Thee,' and, when God has spoken, He too speaks out in his turn and says, 'Come hither and hearken all ye fearers of God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.' No one who is endowed with any portion of the prophetic spirit can keep it to himself. He is driven by the power within to communicate it to his fellows. This was the secret of the activity of a Savonarola, a Francis, a Bernard, a Wesley, and a Luther. Each spoke because he must. If we do not speak in our place, high or low, it is because we have not been careful to cherish the gift of the prophetic spirit.

Lastly, Jesus saw clearly that a Kingship based on prophetic powers must be rejected by the mass of men, and that the rejection must be accompanied by suffering. Hence, for a militant and triumphant Messiah He substituted One who should reign from the tree of suffering. He accepted this as the law of His life. It was the will of His Father, and He could say under the shadow of His Cross, 'Thy will be done.' But the servant must be as His Master. Each in his turn must be touched with the coal from off the prophetic fire. Each must go forth and declare the truth given him. Each must expect and welcome opposition. Each must be the object of such persecution as the age he lives in allows; the cross under a Tiberius; the headsman under a Nero; the heretic's pyre under an Alexander III., or a Philip of Spain, or a Calvin; ostracism, deposition, the sneer, the faint praise, the neglect and scorn of a softer age. The prophet will not complain, for he will recollect that so persecuted they before him the greatest of all the Prophets. And if called upon to fill up what remains behind of the sufferings of his Lord, he will remember that the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy.

Requests and Replies.

For the benefit of one who has neither the means to procure, nor the time to study, such standard works as Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, can you recommend any book that will give a short and reliable account of the present position of critical opinion regarding the Pentateuch?—W.

BEYOND all doubt, the book for the above purpose is *The Pentateuch in the Light of To-day*, by A.

Holborn (T. & T. Clark, 1902; price 2s. net). So high an authority as the *Revue Biblique* recently (July 1903) spoke very favourably of the way in which Mr. Holborn's work accomplishes its aim, and noted with admiration the success with which the proportion between details and results is maintained. The treatment of the subject is at once thoroughly scholarly and perfectly popular, while