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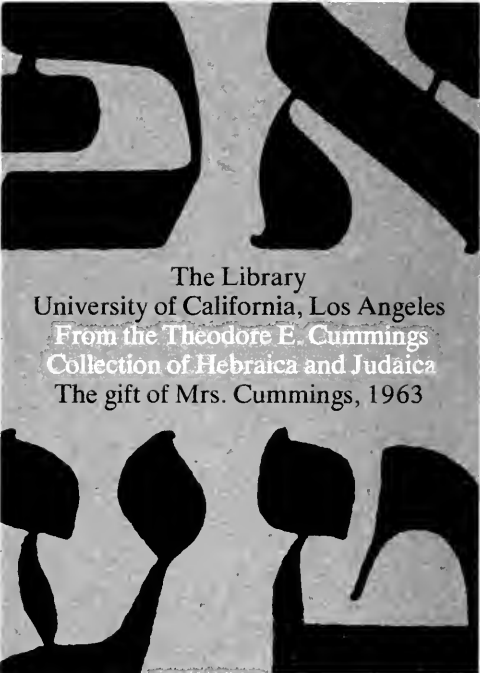
Subjects of the Bible

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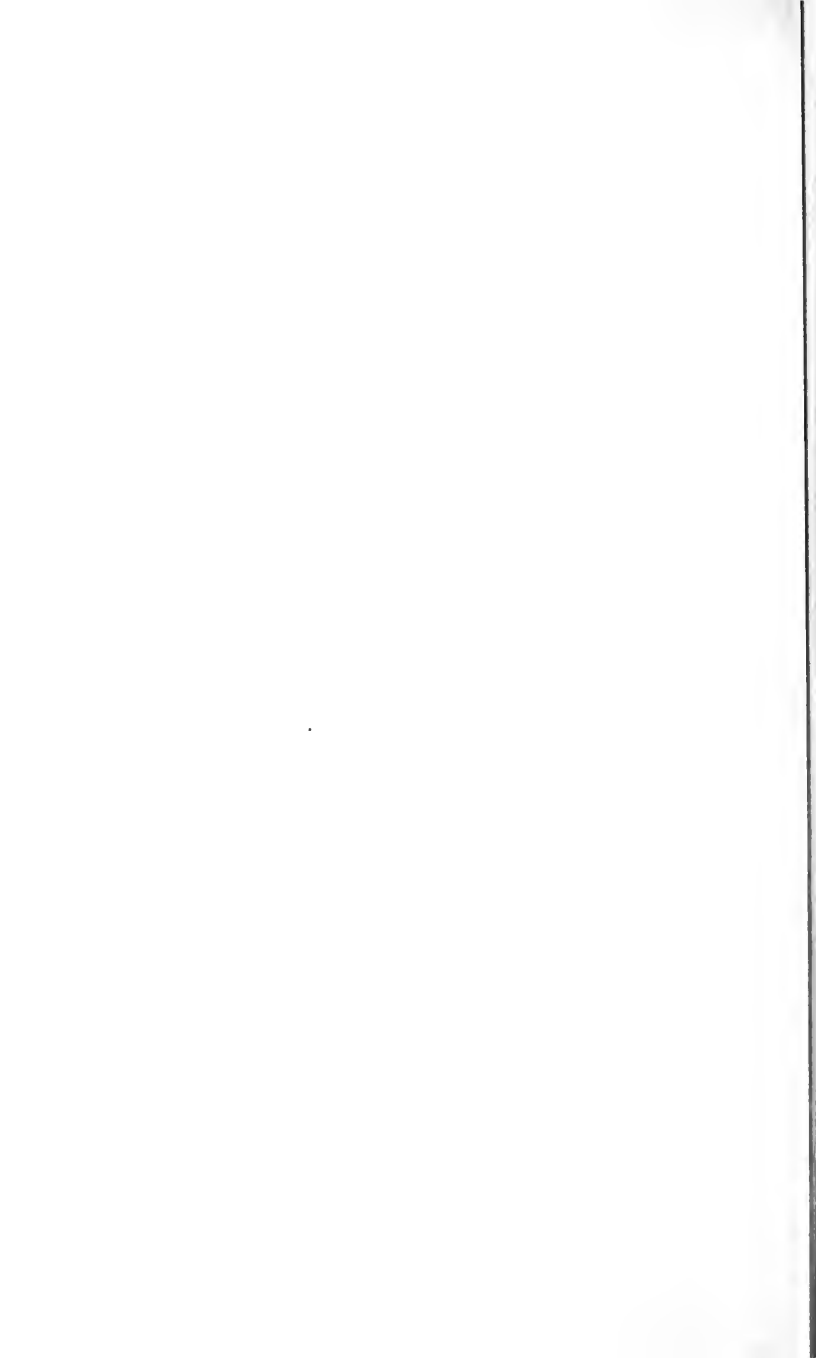
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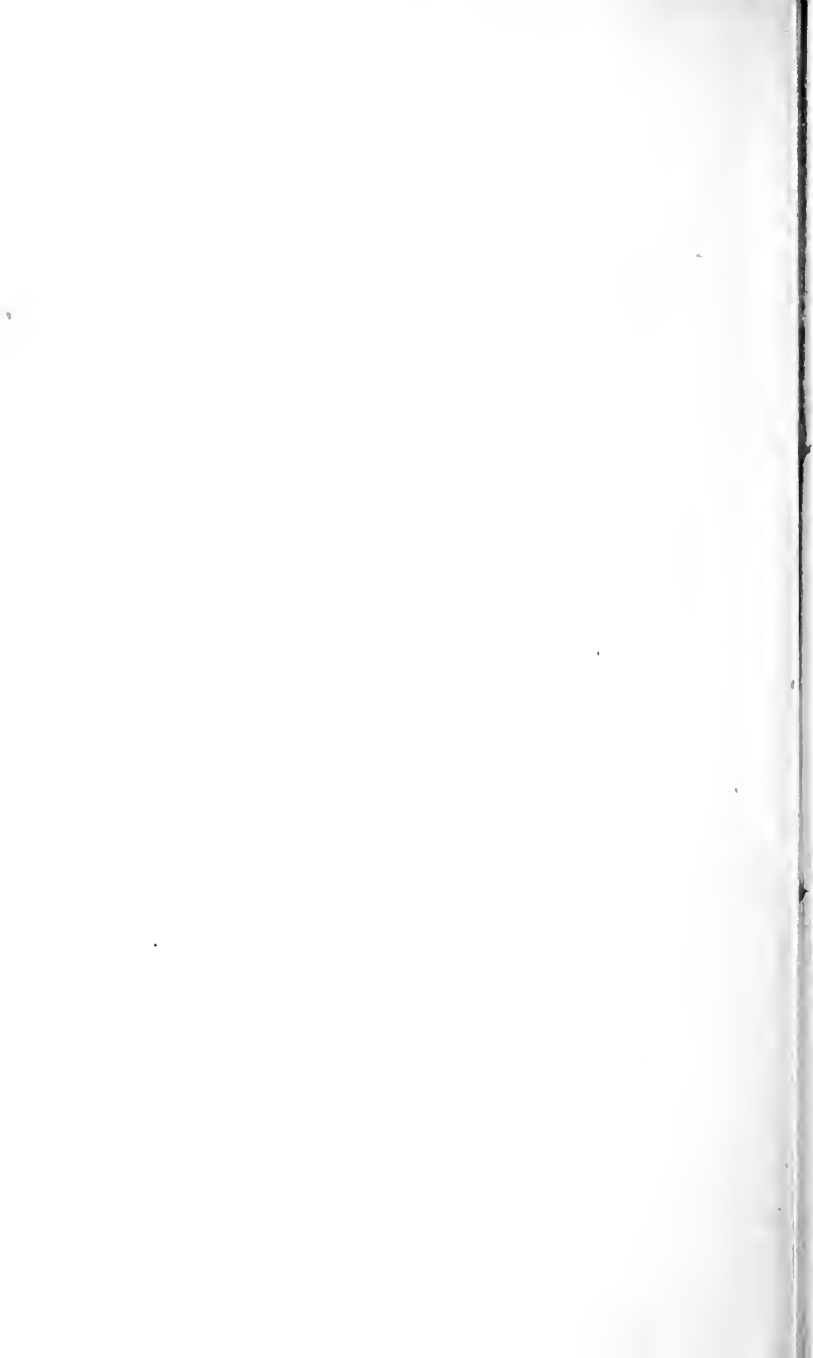
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Aspects of the Bible

BY

H. G. ENELOW



LOUISVILLE

1911

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NOTE

The four addresses contained in this booklet were delivered at the Sunday morning services of Temple Adath Israel, during the month of April, 1911, in honor of the tercentenary of the King James Version of the English Bible. They are offered in the present form in the hope that they may prove of some value to those that heard them, as well as to others, and that they may help spread a love for that "mass of strange delights", the Holy Scriptures.

Louisville, Kentucky
November, 1911.

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**“Starres are poore books, and oftentimes do misse:
This book of starres lights to eternall blisse”.**

George Herbert

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THE BIBLE IN HUMAN LIFE

THE BIBLE IN HUMAN LIFE

“The Lord gave the word; great is the
company of those that publish it.”
(Psalm Lxviii, 11)

These words of the Psalmist may be applied literally to the Bible. Whatever view we may hold concerning the origin of the Bible, we must all agree that it contains the highest revelation of religious truth, and that it has been the means of spreading that truth among a very large number of people. An ancient rabbi, commenting on our text, made the quaint remark that as every word issued from the mouth of the

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Almighty it divided into seventy voices and went forth to the seventy various nations of the earth. Similarly, it may be justly said of the Bible that it has carried the Divine Voice to every nook and corner, and that through the various languages into which it has been translated its message has gone forth to the very ends of the earth.

The three hundredth anniversary of the King James Version, celebrated this year, will serve to remind intelligent and unbiased people of the vast and deep influence that the Bible has exercised on the human race. I say unbiased, because there are many people who are prone to attribute the faults and shortcomings of Western civilisation to the Scriptures. Simply because

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Europe is supposed to have lived under the Bible these many centuries, all its sins and failures are by such critics laid at the door of the latter. I refer, for example, to a book called "The Bible in Europe", by Mr. Joseph McCabe. Its author takes exception to a remark made some time ago by Mr. Bryce in the House of Commons to the effect that "the Bible is the source of England's greatness." Mr. McCabe's entire book is written for the purpose of showing that Mr. Bryce's statement is untrue, and that the influence of the Bible on European life had been injurious rather than helpful. And how does he try to prove it? By rehearsing the tale of corruption that for many centuries existed in Europe, even

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among the officials of the Christian church. The author tries very hard to make out a case against the Bible. But read him carefully and you will find his reasoning rather unconvincing. Though his avowed object is to discredit the Bible, what he really brings forward are instances of iniquity in the church and among peoples that, calling themselves Christians, professed allegiance to the Scriptures. In other words, his argument is really directed against the Christianity of the Middle Ages, and not against the value of the Bible as an influence on the life of the people. And this writer is an illustration of a whole class of critics and iconoclasts who in their revolt against the abuses of the churches or the creeds of the past, are prone

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to blame the Bible for the faults of the latter—a course they would surely avoid if their judgment were less biased and their survey more complete.

The truth is that whatever corruption existed in the various creeds and churches of Europe during the Middle Ages, was there not because of the Bible, but in spite of it. It was there because men did not know enough of, nor paid sufficient heed to, the Bible. Indeed, one of the most important phases of the influence of the Bible has lain in its moralising effect on the churches. Again and again it has come anew into the religious life of humanity as a fresh breeze from sea or forest, purifying the atmosphere and renewing and reinvigorating the spirits. The

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religious and moral degeneracy of the Middle Ages was due largely to the circumstance that the Scriptures were withheld from the masses, and their place arrogated by the Church and its functionaries. Is it not a significant fact that every reformatory movement in modern European history was closely associated with a rediscovery of the Holy Scriptures? Think, for example, of John Wyclif, the great reformer of the fourteenth century. His age was one of revolt against the undue domination of church and crown, against the exploitation of toiler and peasant, and it culminated in what is known as the Peasants' Revolt. Wyclif was one of the moving spirits of that agitation, striving for a larger national freedom

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both in civil and religious life. Opposed by the ecclesiastic authorities, he fell back upon the Bible for support and justification. A wider knowledge of the Bible, he realized, was what the people needed; they must be able to read and study it in their own tongue, and think for themselves and act accordingly. Therefore, he set about making an English translation of the Scriptures as a means of emancipating and ennobling the nation's life. The beginnings of the English Bible, thus, are intimately connected with the growth of political and social freedom in England. And it is noteworthy that in a later age similar motives were behind the biblical labors of William Tyndale and Martin Luther. The whole Protestant Reformation, as

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a matter of fact, was inspired by the Bible and resulted in the Bible being given to the masses. No one would say that Protestantism brought perfection into the world. But, who will deny the great improvement it wrought in the religious and moral life of the European nations? By a return to the Bible that improvement was achieved, and ever since the freeing of the Bible from the fetters of the Church and its passing into the hands of the people, it has been impossible for Europe to fall back altogether into the barbarism and vices of the earlier centuries.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the freshness and integrity of the Jew's religious and moral life throughout the ages has been due in large measure to his

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knowledge and free use of the Bible. The Jew not only created the Bible, but kept it alive. Save for his devotion and vigilance it never would have come down at all, and in the ages when all Europe was engaged in warfare, avarice, and lust, he gave his energies freely to the study and preservation of the holy writings. Not only did the Jew preserve the Bible, but the Bible preserved the Jew. Just because the Scriptures were never kept from the Jewish masses by an ecclesiastic monopoly and spiritual autocrats, every Jew, on the contrary, being urged and obligated to study them continually, the religious life of Israel was saved from stagnation and Judaism from becoming a form of spiritual tyranny. Those teachers

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in Israel were regarded as the greatest benefactors, and enjoyed widest renown, who strove, by commentary and exposition, to make the Bible the common property of all the people, like Rashi and Ibn Ezra, whose labors, by the way, indirectly proved a boon to the leaders of the Protestant Reformation. "As the dove is saved by its wings, Israel is saved by the Torah," said an ancient teacher. Continuous contact with the Torah, that well of living waters, has saved the Jew from spiritual decadence within, and from destruction at the hands of the enemy without.

Aside from the general ennobling influence of the Bible upon the human race, there is hardly a nation in Europe that has not been affected

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by it in the making of its laws and the formation of its social and governmental institutions. Recent researches go to prove that even the most ancient Slavic legislation owed a considerable debt to the laws of Moses—a disclosure that Russian bureaucrats would find distasteful if the truth troubled them at all. But when we come to a study of England and America, we find traces of biblical influence at every step. King Alfred, who died in the year 900, expressed the conviction that his code of civil laws must be based upon the revealed law of God, and acting upon that conviction he prefaced his code of Saxon laws with a free translation of the laws in *Exodus* xx, 23. From that time on, biblical ideas and customs and precepts

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have been drawn into the very fabric of English life. The whole Puritan movement, to which such a large share of modern English life goes back, was practically a revival of Hebraic ideals and aspirations. The Bible was the mainstay of Cromwell and the inspiration of his followers. And when the Pilgrim Fathers left old England and crossed the ocean intent upon founding a new home where they might live a life in accord with their own conscience and convictions, the only book they carried with them, and the spirit and the ideas of which formed the foundation of the new commonwealth, again was the Bible. Later on, when the colonies threw off the yoke of England and determined to establish a government of their own, we again

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see some of the foremost men of the time go back to the Jewish Scriptures for examples and for models of government, and none can study the story of the rise of our republican institutions without realizing how much they owed to the precepts and precedents of the Bible.

As the Bible was one of the chief treasures that this country, in its infancy, got from England, so we see it now forming one of the great bonds of union between the two countries. Of all the factors that make for a sense of union and fraternity between England and America, none is so important as their possessing and loving in common this sacred legacy of a common past, and only the other day the premier of England and the American am-

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bassador to Great Britain at a public gathering both expressed the hope that the Bible celebration of this year might be signalised by the sealing of a treaty which would make peace between the two countries permanent. A sentiment and hope, this, to which all may well say amen; but it serves also to remind us of what the Bible has done toward the unification of the human race in general. Of course, the world has not yet become a garden of fellowship and peace. But whatever feeling of union and amity there does exist in the world, is due to nothing so much as the direct and indirect influence of the Bible. It is in the Bible that the gospel of peace is preached, there that the unity of the race is proclaimed, there that the

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visions of the future reunion of all the nations are set forth. It is impossible for such a book to have been carried far and wide, to have been given to the races of mankind in wellnigh four hundred dialects, without having created all over the globe a deep and growing sense of union and fellowship—such a sense as nothing else could have created. It has been truly said time and again, that the Bible is the only universal book in the possession of mankind.

It should not be overlooked, however, that vast as has been the influence of the Scriptures on the public life of various nations, it has been of equally great importance as an influence in the private lives of men and women. After all, there can be no healthy and powerful national

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life, unless the private life of individuals is strong and pure. Who can estimate what the Bible has meant in this respect? Who can count the number of men and women that were enabled to live nobly, to suffer bravely, to dare greatly, to die cheerfully by devotion to the thoughts and songs and ideals of the Bible? "With psalms on their tongues," says the author of a book on "The Psalms in Human Life", "myriads have died—now in quiet sickrooms, surrounded by all who have loved them best in life—now alone, and far from home and kindred—now hemmed in by fierce enemies howling for their blood. Thus in the Psalms there are pages which are stained with the life blood of martyrs, and wet with the tears of saints;

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others which are illuminated by the victories of weak humanity over suffering and fear and temptation; others, which glow with the brightness of heroic constancy and almost superhuman courage." It is by the aid that the Bible thus has given to individual men and women, both high and low, all over the world, and throughout the ages, that it has wielded incalculable influence on the human race.

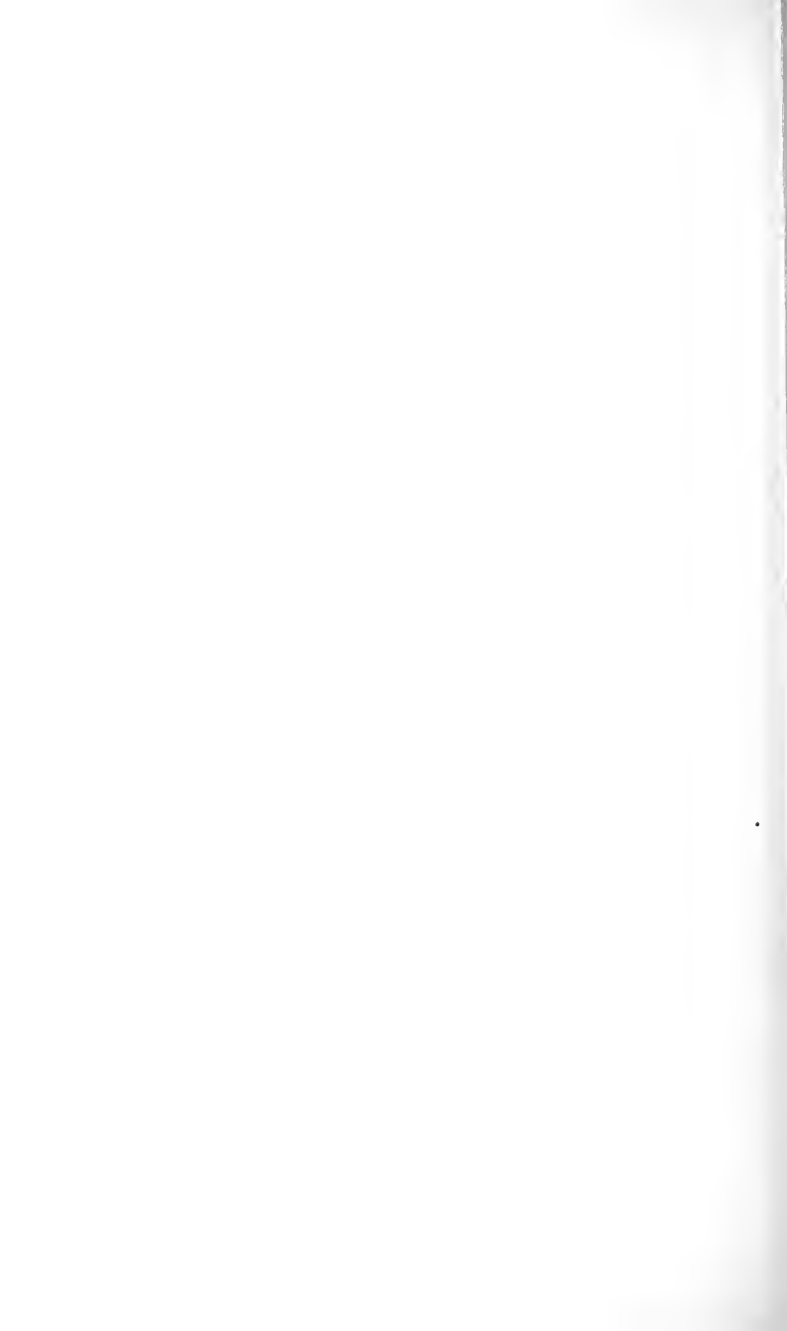
Is this influence going to continue? This question is often asked. It is a great loss, in many ways, that the study and knowledge of the Bible should have suffered such a decline in recent years. But there can be no doubt that men and women will come back to the Bible, as after periods of neglect they have come

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back to it in the past, and that whenever they do come back to it, it will be for the enrichment and elevation of their lives. "To the Bible men will return," says Matthew Arnold, "and why? Because they cannot do without it. Because happiness is our being's end and aim, and happiness belongs to righteousness, and righteousness is revealed in the Bible."

There are signs of such a return today. Let us hope that this tercentenary of the King James Version will serve to stimulate it, and that the company of those that love and publish the God-given word will grow with the passage of the years, until the earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea!

**THE LITERARY BEAUTY
OF THE BIBLE**



THE LITERARY BEAUTY OF THE BIBLE

“The words of the Lord are pure words.”
(Psalm xii, 6)

In the summer of 1830 Heinrich Heine lived at Helgoland, and in his letters from that little island he relates how from sheer monotony he often resorted to reading the Bible. It is well known that Heine was much more Hellenic by temperament than Hebraic. He realized it himself, and frequently referred to it. Still, the more he read this master-piece of the Hebrew genius, the more he grew to love and admire it. Much as he admired the spirit

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of the Bible, however, what impressed him most was its style. "What a great book!" he exclaims in one of his letters. "More remarkable to me even than its contents is the form. Here the word is as it were a product of nature, like a tree, a flower, like the sea, the stars, like man himself. Here everything grows, and flows, and twinkles, and laughs, one knows not why; it all seems so natural. This is in reality the word of God, while all other books are but signs of human ingenuity."

Heine's admiration of the literary beauty of the Bible has been shared by every reader of judgment. People accustomed to treat the Bible chiefly as the sacred book of religion, sometimes lose sight of the

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fact that it is also one of the greatest—if not the greatest—literary classic that the world possesses. Yet it is impossible even for men indifferent to the religious contents of the Bible to be blind to its literary excellencies, if they have an eye at all for literary beauty and an ear for the music of expression.

One of the most convincing indications of the literary genius of the Bible is the fact that it has retained its power and charm in so many different languages. Very few books can do that. What a difference, for example, between the literary beauty of Shakspeare's dramas in English and a German version of them, even though the latter has been made by men of poetic talent. Similarly, Goethe's *Faust* in an English version

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falls far below the original in point of power and beauty. Who has ever read an adequate translation of Heine's *Buch der Lieder*? But the marvelous thing about the Bible is that it has lost little of its beauty and magnificence by translation into modern languages. Instead of being conquered by other tongues in the process of translation, it has mastered each one of them in turn. We know from history how repeatedly vanquished nations have forced their ideas and customs and speech upon the conquerors; how even pagan peoples, after embracing Christianity, grafted some of their own beliefs and practices upon the victorious faith. But in the case of the Bible the reverse has happened. The various tongues into which it has

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been turned, invariably have been overcome by it. They have adapted themselves to its peculiarities. They in their turn have become biblical. They have yielded to the demands, the exigencies, the fascination of the original. They have in a way become Hebraic, with the result that there is hardly a civilised language or literature that has not felt the impact, that has not been affected by the influence, of the biblical style. Thus, while it is true that the deepest and purest enjoyment can be gotten only from the original language of the Bible, millions have drawn delight from its pages who knew not a syllable of the original. Like a mighty river forcing its way through rocks and hills, the Bible has broken a path through uncounted

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lands, and all the while its power has remained undiminished and its splendor undimmed.

Of no language is this more true than the English. Nay, of none other is it equally true. The perfect manner in which the Hebrew original of the Bible fused into the English of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, has been the subject of frequent marvel. Selden, a short while after the publication of the King James Version, in a somewhat critical vein, called attention to the Hebraic character of the translation. The translators, he maintained, had kept not only the Hebraic thoughts, but also the Hebraic phrases. Since that time, the foremost literary authorities have again and again expressed admiration for

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that very element of the English translation. Addison, in the eighteenth century, repeatedly praised it. Coleridge called the translators inspired. And from such a laudatory attitude toward the English Bible, no man of enlightenment and balance has ever dissented. What is more, the Bible thus has become both a fountain-head of beautiful and noble English, and a supreme criterion of style. On the one hand, all the masters of English literature have drawn from it inspiration and precept. On the other, it has served as the universally accepted standard of diction. You may recall Ruskin's words in his reminiscences. He tells us how his mother had forced him as a child to learn long chapters of the Bible by heart, as

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well as to read it every syllable through, aloud, hard names and all, about once a year. "To that discipline," he adds, "I owe not only a knowledge of the book, but much of my general power of taking pains, and the best part of my taste in literature. Once knowing the thirty-second of Deuteronomy, the one-hundred and nineteenth Psalm, etc., every syllable by heart, and having always a way of thinking with myself what words meant, it was not possible for me, even in the foolishlest time of youth, to write entirely superficial or formal English." It is even so with the rest of us. Once to have grown accustomed to the purity, the rhythm, the stateliness of the biblical style, is to have no patience with a style of mere pomp

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and formality, just as the ear stored with the music of Beethoven or Meyerbeer cannot possibly be content with the noisy tunes of an organ-grinder.

Wherein, chiefly, does the secret of the biblical style lie? First of all, in its sincerity. There can be no great style where there is no sincerity. You may have grandiloquence, brilliancy, and pomp without sincerity, but not the truly great, the truly impressive, the masterful style. With respect to style, too, the old rabbinic adage holds good: "Words that come from the heart go to the heart." We have seen what impressed Heine most about the biblical style. Its beauty to him lay in its complete naturalness. "Like a tree, like a flower, like the sea, like

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the stars, like man himself!" There is not a trace of conscious art in the Bible, he adds, and comparing it to that other great book, Homer, he maintains that while there too the subject is taken from reality, it takes on the form of a poetic composition, is melted, as it were, in that crucible of the human spirit which we call Art. No trace of such Art, he says, appears in the Bible. It is the style of absolute reality, devoid of all human aid. It is a style one cannot analyze. One can only attest to the effect it produces. It baffles all rules and canons of rhetoricians. "It is the word of God." There can be no doubt but this is the impression made by the Bible on all sensitive readers. Above all else, its power lies in its spontaneity and

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sincerity. The men that wrote the Bible were men of open eyes and open hearts. They spoke freely. They did not hide their convictions, their thoughts, their fears, their doubts, their hopes. Their speech was in perfect accord with their thought. There is no hypocrisy or mere conventionality about their style. It always expresses their feeling, whatever their mood might be. When joyous, their language has the power of a mighty torrent rushing down the snow-capped mountain; and when sad, it has the loveliness of a limpid stream flowing through the valley on a moonlit night. It is always natural and sincere.

Think, for example, of the book of Job. What is one of the chief elements of its fascination as a literary

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masterpiece? On another occasion I may allude to its spiritual value; but what forms the secret of its rare literary power? No doubt, its absolute sincerity. Job is one of the world's great books of skepticism. It is the candor, the honesty, the sincerity of the book that make for its distinction. It is the element of surprise in it. You wonder that so skeptical a book should be found in the Bible. But the very manner in which the hero voices and treats his doubts—his freedom from all deceit, cant, and vulgarity—forms one of the great literary qualities of the book. By justifying Job the Bible indicates, as Tennyson has tried to do more recently, that

“There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.”

BEAUTY OF THE BIBLE

I have heard people try to read into Job all manner of ideas and dreams foreign to its author. Such people not only misconstrue the meaning of the book, but fail to appreciate its chief esthetic charm, namely, that it says all it means to say and spurns those that speak things they cannot possibly mean or things that contradict actual experience. “Will ye speak unrighteously for God, and talk deceitfully for Him?” Or, “Should I lie against my right?”—this is what Job resolutely refuses to do; and it is this courageous sincerity in the treatment of a grave problem, be the cost what it may, that makes the book, quite apart from its poetic beauty and nobility, one of the exemplary books of all literature.

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In point of form, you may class the book of Job as a dramatic poem. There is nothing quite like it anywhere else. But there is another species of biblical literature altogether unlike what may be found elsewhere, namely, the Prophetic Oration. I once heard a well informed gentleman read a paper on Oratory, and by way of illustration he cited many an orator, both old and new, particularly Cicero and Demosthenes and the other famous masters of the art. But though himself a preacher, he said nothing about the oratory of the Bible. He had simply overlooked it. Thus, we are all apt to forget that the highest examples of oratory in all literature are to be found in the Bible, and that they are likewise

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the most enduring examples, because the themes they treat are eternal. I cannot think it possible for men to cease to care for those themes. I can conceive that men might lose interest in the character and designs of Catiline, or that the differences between Demosthenes and Aeschines might cease to appeal to them, or that they might even forget the points at issue in the great debate between Douglas and Lincoln; but how can men ever lose interest in those questions of right and wrong that formed the substance of the Prophets' fiery discourses? And in mere form of expression what could be more powerful than the orations of Moses, more overwhelming than the rebukes of Isaiah, more irresistible than the words of consolation and

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hope of all the various Prophets of Israel? Read them side by side with any of the other great orators of old: the others sound remote, unreal, shadowy; they are fresh, vital, moving, full of glow and fire even today. Righteousness is mightier than rhetoric. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever."

Then, think of the Psalms, which have been well called the response of the human heart to God. It has been said by one of the foremost critics of the age that in the Psalms we have the Great Lyric, just as in Aeschylus and Sophocles and Shakspeare we have the Great Drama. The title is well deserved, for in the Psalms the poets have dealt in the noblest way with the greatest themes

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of life, the everlasting emotions of the inmost heart of man. All the fears and hopes, all the doubts and cries, all the faith and fervor and yearning of the human heart are voiced in the Psalms, and voiced with a simplicity and truthfulness unmatched anywhere else. Now, outwardly human life may change from age to age; but the inner needs of the heart change but little. And thus, you can read the Psalms even today, thousands of years after they were first composed, and thousands of miles from where first they were chanted, and still they "fall as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."

Who will say that the few forms of literary beauty I have named exhaust the treasury of the sacred

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book? There is scarcely a page in the Bible that does not contain something to arrest attention and call forth praise. If you want captivating stories, the books of Genesis and Judges and Esther, and all the rest, are full of them. If you seek a beautiful picture of old-time rustic life, aglow with the spirit of love and faith and true devotion, there is Ruth and the Song of Songs. If you would read songs of deepest sorrow and woe, there is David's dirge upon the death of Jonathan and Saul, and the unknown poet's lament on the fall of Jerusalem. Or is it counsel of perfection that you would have, and wise reflections on life and destiny, on character and conduct? There is Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the latter called by Renan the love-

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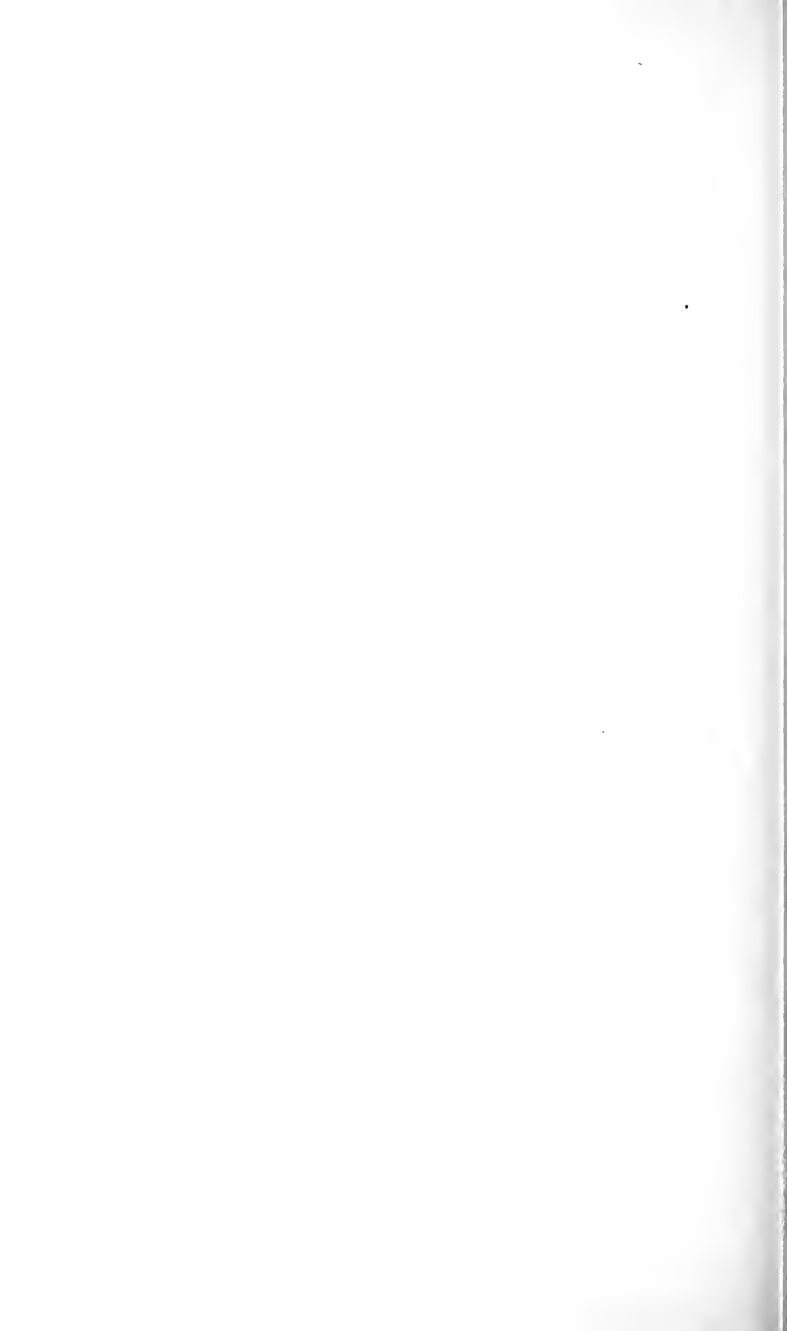
liest book in the Bible. Indeed, it testifies to the variety and riches of the literary beauty of the Bible that it has appealed to men of the largest variety of dispositions, of tastes, and of creeds, both the most cultured and the untutored, the most pious and most skeptical. The rabbis have well said that as the Manna offered to every person just what his taste craved, so in the Torah men have continually found what spiritual nourishment they needed most.

Let us hope that the Bible may long continue to nourish the spirits! May there be a revival of interest in the splendor and charms of the Bible as a great classic of literature, as well as of religious truth. The more we study it, the more we shall agree

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with the Psalmist that “the words of the Lord are pure words,” “restoring the soul,” “enlightening the eyes,” “enduring for ever.”

**THE ETHICAL POWER
OF THE BIBLE**



THE ETHICAL POWER OF THE BIBLE

“In righteousness shalt thou be established.”
(Isaiah Liv, 14)

There is one element in the Bible universally acknowledged to possess permanent value, in which we of to-day are particularly interested, and that is the ethical. Whatever views men may hold concerning other phases of the Bible, and whatever debating there may be in regard to its composition, authorship, historical value, and what not, it is agreed on all hands that as an ethical work it is unsurpassed. Matthew Arnold has called the Old Testament

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“Israel’s magnificent establishment of the thesis: Righteousness is salvation,” and he thus gave an undeniably true description of the Bible—one that everyone will admit to be accurate who has a fair and intelligent acquaintance with its content and teaching. But if we would find any one verse, and a brief one at that, summing up the biblical idea of what forms the real and lasting strength of human life, none is better than the words of Isaiah: “In righteousness shalt thou be established.”

Righteousness, this is the master-word of the Bible. There is no expression met with so often on its pages. There is no idea so frequently dwelt on and elucidated; and Righteousness, as Miss Jane Addams

ETHICS OF THE BIBLE

has well remarked, is but the old Hebrew word for ethics. It is no sheer accident or convention that makes people call the Bible the "good" book; rather does this adjective express the true purpose of the Bible, namely, to make human life good, to make goodness the governing principle of the individual and of society at large, to make the world a habitable place for human beings, and an abode of happiness, by the increase of goodness. That is the chief aim of the Bible men, and to it is all else subordinated. If among the Greeks art and beauty and philosophy were things of prime import, if among the Romans questions of political order and government and national strength were uppermost, if among the Phoenicians commer-

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cial ambition held the first place, the Jews were continually taught by their most eminent men that the chief object of life is goodness, that without goodness neither wisdom nor power counts, and that it is not art, nor philosophy, nor commerce, nor political eminence, but Righteousness that exalteth a nation. Wherever you open your Bible, you find a reminder of this ruling passion of the ancient Jewish teachers and idealists. In the stories primeval, in the history of the nation, in the lives of the great men, in the orations of the prophets, the songs of poets and the saws of wise men, everywhere the same refrain: "In righteousness shalt thou be established."

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If we try to ascertain the leading feature of biblical ethics, we shall find that the first place must be given to earnestness. The Bible men were very much in earnest, and the first lesson they sought to inculcate about life was, that it was not a trivial thing, but meant for a high and serious purpose. It is not true altogether to assert, as some do, that there is no humor in the Bible, or that it does not appreciate the value of leisure and play. "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven"—taught the sage. But it is preeminently true that the Bible teachers held that life has a solemn purpose, that it is a time of toil and service, and that only those can be said to employ it aright that really

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apply themselves to its duties and tasks with all their heart, soul, and might. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." This, from the biblical standpoint, is the first and fundamental principle of the ethical life, and from its operation no man is exempted, high or low.

Without the spirit of earnestness there can be no character. It is the soul of sincerity, of faithfulness, and of every form of noble achievement, while the beginning of all moral mischief and decay is to trivialize life—the adoption of an attitude of levity or scoffing or frivolity toward it and its opportunities. The sons of Belial—the biblical expression for

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creatures without character and worth—are those given over to a frivolous and superficial life. The difference between the two kinds of men, those possessing earnestness and those devoid of it, forms the constant theme of biblical reflection and teaching, and it is brought out with great force in the First Psalm, where the righteous, he who sits not in the seat of the scoffers, is likened to a tree planted by streams of water, while the unrighteous are like the chaff which the wind drives about. Earnestness makes for character, for stability, for usefulness and success; while the spirit of scoffing leads to nothing. This is the first and most frequent biblical teaching in morality; and it is a doctrine that has not only appealed to

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every true and noble man that has ever lived, but also been verified in the history of mankind. For, who does not know that whatever great deed has been done among men has invariably been the product of the spirit of earnestness and a protest against the spirit of levity and negation?

Another feature of the ethical teaching of the Bible is found in this: it identifies religion with morality. By this I do not mean to intimate that there is no recognition in the Bible of the undeniable fact, so frequently lost sight of nowadays, that there are certain aspects of life and destiny with which Religion is concerned that go beyond the purlieus of ethics, that transcend mere questions of conduct; of this side of Re-

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ligion there is ample cognisance. But the Bible teachers repudiate the idea that it is possible to have religion where there is absence of ethical cognition and moral practice. We all know that it is precisely on this point that primitive religions often went wrong and that even today so-called champions of Religion sometimes hold false ideas. In ancient times, particularly, the chief parts of religions were supposed to be rites and ceremonies, and whoever conformed to the commonly accepted customs of religious worship, was supposed to be religious, no matter what kind of life he lived. The great concern of worship was to expiate sin and to appease the gods by generous sacrifice and appropriate ceremonial. Cult, not character,

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was the most important phrase in the vocabulary of Religion; and alas! there are not a few even today who similarly see in cult the centre of gravity of Religion. It is the Prophets and the Psalmists of the Bible that first voiced a different idea about the chief purpose and demands of Religion. This they did when they startled their people with the bold declaration that the chief requirements of Religion were not sacrifices and ceremonies, but Righteousness—clean hands and a pure heart. “He hath told thee, O man, what is good and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” When Micah laid down that definition of Religion; when Isaiah declared that the de-

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mand of Religion was that the people put away the evil of their doings, cease to do evil and learn to do well; when Joel insisted that real contrition and repentance lay not in the rending of garments but in the humbling and purification of the heart—humanity was taught a new conception of Religion, namely, that Religion and Morality must go together, and that there can be no true Religion where there is no ethical integrity and moral idealism. This vital interrelation of Religion and Morality is one of the most significant affirmations of the Bible, and it has made the Bible a powerful influence in the ethical progress of the world.

It is well to point out in this connection that in its ethical teaching

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the Bible addresses the individual in a twofold capacity: as an individual and as a member of society. If the Bible lays stress on the private virtues—on purity, industry, sincerity, on truthfulness and fidelity, on obedience, and all the other virtues that make and adorn personal character—it is equally emphatic in regard to the social virtues. The relation of the individual to society formed a question of tremendous importance to the ethical teachers of Israel, and no man's life was deemed worthy of approval whose relations to his fellows were unrighteous, howsoever excellent and meritorious it might be otherwise. Nothing is more impressive in the whole Bible than the promptness and the courage with which the Prophets took to task

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kings and princes and peoples for deeds of social injustice. Let a man be as noble a ruler, as brave a warrior, as sweet a poet as King David, when once he is guilty of a grievous wrong against another man, he is quickly taken to task by the Prophet. "Thou art the man!" the Prophet tells him in rebuke so sharp and clear that it has come ringing down the ages. Let a people have risen never so high, let its worship be never so stately and its sacrifices never so numerous, let its past merits be never so great, if it has broken the laws of social justice and entered upon a life of social iniquity, its doom is sure to come. "Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof;

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because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; that tread as upon the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek; and they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge, and in the house of God they drink the wine of such as have been fined.” It is this recognition of the social aspect of morality, that made the Prophets, all of them, from Moses to Malachi, the staunchest and most intrepid champions of the poor and the oppressed the world has ever known, and they never tired of dinning into the ears of their people the solemn admonitions of justice. “Justice, justice shalt thou pursue,”—this was the keyword of social morality with them, and it is

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not too much to say that from their altars all the great social reformers of subsequent ages have borrowed coals of fire. Today, too, social justice is one of the great ends mankind is fighting for, and for this struggle we can find nowhere clearer sanction and stronger incentive than in the teachings of that sacred book whose chief theme is, "In righteousness shalt thou be established!"

One other feature of the ethical power of the Bible I must point out—namely, the high ideal it sets before us. It is from the nobility of their ideals, no doubt, that men derive power and stimulus in the making of character. Where the aim is low, there can be no lofty achievement. The ethical ideal of the Bible is the very highest possible—namely, Holi-

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ness, and the pattern it commends is God Himself. "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy!" Of course, this does not mean that any man can become as holy as God, but it does mean that in the pursuit of the ethical life everything depends on the loftiest possible ideal, and that the test of men lies in the determination and the tirelessness with which they keep on struggling toward the ideal goal. "That little man," Browning observes in "A Grammarian's Funeral",

"That little man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it;
This high man with a great thing to pursue
Dies ere he knows it"—

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But is it not the very pursuit of a great and holy purpose that puts the stamp of greatness upon a man?

The name of Thomas Huxley is associated chiefly with opposition to the old Hebrew traditions. The more noteworthy is the tribute he pays to the ethical value of the Bible. "All that is best in the ethics of the modern world," he says, "insofar as it has not grown out of Greek thought and barbarian manhood, is the direct development of the ethics of old Israel." "There is no code of legislation," he adds, "ancient or modern, at once so just and so merciful, so tender to the weak and poor, as the Jewish law and, if the Gospels are to be trusted, Jesus of Nazareth himself declared that he taught nothing but that which lay implicitly or

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explicitly in the religious and ethical system of his people.” Let us hope that men will continue to draw moral inspiration from the Bible, and learn from its pages those lessons of righteousness that are needful for the beauty and strength of our life.

**THE SPIRITUAL OUTLOOK
OF THE BIBLE**



THE SPIRITUAL OUTLOOK OF THE BIBLE

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

(Proverbs IV, 23)

No word has had a larger variety of definitions than Religion. One thing, however, all will admit; namely, that Religion must denote a certain spiritual attitude to the universe. Behind all the various manifestations or expressions of Religion, behind all its forms and ceremonies, behind all the meditations and prayers it has inspired and all the laws and precepts it has produced, must lie the general attitude

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it has taken toward the world and human life, its general view of things. This latter is the real soul of Religion, and where that is wanting, religious form and practice are like a body without a soul.

Moreover, it is here that we come upon what forms the real difference between men and men. All conduct in reality reflects the inward being of men, whose practical life differs according to the various views they hold concerning the purpose, the meaning, the worth of the universe in general, and human life in particular. Conduct originates in the heart, just as the mightiest of rivers springs from the bosom of the earth. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." The actual life of the man whose attitude to the universe

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is spiritual is bound to differ from that of the convinced materialist. It is in the thoughts, the ideas, the inner promptings, of men that we must seek the forces that have fashioned the lives of individuals and directed the course of civilisation.

What wonder, then, that the wisest and noblest of men should at all times have sought to formulate correct ideas about the world and human life, and to impart those ideas to others? That, essentially, has been the object of every philosopher and poet the world has known. Philosophic schools have differed according to the variety of theories they have held concerning the nature of things, and the reason why thinking men in general have entertained a high regard for the philosopher,

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even if they were unable or unwilling to follow his speculations, is that they have recognised the inevitable relation between ideas and conduct, thought and practice, between the theories advanced by thinkers and poets concerning the universe and human destiny, and the shaping of everyday life.

Now, as far as the Bible is concerned, every tyro knows that it is governed by a certain attitude of its own, that it has its own view of the earth and all that is therein. True 'tis that the philosophy of the Bible is not put forth in the manner of other philosophic writings; it is not reduced to a system, as are the ideas of Aristotle, or Spinoza, or Hegel. The teaching of the Bible is done in a variety of ways, more often follow-

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ing the natural method of a father teaching his children, than a strict scientific or pedagogic system. But that there is a definite spiritual outlook and philosophy in the Bible, no intelligent reader of it will deny. What is more, it is a philosophy that throughout the ages has had a larger number of devotees than any other scheme of thought. If other philosophies have had their thousands, the biblical philosophy has had its millions of disciples and followers. Indeed, we cannot think of the host of people of all times and climes, and of every state of education and fortune, who have found in the Bible the highest and most satisfying interpretation of the universe and solution of life's problems, without recognising that one of the most striking

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things about it is the universality of its appeal as a formulation of thought and spiritual guide. The Israelites, we are told, were led through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day to lead them the way, and by night by a pillar of fire to give them light. Similarly, it may be said that the Bible has served as a pillar of cloud and of fire to lead uncounted millions through the wilderness of life.

At the core of the biblical interpretation of the world is God. We know very well that we cannot think long about the nature of the universe, without asking the question as to how things came into being. It is but natural, therefore, that the origin of things should at all times have formed one of the first, as well as most fascinating, themes of philo-

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sophic speculation. The earliest Greek philosophers tried to trace the universe back to some one element, such as fire, or water, or air. A clash of theories thus arose among them, and diverse schools of thought came into being. Their example was followed by medieval thinkers. In the nineteenth century, however, scientists and philosophers again devoted their attention in particular to the subject of the origin of the world, thanks to the spread of the idea of evolution. But may it not be said in all truth that with all that has been thought and taught on this subject, men have been unable to go far beyond the thought of the Bible? Science may reduce the world to atoms, as the early Greek philosophers read it in terms of fire or water or air, but

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beyond a certain point even modern scientific analysis and speculation cannot penetrate. It all comes back to the biblical teaching: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." All the many rivers of philosophic thought return into the sea of that grand declaration. You may call the Creator whatever you choose—the Unknowable, or the Infinite, or the Absolute—the fact remains that human thought, with all the aids of Science, cannot push beyond that idea. Was it not the illustrious German scientist, Alexander von Humboldt, who recognised in the Psalms a summary of all the laws that govern the universe? "A single Psalm," he writes, "the one-hundred and fourth, may be said to present a picture of the entire

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Cosmos. We are astonished to see within the compass of a poem of such small dimension, the universe, the heavens and the earth, thus drawn with a few grand strokes." And no one can read that Psalm without agreeing with the versatile scientist, without feeling that that Psalm is no less profound in philosophy, than superb in poetry.

It is the chief characteristic of the biblical writers that they could not even think of the world without the thought of God. A godless world to them meant mental and moral chaos; it turned life into a scene of blind men groping about in a labyrinth, of wanderers lost in a dark forest, of mariners astray on the high seas without chart or compass. A godless world to them meant, I

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repeat, not only mental, but moral confusion. For, where is the ground or what the use of morality, if this be a haphazard life, a meaningless and headless world? "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," they held; and the fool to them was not so much the man devoid of intellectual power, as the man wanting in moral force and spiritual intelligence. That was the worst form of folly to them—ethical ineptitude and spiritual stupidity. Atheism and iniquity went hand in hand, as far as they could see, and in most instances were bound to go together. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." But as for themselves—as for the

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poets and sages of the Scriptures—how could they contemplate the beauty, the order, and the marvel of the world without thinking of God? It was He that “laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be moved forever.” His wisdom it was that indwelt the visible universe. “O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, in wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy riches.” It was His joy in the world that sustained it: “The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in His works.” The sight of all this wonderful world it was that filled the biblical poet with devout and joyous thoughts, on the one hand: “My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord!” And on the other,

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with moral resolution: "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more!"

If the denial of God is, thus, held to be the height of folly, the quest of God is the noblest occupation of life. Religion is a quest—it is the quest of men for the ideal, for happiness, for holiness, for God. It is the great thirst of the soul. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God: My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." No one can be called religious in the deepest sense who does not face life with such an eye of wonder, of inquiry, of expectance—who does not realize that this world of ours contains many precious treasures and wonderful mys-

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teries. This is the spirit we find in the Bible, and Mr. Watts-Dunton has rightly called it "the great book of wonder." "Show me Thy glory," exclaims Moses; and this forms the great desire and endeavor of all the prophets and poets of the Bible: they seek to see God face to face, to know His way, to fathom His will. And that to them is the highest wisdom and purest delight of life. "My soul looketh for the Lord more than watchmen look for the morning: yea, more than watchmen for the morning."

Are we to conclude, however, that it is within human power to fathom by mere seeking the whole divine mystery, to solve the entire problem of the universe? "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou

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find out the Almighty unto perfection?" The biblical answer is, No! The Bible does not forget the very wide margin of mystery that surrounds the folio of human knowledge, and it frankly avows that it is not possible for flesh and blood to know all, that there are certain things too far even for the keenest mind and too deep for even the most devout of souls. "The secret things belong unto the Lord, our God!" says the writer in Deuteronomy, and the Psalmist, though aware that "the secret of the Lord is unto them that fear Him", does not fail to perceive the limitations of human capacity, and he expresses it in that exquisite little poem of humility, the one-hundred and first Psalm. "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor

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mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely, I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.”

But if the universe is under the governance of a good and righteous God, how shall we account for the evil and suffering of which the world is full, and more especially for the sufferings of the righteous? With this question the sages and poets of the Bible grappled often, and their answer is given in the Psalms, in certain chapters of Isaiah, and particularly in the Book of Job. We are familiar with the picture of the Servant of the Lord drawn by Isaiah: the man chastised and afflicted for the benefit, the peace, the healing of his

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fellows. We all know the story of Job: the man of fleckless piety who, brought low on a sudden by misfortune, is led to question the goodness and justice of God, but comes out of his period of doubt with an even deeper understanding of the Almighty, and a nobler spirit of adoration, than he had possessed before. The object of suffering thus is to purify the human spirit, to chasten and ennoble the heart, and to bring home to men that the highest form of godliness is humility, that the purest piety is the power to adore God under all conditions, to hold fast to faith even under hardship and adversity, and the noblest servant of God is he that will suffer and endure for the good of others. "It is good for me to have been afflicted; that I

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might learn Thy statutes"—in this cry of the Psalmist is contained a whole spiritual wisdom. Of course, it is not always easy to see the light; one must wait patiently and faithfully. How does the poet of Job put it? "And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds: but the cloud passeth and cleanseth them." That such light there is behind the clouds, and that it must break through, that such joy must follow sorrow—this was the sustaining faith of the men of the Bible.

"Weeping may tarry for the night,
But joy cometh in the morning."

We may thus sum up the chief elements in the spiritual outlook of the Bible as, first, a recognition of the worth and sanctity of the world

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by reason of the Presence of God; next, the quest of God—the attitude of inquiry and wonder toward the secret of the world; then, the recognition of the existence of mysteries that transcend the power of human attainment, and finally faith in the moral meaning of suffering, in the ultimate adjustment of the ills of life, and the higher vindication of the righteous.

“What is a failure here but a triumph’s
evidence
For the fulness of the days? Have we
withered or agonized?
Why else was the pause prolonged but
that singing might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in, but that
harmony should be prized?
Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is
slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of
the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom He
whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome; ’t is
we musicians know.”

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With emphasis upon one thing I must conclude, namely: the value the Bible attaches to the individual in the pursuit of the spiritual life. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." An ancient rabbi remarks that the words in the ninety-second Psalm, "The righteous flourisheth like the palm tree," were meant to be applied to Abraham, for the reason that just as the palm tree brings forth its fruit out of its own core, so the patriarch gained all his godliness and understanding from the depth of his own heart. It is true of all. Without the cultivation of one's own heart the spiritual life is impossible. You may have heard many traditions, read many books, listened to many arguments: but what counts

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for most in the determining of your spiritual attitude is the prompting of your heart—your own feeling, vision, conviction—gained by your own experience and clarified by your own thought. All the wisdom of others must pass through the crucible of your own soul before it can become pure gold of faith and character. Otherwise, it is but crude ore. This is the meaning of Job's final words: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee!" It is such personal spirituality that can really affect our life—our work, our demeanor, our patience and courage.

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