

M.R. Newbolt

The Bible and
The Ministry

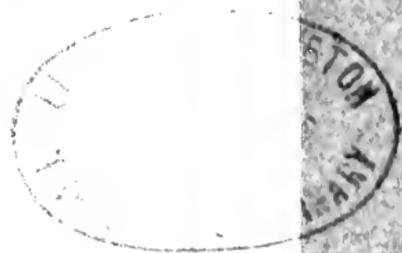


BS530

N53

BS 530
N53

M. R. Newbolt



THE BIBLE AND
THE MINISTRY

1111
N53

THE BIBLE AND THE MINISTRY

THE BIBLE AND THE MINISTRY



by

M. R. NEWBOLT

Canon of Chester : sometime Examining
Chaplain to the Bishop of Chester



dacre press
westminster

*Made and printed in Great Britain
by The Camelot Press Ltd., London and Southampton
for Dacre Press, 39 Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.1*

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. The Bible in Past English History .	7
II. Present-day Ignorance of the Bible . .	20
III. The Bible and Theology	34
IV. The Bible and Liturgy	47

I

THE BIBLE IN PAST ENGLISH HISTORY

We were promised in the nineties of last century that when the results of the new learning had been absorbed the Bible would come back into its own, refreshed and invigorated, reinforced in its influence as a factor in the spiritual life of the nation. A new and better day was dawning in the history of the Holy Scriptures, and their power to appeal to thoughtful people was going to be enhanced by the flood of new light thrown upon them by scholars.

This has not happened yet.

'The Bible,' mused a very intelligent Cambridge Graduate, puzzled, I think, by the interest in religion as a conversational topic aroused by the phenomenon of the Group Movement, 'the Bible is, of course, a wash-out.'

I do not think it is unfair to say that this is the general impression produced by much of our present-day public-school lessons in Divinity, and thirteen years' experience as an Examining Chaplain and six as Principal of a theological college for non-graduates has given me some insight into the amount of biblical knowledge to be found among candidates for Holy Orders. The last half-century has indeed seen a revolution in the position of the Bible as a factor in English life, but the revolution consists mainly in the passing away of a very ancient tradition. The English, once a biblically-minded people, to-day are strangers to the Bible.

And this has come to pass in spite of the fact that scholarship is able to present a far more intelligent and illuminating view of the Bible as a whole—as, for

instance, in tracing successive stages of God's self-revelation, through Moses, who welded the people of God into a nation separated from the surrounding races under the covenant with Jehovah, through Amos, who proclaimed the Universal Law as binding on all nations, Hebrew and Gentile alike, through Jeremiah, who made the Law a matter of the individual conscience and revealed the supreme value and responsibility of the individual soul. There is no need to summarise or expound the very great and positive gains of the modern approach to the Bible; they are obvious and well known.

But there are factors unfavourable to the old unquestioning belief in the Bible as an authoritative book. We have been living in a creative age which resented any suspicion of prohibition against freedom of thought and action. 'I am quite prepared to allow that Christ forbade re-marriage after divorce,' the modern youth would say, 'but I do not agree with Him. Circumstances have changed.' It is useless to say that anything is right or wrong simply because 'the Bible says so'. 'Prove all things' is the apostolic injunction most acceptable to the age, and there is much to be said for this demand for freedom, so long as a sense of proportion is observed and the overruling authority of God is left unchallenged.

Dr. Bigg summed up the lesson of the life of St. Augustine, that great intellectual and saint, in the conclusion of his introduction to the *Confessions*, in these words: 'If you believe a thing, Materialism, Socialism, whatever it may be, go and do it; preach it and act it without scruple and without compromise. If your theory will not work, note carefully where it breaks down, cast it away at once and try another.' It is too clear that our pre-war theory of life has broken down; it has broken down to the resounding crash of high explosives, and though new theories have been preached and acted on without scruple or compromise in Russia and Germany

rather than in England, yet here too we have been trying out a theory which has failed. If we seek to note where our philosophy of life does not work, it will probably be found that the weak spot is precisely here—a loss of that bed-rock firmness which is built upon belief in a final authoritative word of God. The characteristic word of the Bible is, 'Thus saith the Lord', or, in the New Testament, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you'. To this the Enemy of souls replies, 'Yea, hath God said?', and goes on to promise, 'Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil'. We have been creative (and creation is a Godlike activity), but we have created for death and destruction; we have claimed and used freedom, but we have now to fight for our lives against the extinction of freedom in Europe.

One thing, however, about the use of the Bible is certain. We can never put back the clock in a fundamentalist direction nor seek for safety in an obstinate obscurantism; our appeal must be to honest thinking and to facts, remembering that the surest of all facts is God. God is truth and it would be something akin to sacrilege to refuse to follow any line of investigation which leads us nearer to ultimate truth. God has given us our intellect that we may use it, and it is no discredit to faith to do so. In so far as the old traditionalist attitude to Holy Scripture was bibliolatrous, unintelligent or superstitious it had ceased to be faithful to truth. It is impossible to keep truth in water-tight compartments, having one criterion for the categories of religion and another for those of science, and it may have been inevitable that, in order to get rid of what was false in popular reverence for the Bible, the Bible should be withdrawn for a time from use and largely forgotten in order that men might come to it afresh and with a truer appreciation of its meaning.

The assertion that English people to-day are ignorant

of the Bible, and that our forefathers were saturated in it are both of them generalisations more easy to make than to substantiate; the reader may not agree with either. It is true that there are circles in which the Bible to-day is studied with zeal and enthusiasm; we have Bible classes, Bible Reading Fellowships and the like. Some, on the other hand, may be dubious whether the conventional reputation of our forefathers as Bible Christians can be justified in fact. Perhaps the fairest test is to take samples of sermons preached in different periods of history. The pulpit is a mirror of the age; in its preaching we see reflected the outlook of those who listened. For the preacher must address himself, not to a select coterie, but to the average man; he faces a mixed audience of all classes, educated and uneducated, a cross-section of the general public, and this is specially true of days when church-going was universal since Church and nation were one thing. The preacher's use of the Bible is conditioned by the capacity of his congregation; he has to hold their attention and it is useless for him to appeal to a book of which they are ignorant; if the Bible is used freely by the preacher we may be certain that the people he spoke to knew a good deal about it. We can also judge whether the preacher has the broadly biblical outlook, whether he sees the transient scene of human affairs against the background of eternity, as something directed and governed by divine providence in view of a final end, or whether he only reflects, like a journalist, the day-to-day succession of events and tendencies.

In order to realise the antiquity of the hold which the Bible had upon the English people, and to appreciate the use made of it by the preacher, we may take a sermon preached in 1388, at Paul's Cross, the traditional rostrum of the city of London. It is printed in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and manuscripts of it are there said to survive in

one or two College Libraries. The preacher, one Richard Wimbleton, lived in times not unlike our own, in a period of cataclysm when immemorial institutions were breaking down and civilisation was painfully re-shaping itself, when social injustices were crying out for redress and vested interests were fighting in the last ditch for their privileges. In his lifetime the Black Death had swept away, perhaps a third, possibly half, of the population of Europe, and the economic structure of England had broken down to the accompaniment of strikes, riots and bloodshed. Recently the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, as Chancellor, represented the old régime, had been murdered by the mob on Tower Hill. Abroad the Jacquerie in France was a recent memory of terror comparable to the atrocities of the Bolsheviks. Richard Wimbleton's theme, like ours to-day, was social righteousness; let us notice how he does his work. His text is the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. The State, he says, is made up of the Priesthood, the Knighthood and the Labourers; each of these several orders has its part to play in the economy of the Kingdom and to every man in his several estate, Christ, in the 'so strait doom that we shall give reckoning of every idle word that we have spoken', will, when the evening is come, and the labourers are paid, say: 'Yield reckoning of thy baily' ('Give an account of thy stewardship').

First he deals with the clergy: 'Every such bailiff then beware, for anon he shall reckon with Christ to the last farthing.' With equal outspokenness he deals with the governing class—'him that keeping hath of any community, Kings, Princes, Mayors, Sherrifs and Justices'; and lastly with the common man. Here was a preacher in a wild and turbulent age, when might claimed to be right, who could appeal with confidence to a law eternal in the heavens, administered by Him who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the only ruler of Princes, and

enforced with a compulsive authority recognised by every man to whom he spoke.

The point to note is that the whole sermon is saturated with the Scriptures. For the more learned of his audience he has an elaborate exposition of the woman sitting in the ephah in the prophecy of Zechariah, but for the most part he illustrates his argument by the citation of biblical characters, driving home abstract ideas by concrete instances. This is the way in which he gives 'truth embodied in a tale'.¹ 'O how many men hath covetousness deceived and spilt? When covetous Balaam would for gifts that the king offered him, have cursed God's people, his own ass reprov'd him and hurt his foot against a wall. Achor was stoned to death, for covetousness made him steal gold and clothes against the commandment of God. Gehazi was smitten with measelrie for he sold Naaman's healing that came of God. Judas for covetousness sold Christ and afterwards hanged himself. Annas and Sapphira his wife were dead suddenly, for they forsook to give Peter their money that they had.' He does not hesitate to quote the example of Rehoboam in terms that must have been taken as applying to his own King Richard II. 'It is good that every ruler of communities be not led by follies, for wit ye well, be he never so high, he shall come before his higher, to yield reckoning of his baily.'

We may not agree with the use this preacher makes of all his instances; his audience stood at a different level of civilisation from our own and nearer to that of a

¹ Our Lord used stories and characters from the Scriptures in this way. He refers to the widow of Zarephath, to the story of the hungry David eating the shewbread, the Queen of Sheba and the glory of Solomon, the Ninevites repenting at the preaching of Jonah and Jonah's three days and nights in the whale's belly. These are stories from literature, as one might quote King Alfred and the cakes, King Canute and the waves, or Bruce and the spider, without staking one's reputation for scholarship on the historicity of the narratives.

primitive people, but some significant points must strike us in his preaching. He and his hearers talk a common language, and are at home in the same world of thought; he refers to these Bible stories as to familiar things of which no one could be ignorant. How many preachers to-day could take for granted that a mixed outdoor congregation could understand these allusions? We simply cannot quote the Bible in this way because we know it would puzzle our people. And here is something more than mere knowledge of a text; the English of the past were at home in the Bible world as in their own house, they looked at it from within, not in the detached and critical manner in which a Frenchman may read English history or an Englishman that of the United States; they thought of the characters of the Bible as we think of our national heroes and our foreign enemies. They looked upon Abraham as their forefather; in the words of Dr. Goudge, they 'claimed the family portraits'; they were conscious of a continuous heritage with Israel of old, sharing their glories and their shame, learning the will of God from the records of their suffering and sin as well as from their faithfulness.

Besides this sharing of a common language, whose loss is so much to be deplored, we cannot avoid noticing an emphasis on one great thought which is massively prominent in both the Old and New Testaments and repeatedly insisted upon in our Lord's parables, but given little prominence to-day. It is the sense of the Majesty of God and the ever-present thought of Christ as Judge of quick and dead, 'henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool'. A generation which had never heard the word 'eschatology' was quite convinced of the truth expressed in Bishop Pearson's words, 'Enemies we have all been; under His footstool we shall all be, either adopted or subdued'. Richard Wimbledon's refrain, 'Yield reckoning of thy baily',

rings like the tolling of a great bell throughout his long discourse.

Contrast with this a sermon by Dr. Temple, then Archbishop of York, in the modern equivalent of Paul's Cross, the popular Press (printed in the Christmas Number of *Picture Post*, 1940). The circumstances are similar; then as now London bore scars of violence, death was in the air, the ordered system of society was in the melting-pot. The theme of both preachers is the same. 'Rich men,' cried Richard Wimbledon, 'take from the poor man an acre near the rich man's field, or a house in a street owned by the rich man, as Ahab did when he listened to his false Queen.' 'If we really put justice first', says the Archbishop, 'if we are going to practise to love our neighbour as ourselves, we must clear the slums and provide decent houses for all at rents which all can pay; this can be done if no one tries to exploit his neighbour to his own advantage. . . . All these things are required by justice, the desire for which in the hearts of men is summed up in the command, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Fundamentally the message of the Church is the same in the twentieth century and in the fourteenth, but the manner of its delivery has altered with the change of the mental furniture of the public to whom the message is delivered. Apart from the text, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', the Archbishop's sermon contains no quotation from the Bible; more than this would only perplex the reader, it would not strengthen his discourse, but rather it would weaken it. 'My own guess', says the Archbishop, 'is that after this war we must have either a moral revolution or a revolution of violence; but revolution of some sort there will and ought to be.' He is obliged by the atmosphere of our day to make use of a material rather than a religious sanction of morality, the danger of a revolution of violence. This is a perfectly justifiable

vindication of the law of God, a prophet might use it (and the Archbishop is surely one of our present-day prophets) but so also might a secularist. The distinctively religious sanction, which only a Christian preacher could employ, is extra-mundane and relies on the knowledge that man must give an account of his deeds, after death, to a Judge who is eternal. To the older preacher, and to his audience, the Judgement was no matter of guess, it was fact as undeniable as death.

I do not suggest that it is a good thing to sprinkle a sermon with biblical quotations; that is another question. All I am concerned to show is that our forefathers were thoroughly familiar with the text of the Bible in a way in which we are no longer familiar with it. If further evidence is required, it can be found in the contemporary fourteenth-century poem *Piers Plowman* written as popular propaganda for the common man. This poem, whose opening lines proceed from Malvern, has more Scriptural quotations in a page than you will find in the whole of the voluminous report of the Malvern Conference of 1941. This tradition, which goes back far behind the Reformation, is continuous until the nineteenth century. Then, with the flowering of our educational system, it stops. The last great representative of the biblical type of sermon was Mr. Spurgeon, and his discourses would not be listened to to-day. Whether the congregation were men of the Restoration period or solid Englishmen of the eighteenth century it is obvious that they expected the sermon to be full of the Bible. Donne's sermons, which one may guess will still be read when Newman's are forgotten, dating as they do from the golden age of English (for Donne was ordained in Shakespeare's lifetime, in the generation which produced the Authorised Version), are full of the spirit of the Bible; they echo the sombre magnificence of Job and the rhetoric of St. Paul. He also has the habit of Scriptural

quotation. Thus, to illustrate a statement that men have longed for death, he cites the complaint of Job, 'the impatient Israelites' (who cried: 'Would God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt'), Elijah when he fled from Jezebel and under the juniper tree requested that he might die, Jonah's impatience when he said: 'It is better to die than to live', and St. Paul's protestation: 'I die daily'. His masterly and detailed use of the sacred text presupposes that his hearers would pick up his points and follow his allusions. The same tradition of profuse biblical quotation is notable in Jeremy Taylor, Donne's younger contemporary, in Joseph Butler and other great preachers of the eighteenth century. But when we come to a giant of our own day, Henry Scott Holland, the admixture of biblical material is thin. He expects little of his audience beyond fundamental beliefs.

This contrast between the past and the present can be appreciated by even a superficial reading of Mr. Ashley Sampson's recently published volume, *Famous English Sermons*. These preachers of an older world seem to have taken for granted a greater power of sustained attention from their congregations than it would be possible to expect to-day. Donne would have kept us awake, he might have given us nightmares, but the effort of following his great periods would have left us exhausted. Richard Baxter would defeat a modern congregation altogether. May this not be partly due to the fact that we are not, as were the English of the past, a nation nourished on the Bible? We read much more in quantity of printed matter, but we read ephemeral stuff; they were men of one book (if we may call the Bible 'a book'); we are omnivorous readers, but their one book was great literature, and a mind formed on the Bible will exhibit some of the richness and depth which are the result of a liberal education. An age accustomed to the lofty and magnificent speech of the Holy Scriptures and the broad

sweep of their thought demanded sermons in the 'grand manner'; a generation educated in schools where no period of teaching is long enough to risk mental fatigue, and accustomed to absorb ideas in snippets, demands something short and easy, like a broadcast address. In his Bible the ordinary man found poetry, both epic and lyric, of a kind that ennobles, and braces the muscles of, the intellect; the Apocalypse, it has been said, is the world's masterpiece of imaginative art; the prophets of the Old Testament have at least as much to teach the reader as the speeches of Demosthenes or Cicero, and he who knows the historical books has lived in another age than his own and has a longer perspective of development than is to be obtained from any other literature. He is taught to see world-history, not as a fortuitous succession of events leading nowhere, but as a consecutive story with a beginning and an end, and to see God as the author of history, both of the record of events and of the events themselves. Our ancestors did not look on history as a photographically accurate reproduction of the past, like a succession of news reels ('just one damned thing after another'), but as a drama with a sustained and living interest, having a plot and predetermined rhythm; they had what the modern historian despairs of finding—a philosophy of history. The Bible has been called 'the most educational book in the world' and even in this respect our age is the poorer for its neglect.

We live in a world of rapid change (one might say, of the rapid collapse of Christian civilisation), and the process of secularised education is still young. Europe is leaving old landmarks speedily behind it. Who can say how much the Bible will mean to the young of the future? Fortunately this time of testing has come upon us in this country before the old ways of thinking had dissolved in 'the acids of modernity' and has found us a nation nurtured in moral ideas which grew out of the soil of the

Bible. Even where outward evidence of the Faith was dead the works remained. The ordinary knock-about Englishman showed at Dunkirk the love which has no greater—willingness to lay down his life for his friend; and the people of our bombed cities are prepared to die for an ideal of life which is inherited from Christ even if they have forgotten its origin; they detest instinctively the pagan worship of force which has bewitched our adversaries. 'We have got to fight for the only things worth having,' said a soldier to me in a railway carriage on a night-journey just after the collapse of France—'liberty and Christianity. And by *God* we will!' Yet this private who had twice been a sergeant-major, but 'was one of the unlucky ones', was not a conventionally 'religious' man. The endurance of the bombed civilians in our cities springs out of a race that has been brought up on the Bible, for this endurance, the power 'to take it', the grit that can patiently suffer with no power to hit back or to find any defence save an indomitable will, is a distinctively biblical virtue; it is the courage of the martyr. And it is the endurance rather than the pugnacity of the British that is going to win this war. 'No weapon that Britain can forge,' writes Miss Phyllis Bottome in her book, *Formidable to Tyrants*, 'no fighter among her young Davids of the air, is so terrible a fighter as that grim, determined yet unconscious fighter, the London Poor. Those who have lost all outward possessions and yet retain their courage and good will cannot well be conquered.'

We do not as a nation respond quickly to new ideologies, but certain fundamental loyalties and inbred ideals lie so deep in our people's hearts that it took the devastating explosion of total war to lay them bare. The nation fell back on something old-fashioned and instinctive, not learned from the new ideas of the advanced intellectual, but more akin to the almost in-

congruous combination of starkness and piety which we find in the letters and prayers of a Drake or a Nelson, something which grew out of our past as a Bible-loving people. 'Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' Not for nothing has the Bible been for centuries dinned into the minds of Englishmen. It has had a great deal to do with moulding the national ideas of 'decency' and courage. The shape remains even when the mould is withdrawn. But will it remain for ever?

II

PRESENT-DAY IGNORANCE OF THE BIBLE

Evidence of the widespread ignorance of the Bible is to be found in the work done by candidates for Holy Orders; they come from God-fearing homes and one would expect that among them at least the Bible would be well known. But it is not; and I believe that this is a serious defect in the training of the clergy, serious because an unbiblical Ministry means an unbiblical Church. It is also a defect which can be remedied, for the Church has the training of the Ministry in its own hands. If we wish to be constructive, not merely to lament the lack of knowledge of the Bible, the obvious point to start at is with the candidate for Holy Orders; for only by the Ministry, or rather by the Church, the guardian of Holy Writ, acting through the Ministry, can the Bible be brought back to its own. It is the duty of the priest, 'out of the Bible to instruct the people committed to his charge'; he is a Minister of the Word as well as of the Sacraments and he cannot fulfil this ministry unless he himself knows and loves the Bible. 'He', said Bossuet, 'who should give to the people from the altar, not the sacrament but common bread, would be guilty of sacrilege. Of no lesser sacrilege is he guilty who proclaims to the faithful, not the word of God, but his own surmises, speculations and opinions.'

The experiment was tried in a certain diocese of setting candidates for the diaconate a very elementary Scripture paper, to test, not their information about the Bible, but their knowledge of the Bible itself, bearing in mind the sort of instruction they would give to a Bible Class or a Sunday School or in a sermon to a mixed

congregation, eschewing essays and demanding facts. The papers were framed to find out the candidate's familiarity with stories from Genesis, or the Books of Kings, incidents in the Gospels and the Acts and famous sayings such as our Lord's words from the cross, and other passages bearing on vital truths of our religion. (This paper evoked a protest from the Principal of a theological college on the ground that his students would have already 'satisfied the examiners of G.O.E.')

It is true that questions of this sort are asked in the General Ordination Examination, but if a candidate does well on the more general questions I fancy the examiner will pass him even if he is weak in knowledge of the subject-matter of the Bible.) The results of this experiment were startling; stories from the historical books were found to be either imperfectly remembered or unrecognised, famous biblical characters were apparently unheard of, the sequence of events in the Acts was hopelessly confused; one man thought that Patmos was 'an island where St. Paul was wrecked and lit a fire', another that the words 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord' were spoken by the Angel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin Mary. 'Howlers' of this kind need not be taken too seriously if the rest of the man's work is good; they may be due to mental aberration; but there was no getting away from the total impression, based on the cumulative evidence of several years, of deplorable ignorance of the Bible (apart from 'set books') on the part of the majority of candidates. Some of these future priests could get only 25 out of 100 marks on papers well within the capacity of a child, and the least well-informed were often men with a public-school education and an Oxford or Cambridge degree.

In some instances the result of their studies had been to induce a critical spirit which set the student in a false relation to his subject, and to encourage an attitude of

mind at once more harmful and less easy to eradicate than simple ignorance. Young people to-day, perhaps because they live in a world bemused by propaganda, acquire the habit of suspicion towards conventional authority; embittered disillusion has caused many an idealist to learn the trick of a cynical depreciation of things which our fathers uncritically revered; and this may tend to an iconoclastic frame of mind in Bible study; superficial acquaintance with advanced liberal theories, a facility of reference to the latest catchword of biblical criticism and a detached attitude towards 'the religion of the Hebrews' do not foster that humility which was the virtue of a Westcott. Few things have done more to change the student's attitude to the Old Testament than the substitution, on grounds of linguistic accuracy, of 'Jahweh' (which I have seen spelt 'Javey' in an examination paper) for the traditional 'Jehovah'. The universal use of this reconstruction of the vowels hidden in the sacred *tetragrammaton* seems destined to remove all associations with 'dread Jehovah's awful Name' and even to encourage a patronising attitude towards the Old Testament as a whole. I remember a candidate, some years ago (public school, B.A.Oxon., trained at a theological college), who was prepared to be eloquent on the thesis that 'to the primitive Hebrew, El was the God of the desert, but Jahweh the God of agriculture', but whose knowledge of the subject-matter of the Bible was less than might have been expected of a boy of twelve. I believe that it is a bad educational principle to foster a critical frame of mind towards a masterpiece which the pupil has never studied for himself, as if an art student should disparage the work of Turner on the strength of a confused memory of a photographic reproduction of 'The Fighting Téméraire' and someone's smart debunking of Mr. Ruskin.

Even if only considered as great literature, the Bible

deserves more sympathetic treatment than it sometimes gets; many never discover its charm till they come to it outside the atmosphere of the lecture-room, just as the magic of Shakespeare is appreciated for the first time when the horrid little school editions of his plays are forgotten and he is read for his own sake, not for examination purposes. But the Bible is more than literature or it is a deceit. There are decided limits to the religious value of books which encourage us to read it as a work of art.

The scanty knowledge of the average ordination candidate may seem surprising and even shocking, but if we put ourselves in his place and ask what chance he has had in the course of his youth to learn the Bible, it is not easy to see that he is personally to blame. We take for granted that we are a Bible-loving nation; it is conventional to say so, and the enormously strong ancient tradition may survive here and there in families where the mother reads the Bible to her children. Where this habit is kept up its value is beyond all price, for in many instances this is the only effective method of learning to love the text of Holy Scripture; when the child's school life has begun (and children are more and more dependent for their education on school rather than home), it is impossible to guarantee that the Bible will be properly learned, or even learned at all. Splendid teaching is given in some of our Church elementary schools, but most candidates for Holy Orders are taught in secondary schools where religious instruction cannot be said to be the primary interest in an overcrowded curriculum, nor is it always given by competent or sympathetic teachers. The best place of all for acquiring knowledge of the Bible is in the worship of the Church, but even the boy who means some day to be ordained probably has less experience of liturgical worship than his ancestors. The tendency of public schools in the last half-century has

been to reduce the Scriptural part (psalms and lessons) of the chapel services; at the older universities the college chapel no longer plays its former part in the life of the undergraduate; in the modern it does not exist at all. Moreover, the restoration of the Mass to its proper place as the chief act of worship on Sunday has resulted in the fact that many young people hardly ever hear the psalms and lessons of Mattins, and not always those of Evensong.

Students training for Orders are often conscious of their lack of biblical knowledge and are unhappy about it, but the authorities are not invariably helpful. A student at a Wesleyan theological college who asked his tutor for help in learning the Bible was recommended to buy a text-book on Civilisation in Palestine; a similar seeker for advice in one of our own colleges was advised to read Dr. Streeter; often they are so busy learning to assign Old Testament passages to E, J, P, and the rest that they complain they have no time for the fruitful study of the Bible itself. Behind the whole question smoulder the fires of former controversies and the haunting dread of being suspected of fundamentalism or of being behind the times in the latest development of scholarship; our colleges must at all costs keep up to date by the standards of the academic world.

Karl Barth is a theologian, though we may not agree with his theology, and a theologian is something more than a biblical critic. It is with a certain amount of justifiable impatience that he writes: 'It is too clear that intelligent and fruitful discussion of the Bible begins when the judgement as to its human, its historical and psychological character has been made and *put behind us*. Would that the teachers of our high and lower schools, and with them the progressive element among the clergy of our established Churches, would forthwith resolve to have done with a battle that once had its time but has

now had it. The special *content* of this human document, the remarkable *something* with which the writers of these stories and those who stood behind them were concerned, the biblical *object*—this is the question which will engage and engross us to-day.¹ When this task really begins to engross the theological schools of England, which drank so deep of German nineteenth-century criticism, the Bible will again become a spiritual force.

When a modern Anglican commentator has to deal with such a passage as the first beatitude, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit', his instinct is first to compare the version in St. Matthew with that in St. Luke and to dilate on the synoptic problem; then, pointing out that the 'poor' and the 'pious' are identical in Deuteronomy, Isaiah and the Psalter, he concludes that 'the poor' here means 'the faithful remnant' and finds an illuminating parallel in *Sifre* on Numbers. Beyond this he has little to say, and, interesting to scholars as his comment may be, it has the effect of making the great saying curiously remote from practical life; the reader is not moved to action of any sort; in fact, the beatitude is effectively sterilised. In the seventeenth-century commentator, Cornelius à Lapide, who laboured under the disadvantage of a scholarship far less well-informed than ours, a serious attempt, covering several columns, is made to elucidate and emphasise the meaning and 'spiritual content' of the beatitude. Thus: 'There are three kinds of poverty: first those poor in property, as are beggars; second, those poor in spirit as Abraham, who in property was rich but in spirit and ambition poor; third, those poor both in property and spirit as Religious who take the vow of poverty from love thereof and abjure all wealth. . . . So also there are three kinds of rich: those who are rich in property, as merchants; second, those who are rich in the sense of

¹ *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, by Karl Barth (Hodder and Stoughton), pp. 60, 61.

being avaricious, who scheme for riches ; third, those who are rich both in property and in spirit, who lust to be yet richer than they are.' The space devoted to this searching saying is mainly filled with illuminating extracts from the Fathers, that is with the best Christian thought derived from the wisdom of centuries. Cornelius à Lapidé wrote for his own age ; his naïveté may provoke a smile from the modernist, but he shows to us denizens of a secularised Europe which is slipping into barbaric paganism and economic chaos, the word of Christ as a 'lively', life-producing word, a word in a living, not in a dead language. Bishop Christopher Wordsworth's *Holy Bible in the Authorised Version, with Notes and Introduction*, published in 1880, in spite of its unfortunate literalism, is more suggestive of the true meaning of the Bible for us than many more recent and enlightened commentaries. He too is full of the learning of the Fathers. Thus, for instance, in treating of Jacob's wrestling with God at Jabbok,¹ while his handling of the story is poles asunder from the contemporary method, he treats the narrative, not as something to be looked at from the angle of *The Golden Bough*, but as conveying, under pictorial form, a vital truth of our faith. 'God allows the exercise of his power to be modified by man's acts. He said to Lot, "Hasten thee, escape for I *cannot* do anything till thou be come thither." It is written of Christ that "he *could* there do *no* mighty work because of their unbelief". On the other hand he says, "All things are possible to him that believeth".' He quotes Hosea, to the effect that Jacob "had power with the Angel and prevailed" because "he wept and made supplication unto him". Such an appeal was irresistible to the God of tenderness and mercy. "Volens victus est", exclaims St. Augustine (*Serm.* 122). "Victor a victo benedicebatur." This is to use Scripture as an aid to life. Such a comment as—

¹ Gen. xxxii. 24-32.

'The narrative does not attach well to verse 13 or to verse 21; very possibly, in the compilation of the book something has been omitted', combined with the general modern treatment of the historicity of the passage, contributes to the cure of a crude fundamentalism; but this kind of comment, when it has served its purpose, ought to be 'put behind us'. Let the incident be frankly treated as myth, not history; this does not mean that it has no message for us to-day. There are certain truths (and this is a precious truth) which are best conveyed in a pictorial form and our business is to dwell upon the truth enshrined in the narrative. A workman is dependent on his tools, and a student on his commentaries and his lectures; from them he obtains the direction of his search for truth which may either set him to work on a deep and rich vein of the Wisdom of God or on a shallow and superficial intellectual quest.

Much time and great pains are devoted in our theological colleges to the Old and New Testaments, and admirable work is done which in course of time will, one hopes, have a beneficial effect on the use of the Bible by the Church, but the teachers labour under almost insuperable difficulties in that they have to crowd into a few terms a mass of instruction which ought to be absorbed at leisure over a long period of time. All they can do is to give the student what amounts to prolegomena to the study of the Bible; the student must be expected to have got to know the Bible for himself and to know what to look for in it, namely, the wisdom of God.

The whole question of training for the Ministry is affected by the change in the trend of education in the last century, for the priest is an ordained layman, with a layman's education on which his theological training has to be superimposed. In the days of Mr. Keble it was easy for a man to step straight from the University into Holy

Orders, since all education was homogeneous and there was little difference between the academic and the Christian outlook; broadly speaking, the Bible was known and accepted by every educated man. This is no longer the case. The Church has identified the cause of 'religious education', for which it has fought so valiantly and on whose behalf Churchpeople have made such sacrifices, too exclusively with Church non-provided schools. In the long run it is higher education that counts, especially in the sphere of religion. The University sets, in this matter, the tone of the Public School and the Secondary School, and eventually of the national education in religion even in our Church and Sunday Schools. In the universities are trained our Ministers of Education, our school masters and mistresses, the principals and staffs of our Training Colleges for teachers, the leaders of thought and the writers of newspapers. What the University has given filters down through the channels of the national system of education till it reaches the infant class in the village school. It is of no use to guard the back door if the front door is left open, and in too large an area of the higher educational world the cause of religion has been allowed to go by default. This is especially the case with the University education of women, and women play a most important part in the religious education of our children. It came as a shock to many people, particularly in country districts where the Bible is still well taught in schools, to find from the experience of evacuation that for all practical purposes thousands of English children know as little of the first truths of the Faith as the non-Christians to whom we send missionaries overseas. The alienation of urban industrialised populations from the traditional English attitude to the Bible is clear for all to see; the extent of this ignorance among the better educated is less possible to estimate, but those of the younger generation from whom the priesthood is

recruited are likely to be the best-informed members of the professional class.

The paradox of the situation is that apparently the intense interest aroused by the new learning applied to the Bible is itself a cause of its popular neglect and its loss of prestige. The young mother, with recollections of her divinity lessons at a public school, is puzzled how to teach the Bible to her child, where to begin or what to aim at, and this puzzlement is due to the loss of a tradition in which her own mother was bred. She fears that so much of the Old Testament is of dubious authenticity that she does not know how to handle the Bible for the young; she does not want to teach her child 'stories which are not true', or to base its faith on foundations which must later on be undermined. The whole thing, she feels, has become too difficult and 'scientific'; the simplicity of the days of Charlotte Yonge is gone.

The claim is made that we should 'treat the Bible like any other book'. But has the scholastic mind treated other books invariably well? Is the result of reading Euripides, Virgil, or Shakespeare at school the beginning of a lifelong habit of reading the classics for ourselves? The Bible is, above all, a friendly book; we do not get to know our mother or our wife better by setting out to treat her 'like any other woman'. We must have an affection for the Bible before we can begin to understand it; 'Lord, what love have I unto Thy law', cried the Psalmist; 'all the day long is my study in it'. There are keen biblical scholars who could say 'all the day long is my study in it' with truth, but have no special love for it in itself, only an intellectual absorption in a fascinating subject; they will dissect a Gospel with the same enthusiasm as they would analyse the text of Thucydides. When Schweitzer wrote that 'Hate as well as love can write a life of Jesus, and the greatest of them are written

with hate' (even though he qualifies this by explaining: 'It was not so much hate of the person of Jesus as of the supernatural nimbus with which it is so easy to surround Him'), he said the worst that could be said of the German scientific study of the Bible. The principle of the saying, 'God is Love and he that loveth not knoweth not God', applies also to God's Word. He that loveth it not knoweth it not, for love as well as intelligence is the key to its secrets; it refuses to be called up to the bar of our private judgement to plead guilty or not guilty.

Another obstacle to teaching the Bible to the young is to know where to begin. To read all through a volume of some 780 pages in double columns of close print is obviously impossible, and the difficulties of interpretation raised by the text-books are so numerous that it is hard to see the wood for the trees.

The theme of the Bible is that 'God who has wonderfully created us has still more wonderfully redeemed us'. The opening section of the Bible deals with creation; all the rest leads up to and describes our redemption. As the Church puts the Bible into our hands, it begins with an introduction in the Book of Genesis and ends with a conclusion in the Apocalypse; these twin documents contain the presuppositions without which we can hardly use it as the Church intends. As at each end of a suspension bridge are towers from which depend the cables that carry and hold up the structure, so these two documents carry the span of Holy Scripture, and until their message has been absorbed by the teacher it is impossible to enter safely into the Bible world. To omit careful consideration of them is as unintelligent as if, in reading a detective story, one should skip the first chapters which narrate the crime and the last which give the solution of the mystery.

The Bible begins by taking us behind the scenes into eternity, before time was; its initial sentence gives us the

first article of our belief: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth', and by reference to this dogmatic theological statement, and the symbolic narratives which illustrate and expand it, we supplement and correct conceptions of God found in the time of Joshua and the Judges; we realise that fallen Man retained only a blurred, imperfect image of his almighty and loving Creator, and that he had lost his way, a bewildered wanderer in creation, till God should come down to save him. The inspired pictorial descriptions of the origin of the world and of human life should be read as St. Paul read certain incidents in the Old Testament where fundamental truths are wrapped up in easily comprehended myths; they are not childish fairy-tales nor are they to be taken as literal descriptions of the astronomical and biological history of the cosmos. It is best to be perfectly clear and consistent about this and to beware of trying to 'reconcile Genesis and science' after the example of one of our Bishops who defended the historicity of the Flood by declaring that a Dutch ship-builder had constructed a vessel on the dimensions of the Ark and found that it was faster and more commodious than any ship of modern times. The Bible begins as it ends with picture-book theology and the first chapters of Genesis stand in line with the Book of Revelation. It opens with myth, as Plato understood the word, and the story proceeds for a time in the region where folk-lore merges into history, as in the drama of the plagues of Egypt, the saga of Samson and even the panegyric of Solomon. It has been well said that 'both Philo and Josephus, writing in the first century after Christ, regarded the biblical accounts of creation more as Sir James Jeans does than, for instance, as Mr. Gladstone did'.¹ Not less essential than the Alpha of the Bible in Genesis is its Omega in the

¹ *Women of the Bible*, by H. V. Morton, p. 9.

Apocalypse, the revelation of what shall be, when the heavens and the earth which now are have passed away. We come from God and we go to God, whose perfect, eternal and complete happiness all men were created to know and share. Everything else in the Christian religion is a means to this end; it is concerned, not only with man's present prosperity and peace nor only with social and international reconstruction, but with the attainment of beatitude in God. 'The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' 'And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.' 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth' is balanced by 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus'.

Once it seemed a new and illuminating thought that the Bible is not a Book, but a library of books written at very various dates, each coloured by the mental background of its period, as Dr. Kirkpatrick taught a previous generation in his *Divine Library of the Old Testament*. While perfectly true and indeed obvious, this line of approach makes it still harder to see the wood for the trees. What is also true and not so evident, is that the Bible is, in the words of Mr. Charles Williams, more than 'a number of literary pieces rather oddly collated'; it is given a unity by virtue of a theme which runs through its entire length from its Alpha to its Omega. Analysis has gone far enough; we need a synthesis which shall restore to our people the Bible as their fathers knew it, illuminated by the labours of a century of intense scholarly research.

It is a golden rule that the Scriptures should be read as their writers intended them to be read, and lecturer and commentator may profitably ask themselves what the sacred writers would think of the labours of the lecture-room of to-day, what St. John, for instance, would say to an average twentieth-century commentary

on the Fourth Gospel. His own intention is expressed with clarity. 'These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name.' To this end all New Testament studies are subsidiary.

III

THE BIBLE AND THEOLOGY

It is not enough to complain that the great advance in biblical studies during the last century has failed to stimulate affection for the Bible but has, on the contrary, coincided with a progressive fading-out of the Bible from the minds and memory of the people of England (though no doubt the position would have been still worse without the New Learning); we must ask ourselves the reason for this unfortunate state of things. That wise priest, Canon Stuckey Coles, used to say that the Englishman's religion depended on two traditions, the Bible and Sunday. What we have to do is to see to it that the elimination of fundamentalism from the first and of Sabbatarianism from the second do not deprive him of both; we are seeing the death of fundamentalism, and the war is giving the death-blow to Sabbatarianism, but it will be fatal to 'empty out the baby with the bath-water'.

As has been suggested, the intellectual and spiritual training of the Ministry is ultimately determined by our Universities, and especially, of course, by their Schools of Theology. Since the day of Westcott, at Cambridge the study of the Old and New Testaments in themselves has assumed a predominant, almost a disproportionate place in the study of Theology. At the same time it has come to pass that the Bible has been studied with little reference to its context in the larger field of Theology proper, and divorced from its union with the faith and worship of the Church. Many of the great Continental authorities, at whose feet our English scholars have sat so long, lived outside, and sometimes in strong opposition to, the main current of historic Catholic Christian life,

and their spirit has insensibly affected the attitude of our religious teachers to the Scriptures. To put it roughly, Bible study has been secularised. Thus one may come across intellectual persons to-day who know the Bible, for they make it their business to be acquainted with all great literature, but to whom it means no more than do the Homeric poems; it is to them a milestone in the evolution of the race, a land-mark which we have left behind us in our progress into the post-Christian era in which both Bible and Sunday will be obsolete. It is impossible for Christians to study the Bible in a vacuum. The word of God is compared in the Epistle to the Hebrews to a sharp sword, 'quick and powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow'; but removed from the hand that wields it, examined in isolation from its owner, it is no more than a museum piece, of interest to specialists and collectors only. For when they are detached from the larger framework of the Faith the biblical writings lose their virtue; it is only when we approach them with certain presuppositions that they are fruitful. We must come to the Bible with the belief that God is (for He is the ultimate reality in terms of which all other reality can be stated, while He Himself cannot be stated in terms of any other), and that 'He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him'—that is to say, He exists, not as a remote, inaccessible Absolute, but in a benevolent relation to ourself and to the world. It is not normal for the Bible to arouse conviction in an unbelieving reader, though God may, and does, sometimes work exceptional conversions by its means.

Theology, as its name proclaims, is the science of God, having for its subject God, and man and the universe in relation to God. As the subject of mathematics is space and number, that of chemistry the behaviour of inorganic matter, that of biology the origin and distribution of

plants and animals, that of history the record of the affairs of men, that of politics, economics and sociology, the State, its government and the laws of human society, so the subject of theology is God ; knowledge of whom is gained by the light of nature and the light of revelation. Because its subject-matter is the most exalted that can engage the mind and because it affords a unified philosophy of life and of the universe it used once to claim the proud name of 'Queen of the Sciences'.

The quarry from which the Church extracts her theology is the Bible ; that truth which lies in the Bible as the gold lies in the mine, is presented to us in the Creeds as gold in the form of the coin or the jewel, and the Catholic Church, which has been working the mine of Holy Scripture for nearly two millenniums, has amassed, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who leads her into all truth, a vast treasure of wisdom.

Theologians arrive at their dogmatic statements, as Father Bede Frost well puts it, 'by reading the Bible and thinking about it'.

Now, theology is an immense dynamic force ; even when it is faulty it is one of the most powerful influences in the affairs of men. Among the greatest of pure theologians was John Calvin. His *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is much more than a discussion of a few important themes ; it aims at nothing less than a full treatment of the whole of a Christian man's belief and the relation of God to human society. From it sprang the Genevan theocracy, great and lasting political and religious changes in Switzerland, Holland and France, the Kirk of Scotland, Oliver Cromwell and his Ironsides and many other makers of history.

Calvin was above all a student of the Bible ; but in his hands it was a weapon of his theology and consequently with it he set the world on fire. Could anyone picture the Honour School of Theology at Oxford setting a

world on fire? It may seem a foolish thing to imagine; but why should it be so incongruous? Possibly because what is termed 'theology' in the academic world to-day is no longer the science of God but the study of man's thoughts about God, which is a different thing;—in the one case God, in the other Man, is the centre of the picture.

There are good theologians and bad. I am only concerned here to insist that theology is a vital and dynamic force; it is not a study remote from life, the pursuit of persons interested in a side-line of academic research, useful to men looking for a career in the Church but otherwise one of the minor interests of a great University. Arius was a theologian, and though he was a bad one he made some stir in the world. But the perfect theologian must be, not only a man of trained intellect, he must also be a saint, and a saint willing to act as an instrument of that supernatural society which is greater than himself,—the Spirit-bearing body which is 'the pillar and ground of the truth'. Calvin was not a saint, and his science of God was tainted by a streak of hardness in his character; moreover he cut himself off from the communion of the Catholic Church and his theology has the limitations of individualism. Nevertheless, striving as he did, in the old tradition of scholastic theology, to seek for knowledge of God by the light of reason and revelation, he set free that living force which is so sadly lacking in theology as understood to-day.

God, 'the maker and preserver of all things both visible and invisible', created us and sustains us in life from moment to moment; if He should withdraw His glance from us for an instant we should drop out of existence; He does not depend on our thinking; we depend on Him. 'Cogitor, ergo sum', is a better starting-point for a unified philosophy of life than the 'cogito, ergo sum' of Descartes.

The average Englishman, to whom 'metaphysical' is almost a term of abuse and who attaches the most sinister implications to the word 'dogma', is not theological because his clergy are not theological; he is hardly aware that there is anything to be learned about God; 'either God exists or He does not' is about the extent of his intellectual interest in the matter. He may have a very real love for God, but it is possible to fall in love with a fictitious image of the object of even earthly affection and subsequently, on encountering some characteristic alien to our self-constructed image, to suffer disappointment.

Consequently when he does begin to think about such things the average Englishman falls an easy victim to some passing and eccentric development of religious thought; he has taken for granted that everyone knows about God, but no one expects to know about Christian Science, Theosophy or Spiritism by the light of nature; because these religions have some kind of a philosophy which must be mastered, they attract him powerfully. We clergy are weakest as a rule in just this very 'science of God' which should inform our teaching of the Bible. At a recent meeting of a clerical association the statement was made that the almightiness of God did not mean that 'He is able to do anything' for God cannot sin. The objection was raised by some of the younger clergy that this implied a limitation of God; that He does not sin was agreed, but it was thought that if He could not reject the temptation to sin this would mean that the goodness of God was only 'a cloistered virtue'. The layman might recognise that here was a tangle of thought and he might not be able to detect the fallacy, but he ought to expect his clergy to have gained from the Bible a clearer conception of the meaning of the word 'God' than this. Under the strain of the war and all its demands on our faith weaknesses appear in the founda-

tions of theism. In an otherwise admirable paper in a religious journal a devout layman spoke of God as 'learning by experience' and being taught about man by disappointment. A popular writer whose works are widely read thinks we understand God better by eschewing the capital letter in writing of Him and talks of God as 'fighting with his back to the wall' against the evils which assail our civilisation. One might as well talk of the multiplication table fighting with its back to the wall because the Infant Class are making a muddle of their sums. God is a fact, not a theory, and the spiritual world, as Baron von Hügel declares, is a world of facts. 'You must learn about it, as you would learn forestry from a forester. After five or six years amongst the trees you will know something about it. You are a goose if you cavil at that.' Father Bede Frost, to whom I owe this quotation, also gives Chesterton's definition of theology as 'the element of reason in religion, the reason which prevents it from becoming a mere emotion'. Theology is a science, and a science which is essential to the true understanding of the Bible.

Yet it is not by the intellect alone that we attain to the knowledge of God; we know Him primarily by love (for He is a person not a puzzle), and by seeking to be faithful in doing His will. 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine' (not 'if any man will do God's will he need not trouble about dogma'). The study of the Bible, or of any branch of theology, without a life of prayer and moral discipline, is both dangerous and unscientific. It is a well-known fallacy to argue that 'he who drives fat oxen must himself be fat', but he who chooses 'the science of God', unless he is content to leave the nature of God an open question, must be godly, he must practise the knowledge of God with the heart as well as with the intellect. Practice is at least as essential in theology as in chemistry or in music; the contribution

made by Baron von Hügel to the religious thinking of his generation would have been a much smaller thing if he had not been a man of prayer as well as a profound thinker. As we shall argue later on, prayer, and especially liturgical prayer, is an essential background to the true understanding of the Bible.

To return to the question of the modern academic study of theology, and the place which the Bible holds in it, the following may be taken as a list of the various divisions of the subject. First, Comparative Religion—this is something new in the theologian's curriculum; it is a branch of research unexplored by, say, the Caroline divines, and it has the attraction of all new things. Pre-historic man is a prominent character in the contemporary world of learning and we are conscious of illimitable vistas of time behind the dawn of known history during which man developed through the ages. The general rough impression which a not very well balanced student might obtain from lectures on this subject is that in the evolution of religious thought, first we find animism, then polytheism, then monolatry, then monotheism and finally (but is this final?) Liberal Christianity. Comparative Religion might be more accurately defined as anthropology,—for man rather than God is the object of its investigations. Other branches of 'theology' are the Philosophy of Religion, the Psychology of Religion, the Old Testament, the New Testament, the History of the Creeds, the History of Christian Doctrine, Church History, Moral Theology and Christian Worship and Liturgy. It is quite possible to treat almost any of these subjects in a detached and non-committal spirit, as an unbiased scientific examination of man's thinking about God and of his religious practices in various ages.

But we are concerned with the Bible and its place and treatment in this comprehensive scheme. This is what a Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford says of the Old

Testament in a recent publication on the Study of Theology: 'After more than a century of scrutiny, the Old Testament emerges unequalled as a source of knowledge about the history of civilisation in one important region of the world and unsurpassed also as a vehicle of man's deepest devotional thoughts and aspirations.' Contrast with this the words of Him who, on the way to Emmaus, 'beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself'. However illuminating the study of the Bible may be as a record of man's history, man's thoughts and aspirations, this is not the path which the teaching Ministry should follow, nor, if our definition of theology is correct, has it any very direct reference to 'the science of God'.

Contrast, in order to illustrate this difference, two imaginary schemes of instruction on a biblical theme chosen at random, say, the Fatherhood of God. The first, worked out by a man trained to think in terms of Comparative Religion, might run something like this: Among Semitic races, the god, or Ba'al, was conceived of as the source of agricultural fertility, 'giving rain from heaven and fruitful seasons'. Perhaps primitive man discovered that a plant like our wheat grew in the disturbed earth of his burial-mounds and thus came to associate bread with the spirits of the dead. The god was, in annual cultus-ceremonies, married to the earth, as the husband of the land and father of the tribe which lived upon it. His festivals were accompanied by orgiastic rites emblematic of the fertility-god, and it is notable that the Hebrew prophets, in the interests of the higher moral standard which they upheld, fought against the natural tendency of the worshippers of Jahweh to assimilate their worship to that of their neighbours. But even the prophets show traces of this belief: 'For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth

the things sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.' 'Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate, but thou shalt be called Hephzibah and thy land Beulah; for the Lord (Jahweh) delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.' The commentator will not fail to note that the fatherhood of God was originally understood as a relation between Him and the group or tribe, giving them prosperity and plenty so long as the relationship was cemented and renewed by the sacrificial meal. Only in later and more developed thought and aspiration is He sometimes conceived of as the Father of the single soul. Christ made much use of this idea. In fact His characteristic name for God is 'Father'.

The second scheme of instruction on the same theme, but expressed in terms of theology, might begin with the statement of St. Paul, that God is the Father 'of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named' or in the better translation given in the margin of the Revised Version, 'from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named', who is from eternity a Father, being the Father of the Eternal Son. We are to contemplate the perfect relation of love which exists in the bosom of the Ever-Blessed Trinity, that relation which our Lord claimed when He spoke of the eternal God as 'My Father and your Father'. He is the 'only Son' in the sense that He is God the Son. And He taught us to come to God through Himself, as to our Father, with the proud yet intimate confidence of children. God is our Father because He is our creator, we are children of 'Adam which was the son of God', and no other creature on earth is God's child, except man, made in His image.

We are God's children also by baptism, 'wherein I was made the child of God', because by baptism we are made members of Christ, partakers of the nature of His Son. Here is primary truth, truth that can become a living and life-giving force, making us 'feel we are greater than we know' yet at the same time miserably unworthy of our high privileges.

The teacher may, if he wishes, include some consideration of the blurred and degenerate instinct which caused fallen man to feel some sense of kinship with, some dependence upon, the unknown Being who created and sustains him, but these anthropological curiosities in themselves are sterile; they tickle the intellect, they do not move the will. They are in fact 'interesting'—to certain types of mind, as a talk on the wireless may be 'interesting', but the word of God is not to be described by that epithet; it 'pierces', it penetrates through the outer layers of consciousness to the heart, it is as personal as the message on the wireless that begins with our own name and tells of a wife or child who is dangerously ill and needs us. The word of God does not, *in the first instance*, call us to listen to other men's thoughts and aspirations; far less is it concerned to teach us history as the scholar is concerned with history. ('Now the rest of the acts of Asa, Omri, Ahab, Hezekiah and the rest, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel, or of the prophet Iddo, or the book of Jasher?' Look for these books if that is what you want.) The Bible is concerned with a message which begins: 'Thus saith the Lord', and is addressed to us: 'Thou art the man.'

It is not the case that the Bible is forgotten by the common man in England because it is no longer studied by the intellectual leaders of the Church, as it has been neglected in other lands and other ages in favour of legends about the saints or fine-spun subtleties of

speculative dogma. Nor has it suffered from mere neglect; it has been analysed with prodigious diligence, buried under masses of exegesis, argued about and submitted to every description of dissection by the erudite. Yet it has steadily and progressively lost its hold upon the public mind. Even the devout worshipper, who would never miss Mass on Sundays and days of obligation, knows it less well than the average lukewarm churchgoer of a bygone generation. In some subtle manner it has lost authority, and with the loss of authority its power to grip men and move to action. We have got into the habit of despairing of ultimate, final truth because in the region of theology we have made man the centre rather than God; we have asked too exclusively: What has man taught about God? We have sought too diligently to read what the latest scholarship has to say about the Bible, rather than set to work to read it for ourselves. We no longer ask of any statement which confronts us: Is this true? but: Who says it?

It is so with the Bible itself. A Cambridge Professor remarks that in a certain line of teaching in the Gospels we can trace 'the hand of that ecclesiastical artist who composed the first Gospel', or another will dismiss a passage as 'characteristically Pauline'. Meanwhile we build up a theology of our own (for some philosophy of life is necessary) and judge the Bible by its apparent consistency with our pet belief. In the eyes of those who, before the war, believed in progress and the automatic march of inevitable evolution, the apocalyptic note of much New Testament teaching was suspected or ignored; no cataclysms, no sudden breaking-in of the divine upon the smooth mundane surface of our civilisation was to be allowed; the element in the New Testament which envisaged such possibilities was airily dismissed with a disparaging reference to 'Jewish Apocalyptic'. Men had come to take our secular world-order for

the one solid basis of reality, for something as fixed and orderly in its inevitable development as the starry heavens themselves; that it could be shaken by upheaval from within, that history should revert to an age of violent barbarism, seemed as inconceivable as that the sun should be turned into darkness or the moon into blood. The business of progressive thinkers was to keep their ears to the ground, to listen diligently to what the world, or advanced thought, or 'Youth' demanded, and to shape religious doctrine to supply the need.

Not content with historic or textual criticism, men became profoundly critical of the morality of the Bible, even of some of the recorded teaching of Christ Himself, as in Dr. Dearmer's *The Legend of Hell*. How often have we heard that text about 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' quoted as an instance of the savagery of the Old Testament? And yet the historic sense on which modern biblical criticism has rightly laid such store should have modified these strictures. Criminal law, and all law as the application of science to the art of living, was in its infancy; as men had to be their own butchers more frequently than we who have relegated this necessary task to a professional trade, so they had to deal with crime without police. Whereas it had been common to demand death in revenge for serious bodily injury, as in our own day conquered people are told, in regard to such offences as insult to the Swastika flag or listening to foreign wireless, 'the penalty is death',—this precept laid down the principle that the punishment for an offence should not exceed the crime. Or again, *The Bible to be read as Literature* starts us on our reading of the Apocalypse with the warning that, 'dominated by conceptions of war and revenge, the work is ethically on a lower plane than the rest of the New Testament'. If this were true, even the fact that 'from the strictly literary point of view it is the most magnificent of the later books

of the Bible' would not compensate for the distrust with which the simple Christian would approach it.

Much of this depreciation of the Bible is subtle and elusive; it is a matter, as it were, of the tone of voice, an unspoken rather than an outspoken distrust of its claims. But if Renan is right in saying 'La vérité consiste dans les nuances', these nuances of modern Bible study, shadowy and impalpable as they are, do not conduce to restoring its prestige in the eyes of the common, unsophisticated man. In the days of Christ it was the scribes, the men of letters (*grammateis*), the students and expositors of the Law who made it 'of none effect'. We must beware lest we modern scribes fall into an error which is an ever-present danger when the pedagogic, the intellectual and the literal method of Bible study takes too predominant a place.

He who 'from a child had known the Holy Scriptures' (which meant the Old Testament) knew them as something 'able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus'—that is, as part of a system of Christian theology, and as beneficent to us. They are 'profitable for doctrine',—to teach about God and heavenly things, 'for reproof and correction',—for moral guidance, to warn us against our sins and to point the better way, and for 'instruction in righteousness'—'*ad erudiendum in justitia*'. This is the end for which the Old Testament was inspired by the Holy Ghost, and in this spirit our forefathers read it.

IV

THE BIBLE AND LITURGY

The Bible is essentially a Church book, the possession of the People of God, designed for the use and benefit of the believing body which produced it. Divorced from the life and worship of this body it is drained of most of its vitalising spirit and becomes the mere husk of its true self, interesting, even fascinating, to the scholar and the specialist but dry and unattractive to the general public, just as the Scripture lesson is often the least popular subject in the school curriculum, both to teacher and pupil, being associated mainly with lists of Kings of Israel and Judah and the missionary journeys of St. Paul.

The Bible is given to us both for public and for private use, but its public use is original and primary. Some books of the New Testament were expressly written in order to be read in the Christian assembly, as, for example, the Epistles of St. Paul and the Apocalypse; probably all were first promulgated in this way. To read the Bible in private, precious and essential as such reading is, is not so easy nor indeed so natural; this use is secondary and ancillary to its use in public worship, in its natural setting—the services of the Church; and the decay of public worship is at least one, and perhaps the most obvious, reason for present-day neglect and ignorance of the Bible. How many people are there who have ceased to attend any place of worship, yet keep their religion alive by reading their Bible to themselves? I venture to guess that the vast majority of its regular readers are to be found among church or chapel goers; of those whose religion is purely individualistic and mystical, who would agree with Professor Whitehead

that 'religion is what a man does with his solitariness' (and let the Devil do what he wills with his gregariousness as he has done in Germany, Russia and Italy), I doubt whether many make much use of Holy Scripture.

The Bible is a product and possession of the People of God—the Church. The Church produced it, it grew out of the family of Him 'who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets'. The Church selected it, for the Canon does not represent a complete national literature but a selection from that literature; beyond the borderland of the Apocrypha are many books, some lost and some still surviving, which have never been admitted by the Church to the Bible. The Church translated it, not always adhering strictly to the meaning of the original text; the Psalms, for instance, have been considerably altered in course of centuries of use. The primitive prophet may, as a distinguished Cambridge Professor assures us, have written: 'Jahweh, pay attention to my yell'; if so, I am glad the Church translated him: 'Lord, hear my prayer'. Or again, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' is a mistranslation of the actual words of Job, but I hope that when I am buried no pedant will declaim: 'I know that my *goel* or avenger liveth'. The translation of the Bible is a task of great responsibility and the reader of any version ought to be able to have confidence in the translator, whose work he must take on trust if he is unable to check it by his own knowledge of the original language. Thus, when Dr. Moffatt translates our blessed Lord's words at the institution of the Eucharist, in the three synoptic Gospels and in 1 Corinthians, as: 'this means My Body' instead of 'this is My Body', how is the general reader, attracted as he must be by the brilliance and skill of the translation as a whole, to know that this interpretation is tendencious?

The Church is responsible for the arrangement of the

books in the Canon, from its opening with Genesis 1-4 to its closing with the Apocalypse. The Creation narratives may be post-exilic but the Spirit-bearing body of the Old Covenant did not place them among contemporary products of the later and more developed theology in order of evolution, but put them first, in order of importance. For the Church was not concerned solely with a generation like our own, preoccupied with questions of authorship, date and development.

The Church is responsible for the nomenclature of the sacred writings. 'Moses', 'David', 'Isaiah' are convenient names to which various Scriptures are attached. We do right not to take these names with literal strictness. (Did the Church of the Hebrews take them so? It is hard to believe that they thought of ascribing to the pen of Moses an account of his own death.) So long as we teach people the general broad significance of these titles, that is enough. Can we suggest a more convenient method of referring to them?

I believe the only reference to individual 'Bible reading' in the New Testament is in the instance of the Ethiopian eunuch who read Isaiah in his chariot, and he required the interpretation of the Church before he could understand what he read. Palestinian Jews of the days of Christ would not have been able to understand the Scriptures, since they were written in Hebrew which only the educated understood, and Dr. Oesterley tells us that texts of the Old Testament in private houses were rare. They knew their Bibles because they heard them translated and interpreted in the synagogue every sabbath day. So the fourteenth-century Englishman knew the Bible intimately, as the sermon of Richard Wimbledon and the better-known poem *Piers Plowman* testify; but he can only have known it through instruction got in church, and from his priests. Wickliffe's translation was too recent to have circulated widely by 1388 and the

cost of a manuscript of the Bible was prohibitive to all but the rich—probably at least £40 in our money. Our forefathers in more recent generations also got to know the Bible chiefly in the worship of the Church. In Mattins and Evensong the Church of England has—or must we rather sadly say ‘had’?—a magnificent liturgical tradition, demanding and receiving a much more intelligent response from the congregation than the popular devotions, lovely and attractive as they are, which supplement the eucharistic worship of Continental Christianity. In these services the whole of the Old Testament, with inconsiderable omissions, is read through once a year, and the New (with the exception of the Apocalypse, from which only certain lessons are taken at the end of the year) ‘every year twice’. The Psalter is read through once every month.

The Church was, in fact, the school in which the English people learned the Bible, from times long before the Reformation to the twentieth century. The devout practice of reading the Bible at home received a vast impulse after the invention of printing (cheap printing, however, has diminished it; to-day more read the Sunday paper than the Bible), it also increased immensely after the Evangelical revival; under the influence of the same revival it was read at family prayers, and it was taught in Sunday schools which began to spring up in the last decades of the eighteenth century. But the chief school of Scriptural knowledge for the great mass of the English people over the main course of their history has been their Sunday worship in the Parish Church or the Chapel.

Man is both a social and an individual being. He is a separate personality, unique and self-contained, made to approach God *solus cum solo*; he is also created to find his perfection in a society, a family, a corporate body. The Bible is adapted for each of these aspects of human

nature, both for private reading and for public use, and these two uses correspond to the difference between private devotion (and popular devotions, which are based on individualism), and liturgical worship. 'The primary and exclusive aim of the liturgy', says Romano Guardini in his well-known book, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 'is not the expression of the individual's reverence and worship of God. It is not even concerned with the awakening, formation and sanctification of the individual soul as such.' It is not your prayer nor my prayer but the prayer of the Body of Christ whose object is the worship of God, in the course of which worship the individual derives sanctification. There could be no more fatal error than to depreciate personal or 'mystical' devotion because it is not liturgical; both types of prayer are necessary to healthy spiritual life; nor should there be any sense of rivalry between the practice of reading the Bible for ourselves and listening to it in the congregation. But of the two its liturgical use is primary. For the Bible, like the liturgy (if I may use this word, not of the Mass alone, but of all official worship of the Church), is intended for a corporate body of all sorts and conditions of men, drawn from different social strata and from different races; it was written for the African of Uganda as well as for men who attend the College Chapel at one of our ancient Universities; it was written for all periods of history, for the people of the Old Covenant as well as for the Christian of to-day, for illiterate peasants, not only for the intellectual, for children as well as for adults, and the more we are content to take our place in this great corporate body, so ancient yet so vividly alive with the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the better shall we understand the Bible which has been the companion of all the blessed who now live with God in that communion of Saints to which we too belong.

Dr. Dodd in *The Apostolic Preaching and its Development*

has drawn a clear distinction between *kerygma* and *didache*. *Kerygma* is the word translated 'preaching' in the phrase 'preaching Christ', or 'the Kingdom', or 'the Gospel'. *Didache* is the exposition and defence of the implications of the Gospel; it is sometimes used for the attempt to commend Christianity to persons interested but not yet convinced, or it may mean moral instruction. *Kerygma* is the function of the *keryx* or herald; it is a proclamation of a message after the manner of the town-crier, the auctioneer or of anyone who lifts up his voice to attract attention to what he has to announce. In liturgical worship the Bible is delivered as *kerygma*. When the Deacon reads the Gospel at the High Mass, he is employing Scripture in the purely liturgical manner, declaiming it impersonally as the message which the Church has for us on that particular occasion, letting the Bible speak to the Church from the lips of the Church itself, not as good advice nor yet as matter for consideration and debate, but as Gospel, or Good News. This primary foundation is presupposed behind all the Church's *didache*; the task of exposition, consideration, of 'reading, marking, learning and inwardly digesting' remains to be done, but without this solemn proclaiming of the Bible message there would be something missing which is essential. Traditional ceremonial underlines this conception; at the reading of the Gospel the Priest is left unattended at the altar while the acolytes with their candles and the thurifer with the incense together with the Sub-deacon stand round the Deacon as he proclaims the word of God.

All lections in worship have this liturgical character. The lessons in the Divine Office are also *kerygma*; they are not chosen by the minister in order to fit some line of thought which he personally desires to bring before the people, but chosen by the Church as part of the liturgical scheme. It is unfortunate that the association

of particular lessons with a certain Sunday or Festival is now weakened by the wealth of alternatives provided in the revised lectionary; one year the congregation may hear the story of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, and next year, on the same Sunday, a lesson from the Book of Wisdom—unless indeed the priest, unable to decide which of the lessons provided for him is the best, chooses a third out of his own head.

In the Church's use of the Scriptures the whole of the Bible is covered and the treasures of both the Old and New Testament are drawn upon. This is an important corrective to the popular tendency to base theology upon Lives of Christ, to concentrate almost exclusively upon the historic records of the earthly days of His incognito—the things 'that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up'—to consider 'the Jesus of history', often stripped of His 'supernatural nimbus', rather than the contemporary Christ, as the sole object of religious attention. The Church is the greatest Bible Reading Fellowship in the world and those who desire a systematic scheme of study for their private use could not do better than base their daily reading on the daily lessons; by so doing they study the Bible with the Church and find their reading adapted to the Church's year.

The applications of this principle of the liturgical use of the Bible to the training for the Ministry and to the whole question of the Bible and the Ministry are obvious. 'All Priests and Deacons', says the Book of Common Prayer, 'are to say daily the Morning and Evening Prayer either privately or openly, not being let by sickness or other urgent cause', and in this saying of the Office the reading of the lessons is an integral and vital part which must colour the mind of the reader and furnish it with that kind of wisdom which the Bible can alone produce. 'Personally', said a young priest recently to a friend of mine, 'when I say the Office alone

I substitute great poetry for the lessons, for I find the Bible dull.' One hopes this is a private idiosyncrasy. We need a book on the same lines as *The Divine Office considered from a Devotional Point of View*, by the Abbé Bacquez, translated into English in 1885, a book that is not pedagogic nor concerned with the intricacies of Prayer Book history but designed to help the priest to say the Office with intelligent devotion. What better advice could be given to a candidate for the Ministry than that he should begin, even at an early stage in the testing of his vocation, to form the habit of reading Mattins and Evensong, or at least the psalms and lessons with the collect for the day? This is something more definite than a simple exhortation to 'read the Bible regularly'.

At the theological college these Offices should be said in their entirety as a most important part of the daily life of the community, and each student should be carefully trained in reading the lessons. No pains are wasted which are spent in making the Chapel services as reverent and recollected as possible, for here is the antidote against the dangers attendant on the study of Scripture for purely examination purposes. Sext, Compline and the other Breviary Offices are an admirable supplement to those which are to us of obligation, but they can never be a substitute. It is a distinctive principle of the Church of England that the Ministry should pray with the laity; it is surely a great source of strength to the Church if priest and people are both trained in the same *lex orandi* and, so far as may be, inhabit the same 'thought-world' in the life of prayer, even if the priest uses the liturgical treasures of the Breviary for his own private devotional life as well.

And now for the Psalter, at once the most difficult and the most important part of our subject. The liturgical use of this book of the Bible has always been the back-

bone of the Divine Office; it is the one book which the people recite with their own lips (the choir represents the laity), and its words form their devotional language; most of the versicles and responses in the Office are taken from its phraseology. And it is in the use of this book, more than of any other, that we have witnessed a change for the worse. The Psalter is far less familiar than it used to be fifty years ago; hymns, more often Modern than Ancient, have ousted the psalms, so that Charles Wesley, Frederick Faber, Henry Francis Lyte, John Greenleaf Whittier and a score of other religious lyricists are doing more than David to provide the spiritual food and shape the religious thinking of the average English congregation. This is being done with the acquiescence of the clergy. Often it happens that the priest, harassed and heartsick at the falling off of churchgoing, and looking round for some reason for its unpopularity, lays the blame on the psalms. 'What', he will say, 'can my people make of them? What meaning can they attach to such a sentence as "Over Edom will I cast out my shoe" or to other archaic obscurities?' I doubt whether, unless it were suggested to them, our people would feel this difficulty; it has not prevented their forefathers for generations from singing the psalms with great benefit. If there is one lyric which the age has taken to its heart it is Blake's *Jerusalem*. I have often wondered what the Mothers' Union make of: 'Bring me my bow of burning gold, bring me my arrows of desire', and what the precise meaning may be of the phrase, 'those dark Satanic mills'. The canons we should apply to great lyrical poetry are not pedagogic and literal but æsthetic and psychological. The whole of the obscure grandeur of Blake's poem leads up to the concrete aspiration with which it ends, to 'build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land'; the opening lines throw us into the receptive frame of mind for this magnificent climax, but frankly they mean

little that we could explain in other words. So in such a verse in the Psalms as 'When the company of the spearmen and multitude of the mighty are scattered abroad among the beasts of the people, so that they humbly bring pieces of silver; and when He hath scattered the people that delight in war', the mind, lulled by the magnificent yet difficult phraseology of the opening of the verse, fastens with satisfaction upon the phrase, 'when He hath scattered the people that delight in war'. 'Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered!' It is not necessary for every bit of liturgical worship to be obvious and intelligible at first sight, any more than that purely utilitarian standards should be applied to ceremonial or to the structural ornament of a Church. 'If a verse escape our notice', says Bacquez, 'it gives the mind time to meditate on the preceding one, just as a pause in a concert gives the ear leisure to enjoy all the charm of the foregoing melody', and he quotes Bossuet on Isaiah to the effect that 'God has designedly united in His word light and shade, as was the case with the luminous cloud that conducted the Israelites'. There is room for the play of the imagination in worship; but imagination demands sympathy and if we have no sympathy with the Psalter, but merely the critical spirit, we shall not commend it to our people.

After this digression let us return to the custom of substituting the use of hymns for the psalms. Imagine we are going to Evensong in a village church on the Eighth Sunday after Trinity. There is a sparse attendance, only some twenty people in the church which has seen so many generations assembled in its walls—none of them are children, the majority are old or middle-aged. The choir consists of three girls and two men; there is also the organist. The service begins with a hymn of four verses, 'Come, let us join our cheerful songs', after which the penitential preparation is said. The psalms

appointed for the service in the new calendar are, 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy', 'Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks', and 'Give sentence with me, O Lord'. Of these the last only is sung, because it is the shortest, and the choir do not know the chant for the others. The lesson from the Old Testament has thirty-three verses, the second lesson eighteen. After the collects is sung the hymn, 'Praise, my soul, the King of heaven'; before the sermon, 'Thine for ever! God of love'; after the sermon, 'Lead, kindly Light'—making sixteen verses composed respectively by Isaac Watts, H. F. Lyte, Mrs. Maude and Cardinal Newman, to six verses of the Psalter.

This is not a satisfactory form of service and we cannot be surprised that the congregation does not grow. A popular devotion, such as a Mission service, is a good thing and arouses personal devoutness: a liturgical service is also a good thing, for it builds up solid religion; but a hybrid between the two is a very bad thing. The formality of the liturgical shape makes it stiff, while the freedom appropriate to popular devotion destroys the peculiar dignity and beauty of liturgical worship. Incidentally nothing is more fatiguing than for a small body of elderly voices to attempt to sing hymns which require the élan and vigour of a large and lusty congregation. This type of Evensong is a failure as a liturgical action; it is lop-sided because the lessons are of unbalanced length as compared with the one short psalm, and the prayers after the third collect, derived from various sources, not all of the first excellence, conduce to the effect of a clerical monologue. (One reason why hymns are so popular is that the people want to use their own voices in the praise of God.)

Now the few who have come to church on this occasion are the faithful remnant and deserve the best that can be offered them; it is upon them that the life of the

parish must in slow process of years be built. They are the Body of Christ in that place, and their advance in the spiritual life is of paramount importance; they are not babes who must be fed on milk or on the sugar of emotional hymns. The intimacy of a small congregation affords a golden opportunity for teaching, and what better instruction could be devised than the intelligent and devout recitation of the psalms? There is no surer way of teaching the Bible than by getting the congregation to repeat it aloud. Would it not be better, instead of singing one psalm badly, for them to *read* the psalms for the day in their entirety, verse by verse alternately with the priest (except on festal occasions when there has been opportunity for the choir to practise them)? For missionary purposes a frankly non-liturgical service might be provided which did not attempt to be like Evensong. As things are, we are in danger of losing a priceless tradition of biblical worship and relapsing on to a lower level whose ideal seems to be hearty community singing, but whose conditions make this impracticable.

The mind of the priest ought to be saturated in the Psalter and only if it is can he communicate affection for it to his people. We cannot all emulate the example of that thirteenth-century abbot of whom it was narrated that, as a feat of memory, he recited the whole Psalter backwards, but its daily use should form the food on which the life of prayer may grow. In these terrible and anxious days of war the psalms with their brave and profound sentences give us the very consolation and encouragement of God, fitting marvellously the necessities of the occasion. At all times they have been the inspiration of great souls. 'I have been keeping the voyage', wrote Father Benson from the ship on which he was returning from India, 'in active company with King David, and learning some more of that inexhaustible

treasury.' He speaks of his longing to make others feel something of the happiness that they might have in the Psalter if they would. 'How strange it is to think that one can have such an intense secret of happiness and that people round about should be so utterly ignorant of the pleasure within their reach.' The other passengers would have been surprised to read the mind of this little bent priest reading his Office at the open porthole of his cabin. What the psalms meant to him can be found in his *War Songs of the Prince of Peace* and in *The Way of Holiness*, his exposition of Psalm 119; but he would be the first to tell us that each must find the secret of the psalms for himself. The Bishop of Nasik has also published a devotional study of Psalm 119 which represents his meditative thoughts on it begun at Cuddesdon and developed during the years of his ministry.

No other book of the Bible is more essentially liturgical; the key to its meaning lies in its spiritual and devotional use, for the Psalms remain after thousands of years almost the sole language of the faithful in their communications with God. In academic study hardly any other book provides more difficult problems of exegesis, of historic origin, authorship and critical interpretation. The method of treatment of this book for examination purposes is, as a rule, ill-adapted for any real appreciation of its value as a food for the spiritual life of the worshipping Church.

Questions of the precise meaning of the original Hebrew, often corrupt and archaic, of possible references to this or that Israelitish King, to the date of its component parts all have their importance, but these matters are secondary, and too much absorption in the portentous mass of literature on the critical study of the Psalms distracts the mind from the purpose with which the Holy Spirit entrusts us with these 'ancient songs full of weighty and weird memories, strange, ghostly witnesses

of the sufferings, struggles and triumphs of the long-departed fathers, all leading to the edge of an immeasurable event'. These words of Karl Barth tell us something of what the Psalms mean to him. 'Whether the minister and people understand what they are singing or not, they are full of reminiscences of God, always of God. *God is present*. The whole situation witnesses, cries, simply shouts of it.' The fact that the Hebrew of Psalm xxii. 16: 'like a lion my hands and my feet', is of little significance; the translation: 'they pierced my hands and my feet', found in the Septuagint, has all the significance that any words could hold. Here, if anywhere, Holy Scripture is full of supernatural undertones and it is fatal to let the literal, the 'natural' in the New Testament sense of the word, become the norm of our interpretation. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' A scholar who is a Jew by religion can by virtue of his race and inherited culture tell us much about the Psalms, but nothing at all about their Christian use; St. Augustine, who knew no Hebrew, is able to help us to see the things of which our Lord spoke as 'written in the Psalms concerning Me'.

The 'natural' meaning of the Psalms is often sub-Christian, but though the original writer may have composed these songs in the spirit of his tribal wars, as odes of vengeance or of martial triumph, we do not read them as if we ourselves were chasing Amalekites over the mountains of Palestine; they voice for us the immemorial warfare 'against Principalities and Powers, against the Rulers of this world-darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places'. It is of 'our ghostly enemy', often disguised in pleasant and alluring shape, that we are to cry, 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? . . . Yea, I hate them right sore, even as though they were mine

enemies'. A generation of clergy trained in the natural, the historic, the textual study of the Psalter will feel small sympathy with Neale and Littledale's four volumes of Notes from the primitive and medieval writers (and indeed it is hard to separate what is merely 'primitive and medieval' from what is of universal application) or even with Spurgeon's *Treasury of David*, but the spirit of this interpretation holds the key to unlock many treasures.

A French priest who made a special study of them wrote at the end of his life: 'I am convinced by experience that for the due recital of the Psalms a long study of the commentators is not much use. Such remembrance as I preserved of my studies in this line distracted me rather than assisted me to pray. . . . I have limited myself to discover in each psalm and in a certain number of its verses a few touching thoughts and reflections; of these I made a collection and tried to penetrate myself with their spirit. At last these thoughts became familiar to me and nourish my soul during the Divine Office.' 'It is always Jesus Christ', says the Abbé Bacquez, 'who prays and speaks in the Psalms, sometimes in His own Name as the only Son of God; on these occasions His words taken literally beseem Him alone; His members can only appropriate them so far as their union with their Head makes them sharers of His greatness and His destiny. . . . Christ also frequently speaks here in the name of the Church and her children, as Head of a body whose members experience all kinds of necessities and find themselves in the most divers conditions and feelings. He borrows the very accents of His creatures, He humbles Himself before His Father's majesty, He groans, He asks pardon and forgiveness, He is the universal Penitent, overwhelmed with the weight of all our sins. He utters cries of gratitude and joy, redoubles His thanksgivings and invites every creature to rejoice with Him.' This method of interpretation is of vital practical

importance to the congregational use of the Psalter, nor need we be in the least intimidated by the pronouncement that 'the older exegesis is now universally discredited'. 'Novum Testamentum in vetere latet; vetus Testamentum in novo patet.' The phrase 'that it might be fulfilled' of the New Testament points to the full development in Christ of what existed after the manner of a seed in the Old. Because the botanist is chiefly concerned with the study of the seed the ordinary man is not mistaken in enjoying the flower and the fruit; he does not for a moment deny or belittle the marvels of the bio-chemistry of the tiny grain of matter which germinates beneath the soil but he is much more concerned with the flowers in his garden and the fruit on his apple tree. It matters little to us in church that the beneficent prince of Psalm 72—whose dominion shall be from the one sea to the other, and from the flood unto the world's end, to whom shall be given the gold of Arabia; to whom prayer shall ever be made and who shall daily be praised—was either Jeroboam or Jehoshaphat, or that scholars are pretty certain that the psalm is 'not Messianic'. To us the Prince is Christ. When the ordinary churchgoer reads of the King's daughter, all glorious within, whose clothing is of wrought gold—brought unto the King in raiment of needlework, he associates her in his mind with 'the bride, the Lamb's wife', with the Heavenly Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, not with the Semitic wife of some long-departed monarch of Judæa.

Much harm has been done by the habit of reciting the psalms in the same frame of mind as hymns. A hymn is a popular devotion intended to kindle a personal emotion or express an individual's sentiment; it expresses *me*, and is meant to put into words what I feel or ought as an individual to feel; as a popular devotion based on

individualism it is an invaluable aid to devotion. But we cannot sing the psalms as if they were hymns. How can the individual say on the seventeenth morning of each month: 'Preserve Thou my soul, for I am holy', or on the fourth evening: 'They pierced my hands and my feet'? Still less dare he take on his lips, as expressing his own individual mind, those tremendous denunciations of evil men with which the Psalms abound. This difficulty is so often felt that many of these words are now omitted, but it should give us pause to note that the passage (Ps. lxi. 26) generally considered as the most unfit for Christian lips is quoted in the first chapter of the Acts (v. 20), with the solemn preface, 'The Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake', concerning the supreme act of human wickedness. The corresponding difficulty of repeating, as expressions of our private sentiment, such a tremendous aspiration as 'My soul longeth after Thee as a thirsty land' must also have occurred to many who take it upon their lips. It is hardly to be wondered that, nourished in this individualistic use of the psalms, a liberal divine spoke of the 'unpleasantly self-satisfied tone' of the writer of Psalm 119. If James Lloyd and Mary Lewis were to repeat in a purely individualistic sense: 'Let such as fear Thee and have known Thy testimonies be turned unto me', 'Mine eyes gush out with water because men keep not Thy law', or, 'Lord, I have looked for Thy saving health and done after Thy commandments' the stricture might be justified, but if these words are said *in nomine Christi*, not in our own name but in the name of Him whom we worship in the body of Christ which is the blessed company of all faithful people, and if they are the expression of the mind of Him who dwells in us through the power of the Holy Ghost, they are fitting, natural and appropriate. St. Augustine in his preface to Psalm 1 writes: 'In the Psalms Jesus is to us, not only born, but undergoes the saving passion of His

body, rests, rises again, ascends to the heavens and sitteth at the right hand of the Father.' The reference is partly to the sequence of Psalms 22, 23 and 24, the great psalm of the Passion followed by 'The Lord is my Shepherd' and the twenty-fourth Psalm with its triumphant refrain, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in'.

But there is higher authority than St. Augustine for this reading of Christ into the Psalms. The first chapter of Hebrews and the speech of St. Stephen (Acts xiii. 33) both refer the sentence, 'Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee', to the Lord Jesus. 'Ye are the Body of Christ', says St. Paul; we are by virtue of our baptism members of Christ, and in the liturgical worship of the Church the voice of the Body of Christ is made articulate, whether it cries: 'Save Me, O God, for the waters are come in even unto My soul', or: 'Praise God in His Holiness, praise Him in the firmament of His power'.

The New Testament writers and the Fathers do not spend time in expounding the theory of this spiritual interpretation, they assume it; and it is best taught by allusion, for it provides a frame of mind in which to read the psalms rather than an exegesis capable of precise formulation. Once we have grasped the principle we can find new depths of meaning in the Psalter for ourselves. 'Those who have learned from Jesus Christ', says St. Augustine, 'to be meek and lowly in heart, advance more surely by thinking and praying than by learning and listening to lectures'—a sentence which sums up a great part of the secret of that Bible study which is so important a preparation for the work of the Christian Ministry.



Gaylord 
PAMPHLET BINDER

 Syracuse, N. Y.
Stockton, Calif.

BS530 .N53
The Bible and the ministry

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00037 7632