

preters employed to render this message of God into the tongue of the people.

How do you suppose God, in Old Testament times, spoke to the prophets? Do you imagine He whispered to them in secret the words which they were afterwards to speak in public, or caused these to stand out, in a handwriting of fire, on the firmament of the imagination? It used to be believed that something of this sort had taken place and had been the origin of our Old Testament books. But not at all. It was in events that God spoke—in the aspects of nature and the vicissitudes of the seasons, as they swept over the beautiful face of the Holy Land; in the rise and fall of rulers; in invasion and famine; in defeat and victory; in birth and death. Such was the language in which God spake, and the prophets had the gift of reading it. They perceived what God desired to teach His people by His providence—that the way of transgressors is hard; that the righteous shall flourish like a tree planted by rivers of water; that over all their sits an almighty Judge, who marks and rewards; and that through the ages one increasing purpose runs. Thus they read off the mind of God, and of this blessed activity of theirs the books of the Old Testament are the imperishable memorial.

It is manifest, however, that the same kind of interpretation is required in our time; for God is still speaking in the same way, but few comprehend. God is in the centuries which we characterize by putting the letters A.D. after them as certainly as He was in the centuries which we write with B.C. I do not say that He was not near to Israel in a special sense; but, if His voice is less distinct in history now than it was then, or if the complexities of modern life render it difficult to discern a divine trend in events, all the more necessary is it to have interpreters, capable of perceiving what God means and making this known to others. As year follows year in the history of any people, there is a writing on the wall, which it concerns the nation to lay to heart; but it is written in hieroglyphics which not everyone can decipher. He, however, who can read the writing and give the interpretation may be the saviour of his country; for he expounds the conditions of its weal or woe.

It was thus that ministers conceived their office in the classical age of preaching—that of the Reformers and Puritans. When