

Divine Plan in the world, or with the communication of Divine Truth respecting that Plan, its origin, execution and ends. *For this reason, purely human psychical "inspiration," which may account for the great productions of human genius, is, nevertheless, of an order inferior to Divine inspiration, which invariably has for its end Divine revelation in one or both of its forms, i.e. either as historical or documentary.*

2. The Meaning of "Prophecy"

Now we have throughout the Scriptures a single word which is used to designate either or both of these two distinctive works of the Spirit, the works of inspiration and revelation. That word is *prophecy*.

"Prophecy" is a term commonly thought of as having reference solely to the prediction or foretelling of "things to come." This, however, is only its *secondary* meaning in Scripture. Primarily it means to declare and to interpret the Mind and Will of God. In its primary sense, the word *prophetes* invariably means, both in classical and in ecclesiastical Greek, "one who *speaks forth* for another," and especially "one who speaks for a god," or "one who declares in the name of a god," "one who expounds or interprets the word of a god." This is certainly the primary meaning of the word in the Scriptures. When Moses, for instance, on being commissioned to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage, complained of his inability to make a speech, Jehovah promised him that He would make him "as God to Pharaoh," that is, empower him to deal with the Egyptian monarch in the name and power of the living and true God. At the same time, Jehovah promised Moses that Aaron his brother should accompany him to be his spokesman, that is, to declare his (Moses') words and to interpret their meaning both to the people of Israel and to the King of Egypt. Exo. 4:16—"And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and it shall come to pass, that he shall be to thee a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God." Cf. Exo. 7:1—"And Jehovah said unto Moses, See, I have made thee as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy *prophet*." A prophet, in Scripture, is a mouthpiece of God, a spokesman for God, a revealer of the Will of God, a declarer of the Word of God. Thus the prophets of Israel were primarily preachers

of righteousness and justice; their unfailling theme was God's holiness. Only secondarily were they foretellers of things to come, although in their case especially this secondary aspect of their work is of prime importance to us, in the fact that their predictions concerning the incarnate life and work of the Messiah are of such great evidential value. In the New Testament likewise, those persons who revealed truth to the early Christian congregations are called *prophets*, and their work *prophecy*, because they declared the Mind and Will of God (e.g., Acts 11:27, 13:1; Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 11:4, 12:10; 1 Cor. 13:2 8; 1 Cor. 14:29-33, etc.). Cf. Eph. 4:11-12; "And he [Christ, the Head of the Church] gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ." 1 Cor. 12:27-31: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, divers kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But desire earnestly the greater gifts." Thus it is very clear that prophecy, in Scripture, was not confined exclusively to prediction. Cf. Rev. 1:19—"Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter." Nor, on the other hand, is the term *prophecy* used in Scripture to cover every declaration of Divine Truth, but only the declaration of that Truth obtained through immediate revelation. In a word, without revelation of Divine Truth, there cannot be prophecy in the Scripture sense of the latter term. Hence, to speak of a preacher or an evangelist as a "prophet"—a practice all too common among churchmen of our day—is both erroneous and misleading, for the obvious reason that a preacher or an evangelist is but a proclaimer of Divine Truth *already revealed*. Such loose employment of Bible terms, by persons who ought to know better, serves only to contribute to the confusion which already exists.

Again, this particular gift of the Spirit of Truth, namely, the communication of the Divine Mind and Will to men, is called, as to the method or mode thereof, *inspiration*. It is so

called from the very name and nature of the Spirit Himself: one of the principal names by which He is known in Scripture is the name, the Breath of God. Hence, outbreathing from the Deity or inbreathing into a human instrumentality is the mode of expressing, in the nomenclature of the Spirit, the idea that Divine Truth—that Truth which is Being, Life—is being communicated. And so we read, in John 20:22-23, that when Jesus designed to indicate the future bestowal of the Spirit's powers and influences upon the Apostles, "he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." Obviously, however, the symbolic act of outbreathing in this particular case indicated not only the future revelation of Truth to the recipients by the Holy Spirit, but also their investiture with Divine authority. Under the guidance of the Spirit, the Apostles were to go out into the world not only as infallible witnesses, but as properly certified ambassadors as well, of Christ the Absolute Monarch of the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:8, 10:39-42; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 6:29). The point is that *inspiration* or Divine inbreathing into a human instrumentality is invariably linked up in Scripture with the communication of the Mind and Will of God, communication either in the form of an historical event performed under the impulsion of the Spirit, usually through the instrumentality of the Word, or in the form of a spoken or written declaration of Divine Truth imparted to the speaker or writer by the Spirit.

Moreover, it seems that when persons were so inspired, or *breathed into* by God through the Spirit, they had no rest until they had proclaimed or published the communication thus vouchsafed them. When Jeremiah, for instance, in a mood of depression occasioned by the scorn which had been heaped upon him, vowed that he would speak no more in the name of Jehovah, he found the Word of God to be "as it were a burning fire shut up in his bones." "I am weary with fore-bearing," he exclaimed, "and I cannot contain" (Jer. 20:8-9). Likewise, the consternation of some of the prophets was occasioned by the dreadful representations which had been made to them in visions, or by the momentousness of the truths which had thus been revealed to them. Take, for example, Isaiah's vision of "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high

and lifted up; and his train filled the temple." What was the effect of this vision upon Isaiah himself? The vision of Infinite Glory and Holiness filled him with a sense of human sinfulness which simply overwhelmed him. "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts" (Isa. 6:1-5). Cf. v. 8—"And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me." The prophet was filled with a divine restlessness which could be assuaged only by his own proclamation to his people of the truth which had been disclosed to him in the vision. Cf. also the testimony of Daniel, following his visions of the Ancient of Days and of the Coronation of the Son of Man. Dan. 7:15—"As for me, Daniel, my spirit was grieved in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me." Dan. 7:28—"As for me, Daniel, my thoughts much troubled me, and my countenance was changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart." Cf. also the testimony of the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 9:16—"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; ;for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." Thus it will be seen that the immediate effect of Divine inspiration or inbreathing was that the recipient was "moved" by the Spirit, that is, driven by an inward compulsion; moved to act, to speak, to do what the Divine Will desired to be done, to publish the truth which the Divine Spirit desired to be spread abroad in the world. For all such inspired persons there was no peace, no rest, short of such action or proclamation.

"Now the natural man," writes Paul, 1 Cor. 2:14, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged," that is, examined or discerned. (The *psychikos* man here is the man whose sole habitat is the Kingdom of Nature: the animal man, so to speak, the unconverted man.) No truer statement was ever made. It is corroborated by all human history and experience. The purely natural or human mind could never, of itself alone, have imagined or formulated such a Plan of Redemption as that which is disclosed in Scripture: a Plan foreordained to have its execution in the voluntary vicarious Sacrifice of the Son

of God Himself to make Atonement for the sins of the world—a Sacrifice, that is, intended by its very preciousness to sustain the majesty of the Divine law violated by human transgression, and intended at the same time, by its concrete demonstration of God's love, to overcome the rebellion in man's heart and thus win him back into fellowship with his Creator; a Plan destined to have its consummation in the perfection of a holy race, redeemed in spirit and soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23) to dwell eternally in God's presence in the ages to come; a Plan which envisioned, even from the foundation of the world, nothing short of the complete conquest of mortality itself and the eradication from our universe, through the life of the Spirit as lived by the saints, of all the consequences of sin including even physical death. No human genius was ever born capable of conceiving, by the powers of his own intellect alone, a Plan of such grandeur of scope and purpose. As Adam Clarke puts it: "Such a scheme of salvation, in which God's glory and man's felicity, should be equally secured, had never been seen, never heard of, nor could any mind but that of God have conceived the idea of so vast a project, nor could any power, but His own, have brought it to effect."¹ Indeed this statement is historically supported by the fact that men of genius, men of the speculative cast of mind, have ever been inclined to regard the outstanding events of the Divine Plan as revealed in the Bible, such as the Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection, for example, as the superstitions of fanatical zealots. As a matter of fact, about all that the unaided human mind was able to do from the dim light of "natural revelation," prior to the appearance of the Logos in the world, was to exchange "the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things," to "exchange the ruth of God for a lie" and to worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:22-23), even as the self-styled "humanists" of our day are wont to do. The purely natural man—that is, "natural" in the sense of being *uninspired*—receives not the things of the Spirit of God. Such Divine Truth is, and in the very nature of the case has to be, revealed to men by the Spirit Himself. *To the Spirit of God we are indebted for all that is known or know-*

1 Adam Clarke, *Commentary*, 1 Cor. 2:9, *in loco*.

able of God and of His Plan for the human race. Furthermore, to the Spirit of God we are indebted also for whatever individual capacity we may have for understanding the Truth of God and thus knowing God. For even reason itself was implanted in man at his creation by the Breath of God.

That which is true, moreover, of Divine revelation with respect to the uninspired man, is equally true, on a lower plane of course, of the grasp of that Divine revelation by the worldly-minded man. As Jesus Himself said to the Eleven, John 14:16—"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter . . . even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive." Even to the unconverted man—the man who lives his life on the low plane of what the Apostle designates the "mind of the flesh" (Rom. 8:6-8), who has allowed his spiritual faculties to become vitiated by the practice of sin—the things of the Spirit are simply foolishness: he is utterly incapable of examining, much less of discerning, their significance. Certainly we know how true this is! How many thousands of people there are in the world today who, no matter how "alive" they may be to the things of science, art, education, philosophy, politics, and the like, are nevertheless utterly dead to the things of the Holy Spirit. Not only they, but thousands of worldly-minded, ritual-loving Christ-crucifying church-members as well, scarcely know even that the Holy Spirit exists! (Cf. Acts 19:1-7) The deep things of God are sought out and revealed to men only by the Spirit of God, that is, by inspiration (1 Cor. 2:10-15); they have been set down in the Scriptures, and their significance has been declared to us, by those same inspired men; and they are capable of being apprehended only by spiritually-minded persons, that is to say, by persons whose minds have been fructified by the Spirit through their own reception of the living Word which is the Seed of the Kingdom, the Word whose entrance always giveth light (Luke 8:11, Psa. 119:130). Cf. 1 Cor. 2:15—"He that is spiritual judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man." Only through the study of the Scriptures, and the assimilation into their lives of the living Truth revealed therein, the Truth revealed by the Spirit through inspired men and interpreted by them for all mankind, do men grow in their capacity for understanding the things of the Spirit. Scripture interprets Scripture, if allowed to do so. Any man who has filled his mind with the language—the very words—of the

Bible, knows that this is true. He knows that his comprehension of the content of the Bible is clearer if, instead of himself trying to interpret the Scriptures, he permits the Scriptures to interpret themselves. He knows too that if he takes the teaching of the Scriptures into his life, and actually lives it in his various relationships from day to day, he will never cease to grow in his knowledge of God and of God's Will; that, in a word, if he genuinely "hungers and thirsts after righteousness," he will, as Jesus Himself has promised, "be filled" (Matt. 5:6). Inded this is the very challenge of our Lord, John 7:16, 17—"My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." In a word, said Jesus in substance: I propose the *pragmatic* test: he who tries my teaching by living it from day to day will find that it *works*, and hence that it is the Truth. No man can ever hope to attain the Vision of God, the Life Everlasting, unles he nurtures himself in mind and heart, in thought and affection, upon the sincere milk of the Word (1 Pet. 2:2); without such nurture, such *constant* nurture, he simply cannot grow in that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). That Word is the living Word of God as revealed by the Spirit through inspired men and by them in turn embodied in the Scriptures. The Word of God, the Word communicated through *inspired* men to *all men* by the Spirit, is embodied in the Book of the Spirit, and *only* in the Book of the Spirit.

To sum up: Had not the Truth of God respecting man's origin, nature and proper ends, been *breathed* into human instrumentalities by the Spirit, and by them in turn declared to all mankind, that Truth would have remained concealed in the Being of God forever. The simple fact of the matter is that without the Spirit's works of inspiration and revelation—both included in the Scripture term *prophecy*—the natural man would still be living in gross darkness, the darkness of pagan superstition, licentiousness and hopelessness. The whole world would still be without that "light that shineth in the darkness," without that "life which is the light of men" (John 1:4-5). To us who enjoy the fruits of almost twenty centuries of Christian teaching and preaching, the very thought is terrible to contemplate! May the good God deliver our children

and our children's children from such a God-less, Christ-less, Spirit-less world!

3. The Spirit of Truth in the Old Testament

The first eminent gift of the Spirit under the Old Testament having direct reference to Christ was the gift of prophecy, the primary end of which was to prepare the world for His advent, and the secondary end to pre-signify Him, His ministry, suffering and glory, or to appoint such ordinances and institutions of Divine worship as would be symbols, types and metaphors of Him and of His reign. From the very beginning of the Old Testament Scriptures, that which is recorded has either indirect or direct reference to Christ and the Christian System. The highest privilege of the ancient Theocracy was to bear the tidings of all the blessings and privileges which we now enjoy under the New Covenant.

[Isa. 33:17]: Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty, etc. [Jer. 31:31]: Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, etc. [Rom. 15:4]: Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope. [Luke 24:27]: And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets he [Jesus] interpreted to them [the Eleven] in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. [Cf. vv. 44,45]: And he said unto them, These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures, etc. [Cf. John 5:45-47, the words of Jesus to the Jews]: Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope. For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? [1 Pet. 1:10-12]: Concerning which salvation [the salvation brought to men by Christ] the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into [The Bible is one Book, the Book of the Spirit. In the words of the familiar couplet:

The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed;
The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.]

The communication of the gift of prophecy, as including of course both inspiration and revelation, is contemporaneous