

had been recovered in Ethiopic, and when only a few Greek fragments had been brought to light, Daniel Heinsius¹ saw the importance of those fragments for the interpretation of 1 Peter iii. 19; and this suggestion was taken up by a number of later scholars; and it only needed a closer knowledge of the Book of Enoch, and a proof that 1 Peter depends upon it, to make it reasonably certain that the "spirits in prison" can be nothing else but the fallen angels of Genesis. And that Enoch is their preacher (*κῆρυξ*), in the judgment of the early Church, may be gathered from the following passage of Irenaeus:

Iren. iv. 27, 2: "Sed et Enoch, sine circumcissione placens Deo cum esset homo, *Dei legatione ad angelos fungebatur.*"

J. RENDEL HARRIS.

DIALOGUES ON THE CHRISTIAN PROPHETS.

V.

Who are the Prophets now?—No Fear of Reconstruction—Bishop Butler on new Discoveries in Holy Scripture—Function of the Prophets—Their Subject-matter—Fulfilments—Endurance.

Mason. Don't you think, Riddell, it would be better if you were to state plainly, before we proceed further, the position which you take with regard to the Christian Prophets?

Riddell. By all means, Mason. I have been trying to do so for some time past, and evidently I shall have to continue my poor endeavours for some time longer. For instance, a dear friend of mine, with all the agility of a female intellect, has pressed me to tell her who are the Christian Prophets now.

M. And what was your answer?

R. There are none. What else could I say?

M. The lady meant, of course, "Who are their direct successors?"

¹ See Heinsius: *Exerc. Sac.* (A.D. 1639).

R. My answer would have to be the same. There are none.

M. You are engaged, then, in dealing with an extinct body of Christians?

R. Yes. We should gain little by asserting that the direct successors of the Christian Prophets were Christians who are not prophets. "There is no prophet more," as the Psalmist said, but there are, on the other hand, some nowadays who "understand" (Ps. lxxiv. 9: see Prayer-Book version). The gift of prophecy has been withdrawn. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail," was St. Paul the Prophet's own prophecy; and it has proved to be true in the course of history. They have "failed," and the class of prophets is extinct. If I were to tell you that the Friends' Meetings, as observed by many of our grandfathers' generation, and even to-day, bore a strong outward resemblance to the meetings of the Christian Prophets as described by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians xiv., I cannot think that this resemblance, great as I consider it to be, would justify me in saying that the Friends are the direct successors of the Christian Prophets any more than some other Christian bodies. I prefer to say that there are no successors. The Friends do not practise *fasting* before ecstasy, nor is *ecstasy*, nor, I believe, is *revelation* a part of their system as such, nor do they continue *tongue-speaking*, which is such a marked feature of the Holy Apostolic Church known as Irvingite. The line of Prophets is extinct.

M. You remind me that at home I happen to possess a metatarsal bone of *Didus ineptus*, commonly called the Dodo. I could forgive any zoologist who set to work to reconstruct the skeleton of that extinct bird, though there are some good specimens at Cambridge, and I forgive you, Riddell, for trying to reconstruct the picture of the Christian Prophets.

R. Thank you, Mason, for your indulgence. You might

even be pleased to think the object was attainable, and if I were the zoologist, perhaps you would be so kind as to lend me the metatarsal for a while. You would not be afraid?

M. No, indeed! No more afraid of your zoology than of your honesty in returning my bone at last.

R. Good! You would not fear the result of the inquiry to which you had contributed the loan of a dodo's metatarsal. Neither will you fear what may result from an inquiry in theology to which you will have contributed your kind attention.

M. The dodo is extinct, but in theology, remember, there are volcanic fires which are not extinct.

Incedis per ignes
Suppositos cineri doloso.

R. Yes, but we are all alike. This volcano, the earth, is ever cooling, and we are all walking on the treacherous crust which covers the fires beneath. If the Christian Prophets are extinct, then we are all the safer in treading the path of their quest. And possibly, too, we may discover the roots of a gentle *eirenicon*, that humble herb which may be found growing amidst the lava, and the leaves of which are said to soothe the effects of a scorching animosity.

This, then, is the position. The prophets were a class of men who existed in our Lord's time and for some few generations after His birth. Let us enumerate some of them. Simeon and Anna, of Jerusalem; JESUS, the Prophet, of Nazareth; James and Peter; Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves (Acts xv. 32); Barnabas and Paul; John the Elder (2 John i., 3 John 1); Luke-Silas. Next, without at present trying to ascertain the antecedent links, which are many, in the chain of prophecy, nor those which follow, so far as they continue, let us see what these men did. Before prophesying, they individually passed into a state of ecstasy, and their physical preparation

for this state was fasting or hunger, and their spiritual preparation was prayer.

M. But I am one of those who commonly understand that prophesying was what we should nowadays call preaching. The "Liberty of Prophesying," about which Jeremy Taylor wrote, was the liberty of preaching the Gospel and expounding Scripture.

R. Yes. No more utter blindfolding of the eyes to the facts of history was ever done than to assert that prophesying was preaching. Jeremy Taylor assumes this rather than asserts it. It was a natural assumption 250 years ago. But the assertion cannot be made now without a wilful and deliberate ignorance of the plain statements of the New Testament. We have found out more things than were in Taylor's philosophy. He is a learned and beautiful writer to whom we owe a debt of undying gratitude for several of his works. But let me remind you of the dignified and weighty words of Bishop Butler, a far greater philosopher than Jeremy Taylor, in which he argues that fresh discoveries may be made in the interpretation of the Bible, just as they are made in the field of natural science. Here it is. I underlined it long ago. He says (*Analogy*, part II., chapter iii.): "The more distinct and particular knowledge . . . of the prophetic parts of revelation, like many parts of natural and even civil knowledge, may require very exact thought, and careful consideration. The hindrances too, of natural, and of supernatural light and knowledge, have been of the same kind. And, as it is owned, the whole scheme of Scripture is not yet understood; so, if it ever comes to be understood, before the *restitution of all things*, and without miraculous interpositions, it must be in the same way as natural knowledge is come at: by the continuance and progress of learning and liberty; and by particular persons attending to, comparing and pursuing, intimations scattered up and down it, which are

overlooked and disregarded by the generality of the world. For this is the way in which all improvements are made ; by thoughtful men's tracing on obscure hints, as it were, dropped us by nature accidentally, or which seem to come into our minds by chance. Nor is it at all incredible that a book, which has been so long in the possession of mankind should contain many truths as yet undiscovered. For, all the same phenomena, and the same faculties of investigation, from which such great discoveries in natural knowledge have been made in the present and last age, were equally in the possession of mankind several thousand years before. And possibly it might be intended, that events, as they come to pass, should open and ascertain the meaning of several parts of Scripture."

I am sure you will not fail to be impressed with this superb passage, instinct as it is with the fiery energy of faith, of trust, in the possibility—nay, the certainty—of results, a faith which must actuate, and does actuate, every true investigator. You have no idea, perhaps, of the unfaith or atheism of those who block the way of investigation and who pooh-pooh the idea of new and fruitful results. Yes, you may obtain some idea, when you think, in another region of work, for instance, of Milton parting with *Paradise Lost* for a ten-pound note, of Keats done to death by the *Quarterly*, of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* on its first appearance saluted with charges of bestial insinuation by the reviewers. I do not expect the Christian Prophets to be recognized just yet, after being so long " overlooked and disregarded by the generality of the world. For this is the way in which all improvements are made." There must always be a *Reviler*, just as there were " mockers with mockery " (2 Pet. iii. 3) in the times of the Christian Prophets, and there is very little doubt that their mockery reached a climax on a Saturday, considering the then importance of that day of the week. Could anything be plainer than St.

Paul's distinction between an evangelist and a Prophet? A Prophet could often preach, no doubt, but then, when he preached, he was a proclaimer, a herald, an evangelist; and when he prophesied he was a Prophet.

M. What then was the subject-matter of a Prophet?

R. The Christian Prophet was occupied with the Christ, the Messiah. His business was to find fulfilments of prophecy. He took a text or texts of Old Testament Scripture, the New Testament being not yet written, and placing the texts alongside of events he found (or failed to find) a fulfilment.

M. What do you mean by saying "or failed to find" it.

R. The Prophets met together (1 Cor. xiv. 29), and each after his ecstasy declared what had been revealed to him. The Revelation was submitted to the criticism of the other Prophets, and if these, in the exercise of their critical faculty (*διακρινέτωσαν*), rejected the results of the Revelation, then it is not incorrect to say that the Prophet had failed to find a fulfilment on that occasion.

M. Was this then an instance of the Higher Criticism, so early in the Church?

R. You may call it Higher Criticism; it was certainly criticism of a high order. And I have been pained at listening last week to a sermon in which the preacher could not refrain from side-shafts at "the self-satisfied critic." These shafts are still as common in sermons as the disused assaults upon popery. Sometimes the critics and the cardinals are together the objects of attack. When will the preachers learn that the Bible is a book of inexhaustible interest and will stand upon its own merits, in spite of all their attempts to make it dull and interesting?

M. I should hope when they became imbued with some amount of historic sense.

R. Historic, yes. We may hope so, but few preachers have even begun to treat the Bible as history. They are

afflicted with the parabolic, anagogic, allegoric sense, and they afflict us with the same in turn. However, we were saying that the Prophets were a class, indeed an Order, for you cannot maintain that "everything was to be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. xv. 40), unless the authority which enforced this order was itself an Order. The less cannot impose the greater. Hence you will not be surprised to find, if you apply another test to my conclusion, that admission to this Order was accompanied by the laying on of hands, (1 Tim. iv. 14, "The gift that was given thee by means of prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the body of elders"—who as I could show you, were Prophets, neither more nor less). And they sought and found fulfilments.

M. I should have thought that, if they were Prophets, they would be concerned with prophesying, as the Old Testament Prophets were, and not with finding fulfilments.

R. Quite so; you would, at the first blush. But you must know that by A.D. 1 the Messianic hope had become intensely powerful—a point which needs no labouring, and that the Old Testament had received a stamp of venerable antiquity and dominant value. I do not however find that other books outside our present Canon were much less valued. For instance, you cannot fail to see that St. Paul has the Book of Enoch before him in Ephesians v. 14, 15 :

Wherefore (he) saith: *Awake thou that sleepest*, and arise from the dead, and Christ *shall give thee light*.

Take heed therefore accurately how ye *walk*, not as unwise, but as wise.

And the righteous one will *arise from sleep*, will arise and *walk in the path* of righteousness (Enoch xcii. 3).

And the righteous one will *arise from sleep* and *wisdom* will arise and be given unto them (Enoch xci. 10).

He will give him eternal uprightness, and he will . . . walk in eternal *light* (Enoch xcii. 4).

And so on. You know that we have in the Book of Enoch the *ipsissima verba* of the quotation given by Jude from Enoch. Is it likely that Jude was the only Apostle who was acquainted with that book? Far from it. There are abundant references to the Apocryphal books; Ecclesiasticus was a favourite source of the Christian prophets, who, considering that the written prophecies were so many and pointed so clearly to their own times being "the last times," set themselves to find fulfilments, and to record especially the Revelations which bore upon those fulfilments. If you wish to see in what light they regarded all history, you need only look at the Book of Enoch, or the Book of Daniel (latter part), or the Apocalypse of Baruch, and you will see that while ancient history is very hastily sketched, the details become more precise and numerous as the present time is approached. The Greek term *συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος* (Matt. xiii. 39, 40, 49, xxiv. 3), exactly expresses this view, the idea of a gradual drawing *together* of the *end*. Believing as they did that the end was so near, you cannot expect that they would add to the store of prediction. This store was complete, and sufficient, and convincing. But it might be made to appeal more powerfully "to this generation" if they could convince it by proved "fulfilments" that "the end of all things was at hand." Prediction had had its day: fulfilment, proved fulfilment, was the last and crowning work of prophecy. I think you will see that your first idea that Prophets must always prophesy, in your favourite sense "to predict," has to be modified, when you come to the age under consideration, which was supposed to be, and actually proved to be, the last age of prophecy, though not the last age of the world.

M. I must own that you are quite convincing there. I have just been reading some wise words in an address by the late lamented Bishop Creighton (*Thoughts on Education*, xxii. p. 131): "I am (he says) prepared to state what

you will consider a paradox, that scientific truth is almost diametrically opposed to what would seem at first sight to be the truth." (Note "what would seem at first sight.") "For instance, common sense would tell us that the sun rises and sets, but science tells us exactly the opposite, that it is we who rise and set. I need not multiply instances; what I mean is that one of the first things that every one ought to learn is that the views which occur to him at the first blush are almost certain to be wrong." I think you have illustrated this remark, Riddell, in what you have said. I shall ask you later to give me some instances of these fulfilments.

R. You shall have them, Mason, in abundance, though many will occur to you readily, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." But you will recollect that in Peter i. 10 we read that "the Prophets—certainly the Christian Prophets—used to seek out and search out diligently what time or (failing that) what sort of time the spirit of Christ (or rather the Messiah-spirit) which was in them (as in the Prophets of old) did point unto." You recollect that when the disciples asked the Lord, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming?" they received a very extensive and explicit reply. You recollect that He Himself foretold many things, which they did not understand at the time, but afterwards they remembered that He had told them of them. Doubtless there were some "times and seasons which the Father had put in his own power" (Acts i. 7). You will further admit that as Messiah was to fulfil prophecy—an elementary fact, patent even to us now—there must have been some means of ascertaining which prophecies Jesus fulfilled, and how He fulfilled them. Or do you suppose that every Jew of that time had all the scriptures of the Old Testament so completely ready at his fingers' ends that he could see a fulfilment at once?

M. I can hardly suppose indeed so much as that. It takes a little thought, even for us to-day, with both Testaments before us, to see that such and such a passage in the New contains a fulfilment of such and such a passage in the Old.

R. Just so; and this although the two passages have, in so very many cases, been placed together for our express convenience. Now who do you suppose placed them together?

M. God must have employed the agency of men for the purpose.

R. Yes; He used the agency of the Christian Prophets, who were Jews living at the time, qualified by their knowledge of the Scriptures, canonical and extra-canonical, by their habits of prayer and spiritual life, by their lofty and noble aims, and by their simple faith, and by their self-control and devotion and humility, and by their rules of order and method, and even by their critical faculty, however different from our own, to discern the signs of the times, to discern and declare fulfilments of prophecy, to publish abroad the glad tidings of the Gospel of Grace, to organize Churches, to travel, to teach, to convert, to discuss, and in all things to endure, as knowing that "he that endureth unto the end should be saved" (Matt. x. 22), and that "in their endurance they should acquire their souls" (Luke xxi. 19).

M. You are giving us a new version there. I thought the word was "patience."

R. Yes: it is singular that the revisers could not shake themselves free from the effect of the Latin Vulgate—against whose influence they were always on the watch. It is unfortunate that they have not rejected the old word "patience" from this verse of the Revised Version. It is far inferior to "endurance"; it is less manly, less expressive altogether; and it obscures the connexion with the

other verse in Matthew. Let us have "endurance" too in the fine passage in the Epistle to Ephesus (Rev. ii. 2): "I know thy works, and thy toil, and thy *endurance*": and to Thyatira (ii. 19): and to Philadelphia (iii. 16): and in Revelation xiii. 10, and in xiv. 12, "the *endurance* of the saints"; and in a dozen more passages. "Have patience with me" is very well in Matthew xviii. 26, for the word has nothing to do with this cardinal virtue of the Prophets, a virtue which is one of their lasting bequests to us in the present day when labour-saving apparatus makes things easy for the workman and motor-cars add to the idleness of the idle, and we are too apt to forget "the mills of God that grind so slowly, though they grind exceeding small"—those powers and forces of nature in the soul and in the body, which sometimes, when God so wills it, refuse the assistance and alleviation of man, and throw us back on the exercise of the enduring will, so that we are fain to exclaim, "We are in the Lord's hand; let Him do what seemeth Him good." There the Prophets struck the bed-rock, the ultimate power of human nature, the power to endure.

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