

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible as we know it is divided into two parts called the Old Testament and New Testament. The name Testament came into the English version from the Latin Bible where the word 'testamentum' is used to translate a Greek word which usually means 'last will and testament' but which was used in the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint (LXX) to translate the Hebrew word meaning 'Covenant'. Neither 'testamentum' or testament convey the idea of Covenant yet the main theme of the Bible is Covenant-relationship between God and Man especially the relationship which God initiated for reconciliation of sinful man to Himself.

First He entered into a covenant relationship with the Israelites whom He called out of Egypt for the special purpose of revealing thru them His purposes for mankind, and later in the person of His incarnate Son He inaugurated a New Covenant with the Church, sometimes called New Israel. The membership of this new people consisted of all who accepted Jesus as the Christ who fulfilled the prophecies made to Old Israel, and as the Saviour who by His death and resurrection had effected salvation for all mankind. Instead therefore of speaking of the Old and New Testaments we should strictly speak of the books of the Old and New Covenants.

The Bible is throughout the book of a covenant people. It is not simply God's revelation of Himself in general terms; it is a revelation which follows one clearly defined channel. Our idea of the church becomes vague unless we consider it against the whole background of Biblical revelation.

We need to see how vitally important the OT is for understanding both the mind and teaching of Jesus, and the whole manner in which the story of His life is set forth in the gospels and the influence of the Spirit after the resurrection upon His followers as described in the Acts and Epistles. It is obvious from early writings that Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, believed the OT and NT were records unique in character and subject matter because they were records of sacred history - as one commentator puts it,

“that part of the story of mankind which beginning with the ancient Hebrews finds its centre in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus and is continued in and from Him in the Church which is His body, the New Israel and in which story is revealed uniquely the existence of a divine purpose, working in and through the Chosen People towards a consummation determined before all the ages.”(Canon Phythian-Adams/'The Fulness of Israel').

If we are to understand the writers of the NT we have to realize what their attitude to the OT was. They did not confine their interest to those passages in which the revelation of God's nature most approximated to that given in the teaching of Jesus, or to those moral precepts which could most easily be taken over as part of a Christian ethic. To them the whole story of the people of Israel, their divine call, their redemption from Egypt, giving of the Law at Sinai, establishment of the worship of Jahweh in the Holy Land, building of the temple, the exile and subsequent return of the remnant to Jerusalem - are all foreshadowings of the greater and final salvation given in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, apart from which they have in themselves no true significance and are not fully comprehensible. As St Augustine wrote 'the New Testament lies hidden in the Old Testament and the Old Testament becomes manifest in the New'.

JESUS AND THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Let us now have a look at some of the evidence as to the place the OT occupied in the Life of Jesus as recorded in the three synoptic gospels. When reading the gospels it becomes obvious that it was clear to the writers and to those before them who had gradually moulded in oral tradition the form in which the material of the gospels was to take shape, that the deeds and words of Jesus were the final fulfilment of OT history and prophecy. He was to them the 'Fulness of Israel' and the realization of its hopes; and they have in varying degrees all been influenced by this primary consideration in presenting their message. But at times it may not be easy to be certain whether Jesus actually quoted this or that passage from the OT or whether it is attributed to him by the Christian scribes. The question of the influence of the OT upon His thought and teaching goes very much deeper than the mere quotation of individual passages.

When we find in synoptic gospels a quote recorded as having been spoken by Jesus which on general grounds appears to be historically impossible we could be justified in supposing, particularly if the quote is found in the LXX version differing from the Hebrew, that the incident has shaped itself either in tradition, or in the mind of the gospel writer around this particular passage. For example see Matthew 21:14-16. After cleansing the temple Matthew states a number of children cried out "Hosanna to the Son of David" and when the priests protested to Jesus He replied "have you never read out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast provided Thyself with praise"? Many scholars find it improbable that children would have been permitted to cry out in the temple courts and the fact that their words are precisely the same as those of the crowd at the entrance to Jerusalem gives reason for supposing that the setting for this word from Psalm 8 is his own insertion. Luke records a more probable incident of similar nature as taking place on the way to Jerusalem, in which some Pharisees say to Jesus "rebuke your disciples" whereupon Jesus replies "I say to you that if they remain silent, the very stones will cry out". (Luke 19:39-40). Matthew's story is then probably not historically accurate; but it contains a theological truth. While Christ remains unrecognised by the leaders of religion in Israel He obtains praise from 'little ones' who 'believe on Him' and accept Him as the Christ, Son of David. The writer has quoted from the LXX which substitutes PRAISE for strength of the Hebrew thereby providing an OT proof text for the acclamation of Jesus as the Christ by the children of Jerusalem. (Psalm 8:2).

The OT conditioned from His earliest days the development and understanding of Jesus. His "growth and understanding" came from nowhere else (apart from his experiences of the world around Him) except the sacred writings of His people and His meditation on them. In the Synagogue sabbath by sabbath He would hear the reading of the Law and the Prophets, and these would have made a deep impression on Him as He related to them and their reference to His own vocation and future ministry.

The gospels leave us in no doubt that it was after the baptism of Jesus by John that Jesus received divine assurance that He was the Unique Son of God called to be the Messiah of the Jewish expectation. He presented Himself for baptism, not because He was conscious of personal sin, but because He had already come to identify Himself with Israel the people of God. This was to be His first public act of vicarious penitence in which He not only recognises the need that Israel had for the washing away of sin before it could be accounted righteous in the sight of God, but also took that sin upon Himself. It is this truth that lies behind His words to John recorded by Matthew "It becomes us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt.3:15). At this point He receives a divine revelation similar to that to Moses the first redeemer of Israel when summoned by the voice of God to undertake his task. The message came in the words of Psalm 2, that He was "the only or unique Son in whom God was well pleased." (unique not beloved is the true translation)

The temptations that followed in the wilderness were a direct challenge to His conviction of divine Sonship and Messiah-hood. our interest in it lies in the light of which it throws upon the degree to which Jesus was saturated in the story of old Israel recorded in Exodus and Deuteronomy. Tempted to "turn stones into bread" He takes the narrative of scripture which describes the hungry Israelites fed by Manna from heaven, bland but sustaining, thereby learning an essential lesson that "man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Deut.8:3 cf. Ex.16) When tempted to take a short cut and win people by an overwhelming display of supernatural power, to "throw Himself down from the top of the temple" and then summons angels to His aid, He recalls the scene in the Wilderness at Massah (testing) where Israel tempted the Lord God by saying "is the Lord among us or not?" (Ex.17:5-7) see Deut. 6:16 "Do not test the Lord your God as you did at Massah" And finally when the devil appealed to His claim for power offered Him an easy victory at the price of using the devil's weapons of force, He remembered His forerunner Moses when he stood on Mt Nebo and the Lord showed him the Land of Promise -and He knew that for Him the conditions of conquest must be as for Moses and Joshua, obedience to the Lord His God. (Deut.34)

Israel had thru Moses learned to trust God and obey His will. So He who was greater than Moses learned that the Kingdom in which He was to rule was the Kingdom in which He was to be the supreme example of obedience.

It was in the strength of His victory over Satan in the wilderness and still in the illumination of Holy Scripture that Jesus began His public ministry. This ministry from the beginning of two parallel lines of activity.

Ist: There was the proclamation that the time of fulfilment had come, that the long expected kingdom had arrived, together with the accompanying call to repentance, a call to men to cease trying to work out their own salvation by works of the Law, and to accept humbly the grace which God was freely offering to them thru Jesus. (Matt.4:17) "Repent for the reign of God is at hand". Jesus a greater than Jonah, was calling all men to repent, as Jonah had called the men of Nineveh long ago, and by repenting, to be the recipients of divine forgiveness; and it is significant that the only sign that Jesus said He would give to the people of His generation apart from the signs inherent in His own actions, was the sign of Jonah the prophet'.

2nd: There was the display in action of the signs of the 'Blessed Age', for so long and variously described by the prophets of old, had arrived. St. Luke tells us that it was on a sabbath day in the Synagogue at Nazareth soon after His return from the wilderness that Jesus set forth what could be called His Messianic programme which God had annointed Him for. (Luke 4:16-19). The programme is described in words taken from Isaiah 61. His miracle of healing are signs that "the acceptable year of the Lord has arrived. They are the outward visible signs that the saving power of God Himself is being made available for all mankind if only they will accept it by faith. Sinners will be released from the slavery of their sins by the miracle of the gift of forgiveness. Sight will be restored not only to the physical but also to the spiritually blind. The 'poor' that is those who are humble and ready, like little children, to be receivers, will have good tidings preached to them; and this 'good news' of salvation will be available not only to the Jews but Gentiles. (non Jews)

Just as Elijah was sent to Sarepta in Sidon (IKings17) and Elisha was called to extend his healing power to Naaman a syrian (2Kings5 so the advent of Jesus the inaugerator of the Kingdom, will result in blessings for all the world "all flesh shall see the salvation of God". it was thus along the lines laid down in Isa. 61 that Jesus sought to exercise His Messianic vocation, and when John the Baptist in prison expresses his doubts as to whether Jesus really was the Christ or not and really fulfilling the role of Messiah, Jesus recalls in words similar to Isa. 61 the kind of works He is actually performing, which are evidence of His Messiahship. Matt.11:26. As the opposition to Jesus developed so did the realization of His inevitable death. The unchronological character of our gospels doesn't enable us to say exactly when this conviction became clear to Jesus. The fate that overtook John the baptist could have brought to the surface the scriptual truth that thru the history of Israel, God's messengers for the most part had perished usually at Jerusalem which had been known as the slayer of the prophets. Jesus was convinced that the murder of Himself, the Messiah, would be the final act in the long series of murders of God's righteous ones throughout the whole history of Israel, and would make the sum total of Israel's guilt complete.

So He says referring to the first and last murders recorded in the OT (Gen.4:8 and 2 Chron.24:20ff) "the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world, shall be require of this generation, from Abel unto the blood of Zachariah who perished between the altar and the sanctuary, yes I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." (Luke 11:50-51).

For the sake of time we will skip over many passages with ample references to the OT in these three gospels especially relating to Jesus, and move on to the time of His crucifixion which should be familiar to all of us.

His death was not to be just another in the long list of martyrdoms for the cause of God. It was to be a vicarious sacrifice for the sins of the world. This would have been made clear to Jesus in His studying of the suffering servant passages in Isaiah. Its true there is only one direct reference in His recorded teaching to words from this passage (Luke 22:37) and this doesn't describe the atoning work of the servant: Isa.52:13-53:12. But Jesus seems to identify the supernatural Son of Man from heaven described in the 'Book of Enoch' with the suffering servant of isaiah, and to have taken both roles upon

Himself. He taught that the Son of Man must suffer, and He Himself was that Son of Man. It is the Suffering Servant passages which lie behind the words of Mark 10:45.

“The Son of Man came not to be ministered to but to minister and give His life a ransom for many”.

Unlike all the material and animal sacrifices ordained in the OT, the sacrifice of the Suffering Servant was to be a spiritual conscious, and willing offering of life made in perfect obedience, an effective act of atonement. It was to be the fulfilment of all sacrifice; and it was as that Suffering Servant that Jesus knew He must tread the way to Calvary.

During the last week of His life on earth before the cross it would appear many passages from the OT were on His mind, and influenced both His public actions and utterances. He enters Jerusalem as a special ‘King of Peace’ riding on an ass as foretold by the prophet Zechariah (Zech.9:9) but no one, not even His disciples, understood the significance of His choice of animal. Next day He cleanses the temple under the influence of the word of Isa 56 which states clearly the function which the temple had meant to fulfil. It was to be ‘a house of prayer for ALL the nations’ but it had failed. The animal sacrifices were inadequate to make real atonement and the exclusiveness of Judaism erected a barrier between the Gentiles and the sanctuary of God, and as FW Green puts it:

“cynically turned the courts of the Gentiles into a cattle market” see Mark 11:17.

The reference to ‘den of robbers’ not only refers to false transactions taking place in the temple; but that history was repeating itself and that as in the days of Jeremiah people committing outlandish sins were coming to the temple for safety to insure against the consequences as if the ‘House called by the name of Jahweh’ were a ‘den of robbers,

The action of Jesus showed a ‘greater than the temple was here’ and raised the question as to His authority. At this point Mark records the parable of the bad tenants a parable much influenced by the language of Isa.5 where Israel is described under the imagery of a vineyard of God. (Mark 12) In this parable Jesus sets forth clearly His authority. He is the ONLY Son (the same word being used in the account of His baptism) of the Lord of the vineyard of Israel who must endure the suffering in like manner to previous messengers of God to the chosen people who by their attitude would bring down divine judgement upon themselves and so forfeit their privileges, “For the Lord will come and destroy the vinekeepers and will give their vineyard to others” A new people of God will replace the old. Jesus clearly states in this parable the necessity of His death as means by which “The Kingdom of heaven is to be opened up to all believers”. Jesus follows the parable with a quote from Ps. 118 where Israel is described as “a stone rejected which becomes the headstone of the corner”. This passage He regards as reaching true fulfilment in Himself and as prophetic of His own triumph which will follow His rejection.

This verse from Ps. 118 became one of the most quoted passages by early christians to describe temporary humiliation and subsequent rejection of Jesus the crucified and risen Messiah, but this does not mean that Jesus didn’t use it Himself with His knowledge of the scripture, it would have been a natural use of the passage with the pending rejection so great a reality to Him.

On the 'day of questions' which followed, Jesus' insight into the true significance of the OT was again revealed. Early in His ministry men marvelled that 'He spoke with authority as their scribes' by which they meant, He interpreted scripture in light of His own knowledge of the purposes of God who inspired it. His knowledge wasn't second hand derived from rabbinical authorities. This characteristic had been especially seen in His answers to the Pharisees on the question of divorce. He went behind the ordinances of Moses "delivered for the hardness of mens hearts" to the original purpose of God in the creation of gender male/female So on this day of questions He confounds the Saducees by appealing to the evidence of the Pentateuch which they accepted as scripture, and shows in Exodus 3:6 long after the death Of the Patriarchs God is revealed as 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' the deduction being these patriarch had not perished. In reply to the Pharisees "which is the greatest commandment" He quotes words from the Jewish Law but gives them true value by regarding them as a summary of the WHOLE Law, bringing together the duty of loving God from Deuteronomy and that of loving ones neighbor from Leviticus and thereby connecting in one unbreakable bond the one duty with the other. Herein lies the originality of His teaching. Next we have the quote from Ps.110 in reference to Davidic sonship of the Messiah used by others in the NT. Coming to the Last Supper in the Upper Room, Jesus, in the sacramental act interprets His death as nothing less than the ratification by the blood Of the New Covenant between God and Man. Although it was some time before christians understood the old covenant was done away (superseded) His language at the institution of the eucharist reflected the famous words about the character of the new covenant spoken by Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

This clearly implies that in light of reality now present the earlier covenant 'had grown old nigh unto vanishing away'. But as in the case of the old covenant, the new covenant is inaugurated by blood, though now it is the blood Of a conscious willing and morally perfect victim.

As Jesus proceeded with the apostles to the Mt Of Olives He expressed to them by words of the prophet Zechariah the offence which the events of the next few hours would be to them. The thought of God as divine shepherd of His people is frequent in the OT and it coloured Jesus' teaching about the relationship between Himself and His followers. He was shepherd of His 'little flock' and He now tells them that His death will bring with it temporary scattering of the sheep on whose behalf He is laying down His life.

More than once in these last days Jesus speaks of 'drinking the cup' an expression becoming very real to Him from scripture where it has a two fold meaning.

First: Ps.16 "the Lord is the portion of my inheritance, and Of my cup" to drink the cup in this sense means to display arid express in complete self oblation 'the love of God'.

Second: Isaiah speaks of the "cup of the Lord fury and in Ps.75:8 "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup and the wine is red". In His death then Jesus was not only displaying the Love of God'; in drinking the cup He was feeling the impending hatred Of sin that God MUST feel and it was this that made drinking the cup 'an experience of horror'.

As he tasted the poison of this cup in the garden, its potency nearly overcame Him in His sensitive flesh, but upon His cry to the will of God to be carried out to the letter and

lie be lifted up before all men on the cross, He is sustained by angels that He might drink the cup on the appointed day and in the appointed way.

So as He takes our place on that cross of Calvary He takes our cup to drink it and expresses our cry from the words of Psalm 22

“My God my God why have you forsaken me?”

Though the earthly life of Jesus as recorded by Mark ends with this cry upon His lips the note of ultimate triumph and vindication has sounded all thru and most of all in **the** moment of His apparent weakness when He was on trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin, His answer to the High Priest “Art thou the Christ?” is given in unmistakable affirmative and is followed by words of assurance in the composite quotation from Ps.110 and “that one day the present judges would be judged and the day when ‘the Son of Man’ would come again in His glorious majesty to judge both the quick (alive) and the dead, I am the Christ and you shall see the Son of Man seated on the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven”.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

When we read the gospel of John we find we are confronted with a narrative in which history and interpretation are blended much more than the other three gospels.

The writer has endeavoured to make explicit what we find implicit in the earlier writings. He often combines the sayings of Jesus with his own reflections in long discourses so that the reader finds it difficult to separate the two. Also the Jesus who spoke in the days of His flesh on earth, and the risen Jesus who speaks thru His Spirit to those who abide in Him are not clearly distinguished. We must therefore consider the use this gospel makes of the OT conscious that we cannot be sure whether any quote or saying attributed to Jesus was really spoken by Him or not. Westcott wrote in his commentary

*'It seems to me impossible to study the 4th gospel with out feeling the writer is penetrated throughout, more so perhaps than any other NT writer, with the spirit of the Old Testament. The interpretations which he gives and records, naturally and without explanation or enforcement witness to a method of dealing with the old scriptures which is of wide application. He brings them all into connection with Christ Without the basis of the OT, without the fullest acceptance of the unchanging divinity of the OT, the **Gospel of John is an insoluble riddle**'. (end of quote)*

The prologue of John takes the story of the life of Jesus back beyond the others, even the nativity scenes of **Matthew and Luke**, to the very beginning of things as we know them. Jesus was not a man who became God, or Son of God at His baptism as some have inferred from their emphasis on Marks gospel. Nor did His divinity date from His conception. He was from all eternity GOD. He was God's Word His agent in creation the sustainer of creation, the medium Of God's revelation to Man, and Himself divine. His "life was the light of Men" but this divine light, though it had illuminated all men to some degree, had a particular sphere in which it had especially shone; and this divine word, though He had spoken to men of all races, spoke especially to those of a particular race, the people of israel, who could then be correctly described as "His own". So when the divine Word became flesh in Jesus He was coming to "His own" and "His own" ought to have received Him for they possessed the scriptures which were all pointing to His coming and were incomplete without him. These scriptures contained the record of a peculiar history of a particular people selected by God to be the means by which He would effect His purposes, which was nothing less than the salvation of men — salvation to be brought about, when the time was come, thru the incarnate Word who would be the final revelation of divine truth and the full and final expression of the divine nature. it is then quite fundamental to this gospel that "the divine salvation is of the Jews" (Jn.4:22). It came as the climax to Jewish history. It was "of the Jews" because they had been trained alone of all peoples of the earth in a real knowledge of God which was pointing them to the final knowledge to be revealed in Jesus Christ, "We worship that which we know" (Jn.4:22) and only as the outcome of this older knowledge, true but imperfect, contained in the OT could the fuller knowledge of God in Christ be made known.

So the incarnate Word of the prologue is at once shown to be Messiah of Jewish prophecy. As soon as Andrew finds Peter he says "we have found the Messiah" (Jn.1:41), and as soon as Phillip finds Nathanael he says "we have found Him of whom

Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write” (Jn.1:45). Such recognition by the disciples that Jesus was the Christ did not as a matter of history, come at this early date. It was not likely to be so instantaneous rather more gradual, but the writer to the Fourth gospel is not concerned with the stages by which it was reached, rather with the fact that it was reached and that it was the true explanation of Jesus of Nazareth. On the other hand we have in contrast the unbelief of the Jews, “His own received Him not”. This tragic note is often sounded in this gospel. Possessing the scriptures which by study ought to have led them to accept “eternal life” (almost the equivalent in this gospel for Kingdom or Reign of God) which was freely offered them in Jesus, they looked upon the scriptures themselves as the final revelation completely missing their spiritual significance. “You search the scriptures because in them you think that you have eternal life and these are they that bear witness of Me and yet you will not come to Me that you may have life” (Jn.5:39). Even in the contents of the Law they should have seen Moses was pointing to a coming one whom to reject would incur divine condemnation. Deut.18:18-19 God spoke to Moses — “I will raise them up a prophet from amongst their brethren like unto thee and will put My words in his mouth and he shall speak unto them all I command him. And it shall come to pass that whoever will not listen unto My word which he shall speak in My Name I will require it of him”. It was surely this passage Jesus had in mind when He tells the unbelieving Jews that He did not accuse them for there is one who accuses them on whom they have set their hopes, even Moses. “If you believed Moses you would believe Me, for He testified concerning Me. But if you don’t believe His writings how will you believe My words?” If they don’t really understand their scriptures how can they be expected to believe Him in whom they are fulfilled. (Jn.5:46-47) Perhaps the most striking feature of the use of the OT in this gospel is the manner in which the great figures of the Old Covenant are portrayed as all pointing unmistakably to Jesus. Not only is Moses disclosed as the direct prophet of His coming, but the teaching of the Mosaic Law is regarded as a definite important stage in the disciplinary training of the People of God given not as an end in itself, but so that they might understand Him in whom the Law would find its proper fulfilment.

Now as to the Sabbath and the accusation against Him for having broken it He offers special light. The command for cessation from work one day in seven wasn’t only a physical necessity, but in order that man may have time to appreciate and enter into a higher life — the Life of God Himself — divine rest which is not inactivity but perfect activity. When Jesus healed the cripple at Jerusalem on the sabbath day He was exercising the perfect activity of God fulfilling the ultimate aim of the sabbath. He was as the Jews rightly saw claiming equality with God, which to them was blasphemy. “My Father works hitherto and I work” (Jn.5:17)

God knows no sabbath because He keeps endless sabbath. Jesus, to do the works of God can therefore ‘break’ the sabbath because this violation is no violation but the whole purpose of sabbatical law. This teaching is again seen in defence of breaking the sabbath in (7:22) “For this cause” Jesus says Moses gave you circumcision (on divine authority) and on the sabbath you circumcise a man. If a man can be circumcised without breaking the law of the sabbath are You against Me because I made a man whole on the sabbath? Circumcision is a covenant sign of partial restoration of Israel pointing forward to full restoration by the Messiah. The action of making the cripple completely whole on the sabbath day is therefore a divine fulfilment

both of the original gift of circumcision, and of the continuous Jewish practice of circumcising on the sabbath.

A considerable part of the Mosaic ordinances was concerned with regulations for the great Jewish festivals of which the most important were Passover and Pentecost. Significant then that the Fourth gospel places much of the activity and teaching of Jesus in settings of these festivals. The Passover commemorates salvation from Egypt and was prophetic of a greater salvation. The first recorded visit of Jesus to Jerusalem is at the Feast of the Passover and it is then that this evangelist records the incident of the cleansing of the temple. One of the chief features of the Feast of Tabernacles was the lighting of the lamps to remind the people of God of the pillar of light which guided their ancestors in the wilderness — against this background Jesus reveals Himself as the Light of the World. On the last day of this feast a golden vessel was filled with water from the Pool of Siloam — and on that occasion Jesus reveals Himself as the source of Living Water which would become a perpetual spring of living water (lifegiving) in the believer. His words recall the miraculous gift to the Israelites of water from the rock. “If any man thirst let him come to me and drink. He that believes on Me as the scripture says, out of his belly shall flow fountains of living water” (Jn.7:38).

It is at the last Passover that this glorification of Jesus in perfect sacrifice takes place. John brings out that Jesus is the true Pascal Lamb offered to take away the sins of the world. Very early in the gospel John the Baptist points to Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World” The hour of fulfilment has come when what was foreshadowed in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac and not wholly fulfilled in it, is now come to pass in the fulness of reality. God Himself was providing a Lamb. (Gen.22:8) Later, Jesus reminds Nicodemus that as Moses “lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of Man be lifted up” John also makes reference to the OT when he records Jesus stating that Manna sent from heaven to sustain the Israelites in the wilderness is symbolic of Jesus the true bread of heaven (Jn.6:31) Westcott in his Gospel according to John, says

‘nothing can prove more clearly the intimate relation between the teaching recorded(by John and the OT than the manner in which Christ is shown to transfer to Himself the figures of Exodus: brazen serpent, manna, water and fiery pillar.

Not only did Moses and the law associated with his name point inevitably to the Greater than Moses, but the stories of the Patriarchs also in view of this gospel, pointed forward to Him whose coming was to supply the clue to the meaning of the whole sacred history. Abraham’s faith that God would bestow blessing upon his seed extended right down to the time of Christ. In John 8:36 we read “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day and he saw it and was glad”

Another patriarch we find in the fourth gospel is Jacob. Not only do the words of the Samaritan woman at the well imply Jesus is greater than Jacob Jn.4:12, but Jacob’s vision of the ladder (Gen.28:12) in which angels go up and down is regarded as prophetic of the person and ministry of Christ.

Read the passage in John 1:51 where Nathanael meets Jesus and the use Jesus makes of this passage. So the writer of the 4th gospel brings out clearer than the others that not only the Law and the Prophets but also the Patriarchs testify to Jesus. Less space is given in his writing to actual quotes from the prophets though he regards

them as definite witnesses to the Messiah and His coming. Jn.6:45, Jesus quotes "as written by the prophets" is actually a free quotation of Isa. 54:13 "They shall be taught of God" as descriptive of that direct knowledge of God, as distinct from knowledge mediated thru the Law and thru the scribes who interpreted it, which all who were drawn to Himself by God would receive in His word and teaching. The words of Psalm 82:6 which describe the judges of Israel under the terms 'gods' are regarded by Jesus as a sign in the OT of that affinity between God and Man (Judges being imperfect executors of the justice which God alone could display perfectly) which was completely manifest in Himself (Jn.10:34).

Finally the rejection of Jesus by His people and therefore the Divine judgement which they brought down on themselves is summed up in the words of the prophet Isaiah, words which were originally spoken by God to Isaiah after his vision of God (Isa.6). that vision of God is regarded as a vision of Christ. (Jn.12:40) So the great drama of belief and unbelief, of salvation and judgement is set out in the Fourth Gospel against the background of the OT. The gospel is mainly concerned to emphasise the nature of Jesus and the tremendous and eternal significance of His appearance in flesh amongst men. Faith in Him is indeed nothing less than the dividing line between eternal life and death. "These things have I written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His Name". (John 20:31).

THE NEW AGE: ACTS

The main emphasis in the NT is upon the spiritual blessings of the New Age, which would result in new energy and new moral power.

A New Age had begun in which all those OT types find their true and final fulfilment.

As Paul wrote (ICor.10:11) “These things happened unto them typically, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the end of the ages has come”.

It was a New Age because creative acts of God had been manifested and a new beginning made possible for the human race as the result of His forgiveness of sins, brought about by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The historical origin of this New Age was the resurrection of Jesus, which was the proof of the effective power of His death and which supplied the key to **understanding** all that follows. For the powers of the New Age were the powers of the risen Christ, and it was His Spirit which was at work amongst the believers, displaying Himself in signs and wonder and mighty deeds. For a description of this New Age in the period before the Pauline Epistles we are dependent entirely upon the Acts of the Apostles. The New Age was the Apostolic age. Accordingly the writer records as the prelude to his recitation of the Apostles deeds and missions an account of the ascension of Christ and the subsequent descent of the Holy Spirit.

The story of Pentecost in Acts 2 is probably an idealized account and it is difficult to know exactly what happened. Peter’s speech however, which follows, interprets the earlier happenings, not just as another occurrence of religious phenomenon, but as something unique. He interprets it as the fulfilment of the words of the prophet Joel of the messianic age when God’s Spirit would be poured out, not only on Israel, but on “all flesh” and “all who call upon the Name of the Lord would be saved”. The writer also adds the words “and they shall prophecy” (v18) showing he did not suppose the gift of the Spirit consisted merely of the excitement of speaking in tongues.

In the second part of the speech an answer is given to the question why this eschatological phenomenon of the “last days” took place at this time in history. The answer is that the Spirit is the gift of Jesus who had been crucified by the **Jews but who had** been raised up by God, it being impossible that He should be held captive by the bonds of death.

The resurrection of which the Gift of the Spirit is a sequel, is all part of the determined plan of God as set out in Psalm 16 which says “He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh experience corruption”. These words didn’t refer to David but to his greater Son and Son of God.

Jesus’ sufferings had been prophesied, and He was none other than “the prophet” foretold by Moses in Deut.18:15 and the “seed of Abraham” in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed.

With the quote from Deut. the writer combines a quotation from Lev.23:29 which points out the penalty that awaits all who should disobey “that prophet”. “It shall be that every soul that does not hearken to that prophet shall be destroyed (removed) from the people” which means excluded from the chosen people.

Acts 3:22-23.

The church wasn't then and never has been an exact equivalent of the Kingdom of God. So Acts doesn't hesitate to record the story of Ananias and Sapphira to show the judgement awaiting a man who lies to the Holy Spirit and holding back on what was promised.

This was in line with the sin of Achan who had kept back some of the spoils consecrated to God. (Joshua 7:1)

The New Age was not one of outward peace. Jesus had never promised His disciples it ever would be. on the contrary, in the world He prophesied for the 'tribulation'. The signs of the Spirit were not accepted as such by those who had "crucified the Holy and Righteous One", and who showed the same hostility to the Apostles as they had shown to Jesus. This opposition could claim the second Psalm as their inspiration "the kings of the earth stood by, and the rulers gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ". Acts 4:26. What had happened to God's anointed one Jesus was happening now to His followers. But the Spirit gave them boldness of utterance 'and the courage to endure.

Stephen, a Greek speaking Jew originally appointed one of the seven chosen to assist the Apostles, soon became a leader in the new church. He was the first Christian leader to oppose what one commentator has called 'the paralyzing territorialism of the fixed Judean Temple'. Not only had the Temple failed as Jesus pointed out, to be "a house of prayer for the nations"; and become an outstanding mark of the exclusiveness of Israel, but its very existence in Stephen's view wasn't in accordance with the purposes of God.

This was what Stephen was about when he courageously spoke out, and it's no wonder he was accused of "speaking words against the Holy Place and the Law" because he said "Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place". Stephen thus saw that the presence of the risen Christ in the hearts of His believers involved a final break with the Temple.

His speech in chapter seven is a review of the history of the Israelites, showing that the Temple owed its origins not to any divine command but to the disobedience of King Solomon. Stephen based his argument on the words spoken by Nathan the prophet to David in 2 Samuel 7:1-17, where David is told NOT to build a house for God but God will make a house for David in the seed He will raise up after him.

Canon Phythian Adams, in his book: 'The People and the Presence,' points out that

'Stephen over-rides verse 13 of 2Sam 7 as nonexistent and stands upon the straight forward sense of Nathan's message. He is not in the least overawed by the somewhat flowery language in which the Chronicler lauds the Temple, it has been forbidden and that is enough. But why had it been forbidden?

Stephen, moved by the Holy Spirit, seized upon the significance of the Old Tabernacling of Jahweh. A fixed house implies a motionless God, motionless because not He but His worshippers will it so It is He who moves, guides, watches, and succours who finally plants His people and all thru the centuries the symbol of His unceasing vigilance has been a nomads tent 'resting' wherever and for whatever period He pleases.

So the thrust of Stephen's argument is that the glory of God has never been limited to a single locality, and he clinches his argument with a quote from Isa.65,

“heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. What manner of house will you build Me?

Says the Lord. Or what is the place of My rest? Did not My hand make all these things?

The speech to an orthodox Jew such as Saul of Tarsus in Stephen's day was considered blasphemy, leading riot only to the martyrdom of Stephen but also widespread persecution in which Saul is a major player. But in the mysterious working of the purposes of God it also paved the way for Saul's conversion and that of the Samaritans who strongly resented the exclusiveness of the Jerusalem Jews with regard to the Temple. The hour had indeed come when “neither in Jerusalem nor Mt Grishim” were God's people to worship Him.

After recording the conversion of Saul he deals with another feature of the New Age, the abolishing of the old ceremonial distinctions between clean and unclean which was one of the chief factors which made unity between Jew and Gentile impossible.

Peter in the vision on the housetop is commanded to kill and eat unclean animals and from this vision came the truth stated in the OT, but not regarded as true in a practical sense by the Israelites, that God is “no respecter of persons” (10:34). The radical distinction between circumcised and uncircumcised, clean and unclean had made such a realization impossible. The essential good news then of the New Age was the proclamation of PEACE thru Jesus Christ between Jew and Gentile (Isa.52:7, quoted in Acts 10:36) Peter's explanatory speech concerning this good news is found in Acts 10:37-43.

Thus those barriers which seemed to be fixed in concrete under the Jewish dispensation, were broken down in the New Age by the Spirit of the risen Christ — working thru Peter, Stephen and other such chosen ones.

In chapter eight the author records the part played in this reconciliation by the evangelist Phillip. Not only was he the first to preach the gospel of the coming of Christ and the Messianic age to the Samaritans but he was instrumental in admitting a Gentile into fellowship who was prevented by Jewish Law (Deut.23:1) because of his physical condition from taking part in the assemblies of Israel. This was the Ethiopian eunuch. The passage from Isa.53 relating to the suffering servant which the eunuch was reading when Phillip approached him and expounded to him in the light of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, was clearly the means of his conversion. The writer makes it clear that it was the death of Jesus that was the cause of the abolition of the restriction, which prevented this man from taking his place among the people of God.

The speech of Paul at Pisidian Antioch in chapter 13 is akin to the speeches of Peter recorded earlier in the narrative; it is an interesting specimen of the manner in which the author supposed Paul to have presented the Gospel to Jewish listeners, and also of the way in which early Christian teachers regarded the OT. For them it wasn't only a record of prophetic utterances but of a series of the acts of God, acts of saving grace, which reached their climax and found fulfilment in redemption brought about by the crucifixion and resurrection of the Christ. Mention is made in this dialogue of these acts; the call of the patriarchs, Egyptian bondage, miracle of the Exodus, 40 years in the wilderness, the destruction of the native kings of Canaan and Israel's sojourn in that land, the appointment of judges, and the establishment of the monarchy of David after Saul's removal. This David was a “man after God's heart” of whose seed there came the saviour Jesus, by whom salvation was proclaimed first to Israel.

They however in ignorance of the true significance of the scriptures, destroyed Him; but they couldn't defeat the ultimate purpose of God, for God raised Him up from the dead, an event which is the fulfilment of the often quoted words of Psalm 2 "Thou art My Son this day have I begotten Thee" and the words of Psalm 16 "Thou shall not suffer My holy one to see corruption".

The salvation brought to men thru Jesus consists of the remission of sins of men being 'put right with' God(the meaning of justified) in a manner which was impossible when obedience to Jewish law was regarded as the means of salvation. This is the supreme miracle of the New Age, the climax of Biblical religion.

God thru Habakkuk had prophesied that He would work this work, even though His people would in no wise believe it; and that because of their unbelief they would be excluded from fellowship with the People of God. The Hebrew version of the quote from Hab.1:5 has in the opening line "Behold you despisers, wonder and be astonished. "Our author quotes from the LXX which has instead of the words "be astonished" the words "be blotted out" an alteration which is vital to his argument.

The speech met with mixed reception. Some of the Jews were won by it, the majority though were roused to a greater persecution of Paul. It was clear that the 'new wine' of the Spirit was bursting the old wineskins. Now "that which was perfect was come, and that **which was in** part was being done away", not in the sense of being abolished, but rather being fulfilled. The New Age reached a climax according to the narrative of Acts at the council of Jerusalem, which is recorded in chapter 15. After reading this passage we will see that Peter referred to the many signs of the gifts of the Spirit given to Gentiles, while Barnabas and Paul had given accounts of the signs and wonders which had been wrought among them. What then hindered the Gentiles joining the Jews in this New Age movement of the people of God, so James summed up the views of the conference by decreeing they should "cease from troubling" those amongst the Gentiles who turned to God.

James confirms the decision reached by quoting the prophetic words of Amos 9:11ff. "After these things I will return and will rebuild the tent of David, which has fallen, and will rebuild the part of it which is destroyed, and will put it up again in order that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles on whom My name has been called, said the Lord, making these things known from the beginning of the world".

Paul and his Epistles.

Before his conversion, Paul supposed that the chief reflection on earth of the divine glory and supreme revelation of God's will, were to be found in the Jewish Law. Given to Moses, the law was the full, and he supposed, final manifestation of what man must do in order to be 'in the right with God', in other words 'justified; and even after becoming a Christian, and had come to see how impossible it was for a sinful person to attain to such a position in their own strength striving to obey its precepts, he still placed a high value on the Mosaic Law as the God given educator which had developed man's moral sense, and quickened his conscience. The Law was "holy, just and good" (Rom.7:12)

In 2Cor.3:7-8, referring back to the narrative of Exodus 34, Paul speaks of the old Mosaic system written on stones and in letters as 'glorious; so that the Children of Israel were not able to look upon the face of Moses because of the glory, even though the glory of the old covenant was to pass away, and it's ministry was to prove to be not unto life but unto death. Paul plays on the veil Moses wore as a symbol, adding that as long as the Jews fail to realize the temporary character of the law the same veil lies on their understanding every time the scriptures are read in Synagogues, and they remain blind to that fuller revelation in Christ which alone can destroy the veil.

Moses removed the veil when he stood before God on the mountain, and Paul regards this as a prophecy of the direct manifestation of divine glory found in the crucified and risen Christ: and whenever we turn away from the Law to the "Lord who is the Spirit" we have an uninterrupted vision of that glory. This was the great truth which Paul began to understand after his conversion. When he says in Galatians 1:2¹ "I made known to you the gospel which was preached to me that it is not according to men, nor was I taught it, but it came to me thru the revelation of Jesus Christ" he is referring to his understanding of the gospel which he claims to have received as a direct command from the risen Christ. His conversion experience probably had much to do with the emphasis he laid upon particular aspects of the christian gospel. His letters are not carefully constructed theological treatises, but occasional letters, in which he deals with problems that arose from time to time in the newly founded christian churches, problems he always seeks to solve in the light of christian beliefs. There are however certain areas of christian truth on which he lays special stress all the time.

- (1) The first is the truth of the divine initiative in salvation. This leads him always think of the life and death of Jesus as special acts of God in history to bring about the reconciliation of sinful man to Himself. That God has taken the initiative in the process of redemption lies at the basis of the doctrine of grace: and Paul had experienced this when God had arrested him and revealed His Son to him at his conversion. He, who by his own actions was in disgrace, had become in God's love the object of His favour.
- (2) The fact that it was the risen and not the earthly Jesus of whom Paul first had experience, brought with it the conviction that heaven was the real sphere to which Jesus belonged. He was not an ordinary man, though He had taken the flesh of an ordinary .He was the "second Adam", the "Lord from heaven", and therefore His earthly life was always thought of by Paul as a temporary self-emptying. as an act of condescension, made out of love for sinful man. "For our sakes He became poor" 2Cor.8:9; Phil.2:5-11

- (3) The human response to the acts of saving grace Paul calls 'faith', which consists in a humble acceptance of what God has done for man thru Christ, a willingness to be just receivers of this gift and nothing else, and a complete surrender of the whole personality to the influence of the risen Jesus. So penetrating had this influence been in Paul's own case, and so complete had his surrender been, that his own ego seemed to have been superceded and he could cry "behold I live and yet not I, but Christ lives in me!" Gal.2:20. (4) The Christian Church is to Paul the fellowship of those of every race who have made this great surrender of faith, and who are living in an intimate relationship with their Lord, so that His divine life flows in them, and without any conscious striving on their part they are enabled to reflect in their lives those Christ-like virtues which he calls "the fruit of the Spirit". So close is this relationship between Christ and the believer assumed by Paul to be, that he can think naturally of the Church as the Body of Christ, or as the Bride who has Him as her bridegroom.

Paul never abandons the OT or his conviction that the Jews were a privileged people entrusted with special treasures for the benefit of the whole human race. They had received "the oracles of God"(Rom.3:1). Israel was in a real sense God's son. It possessed a true if limited knowledge of His glory. its worship was a worship of the true God. God made a covenant with Israel; and above all to Israel had been given the Messianic promises which were fulfilled in Jesus, born a Jew according to the flesh. (Rom.9:4-) The truth is that not only does Paul make a large number of quotations from the OT chiefly in Romans, and to a lesser extent in the other epistles, but he uses the OT analogies freely to explain essential elements in christian truth. In common with Jesus and Peter he speaks of the crucified and risen Jesus in the words of Isaiah as a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" to the Jewish people (Rom.9:32-33). And to him also as to Peter, the Christians are the new "people of God" in whom the words of Hosea are fulfilled when he prophesied, "I will call them My people who were not My people and her beloved who was not beloved" Rom.9:25. Also Paul finds in the OT quite literally and without any strained exegesis, the doctrine of 'justification by faith', for Habakkuk 2:4 states "the righteous man as a result of faith shall have life", and Paul deduces from this that "by works of the law shall no man be justified" (Rom.1:17;Gal.3:11). The story of Abraham moreover Leaches the same truth when it is said that "he believed in God, and his trust and confidence that God would fulfil His promises was alone sufficient to give him the status of a righteous man in the eyes of God.

This faith is not a works that earns anything it is a gift to believe what God has said and done.

Paul goes further back even than to Moses and the Patriachs in his presentation of christianity as the fulfilment of the OT. He goes back to the creation story of Genesis. To him the birth, ,death and resurrection of Jesus ushered in a new beginning. The incarnate Christ was a 'new man' and all who live by faith in union with Him are "new creation" 2Cor.5:17;Gal-6:15. To him Christ is the 2nd Adam and both in the letter to Romans and in ICorinthians he draws a contrast between the two Adams. (Rom.5:14;ICor.15:22,45.) The 1st Adam was made by a creative act of God a "living soul", the last Adam, Paul goes on to add, was a "life giving Spirit", one that is to say who was able to impart to others the spiritual life which He Himself possessed.

In Rom.5:14-21 he speaks of the original Adam as a “type of Him who was to come” and he draws both a parallel and a contrast between the two figures. The actions of both were universal in their results, and the ‘sons’ of both (such is the solidarity of the human race) share in the deeds of their ancestor. The transgression of the 1st Adam resulted in death for the many, and the saving grace of the 2nd Adam resulted in life for the many. “As in Adam all die even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” It was because Paul thought of Christ as the new Adam that he also ‘.by natural extension of thought, came to think of the Church, a fellowship of believers, as the Bride of Christ prefigured by Eve. So when he is expressing his anxiety over the Corinthians lest they should fall prey to the false teachers who were claiming their allegiance, he says to them,

“I am jealous over you with godly jealousy for I have espoused you to one husband that I might present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve thru subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ”. 2Cor.11:2-3.

This verse reflects the nuptial relationship — the betrothal between Christ and His Church which Paul understood. In the letter to the Ephesians he develops this thought further. The Genesis story states Eve was created out of a rib taken from the side of Adam. She was therefore literally “bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh”. So the Church is to Paul the body of the 2nd Adam almost as much His body as was His body that He dwelt in while on earth. Christ and His Church are “one flesh” as Adam and Eve were one flesh. In Eph 5:21ff He regards earthly marriage as a shadow of the eternal marriage of Christ and His Church, and the duties of the husband and wife are conditioned by that higher relationship. The husband is in a position of authority over the wife, because Christ is the head of the Church. The husband's prime duty is to protect his wife, because Christ is “the saviour of His body the Church and gave Himself for it”. The husband must therefore ‘love’ his wife with the same kind of sacrificial love that Christ displayed on behalf of His body the Church. Wives, on the other hand, are to be in subjection to their own husbands because of the obedience which is demanded by Christ from the Church. Paul ends the passage with words which make it clear that He regards the relationship that now exists between believers and Christ. as a ‘fulfilment’ of the Genesis story of creation., for he adds the passage quoted by Jesus Himself; ‘For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh,’ then saying, “this mystery is great but I speak of Christ and His Church”.

There is another imagery by which Paul portrays the close relationship between Christ and His Church. This is the Temple. And in this too there is a fulfilment of the OT, for it had ever been God's desire to ‘Tabernacle’ amongst His people, a desire only partially realized in Israel. “Know you not “Paul says to the Corinthians when he wishes to warn them of the dangers of factions that could destroy their unity in fellowship, “Know you not that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? “And he adds, “Gods temple is holy and such a temple are you”. (1Cor.3:16-17). Party strife is therefore nothing less than sacrilege. Similarly in 2Cor.6:14ff, he reminds them that they are a community distinct from the heathen and must therefore avoid anything which might lead them back to idolatry, for they are nothing less than the “temple of the Living God”, and, “what agreement” he asks, “has God's temple with idols?”

He then adds a number of quotes from the OT which show that he regards the existence of the the Christian Church, based on the close intimate relationship between Christ and the believers, and on the presence of the risen Christ in their hearts, as the final manifestation of that presence of God amongst men which was partially known in Israel, particularly in the tent of meeting in the wilderness. Read 2Cor.6:14-18. (for vs 16-Lev.26:12;vs17; Isa.52:11 & Eze.20:34; vs18 — 2Sam.7:14) This quote from 2Sam. where Nathan is prophecying reminds us of the words of Stephen when he commented on the temple in his speech - it was to be the seed of David who would build the dwelling place for God, and that seed wasn't Solomon but Jesus the Christ. This also would result in the believers, after atonement had been made, becoming the very sons and daughters of God.

John 1:12. "to as many as received Him become children of God.

Thus the OT to Paul was true as far as it went. The moral laws of Moses had educated man's moral sense, but left areas of conduct still impotent; the sacrifices had shown that sin must be atoned for, but failed to make the final atonement. The Tabernacle and Temple had set forth the truth that without the presence of God men can never fulfil their true and proper reason for being, but the temple had become a symbol of national and religious exclusiveness. So the old dispensation was incomplete and unsatisfactory because it couldn't satisfy. It all pointed to something better to come when shadows would become reality and prophecy would vanish away because their hour of fulfilment had come.

HEBREWS

The aim (if the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to show that God is the God of the old covenant as well as the new. Under the old covenant He spoke "in the prophets" and under the new covenant He speaks in one who can only be described adequately as "SON"[1:21].

The writer doesn't use the OT just to prove arguments or to supply illustrations, but because it is upon the authority of the OT that the validity of his own argument depends. The OT to him is a revelation of God's purposes for the human race. In its records God spoke "to the fathers in the prophets at Many times and in many ways", and all these fragmentary, varied revelations become welded together and fitted into a perfect unity in Jesus Christ.

The OT is however more than just the record of the past sayings of God. In it the voice of God can still be heard, speaking to men and women of every age, and judging both thought and deed. As the author of Hebrews says "the word of God is living and active sharper a double-edged sword piercing even to dividing soul and spirit ... it - judges thoughts and attitudes of the heart" [4:12]

The manner in which the writer introduces several quotations from the OT makes it clear that he had a high view of its inspiration, and a deep sense of its permanent abiding message.

He doesn't say 'it is written' or 'the scripture says' but "God says" or "Christ says" or "the Spirit says" e.g. See Christ presented as making three quotes in chapter 2:11- 13, (1) Psalm 22) "I will declare Thy name unto MY brethren" (2&3) from Isa 8:17-16 "I will put my confidence in Him" and "I and the children God gave Me". And these quotes are introduced with "Therefore He that is Christ] is not ashamed to call them brethren saying---" See also 3:7-11 a quote from Psalm 95:7-11 where he begins "as the Holy Spirit says " and again 13:5 beginning with "God has said . . . "quoting from Deut. 31 and Psalm 118.

In this way the writer shows that the message of God spoken in times past remains a message, which God speaks at all times, in the present circumstances of men's lives. see Heb 12:5-6 quoting from Prov.3:11-12. It is this abiding voice of God speaking directly from the pages of the OT which makes it for the author, and still for us today, 'Holy Scripture' The fundamental theme of this powerful letter is the belief that God has a purpose for man, which is destined to be fulfilled, a purpose which was made known to Israel of old and conveyed to them in series of promises. Towards the fulfilment of of this purpose they were always striving; but Could never quite reach it suffering backslidings and disobedience. The nature of that purpose that God has in mind for Mankind, and which is unchanging, which He will never abandon, however disobedient men may be, is set out in this epistle.

In 2:5 it is called "the world which is to come" and in 11"10" the city with foundations whose architect and builder is God". The most characteristic description of it however is taken by the writer from Psalm 95. There the the ultimate purpose of God for man is described as "entering into the divine rest" which means nothing less than actually sharing the life of God Himself, for rest in the Bible is thought of as a "Sabbath rest", the root which is perfect activity, and of which the institution of the weekly Sabbath is a symbol. Augustine put it

like this 'Thou hast created us for Thyself, and the human heart is restless till it rests, O God, in Thee'.

So the writer of Hebrews looks back on the history of Israel as the story of their struggle to "enter into the divine rest".

Their disobedience was always a stumbling block to their enjoying this rest from their time of release from Egypt, while in the wilderness, or when they entered the promised land. But the promise remains "There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" [4:9]. It is still man's destiny to enjoy it. The promise is set forth in Ps 8 quoted in 2:6-8 which says that though created inferior to angels in order of creation, man would ultimately be "crowned with glory and honour" and exercise universal lordship. So far only one man, Jesus the Christ, has fully entered into that rest, but He identifies with us in becoming the seed of Abraham to assist His brethren to join Him in Sabbath rest. He alone exhibited the perfect rest of God for He alone was truly obedient. In His life was a combination of sympathy with man and trust in God. Just as Isaiah [see Isa.8:18] and his children were a faithful remnant of Israel so that Isaiah could say "here am I and the children God has given me [2:13] so Christ uses these words to denote He was father and brother to the new society of faithful who, because of belief in Him, would be enabled to enter into the promised rest. Herein Jesus fulfills all the great OT figures foreshadowing Him.

The opening chapters of the epistle are concerned with showing that Jesus is superior to all His forerunners. In chapter 1 the writer uses a chain of quotes from the OT to reveal the splendour and dignity of Christ's person. The first quote is from Psalm 2 "Thou art My son today have I begotten Thee". The words would have probably referred to a Jewish king such as David, who, when confronted by enemies, claimed relationship to God which would ensure victory. But never in David's reign or any other did this salvation, and ultimate victory, become a reality. It was only in Jesus, David's greater son, that the words would find fulfilment. The victory of this true Son of God is a spiritual victory realized in His death and resurrection.

The next quote comes from 2Sa.,7:14 "I will be His father and He will be My son" This was spoken by the prophet Nathan concerning the son of David, and although the original inference would be taken concerning Solomon, their full meaning waited till the coming of Jesus Son of God. A third quote comes from Deut.32:43 [see dead sea scrolls & LXX] "Let all the angels of God worship Him".

This was part of the song of Moses which consisted of a prophecy of the destiny of Israel, which will result in a final and decisive revelation of God's judgement. The coming of Jesus "God's first born" would be the time of this perfect judgement.

Other quotes from the Psalms are from 104 where he mentions the angels but goes on to say they are inferior to the Son by quoting Ps45 and referring it prophetically to Jesus as the Christ - anointed one of God. In the quote from Ps 102:25-27 we have one in great distress

appealing to God as creator and pleading for the restoration of Zion. The writer of Hebrews refers them to God the Son the great agent of creation who is immutable and eternal

"You remain the same and Your years will never end."

Finally he ends the chain with PS 110¹. His superiority to angels again spelt out but with the stronger inference of the co-equality of God and His anointed working together till all the powers of evil are overthrown.

But the chief subject of this epistle is the problem of how sinful man can “draw near to God” [an expression that is characteristic of this letter]. It was the sin of man that prevented him from entering into the eternal rest of God, so this must be dealt with. That man must draw near or seek to draw near, for that is his ultimate destiny, is one of the axioms of the Bible; and the Bible also assumes that the means by which we must seek to obtain that access is by the forgiveness of sins. Because God is holy and righteous, man cannot approach Him unless his sins are forgiven. And it was for the attainment of this end that the Levitical system of sacrifices came into being, and it is to this side of the Jewish Law, that our writer has given his attention.

At the centre of this body of laws was the fact that “without the shedding of blood there can be no remission from sin” [9:22] And for many generations it was the “blood of goats and AM and ashes of heifers sprinkling the unclean to sanctify them so that they were outwardly clean” [9:13] This was a temporary measure until the perfect sacrifice was to appear, “how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death (or dead works) to serve the living God” [9:13-14].

Even the OT itself bears witness to the transitory nature of the Levitical system of sacrifices for it speaks in Ps 110 of another Order of priesthood. As the Psalm was often interpreted in a Messianic sense, it was quite suited for the purpose of our writer.

In the narrative about Melchisedek in Gen.14 he appears suddenly confronting Abraham on his return from victory over the kings, and Abraham pays him tithes. And so Melchisedek is seen to be greater than Abraham and all his offspring including the Levitical priests. The royalty of this King-Priest is revealed in his name Melchisedek, meaning, “King of righteousness”. The description in Genesis of Melchisedek, as “king of Salem” also relates to his royal priesthood, for the name Salem means “peace” and the true function of a priest is to create peace between God and rebellious man. The application to the priesthood of Jesus is then made explicit. Not only did Jesus possess that sympathy with humanity based on a knowledge of human life and experience; not only did He not take this office upon Himself [2 characteristics which accompany priesthood, Aaronic or any other] but His priesthood, like Melchisedek, was royal for He belonged to the tribe of Judah. It was also permanent for it goes on unhindered by death. And it was righteous, for Christ knew no sin. Christ therefore “abides forever a priest after the order of Melchisedek.” It was as such a priest that Jesus offered His sacrifice the superiority of which over the Levitical sacrifices is finally stated in Chapter 10 and is illustrated by a quote from Ps40:6-6. The Psalm states an essential truth which is conveyed in many other passages of the OT, the truth that the sacrifices of animals, are less pleasing to God than the obedience, contrition, and moral purity of the human heart.

An acceptable sacrifice has now been made as Jesus the Christ has offered Himself in obedience to God and by this sacrifice men are sanctified and so “able to draw near unto God”. It is thus the means whereby the New Covenant between God and man is ratified. This NC of which Jeremiah wrote [See Jer. 31] and is quoted in 8:9-12 and later in 10:16-17 was concerned with the forgiveness of sins. The day would come when God ‘would no longer remember man’s sins and iniquities’ For perfect atonement would have been made for them. In 10:15 the author states that this is the meaning which the Holy Spirit is unfolding to us in this great passage of scripture.

The essence of the new covenant, and so true Christianity, is the act of divine grace by which God freely bestows upon man the forgiveness of sins; and when that forgiveness is accepted by repentance and faith, the other blessings of the NC as foretold by Jeremiah become available. All men under the NC are brought into direct and immediate first hand knowledge of God.

So Jeremiah foretold-

“God would put His laws in man’s minds and write it on their hearts and once again they would be His people for all would know Him from the least to the greatest” Jer.31:33-34.

This epistle then is primarily concerned with the divine action in salvation brought about through the priestly sacrifice of Jesus.

Now we come to the roll call of ‘faith’ in the 11th chapter. Here the author records men and women of faith who lived as pilgrims, not always expecting the ultimate goal of human life was to be found in the present world, but who looked always for something better that was to come. Out of all these names in this roll of honor Abraham and Moses are the most important. Abraham’s faith was based on the belief in God’s creative power, which enabled him to believe the promises even at a time when humanly speaking, it seemed impossible that he could have any descendents in whom they could be realized.

And later again his faith showed itself in his readiness to offer Isaac in sacrifice at the bidding of God. His willingness to make this sacrifice was then a foreshadowing of the obedience displayed by Christ, just as the subsequent resurrection of Isaac, though he wasn’t actually dead, was a type pointing to the resurrection of -Jesus. “He received him back from the dead as in a parable [11:19]

The faith of Moses was preceded by that of his parents “who saw he was no ordinary child” [11:23]. Moses was anointed [made a christ] for the purpose of leading Israel from slavery to freedom to be a Peculiar People unto God. And like the true Christ whom he foreshadowed, bore the reproach and ridicule of those he sought to help [11.26].

It is the inspiration of these heroes **of faith, and above** all by keeping the vision of the suffering and subsequent triumph of Jesus, their great highpriest, over before them, that the writer appeals to his readers to endure suffering. To follow Jesus ‘outside the camp’ to ‘despise not the chastening of the Lord’ to ‘lift up exhausted hands and restore paralysed knees’, and to consecrate themselves afresh to their Lord. They are to “beware lest any root of bitterness springs up to incite them and by it many may be defiled” This could be a reference to a passage in Deut 29:18 where it occurs in a warning against idolatry and apostasy. And he goes on to be careful “lest there be any fornicators or profane persons such as Esau who for a single meal sold his birthright”. Those two statements could also be referring to apostasy, for fornication and adultery are used in this sense often in the OT.

Finally the author appeals to them to realize the destiny awaiting them if they will remain in fellowship of the redeemed, and in a magnificent passage he contrasts this final destiny with all the preliminary and imperfect attempts to reach it. The revelation given on Mt Sinai, under circumstances (if dread and awe, symbolized by fire, smoke, and storm, was a great stage towards the ultimate fulfilment of God’s purposes that

man should “enter into His rest” and enjoy Him forever. These men learned that the fear of the Lord and obedience to His will are the ‘beginning of wisdom’.

Another Mountain, Mt Zion at Jerusalem, had become the centre of Israel which had sought to keep the law, and by means of the temple sacrifices, to make Israel worthy of entering into that ‘rest’. Entrance into the ‘heavenly Jerusalem’ however, had only been made possible by the outpouring of the ‘blood of Jesus’. This blood which “spoke of better things than the blood of Abel” was the means whereby He became mediator of the New Covenant which united God and man in perfect fellowship; and the names of all who accept that sacrifice and are ‘put right with God’ are “enrolled in heaven”. It is this hope of the heavenly city which is, and must always be, the greatest inspiration of the Christian.

“You are come to Mt Zion unto the city of the Living God, heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, and to the general assembly of the Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks a better word than that of Abel. 12:22ff.

JAMES

To this writer as to most of the writers of scripture, the supreme duty of man is obedience to the Word of God. He thunders with the fervour and eloquence of an OT prophet against the pride and vanity of human nature which keeps men from rendering this obedience and his prime example for such obedience is Abraham when he was told to sacrifice and offer up his son Isaac, an act which must have seemed to Abraham folly, frustrating the promises that had been made to him. It is clear that by the 'Word of God' our author means not only the Christian Gospel as it is being proclaimed by the evangelists but the revelation of God to His chosen people, as it was set out in the OT. He calls upon his readers to "receive with meekness the engrafted word which was able to save their souls" and by engrafted he means the word that is able to take root like a plant and bear fruit in conduct. Men are therefore to be "doers of the word and not merely hearers", but before they can be doers they must be attentive hearers.

So it is in this connection in order to impress or inculcate the duty of paying careful and prolonged attention to the "Word of God" whether written or spoken, that he employs the famous simile of a man looking at himself in a mirror. (1:23). A mirror is made to reflect, that is its purpose, but you can admire the beauty and workmanship of its construction without paying any attention to the reflection. in like manner the OT can be just seen as ancient history or a collection of legends where the question of dates and authorship becomes more important than the message contained within it.

What then are we meant to see reflected in the pages of the Bible? James suggests the answer (1:23) in the phrase "the face of our birth" the true self, not as others might see us, with our masks on, but as God sees us, i.e. selfish, proud, rebellious stubborn, disobedient, yet creatures made in His own image marred by sin but not totally obliterated.

The mirror of James' day would have been polished metal possibly bronze, and so as Paul puts it "we see in the mirror darkly" therefore as James suggests it was necessary to take a careful long look to get the best impression otherwise you would be like the man who takes "just a glance and off he goes immediately forgetting what he looks like".

There is therefore a very important truth set out in this simile namely, that the Bible, if it is to be for us personally a 'Word of God' can only be so if we take the trouble to see and hear its messages and approach it with humility without seeking to pass judgement.

The account of David Bathsheba and the prophet Nathan provides us with a good example. David coveted another man's wife and so conveniently had his husband placed in a position where he was most likely to be killed. Nathan is sent to him to tell the king the story of the rich man who robbed a poor neighbour of his ewe lamb. David expresses horror at such callous behavior. The story however remains just a story quite unrelated to him until the prophet states "you are that man!" Then the story becomes to the king not just a moving tale but the "Word of God sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing unto the dividing of soul and marrow.

In the mirror of God's Word James tells his readers is to be found also a revelation of "the wisdom from above" (3:5). If faith is a key word in the Pauline Epistles and hope a key word in 1st. Peter, Wisdom is a key word in James. This is the wisdom for which a man must pray, because without it no one can receive divine grace, and because it is a quality which God gives generously and ungrudgingly to all who ask Him for, it. (1:5) Its wisdom that is in itself 'pure' and produces in those who possess it a "peaceful reasonable and merciful disposition" (3:17) the disposition of a person who does good works, because he or she is undivided in their allegiance and sincere in their motives. (3:18) over against this supernatural wisdom is the "wisdom that is from below." Earthy unspiritual and of the devil.

This wisdom springs from the evil in the human heart, the proud, selfseeking envious spirit of the natural (i.e. unredeemed) man which produces partly strife and disorder. (3:15) This -is the spirit of the world; and the writer calls upon his readers not to be divided in their minds, professing faith in God but showing in their conduct the wisdom from below. The outward trials of their lives may well bring with them great temptations to compromise with the spirit of the world, and he bids them look upon these trials as occasions of testing of the reality of their faith, so that they may win a reward of all who are loving and faithful. (1:12) To compromise between God and the world is, our writer reminds his readers, 'to commit adultery' a metaphor which is often used in the OT for the disloyalty by the people of God. God is still a jealous God, and will not tolerate the setting up of idols -in His place, even though the idols be the thoughts and imaginations of men, or the adoption of the world's standard of values. "You adulterous people don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred (or being in a state of hostility) towards God?"

"Pure religion and undefiled (faultless) is to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (4:4 and 1:27)

The jealousy of God is referred to in 4:5 which claims to be a quote from the OT but is more likely a summing up of many scriptures that God will not condone His people flirting with the world especially as His Spirit is dwelling within us. To put it in other words God cannot view with anything but jealousy the transference by us of allegiance that we owe to God who made us in His image, to some other object of affection; and being a loving God He will help us, providing we are humble, to remake the lost image by offering the gift of grace. "where sin abounds grace much more abounds" so we have the words in (4:6) "but He gives us more grace". That is why the scripture says "god opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" Prov.3:34. The manifestations of the 'wisdom from below', the moral stupidity which blinds men from the true values of life is nowhere more vigorously denounced in the NT than in this Epistle. The pride that is inherent in the human heart causes above all else a false sense of security in material possessions. In consequence they forget the frailty of their creature-hood and they are "mists that appear for a little while and then vanishes" (4:14) and that "as the wild flower of the grass he will pass away" (1:10)

So the careless worldliness of the boastful business man and the greedy employer withholding due wages from his workers are denounced in language reminiscent of the great Hebrew prophets of the OT in the section (4:13-5:10). Judgement awaits and overtakes those who are least aware of it. The rich heaps up his riches which is destined to act against him in destruction in the last days, (5:3) They fatten themselves like sheep unconscious of the slaughter awaiting them. (5:5)

Another sign of the 'wisdom from below' is the misuse of the gift of speech. With this gift man is privileged as a creature uniquely able to glorify his Creator, but in disobedient man, it has become a potent instrument for evil. James dwells on the volume of evil such a small thing as the tongue can produce (3:3etc). He calls his readers to be hearers rather than speakers and learners rather than teachers because of the mischief that comes about when the tongue is not checked. (3:1 Backbiting, irreverent swearing of oaths, 4:11&5:12 along with the cursing of men made in the image of God are condemned. 3:9 "if any man therefore "he says" thinks himself religious yet doesn't keep a tight rein on his tongue he deceives himself and his religion is in vain" The persons who makes hasty judgements against their fellows are actually usurping the role of God, setting themselves up as critic of the Law and turning from their proper duty of being obedient to it (4:11-12)

A 3rd evidence of this 'wisdom from below' is in regard to respect of persons. Privileged positions are given to some in Christian assemblies solely because they are rich. They are forgetting true wealth lies in the depth of a man's faith and in the reality of his love by which he inherits the Kingdom. (ch.2) So to sum up the evidence of the essential sinfulness of human nature to which James draws attention, the covetousness which, according to the account of the fall of man in Genesis, was the cause of man's original sin, and to which Paul alludes as his first awareness of the reality of sin Rom.7:7. It is covetousness, the lust to obtain, which makes human nature a battleground between conflicting desires, and is responsible for the factions and quarrels which leads to war. James 4:1.

James doesn't elaborate on what God has done to remedy this state of affairs making no mention of Jesus or the cross, his emphasis is on what — a person must do to obtain the "wisdom from above" and enjoy God's grace.

The first essential Step is for a person to be humble and penitent. Humble yourself before God. Only then can you receive grace and be exalted (4:9-10) "Grieve, mourn, and weep. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom—Humble yourself before God and he shall exalt you". Without a realization of sin, and sorrow for sin, the reign of God is never present in a man's heart, and the "wisdom that is from above" is never evidenced in his actions.

Accompanying this penitence there must be a sense of absolute dependence upon Almighty God, which will naturally express itself in constant prayer; personal and intercessory prayer, prayer for wisdom, prayer in affliction and in sickness.

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The author illustrates this persistence in prayer from Elijah (5:17). In the OT he finds examples of steadfastness and endurance in times of trials. The prophets who spoke as representatives of the Lord (lit.) in the name of the Lord) 5:10 are excellent examples of perseverance in the face of hostility and under grievous persecution; and he adds to their number Job who, after an outstanding instance of patience enduring affliction, sorrow, disaster, obtained a firsthand knowledge of God. "In the past, my ears had heard of You but now my eyes have seen You. "Job 42:5. What Job learned in his adversity is stated by James in words from Psalm 103:8 "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy". The OT and NT are at one in their revelation of a God who blends His nature, as only God can blend, the qualities of justice and mercy, goodness and severity, anger and love; a God who, though He avenges Himself against His enemies

and is Man's judge, is nevertheless the rewarder of all who faithfully endure the trials and tribulations of their earthly pilgrimage.

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.” James 1:12.

REVELATION:

The Revelation of St John is for the modern reader a very strange book, and its strangeness has tended to make it either unduly fascinating or repellent to many. Some have devoted a disproportionate amount of time in the attempt to find some clue in its mysterious symbols to the shape of things to come. Others have tended to minimize its value, not only because of the difficulty of its cryptic symbolism, but because it seems to lay too little stress on the glory of the new age that had actually arrived, and to throw the emphasis of Christian thought too much into the future. The book however really is in keeping with the main emphasis of NT literature, and it contains a Word of God for the People of God not only in days of persecution and suffering, but at all times when they are tempted to substitute something else for the message which the Church is called by God to proclaim to all the world.

Our main concern however, is to notice the manner in which the writer describes the person and work of Christ, and the fellowship of His followers, in terms of the fulfilment of OT prophecy. No other NT writing presents a more splendid portrait of Jesus the Risen and Ascended Lord. It is because of what He is that Christians on earth can take courage in their hour of tribulation. All the limitations of His earthly sojourn are thrown aside, and He reigns for evermore in heaven, clothed with a garment extending to His feet and wearing a golden girdle - a royal high priest, who has won His ascendancy as a result of His sacrifice of perfect obedience. The book leaves the reader in no doubt (and in this it is at one with all the great NT writings) that the supreme work of Jesus the Messiah was His death. It is as a sacrificial victim, as a Lamb once slain who perfectly fulfilled the prophecy of Isa 53 that He exercises universal dominion. Because of His faithfulness unto death a new song is found on His lips, the song of the Lamb.

The OT frequently speaks of new songs being sung by the Israelite to commemorate special victories of God's people. The greatest of these victories was the triumph wrought by Moses the saviour of Israel over Pharaoh and the Egyptians which gave rise to the song of Moses. The risen Christ, the saviour of the New Israel, sings a new song to celebrate a victory of which Moses' victory was a prototype, the great and final victory over sin and death. This new song of the victorious Lamb of God can be sung by all the martyrs who have accepted the Lamb's sacrifice, and washed their robes in His blood, having suffered for the sake of Him, who was Himself the faithful witness. And because of His faithfulness was 'the first to be begotten from the dead' and was made ruler of the kings of the earth. Again and again the Revelation connects the splendour and power of the risen Christ with His redemptive work; and in this close association of the Messiah's humiliation and glory, of His death and resurrection, the book underlines what we have seen to be the primary message of the NT, a message stated pictorially and symbolically in this writing, and more historically and theologically by the writers of the Gospels and Epistles. Because Jesus 'loved us and loosed us from our sins' He has 'all power in heaven and earth' and is worthy to receive honour praise and worship, which is due to God alone. Thus the titles ascribed to God in the OT are now given to Christ. He is 'Lord of Lords' (Deut. 10:17) 'the first and last' (Isa.44:6) 'the Almighty' (Amos 4:13). Because He was the 'Lamb of God' 'on whom was laid the iniquity of us all' He is also 'the lion of the tribe of Judah', who can trample all foes under His feet.

The writer draws freely from the rich imagery of the OT, particularly from Daniel. He describes the indescribable to picture what cannot be adequately pictured viz the subsequent glory of Him who performed the greatest act of God in all history, the atonement by which man was reconciled to God. The meek, submissive Lamb, who when 'He was reviled reviled not again' is now a figure with eyes of flame, feet of brass, and a voice like a mighty cataract, shining like the Sun in His strength. He alone is worthy to unlock the seals of the book of destiny, and to act as the judge of the nations of the world. If the saving death of Jesus is presented as the central act of the Messiahs work on earth, which was the prelude to His age long glory in heaven, the Christian Church is set forth in this great book as the fellowship of those of every age and land who are united with one another because they owe a common allegiance to the crucified and risen Son of God. "Thou was slain and has redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred tongue people and nation"

In the **vision** of the New Jerusalem the Church is seen in its ideal state when perfected by suffering and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. It is now worthy to be presented as the Lamb's bride and on the gates of the cities walls are written the names of the 12 tribes showing the Christian church is continuous with the church of the OT, though the foundations on which the walls of the city rests are the 12 Apostles. The vision of the New Jerusalem is held up before the readers as a stimulus for them to endure to the end the struggle in which they are engaged. At present the New Israel is the martyr church on earth called to fidelity under suffering. At the moment it seems at the mercy of kings of the earth and the beast with the unspeakable name, and the harlot drunk with the blood of the saints. The woman of the vision of ch14 is forced to live a wilderness life a truth which holds good, not only in days of persecution, for the Church is always a pilgrim Church' which can never settle down or come to terms with the world. We live at a time in history when, as an institution set alongside other institutions, the Church in our country seems to be in decline and we see many making desperate attempts to try and place it once again in the foreground, but only too often the desire underlining these attempts seem prompted by the thought that the Church ought to be successful and powerful in the sense in which we use these words in connection with human institutions.

Some seem so eager to bring the Church out of the wilderness to make her triumphant in the marketplace or political arena, and in the councils of nations, and so feverishly anxious to Christianize society and create christian social order, and so concerned to adjust Christianity to the tastes and intellectual fashions of modern man, that they are in danger of forgetting that the Church on earth is and must be in the wilderness.

It's duty and raison d'etre is to set forth the salvation won by Christ on Calvary, to offer men the power which comes from the forgiveness of sins, and give them assurance that the risen Lord will seal all that are faithful, not from earthly affliction, but from eternal death. It was to the feverishly over-anxious modern Church, busy with its own movements and isms and forgetful of its true nature and purpose, that Karl Barth addressed the following remarkable words. -

"The Church need not die-if only it would not so grimly struggle to live. It can hear and proclaim the Word of God-if, without any pretensions of becoming great through the Word, and without any anxiety for the morrow, it would only care for the truth of the Word.

If the Church were sufficiently humble to recapture its understanding of the communion of saints as the fellowship of sinners dependent upon the forgiveness, and so be rid of

that nervous, devastating, vigorous founding of new societies; if it were sufficiently humble to endure patiently the sneers of the rationalists, to fear and love God; if it were courageous enough to keep its eyes fixed upon its own theme, to abandon all striving after, attaining, and boasting about visible goals and successes... then the Church would be the Church of faith, and the Church of righteousness of God. But, "he adds,

"the Church does not love the solitariness of the desert ... it does not wish to be a stranger upon the earth ... It is in great haste; it is hungry and thirsty for the concrete joys of the marriage feast." (The Epistle to the Romans, English translation, p.367.)

Finally, from another commentator,- "We dream of a time when all miseries of the present will be removed, when ail knowledge will be in our grasp when men every where will be just and happy, and we make it our endeavour to bring about that time. Yet it can never in any sense really arrive. Passions which seem to have been eradicated are always liable to break out again. Evil conditions which were reformed so long ago that we have forgotten them, are found suddenly to return. History is full of warnings that the most secure civilization is built on reclaimed land, and that the flood is waiting to rush in as soon as the barriers are weakened. So in mans life on earth there are limitations which can never be overcome, and for any true fulfilment we must look beyond ... we must still wait on for the true 'Kingdom of God'."

The Bible story is the record of the successive acts of God wrought in history to secure the salvation and blessing of mankind. one of these acts however still lies in the future. So the New Testament ends with "Even so come Lord Jesus."