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ARTICLE VI.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE HEBREW PROPHETS.¹

BY PROFESSOR FRANCIS B. DENIO, D.D.

RECENTLY the reading of the Thirty-fourth Psalm stirred afresh some questions, the consideration of which seems to me to be worthy of our attention. The words which aroused my questioning were such as these:—

- Ver. 9. "Oh fear Jehovah, ye his saints;
For there is no want to them that fear him."
Ver. 19. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous;
But Jehovah delivereth him out of them all."
Ver. 20. "He keepeth all his bones:
Not one of them is broken."
Ver. 21. "Evil shall slay the wicked;
And they that hate the righteous shall be condemned."

I may be in error; but I suppose that, if I had been born and set to teach seventy-five years earlier than I was, I should have been likely to have treated these verses as declarations of universal truth explicitly revealed by God and authoritatively proclaimed through the Psalmist. At that date, however, seventy-five years ago, changes had set in which were to modify such opinions as I might have had.

In 1850 Professor Park preached his famous sermon on "The Theology of the Intellect and of the Feelings." The author of that sermon expounded a great truth in that discourse, and used it for his own immediate purposes. It was

¹An address delivered at the opening of the eighty-ninth year of Bangor Theological Seminary, September 22, 1904, in commemoration of the completion of twenty-five years of service by the speaker in that institution.

left for another generation to consider the bearings of the truth in other and more general relations. In his discussion of the fifth verse of the Fifty-first Psalm,

"Behold I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin did my mother conceive me,"

Professor Park treated it as the expression of the heart of a man—sinful, deeply penitent—uttering its penitence and self-condemnation for sin in the form of speech natural to him. He laid aside the idea that the verse was an actual declaration of literal fact from God. We need not hesitate to adopt the position of Professor Park on this point.

The feelings which are fundamental in this utterance were due to the influence of God's redemptive Spirit, and the life which was the cause of this utterance had come under the molding influence of that Spirit. It is not unjust, therefore, to say that, in a very real sense, the Holy Spirit was an author in the production of these words. At the same time the Psalmist was proximately and intentionally their author. His experience had given him a mighty conviction of the deceitful weakness in his nature, and its persistent bent toward evil in unguarded moments. This conviction he uttered in a form natural to him as a member of his race and generation. His individual personality is evident in his utterance.

We are to think in a similar manner of the Thirty-fourth Psalm. The author had experienced some deliverances from peril or trouble, and expressed his sense of the divine care in forms natural to himself. They can scarcely be regarded as universal truths, for many of God's servants have not found them realized in their lives.

In the light of these facts, what value can we say that this psalm has for us? As Christians we accept and hold the Old Testament, especially prizing the most Christlike parts of the

Old Testament, because Jesus drew his own spiritual nourishment from it; because he gave his personal authentication to the religious life formed upon it; and because, after all, the religious life of the Old Testament is really an earlier stage of Christian development. We still use such words as those of the Thirty-fourth Psalm, with their childlike optimism, because we have the better words of Christ, such as Matt. vi. 33: "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Especially also do we rest in their further unfolding, as in Rom. viii. 28: "And we know that to them that love God, all things work together for good."

We learn to consider the Psalms as expressions of the religious life under the Old Covenant, a life advancing toward the New Covenant, a life in its immaturity, yet, under the educating influences of God's immanent and redemptive Spirit, molding the religious life. In such an educative process some psalms must be of greater value than others. The Psalms, and indeed the entire Old Testament, have great importance from this point of view. This importance has recently been phrased thus:—

"Without the New Testament the Old Testament would be a magnificent failure; without the Old Testament the New Testament would be an inexplicable phenomenon. The New Testament presumes and explains the Old Testament. The Old Testament lays the foundation and provides the presuppositions for the New Testament. The New Testament does not supersede, but illuminates the Old Testament. The Christian church 'is built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.'"¹

Thus we may rightly say that the Old Testament has permanent value, and within certain limits its teachings are as important as ever they were. Once the Hebrew prophets were

¹ Kirkpatrick, *Critical Questions*, p. 8 f.

without the New Testament authentication. Nevertheless, their utterances were as true when first delivered as they have been at any time since.

I propose, for my theme, *The Origin of the Authority of the Prophets to Speak for God.*

In considering the origin of the authority of the prophets to speak for God, it is necessary to consider, in the first place, what it was that the prophets uttered on God's behalf. The characteristic messages of the prophets concerned the character of God, his will respecting the conduct of Israel, and his purpose respecting the destiny of that race, and indeed of mankind.

They set forth the character of God in such truth and with such fullness that Jesus Christ had little to add concerning the disposition and character of God. Jesus Christ was a divine persuasion adapted to win men to the belief that the character of Jehovah delineated by the prophets was a true one. He it was in whom the fullness of the Godhead was to dwell bodily. He illustrated the Old Testament teaching respecting God, rather than added new elements to it. He was the wisdom and power of God. In him the thoughts about God long before uttered, took visible form. The Old Testament prophets taught about the holiness of God, about his love for righteousness, about the stern punishments in store for the incorrigibly rebellious against his righteous requirements. These things Jesus reiterated. On the other hand, the choicest things that Jesus uttered respecting the divine grace are little more than a repetition of utterances of Hebrew prophet and psalmist; such as,—

“For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is his loving kindness toward them that fear him,
As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Like as a father pitieth his children,
So Jehovah pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. ciii. 11-13).

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins" (Isa. xliii. 25).

"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I cast thee off, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not come in wrath" (Hos. xi. 8, 9).

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth over the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in loving kindness. . . . He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic. vii. 18, 19).

These are among the choicest utterances. There is a still greater number equally precious and rich in the expression of the divine love, of God's yearning for man's response in love and obedience, and of God's redeeming grace. Were we to recite them all, we should find that nearly all our conceptions of God are due to the Old Testament. He is a person who held friendly relations with the prophets. He was supreme in human history. He was holy alike in his compassion, grace, justice, and love, which he would gladly show to all who would accept his gifts.

The prophets also declared the meaning and purpose of the history of Israel. They taught that Jehovah had taken the race of Israel into a special relation and nearness to himself. He did this in order to establish a unique society. The uniqueness of this society is thus phrased: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all the peoples: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Ex. xix. 5, 6). All Jehovah's

dealings were for the purpose of bringing Israel to the attainment of this ideal. This, in brief, is the prophetic interpretation of Israel's history.

It was the will of Jehovah that such a society should come into existence. Therefore he laid his commands upon Israel that they should live righteously and seek each other's welfare. Furthermore, it was the purpose of Jehovah that, sooner or later, a perfect society should be established. The time was yet to come in human history when all that was harmful in human environment, all that was evil in human life, should pass away; when men should everywhere conform to the divine will, so that human life should have become wholly righteous. So firmly did Jehovah purpose this, that he was controlling the history of the entire race of man with this end in view. Under his control everything in human history, wars, even the mightiest convulsions among the nations, were but agencies in his hand for purifying the human race from evil, and for hastening the coming of perfect society among men.

Thus briefly have I sketched the central theme of the prophetic teaching, namely, the character, mind, and purpose of God.

One fact about the prophets' knowledge of their great theme is of special significance. This is the fact that the prophets were certain that they knew these things about God, and that they had authority to speak for God to man.

It is a scientific principle that the proper method of gaining knowledge is to take facts and study them until their entire significance is mastered. It will take many hours, days, and even longer periods of time, to gain the entire significance of this fact which I propose to discuss. Nevertheless, let us patiently consider as fully as time permits the more significant features of this fact of the certainty in the mind of the Hebrew

prophets. This fact, I have become convinced, is a most significant point in regard to the origin of the authority of the prophets of Israel. Accordingly I make it central in the discussion. This certainty of the prophets in regard to the truths which they declared on God's behalf was absolute; it was certainty for which they risked everything. Their teachings about God were marvelous and unparalleled among men. To my mind the certainty of their knowledge was much more marvelous. The rise and history of the Christian church have justified to us the sense of certainty with which the prophets spoke. The prophets did not need to wait until the centuries should verify their utterances, for they already had a certainty equal to ours. The question is, What produced this certainty?

There is no reason to believe that, outside their message respecting the character, will, and purpose of God, they were beyond the limitations of their age. In respect of their knowledge of God they were at a point in advance of the majority of the Christian church even to-day. They knew great truths, and they knew that they knew these truths. There is an Arabic proverb:—

"Men are four:

He who knows not, and knows not he knows not. He is a fool, shun him.

He who knows not, and knows he knows not. He is simple, teach him.

He who knows, and knows not he knows. He is asleep, waken him.

He who knows, and knows he knows. He is wise, follow him."

The Hebrew prophets were wise. They knew God, and they knew that they knew him. This note of certainty is essential to the reality of knowledge. We know a truth or a fact when we are so certain of it that we are able to say, "If this be not true, then nothing is true." Indeed, until we can say this, our knowledge is not fully knowledge; it is opinion, conjecture.

It is easy at this point to recall the fact that men have often been ready to use the language of certainty when they were not qualified to use it. Doubtless ten-thousand-fold more things have been declared to be certainly true than the facts have warranted. This merely shows that it is not uncommon for men to assume that they have attained knowledge before they have attained it. They have shown themselves to be somewhere in the first two classes of the Arabic proverb. They were neither wise nor asleep.

Certainty is the assurance of mind that our ideas correspond to the reality. The degree of assurance, or the absoluteness of certainty, is evidenced by the tenacity with which we hold our ideas, and our persistence in making them the basis of our conduct. The Hebrew prophets showed the fullest sense of certainty by enduring the shock and attrition of the unbelief of their people, and by uttering their message with such authority, as well as persistence, that the unbelief of their nation was changed to faith.

We know that, as the result of all our past experience, we have a conviction that there is a world external to us. We are constantly gaining new ideas concerning the realities of this world. This is the first stage of knowledge,—the idea. The second stage of gaining knowledge is that of testing our idea by comparison with the reality. If we have sufficient opportunity for comparison, and are thorough in our comparison, then we know that our idea corresponds with the reality; or, that it does not, and needs correction. If we see that it needs correction, we modify our idea. When abundant comparison and necessary modifications have brought our idea into full correspondence with the reality, we arrive at a third stage of knowledge,—that of certainty.

Real knowledge then has three stages: first, that of the for-

mation of an idea; second, that of verifying or modifying the idea; and this second stage may prepare for a third stage,—that of assured knowledge, or certainty. In the second stage, that of comparison, it might be found that it was impossible to compare the idea with reality in a degree sufficient to secure certainty. In that case, knowledge is not complete. The perfection of knowledge, therefore, depends upon the completeness of the comparison in the second stage. It might be that there is no reality to correspond to the idea. The idea would in this case be a hallucination. History has made it abundantly certain that the Hebrew prophets were not subject to hallucinations respecting the mind, purpose, and character of God.

It will be useful to illustrate this second stage in various ways. We know that all our knowledge of this world starts from sensations. At the time I am composing this paragraph I stop writing and listen to the sounds which come to me. First, there is a steady rushing sound. I have hitherto associated such sounds with the action of wind on the foliage of trees. I look up, and the sight of swaying branches confirms my thought that the wind is causing the noise. I listen further. Not a few sounds come which illustrate my point. Among them is a series of sounds which for a second causes an illusion. If I had just awakened from a Rip Van Winkle sleep of twenty years, and heard those sounds, I should have reasoned thus: Those sensations of sound out of all possible millions of sounds come in a series, such a series as I have always found associated with a trotting horse. That series of sensations is usually accompanied with another kind of sensation which I have associated with a wheeled vehicle. The latter sensation is now lacking. Horses going at an even gait in our streets are either drawing vehicles or are ridden under

the saddle. This horse is not drawing a vehicle; therefore he is under the saddle. Twenty years ago this interpretation of the sounds just heard would have been correct. Now it is not necessarily correct. I look and see that the horse is attached to a vehicle that was not known twenty years ago. I had a momentary illusion.

The tendency to illusion is a common pitfall on the pathway to certainty. The essential condition of the avoidance of illusion, and likewise of the attainment of certainty, has been well phrased as "a full and abundant contact of the mind with reality." This is a guard against illusions. Where every sense has been brought into action in connection with external objects, where many repetitions of this contact with the external objects have thoroughly familiarized the mind with the object in question through a long experience, the possibility of illusion is practically banished, and the mind naturally comes to the conviction that its idea corresponds to the reality. Thus a hundred years of full and abundant contact with the properties of steam have taught us its powers, its utility as a servant, the great perils which attend its use, and the conditions under which it may be successfully employed. Illusions have been corrected. Many disasters have taught the risk of trifling, or of going beyond the clearly ascertained strength of the material employed in utilizing the power of steam. The essential importance of certainty has been taught by the hardest of lessons, and certainty respecting the general conditions of utilizing the properties of steam has become very general. Thus are the conditions of life, the necessities of human safety, constantly compelling men to know with certainty that their ideas of the powers of nature which they use, and the means of controlling those powers, correspond to the facts. Certainty in all these cases is the result of the conviction that the percipient mind

has acted correctly in all its processes, and reports correctly in its resulting affirmations. This may be taken as a correct statement of the nature of certainty in general.

The statements thus far made, and their illustrations, seem very simple. The second stage in the attainment of knowledge, that of comparison, is a process in which the individual does not labor alone. Take the illustrations of the power of steam. The knowledge and mastery now attained of the modes in which this power must be utilized, if utilized at all, are not the result of any one individual's efforts. Many persons have contributed to the result. We are heirs to the life, experience, and knowledge of many other persons. We understand their life, experience, and knowledge by our own, and we understand our own experience better by what we can learn of the experience of others. We believe that they stand in the same relation to the physical world in which we stand, that their experience and ours must correspond with each other where the conditions are the same. Their experience confirms us in the belief that we understand our own, and their experience often enables us to understand things in our experience which would otherwise be unintelligible to us. Our own certainties link in with the certainties of others, and, so to say, unite to form a collective mass of certainty for ourselves and for those who shall succeed us. In all cases any individual participates in this certainty to the fullest degree only so far as he enters into the individual verification of it. So far as he does this, his own certainty gains the confirmation of the mass of experience and knowledge of the many before him.

This suggests the subject of certainty in knowledge derived from the scientific investigation of other persons. I may quote from a writer on this point:—

"If we suppose, for example, a society of investigators in any

scientific domain, who recognize each other as equals in respect of ability requisite for this task, as alike educated, as having the same end in view, the individual will have no scruple about appropriating the certainty of the others, even when in a given case he is not in a position personally to reproduce the certainty by the like act of experience and verification. On the other hand hesitation and doubt will make their appearance in the same measure in which these preliminary conditions are wanting, and in default of them the individual subject is not able to identify himself with the other subjects."¹

This illustrates the fact that often, in forming ideas, we are compelled to form them on the basis of testimony, instead of direct experience; we need to exercise faith, and then put these new ideas to the test. This method involves dependence upon others in a measure. We have to trust their faculties instead of our own. We have the responsibility for ascertaining how far this trust is justified. We must make some ventures, some submissions, run some risks, in order to secure the verifications. This is true when we form our ideas from our own experience. In this method the use of hypothesis and verification are common alike to our daily life, to scientific research, and to the religious life.

These facts suggest further certainty respecting things which are beyond the possibility of individual verification. It is the certainty derived from personal testimony. Its ground is given in the quotation just made respecting scientific observers "who recognize each other as equals in respect of the ability requisite for this task, as alike educated, as having the same end in view, [when] the individual will have no scruple about appropriating the certainty of others, even when in a given case he is not in a position personally to reproduce the certainty by a like act of experience and verification." It is noticeable that where one is recognized as preëminently superior in the scientific domain, his certainty is eagerly sought

¹ Frank, *System of Christian Certainty*, p. 86.

and readily accepted. On the same principle, whenever that "abundant contact with reality" which is the condition of certainty of knowledge is permitted to men in respect to the knowledge of the will of God, much more is this a certainty for them than any declarations of the results of scientific investigation, for God is an unquestionable authority. The results have shown that the Hebrew prophets did have a knowledge of the will of God, and also of his purpose regarding human destiny. In what manner did they have that "full and abundant contact with reality" which enabled them to escape illusion respecting God's personal character, his will and purpose?

For a further illustration of the growth of certainty, let us examine the process of the attainment of our knowledge of God.

As the physical senses have their offices in relation to the physical world and our experience in contact with physical objects, so conscience has a like function as regards our life in relation to God. A babe is surrounded at the beginning of its life with a vague somewhat, wholly unknown. Contact with this unknown somewhat stirs within him the earlier stages of consciousness into memory, so that individual objects emerge from the undefined vagueness. Later he learns to attribute these oft-repeated sensations to the same causes or similar ones. Classes of objects come to be separated out of the entire mass of objects. Still later, individuals are separated from the classes of which they are a part. Willing or unwilling, the child comes to attend carefully to the messages which the physical world sends by means of sensations, or else it suffers pain, hunger, and even destitution.

In after years, in an analogous manner, in our moral life we become aware of a vague somewhat, which by its mystery

awakens wonder, awe, and sometimes apprehension. It is our conscience through which these feelings are aroused. These feelings, this sense in conscience, do not deal with a physical world. In the presence of this unknown of which conscience makes us aware, we begin to realize the moral quality of our actions and of our attitude toward our fellow-men. We are awakened to the existence of a whole universe of spiritual relations which give character to our life in this physical world. In this spiritual development we are not under the law of sharp and immediate correction by the most primal laws of existence, as in our physical relations. In their early stage of development, our spiritual relations do not press themselves most insistently upon our attention. It is not *being*, but *well-being*, that demands attention through conscience. *Well-being* comes to consciousness slowly; while *being* delays not to press itself upon our attention from the earliest moment, and to press most insistently.

Just as the ear is capable of training into accuracy of perception and freedom from error, so may the conscience be trained to the perception of the right and the good in conduct and character. As we interpret the sensations of light and sound, so in conscience may we learn to interpret our sensations (so to say for lack of a better term) of God. We may disregard conscience; so may a person go through life disregarding his power of hearing. He will be unable to distinguish one bird's note from another; he will heed but little of the speech of his fellow-men. Music is an unknown world to him. He exists, but harmony and melody mean nothing to him. Disregard of conscience means a similar underdevelopment on the Godward side of his life. Let a person who has musical capacity equal in sensitiveness to the sensitiveness of the ordinarily developed conscience, listen habitually for me-

ludious and harmonious sounds in order to cultivate musical perception; and still better, let him practice music. He gradually passes into a new world—a world of sensuous delight and of spiritual inspiration. In analogous manner, let a person give his conscience full development in his life; let him open his heart to the purest and the highest; let him permit his conscience to increase in the delicacy of its perceptions by constantly heeding its dictates, by crushing out self-seeking, by suppressing all that is base in life or thought, and he enters a world of spiritual vision previously unknown. He learns the blessing of the pure in heart, who see God.

As in music, so in conscience, we need wise leadership, in order to develop normally. The musician's ear and power of execution alike need training. Equally true is it that conscience needs training. It is only under the best influences from others that we learn to attend to our consciences as carefully as to our physical senses. Thus, while obedience to conscience is obligatory, it is absolutely necessary to cultivate accuracy of conscience by training it into conformity to those fixed principles which are the same for all the ages. The normally trained conscience rings true only to the will of God. In the maturity of its normal development, conscience brings to us the personal voice of God, even as our ears bring to us the personal voices of men.

In all development such as this, we ourselves need to watch and study our experiences, and in the earlier stages we need very much instruction in the right interpretation of these experiences; just as, in infancy, the babe has need of much and varied help in its self-adjustment to this physical world. Constant attention to our spiritual experiences, diligent comparison with the interpretation of these experiences given in the Bible, and by the whole fellowship of those who have best

learned to know God, lead us nearer to certainty regarding our relations with God.

The preëminent standard of comparison of our experiences is to be found in the Bible. This is our chief instructor, and, interpreted by the Holy Spirit, it is adequate to be the sole instructor. Under its tuition, and by reason of the reaching out after the approval of our own consciences, we may find a resulting peace of mind, which later we know as the peace of God, who is the God of peace, a peace which means his personal approval. Conscience may be atrophied by neglect; it may be deadened by opposition to its requirements and by their violation. Conscience may be inactive, and seem peaceful. This is not the peace of God, for his peace comes only when the conscience is active and sensitive. The more alive and sensitive it is, the more exquisite is its peace; and, in this condition, conscience may become as keenly alive to the presence of God in the spiritual life as is a musician to the richer harmonies in the world of sound.

In such development as this, we attain certainty of the presence of God, and of his personal fellowship in our lives. The actual course of the experience in which our conscience develops this power of spiritual perception is not infrequently as follows:—

At some crisis of our lives we go to God in distress, in agony of spirit; perhaps sullenly defying his will, but going to him because we have none other to whom to go. We have a great trial to face which we cannot avoid. Suddenly a flood of peace enfolds our soul, making us calm and resolute to do the right. If we confide our experience to the wise, we are told that we have met God in our inner life. At first we believe it, perhaps, because others say it. Repeated experiences bring us to believe it because of the correspondence of our

experience with the word of God. We find that experiences such as ours have come to many of our fellow-men. As their experience enables us to interpret our own, we begin to feel that our experience has a universality of character which entitles it to our full confidence. We begin to have a sense of certainty about these spiritual experiences which is not dependent upon the testimony of others, and we acquire the power of discriminating these experiences from other experiences with which they might be confounded. We have reached certainty.

Gradually similar experiences can be recognized in the common events of life as well as in the more important crises. We come to recognize the presence of God, to feel the intimations of his mind, in the ordinary duties of life as he brings them to our conscience. In short, there come to be large tracts in our lives where we can say that we *know* the presence of what our Bibles and our religious teachers lead us to call God. As we continue this life for ourselves, and we grow in reverence and sensitiveness by a life of prayer, heeding the gentlest monitions of conscience, we come into a sense of personal relationship with God; for we receive wisdom, strength, courage, and peace which are more than are supplied by our native resources, and which are yet at our command when we seek them by prayer to God. The possibilities of hallucination pass by. Our illusions are corrected. As the years go on, we have "full and abundant contact with reality," that is, with God, and develop more and more the sense of personal relationship with God,—in short, we know of a certainty that we live in fellowship with God.

Those among us who arrive at this certainty most fully are no more than the peers of the Hebrew prophets in their certainty that they knew God, and could speak his mind.

Before we may attempt to answer the question how the Hebrew prophets came to have such certainty in their knowledge of God, we need to consider the other phase of their certainty already mentioned. They were certain they had received authority from God to speak for him. As I have just said, the prophets spoke from a knowledge of God as certain as our best knowledge, and as real as is ever attained among us. As I have said, I regard the certainty as more marvelous than the fact of the knowledge, but I regard as yet more marvelous their certainty that they spoke with authority from God himself.

Men among us sometimes utter a word thus with authority. They are men whose lives have been given up to the knowledge of God and of his mind, from whose hearts self-seeking has been banished, and in whom the mind of Christ is regnant. Even so, they rarely produce a religious classic that can abide the ages. There is a real and full succession of the psalmists, but where is the author of a companion to the prophetic classics? Perhaps Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is as notable a religious classic as we have from later writers. Its power is in the life that is pictured, not in the religious teachings found in it. At the best the note of personal authority is rarely present in the utterances of the servants of Christ. They have mighty convictions of truth oftener than they have a sense of authority.

On the other hand, the Hebrew prophets not only knew God's character and mind, but they also knew that they were sent to utter his mind for him. They declared his will concerning human conduct, they proclaimed the purpose which Jehovah was carrying out in the history of the human race. They claimed that they did this by the authoritative command of Jehovah. The history of Israel and of the church of Christ

has proved that the prophets were right in claiming to speak with authority from God. How came they to their certainty of authority?

Authority; what is it? It is something which looks back to a person and an author. God constituted man so that his highest good is in fellowship with God; and in him, the personal Author of man's being, is the origin of knowledge of human duties which can be proclaimed with authority. God is also the author of the destiny of the human race,—that destiny which perfectly develops the best and highest capacities of human nature,—and he alone knows the method by which the consummation is to be attained. Therefore he alone is the source of authoritative utterance respecting human destiny.

We sometimes use the expressions "the authority of duty," "the authority of truth." Taken strictly, these are improper or figurative expressions. I recognize duties in life; are these impersonal obligations? Are they to be performed somehow into an impersonal moral universe? It is true that men often fail to recognize the personal bearing of every duty; and the result is a cold, angular, unsympathetic, repellant bearing toward others, because the conduct is mechanical. Men can ignore facts in life, but they cannot thereby eliminate these facts from the universe. They may also ignore the meaning of facts, but these facts do not lose their significance thereby. Thus we may blindly or willfully fail to recognize the personal relation in duty, the relation to God; but that relation abides none the less, and it is this personal relation to God which gives duty its authority. Duty is that which is due, but it is never due in the abstract. It is a personal relation,—a relation immediately to one's self perhaps, to one's neighbor or community, or to the larger community or nation, or to mankind at large. But ultimately every duty is due to God.

Suppose we speak of the authority of truth. What do we mean? Is it said that truth has authority over the reason? Does this mean anything else than that all normal processes of thought necessarily conform to truth, whatever it may be; and, further, that it is our duty to see that our processes of thought are normal? To whom is it due that our processes of thought be normal? Is it not to God, the God of truth? Do we ever speak of the authority of truth, meaning that truth has authority over a person? Is truth personal or impersonal? Can a person feel any authority of an impersonal truth? Has even the gospel of Jesus Christ any authority considered merely as a truth? In my conscience I recognize the obligation which rests upon me to acknowledge the claim of the Saviour to my obedience as that claim is set forth in the gospel. The claim is a personal one; its origin is personal. It is the personal element which makes it authoritative.

The authority of Jesus Christ is not derived from any truth which he taught; it is due to his personality, to his personal qualities, to his personal acts which brought him into unique personal relations with every sinning man. You might say that it was due to the truth which he was, but you may not say it was due to the truth which he taught.

In these days we never tire of saying that the supreme revelation of God is Jesus Christ; or, phrasing it somewhat differently, Christ is the most complete revelation or manifestation God has made of himself. Because he is this complete manifestation he has his authority. By him we *know* that God is a God of holy, measureless love. By him we come into as full an understanding as we are capable of having of the fathomless mercy of God. Through him has been made known, with the highest degree of certainty possible, the redemptive purpose of God. Since all this is done by and through Jesus Christ, he has his divine authority.

It is not too much to say that nothing but this personal manifestation of God in Christ would have been sufficient to prove to mankind at large the divine attitude toward sinning men. Because men are benumbed by sin, by selfishness, they do not realize their need, and whenever they are aroused to a sense of their need they cannot believe that God can be merciful to them. This personal manifestation of God in Christ was essential for them in order to establish in the consciousness of men God's authority on its proper basis. The true basis is spiritual, not physical. The right of a parent to authority over a child is not on a physical basis, but is conditioned on spiritual fitness. The state recognizes this fact when it removes a child from the tutelage of a parent who abuses his authority. This spiritual superiority of God over the human race could be most fully manifested only by the revelation in Christ. If authority is spiritual and personal, how can it be transmitted but by a personal act?

In the New Testament writers and speakers we find that the sense of authority was due to personal relations with God, or with God in Christ. It was based on the sense of personal transmission from Christ. This note of authority, based upon personal relationship with God, and directly transmitted from him, was equally present in the Old Testament writers, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and others.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]