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A STUDY OF THE BIBLE

BY

LONSDALE RAGG, B.D.

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD
PREBENDARY OF BUCKDEN IN LINCOLN CATHEDRAL
SOMETIME WARDEN OF THE BISHOP'S HOSTEL, LINCOLN

ὅσα γὰρ προεγράφη,
εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν διδασκαλίαν ἐγράφη
Rom. xv. 4

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PREFACE

THE modest aim of this book is that of setting forth a point of view; and the writer has tried to avoid the appearance of an erudition which he cannot claim. Much of his matter, especially for Chapters II and IX, has been derived of necessity at second-hand, though always, he hopes, from trustworthy sources. But he has endeavoured to work as far as possible with no book except the Bible before him, and to burden the pages with few references except those indicating the scriptural passages concerned. For the point of view which he fain would bring before the reader is that of one who, with instincts preponderatingly traditional, practical, and devotional, has allowed the leaven of the 'New Learning' to work in his mind, believing that there is much that is true in it, and that all truth comes down from the 'Father of Lights.' His endeavour is, in fact, to show, with as little technicality as possible, what the Bible, in its manifold aspects, looks like to-day to one who, for many years, has turned over its pages, and has never lost, with changing times, his first love and reverence for its teachings.

The subject is at once so sacred and so vital that its treatment demands a rare combination of self-restraint and frankness. The writer is acutely conscious that he must have failed again and again in these respects, and takes this opportunity of craving the pardon of any fellow-lovers of Holy Scripture who may be offended by his well-meant phrases. That he has not still more to apologize for, is due to the friends whose names he records with sincerest gratitude below.

The attempt seemed worth making, with all its risks, and the author hopes to follow it up by two companion volumes—one devoted to the Old Testament, and the other to the New. In these an endeavour will be made to set forth, as graphically as the data will permit, the circumstances of origin, spirit, tendency, and teaching of the various elements or units of which these great collections are composed. For if there is anything that the average Bible-reader has a right to demand of the New Learning, it is that the books should be made to *live* for him in a new way.

Among the friends to whom the author's grateful remembrance is due are the Rev. Alban Blakiston, Chancellor Crowfoot, Canon Hobhouse, Dr. Tancock, and Dr. G. C. Joyce, who have most kindly looked over parts of the manuscript. To the first-named the third chapter owes a great debt; to the last-named Chapter IV, for which Dr. Joyce's recent book on 'The Inspiration of Prophecy' supplied not a little material.

Dr. R. L. Ottley and the Rev. R. St. J. Parry have each of them read through all the proof-sheets, and have earned the thanks of writer and readers alike by the removal of many a blemish.

L. R.

TICKENCOTE,
St. Peter's Day, 1910.

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I

THE TEMPLE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

The Bible may be compared to one of our great cathedrals—a grand, harmonious structure having an acknowledged unity and a recognized character of its own, yet obviously, on the most casual examination, the work of many hands, many minds, many epochs. Here and there records are left of the actual building—we have documentary knowledge of the name of this or that architect or foreman, who employed him and what he earned—but for the most part the work is anonymous. Only an expert among experts can detect in the mass of this anonymous work the impress of different hands, by a peculiarity of structure, of ornamentation, of tooling; but a thorough expert can sometimes do so with a certainty that amounts to demonstration. So it is with the Bible. The noble proportions of the cathedral, the grandeur of the great outlines, strike the eye at once, and these things evoke the greater admiration because the structure gives the impression of being an organism rather than a mechanical product. It has about it the air of that which has grown and developed, almost the air of a living thing. And when the component parts of this structure are examined more closely—the west front; the roofs and towers; the nave with its aisles, its triforium, its clerestory; the transepts; the great choir; the retro-choir or Lady-chapel, and the different side-chapels; the various windows, with their tracery and their coloured glass; not to speak of the tombs and effigies, the stalls, and the diverse ornaments of the church—a bewildering richness of variation springs into view. So, too, it is with the Bible. And as in the cathedral many of the details would of themselves seem mutually inconsistent, yet somehow they blend into a unity, so that the relics of the Norman or pre-Norman work seem to melt almost insensibly into the Early English, and so through the Decorated, Perpendicular, and Tudor work to Jacobean tombs and Caroline altar-rails: so, again, is it with the Bible. Nay, as one looks more closely, the very outline of the grand plan of the great building seems to be marred, and its symmetrical buttressing obscured by excrescences in the shape of chapels of the Perpendicular period or later. And in the case of the Bible, the same phenomenon recurs: whether these excrescences are to be compared to the Apocrypha, or to such books as Esther and Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, whose place in the Bible is, for many, a difficulty. In the Bible and the cathedral alike, however, such seeming excrescences will be found to have won their place as parts of the great organism. We should miss them, and feel the want of them if they were removed.

But the parallel does not end here. Without elaborating the analogy of the different parts according to their use and sacredness—where the nave would answer to the Old Testament, the choir to the Psalter, the sanctuary to the New Testament, with the Gospels for its altar and (shall we say?) the Apocalypse for reredos—we may pause for a moment to consider the various types of men who enter the cathedral, the purpose with which each comes, and the impression which the building makes upon him.

The people who pass through the open doors of the cathedral during an average day will include not a few to whom the purpose for which it was built and adorned means little or nothing. There are those who come to while away a spare hour, or to listen with more or less intelligent appreciation to the choral music of the daily services. There are some who are attracted simply by the size of the building, viewed from outside, or the noble dignity of its towers and pinnacles. Again, there are some who have acquired a smattering of the principles of Gothic architecture, and wish to 'practise' upon a building in which they are told so many styles are represented. Then there are the people to whom historical associations are paramount. The noble choir attracts them because its architecture speaks to them, say, of the thirteenth century, with all its manifold glories; the nave or the west end recalls the grim days of the Conquest; and the crypt carries the mind back to still earlier times. Or it may be that this and that part of the building is definitely connected with the name of some hero of the past: here is a part of the building for which he was himself responsible; here he was martyred; here was his shrine; here may be seen his actual effigy, carved by contemporary hands. In the lover of history the cathedral finds one who, if he come not actually to worship, comes, nevertheless, much in the spirit of a pilgrim.

Besides these, there are what may be called the experts. There is the musical expert, who times his visit carefully so that it shall coincide with the hour of Evensong. He takes a keen interest in every detail of the music, choral and instrumental—in its form and its matter, in the music chosen and the way it is rendered, in the skill of the organist and the tone and quality of the instrument. Possibly he has his hobbies and his special studies, and has come on purpose to listen to the Bach voluntary or the Pergolesi anthem, or, it may be, to the plain-song chanting.

So, too, with the architectural expert: the great building is like an open book to him, wherein he can read at a glance more of the general history and the local peculiarities of the development of ecclesiastical architecture than the plain man would find out for himself in a lifetime. This expert, too, may very likely have his hobbies and his special studies, and on these he will naturally spend most of the time at his disposal. Besides these, again, there is a host of specialists who have come principally to see just one thing; yet linger on, very likely, under the magic of the impressive grandeur of the whole. One has organ-cases as his hobby; and the quality and tone of the organ, or the character of the music played, means nothing to him in comparison. Another makes a special study of bells and their inscriptions, and the way they are hung. He hurries up the turret steps of the central tower, heedless of the magnificent views that burst upon him from time to time—fairy glimpses of the interior of the building, or of the city and surrounding country spread out at his feet. Another has come because the guide-book tells him that in a certain nook there is an effigy wearing an 'SS. collar,' and he is impatient till the service is over, because till then he is debarred from approaching the spot.

The parable is not very obscure, and the reader will have no difficulty in interpreting its details in a general way. A large proportion of those who turn the pages of the Bible nowadays come to it primarily with no devotional purpose; but many of them bring to it a genuine interest far more intelligent and enthusiastic than that of the average conventional worshipper; and who shall say how much of the spirit of devotion they may have imbibed before they leave, under the spell of a building whose very stones are saturated with prayer! Even the careless, unintelligent, or dilettante visitor is likely to leave the place with some fresh touch of the ideal in his nature; much more he who comes intending to learn something. Public opinion does not resent the intrusion of such visitors. The non-worshippers are welcome to come, provided they will uncover their heads as they enter, and hush their voices a little, and not disturb the actual service by their movements. The cathedral authorities themselves recognize the fact that, though the building is first and foremost a religious temple, it is also a national monument, and a concrete glossary of Gothic architecture. They are proud and glad that as many as possible should become familiar with every aspect, primary or secondary, of their noble charge.

But the more narrow-minded of the worshippers are apt to be on the lookout for occasional breaches of reverence or of courtesy on the part of the non-worshipping visitors, to resent their entrance as an 'intrusion,' to speak glibly of 'desecration.' No doubt there are some who walk noisily about during Divine Service, or raise their voices to an unseemly pitch, or make tasteless remarks in strident tones; but these are few, and their sins should not be visited on the many.

The present study is, among other things, a plea for a more sympathetic attitude on the part of the purely devotional reader of the Bible towards those many who interest themselves in Holy Scripture for reasons other than devotion. If the Bible is a Divine book, said Origen in the third century, it is also a human book. For some of us, as for our forefathers, it is a veritable sanctuary of devotion; but we must not forget that it is also, in its material structure, a monument of literary architecture, a treasure-house of historical material and of heroic biography; that, while it offers an unique field of investigation to the more general experts—the scientific student of the development of religion, the literary-historical critic, the reconstructer of ancient history—it offers also a hundred points of interest to specialists of various types, men whose soul is immersed in the study of some particular department of grammar or etymology, of ethnology or anthropology, of ritual, law, or custom, of psychology or mental therapeutics.

Shall we resent the intrusion of these men into our temple—men whose profound knowledge of some of its characteristics might well make us ashamed of our own contented ignorance? The doors are open, whether we will or no; the doors are open, and they have a right to enter. Shall we not rather study to welcome them, and try to learn from them? We have learnt something from them already. We have learnt to realize something more of the richness of our own heritage: its almost infinite variety, the wonderful historical pageant that it represents in solid stone, the marvellous mechanism (represented typically by the 'flying buttress') that in an almost inconceivable way combines structural utility with beauty and grace.

If we sit at the feet of one and another of these experts, our wonder will not diminish but increase. The architectural expert will perhaps point out to us a clumsy joint here, or a technical blemish there; he will also teach us to see differences of date in what we had superficially assumed to be a homogeneous arcade, or a simple mass of masonry. He will point out to us pieces of the very earliest structure overlaid with carved and moulded work of a much later period (as the veil of Perpendicular tracery is cast over Gloucester's Norman choir); he will hint, here and there, at a probable mixture of styles and periods beneath the surface, which can never be demonstrated till the building is pulled to pieces. The historical expert will conjure up for us living associations with the past, the thrill of which will be upon us in future whenever we enter the building. He may open our eyes also to the darker side of history, and unsettle to some extent our sentimental affection for the 'ages of faith.' He may even compel us to listen while he reads out some quite indisputable contemporary document which proves that sordid motives contributed in some degree to the uprearing of this noble church—that sordid incidents are inextricably interwoven with the story of its growth. Our first feeling will be one of disillusionment, and of resentment against him who has caused it. But, if we are true men, the feeling will not last. The glorious buildings, familiar to us from infancy, and always associated, from the first moment that we can remember, with a thrill of awe! The structure whose sky-scaling lines literally drew our eyes and our thoughts up heavenward! We had never thought of it before as so many stones piled up one on the other by coarse, rude workmen. We had somehow taken its existence for granted. It must have been always there, or have come into being at a wave of the wand, like the magic palaces of our fairy-tales, or have reared itself up to the strains of heavenly music, like the mythical walls of Troy. And then, when the thought of the process intruded itself more upon our notice, we instinctively pictured the builders of old time each with a nimbus round his head, like saints in a window, passing to and fro with stately grace, every movement an act of devotion. Now we have been taught to hear the ring of the chisel on the stone, the creak of straining ropes, the clank of chains, the ill-considered ejaculations, it may be, of some overworked mechanic. The entire building breathes a spirit of devotion; it is inspired alike in the whole and in the parts, but

> 'Many a blow and biting sculpture
>   Polish'd well those stones elect,
> In their places now compacted
>   By the heavenly Architect.'

It is well for us, the world being what it is, to realize sometimes that our inspired and inspiring cathedral was reared up by men of like passions with ourselves, and of a less-developed external politeness; that human weariness and tears and blood contributed to its building; that men probably quarrelled and swore in its unfinished aisles; and the whole round of human life went on in those days as in these. So, too, we should be thankful to the various experts who disclose to us their secrets about the human aspects of the Bible; and the stories of human struggle and suffering, of construction and demolition and reconstruction, of piecing together of old fragments with new work—every fresh light thrown by research upon the vicissitudes of the Divine yet human structure—should increase our intelligent appreciation of Holy Writ, and enable us to use it for its own primary purpose with fresh enthusiasm.

For, thanks be to God, its own primary purpose still remains. It is still, above all, a temple of devotion, where, day by day, those who will may kneel in prayer, and drink in fresh draughts of inspiration; where the time-honoured strains of the Psalter still voice the aspirations, the fears, doubts, triumphs of the human heart, face to face with its God, and link these latter times with all the Christian centuries and with the Second Temple at Jerusalem. Here, in the sanctuary of Scripture, devout spirits may still find an Altar of mystic Communion, a very Holy of Holies, in the intimate teachings of the Fourth Gospel.

Moreover, the devotional use of the Temple of Holy Writ is, for the devout, not hindered, but enhanced and enriched by a fuller scientific knowledge of its structure and its history. The most intelligent of all the worshippers is he to whom every arch and pillar, every stone, has a meaning, and that no mere, vaguely imagined symbolic meaning, but a genuine historical significance. He values the Divine and inspiringly beautiful product all the more because he knows how humanly it came into being, and because he realizes its place in the drama of his nation's history. The more we can succeed in discovering that the Bible (the Old Testament especially) is the record of a Revelation wrought out in a people's history, the more it will mean to us.

But if the worshipper can learn from the scientific expert, whose interest in the loved object is, primarily,

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so different from his own; so, too, the expert, if he is welcomed, may learn something from the worshipper. Probably, if he be a sincere, and therefore a humble-minded, seeker after truth, he will never leave the sacred precincts unmoved by the spell of awe and reverence, that atmosphere of long generations of worship, which seems to linger in the mysterious spaces of the Temple.

Further—and in this lies our surest hope for the continued influence of the Bible upon the generations to come—the expert may be a *devout* expert, a worshipper too. He may be one who feeds his mind and memory and his æsthetic taste upon the material fabric, with its sovereign literary beauty and its inexhaustible intellectual interest; but he does not end there. He carries his keen, penetrating mind, his well-stored memory, his cultivated, æsthetic taste into the sanctuary, and is thus enabled to offer up anew to the Inspirer of the great structure its various aspects incarnated, as it were, in his own life; and to offer up this life enriched by the manifold inspirations of the Temple in which he worships.

II

THE DIVINE LIBRARY

Is there any instance, within the entire range of etymology, of a title so significant as that by which the Scriptures of the Church are familiarly known? 'Bible' has become the proper name of one among many volumes—a volume which all Christians hold sacred. To the average Christian the name expresses the fact that this is 'The Book' *par excellence.* A hundred associations have gathered round the name—associations of the most holy and inspiring kind—justifying the title which they illustrate and enrich, justifying the supreme place which this Book has held for centuries past among the books of the world. But among all the ideas which the name 'Bible' suggests to the mind, none is more remarkable or more significant than the idea of unity.

Bible to us is a word in the singular number, but in its etymological ancestry we find a plural original. It was not without reason that the Latin *biblia*—a mere transliteration of the Greek *βιβλία*—transformed itself insensibly from a neuter plural to a feminine singular; and what had been at the outset spoken of as a group of books (or, to be more exact, of little *bybloi*, or papyrus documents) came to be recognized as a single entity. Singular and plural, as we shall see, have each an important claim to recognition; and on the just appreciation of each claim depends, in large measure, the intelligent understanding of the Bible itself.

The constituent elements of the Bible are many and various, as we shall have occasion to note, but they form a single group, an organic whole, with a single fundamental theme; and it is, doubtless, this essential unity in diversity which at once justifies and accounts for the strange history of its title. St. Jerome's title of *Bibliotheca Divina*—'The Divine Library'—is the earliest specific name applied to the whole group of small books (*βιβλία*); and *Bibliotheca* remained, right into the Middle Ages, a familiar title for the collection of sacred Scriptures. And, in spite of the domination of custom and tradition over our minds, and the habit of seeing and handling those Scriptures in the form of a single volume, none can deny that the Bible is, at the first intelligent glance, more appropriately to be called a library than a single book.

It may be well to pause for a moment upon these two aspects of the familiar object: its diversity and its unity. Speaking generally, we may say that the former associates itself with history, the latter with tradition. The literary historian marks and emphasizes the very various dates, occasions, and circumstances in which the several books had their origin; for him the diversity within the unity has the greater significance. The traditional view of the Bible, on the other hand, gives greater significance to its unity—a unity which is the outcome of that pressure of external influence and authority upon the various elements which we know as the formation of the Canon of Scripture.*

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* 'Canon' (Gk. *κανών*) means, technically, a list (and a standard) of books believed to be divinely inspired: a Jewish idea handed on to the Christian Church.

But such a broad and general way of speaking lends itself to misconception. The selection and grouping of these writings involved in the formation of the Canon had undoubtedly an internal as well as an external justification. If these particular documents came to be recognized as canonical, it can hardly have been as the result of a mere arbitrary and capricious selection. Was it not rather, in the main, because they were found to possess certain common characteristics; to exhibit a common tendency, to conform to a common type and standard? Such a supposition would not have been, in any case, a very rash one. It is supported by the history of the growth of the Canon; by the very informal way in which the documents won their recognition from the consciousness of the Church. It is corroborated to the point of conviction by a study of the books themselves, and a comparison of those which actually established their claim to a place in the Canon with what we may call the rejected candidates for admission. The greater prominence that modern scholarship gives to the Apocalyptic works of later Judaism—works like the *Book of Enoch*, the *Book of Jubilees*, and the *Assumption of Moses*—is due (as we shall have occasion to note hereafter) to their historical importance in the evolution of thought, and to the light which they throw upon the Old and New Testaments; it does not obliterate the distinction on the spiritual side between canonical and uncanonical books. The supremacy of the former in the spiritual realm is on the whole brought out into stronger relief by a comparison. And the same is true of the books which may be styled New Testament Apocrypha.

The childish imaginings by which the typical 'Apocryphal Gospel' is distinguished from the work of the canonical Evangelists are worthy of the darkest of dark ages; and the beauty of thought and feeling which mark such writings as the *Epistle of Clement of Rome* and (in a less degree) that ascribed to 'Barnabas' are far from placing these works on a level with the New Testament Epistles, though at one time it seemed as though they might have made good their place in the Canon.

The books of the Bible have every right to stand apart from the literature that was contemporary with them, and every right also, as we shall see more clearly hereafter, to be regarded as forming a single organic group.

The unity in diversity which results, gives the Bible a character all its own, a something which we recognize as parallel to human nature and human history, to the universe itself—nay, to the mysterious revelation of the Being of God which Christianity claims to discern in its pages.* This unity in diversity is doubtless one of the grounds of the Bible's unique appeal to mankind—an appeal to which no barriers of race, language, circumstances or environment have been found to oppose an effective hindrance.

Perhaps it is scarcely necessary to dwell at length on the superficially heterogeneous character of the elements of which the Bible is composed. To estimate this aright, the English reader must first think away the results of translation. The familiar and revered 'Authorized Version' and the more exact, if less rhythmical, Revised Version have made it possible for the average Englishman to pass from the New Testament to the Old and back again without the sense of a break, or the necessity of focussing his mind afresh. But the one vernacular rendering represents, not merely two different dialects, but two languages entirely distinct in script, in etymology, and in syntax. The Bible is written partly in Hebrew and partly in Greek.

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* It is possible that the very name given to the Almighty in many of the Hebrew writings—the familiar name *Elohim*—may be reckoned as an analogy, being, like *biblia*, a plural word that has become a singular.

The Greek portion, which includes all the New Testament books as they have come down to us,* varies greatly from part to part in style and diction. We pass from the comparatively pure Greek of the Third Gospel and the Acts and the Epistle to the Hebrews, to the intensely un-Greek phrases and constructions with which the Apocalypse abounds. The type of Greek used throughout is what is known as Hellenistic, a dialect which has been generally regarded as owing very much to the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. It has commonly been looked upon as a debased Hellenic speech flooded with Hebraistic ideas. Recent discoveries have modified this judgment. Contemporary inscriptions and papyri show that many words and phrases hitherto regarded as 'Hebraisms' must renounce the title. The Greek of the New Testament is, in fact, regarded now as little more than the cosmopolitan vernacular of the period, varied by local peculiarities. But this only throws into stronger relief the difference of original language which separates the Old Testament from the New. In any case, we may still find in the Apocrypha, the Deutero-canonical books which follow the Old Testament proper in our Bible, early instances of the type or types of language in which the New Testament is written. These books (of which more hereafter) were not in the Hebrew Canon of Palestine, but were circulated with the Septuagint translation (begun 280 B.C., and only finished some time after the Christian era). Most of them are original compositions, as they stand, in Greek; but here and there, as in the case of the wisdom of the Son of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), we have proof of a Hebrew original.

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* There is traditional evidence (see below, Chapter II., p. 78) for an original Hebrew—*i.e.*, Aramaic—St. Matthew.

The Hebrew portion of the Bible comprises the whole of the Old Testament, though certain portions of the Books of Ezra and Daniel are in Aramaic, the debased Hebrew-Syriac speech, a sort of *lingua franca* for Syria, which came into use after the Exile, when classical Hebrew had become the language of the learned; and Aramaisms, we are told, abound in some other books—*e.g.*, the Books of Chronicles.

For the rest, there seems at first sight little variety in language, as distinct from style. But scholarship is learning to recognize more and more differences of vocabulary and phraseology—differences pointing probably to distinctions of dialect and of date in the Hebrew Books. And this is not unnatural; for while the New Testament Books saw the light, all of them,* within half a century, the component parts of the Old Testament cover a period of many centuries.

When we come to style, there is no need of a knowledge of Hebrew to distinguish between the statistical portions of Chronicles and the flowing narratives of Samuel; between the legal phraseology of much of the Pentateuch and the fiery utterances of the Prophets; between Isaiah and Daniel; between the Book of Proverbs and that which bears the name of Job; between one and another among the Psalms.

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* With the possible exception of 2 Peter or Jude, or both of them (see, further, pp. 24, 71).

If we turn our attention to details of subject-matter, and to the circumstances to which the different books owe their origin, we need not go beyond the New Testament literature to illustrate very amply this aspect of diversity and variety. 'The documents . . . range from the formal historical work of St. Luke, to the personal and private letters of St. Paul to Philemon and St. John to Gaius. Their authors include such divers personalities as a Galilæan fisherman, a learned Jewish Rabbi, a Gentile man of science; their themes range from the mysteries of Divine redemption and the theory of the Universal Church, to the method of dressing a woman's hair and the use of wine as an article of diet.'*

If the diversity of origin, style, character, and immediate purpose which marks its component parts qualifies the Bible for its earliest title 'Bibliotheca Divina,' so also does the history of the process by which those components came together, so far as we can trace it. The Bible was not 'built in a day'; indeed, it rather grew than was built, and many different forces and tendencies contributed to its growth. We must not think of the various books as being written *currente calamo* in an abstract, independent way, without relation to contemporary conditions, and then acknowledged immediately as inspired and canonical works. Modern scholarship rightly bids us distinguish carefully between the date of a book's appearance as literature and that of its assumption into the group of approved 'Scriptures.' Some of the books received a more speedy, others a more tardy recognition. In the New Testament, the Gospels, the earliest of which were undoubtedly committed to writing after many of the Epistles were already in circulation, are the first to be used and acknowledged as Scripture. They quickly win the place of honour, corresponding to that of the Pentateuch in the Old Testament, a place which they have never lost.

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* L. Ragg, 'Church of the Apostles,' p. 17.

Similarly, in the Old Testament, a younger group of documents appears to have achieved canonical precedence over writings earlier born or earlier matured. The first Hebrew Bible was the Pentateuch (beyond which the Samaritan canon, which dates from about 400 B.C.,* never grew); and much of this is now judged to have been compiled after many of the prophetic writings. Yet it was only at a considerably later date that the 'Former' and the 'Later' Prophets were admitted as a canonical appendix to the 'Law.' And at the head of this second group is a book (Joshua) whose style and structure proclaims its affinity with the Pentateuchal writings rather than with the books that follow.

In the formation of the Hebrew Canon three main stages are traced. The first Hebrew Bible, which received general acknowledgment in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah† (in the fifth century B.C.) comprises the *Five Books of the Law*, one of which, Deuteronomy, had already been received as an authoritative basis of reformation a century earlier, after Hilkiah's dramatic discovery of it while he was engaged in cleansing the Temple.‡ The second Canon, that of the *Law and the Prophets*, was probably acknowledged about 200 B.C. This itself, however, is based on several preliminary collections or crystallizations. The 'Former Prophets'—*i.e.*, the prophetic historians—comprising the Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, form a group by themselves, with a special history, and were obviously edited as an historical appendix to the Pentateuch. Of the Prophets proper (in which Daniel is not included, nor the Book of Lamentations), the twelve whom we call "Minor Prophets" formed a collection by themselves, and were regarded as a single book. The addition of the entire prophetic group to the Pentateuch, so as to form the second Hebrew Bible, was followed, at a later date, by a second and final appendix, known to the Hebrews as the *Writings*, and generally distinguished by scholars under its Greek title *Hagiographa*. This is a very miscellaneous collection, including all the books not hitherto enumerated, and its final acceptance must, of course, be dated not only later than the latest chronological indication exhibited in the text, but also considerably later than the date of the second or 'Prophetic' Canon. The Book of Nehemiah (xii. 11) carries down the list of High Priests to Jaddua, the contemporary of Alexander the Great. But the third and final Hebrew Canon must date from a still later period, probably *circa* 105 B.C. From that time we have reason to believe that the Canon of the Hebrew Scriptures, as we have it, was generally accepted in the Jewish Church (who enumerated their books as twenty-four in number), though the formal ratification and declaration of its limits did not take place till the Synod of Jamnia, after the Destruction of Jerusalem, in the last decade of the first century A.D.

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* Manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch are still in existence. They are written in an older Hebrew script, similar, probably, to that in use before the Exile, for it resembles that of the celebrated Siloam inscription of *circa* 850-820 B.C. They exhibit some interesting variations of text.

† Ezra iii. 2, vii. 6, 10, 14; Neh. viii. 1-15, ix. 3, x. 29.

‡ 2 Kings xxii. 8 (621 B.C.).

The Divine Library of the Old Testament is thus formed (it will be observed) of three lesser libraries, and is composite in more senses than one. For each of these lesser libraries contains a number of books—books which, in the Second and the Third Collections, fall into still smaller groups; while many of the individual books (as we shall have occasion to observe in the next chapter) bear more or less distinct traces of a composite origin.

The unity which governs this complexity would seem at first sight to be a unity imposed from without. It was the authority of the Jewish Church (however officially or unofficially expressed) that sifted and selected, that grouped together in each age those books which, in the quaint Rabbinic phrase, 'defile the hands'*—*i.e.*, are sacred; that added book to book within the group, and group to group within the Canon, till at last, some time before the commencement of our era, the complete Hebrew Old Testament was recognized as 'Holy Scripture' and as 'inspired of God.'†

This process was doubtless, in the main, an informal—we might almost say an instinctive—one. The New Testament itself proves that the Old Testament Scriptures, practically as they stand, were already accepted by Jesus of Nazareth and His contemporaries among the Jews, though it was not, as we have said, till the Synod of Jamnia that the formal and summary decision of Jewish experts was promulgated—a decision which only confirmed the conclusions already informally reached.

The acceptance of the Hebrew Canon by the Lord Himself made its acceptance by the Christian Church a foregone conclusion. Nothing is more certain than that the primitive Christian Church accepted the Old

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* To protect the sacred books from careless handling the Rabbins laid down the rule that to touch them was to incur ceremonial defilement: after touching them the hands must be washed.

† 2 Tim. iii. 16.

Testament Scriptures bodily as a legacy from the Church of the Old Covenant.

There is, indeed, a group of writings, to which we have referred above (writings familiarly known to us as the 'Apocrypha'), which raises problems difficult of solution. These are books, mostly or entirely of Greek-Jewish origin, which were circulated, apparently, with the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures known as the Septuagint Version. Whether this larger Bible, which comprised not only a number of extra books, but also Greek interpolations into certain canonical books, was ever formally accepted by any section of the Jewish Church remains an open question. Its very general acceptance in the Christian Church (though not without protest from the more learned of her teachers) was doubtless due to the influence of the Septuagint. But to the whole question of the Apocrypha we must return later.*

We have seen that the Hebrew Canon was a gradual formation, in which three outstanding stages may be marked—a process in which later-born documents sometimes won an earlier recognition as canonical.

The three great landmarks are visible in the New Testament itself, where our Lord is made to speak of Scripture now as the 'Law,'† now again as the 'Law and the Prophets,'‡ and in one place as 'the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms'§—where 'Psalms' stands (it would seem) for the whole group of the Writings of which it was typical, and in which it held the first place.

A similar line of development marks the growth of the New Testament Canon, though the successive stages and groups are not, perhaps, so clearly marked. Here, too, as we have observed, the order of canonical acceptance does not coincide with the order in which the documents saw the light. Here, too, there is an inner group, a 'holy of holies' within the Temple of Holy Writ, the sacred 'Tetrateuch' of the Four Gospels, the first accepted nucleus of the distinctively Christian Bible. Here, too, there is a book—the Acts of the Apostles—which holds an ambiguous position, and forms a link between the first or Gospel group and the second group of the Pauline Epistles. The Acts, like the Book of Joshua, in the Old Testament, belongs by literary affinity to the group which precedes it in the Canon, but (again like Joshua) is separated therefrom by the cleavage-line of canonical structure.

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* See below, pp. 36-39, 127, 128.

† Matt. xii. 5; John vii. 19.

‡ Matt. v. 17; Luke xvi. 16.

§ Luke xxiv. 44; *cf.* xx. 42, and Acts i. 20.

In the New Testament, again, there may be discerned three groups. The Gospels are followed by the Pauline Epistles, and these again by a somewhat miscellaneous group of writings including the Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse. And if it be not fanciful to carry the parallel still further, we may see an analogy between St. Paul's writings and the 'Prophets' of the Old Testament, preceded by the Acts as 'Former Prophets,' and in the miscellaneous collection which completes the New Testament, the analogue of the strangely heterogeneous 'Writings' or 'Hagiographa' of the Hebrew Bible. In the New Testament, as in the Old, the third group—some elements of which* belong both in origin and in character to the early period, and might naturally have been looked for in the earlier *stratum*—has least cohesion, least equality of level, and, with some notable exceptions, least sublimity of style; while it is in this third group that the Apocalyptic element is most strongly (though not exclusively) represented. The closest Old Testament parallel to the Book of the Revelation is to be seen in the Book of Daniel.

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* This is true, *e.g.*, of much of the Psalter, which has Psalms both early and prophetic in style, and in the New Testament of the Johannine Epistles, which clearly belong to the Fourth Gospel.

In the case of the New Testament, as in that of the Old, the process of canonization was a gradual and a more or less instinctive one. When at last conciliar recognition was given to the whole body of New Testament Scriptures,* it was the acceptance of a *fait accompli.* Of the recognition of the Four Gospels as worthy to be placed beside the Sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament we have record as early as A.D. 170, in the testimony of Dionysius of Corinth.* The other books followed gradually. Some, like the Apocalypse and 2 Peter, shared the fate of Esther and Canticles in the Jewish Canon, and were long considered doubtful. It is not till after A.D. 300 that the New Testament Canon may be said to have been stereotyped in its present form. It was in virtue of their acceptance as 'Scripture' by each separate group of Churches that these writings finally received universal recognition throughout the Church as a whole, and were accorded the external seal and stamp of canonicity. But while the characteristic feature of canonical recognition in the case of Old and New Testament alike was an appeal to tradition—what *has* been accepted?—the earlier informal acceptance must have had its grounds and reasons. In the last resort it will be found that each book was received upon its merits. Other considerations undoubtedly made themselves felt, but only in a secondary way. The name of the supposed author, whether rightly or wrongly attached to a work, may have played a real part in this case or in that, gaining for some postulant book a hearing. But this particular consideration was not necessarily decisive, nor was it indispensable. True, a book bearing the name of Solomon could not be lightly dismissed by the Jewish Rabbis, nor one claiming to be Peter's by the guiding spirits of early Christian thought. But while the Song of Songs and the Book of Wisdom are both (in all probability pseudonymously) ascribed to Solomon, the former found a place in the Jewish Canon, and the latter, in spite of its noble thoughts and splendid passages (which have won it a place in the larger form of the Christian Canon), failed to secure an entrance. And though the 'Second Epistle of Peter' (the Petrine authorship of which, as it stands, modern scholarship cannot accept) has rightly secured a place in the New Testament, there are not a few pseudonymous Petrine documents—like the *Apocalypse of Peter*, or the recently discovered *Gospel of Peter*—which never succeeded in obtaining recognition as canonical.

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* See Euseb., 'H. E.,' iv. 23. The first conciliar recognition of the complete Canon took place at the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 365), though practically all the individual books were specially honoured and used by the end of the second century.

The fact that a large number of the Old Testament Books are, strictly speaking, anonymous (perhaps we might add also the *Acts* and the *Hebrews* in the New Testament), would of itself be sufficient to prove that authorship was not the deciding factor. Nor can subject-matter, in any narrow sense, nor style have formed the decisive criterion. A glance at the variety of the books will assure us of that. Whatever may have been the actual specific considerations by which each member of

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the series ultimately attained its place, it is not too much to say that the selection is amply justified by an inner unity of spirit and teaching, which links together books so diverse in character, style, and circumstances of origin.

The old Jewish experts saw both in *Esther* (which never once names the Name of God) and in *Exodus* (where it occurs again and again on every page) a revelation of the Divine will and purpose, just as they saw the same not only in the Prophetic Books that introduce their utterances with the bold phrase, 'Thus saith Jehovah,' but also in a dramatic epic like *Job,* in which the apologetic of traditional piety is unmercifully criticized, and a lyric drama like the *Song of Songs,* where anything beyond and above the surface theme of human sexual love is rather hinted at than directly inculcated.*

To the modern reader, though he recognizes in the Old Testament Books a clear difference of levels, and finds one book far more sublime than another, there is a certain unanimity about them all, in what they teach and in what they postulate, though each has its own slightly different point of view. In this matter the postulates are often more important than the doctrines formally enunciated. The tendency of the concordance may be to exaggerate this unanimity; yet its systematic elaboration would be impossible but for an underlying agreement in theological presuppositions which makes it possible to leap from Isaiah to Ecclesiastes and back again, from the Psalter to Daniel, and from Daniel to Deuteronomy, without conscious strain. The very possibility of a concordance speaks volumes; the scope and scientific elaboration of it are still more significant.

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* The Targum on the Song of Songs, however, shows that the traditional Rabbinic interpretation of this book ran on allegorical lines from beginning to end. The book is treated as a discourse on the mystical love of Jehovah to His people. It was doubtless from his Hebrew teacher that Origen (*cf.* below, pp. 226, 308) acquired the germ of his Christian interpretation of this, his favourite book.

Of course, we need to remember that some of the books are actually dependent on others, as Chronicles upon Kings or on the sources of Kings. And in many others (so modern criticism assures us) the original matter has been reduced by successive processes of compilation and redaction to a conformity and homogeneity which it did not at first possess. But if so, these later minds must at least have recognized in the earlier documents material amenable to their purpose. Moreover, this common ground of theological postulates is visible not only in the Law and the Prophets, but equally in the Hagiographa, the group of writings which is most miscellaneous in style and character, and in which the hand of the later editor or redactor is, on the whole, least to be traced.

The underlying unanimity of which we have spoken is the more remarkable because it is not the outcome of a clear-cut system of philosophy. The Hebrew mind had not a philosophical turn. Its most philosophical utterances emanate from the 'Apocryphal period,' when Hebrew and Greek thought were mingled in Alexandria.

In the Old Testament Books we have not the teachings of a single school of thought—like Stoicism or Epicureanism—finding expression in a series of individual minds. There is something intensely unsystematic about the utterances of the sacred writers, something intensely concrete and unphilosophical about their way of looking at the universe. It is naïve and ingenuous in its mode of expression. It rarely attempts to reflect upon its own presuppositions, though it is ever prompt to deduce from them practical religious and moral conclusions. It never dreams of proving the existence of the Divine Being, though, in its later phases, it is ready enough to discredit idolatry by an argument akin to the *reductio ad absurdum*.* It claims for the Deity attributes mutually inconsistent, yet justified by the logic of later ages.

It believes, and believes intensely, in a God at once one, living, personal, and eternal—a group of incompatible ideas of which each is indeed necessary to any satisfying idea of the Deity, but which cannot be harmonized philosophically save in that Christian doctrine of the Trinity-in-Unity, which was as yet outside the range of Hebrew thought.

Again, the scheme (if we may call it such) of the physical universe which underlies the Old Testament writings is the crudest imaginable; yet it in no serious way disturbs the harmony of the different parts, nor affects the sublimity and spirituality of the teaching.†

The modern reader, then, will be impressed by this underlying unanimity of the very various writers, and (unless the prejudice of reaction is very strong upon him) he will probably also perceive in their writings a certain progressive character—a character which recent scholarship‡ has brought out into stronger relief. He will observe a progressive teaching that advances from the simpler and cruder to the more complex and perfect form: from the days when Abraham required a special revelation to demonstrate to him God's distaste for human sacrifices to the time when sacrifice, purified by prophetic criticism, became an ordered scheme full of religious symbolism—a starting-point for the sublime spiritual teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews; from the days when the Hebrew invaders of Canaan could feel themselves divinely commanded to slay man, woman, and child to the time when the Book of Jonah should be written for the express purpose of inculcating a Divine compassion for Nineveh, and when a prophet should couple Egypt and Assyria with Israel as fellow-devotees of Jehovah;* from the time when the good land flowing with milk and honey, the material vine and fig-tree, the corn, wine, and oil of this life, constituted the highest outlook of the Chosen People to the time when these were, to the spiritually minded, but symbols of something sublime and inexpressible—'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. . . .'†

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* Isa. xl. 18-20, xliv. 6-20; Ps. cxv. 4-8.

† On the ancient Hebrew idea of the world, see further, p. 200 *et seq.*; *cf.* p. 45.

‡ See next chapter, p. 96 *et seq.*

Furthermore, if our modern reader is not surfeited with the dogmatism of an old-fashioned typology, he will recognize running through the Old Testament Books, and especially prominent in some of them, the thread of Messianic expectation—that expectation which the New Testament claims to fulfil.

The inspired hymns which St. Luke records—the *Magnificat*, *Nunc Dimittis*, and *Benedictus* — hymns which bear the stamp of authenticity and genuineness in their style, and still more in the striking way in which they mingle thoughts of previous Judaism with something beyond—these are a link to connect the Old Testament with the New. 'As He promised to our forefathers,'[*] is the enlightened Jew's comment on the approaching Advent of the Saviour; and it is the key to the Old Testament. Not only, nor chiefly, perhaps, in its actual predictions is this 'promise' to be looked for: in the destiny of successful antagonism to evil foretold to the woman's seed;[†] in the wide promises attached to Abraham's name;[‡] in the perfect Prophet who is to succeed the Moses of *Deuteronomy*;[§] in the much-discussed Birth predicted as a sign to Ahaz, and the Child, the 'God-with-us,' that grows out of it in Isaiah's mind;[||] in the superhuman 'Son of David' of Psalmist and Prophet, and of prophetic-historical books like *Samuel*—not only in the frequent heralding of Jehovah's own proximate coming to reign in righteousness upon earth,[¶] or in that mixture of heaven and earth, of priest and king, hailed by Psalmist and Prophet alike.[**] Many of these predictions had a partial fulfilment on the way, yet left the human heart unsatisfied, and pointed forward to something more. But the unsatisfied heart itself, in the expression of its highest and deepest yearnings, is a prophet. The very longings of the saints of old bespeak a fulfilment. . . . 'Fecisti nos ad Te et inquietum cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te.'[††]

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* Isa. xix. 24.

† Hos. xiv. 5-8; *cf.* Isa. lxiv. 4, 1 Cor. ii. 9.

The gropings, the passionate cries in the dark, of the Book of *Job*, the chastened scepticism of *Ecclesiastes*, the pessimistic conclusions against which both the

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[*] Luke i. 55.

[†] Gen. iii. 15.

[‡] Especially Gen. xxii. 17, 18; *cf.* Gal. iii. 8, 16 *et seq.*

[§] Deut. xviii. 15; *cf.* Acts iii. 22.

[||] Isa. vii. 10 *et seq.*, viii. 8, ix. 6 *et seq.*, xi. 1 *et seq.*

[¶] Typical are Psalms like xciii. and xcvii. ('Jehovah reigneth').

[**] Especially Ps. cx.; Zech. vi. 13.

[††] St. Augustine, 'Confessions,' *ad init.*

'Preacher' and some of the Psalmists can only fight doggedly with the weapons of a half-enlightened religious consciousness—these are as a cry, 'How long, O Lord, Holy and True!'—a cry which demands and shall receive its answer. The demand is re-echoed down the ages by Gentile voices at last, as well as Hebrew, and then the answer comes. The answer comes in a way so marvellous that it seems too good to be true. So marvellously does the event crown and complete the whole movement of Old Testament thought; yet in a manner so utterly unlike what the average Jew of the first century expected, that Judaism, as a body, rejected its Messiah when He came.

Perhaps the most remarkable of the prefigurings of the Gospel story is that picture of the suffering servant, which, to most of us—surely for intrinsic as much as for traditional reasons—speaks directly of Christ, as it did to St. Philip and his convert on the road to Gaza.* It speaks to us of Christ, and reads almost like a page from the New Testament. Yet its immediate subject was, in all probability, the suffering nation in captivity, or, at least, that faithful 'remnant' that felt itself, in its personally undeserved humiliations, to be, in a manner, vicariously expiating the national guilt.

In fact, it is as 'fulfilling' the Hebrew people that Christ may be said to have fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. He crowned and perfected in Himself their racial capacity, their national destiny. His followers believe that He did far more than this; but this also He did. The Messiah was the true *raison d'être* of the Hebrew people, as for ages had been dimly realized by many a Hebrew mother. It was for the birth of this child that the nation lived; and in Him—though the majority of the generation most concerned was blind to it—in Him their whole development, with its strange, rich record of discipline and of illumination, reached its climax and its end.

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* Isa. liii.; Acts viii. 32 *et seq.*

The Old Testament (whether we close it with *Malachi*, or include the Alexandrine books down to *Maccabees*) is an unfinished volume. The New Testament is at once its completion and the key to many of its enigmas. And in the light which the New Testament writings throw back upon those of the Old Testament, the latter are seen to have more of unity than could otherwise have been discerned. St. Matthew develops the idea of the Davidic King, Hebrews that of the Priesthood, St. James the perfect Law, St. Peter the fulfilment of Prophecy. Almost every New Testament Book has some contribution to add to the solution of the Old Testament problem.

If the Epistle to the Hebrews deals most fully and directly with it from its own point of view, the other New Testament writers were all, clearly, of opinion that they had lived to see at least the beginning of the end—the first stages of that fulfilment for which prophets and kings of old had longed.*

Ere yet the New Testament writings had been collected or had developed into an acknowledged Canon, they had proclaimed—as in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, and to the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in the second chapter of St. Luke—their continuity with the 'Scriptures' to which they refer with such constant reverence.

And this essential unity of Old and New Testaments is jealously and successfully guarded by the orthodox Fathers of the next two generations against the assaults of heretical teachers, who would have the God of the Old Covenant diverse from, and opposed to, the God of the New. Not even the Virgin Birth, that new creation in which humanity was to renew its youth, broke the continuity of revelation for the primitive Christians. It was just the advent of the complete instead of the partial and fragmentary, of the substance in place of that shadow which had been already cast along the route. All previous history and revelation had led up to this. The conception of 'Progressive Revelation' on which modern biblical scholarship lays so much stress, and for which it is apt, sometimes, to claim a good deal of credit, is in itself a primitive and scriptural idea—an idea obscured, indeed, by mechanical and unfruitful methods of interpretation (and needing, therefore, to be emphasized afresh), but never wholly lost to sight.

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* Luke x. 24; Matt. xiii. 17; *cf.* Heb. xi. 13, 1 Pet. i. 10-12.

We have glanced already at the growth of the Canon of Scripture—that mysterious process of selection and crystallization, in many of its stages so informal, so instinctive, so utterly different from what we should have pictured *a priori*. We seemed to discern intrinsic reasons and justification for the setting apart of these particular books, and the grouping of them together by themselves—an inner unity of tendency and theme. But we recognized, also, an external force at work, an outward pressure to which the actual cohesion of these mutually cohesive elements is due—the consciousness of the Church. It is from this point of view that we must return for a moment to the problem of the growth of the Canon.

The books of the Bible did not choose themselves, though, by their intrinsic character, they proclaimed themselves meet to be chosen. The action of the external authority, however informally exercised, was absolutely necessary to the result. When we realize how the Canon of Scripture grew up in the historic Church of Christ, and was nursed to maturity in the Church's bosom, we cease to see anything unreasonable or arrogant in the claim of our Twentieth Article that the Church is 'a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ.' We are familiar with the assertions of advocates of 'the Bible and the Bible only,' who claim that Holy Writ is in every way supreme and ultimate, and would base their religion on unrestrained private interpretation of the Scriptures. But while we recognize the wonderfully direct appeal of these Scriptures to the individual soul, and their sufficiency as documents for proof, when interpreted according to the mind of the Church, the proclamation of a religion of 'the Bible and the Bible only' becomes crudely absurd to those who have even seriously considered the question of the growth (on its human side) of this 'Divine Library.' To treat the Bible as though it were 'an image fallen down' from heaven* is as contrary to history and science as it is to a reasonable religion. The Word of God is from everlasting, but that is the living personal Word, who was incarnated in Jesus Christ. As for the 'Written Word,' there was a time when none of the books of the New Testament or of the Old Testament were written; a time when none of those already written were set apart and accorded the special position which for centuries they have held. We must think of the various books as already in existence as writings, but not yet 'canonized.' We must remember that for a time the entire Hebrew Bible consisted of the *Torah*, or Law, the 'Five Books of Moses'; that the Prophetic Books, received later into the Canon, must, some of them, have been in circulation for generations before the Pentateuch assumed its present form; that the last—very miscellaneous—group of writings to find a place in the Hebrew Canon included a book like the Psalter, which had seven or eight centuries of history behind it, with the complicated processes of accretion, modification, and liturgical revision which beset a hymn-book used by successive generations of worshippers.

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* Like the Ephesian Artemis (Acts xix. 35), an ultimate fact which could not be 'gainsaid.'

Then, further (leaving aside for the moment the formidable question of the Apocrypha), we shall observe that the process of the formation of the Christian Canon ran an analogous course. Here, too, there was no automatic or axiomatic canonization of each book as it appeared; here, too, the order of the recognition of the books as 'Scripture' seems to have been independent of the chronological order of their appearance as literature. Some of the books only gained admittance after considerable discussion, as certain of the Old Testament Books had done in the Jewish Church. It is not till three centuries after the great Pentecost that the New Testament may be said to have arrived at its present form. The process by which it reached maturity was furthered, no doubt, by many different influences, under the rule and guidance (as we believe) of the Holy Spirit, the promised Comforter. Prominent among these influences was the intellectual capacity of men like Dionysius of Corinth, Melito, and Origen. But neither individuals nor councils settled the Canon. It was a silent, unconscious process that went on within the Church, and when at last councils drew up and promulgated lists of the New Testament Scriptures, they were but ratifying a judgment already arrived at.

To say that 'the Church gave us our Bible' is thus no metaphor or figure of speech, but the barest statement of fact. The Bible remains as a documentary record of what the primitive Church thought and taught, and as a touchstone of all subsequent Church teaching. The Church in any particular place or period may be judicially confronted with it, much as administrators of any venerable society or organization might be confronted with the original charter or constitution of the organization which they serve.* And this is the principle which underlies the main contention of that Twentieth Article which we quoted above. But to attempt to understand the Bible without reference to the Church is to risk an entire misunderstanding of its drift and of its proportions.

A word remains to be said as to the limits of the Canon. The plain man of the old school was wont to accept unquestioningly the English version put into his hands by the British and Foreign Bible Society as being the 'pure Word of God.' This volume, he would say, is sharply distinguished from all other volumes. When we pass outside its limits we cross the frontier between the inspired and the uninspired, between sacred literature and profane. There is no vagueness or ambiguity, no room for doubt or discussion. Nor, he would be inclined to add, can there ever have been room for doubt or discussion in the past.

But a very little study of the history of the Canon puts an entirely different complexion on the matter. He learns that the Jewish Rabbis disputed long and hotly as to whether the Book of Esther 'defiles the hands'; that not a few of the Christian Fathers doubted the canonicity of this same book, and two at least (Amphilochius and Theodore of Mopsuestia) rejected it from their Old Testament lists. He learns that, among New Testament writings, the Apocalypse and several of the Catholic Epistles were long disputed in the Church, while other writings, like the Epistle of Clement of Rome, the Epistle ascribed to Barnabas, and the *Shepherd* of Hermas, seemed at one time likely to gain a footing within the Canon. More puzzling still, he finds printed in other Bibles, and used in some of his own Church's Holy Day Lections, a number of books similar, and yet dissimilar, to those contained in his Old Testament. Some of these, he is told, are accepted as fully canonical by the Greek Church; all of them by the Church of Rome. What is the history and status of these books, which he finds printed under the heading 'Apocrypha' in the fuller editions of the English Bible?

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* On this point see, further, Chapter X., p. 296 *et seq.*

The story is somewhat obscure, and some points still remain under discussion; but the broad outlines are traceable. The books themselves represent that fusion of Hebrew and Hellenic thought which was initiated by the conquests of Alexander the Great at the beginning of the third century B.C. Most of them were written first in the Greek language; one of them, and that in many ways the most interesting of all, had a Hebrew original, large fragments of which have been discovered in recent years. This is the Wisdom of Jesus-ben-Sirach, commonly called *Ecclesiasticus*. Composed about 180 B.C., it was translated into Greek about 130 B.C. by the author's grandson, whose preface supplies most valuable data for the history of the Old Testament Canon. Three times in this preface the translator refers to the 'Law, the Prophets, and the other books' in such a way as to suggest that the Hebrew Canon was already practically closed.* The Hellenistic view of revelation was, however, more lax and liberal than that of the Palestinian Jews, and the group of Greek books in question, together with long Greek interpolations in some of the canonical Hebrew books, managed without difficulty to insinuate themselves into the rolls on which the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament was written. That this meant a formal 'canonization' of the Apocrypha is more than can be proved. There is no satisfactory evidence that there ever actually existed a *Jewish* Canon (whether at Alexandria or elsewhere) including, besides the Hebrew scriptures, these Greek works of very varying style and merit. Only in the case of two of them—Ecclesiasticus and 1 Maccabees (both originally written in Hebrew)—is there any reason to suppose that there was any attempt to introduce these further books into the Hebrew Canon. What is certain about them is that, being circulated with the manuscripts of the Septuagint Version, the Apocryphal Books found an entry into the developing Christian Canon of the second or third century and onwards, and had their position confirmed (mainly through the influence of St. Augustine's views) at the Council of Carthage in 397.†

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* As regards the 'Law' and the 'Prophets' this deduction is certain, but not absolutely certain as regards the Writings. Ben Sirach's list of heroes of the faith (xliv.-l.) ranges from Enoch and Abraham to Nehemiah and Simon, son of Onias (300 B.C.).

† The books actually confirmed by the Council of Carthage were Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, and Maccabees.

The explanation is simple. When the Christian Church entered upon its career of world-wide conquest it was, to all intents and purposes, a Greek-speaking body; its leaders knew little or nothing of Hebrew, and thus it appears to have accepted, at first without discussion, the swelled volume of the Septuagint as 'Scripture.' How or when this happened exactly we do not know, but it is clear that the *Hebrew* Canon, and not this wider one, was the accepted Bible of our Lord and His Apostles. There are references in the New Testament to every book of the Hebrew Canon except *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther,* and perhaps *Ecclesiastes.* Many of these are quoted with a reverential formula as 'Scripture,' and the more general references to 'The Scriptures' (both those put into our Lord's mouth and those for which the writers themselves are responsible) are of such a character as to make it clear that there was a definite body of writings whose authority was unquestioned alike by speaker and by audience, and, further, that this body of writings was identical with what we know as the Hebrew Canon of the Old Testament.* Some of the Apocryphal Books are referred or alluded to in the New Testament—as, *e.g.*, 2 *Maccabees* (vi. 18 *et seq.*) in the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 35). But this fact cannot be used to favour the extension of the Canon accepted by the New Testament writers; for a book like *Enoch,* which never came near to attaining a place in any Canon of Scripture, is similarly referred to—

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* If, as many now hold, a large number of the New Testament quotations were derived, not from complete rolls of Old Testament Books, but from handbooks of 'Testimonies' with collected and classified texts, the existence of such handbooks throws back still further the general recognition of the sources from which it draws.

nay, more definitely—in the Epistle of St. Jude (14).* Against the existence of a recognized Hellenistic-Jewish Canon containing the Apocrypha may also be urged the evidence of Philo and Josephus. Both of them were men of wide literary and intellectual sympathies, both Greek-speaking Jews of the first century A.D., who actually wrote on the subject of Hebrew Scripture, yet neither of them shows any knowledge of such a wider Canon.

The knowledge that these Apocryphal Books were not in the Hebrew, nor (probably) in any Jewish Canon, that they did not form part of the Lord's own Bible, or that of His immediate followers, has impressed itself on the Anglican attitude towards the Apocrypha—an attitude which, like so much else in England, may be described as reasonable, but hopelessly illogical. Hebrew scholars in all the Christian ages (when such have existed in the Church) have felt a difficulty in acquiescing in any attempt to rank these books with the original elements of the Hebrew Canon. The contention goes back beyond Reuchlin and Luther to St. Jerome in the fifth century, and Melito in the middle of the second.

The Anglican position is a strong one : there is a clear line of demarcation, and the authority of the Lord Himself (so far as it can be quoted) is rightly held supreme; but the line has one weak point. For men of a single Testament it would be enough to say : 'I have no doubts as to the limits of the genuine Jewish Canon. I accept that and none other. It is the Bible of Christ and His Apostles.' But what, then, becomes of the New Testament ? On what authority is it accepted ? The same Church which sifted and selected from its own literature those books which were to form the Canon of the New Testament accepted also, by an overwhelming majority of opinion, though not without question, these Apocryphal Books as part and parcel of the Old Testament. If I acknowledge the Church as witness and keeper of Holy Writ, must I not accept the Apocrypha as canonical?* Can I, as an Anglican, fall back on the phrase of Article VI. that I accept as Scripture 'those books of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church'? To press this principle in such a matter would be to open the flood-gates of destructive criticism. Was not the Apocalypse at one time disputed, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, and all or most of the Catholic Epistles? Where is my New Testament? What, again, about Esther and the Song of Songs, not to speak of the unrecorded but no less undoubted discussions that must have accompanied each successive augmentation of the Hebrew Bible? Where, then, is my Old Testament?

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* See, further, next chapter, p. 81.

Without attempting to claim for our own branch of the Church Catholic that absolute infallibility which we do not allow to any other single branch, we cannot but feel that the solution of the problem of the Apocrypha lies somewhere along the line that she has taken. She is right in her refusal to extrude altogether from her Bible a group of writings held in especial reverence by the Fathers of the early centuries, and accepted still by thousands of her fellow Christians to-day. She is right, again, in refusing to put on a level with the old Hebrew

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* It is open, perhaps, to an objector to urge that the judgment of the early Christian critics is more to be trusted when they are dealing with Christian or pseudo-Christian documents, where they may be styled 'experts,' than when the subject is (like the Apocryphal Books) a product of Jewish thought. On the position of the Early Church as an 'expert,' see Chapter X., p. 293 *et seq.*

Sacred Books which formed Christ's own Bible this group of predominantly Greek writings, whose admission was regarded by some of the best Christian scholars of antiquity as due to a misconception, and whose general acceptance in the West we probably owe to the commanding influence of St. Augustine. A quasi-canonical position they have won for themselves. The Church, therefore, reads them (as St. Jerome actually says) 'for the edification of the people, not to confirm ecclesiastical dogmas.' Much has been done to obscure her position by the irresponsible action of publishers, who have, on their own authority, printed copies of the Bible without the Apocryphal Books. Attempts have been made again and again from a Puritan standpoint to expunge the Apocrypha entirely, following the lead of Genevan Protestantism. The inclusion of these books in the Old Testament volume was to Martin Marprelate a mingling of 'heaven and earth together,' a making 'the spirite of God to be the author of prophain bookes.' The arguments used upon the other side have not always been of the strongest, but the instinct, surely, has been right; and the process by which the English Church has arrived at her position offers analogies to that instinctive and informal way in which the Canon originally came to be formed.

The problem of the Apocrypha raises other questions, which must be answered elsewhere. It affects, for instance, or may affect, our whole view of what inspiration means. Can we draw still that sharp line between inspired and uninspired, between sacred and profane, which the old controversialists drew, when we are conscious that our Bible contains not only canonical books of greatly varying quality, but also a whole group of deutero-canonical works, of which the noblest passages seem to us far more inspiring than much of the Hebrew Canon proper? When we look forward to All Saints' Day and to Founder's Day, and to the last days of October and the first eighteen of November for their weekday lessons from Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, and Baruch, is not the dividing line apt to become a little blurred? This question we shall attempt to meet in another chapter. Meanwhile we accept the Apocrypha gratefully for the light they throw on the period between Malachi and St. Matthew—a light in recent days reinforced from other sources, but none the less reliable in itself. And, without prejudice to the further question just mentioned, we may still quote Bishop Westcott's estimate of these books. In general it is true of them. 'They witness alike to what Judaism could do, and to what it could not do. They prove by contrast that the books of the Hebrew Canon, as a whole, are generically distinct from the ordinary religious literature of the Jews, and establish more clearly than anything else the absolute originality of the Gospel.' The last phrase, indeed, would be hotly disputed by many scholars of to-day, who would contend that a fuller knowledge of the Jewish literature contemporary with them—of the Book of Enoch, the Book of Jubilees, and the rest of the so-called 'Apocalyptic literature'—has to some extent bridged over the gulf which once separated the Apocrypha, in phraseology and ideas, from the New Testament. But this, again, is a question to be treated elsewhere. There is (as we shall see) a very important sense in which the Gospel originality is thrown into stronger relief by modern studies.

Enough has been said, however, to make clear the Bible's claim to the name *Bibliotheca Divina*, in virtue of the almost infinite variety of the elements of which it is composed—a variety emphasized by the story of the formation of the Canon. Diversity in unity is the mark which history has left upon it. Diversity in unity is the secret of its unfailing appeal to all the races of the world; may we not see in it also the seal of the Spirit who has exercised an inspiring influence over its beginnings and a providential control over the strange, slow process of its evolution ? . . . 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.'

III

CRITICISM AND ARCHÆOLOGY

In the foregoing chapter reference has been made more than once to modern scholarship and recent criticism. The general attitude towards the Bible there exhibited, though not of a startling or revolutionary kind, bears manifest traces of the influence of these forces. The views there expressed may seem commonplace now, but three generations ago they would have been regarded with suspicion, and a little earlier would have been inconceivable.

The critical faculties of three generations, furnished with scientific instruments unknown to our forefathers, have been busily and patiently at work upon the biblical literature, and it would be strange indeed if no result had ensued, if no modification of previous opinion had been evoked. But, apart from the expert and specialized studies of the past century, the general advance of knowledge was bound to affect a man's view of the Bible, as of everything else. His view of Holy Writ is largely coloured by the atmosphere in which he lives. To the Hebrews, to whom we owe the earliest pages of the Bible, it was one thing; to the Greek-speaking Jews, who were largely responsible for its completion, and to the Greeks, who practically settled its traditional interpretation, another. To mediæval Christianity it presented one aspect, another to the Reformation leaders, and yet another does it present to the modern student. Within living memory in England the prevailing attitude has greatly changed. The generation that held up its hands in horror at the publication of *Essays and Reviews* has been succeeded by one that reads the *Hibbert Journal* and the *Encyclopædia Biblica* almost without flinching.

Each age, however, leaves its impression on the tone of those that come after. In the action and reaction of the world's intellectual development, its message sometimes reappears in a slightly different form, and individual survivals of each previous type are probably to be found living in every generation. These are men who live isolated intellectual lives, or men in whom a particular intellectual bacillus is so strongly present that the ideas of their own century cannot force an entrance. The characteristic Hebrew view of the Scriptures has thus been able to propagate itself down the ages, and has at times secured for itself a notable revival, as in the Puritanic tendency, a form of Christianity with a strong Old Testament bias.

The Hebrew mind, though not philosophical, was daringly theological, in a concrete and practical way. Its working is, perhaps, most characteristically and most sublimely exhibited in the Psalter. To it the Divine presence in the world, conceived in terms of a sort of spiritualized anthropomorphism, was a very immediate reality. The Hebrew knew nothing of secondary causes. The thunder was God's voice, the lightning His flashing sword; the clouds were His chariots, the winds His path. What to us is poetic imagery and metaphor was to the Hebrew the baldest statement of fact. The Almighty literally drew the sun, moon, and planets across the firmament, which He had, as literally, studded with the fixed stars. He literally opened the windows of heaven and poured out the 'waters above the firmament' upon the earth.* His hand was literally seen and felt in human life and human history; what we should describe as the 'pressure of circumstances' would be to the Hebrew 'the strong hand of the LORD.'

Such a Deity to such a man would speak with a literally vibrating voice, the voice of many waters, or the deep tones of one of his most formidable creatures. 'The lion hath roared,' exclaims Amos, 'who will not fear? Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?'† To such a man, in his more exalted moments, revelation would come as an articulate and audible whisper: 'In mine ears saith Jehovah Sabaoth.'‡

Pondering on words like these, it was easy enough for the biblical student of a later age—the Pharisaic 'scribe' or 'lawyer' of New Testament times—to mistake the scope and bearing of such notes of direct revelation. It was not unnatural that he should first of all infer from them a like character for every word written by the same prophet, and that then he should proceed to ascribe to the whole of Scripture the form and intensity of direct inspiration which he found to be claimed in certain of its passages.

Nor is it surprising that with his Hebrew temperament he should have ignored the secondary causes and intermediate processes by which the various documents slowly and painfully attained their final forms, and climbed up to a place within the Canon; and have attributed to them a direct and absolute sacredness, which the literalistic

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* On the Hebrew cosmology, see, further, pp. 200 *et seq.*; 203-206.

† Amos iii. 8; *cf.* i. 2.

‡ Isa. v. 9.

Pharisee of a still later age might interpret in terms of a strictly mechanical inspiration of every word of Scripture. That something of this sort happened we know. Some centuries after the beginning of the Christian era the process culminated in giving us what is called the Massoretic text of the Old Testament: a text which reigns supreme because (if the traditional view is to be trusted) all variant manuscripts were sedulously destroyed by Pharisaic zeal for orthodoxy. But the process was certainly far advanced when the Christian Church took on from Judaism the Hebrew Scriptures and something of the prevailing Hebrew estimate of them. Hence it is—from literalistic Pharisaism—that is derived the theory, revived in comparatively recent days by Hebrew-minded Puritans: the theory which sees in the Scriptures a body of writings mechanically dictated by the Spirit. The authors of these writings, it is held, were authors in name alone, because their natural faculties were entirely passive and quiescent during the hours of inspiration when they wrote. Their writings are not theirs, but God's, and, as such, marked off by a clear line from all other literature whatsoever.

On such premises criticism of the biblical literature would be out of the question. To this subject we shall return when we come to treat of inspiration.* Our present task is an equally formidable one—to sum up, as far as may be without entering too much into detail, the general results of criticism as controlled and illustrated by archæology.

The results so far obtained are necessarily incomplete, and in part quite provisional. The movement of criticism, though never left quite without witness since

* See next chapter.

the days of Jerome and Theodore of Mopsuestia, has been slow and fitful in its action till a hundred years ago; and since it began to work effectively, its path has been beset with obstacles, of which by no means the greatest has been the dead-weight of conservative opposition. The conservative prejudices or the radical or anarchical extravagances of its own extreme Right and Left; the vagueness of its data; the pioneer character of much of its work; the want of unity and aim and of concerted plan which marked its earlier stages—these and other causes have imposed an effective drag upon the course of criticism; while the sympathy of many who might have become its solid supporters has been alienated by a misconception of its motive and its aim. Traditionalism has tarred all critics with the same brush; and because some of its leaders have been Ultra-rationalists, the whole movement has come to be regarded as a conspiracy against the supernatural. Because many of its provisional conclusions have been from time to time upset by further evidence, *all* its results are wont to be characterized as wild imaginings, 'the baseless fabric of a vision.'

There are four possible attitudes towards the literary-historical criticism of the Bible, but not all of these (need it be suggested) have any real claim to consideration.

First of all, there is the attitude of the fanatical opponent, to whom criticism (to speak frankly) 'is of the devil.' 'I am thankful to say I know nothing about it, and it is all wrong.' Such statements may still be heard here and there from the lips of otherwise intelligent people—men who, however old-fashioned, are quite ready to use telegraph, telephone, and motor-car—

and who, when questioned, prove critics enough to have given up the Ptolemaic theory of the universe, and even to have discarded the doctrine of a process of creation limited to a hundred and forty-four hours.

Such a genuine *laudator temporis acti* has to live his workaday life in the twentieth century amid its sights and sounds, but he manages somehow to close his eyes and shut his ears whenever the question of the Bible comes up. It is one of the miracles of Divine grace that Holy Writ, thus artificially isolated from the rest of his universe, remains for him so fruitful and so helpful. If he chance to be a preacher, must not his interpretations of it lose their force to a large section of his congregation?

At the other extreme is the man who is anxious above all things to be up-to-date; who is ever on the watch for the newest and most ingenious of those critical *extravaganzas* which come into being day after day. 'Dummkopf has proved this,' 'Hanswurst has proved that.' If some Continental theologian, in despair of showing himself original in any more rational way, should broach a theory that the Book of Daniel was compiled by Ibn Ezra in the twelfth century, or that Martin Luther was the author (shall we say?) of the Epistle of St. James, such an one would not turn a hair. He is ready (have we not known instances among the self-styled votaries of criticism and of archæology alike?) to accept any new theory on the slenderest of evidence, provided it be sufficiently unorthodox. Obviously, the advance of sound knowledge does not lie in that direction.

The true attitude, surely, is that of one who, while conceding its just value to the heritage of the past, is ready to admit such modifications of his old ideas as are necessitated—not by the latest theory advanced by some irresponsible professor, *exaltés* as many of these are apt to become by the strange fascination of Oriental studies, but by such general conclusions as may be established from time to time.

The fanatical opponent of whom we spoke just now would probably assert that he was ready to accept all genuinely established conclusions. But the value of this concession is heavily discounted by his frank avowal that he knows nothing about it, and does not ever mean to know anything about it—an avowal which bears the stamp of genuineness and sincerity!

But the attitude which we have commended itself offers several types. The advocate of the *via media* may have sympathetic leanings towards criticism, or the reverse. Sympathy by no means involves a want of discrimination. Nor does a general sympathy with criticism imply a lack of real reverence for Holy Writ, or a rejection of the belief that it is in some special way 'inspired of God.' The Bible, after all, has its two sides, corresponding to the body and the spirit; and just as man, on the physical side, is linked to the material world of organic life, and offers countless analogies for the physiologist to what we call the 'brute creation'; so the Bible, on its material side, falls under the category of ancient literature, and is amenable to the same tests and criteria by which other ancient literature is judged. While its theological side reflects every phase and stage of the Godward movement of man's spirit, and appeals to every mood of the individual spiritual life, its material side offers fields of study to every type of literary and scientific investigator. The floods of new knowledge let in from every quarter by an age of unique specialization were sure to affect biblical studies as they have affected all other studies. The development of literary and historical as well as textual criticism, the advance of archæology, the birth and growth of anthropology, psychology (in the modern sense), and of the study called, somewhat clumsily, 'comparative religion'—all these, together with the progress of sciences, like geology and astronomy, more general and remote in their relation to Holy Writ, have, as a matter of fact, deeply affected the thinking man's view of the Bible. And the student, whose sympathies are, on the whole, with criticism, accepts the fact with gratitude. Any real access of truth, even if it unsettle some of our preconceived notions, is a thing to be thankful for. Some cherished ideas must go. We shall not part with them lightly; but if we have to give them up, we do so whole-heartedly, knowing that the new light is from the same source as the old, even from the 'Light which lighteth every man.'*

The less sympathetic attitude is that adopted by the most stalwart champions of orthodox conservatism at the present day. Without a settled theory of its own—for the rigidly conservative view of the Bible, like the chronology of Archbishop Ussher, is surely discredited—it contests the ground inch by inch, using every bit of cover, invoking every available ally from the archæological camp; scoring now a real, but unfruitful, now a merely imaginary, success; fighting a defensive battle. The defending party lacks coherence and organization, but its courage is splendid, and its dogged persistence heroic. On the whole its action is beneficial, for it ensures the careful testing of fresh hypotheses, and in the end consolidates while it retards the advance of critical knowledge. In this way it holds a position analogous to that of a Second Chamber in the progress of legislation.

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* John i. 9.

What, then, are the general outlines, the broad tendencies and main conclusions, of the type of criticism which may be said to hold the field to-day ?

I.

It was with the Old Testament that criticism began, and it is here that it claims to have achieved the most remarkable results, so we shall do well to reckon with Old Testament criticism first. In the sequel it will appear how far similar methods are likely to produce similar results in the case of the New Testament.

The type of Old Testament criticism which may be said to hold the field to-day, alike in Europe and in America, is that which is represented by the School of Wellhausen. It owes its impulse, its special principles, and the outlines of its theory, to Julius Wellhausen, whose work of a quarter of a century ago—itself the culmination of a long series of previous investigations by other critics—was ably seconded in England by Robertson Smith, and has since been carried forward by scholars too numerous to be mentioned.

Literary criticism of the Pentateuch on common-sense lines did not, of course, originate with the Protestant scholars of the nineteenth century. Apart from the sound biblical scholarship of earlier Christian students like St. Jerome, the Jews themselves show traces of an early and intelligent interest in questions of authorship, though these traces are few and scattered. That Moses himself should have written the story of his own death, in the last verses of Deuteronomy, presented no difficulty to the minds of Philo and Josephus, the contemporaries of the New Testament writers; but the Talmud makes it clear that Jewish scholars before the sixth century A.D. were prepared to assign the authorship of these verses to Joshua, and of the account of the death of Joshua similarly to Eleazar.

We come much nearer to the spirit of the best modern criticism in the suggestion of a Rabbi Isaac (*c.* A.D. 900) that the phrase 'These are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel'* must have been written after the establishment of the monarchy, a consideration which led him to assign the whole section to the days of Jehoshaphat.

But the immediate ancestry of modern criticism may perhaps be said to date from 1766, when Astruc, a devout French physician, called attention to the strange alternation of the two Divine names, *Jehovah* and *Elohim*, in the Pentateuch, and suggested that they might represent traces of two earlier documents incorporated by Moses in his work. The suggestion proved a valuable one, though not covering all the ground. Other starting-points for analysis quickly emerged. Later critics were struck by the occurrence of glaring inconsistencies, and especially of apparently duplicate narratives of the same event, successive, as in the first two chapters of Genesis, or interwoven, as in the story of the Deluge, and the account of the way in which Joseph came into Egypt,† and (more obscurely) in the record of the plagues and the deliverance from Egypt.

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* Gen. xxxvi. 31.

† Gen. xxxvii. The existence of two parallel narratives becomes clear if verses 21, 25-27, 28^b, be read as one story, and verses 22, 24, 28^a and ^{c}, 29, 30, 36, as another. In the first Joseph is sold by his brethren to Ishmaelites; in the second they throw him into a pit, whence he is taken by Midianites without their knowledge.

These phenomena were found not to be confined to the Pentateuch. The opening chapter of the Book of Judges proved difficult to reconcile with the summary record of the conquest in Joshua. The history of David, again, afforded duplicates which suggested that the Books of Samuel embodied two parallel and not entirely consistent narratives. The story of his introduction to Saul is a clear instance of this,* and it is tempting to the critic to see the like in the two accounts of how he spared Saul's life when his enemy lay in his power.†

A conspicuous case of general parallelism, combined with a host of detailed inconsistencies, is that afforded by a comparison of the two records of the Hebrew monarchy as exhibited on the one hand in the prophetic narratives of Samuel and Kings, and on the other hand in the Chronicles. The account of the Chronicler follows the earlier narrative word for word to a very large extent, so far as it deals with the kingdom of the House of David, in which alone he is interested; but his additional matter shows a marked difference in tone and tendency, and not seldom an inconsistency in matters of fact. 'In many cases,' says Dr. Driver (and his words are carefully measured)—'in many cases the figures [in Chronicles] are incredibly high; in others the scale or magnitude of the occurrences described is such that, had they really happened precisely as represented, they could hardly have been passed over by the compiler of Samuel or Kings. Elsewhere, again, the description appears to be irreconcilable with that in the earlier narrative;

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* Compare 1 Sam. xvi. 14 *et seq.* with xvii. 55 *et seq.*

† 1 Sam. xxiv. and xxvi.

while nearly always the speeches assigned to historical characters, and the motives attributed to them, are conceived largely from a point of view very different from that which dominates the earlier narrative, and agreeing closely with the compilers.'* A good typical instance of this may be found in the speech put into the mouth of Abijah by the Chronicler,† and his account of that king's reign, when compared with the brief notice in Kings.‡ But other criteria besides those of subject-matter quickly claim attention. The study of style and vocabulary must be called in to control the results of such investigations, which, again, will be illustrated by all that we can learn of the language, habits, and religion of the nations surrounding Israel.

Style and vocabulary show a tendency to corroborate results obtained from other data. The phenomena frequently group themselves in an intelligible way. Passages and sections which had already been, on other grounds, separated from their context and classified by themselves are found to be distinguished further by special characteristics of vocabulary and style, and thus tentative lines of cleavage are deepened and made permanent, and the sober conjectures of analysis are corroborated.

Again, analytical principles first applied over a restricted area are found to be more widely applicable. Fresh literary affinities are discovered between book and book. Thus, *Joshua* is found to exhibit a composite character, involving the interweaving of the same documents which analysis has discovered in the preceding books, and so the Pentateuch becomes, for the literary critic, a Hexateuch. The following books, again—Judges, Samuel, and Kings, which form with Joshua the Hebrew canonical group of the 'Former Prophets'—show in their finest and most graphic passages affinities in style and vocabulary, as also in tendency and point of view, to a certain strain in Genesis, which is represented, *e.g.*, by the second account of creation (Gen. ii. 4 *et seq.*), and by the noble character-studies of the patriarchs.* The Books of Chronicles ally themselves naturally with the first account of creation, and the many statistical and essentially legalistic portions of the Pentateuch: though apparently of much later date than these, they have imbibed their spirit.

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* Driver, 'Literature of Old Testament,' p. 500 (6th edit., p. 533).

† 2 Chron. xiii. 1-xiv. 1.

‡ 1 Kings xv. 1-8.

Further study of books outside the Pentateuch sometimes corroborates in a most remarkable and unexpected way the results of Pentateuchal analysis. A good instance is furnished by the story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram in Num. xvi. A close study of this passage seemed to reveal a composite origin, in which the 'priestly' story of Korah's rebellion on ecclesiastical grounds (itself exhibiting a composite character) had been added to a 'prophetic' (JE) narrative of the revolt of Dathan and Abiram (laymen) against the civil authority. It was not observed till afterwards that Ps. cvi.† had no mention of Korah, and treats Dathan and Abiram as representatives of the rebels on whom such summary judgment was executed.

The Book of Deuteronomy, at first sight puzzling beyond measure in its relations to the books which precede and follow it, proves, when better understood, to be an important pivot of the critical theory.

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* This documentary series is known by the symbol JE; that of Leviticus, etc., by P. See, further, p. 63, and note at the end of this chapter.

† Ps. cvi. 17.

Its style is far superior to that of the Chronicles, its language and vocabulary more classical; yet it has obviously left a strong mark upon the later work. Its characteristic doctrine of the necessity of a single sanctuary, at the place 'which Jehovah shall choose to place His Name there,' is the standard by which the kings are judged throughout the Books of Chronicles. On the earlier series of historical books—the 'Former Prophets'—Deuteronomy has indeed set its mark, as though the whole series had been finally edited and welded together by one who was under the influence of that book. Yet in this series the ceremonial and religious standard of Deuteronomy is not imposed upon the historical characters—they are not definitely arraigned by the historian for breaches of it—until the reign of Josiah and the discovery of the Law-book in the Temple.

In the early chapters of Kings few traces are left of the distinctive Deuteronomic teaching, not to speak of the full-blown system of Levitical sacrifice which is strongly present in Chronicles; still fewer are to be found in Samuel and Judges. Heroes of theocratic history, like Solomon, David, Samuel, naïvely and without blame break all the rules of sacrificial observance. Ephod images and teraphim are mentioned without wincing. The Judges, actuated as they are by the direct influence of the 'Spirit of Jehovah,'* act without any reference to, or apparent knowledge of, the precepts of Deuteronomy, or of the Levitical ceremonial, and are not, in the narrative, condemned therefor. Priestly functions are freely exercised by laymen; sacrifices are performed, as in patriarchal times, wherever it is most convenient. There is a prevailing silence with regard to the observance of even the greater festivals enjoined by the law. From the days of Joshua to those of Hezekiah the Passover is not mentioned even in Chronicles, and in Kings not till the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign. And the language of both Kings and Chronicles about Josiah's Passover suggest that it followed an almost immemorial neglect or abeyance of the feast.*

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* Judg. xi. 29, xiv. 19, etc.

We have spoken of Deuteronomy as one of the pivots of the Wellhausen theory. The Passover is a typical instance of a number of fundamental enactments which, according to the best historical evidence we have, were unobserved before the days of Josiah, and in his reforms were explicitly associated with the newly-discovered Law-book: 'Keep the passover unto the Lord your God, as it is written in this book of the covenant.' †

Another pivot of the theory is found in the eighth-century prophets, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. A candid reader will be ready to admit that the background of their teaching does not seem to be the Levitical system as embodied in the Pentateuch. The apparent antagonism of the prophets—and notably of Isaiah—to ceremonial sacrifice is no doubt very easily exaggerated, and has been inordinately exploited by leaders of an anti-sacrificial crusade. Hosea's 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice,' was, doubtless, like Samuel's 'To obey is better than sacrifice,' ‡ intended rather to exalt the essential spiritual and moral element than to deny efficacy to the ritual form in which the spirit found natural and meet expression. But it is certainly not for neglect of the ceremonial law that the earlier writing prophets arraign the people; their denunciations have a pervadingly moral and spiritual aim, and some at least of their statements are not easy to harmonize with the Pentateuchal atmosphere, as when the Lord, by Amos, asks (clearly expecting a negative answer), 'Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?'* And Jeremiah† provided the answer: 'I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.'

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* 2 Kings xxiii. 22, 23; 2 Chron. xxxv. 18, 19.

† 2 Kings xxiii. 21.

‡ Hos. vi. 6; 1 Sam. xv. 22.

In general, the Prophets seem to emphasize the inward part of the religious life, morality and heart-worship, at the expense of the outward; and it is not until we come to Ezekiel, the priest-prophet, that we find anything like a complete reflection of the Levitical system. And here the phenomena are so striking as to suggest the idea that the teaching of Ezekiel may have had a direct influence upon some of the last stages by which the 'Pentateuchal' Law reached its final form.‡ If this be so, then we can readily understand the apparent ignorance of the Law shown by the earlier prophets.

Once more, the study of Arabic side by side with Hebrew, and of the religious customs of the Arabs and of kindred Semitic peoples, has largely illustrated and corroborated the results sketched above. Light has been thrown on the Hebrew language, which enables the expert to detect with greater certainty the presence of late words and constructions, and in consequence many passages long reputed earlier have been relegated to the period of the Exile or the Restoration. The comparison of Hebrew rites and ceremonies, and of their religious formulæ, with those of their neighbours shows strong and close affinities. The language used by Mesha of Moab about his god Chemosh on the famous 'Moabite stone' almost exactly parallels the religious-political attitude of Jephthah in controversy with Ammon.*

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* Amos v. 25. † vii. 22.

‡ He seems to be directly responsible for the second part of Leviticus (xvii.-xxvi.) dealing with the 'Law of Holiness,' which the critics mark as 'H.'

The sacrificial customs of the primitive Arabs adduced by Robertson Smith seem to represent the germ of the Hebrew sacrificial system, and the general trend of the evidence is towards showing that the so-called Mosaic legislation was, in many of its points, a modification of existing customs—a modification worked out, it would seem, slowly and gradually, and not without a helping hand from the prophets.

As regards the sacrificial system, the evidence of the prophetical historians seems to ignore the distinctive rites of the sin-offering, attributing, apparently, something of an expiatory value to burnt-offerings of the patriarchal type, as does also the framework of the Book of Job (chaps. i. and xlii.), where a remarkably successful attempt is made to reproduce the atmosphere of primitive patriarchal religion; nor is such an elaboration of sacrifices implied even in Micah.† This agrees with the general movement of religious evolution among the Semites, as elsewhere in antiquity, where the elaboration of rites definitely connected with the developed sense of sin is wont to appear at a comparatively late date.

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* Compare, *e.g.*, with Judg. xi. 24 (' Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess?') the Moabite stone, 'And Chemosh said unto thee, Go, take Nebo against Israel.'

† *Cf.* vi. 6.

Again, the Levitical technical term for guilt-offering occurs, indeed, in the First Book of Samuel, but its connotation is different: it is applied to the 'golden mice and golden emerods' of the Philistines.* So, too, the quaint ceremonies associated in the Book of Ruth† with the marriage of an heiress widow to her husband's next of kin do not correspond to the provisions of the Book of Deuteronomy. In these and similar cases‡ we seem to have links between the primitive customs of the ancient heathen Semites and the later developed system of the Levitical law.

The general characteristics of the course of literary development, independently detected by a close study of the first two groups of Old Testament Books—'the Law and 'the Prophets'—reappear also in the Psalter, the leading book of the third or Hagiographic Group. The Psalter is a sort of micro-canon, a little Bible in itself. Its five books§ (corresponding in number, perhaps intentionally, to the 'Five Books of Moses') represent successive collections of documents, the documents themselves of widely varying date. Each book has its own special characteristics, more or less marked, yet the line of literary and historical affinity cuts across the line of demarcation provided by the formal divisions; and the Psalter as a whole exhibits (as is to be expected in a hymn-book in use for successive generations) manifest signs of editing. It has variations in the use of the Divine names corresponding (superficially, at any rate) to those of the Pentateuch. The first, fourth and fifth books use *Jehovah;* the second, *Elohim;* the third has the two names about equally distributed.

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* *'Asham* (אָשָׁם), 1 Sam. vi. 3, etc.

† Ruth iv.; contrast Deut. xxv. 5 *et seq.*

‡ *E.g.*, the lifelong Nazirite observance of Samson (Judg. xiii.) different from the temporary vows of Num. vi.

§ The division into books is marked in the Revised Version.

The significant phenomena of style and vocabulary, and the variations in ethical and religious background, reappear here in a new setting, and form a fascinating, though often elusive, subject for study. There are psalms historical, didactic, gnomic or proverbial, prophetic, mystic, answering to each type of Old Testament literature.

The general result of the last half-century of criticism of the Psalter has been to bring down the dates to a later period than was formerly supposed to be correct. A candid comparison of the so-called 'Davidic' Psalms with the historical material provided by the Books of Samuel, though it does not rob the royal Singer of his place at the fountain-head of Hebrew psalmody, makes it impossible to assign to David and his contemporaries anything like the number of psalms attributed to them by tradition, even making allowance for subsequent verbal changes; while the frequent occurrence of Aramaic words and later constructions has stamped many psalms as being (in their present form) post-exilic, and has led some critics to look for the patriotic stimulus of not a few in the stirring and heroic period of the Maccabean wars of independence—that is, in the middle of the second century before our era.

The chronological results which emerge from the literary-historical study of the Psalter are paralleled, to a large extent, in the rest of the Old Testament. There has been a general reduction of the dates. But a still greater revolution is involved in the discovery of the Wellhausen School that the chronology of the Law and the Prophets has (broadly speaking) to be reversed;

that the prophets of the eighth century, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, represent (apart from isolated passages embodied in later narrative*) the earliest Hebrew literature to which we can give a certain date; that the prophetic narrative, from which we derive the most graphic details of the history, alike in the Pentateuch and in the books which follow, though compiled out of earlier Judaic and Ephraimite documents assignable to the ninth (J) and eighth (E) centuries respectively, dates in its consolidated form after the middle of the sixth century B.C.; while the Priestly Code (P),† which interweaves its statistical records with this, and supplements the historical narrative by the Books of Chronicles, saw the light in Babylon during the exile, between the days of Ezekiel and those of Ezra. To this period is to be assigned the finished legal and ceremonial system embodied in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers; while Deuteronomy, which formed (in whole or in part) the basis of Josiah's reforms, cannot have been in existence many years before its discovery by Hilkiah in A.D. 621, or at any rate cannot ever have been acknowledged as authoritative before that date.

No attempt has been made to present, exhaustively or scientifically, the evidence on which the Wellhausen theory is based; but it is hoped that the somewhat superficial outline just given may be enough to show how very broad are its foundations, how very varied, yet how mutually cohesive, are the materials out of which it is built.

Within the general outlines of this scheme, which is very widely accepted in Europe and America, and claims amid its adherents in England the names of such sound, devoted, and trusted scholars as Driver, Ryle, and Kirkpatrick, there is room for considerable variety in detail. Much is still left vague, and must remain so, unless archæology intervenes with conclusive evidence on one side or the other. A Mosaic nucleus of legislation in the Pentateuch is warranted and demanded by the strength and unanimity of tradition. The *minimum* attributed to Moses himself is, perhaps, an indeterminate nucleus of Exod. xx.-xxiii. 19, and that, perhaps in an earlier form, now lost; the *maximum*, as much of the whole as the phenomena of later history will permit. Again, as regards the patriarchal narratives of Genesis, opinion will always be divided — unless archæology comes forward to arbitrate—as to the exact degree of historical value attributable to continuous oral tradition, and, again, as to the possibility of documentary transmission of some of the (presumably) very earliest narratives, like that, for instance, of Gen. xiv.

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* *E.g.*, Gen. iv. 23, 24; Judg. v.; the poetic extracts in Num. xxi., xxiii., and xxiv., and elsewhere.

† For scheme of documentary signs and probable dates, see note at end of chapter.

But, making allowance for all possible concessions, the traditionalist would probably not be far wrong in stating the grounds of his quarrel with the Wellhausen School somewhat as follows: They deny the strictly historical character of the narratives in Genesis, and question that of the bulk of the seemingly historical matter that bridges the gulf between Moses and David. If the existence of Moses be conceded as, in some sense, a 'founder' of the religious polity of Israel, the exact part he played is left uncertain. Of the Pentateuchal legislation only a vague and undetermined nucleus is granted to be of an undetermined antiquity. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob become little more than legendary figures; the sojourn of the twelve tribes in Egypt is regarded as open to discussion; the story of Joshua's conquest has to be entirely rewritten. It is only with the monarchy that we begin to stand on firm ground; and even here we must be on our guard, not only against the priestly strain in the narrative, which colours it with the tints of post-exilic Judaism, but even against the earlier Deuteronomist element, in which history has been rewritten from the standpoint of Josiah's reforms.

It is a serried front and a solid systematic organization that Wellhausenism opposes to the attacks of the traditionalist. How does the latter hope to prevail, or even to hold his own? A natural step on the part of one who suspects this revolutionary movement is to turn to Archæology for aid. And in a certain sense it is a right step. For the literary critic will be the first to admit that his conclusions are always open to revision from the archæological side. If an archæological discovery were to disprove the Wellhausenist hypothesis to-day, its advocates would cheerfully give it all up to-morrow. But archæological data are one thing—a factor which must be treated with the utmost respect—while the inferences hastily drawn from such data are on quite a different plane. Archæology has much to say, and will have more to say hereafter; but her *dicta* as regards the Old Testament, though now and again they corroborate, and still more often illustrate, statements in the sacred text, not seldom suggest a chronological or other inexactitude. This is more especially the case where (from the time of Ahab and onwards) the records of Hebrew and Assyrian history can be read side by side, with points of contact recurring at intervals.

Babylonian archæology will probably from henceforth have not a little to contribute to the criticism of the Old Testament. Its devotees assert that it has been too long neglected by literary critics, and is about to revenge itself upon them. It will be a welcome revenge for all true scholars of whatever type, if it has new truth to reveal. Assyriology is, indeed, still in its infancy, though much advance has been made since the days when George Smith, between 1872 and 1876, first published to the modern world the 'Babylonian Epic of Creation.' As fresh material is deciphered, and the rendering of the familiar texts progressively corrected, there will be more opportunity of estimating aright the relation between Babylonian religion and mythology and the Old Testament; with the result, doubtless, of modifying conclusions reached without due consideration of the Babylonian factor. No one can deny the importance or the relevance of such discoveries as that of the Tell-el-Amarna Tablets in 1887, and of the Code of Ḥammurabi in 1902. The former shew us a Babylonian (cuneiform) script in vogue in Palestine and Egypt in the time of the Eighteenth Egyptian Dynasty, and demonstrate the fact that writing and other civilized arts were practised in Palestine in or about 1450 B.C.—*i.e.*, nearly two centuries earlier than the date which has been the favourite with traditionalists for the Exodus; but its evidence, though in many ways deeply interesting to the Bible student, cannot be said to confirm all round the traditional view of Hebrew history. There is not, as yet, a scrap of evidence that Hebrew records were ever written in the Babylonian cuneiform. As for the Code of Ḥammurabi, while the elaboration and the wisdom of its provisions witness to a very early development of legislative genius, about 1800 B.C., several generations—perhaps we should say several centuries—before the traditional era of Moses; its exact bearing upon Old Testament criticism is obscured, like that of the Babylonian Creation and Deluge literature, by the vast and continuous chronological duration of these monuments. The extant copies come to us from the library of Assurbanipal, inscribed in the seventh century B.C. But many of the ponderous records of this famous collection are copies made of earlier documents, most of which have since disappeared, though considerable fragments have been recovered. Some of these originals, when copied by Assurbanipal's librarians, must have been handed down already for some fourteen or fifteen centuries.

Thus one of the burning questions remains (and may remain indefinitely) insoluble—at least, from this quarter—the question of the date of the Babylonian influence, if such it be, upon the early narratives of Genesis and (some would add) upon the legislation of the Pentateuch. Is it to be ascribed to the period of the Exile, or to be accounted for by the earlier contact with Mesopotamia embodied in the tradition that the father of the Hebrew race came from Ur of the Chaldees? *

If archæology, Babylonian or otherwise, is to modify the trend of critical research, it will probably effect most in that period previous to the eighth century B.C., of which higher criticism is prepared to concede that it is 'still,' to a certain extent, 'under discussion.' Now and again it strikingly supports the literary critics. Stade, for instance, on purely literary-historical grounds, contended that the account of the summary conquest of Canaan given in the Book of Joshua must involve a

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* Gen. xi. 31; *cf.* Josh. xxiv. 2

considerable idealizing of the facts. Excavations in Palestine now seem to be justifying his criticism more and more. Their evidence, which is akin to that of geology, seems to admit of no 'abrupt gap' or breach of continuity in the development of Palestinian religious archæology. How far such evidence can be said to corroborate more advanced theories such as those of Dr. Cheyne, which, working upon a study of the tendencies of clerical errors, and the variation of place-names, would deny the sojourn in Egypt, is another question. What archæology may be expected to do in general, if one may hazard a prediction, is to bring out more and more into relief the genuinely oriental and Semitic character of the Old Testament, diminishing the gap between the traditions, customs and habits of thought of the Hebrews, and those of the surrounding peoples; emphasizing their affinities, without, however, detracting from the supremacy and uniqueness of the Old Testament in the sphere of moral and religious teaching. It may probably illustrate, and in places confirm as historical, suspected details of the earlier period of Hebrew history referred to above. We have seen that it has already proved that the art of writing was known in Palestine in pre-Mosaic and early post-Mosaic times. We may yet discover, in Canaan or in Egypt, direct documentary evidence for one or other of the patriarchal narratives, or justify a considerable enlargement of the nucleus of legislation ascribed to Moses by even the most exigent critics. And even when archæology fails to give direct support to a given tradition, it may supply a picture of the age in question that renders the tradition indefinitely more probable—as Egyptian archæology is thought by some to have done for the story of Joseph, while, according to another view, it has but confirmed its *legendary* character.* Or, again, it may strengthen in a general way the credit of oral tradition in the ancient East, or of tradition that has but a minimum of documentary support. The traditionalist may draw some comfort from the recent excavations in Crete—that signal triumph of the spade over the pen, which has vindicated for history an entire civilization long reputed purely fabulous; has vindicated a vague but persistent tradition of Minoan greatness against the ignorance even of the great historians of ancient Greece!

There is no limit, in reason, to the revelations that the spade may have to offer. It is not likely, however, to upset that working hypothesis which is known as the law of gravitation, nor—so the critics confidently affirm—the main outlines of their working hypothesis, which, like the gravitation theory, is corroborated from so many different sides. In the main issue it is doubtful whether there is any hope for the rigid conservatives. We shall probably never work round again to the position of accepting the chronology which lies on the surface of the books; of accepting the Pentateuch as it stands for the work of Moses, and explaining the entire neglect of its injunctions during centuries of subsequent history by the theory of the 'passive existence' of a document backed by such overwhelming sanctions. The 'Ornaments Rubric' has been ingeniously adduced as a parallel, and is not a bad parallel as far as it goes—for at what period between its promulgation and the present day has it been generally obeyed by those who claim to be orthodox followers of the Book of Common Prayer? But, after all, the parallel does not go far enough. The Ornaments Rubric cannot fairly be balanced against the entire system of the Levitical Law!

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* If the Joseph-story could be shown to have originated in Egyptian *legend*, it would still bear witness to a connection of Israel with Egypt.

II.

Criticism concerns itself with the New Testament as well as with the Old, and so does archæology. And many an enlightened traditionalist is roused to violent antagonism against the drastic methods and revolutionary conclusions of Old Testament critics because he dreads the application of the same methods, and the proclamation of similar results in the case of the New Testament. Nor is his fear unaccountable. The wild and savage assaults of the Tübingen School upon the New Testament stronghold, though they have been beaten back by solid scholarship armed with the same weapons of literary and historical method, have left a good deal of suspicion and unsettlement behind. The plain man feels that every inch he concedes on Old Testament ground brings the enemy so much nearer to the Gospel citadel; that the battles of the Gospel are being fought out on the field of the Law and the Prophets.

Such considerations as these may account for anxiety and apprehension, but they do not justify despair. It is natural and right that we should shrink from an unsympathetic dissection of the most sacred pages of the Gospel story. With an honest desire that the truth may prevail, one may yet shudder at the character of some of the episodes of the struggle. A genuine sympathizer with criticism may well be shocked, roused to wrath, scorn, indignation, by some of the insolent utterances of the modern spirit. He may feel (to take up a former metaphor) that a non-worshipping intruder into the Temple of Holy Writ is disturbing the worship by his loud talk and irreverent behaviour. But the fears of the plain man are enhanced by a failure to estimate the immense difference which separates the critical problems of the New Testament from those of the Old—a failure which not a few would-be critics share.

It is true that the method by which the second group of writings must be tested and sifted is the same; but the material to be dealt with is in one respect wholly diverse. The literature of the Old Testament, besides being largely anonymous, is spread over a vague period of a thousand years or more; and much of it is separated by many generations from the events which it narrates. The genesis of all, or practically all, of the New Testament writings is confined within the space of half a century—roughly speaking, A.D. 50 to 100—and the latest of its books (with the possible exception of 2 *Peter* or of *Jude*) was in all probability finished within seventy years of the date of the Crucifixion.

These simple facts of chronology, which have been established, not, indeed, without a struggle, but established, one may hope, once for all, make all the difference. No amount of shifting of the order of the documents can possibly produce for the New Testament the chronological revolution that Wellhausenism has introduced into Old Testament study by putting the Prophets before the Law.

The new chronological reading of the Old Testament documents finds indeed (as we saw in the preceding chapter) a curious parallel in the generally accepted order of the genesis of the New Testament Books, where the Epistles, representing prophetism, actually precede the Gospels—the Christian Tetrateuch—and the Apocalypse comes in at the end (or near the end), like the Apocalyptic writings, canonical and uncanonical, of Judaism.

If the New Testament is not subject to drastic chronological rearrangement, neither can there be levelled against it the accusation from which the Old Testament narratives so often suffer, that it lacks the essentials of historical credibility. The Old Testament historians, we are told, date from the Exile or later, and the earliest of the documents which they incorporate cannot (with a few fragmentary exceptions) claim an antiquity earlier than the age of David or Solomon.

If, then, no historical details can be trusted that have passed down unwritten for more than a couple of generations, all likelihood of detailed accuracy in these narratives disappears. This canon of criticism, if so it should be styled, may perhaps be accepted, with some reservation, as regards details, though the spade, as in Crete of late, wins now and again surprising victories over the critic's pen, and vindicates (as we have seen) hoary traditions that have had but slender documentary support. But such criticism has no foothold in a region like that of the New Testament, where all (or all that is essential) is compressed into the space of a single generation.

In the New Testament region, moreover, archæology is very largely confirmatory at the points where it touches. The researches of Sir William Ramsay, for instance, in Asia Minor may be claimed as not only illustrating in a remarkable way the Acts of the Apostles and the first two chapters of the Apocalypse, but also as vindicating the historical accuracy and detailed topographical knowledge of the writers of those books, New Testament criticism has ceased to busy itself so much with date and authorship, and is concentrating itself more and more on the central Figure of the Gospels. The date and authorship of the several documents occupy much less attention to-day, partly because so much is settled, partly because, as in the case of the Synoptic Gospels, the problem has assumed another form; and it is 'source' rather than authorship or date that is of primary importance.

Much is settled. Ramsay's triumphant vindication of the veracity and historical trustworthiness of the Acts, and of its 'Lucan' authorship—with all that this implies for the Third Gospel—Harnack's conversion to the early date of practically all the New Testament writings, and, above all, to the genuineness of the bulk of the Pauline Epistles—these are great gains, of permanent value, and have helped to clear the ground.

They have given us back St. Paul (branded in Tübingen days as the wilful perverter of Christianity)—given him back to us as the author, directly or indirectly (through his companion St. Luke), of half our New Testament, as the great thinker and statesman to whom, under God, Christianity owes its very continuance in the world.

The authorship and composition of the Apocalypse still offer puzzling problems, for which it is, perhaps, too soon to look for a final solution, till we are still further familiar with the Apocalyptic literature of the period outside the Canon. Even the most conservative of critics, who contend for the integrity of the book as the work of a single author, recognize the difficulty of attributing it, with its immense differences of style, to the author of the Fourth Gospel, unless a considerable lapse

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of years (and change of conditions) can be supposed between the composition of the one and the other. But there is a prevailing tendency to date the Apocalypse, together with the Fourth Gospel and the rest of the Johannine writings, before the close of the first century; and in this matter the question of date is, perhaps, even more important than that of authorship.

It is upon the Gospels, then, that criticism is once again concentrating its forces more and more; always with a view to coming face to face with the central Subject of these Gospels, who, for some of us, is also the central Figure of all human history.

The real difficulty of harmonizing the narrative of the Fourth Gospel with that of the other three, the group of problems raised by the interrelations of these other three—called, for convenience, 'The Synoptic Problem'—these matters are still to the fore, though some, at least, of the questions are nearing a provisional solution. But the critical spirit cannot rest there. Working upon the *data* supplied by the study of these and of kindred problems, it is making a bold attempt to estimate how much of the Gospel teaching, as we have it, can be identified (in substance at least) with actual sayings of Jesus, and how much must be attributed to the interpretative tendency of the minds through which it has been filtered; and, finally, what is the real tone and tendency of the original utterances so far as we can disentangle them. Has the Lord's teaching been faithfully transmitted, or has it (perhaps without any lack of *bona fides*) assumed a very different complexion in the course of that dogmatic evolution which must have begun from the first moment when the Master's words fell upon the ears of fallible, if loyal, disciples? We have here, in other words, the question crudely propounded in the alternative, 'Jesus or Christ?' We have also the problem raised in a different form, in the discussion of the 'eschatological teaching' of Jesus. To these we will revert in a moment, but first it may be well to sketch, in as few words as possible, the present state of criticism with regard to the Fourth Gospel, and with regard to the Synoptic problem.

The fierce battle that has raged now for years over the authorship of the Fourth Gospel can scarcely be said to have issued in an absolutely decisive victory for either side. Yet, on the whole, the traditionalists would seem to have the advantage. Harnack now admits the 'Johannine' authorship; and though it is to another John that he attributes it, yet this 'John the Elder'* is a contemporary of John the Apostle, and is accounted the author also of the Apocalypse. If an early date be admitted—within the limits of the first century—that is really, perhaps, more important than the actual authorship. On the other hand, a bold attempt has been made by Schmiedel to shift the date to near the middle of the second century (A.D. 132-140). It requires but a little historical imagination to realize the extreme difficulty of this hypothesis, by which an entirely new Gospel is, in Dr. Sanday's words, 'suddenly thrust into the course of events . . . as it were under the very eyes of Polycarp and Anicetus and Justin and Tatian, without making so much as a ripple upon the surface.'

Nor do we find Wernle's theory convincing—that 'the whole of the Johannine theology is a natural development of the Pauline.'

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* Mentioned by Papias in the well-known passage cited by Eusebius, 'H. E.,' iii. 39.

Attempts have been made to dissect the Gospel into two or more documents—*e.g.*, the first, comparatively early and dependent on the Synoptics, the second consisting of additions by a later editor. It would be useless to deny that abundant material for such analysis can be found, especially on a theory which demands a more than twentieth-century consistency, and a Western sequence of ideas in the Evangelist. But, on the whole, the theory which best fits the facts would seem to be that of 'reminiscences interpreted in the light of fuller experience and later controversy,' with or without a definite implied criticism of the Synoptic Gospels, such as Dr. Sanday inclines to. And no more appropriate author has yet been suggested than John the Apostle, son of Zebedee, to be identified with the 'other disciple' and 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' of the Gospel itself. That he was a Jew of Palestine, and of all the Evangelists the best acquainted with Rabbinic Judaism, appears to be a growing conviction among Jewish scholars.

The Synoptic problem seems, after years of patient and industrious labour, to be nearing a solution. The three Gospels have been compared with one another, paragraph by paragraph and verse by verse. Every phrase, every single word, has been weighed, tabulated, classified. We have had printed and set out in parallel columns the sections in which St. Luke and St. Matthew agree with St. Mark; those in which St. Mark and one other are coincident; those in which St. Luke and St. Matthew are together with nothing corresponding in St. Mark; and the passages peculiar to each Gospel have been carefully classified and considered. The traditions of later writers, and notably those derived from Papias of Hierapolis (*circa* A.D. 130), about the Gospels of

St. Matthew and St. Mark have not been left out of account; every attempt has been made—now with greater and now with less success—to respect them in forming a decision. The results so far attained from this investigation may be roughly set down somewhat as follows:

The first point established is that *St. Mark's Gospel is the earliest,* and may be supposed, in accordance with the tradition preserved by Papias, to preserve, in substance, the teaching of St. Peter, or to be derived directly or indirectly from that Apostle.

The next point is *the use of this 'Second' Gospel by the First and Third.* In these other Gospels the narrative of St. Mark reappears in its order, phraseology, and detail. Each uses nearly the whole of the material supplied by St. Mark, but uses that material independently.

Further, while a comparison of St. Matthew with St. Luke gives no ground for the supposition that either of these Evangelists knew the other's work as we have it, it warrants us in the conclusion that *each of them used, independently, a document other than St. Mark.* Though this document is unknown, and cannot be dated with certainty, their use of it is so full that it can almost be reconstructed, conjecturally, from St. Matthew and St. Luke.*

Lastly, while both St. Matthew and St. Luke have clearly made use of other (independent) sources, one point, on which not a few scholars confidently expected to be enlightened, still remains obscure—namely, the connection, if such there be, between the Gospel we know as St. Matthew's and the *Logia*, or 'Sayings of Jesus,' of which Papias speaks. 'Matthew,' says that writer, in a familiar passage, 'composed the oracles (*λογία*) in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as he could.'* That the influence of a collection of such oracles in Hebrew or Aramaic can be traced upon our present First Gospel is more than can be affirmed at present, though it would be bold to deny the possibility of it. What seems to be probable is that the Gospel in question acquired its title of St. Matthew because an early generation of Christian critics inferred or assumed its dependence on, or its identity with, the *Logia* mentioned by Papias.

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* This source was at one time provisionally identified by many with the *Logia* or 'Oracles of the Lord' mentioned by Papias. The identification may not be wholly baseless, but is not much in favour now. The present symbol for this 'common tradition of St. Matthew and St. Luke' is Q (German, *Quelle*=source).

The relation of the Fourth Gospel narrative to that of the Synoptics is still under discussion. There are immense difficulties confronting the harmonizer, but there is still a good deal to be said in favour of the superior accuracy of the Fourth Gospel in certain details. The Synoptics seem to imply a Judæan ministry which they never describe; St. John's dating of the Crucifixion is by many thought to be the true one, and there are not a few passages which favour the hypothesis that the Fourth Gospel deliberately supplements the first three.

Such being, roughly, the present state of Gospel criticism, what is the particular form assumed by the problems which attach themselves to the Person of our Lord? Such problems are apt to be protean, ever changing form, shifting ground, and much of their actual expression at any given moment is often of a merely ephemeral interest. But the two aspects of the central problem which are most prominently before us to-day have a more than passing importance. Rightly understood, the eschatological question, and the dilemma, 'Jesus or Christ?' raise issues of greatest moment.

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* Eusebius, 'H. E.,' iii. 39.

(1) Taking the eschatological question first, we will glance first at its general aspect, as it must appear to the ordinary intelligent observer, and then consider a little more deeply its grounds and its issues. For many ages Christendom has, for obvious reasons, interpreted symbolically and figuratively the utterances of her Lord and His first followers, as recorded in the New Testament, with regard to the approaching end of the world and the 'Second Coming' of Christ. There has probably always been a latent feeling that much of this interpretation was unsatisfactory, that it explained away what looked like plain, straightforward language, and that it entirely failed to account for, or to justify, the general expectation of an 'end of all things,' which a literal reading of the New Testament seems to shew was the prevailing attitude of the first generation of Christians. Christ's teaching has been interpreted more and more, especially by Protestant theologians, as though it contained no eschatological element at all—as though it had no message about a future dispensation and another life, but were just a rational system of ethics made to suit this present world, and, in particular, our Western civilization of to-day. Even the Sermon on the Mount, that precious collection of moral precepts and principles adapted to the whole range of human life, has to be violently expurgated if it is to be reduced within such limits; and the inadequacy and unreality of the traditional interpretation of the teaching of Jesus has roused the indignation of honest critics and brought about a reaction. Extreme criticism will have it that our Lord's

doctrine is saturated with the characteristic ideas of the age and century in which it was first delivered, and exhibits nothing original except, perhaps, the identification of Himself with the 'Son of man.' All the rest (it is said) was 'in the air,' as is clear to us from our fuller knowledge of the apocalyptic writings current at the time.

The Apocalyptic Writings of Judaism, of which several have been discovered in recent years, are very important for the understanding of the conditions prevailing in the intellectual and spiritual atmosphere of Palestine in the first century A.D. The writings to which this designation of 'Apocalyptic' is given range from about 170 B.C. to about A.D. 100, several of the later ones being wholly or partly Christian works. The series includes two canonical books—the Book of Daniel (the first of the Apocalypses properly so called), and that of the Revelation, a typical apocalyptic work which has lent its name to the whole group. After the Babylonian Exile prophecy began to assume a new form. The change is already visible in Ezekiel, who represents the period of transition, and is still more prominent in Zechariah. The prophet's spirit apparently becomes more and more removed from earthly things, more dependent (as in Ezekiel and Daniel) upon trance-visions and special psychic conditions. It dwells increasingly upon the supernal world, which it depicts in obscurely symbolic imagery; occupies itself with heaven and the angel-world and the future destiny of man beyond the grave. It shows two tendencies side by side. On the one hand, its view becomes broader and more abstract: it is able to give us, as in *Daniel,* the beginnings of a philosophy of history; on the other, as Judaism becomes subject to foreign domination and cruel oppression, it dwells on national glory and national revenge. The patriotic note of Divine judgment upon enemies is pronounced. The great Apocalyptic period synchronizes with the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes and the revolt under Judas Maccabæus at its beginning, and with the revolt against Rome and the destruction of Jerusalem at its end. These apocalyptic books, all alike pseudonymous—*i.e.*, circulated under assumed names—include the *Book of Enoch* (100 B.C. and later), quoted by St. Jude (verse 14); the *Assumption of Moses* (4 B.C. to A.D. 10), referred to by the same writer (verse 9); the *Apocalypse of Ezra,* which appears in the Apocrypha of our Bibles as 2 Esdras iii.-xiv. (A.D. 90-100); that of *Baruch* (A.D. 90-100); and two or three others, among which is the early Christian *Apocalypse of Peter,* of which a large portion was first published in 1892. This last is of special interest, because it has nothing Jewish about it, and because at one time it seemed likely to find a place within the Canon. With these Apocalypses may also be classed the so-called *Sibylline oracles*—poems partly Jewish (140 *et seq.* B.C.) and partly Christian—the Pharisaic *Psalms of Solomon** (63 *et seq.* B.C.) appended to some manuscripts of the Septuagint, and the *Ascension of Isaiah,* perhaps referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews.†

This literature goes far towards explaining to us the difference noticeable between the views on eschatology (that is, on the end of this dispensation and the world to come), which are implied in the Old Testament, and those which appear at once in the New. It is undoubtedly true that much which we had been accustomed to regard as original in the New Testament writers is now proved to have been a commonplace of eschatology or of Messianic prediction in those apocalyptic writings which St. Jude quotes almost as though they were 'Scripture.'* The solitary reference to 'a Son of man' in Daniel† is taken up and elaborated in the Book of Enoch in connection with the Messiah's office as Judge, while the seventeenth Psalm of Solomon and some of the Sibylline oracles contain glowing descriptions of Messiah's reign. So much of the imagery and general colouring of our Lord's eschatological discourses is traceable in one or another of these works that some critics are tempted almost to deny Him originality altogether. What Christendom has accepted as puzzling but authoritative glimpses into the future and into the world to come are, from this point of view, only a working up of contemporary eschatological phrases and fancies, many of them not even drawn from canonical sources. And the heart of the teaching (as it is contended) is apocalyptic and eschatological. The ethics of Jesus, for which so uniquely final and perfect a character has been claimed, are, it is urged, 'end-ethics'—moral teaching suitable only for a dispensation just coming to an end, wholly unsuited to be the staple moral diet of successive centuries of humanity. It is from this point of view, presumably, that a recent writer has dared to say: 'The New Testament is quite unsuitable for general reading: in particular it should be kept carefully out of the hands of the young and simple who have not scholarship and experience enough to separate grain from chaff, and to resist the infection of its dangerous delusions.'

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* With the lately-discovered *Odes of Solomon.*

† xi. 47.

To many of us the present treatment of the eschatological element in the teaching of Jesus will appear exaggerated and far-fetched. Nor shall we be inclined to assent at once to the conclusions drawn from it. For there is a tendency to push the argument very far; to claim that Christendom has entirely misunderstood the Master who spoke so continually in the language of the particular time and place in which He was speaking, who shared very largely (so far as His words can shew it) the views held by the devout Jews of His time about the 'Day of the Lord,' and predicted events as imminent for which His followers are still waiting nineteen centuries afterwards. It is implied, also, that He himself must have misunderstood the course that events were to take. Such arguments must be faced, and however extravagant the stress laid upon one aspect of the teaching may appear, the problems raised will doubtless leave behind them a characteristic contribution to the understanding of the truth. Meanwhile we must needs confess that if a disproportionate weight is given to eschatology, it is largely by way of reaction from the long neglect of that side of the Master's teaching. It was time the balance should be redressed, and the Church brought back to a right attitude. She has not, of late, erred on the side of other-worldliness.

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* Jude 9 *et seq.;* 14, 15.

† Dan. vii. 13.

The fuller knowledge of contemporary apocalyptic phraseology will be a great advantage, enabling us to realize more than before how far our Lord's utterances are symbolical, and helping us here and there to a truer interpretation of their symbolic meaning.

We have always the Master's own disclaimer, 'Not even the Son of man knoweth the day and hour'; we have also His reminder to us, 'It is not for you to know times and seasons . . .'; and with these conditions in mind, we are willing to accept the critics' taunt. The ethics of Jesus *are* ‘end-ethics’ to a certain extent, and that rightly and necessarily, for the true attitude of His followers is an *ever-expectant* attitude—expectant, yet not unsettled: ‘if He tarry, wait for Him,’ and wait industriously, ‘occupying till He come,’ as more than one of His own parables enjoins. Meanwhile these despised ‘end-ethics’ have furnished for widely different nations and races the most satisfactory code the world has ever seen.

(2) The dilemma ‘Jesus or Christ?’ which to the traditional believer looks at first like nonsense, and, as he begins to realize its bearing, assumes the character of something very like blasphemy, is again a bold attempt to see the Master face to face, to listen to the actual tones of His voice as they listened who heard Him on the lake-shore or the hillside in Galilee. It is an attempt made by men who think, at any rate, that they are dealing honestly with the material of the Gospel narratives, from the point of view of modern learning. Being free (as they conceive), from presuppositions such as colour the impression drawn from these narratives when read by men saturated with Christian tradition, they claim to see depicted there a very different figure from the Divine Christ of Christendom. Their quest has not been a simple or an easy one, for the earliest documents from which they can draw their *data* are already tinted with the tints of Christology, and exhibit a superhuman Christ. Again, to get back to His actual words is an almost hopeless task. The more part of the sayings are absent from our earliest Gospel, St. Mark, and are variously phrased sometimes and variously grouped in St. Matthew and St. Luke; while the discourses put into the Master's mouth by the fourth Evangelist, even if not inconsistent

with—but rather wholly worthy of—the subject of the Synoptic Gospels, go far beyond the sayings they record of Him, in many ways, and appear in an entirely different form, allegory and prolonged discourse taking the place of parable and precept. Moreover, we have indications that the Prophet of Nazareth spoke in Aramaic, and that His followers addressed Him likewise in that tongue. Yet the utterances attributed to Him, all but a few short phrases, are extant only in Greek.

Long familiarity, however, gives a sort of instinct by which the genuine and characteristic may, to some extent, be discerned. And we have no right to make such familiarity a monopoly of the traditionalist readers. One critic, Schmiedel, has hit upon a plan which may afford a useful standing-ground and starting-point for students of whatever tendency. He recognizes that the Gospels as we have them depict a Divine Christ, and assumes that the picture does not faithfully represent the original. He admits, however, the good faith of the compilers of the Gospel, and finds it worth while to search among the material that they have left us for traces of the untouched original. And in those naïve and artless narratives he is not disappointed of his hope. Imbedded in the structure which already shews signs, as a whole, of what the latest criticism would call the transfiguration of the 'Jesus of history' into the 'Christ of Christianity,' he finds twelve short passages which he is able to choose as 'foundation-pillars' for his structure.* They are partly sayings attributed to Jesus, partly descriptive of Him, most of which at first sight would so tell against the general tone and tendency of the finished Gospels—tell, in fact, against the Divinity of Christ—that they cannot conceivably have been invented, or even unconsciously transmuted, by the Evangelists; they must be genuine, historical beyond all dispute.

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* (1) Mark iii. 21, 31-35; (2) Mark xiii. 32; (3) Mark x. 18; (4) Matt. xii. 32; (5) Mark xv. 34; (6) Mark viii. 12; (7) Mark vi. 5, 6; (8) Matt. xi. 2-6; (9) Matt. xvi. 5-12; (10) Matt. vii. 29; (11) Mark vi. 34; (12) Matt. xi. 28. [I am indebted to Mr. King's *Ethic of Jesus* for the substance of this and the following paragraph.]

Such a selection must, of course, be largely subjective, and another mind working towards the same end would probably make a different choice. Nor can we hope to form a complete picture of Jesus of Nazareth from such one-sided and arbitrarily selected *data*. In practice, however, Schmiedel may be said to give us an irreducible minimum beyond which criticism can scarcely presume to pass, and a nucleus to work from. And it is remarkable how much is implied, *e.g.*, in the sphere of ethics, by these few passages, chosen, not at all for their ethical content, but simply for their special trustworthiness. They show an intense moral earnestness, genuineness, independence and self-reverence, an essentially ethical conception of religion; they imply in the speaker, or Him of whom the words were spoken, a sense of contrast between His teaching and that of His times, a strong sense of mission, and of a unique relation to God and man. They leave, in fact, on the reader's mind an indelible impression of authority.

But whether in Schmiedel's plan or otherwise, a determined effort is being made to work back from the Christ of Christendom—the Christ in whom all the New Testament writers believe—to an earlier and more original figure presumed to be implied in the sources from which those writers draw their material—to work back, in fact, to a Jesus who is not yet Christ. And as such critics sift and analyze the Gospel matter, they seem to find materials for the reconstruction of such a figure. They find One whose whole spirit seems to have been saturated with the apocalyptic imagery and the Messianic ideas of contemporary Judaism; One who, identifying Himself with the 'Son of man' of Daniel and of the later Jewish Apocalypses, with the Messiah or Christ of the Psalms and Prophets and of the apocryphal 'Psalms of Solomon,' predicted a speedy ending of this world, a swift return of Himself upon the clouds of heaven to judge mankind and bring in the future dispensation. They find His outlook to be apparently coloured by the characteristic superstitions and prejudices of the age and race into which He was born. They have discovered what they were looking for—the human Jesus of Nazareth. Unique He is, supreme in moral grandeur, in spiritual intensity; but not supernatural, not the Christ of Christendom.

It is essential to this line of criticism to demonstrate that the Jesus of the Gospels is in all respects a Jew of His own age, with the ideas and the outlook of His contemporaries. Some of its exponents go further, and strive earnestly to belittle His teaching as being local and racial in its tone and scope, and based on a misconception—to wit, that the end of the world was imminent. This latter line of inference is, happily, not essential to the criticism with which it associates itself, nor can it be alleged against it as its inspiring motive.

The aspect of a great teacher's message which brings him into contact with what is most distinctive of contemporary thought (with its superstitions and prejudices, as well as with its sounder achievements) has been well compared to the scaffolding which is erected to facilitate the construction of a permanent building. If this be so, then to identify Christ's permanent message with the prevailing Jewish, apocalyptic and eschatological form in which it is couched, is to mistake the scaffolding for the building. To belittle and pour scorn upon its ethical principles as of no permanent value, is to shut one's eyes to the expansive and adaptable quality of the Gospel teaching, which has shewn itself capable time after time of germinating, developing and bearing fruit in every type of human soil.

Some of His utterances, indeed, seem useless for this world, unless this world is really the preparation for another—unless, that is (apart from the question of time, concerning which a New Testament writer has pointed out to us that 'a thousand years are as one day'*), the Master's outlook was essentially right.

If originality means something particular and out of relation to the rest of the universe; if to be original one must make no use of the heritage of the ages, and have no correspondence whatever with one's own present environment, then we must admit that the Gospel is not original. Before the eschatological phase of criticism came into vogue, or the question 'Jesus or Christ?' in its modern form was raised, most of us realized that many, if not all, of the Master's most characteristic phrases—and *all* the words of which those phrases were composed—were in existence before He appeared upon the earth. We all realized, though not to the same extent as we recognize it now, that His teaching was clothed in the language used habitually by His hearers, and illustrated by the current imagery and ideas of contemporary Judaism. It has been well urged that if He had spoken in the language of the twentieth century, and based His teaching on the conceptions of the same epoch, His first-century hearers would have been merely mystified, not uplifted nor kindled.

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* 2 Pet. iii. 8; *cf.* Ps. xc. 4.

But this is not to deny the true originality of His doctrine—its implication of an authority unique in the records of human history; its masterly manipulation of Jewish law and tradition; its simple and consistent body of ethical teaching expressed in scattered and apparently disconnected precepts; its fresh and illuminating enunciation of the Divine Fatherhood, and of the forgiveness of sins. In these and countless other ways the teaching of Jesus is stamped with the impress of originality, while the most original element of all that the Gospel contains is the picture of His own character, in its unity and harmony, in its balance of opposite characteristics, in its intense realization of sin in the world, combined with an entire absence of any trace of consciousness of sin within His own soul.

But does not the matter resolve itself largely into a question of presuppositions? Those to whom historic Christianity has already afforded a key to numberless problems within and without themselves, those who are prepared to find the three Gospels—nay, the four Gospels—nay, the whole of the New Testament writings—self-consistent and mutually corroborative, will look at the question 'Jesus or Christ?' in one way; to those who approach the Gospels with what seems to them an open mind, but to their opponents looks like a sharp and irresponsible pair of scissors, it will have a quite different meaning. The believers in Christianity will point to the Lord's promise of the Comforter, whose office, as leader into all truth, was just that of transforming Jesus of Nazareth into that Divine Christ which was latent in Him all the time, yet invisible to those who knew Him 'after the flesh,' for that 'their eyes were holden.'

The New Theologians will promptly produce their own copy of the records, from which the Fourth Gospel—supreme example of the Comforter's work—has been expunged, and with it the Comforter Himself. The other side will point to the phenomenon of Christianity, and ask their opponents to be so good as to account for it. They will bid them mark the extraordinary swiftness and completeness of the supposed change of tradition from Jesus to Christ; they will suggest the unlikelihood of so beneficent, so vigorous and so progressive a structure being built on the foundation of a woeful misunderstanding or a wilful perversion of the teachings of a largely misguided Jewish enthusiast. Finally, they will turn from the contemplation of historic Christianity, and declare with Dr. Headlam that, if the New Testament records had disappeared, we should be forced (were it possible) to reconstruct them in order to account for the subsequent course of history.

Yet we cannot quite dismiss in this fashion the controversy which has raised once more the question of the Divinity of our Lord, and raised it in a new form. It is too soon, perhaps, to formulate in this case the resulting gains to the truth which must, we are convinced, be the outcome of every battle for the faith.

Yet, perhaps, we may dimly see some fruits of the struggle. What if the now popular interpretation of St. Paul's significant words about the Lord's 'self-emptying'—the theory initiated by *Lux Mundi*—should be proved inadequate? What if it should seem necessary, in view of the demands of truth to fact, and of the demands, indeed, of the true humanity of Jesus, to look upon Him more frankly and simply as a Jew of His own age, with the general outlook and ideas of His contemporaries, and to suppose the Divinity in Him confined (at first, at any rate) to that region of the subliminal consciousness which figures so largely in modern psychology?* Might there not thus emerge from the seemingly barren controversy a theory of the Incarnation that would satisfy at once the demands of a strict criticism of the Gospel material, and of the objections of those who are scandalized at the Christological development which they see at work in the Church of the Apostolic and the Subapostolic Age—the process by which, as they would say, 'Jesus' is transformed into 'Christ'? For the process will be found to have been paralleled in the consciousness of Jesus Christ Himself, as the power and meaning of the latent Divinity gradually penetrated upward from the subconscious region, making itself felt first now and again, as in the boy of twelve years old in the Lucan narrative,† then more fully, as all evangelists suggest, from His baptism onwards.

But without daring to intrude into such sacred regions, or to forecast the ultimate results of the present phase of criticism upon Christian theology, we may admit without reserve that criticism has changed the attitude even of the intelligent traditionalist towards the New Testament writings, as well as towards those of the Old Testament, though not, perhaps, to the same extent. There are few thoughtful men to-day who would not be ready to admit, for instance, that the 'Second Epistle of St. Peter,' as we have it, is pseudonymous; few who will not allow that, while the three Johannine Epistles are obviously by the writer of the Fourth Gospel, there are grave (though, perhaps, not insurmountable) difficulties in the way of attributing the Apocalypse to the same hand. There are few, again, who will not be prepared to acknowledge the existence of a 'Synoptic Problem'; who will not admit that the first three Gospels, as we have them—the first and third, at any rate—show signs of compilation and of a dependence on other writings, of which the Second Gospel may or may not be the most considerable. There are few who, studying candidly the verbal differences—and differences of arrangement which occasionally characterize the same matter as it reappears in one Gospel and another—will not be ready to confess that here and there at any rate there must be some doubt as to whether we have preserved for us the *ipsissima verba* of the Master. And the same is true, *a fortiori*, of the Fourth Gospel, where the character and phraseology of the discourses is in marked contrast to that exhibited in the Synoptics. However convinced we may be that St. John's portrayal of his Master is genuinely and intimately faithful, we shall be bound to confess that either it or the Synoptic portrait reflects the individuality of the portrayer—is marked, so to speak, with the mannerisms of his style: has the seal upon it (we should prefer to say) of the Holy Spirit's leading through long years of meditation. St. John's Christ is the Christ of reflection, and of a vital spiritual experience.

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* A view put forward in Dr. Sanday's *Christologies* (which I had not seen when I penned these lines).—L. R.

† Luke ii. 49.

In New Testament study, as in that of the Old Testament, criticism has changed the view-point of even the most conservative student. The wild extravagances of Tübingen have been thoroughly exposed; we may seem to have come back practically to the same point at which our fathers stood. But it is not so. The movement has not been a mere swing of the pendulum, or the completion of a circle. It is a spiral movement by which most things in this world progress. And so here, while many of the once familiar objects have emerged again into sight, we are really further advanced than we were.

Criticism has of necessity modified in certain directions the current view of inspiration—of that we will say more later on. But what has it to say to canonicity? Luther and his contemporaries (as we have seen elsewhere) were half inclined to reconstruct the Canon on a subjective basis, keeping the books which had most to say about Christ, and those which offered clearest support to their favourite doctrines, and rejecting the rest. In this they were influenced also to some extent by the *criteria* of contemporary scholarship; and it was, we may say, on literary-historical grounds that they gave to the Apocrypha that ambiguous position which those writings hold among us to-day.

The tendency of modern Higher Criticism is to ignore the question of canonicity, except in so far as the history of the growth of the Canon is matter for technical study as a department of the history of ancient literature. With the *canonical authority* of the books such criticism has nothing to do. It deals with the documents, not as inspired, nor as canonical, but simply as so much mere literature.

The Old Testament critic, though he passes judgment freely and fearlessly on the comparative merits of the various documents considered as literature, or as *soi-disant* historical records, does not, *e.g.*, presume to say that the Judahite and Ephraimite historians (J and E) are inspired and the Priestly writers (P and H) are not; nor does he propose to exclude the Book of Chronicles from the Canon because he finds it guilty of idealizations and historical inaccuracies, or the second part of Isaiah because he is convinced that it was not written by the prophet whose name it bears by tradition. Nay, the critic leaves to the traditionalist this crumb of comfort—that, while removing the historical landmarks, he has largely preserved the canonical ones. If the Law-books were written later than many of the prophetic writings, they were at any rate accepted first, and formed the first Bible of the Hebrews. The *canonical* order is not (1) Prophets, (2) Law, but, as of old, (1) Law, (2) Prophets, (3) Hagiographa.

What criticism has done for the history of the Old Testament Canon is to clear away the overgrowth and make the position of the landmarks plainer. If the result is a bringing forward of the dates by several centuries, that, too, has its compensations. The plain man's horror at the idea of Maccabean Psalms in the Psalter is relieved by the consideration that such a theory brings out more clearly the continuity of the Divine revelation. Instead of the deep, dark gulf between Malachi and St. Matthew, peopled with dimly discerned and therefore despised figures known as Apocrypha, we find fragments of inspired literature scattered along the route, marked with the hall-mark of full canonicity—points of Divine illumination relieving the darkness that followed the sunset of Old Testament prophetism.

For the rest, we need scarcely remind ourselves of more than a few of the material gains that have accrued to the Bible student in compensation for the unsettlement of this critical period.

First and foremost comes the feeling that truth in general is making headway, the conviction that in the end the message of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life must be helped and not hindered, clarified and not obscured, by an access of real knowledge, from whatever quarter it comes—a conviction that, though the process of growing in knowledge is accompanied by its pains, maturity is a desirable thing, and that when it comes—this maturity of real knowledge—then the Truth shall make us free indeed.

The study of the Bible in general has benefited by the results of *textual* criticism. New problems have been raised by the attempt in Old Testament studies to get behind the traditional Hebrew (*Massoretic*) text;* while in the New Testament the intricacy of textual controversy and the technicalities of its discussion are evinced by such a monumental phrase as 'Western non-interpolation.' Some of the characteristic problems raised by it will come before us later on.† But to the genuine lover of the Bible any process is to be welcomed which gives him the hope of a nearer access to the text of the Scripture as it left its first writers' hands.

On this foundation of textual criticism is built up the structure of the Higher, the *literary-historical* criticism, and it would be difficult to deny that its gifts to the Bible student are more valuable still. True, they do not (or should not) directly touch the inner heart of Scripture, the deep which answers to the deep of the reader's spirit; but they give him new opportunities of intelligent appreciation of the letter, and new possibilities, therefore, of just and living interpretation. In this they are reinforced by the gifts of archæology, which, literally as well as metaphorically, supply us with pictorial illustrations of the sacred text, and enable us also to compare the picture of the religious development of the Chosen People at various stages with that of contemporary heathen nations.

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* On the Massoretic text see next chapter, p. 105.

† *Ibid.*, p. 106.

But it is in the great principles that emerge from it, more perhaps than in matters of detail, that Criticism may claim the gratitude of the Bible student.

If it has removed certain cherished ideas and formulæ, it has brought out as never before the separate individuality of the sacred writers, and taught us to realize the living presence of the human element in Scripture. As literature the Scriptures have thereby gained immensely in interest, and meanwhile the mere scientific study of them on their literary side has made the appreciation of them in this direction more richly possible to us all.

But it is perhaps on the side of revelation and inspiration (just where it seems to have created most disturbance) that modern criticism has the most vivifying and illuminating suggestions to make.

It has familiarized us with the ideas of *continuity* and *progress* as applied to Divine revelation, and it has focussed the conception of inspiration in such a way as to bring us appreciably nearer a definition of that most elusive idea.

The thought of progress in revelation comes out more clearly than before in a theory that takes the leading narratives of the Books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings pretty much as they stand, and makes Moses the promulgator of a germ rather than of the entire system of the levitical legislation. The continuity of revelation is brought out in two ways, for, besides the practical continuity between Old and New Testament times, which results from the later dating of some of the documents, Criticism and Archæology alike are constantly narrowing the gap that divides early Israel, in most things, from the surrounding nations. The Hebrew civilization is seen more and more to be continuous with rather than out of all relation to the neighbouring civilizations; the differentia of the Chosen People is seen more and more to have consisted in a Divine selection of elements common to the heathen world, and a transfiguration of those elements under the great informing principle of a progressively spiritual and monotheistic worship—a monotheism which, if it has occasional parallels in Babylonia, Egypt (under Khuen-aten), and Persia, is, in its depth and its permanence, unique in the history of ancient religion. The Hebrews had more in common with the Canaanites than we once supposed, more in common with the Babylonians. And the comparison of the Hebrew records with Babylonian inscriptions, and with the *data* for Canaan furnished by Palestinian excavation, while it points to an 'inspiration by selection,' offers, as does also comparison with the fine religious literature of ancient Egypt, a convincing testimony to the supreme position occupied by Israel in the religious sphere.

We ventured to suggest just now that criticism had brought us appreciably nearer to a definition of inspiration. For one thing, it has narrowed the field of inspiration strictly so called. It has taught us to look no longer upon Genesis as a scientific textbook of geology, anthropology, or the like, or even as a verbally and chronologically accurate account of the early history of the human race. We do not go to the Song of Songs for the principles of botany, nor to the Book of Job for the classification of mammals. Much material for the early history of any of the sciences alluded to may be gathered from the Hebrew Scriptures; but we have learned to look to the Scriptures primarily for moral and religious teaching, and to expect to find even this revealed progressively 'by divers portions and in divers manners.'* For while we believe them to be 'inspired of God,' we recognize more and more that their inspiration is for a definite purpose: that the Divine treasure is given to us in 'earthen vessels'†—the revelation of God has incarnated itself, so to speak, under the conditions and limitations of human intellect and speech; so that while their natural science, their historical method and the whole setting of their message, is conditioned by the age in which each of the sacred writers lived, there is a side, an aspect of their teaching, which transcends those limitations. We believe, then, that every Scripture inspired of God is profitable, not for the authoritative control of the arts and sciences, but 'for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.'‡

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* Heb. i. 1. † 2 Cor. iv. 7. ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

SYMBOLS USED IN CONNECTION WITH THE DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS OF THE PENTATEUCH AND CERTAIN OTHER BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

J. Found in Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (chap. xxxiv.), Joshua, Judges, and (?) Samuel. A Judahite history of Israel and its antecedents from the Creation (Gen. ii) to Samson, and probably to the death of David. Uses 'Jehovah' in Genesis. It is dated 850 B.C., or later.

E. Found in Genesis (from chap. xx.), Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. An Ephraimite history of Israel from Abraham to (?) Elisha. It is largely parallel with J, but has characteristics peculiar to itself; is more didactic, and less anthropomorphic than J, and uses 'Elohim' in Genesis. It is dated between 850 and 750 B.C.

D or D_1. Contained certainly Deut. xii.-xxvi., probably v.-xi. and xxiii., possibly also i.-iv. It is the 'Book of the Law,' found by Hilkiah in 621 B.C., and is dated between 721 and 621 B.C.

D_2. An editor (or editors) who completed Deuteronomy, and worked up the other books (see below).

H. = Lev. xvii.-xxvi., the 'Law of Holiness,' with, possibly, also other small portions of the book. A compilation made from older codes in close relation to Ezek. xl.-xlviii., and probably made under the influence of, or by disciples of Ezekiel. It forms, apparently, the nucleus of the next item (P), and the transition between it and D_1. It is to be dated, probably, early in the Exile.

P. Contains much of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, all Leviticus (including H), closing verses of Deuteronomy, Josh. xiii.-xxii. There are traces of its influence in Judges — Kings, and Chronicles is entirely influenced by it. A constitutional history of Israel from the Priestly point of view, may possibly be the work of Ezra himself. Dated in Exile, some time before Ezra's mission in 458.

The successive processes of compilation and combination by which these elements were fused into their present condition are still matter of controversy. It is not certain, *e.g.*, whether or not

J and E were combined to form one document, JE, before the Deuteronomist editor or editors (? possibly Hilkiah himself) combined them to form one with the newly-discovered D_1. Nor is it certain at what period before the Restoration later Deuteronomist editors, D_2, worked up JED$_1$ with the sources mentioned in Kings as 'Acts of Solomon' and 'Chronicles of the Kings of Judah' and 'of Israel,' to form one long continuous history embracing our Books Genesis to 2 Kings (except Leviticus and the other portions assigned to P). This process, however, and the addition of PH, must probably have been accomplished before 400 B.C. Chronicles, which is in spirit closely allied to P, belongs, in its completed form, like Ezra and Nehemiah, to the following century. These general results we may tabulate, roughly, as follows :

Ninth century ...	... J.
Eighth century ...	... E.
Seventh century	... JED$_1$ (JE).
Sixth century ...	... H and P, PH.
Fifth century ...	... JED$_1$ + PH + D_2.
Fourth century ...	... Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah.

IV

PROPHECY AND INSPIRATION

'EVERY Scripture inspired of God,' wrote St. Paul to Timothy, 'is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness.'*

If this is the only passage where inspiration is, in so many words, predicated of the Old Testament Scriptures, there are not a few others, whether in St. Paul's own writings, as in the Epistle to the Romans,† or in the Epistle to the Hebrews,‡ or in the First Epistle of St. Peter,§ where the implication is the same. A like doctrine is implied in the attitude of the Evangelists towards Scripture, and in that which they depict as in vogue among the Jews, and adopted by Christ Himself in controversy with them.

Of the fact of inspiration of the Hebrew Scriptures we may safely say Christendom has never doubted from the first. The reverence accorded them by the Apostles as pious Jews was deepened and rendered more reasonable by the new light with which their Divine Master illuminated the hallowed pages when He exclaimed, 'These are they which bear witness of me';‖ or when He proclaimed to them the fulfilment of 'all things . . . which are written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms concerning me';* or when (in words of which we refuse to be deprived by a purely subjective criticism), He declared that He had come not to destroy, but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets.†

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* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

† Rom. xv. 4.

‡ Heb. i. 1.

§ 1 Pet. i. 10 *et seq.*

‖ John v. 39.

And this acceptance of the Old Testament writings as inspired was soon followed, as we have seen, by the elevation of certain writings of the Apostolic Age to a like position of honour. First the Gospels, then the Pauline Epistles (which seem already in 2 Peter to be classed as Scripture),‡ and finally the rest of the New Testament, came to be recognized as 'inspired of God.'

Of the fact of inspiration there has never been any doubt, but of the nature of inspiration no authoritative definition has ever been given; and so all sorts of questions remain on which the reverent imagination and intellect may exercise themselves.

What does it mean when we say that the Scriptures are inspired? Does it imply a miraculous, and a uniformly miraculous, process by which each was originated? Does it, for instance, according to a view of inspiration generally held a century ago, imply such a direct action of the Holy Spirit upon the inspired writer as should leave him purely passive, with nothing, so to speak, of his own to contribute? Or is it a quickening or intensifying of his own natural gifts—the psychological endowment due ultimately, after all, to the same Spirit? Is it a uniform mechanical process, operating in the same manner and with the same intensity over all the field of Scripture? or may we speak of different modes and types and varying degrees of inspiration? Again—and the answer to this question will depend more or less directly on the way in which the previous ones are solved—is the operation and the quality of inspiration of such a kind as to justify us in drawing an absolute line between sacred and profane writings? or are the Scriptures linked in some organic way to the rest of human literature, and may even inspiration itself, on its psychological side, be said to have some historic continuity with similar phenomena in the Gentile world?

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* Luke xxiv. 44. † Matt. v. 17. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 16.

Our previous studies have given us already more than a hint as to the direction in which we must look for a solution of such problems. A mere glance at the variety, the almost infinite diversity, contained within the unity of Scripture suggests that the intensity and the mode of working of inspiration exercised over this vast field may probably be found to exhibit a like variety—a thought which St. Paul's familiar teaching on the subject of 'spiritual gifts'* enforces not a little. If the 'word of wisdom' and the 'word of knowledge' are inspired, and the 'workings of miracles' and the gift of 'prophecy'—if apostles, prophets, and teachers are inspired, so, too, are 'ministrations,' 'helps, governments,' and so is 'faith,' by which revelation is apprehended, and the 'discerning of spirits,' whereby it is spiritually criticized: 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit.'

A mere glance, again, at the Old Testament writings, from the literary-historical point of view, brings into sight countless variations of style and method, and countless relations with non-canonical history and literature. But we shall now take up the investigation from a slightly different starting-point.

First of all, however, it may be as well to insist upon the impossibility of holding to-day any rigid and mechanical theory of verbal inspiration. We are often told that the Church, while accepting the canonical Scriptures as inspired, has never authoritatively defined what is meant by inspiration. If the generations which preceded the application of modern scientific methods to biblical criticism had come to accept a rough-and-ready theory of the Church's method of the inspiration of the Scriptures, such theory was built on no clearly understood principles of authority or of reason. It could point to no such unanimity of continuous recognition as that which sealed the Church's view that certain books were marked off from the rest of human literature by a special note which warranted the title 'Holy Scripture.'

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* 1 Cor. xii. 4-11, 28-30.

The extreme form of theory very largely accepted by our grandfathers is known as that of 'verbal inspiration.'* This theory would make the actual words of Holy Scripture Divine, as being dictated by the Holy Spirit to minds so completely under His sway that the writer's pen became nothing more nor less than a mechanical instrument for the recording of Another's utterances.

This view, which may be traced back ultimately to the doctrine of the Jewish Rabbis, and is paralleled, more or less, by the attitude of primitive peoples towards their sacred books, is confronted, for a thinking person, by many difficulties—difficulties which are constantly increasing with the growth of knowledge and the spread of scientific method. If the text is verbally inspired, the question immediately arises, What text? And the simple believer is forced back from fastness to fastness—from the unthinking assumption of the verbal infallibility of his familiar Vulgate or Authorized Version, as the case may be, to that of the Greek *textus receptus* for the New Testament, and the Massoretic Hebrew text of the Old Testament. Sooner or later he will be dislodged even from these apparently impregnable entrenchments. He will find that the traditional Greek text on which our Authorized Version of the New Testament was based is an uncritical heirloom of the Renaissance, when the best and earliest Greek manuscripts were not yet available. He will find that the traditional Hebrew text of the Old Testament, regarded as sacred by the Jews—the Massoretic—only reigns supreme because all manuscripts which diverged from it were carefully destroyed, and that there is no earlier manuscript of it extant than one of the tenth century A.D.; while the Septuagint, of which we have copies dating from a much anterior time, quite indubitably represents, in not a few places, the translation of a Hebrew text widely divergent from the Massoretic, its readings in some passages being accepted by scholars as most certainly the more original. Textual criticism, if it has not always been able to reach irrefragable conclusions, has at any rate made it clear that the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Old and New Testaments respectively, so long traditionally accepted, are far from representing the originals word for word. Can the simple believer close his eyes to the light, and refuse to listen to the voice of scientific investigation? To do this is to stultify himself.

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* The *Helvetic Consensus Formula* of 1675, a 'local and ephemeral document,' is apparently the only formal acceptance by a Christian body of the extreme doctrine of literal inspiration of the Massoretic Hebrew text.

What is the advocate of verbal inspiration to reply, for instance, when he is assured, on purely scientific grounds, that the incident of the woman taken in adultery cannot be a part of the original text of the

Fourth Gospel, nor can the last twelve verses of St. Mark be by the hand of the writer or compiler of the rest of that Gospel; while the verse about the 'Three Heavenly Witnesses' in the First Epistle of St. John is clearly a not very early gloss? Is he to throw himself back upon the authority of the Church, and urge that the reception of these interpolations, if such they are, is prior to the acceptance of the Canon as a whole,* and that we may therefore regard them as inspired? To do this is to adopt a position logical in itself; but he is abandoning his attitude of 'Bible Christianity,' his proclamation of the traditional text as absolutely authoritative in itself. Or is he to take a still bolder line, and, congratulating himself on the undeniable fact that the disputed passages, if removed, subtract nothing substantial from the sum of revelation, relegate them to an ambiguous position, as early traditions at least as worthy to be appended to the genuine New Testament writings as are the so-called 'Apocrypha' to be printed after the Hebrew Canon of the Old Testament? If he should take this step, or, as an alternative, should claim to judge each case on its merits—relegating (shall we say?) 1 John v. 7 to the margin as a gloss, placing St. John vii. 53 to viii. 11 at the end of the Gospel as an early and presumably true tradition, the exact position of which in the narrative cannot now be determined, and separating St. Mark xvi. 9-20 from the preceding verses, as a later (though still early) appendix by a different hand—in either case he would have to abandon his simple, unreasoned theory of a verbal inspiration of the *textus receptus*.

It is true, as has been implied above, that the most drastic changes suggested by textual criticism do not materially alter the sense or proportion of the revelation as a whole. The three creeds are just as satisfactory a summary, from the point of view of their origin and purpose, of the general teaching of Scripture exhibited in the most carefully edited modern text as they are of the same teaching exhibited in the traditional text. This fact cannot fail to be comforting to all who value historic Christianity and its venerable symbols. But it is equally undeniable that textual criticism, developed without any bias, on purely scientific lines, and largely by devout Christian scholars, has raised problems which cut at the root of any absolute theory of verbal inspiration.

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* Perhaps this would be difficult to substantiate in the case of 1 John v. 7.

May we not venture to apply to this matter words spoken in a somewhat different connection, and, while recognizing thankfully that, in the bounty of Providence, a comparatively faulty text was sufficient for those who came before us, rise to a sense of our own responsibilities? 'The times of ignorance . . . God overlooked';* but to a generation to whom He has given fuller light His command is clear that they should walk in that light.

But in facing the problems of inspiration, we have not to take into account the results of 'the Lower' textual criticism only. 'The Higher'—that is, literary and historical criticism—fastens upon verbal discrepancies, alike in the Old Testament and in the New—discrepancies which, to the old theory of verbal inspiration, remained inexplicable—and explains them as it would explain discrepancies in any other literature. Moreover (as we have seen in our last study), it supplements these explanations with a mass of disconcerting notions—revolutionary ideas about the date, authorship, and composition of the various books. Of these ideas, again, while many are, doubtless, tentative, and many more incapable of proof, a considerable proportion must be accepted by every thinking man—enough, at any rate, to militate against a Divine verbal infallibility of a precise kind in any Hebrew or Greek text, however original, even if it could be restored with absolute certainty by the methods of textual criticism. If there are textual errors in the received text, there are also in any text material errors—mistakes of history, of chronology, etc.—such as textual criticism is powerless to expunge.

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* Acts xvii. 30

That such blemishes (if they are to be called blemishes) are inconsistent with *any* theory of inspiration we should be the last to suggest. But to a rigid theory of verbal inerrancy they do seem to form a fatal objection. Are we, then, to abandon any theory of the action of Divine inspiration upon Scripture in detail, and say that its influence must be looked for in the *selection* of the books to be considered canonical ? Or, considering the ambiguity with which even the question of the Canon itself is beset by the position of the Apocrypha, are we to go still further, and apply the word 'inspiration' not to the writings at all, but to the writers ?

Some would say, for instance, that it is better to speak of the Old Testament as 'the literature of an inspired people' than to apply the word 'inspiration' to the Scriptures themselves. Such a view would meet the difficulty of the very various types of literature found in the Canon, but it does not cover the whole ground.*

If we may anticipate for a moment the course of the future argument, we believe it will be found that the scope of the action of Divine inspiration is many-sided, and takes in all these different departments. It was indeed an 'inspired people'—a people with a special genius for religion—to whom, and by whom, God chose to reveal Himself in the ancient world; and the Bible is just the record of His revelation of Himself, wrought out concretely in their national and spiritual history. Within that inspired people He seems to have chosen specially gifted individuals, men conspicuously fitted to be His mouthpieces—yet not mere mouthpieces. Again, a control is visible, not only (in very different ways) over the writers and compilers of the books—a control which guides them in the selection of appropriate material and the rejection of the inappropriate—but also over the selection of the books themselves to form elements in the Canon, and thus to constitute a single organic whole. We may see, perhaps, in inspiration a general and a special control, but never such control as should deprive the Scriptures of that human character which is everywhere visible side by side with the Divine, or endue them with an absolute verbal inerrancy utterly remote from the circumstances of their origin.

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* See p. 136, and note.

If we would learn about inspiration at first hand, it will be well to question the Scriptures themselves; and if we ask where we shall begin, the most natural starting-point will be found in the prophetical books of the Old Testament. Our ancient dogmatic Creed describes the Holy Ghost as 'the Lord, the Life-giver . . . who spake by the prophets,' and it is to the prophets that our attention is called in the New Testament's most striking sketch of the progressive character of Divine Revelation: 'God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken to us in his Son.' *

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* Heb. i. 1.

Now, if we turn to the writings of prophets like Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, we feel at once that we are rewarded for our pains. Here, if anywhere, we shall find clear indications of the presence, if not also of the method, of inspiration. For these men speak literally in the name of God. They feel themselves (rightly or wrongly) to be charged with a message not their own. Each expresses himself largely in his own style and phraseology; the message has in each case filtered through the prophet's personality. It is couched, often, in terms suggested by the special circumstances of the speaker and his hearers; yet, if we are to accept the conviction of the prophet himself, its origin is not in him who delivers it. 'Thus saith Jehovah,' 'Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken,' is the refrain of Amos.* 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Jehovah hath spoken.'† So Isaiah introduces the series of prophecies in which constant reference occurs to Jehovah's word spoken to him. So, too, with Jeremiah and Ezekiel, with Hosea, with Zechariah, and the prophets in general.

They not only make this great claim, but they disclose to us now and again the way in which such messages came to them. The prophetic ministry of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel is in each case initiated by a vision in which the prophet claims to have 'seen' Jehovah, and to have received his commission direct from Him. Amos, also, who stands at the head of the series of writing prophets, embodies in his book a group of visions which, in their naïve and simple form, bear every appearance of being an ungarnished record of psychical experiences.‡

In Ezekiel the visions begin to assume a more cumbrous and elaborate character, which is further developed in the 'apocalyptic' chapters of the Book of Daniel.

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* Amos i. 3, 6, 9, etc., iii. 1. † Isa. i. 2. ‡ Amos vii.

Ezekiel gives us some striking instances of the vision experienced in trance. The graphic story of his spiritual visit to Jerusalem* presents what in modern phrase would be called the phenomena of clairvoyance, and the experience is ushered in by a sudden access of catalepsy, followed by a repetition of the strange vision of the Almighty (so difficult to translate into picture form) which had accompanied his first call. He sees the hideous orgies of idolatry actually going on in Jerusalem, just as Isaiah (according to one view of the chronology) sees by clairvoyance the fall of Babylon.† In each case the prophet's imagination had been working upon the subject, doubtless, in a waking state, and in the trance he was able to see and hear what was going on at a distance.

But not all the messages of the prophets came to them in trance-visions, or with the intense psychical experience of an apparently uttered voice ringing in their ears. Large parts of their writings show evident traces of literary elaboration, of calm reflection on passing events; and it may well be that even the formula 'Thus saith Jehovah,' or the phrase 'I saw,' may have become in some mouths little more than a conventional expression of the conviction that they were speaking the mind of God.

The phenomena, however, are sufficiently marked to warrant us in the conclusion that the prophets were, in general, men of peculiar psychic sensitiveness, prone to what would now be called 'sensory automatism,' who had the faculty of hearing voices and seeing sights to which there was nothing *material* corresponding in their outward environment.

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* Ezek. viii.-xi.

† Isa. xxi. 1-10.

This, however, is, of course, by no means sufficient to warrant their own clear conviction that such sights and sounds came to them from the very Source of Truth. Why should they be any more inspired than a modern 'medium'?

The prophetic books themselves give us clear testimony that there was such a thing as false prophecy, and that its outward phenomena and its formulæ superficially, at least, resembled those of the orthodox prophet. The four hundred prophets who gave Ahab the fatal advice that he looked for prophesied, like Micaiah, the son of Imlah, in the name of Jehovah.* And false prophets, claiming to give Jehovah's message, were clearly very numerous in Jeremiah's time.

The acted symbolism of Jeremiah's rival, Hananiah, like that of Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, can be paralleled from the behaviour of true prophets in the Old Testament and the New,† and his words have just the ring of the orthodox phraseology; nor can we suppose that he doubted the truth of his prediction of the fall of Babylon, else he would not have named so short a term as two years.‡

What is it, then, that distinguished the false prophet from the true; the utterance 'inspired of God' from that inspired, if at all, from another quarter? First of all, the tree may be judged by its fruits. We may surely say that the prophets of the Old Testament bear their own credentials with them. The effect of their words, not upon their contemporaries alone, but upon subsequent ages, and their appeal to the enlightened conscience of to-day, are the strongest guarantee of the validity of their claim—a guarantee that their utterances are neither consciously fraudulent nor the fruit of self-deception. It is not so much by their predictions that the prophets will be ultimately judged (though many of these are striking enough in their fulfilment), as by their enunciation of moral and spiritual principles, in which they showed themselves pioneers, ready to advance alone, ready to submit their highly-strung and exceptionally sensitive psychic temperament to the torture of felt unpopularity. In this more than in anything else we may see the distinction between the true and the false prophet. Each alike was gifted, it would seem, with an intensely sensitive psychic endowment, including the capacity to read the thoughts, desires, and aims of those around him. The false prophet was content to follow the line of least resistance, to take his colour entirely from his surroundings. The *afflatus* that came upon him stimulated his spirit much in the same way as he might have been stimulated (had he taken a higher line) by Divine inspiration. He himself applied to it the formula 'Thus saith Jehovah'; but it was simply the reflex of the popular tendency, the effect upon him of the prevailing 'suggestion' of his environment. For him *vox populi* was literally *vox Dei.* The false prophet was, as has been well pointed out, the victim of a threefold deception. First, he deceived himself. Prophesying 'out of his own heart,' he found it most comfortable to take a complacent line towards the royal court, whether it were that of an Ahab or a Zedekiah, or towards the clamorous wishes of the populace. To prophesy 'smooth things,' and these alone, was to 'prophesy deceits.'* Having prostituted his psychic gifts at the outset, he became the slave of strong delusions. Any suggestion strong enough to produce in him the customary excitation was mistaken for the Divine voice; and the suggestions among which he habitually lived were those supplied by a corrupt court and a decadent populace. The self-deception thus shades off into a deception of the prophet by the people. If the prophets prophesy falsely, it is because the people love to have it so.† 'The combined influence of many minds concentrated in a given direction upon some impressionable person'—that is the psychological explanation of the influence of the popular will upon the pliant spirit of the false prophet. And, finally, having thus become the willing 'dupe of the current temper of those whom he professed to guide,' he becomes an instrument in the hands of Divine Righteousness for his own and the people's chastisement. In Ezekiel's graphic phrase, he is deceived by Jehovah Himself.‡

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* 1 Kings xxii. 5, 6.
† Jer. xxviii. 10, *cf.* the action of Agabus in Acts xxi. 11.
‡ Jer. xxviii. 3.

It is by contrast to this fatal prostitution of the psychical endowments that we can really judge of the strength and spiritual originality of the true prophet. He may use the same formula as the other, but the message it introduces is one which takes its tone and colour, not from the human environment, nor merely from his own heart, but from the suggestions of that Divine Spirit to whom he owes his exceptional gifts. Thus his voice is no mere echo of public sentiment or public opinion; it is often enough in direct opposition to the ideas of his contemporaries. And it rings true. Any false prophet might have proclaimed in the Lord's name to Israel: 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth.' None but a true prophet like Amos could have appended the startling conclusion: 'Therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.'* None but a prophet whose convictions were free from all taint of respect of persons could have chosen the life of mental and spiritual suffering which loyalty to his call demanded of the sensitive and affectionate nature of Jeremiah, condemned to live a life of isolation among his contemporaries, to see his own far-sighted counsel slighted, and in consequence his beloved city brought to ruin.†

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* Isa. xxx. 10.

† Jer. v. 31.

‡ Ezek. xiv. 9.

Who can but be thrilled by the spectacle of a bleeding heart such as he displays, in the midst of his strong confidence, in a piercing cry like this:

'Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have not lent on usury, neither have men lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me.'‡

Or, again, the consciousness of encompassing hatred is embittered by the darts of derision, as some prophetic message seems to be stultified:

'O Jehovah, Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am become a laughingstock all the day. . . .' He is even tempted to keep silence, but he cannot if he would: the message will burn its way out. 'And if I say, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name, then there is in mine heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, I cannot contain. . . . Denounce, and we will

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[*] Amos iii. 2.

[†] See especially Jer. xxxvii. *et seq.*

[‡] Jer. xv. 10.

denounce him, say all my familiar friends, they that watch for my halting; peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him. . . . Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?'*

It was indeed a heavy burden that lay upon the faithful prophet's shoulders. The prophetic *rôle* is essentially unpopular. If he is to lift the whole tone of his contemporaries, it cannot be without strain; if he is to change radically the complex system of their religious habits and tendencies, much friction will be the inevitable outcome.

If the true character of the genuine prophet is brought out by contrast with the false prophet, its greatness will also be more clearly discerned if we try to trace out the earlier stages of prophecy, and compare them with the splendid products of the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.

What do we mean (it may be asked) by the earlier stages of Old Testament prophecy? Have we not in the very forefront of Israel's history the figure of Moses, the ideal prophetic figure, before the glory of which even the brilliancy of an Isaiah pales?

The answer of modern criticism is confident, and to many minds decisive. The Moses of the Pentateuch is, indeed, an 'ideal figure.' The picture there drawn of the great founder of the Hebrew polity belongs, if the results of literary criticism are to be trusted, to an age when prophecy was fully developed, the eighth and following centuries. The most finished portrait of the ideal Moses, that of the Book of Deuteronomy, belongs,

* Jer. xx. 7 *et seq.*

if not to the lifetime of Isaiah, the son of Amos, at any rate to a time when that noble figure was fresh in men's memories. Perhaps in nothing is the Wellhausen theory, with its reconstruction of the chronology of the Old Testament writings, more brilliantly corroborated by general historical probabilities than in this matter of the evolution of prophecy. If it be recognized that the Deuteronomic Moses is just the eighth-century ideal of a prophet, all the puzzling phenomena of the earlier history fall naturally into their places.

The impulse given to Hebrew religion by the historic Moses may well have been incalculable. Allowance may rightly be made for subsequent deterioration, for a loss of spiritual heritage such as God's Church has suffered again and again in periods of prevailing unfaithfulness and superstition. But this does not explain satisfactorily the phenomena of the Books of Judges and Samuel. It is in Samuel's person that these books would lead us to see the transformation taking place whereby prophecy, as we know it, grew out of a system of divination very little different from that practised by the heathen Semites and the Gentile world of classical antiquity.

In the Book of Judges, with its ephods and teraphim, its graven and molten images,* its 'Augurs' Oak,'† and its hired divining levite,‡ we seem not far removed from that primitive state of things in which religion and magic stand side by side as rivals, and the dividing line between prophecy and divination is not yet clearly drawn. In all primitive religions some men seem to have been credited with a capacity to deal more directly with the unseen world, and these dealings to have been classed as legitimate or illegitimate—*i.e.*, as religious, in the true sense, or magical. In some religions, like that of Rome, divination received official recognition, while magic was condemned. In Deuteronony—which represents, if we are right, the Hebrew religion of the seventh century B.C.—divination is classed with necromancy and condemned.* In the Books of Judges and Samuel there is, indeed, a line drawn between the lawful and the unlawful—a line which Saul crossed, and crossed consciously, when he stooped to consult the witch of En-dor; but divination is still legitimate, or may be so when practised with the right aims and under the right conditions. The employment of ephod images, the consultation of 'the oracle,' the casting of the sacred lot (whether by Urim and Thummim, or otherwise)†—nay, the use made of the Ark of God itself‡ in the age of Samuel—all point to a state of things which by a later generation would have been called superstitious; to a stage of religious development which, but for the grace of God—and, humanly speaking, but for the genius of Samuel—might have borne fruit of little better quality than that of the Gentile religions. The old Greek seer Teiresias is, after all, a noble figure, and one which has close affinities with the prophet. The inquiries addressed to the Delphic oracle were many of them of greater importance for humanity than some of the questions put to the oracle of Jehovah by Saul and David; and the oracle of Apollo showed itself, on the whole, during a long period of history, an influence for good rather than for evil. To this we shall revert later on. For the present what chiefly concerns us is to realize that it was Samuel who at a critical moment in the evolution of the Hebrew religion directed the future course of prophecy into the channel from which it has poured out its blessings on humanity in general.

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* viii. 27 ; xvii. 3-5 ; xviii. 14, etc.

† ix. 37 (R.V. *marg.*).

‡ xviii. 10-13.

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* Deut. xviii. 10, 11.

† Ephod, 1 Sam. xxi. 9, xxiii. 6; Teraphim, 1 Sam. xix. 13; Urim, 1 Sam. xxviii. 6; Oracle ('Inquiring of Jehovah'), 1 Sam. xxii. 10; xxiii. 2 *et seq;* 2 Sam. ii. 1; v. 19 *et seq.*

‡ 1 Sam. iv. 3 *et seq.;* xiv. 18.

In the New Testament, as in the Old, Samuel is reckoned to be, in some sort, the first of the great line of prophets.* He was the founder of what we used to call the 'schools of the prophets,' prominent in the history of his own day and in that of Elijah and Elisha. As such he may or may not have been the father of Hebrew history-writing. But his greatest claim to fame is the position he holds as at once the climax of the old order and the inaugurator of the new. He is familiar to us as the last of the Judges and the initiator of the new theocratic kingdom. Equally important is his place as last of the diviners and first of the prophets.

The well-known story of Saul's search for his father's asses narrated in the ninth chapter of the First Book of Samuel has been a favourite with us from our childhood; but it is only in connection with the evolution of prophecy that its full significance can be appreciated. After a fruitless search of three days' duration, Saul proposes to his servant that they return home. The servant replies:† 'Behold now there is in this city a man of God, and he is a man that is held in honour; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can tell us concerning our journey whereon we go.'

Saul demurs, because he has neither food nor money for 'a present'—that is, for the price of divination. And the servant answers: 'Behold, I have in my hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God to tell us our way.' Then comes the significant note of the eighth-century historian (J): *Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he said, Come and let us go to the seer* (Ḥozeh): *for he that is now called a prophet* (Nabhi) *was beforetime called a seer.*

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* Acts iii. 24; *cf.* Heb. xi. 32.

† 1 Sam. ix. 6 *et seq.*

This 'seer,' who turns out to be none other than Samuel, is indeed a veritable 'man of God'; no diviner on the line between religion and the Black Art, no prostitutor of his exceptional psychic gifts of clairvoyance and sensory automatism. He is 'held in honour' by those among whom he dwells, and is their accepted leader in the rites of religion.* He welcomes the young giant who comes and pays his half-shekel for the benefit of a clairvoyant's answer to his private problem, and he is able to give him the direction he requires. But for Samuel the occasion is one of great and national importance. The same spiritual insight which has given him access to the trifling information which was the overt reason for his interview with the son of Kish has opened to him new vistas, in which Saul figures as first human King of Israel.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the significance of every detail of this simple narrative. Especially notable is its picture of the seer as paid clairvoyant, solving private enigmas, which is not without its parallel in the following generations, yet belongs essentially to the previous period; its suggestion that such a seer was the true forerunner of the eighth-century prophet, and its concrete exhibition, in the person of Samuel, of one who might well have been content, had he so willed, to amass indefinite wealth and influence as a mere diviner (an opportunity still further intensified by his paramount position as judge), but preferred to abdicate his judgeship at the call of his conscience, quickened by a psychic stimulus which he recognized as Divine. Samuel chose the better part. He conquered the diviner's characteristic temptations of avarice and ambition.* He lifted nascent prophecy to the highest place, making it the religious guide and inspirer of the Hebrew people.

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* 1 Sam. ix. 13 *et seq.*

Great as is Samuel, and truly 'prophetic' as is a saying like that—'To obey is better than sacrifice'—which apparently forms part of the older substratum of the record,† there is much that seems crude and primitive in the psychic phenomena of prophecy in his generation and those succeeding. The description of the 'Sons of the prophets,' with their musical instruments, and the contagion of their enthusiastic condition ‡—a contagion that influences not only individuals, but a group of men together,§ and results in a stripping off of the clothes and lying down naked all night ||—if it does not justify a comparison with modern dervishry, shows analogies, at any rate, with religious phenomena of a more elementary type. The private use of the prophet's clairvoyant power is exhibited in the following generation, in the dealings of Jeroboam's wife with Abijah. Still later it is implied in Elisha's converse with the Shunamite, and the inquiries made by Ahaziah of Judah, and by Benhadad of Syria ¶ of the same prophet. The clairvoyant power, we have seen reason to believe, persisted

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* *Cf.* 1 Sam. xii. 3, 4.

† 1 Sam. xv. 22, analyzed as E_1 by criticism. See table, pp. 99, 100.

‡ 1 Sam. x. 5, 6.

§ 1 Sam. xix. 20 *et seq.*

|| 1 Sam. xix. 24.

¶ 2 Kings i. 1 *et seq*; viii. 8 *et seq.*

as part of the prophet's psychic endowment; but its use, as in the case of Isaiah and Ezekiel, is more and more exalted by the later prophets, and becomes more and more definitely the vehicle of a spiritual impulse worthy to be dignified with the name of Revelation.

This glance at the beginnings of prophecy in Israel illustrates what the most superficial study of the 'writing prophets' themselves will have suggested—that even in the succession of genuine prophets there is a difference, not only of type and individual style, but a difference also of level. From the level of prophecy exhibited in Samuel's time to that of the age of Isaiah is an immense step. But among the writing prophets themselves we should not hesitate, surely, to place Jeremiah, on the whole, above Ezekiel, and to put highest of all Isaiah and that later prophet, 'Deutero-Isaiah,' whose writings are appended to those of the son of Amoz (chap. xl. *et seq.*). And in so doing we should be making a very important classification, for we should be committing ourselves to the theory that the sublimity and permanent value of inspired work does not necessarily follow the lines of greatest psychic excitation. The indications of this in the three greatest prophets culminate in Ezekiel, and still more intensely are they exhibited (though in a form which suggests a rather less spontaneous form of excitation) in the writer of the Book of Daniel, which is apocalyptic rather than strictly prophetic, and (in spite of its wonderful power) fails entirely to reach the sublimity of an Isaiah or a Zechariah.

The study of the beginnings of prophecy has also brought us face to face with the problems of heathen divination; but before we return to these, let us follow out a little further the thread of the present argument.

If inherent sublimity and practical utility are to enter into our estimate of the inspired character of a given book or passage of Holy Writ, we needs must admit different levels of inspiration. If divergence of literary type, exhibiting itself now in narrative power, now in poetic fire, now in hortatory appeal, and now in legislation or ceremonial systematization, is to be allowed due weight, then we must surely agree that inspiration expresses itself in different forms. Let us take first this difference of form. The old, unthinking idea of a Bible all equally and uniformly inspired, all on one dead level of spiritual and devotional utility, was based doubtless on an unexpressed assumption that the direct inspiration claimed by the prophets with their 'Thus saith Jehovah' could be predicated in the same sense of every book and every verse within the covers of the Bible. Now, a very superficial study of the different books is sufficient to overthrow this idea. To say nothing of the generally accepted critical conclusions as to the composite character of the Pentateuch, many of the books are clearly compilations rather than the direct products of prophetic vision. In the New Testament St. Luke proclaims his adoption of the best historical methods of his day;* St. Paul draws a distinction between certain of his own utterances which he believes to come direct from the Holy Spirit and others for which he is not prepared to make that claim.† In the Old Testament, Numbers, Judges, and Samuel cite early documents as authority for some of their statements, and Kings and Chronicles abound in references to authorities (which do not, however, if critics are right, exhaust the analysis of that process of compilation through which they assumed their present form). The very prophets themselves borrow passages from one another. To go no further, everyone will remember the verbal identity of the prophecy of the 'Mountain of the Lord's House' in Isaiah and Micah*—a proof that one incorporated it from the other, if both did not borrow it from an earlier source.

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* Luke i. 1 *et seq.*

† 1 Cor. vii. 10, 12, 25, 40: where the variation of phrases is very instructive.

The *literary methods* of the inspired writers are found to range from the systematic arrangement of ancient lists and genealogies to the spontaneously poetic utterances of prophet and psalmist; and the Old Testament exhibits so many varieties of literary composition that one might almost say its writers must have included every representative type of temperament. Think of the difference of psychic endowment reflected in the vibrating utterances of Amos on the one hand, and the shrewd, cold wisdom of parts of the Book of Proverbs on the other. The poetic temperament is, no doubt, closely allied to the prophetic; and the grand spontaneity of many a passage in Job bespeaks a high nervous sensitiveness, a power of imagination and of intuition comparable with the psychical intensity of the prophets proper. And here and there the Song of Songs approaches the same level. But the same cannot be said of the bulk of the Priestly writing, whether in the Pentateuch or in the Books of Chronicles; nor is it implied in the Book of Esther.

The untenable view which would extend the mode and the intensity of prophetic inspiration to the whole of the Old Testament has this in its favour: that much of the history was written by men of the prophetic type, as the Jews themselves acknowledged when they called Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings 'the Former Prophets.' Modern criticism also recognizes a strong prophetic strain in the narrative parts of the Pentateuch. But even there, the gifts required for this noble style of history-writing differ in some degree from those that went to produce the prophecies of an Isaiah or an Ezekiel.

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* Isa. ii. 2-4; Mic. iv. 1-3.

Assuming, then, that this richly diverse literature is all of it the product of the Holy Spirit's reaction upon the spirit of chosen human agents, we cannot but recognize that His operation must have taken diverse forms in its energizing upon differently gifted natures, or upon different sides of a single highly gifted nature.

That there are degrees of *intensity* in the inspiration it is, as we said above, impossible to doubt, if inspiration is in any degree correlative to sublimity and spiritual usefulness. No one would hold, for instance, that the purely genealogical passages in Chronicles, when added together, would produce an equal amount of spiritual food to that which could be extracted from the same number of verses taken at random from the Psalms or from Deutero-Isaiah. No one could compare the benefit directly derived by humanity from the Book of Esther with that derived from Deuteronomy. When we consider the extremes, we feel that we must allow degrees of intensity in inspiration; though the attempt to put into the scale all the different elements of which the Old Testament is composed, and to construct a graduated table from this point of view, would probably be as unsuccessful in its issue as it would be arrogant in its conception.

Looking at the finished results, we can but echo the inspired words, 'by divers portions and in divers manners.'* If inspiration means the reaction of the Holy Spirit on man's spirit, its operation must have been now more, now less direct and intense. We may see it at work, now seizing, as it were, upon the very roots of man's intellectual being, flooding his subliminal consciousness, and quivering out of his trance-bound lips in words of fire; now directing his prayerful reason as it grapples with one or other of the fresh problems of an ever-developing religious consciousness, or as it reflects upon past history, tracing out the indications of a guiding Hand; now stimulating the poet's intuition as he breathes forth in song the deep emotions of the soul face to face with its Creator; now controlling the hand of the compiler as he selects and weaves into an ordered whole the documentary records of past ages—history, legend, or myth; now inspiring the lawgiver's judgment, as he chooses among current customs and maxims, and transfigures what he chooses under the influence of the pure and lofty religion of Jehovah. Intellect and reasoning power, memory, imagination, literary taste and skill, all fall within the scope of the Divine stimulus, which, while it probes the very unstirred depths of the prophet's subliminal consciousness till his whole being throbs, also controls with light yet firm hand the critical faculties of the compiler, securing for his honest effort an edifying result. A real control of the Holy Spirit over each contributor, and over the combined result, but a control that respects and makes use of those individual gifts, which are, after all, the Holy Spirit's endowment—may not this be one aspect, at least, of inspiration?

And now we may return to the question raised by the way. Is the Bible quite cut off from all 'profane' literature by the fact of its inspiration? Does its inspiration make it a thing *sui generis*, or has it affinities with non-biblical literature? Is its most characteristic phenomenon of prophecy a thing entirely apart, or does it, in its earlier stages, show traces of a common ancestry with certain phenomena in Gentile religions?

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* Heb. i. 1.

The problem of the Apocrypha has already* helped us to see that the question of inspired and uninspired, of sacred and profane, is not by any means so simple as it sometimes appears. For those to whom the Story of Susanna and the History of Bel and the Dragon are reckoned as on a par with the Book of Isaiah this problem does not exist. Equally non-existent is it for those who, like some of the early Continental reformers, or the present-day Bible Society, extrude the Apocryphal Books entirely from the sacred volume. But to those who agree with the English Church in following the example of the greatest biblical scholar of antiquity, and class these books as Deutero-canonical, the question at once arises, Are these books inspired or not? If inspired, are they inspired in the same sense or in the same degree as the Scriptures of the Hebrew Canon proper? How can I accept as inspired in the full sense books which are never quoted as Scripture by the New Testament writers—books, too, which, estimated on their own merits, fall, on the whole, so clearly below the average of the Hebrew Canon? How, on the other hand, seeing that I accept the Bible at the hands of the Church, can I deny all inspiration to books which millions of orthodox Christians to-day—including the great communions of Rome and the East—accept as canonical?

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* Chapter I., p. 36.

The Anglican line as to the Apocryphal Books, which, if not strictly logical, seems still the only reasonable one, places them, as it were, on the threshold of that plenary inspiration which all accord to the books of the Hebrew Canon. They stand on the threshold—and they keep open the door. They form, as it were, a connecting-link between the inner circle of the books of revelation and the great outer circle of such heathen religious literature as shows a groping after God. Their ambiguous position suggests to us at any rate the possibility that what we were accustomed to look upon as a sharp antithesis, a dichotomy of 'sacred' on the one side and 'profane' on the other, may be in reality something more like a graduated series of greater and less inspiration, where a line may be drawn across for logical purposes, yet not so as to limit or prescribe too decisively the bounds beyond which inspiration may not pass.

With this object-lesson in view, criticism sets itself to study the idea of inspiration as exhibited in the Bible, comparing it with what anthropology has to teach about man's primitive beliefs, and especially what can be learned on the subject from classical and from heathen Semitic sources. It finds the parallels close and striking, and is eager to raise the question: Is there, after all, anything more in Hebrew prophecy and scriptural inspiration, if its germ is in the phenomena of the Books of *Judges* and *Samuel*, than there is in the similar features exhibited by the frenzied prophetess or the paid diviner of classical antiquity, or the leaping Baal-prophets of Elijah's time, or the mad dervishes of modern Islam?

If we grant, however, a still closer parallel between the phenomena of *Judges* and *Samuel* and those outside the Bible than is, perhaps, justified by the facts, the implied interpretation of the Bible's inspiration by a single group of phenomena in the earlier history is like saying the full-grown oak is nothing more than an acorn. Reversing the sound Aristotelian principle of interpreting things that grow and develop, not by their beginnings, but by the mature result—in technical language, 'teleologically'—we fall into the too common fallacy which loved to deduce from Darwinism the bold statement (doubly and trebly unwarranted) 'Then we are all monkeys.' One of the chiefest vindications of the inspiration of Hebrew prophetism is to be found in a comparison of its humble beginnings with the sublimity of its eventual development. One of the most striking differences between the religion of the Bible and that of the ancient Greeks is that, while at a certain stage they exhibit very close resemblances, in the end they are poles apart. And what is true of the Greeks is true, speaking broadly, of ancient religion in general. If, as we have suggested above, the seer or diviner of eleventh- or twelfth-century Israel stood at the parting of the ways, and might, if he had yielded to the diviner's besetting temptations of avarice and ambition, have developed into something like the later pagan soothsayer, an object of just ridicule and contempt; then, surely, it was inspiration that set his feet upon the rock and gave him the impulse to climb the steep ascent that led to Isaianic prophecy? The psychic temperament, sensitive to the magnetism of every suggestion, is easily swayed in the wrong direction. Only if it be backed by high resolve and lofty ideals, if it be illuminated by the light of a pure and uplifting theology, can it escape the perils of self-deception and ultimate degradation.

Had the Greek religion resembled the Hebrew, the Greek soothsayer might have been the forerunner of a Hellenic prophet comparable to Isaiah. But instead of the bracing atmosphere of a pure monotheism, saturated with noble ethical ideas, the Greek had for his religion a polytheistic mythology full of æsthetic charm, but teeming also with the most hideously degrading immoralities.

The Homeric soothsayer, Calchas, who, in his beneficent spirit, his love of mercy, his championship of the oppressed, and of the cause of righteousness, exhibits, like the Teiresias of Sophocles, the potentialities of a sublime prophet, is an ideal figure, drawn, it may be, not long before or after the classic figure of Samuel in Hebrew literature. But those who followed Calchas in the line of Hellenic diviners are not to be compared with the successors of Samuel. On the one side there is progress, on the other retrogression and decadence. And so with the religion in general. Yet there are traces of Divine working in the Hellenic religion, too, which we cannot justly ignore. Greek divination was not entirely fraudulent. If it was due, as appears, to the striking of a hand upon the same psychic cords which produced ultimately the Divine music of Hebrew prophecy, the sounds produced are, in some cases, so preponderatingly harmonious as to suggest that the same Hand must surely have evoked the music. The Delphic oracle, commended by such thoughtful critics as Thucydides, Strabo, Plutarch, and Cicero, cannot have been wholly fraudulent. The early Christians believed in it as a genuine thing, and attributed its admittedly supernatural answers to demoniacal agency.

Yet history shows it to have exercised, on the whole, a beneficial influence upon individuals and upon nations, ranged on the side of justice, mercy, and progress. Dare we not see here a flickering gleam at least of the 'Light that lighteth every man,'* a partly successful 'feeling after'† the true God by those whose whole religious horizon was darkened by the murk of an unworthy theology?

And if we are prepared, with some hesitation, to recognize certain sparks of inspiration in Hellenic divination at its best, may we not with less hesitation acknowledge its presence in the highest intuitional flights of a Socrates or a Plato—efforts after the ideal which, if not stimulated by faith in one living and holy God, had yet a dimly-conceived monotheism or a philosophic pantheism as their basis? After all, we can afford to be as liberal-minded as the Greek fathers, who, if they denied actual inspiration to Plato, would have done so on the score that he borrowed from the 'teaching of Moses.'

We need not be afraid, then, to conceive of inspiration as, in one sense, overflowing the limits of Holy Scripture. We need not be reluctant to acknowledge touches of it in the sacred books of non-Christian religions; to acknowledge that there was, here and there, some genuine response to the Divine stimulus as it played upon gifted souls among the heathen, for they 'also are the offspring' of One who 'left not Himself without witness' in any age or nation.‡ But if we admit a varying intensity of inspiration within the limits of the Bible, and an overflowing of its influence beyond those limits, we shall not thereby obliterate the line of demarcation, or deprive the Bible of its claim to be in a special and unique sense inspired.

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* John i. 9.
† Acts xvii. 27.
‡ Acts xiv. 17, xvii. 23.

We shall see this more clearly, perhaps, when we come to compare the Bible with the sacred books of non-Christian religions.* But meanwhile, with the *data* already at our command, we may make an effort to define with greater exactness the scope and purpose of inspiration. That task is, indeed, already performed for us by St. Paul, in the passage quoted earlier from the Second Epistle to Timothy. The end of scriptural inspiration he takes to be a practical one—moral and spiritual edification, 'for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.' The sphere of inspiration and of its correlative revelation is religion; not æsthetics, or physical science, or history as such, or even philosophy, but a religion which says 'Know the LORD'; and reveals to us, so far as human language can reveal it, what the LORD is, and that the way to know Him is to strive after His likeness: 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.'†

In this the Bible is supreme and unapproachable. To the outer world of literature it is linked on its material side, just as man, who bears God's image, is linked through his physical organism to the brute creation. We need scarcely enumerate more than a few of these affinities. The historical narratives of the Old Testament have features in common with those of Arabic historians, even to their methods of compilation; the cosmogony of Genesis and the account of the Deluge have many striking parallels in the literature of other races, especially, of course, the Babylonian. Many of what we commonly consider the Bible's most characteristic moral teachings find a more or less perfect echo in one or other of the sacred books of the East. Nor can we hold, with the facts before us, that inspiration has freed the Scriptures from every blemish or error incident to human writing. Inaccuracies in chronology, imperfection in the use of historical imagination, ignorance of any scientific historical method, crude and undeveloped theories concerning the physical universe—these alone would stamp the Old Testament as uninspired, if the old theory of rigid verbal inerrancy were the true and only criterion. Nor can the New Testament, though comparatively free from these defects, claim absolute inerrancy in such matters. The writers themselves do not, as a matter of fact, make the claim. St. Luke tells Theophilus that he has 'traced the course of all things' —that is, of all the matters about which he is writing— 'accurately from the first'; he proposes to draw up an 'ordered' account, from which Theophilus may 'know the certainty concerning the things which he has been taught by word of mouth.' But he compares his work openly, and associates it, with the narratives which it is to supersede. He speaks as a human historian who gathers his information from documents and from eyewitnesses, and selects his material and marshals it according to his intellectual capacity. Criticism and archæology, as we have seen, have strongly vindicated his accuracy and his veracity. Their verdict upon his own account of his writing is a distinctly favourable one. And where chronological difficulties arise (*e.g.*, in his mention of Quirinius's governorship as coincident with the date of the Nativity),* we may well suspend our judgment, and allow for the defects of our own information.

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* See Chapter IX., p. 251 *et seq.*

† Lev. xi. 44; 1 Pet. i. 16.

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* Luke ii. 2.

But not every New Testament writer has the historical capacity of St. Luke, nor is St. Luke himself so lifted above the environment of his time as to speak to us always in language of the twentieth century. The New Testament is coloured, as we have seen, from end to end with the imagery, the ideas, the imaginations, the expectations, of the time and place where it originated. Even the sayings of the Lord Himself are largely couched in the eschatological phraseology of first-century Judaism. Yet men still hang upon His lips, as we are told they did nineteen hundred years ago; He still speaks to them 'with authority, and not as the scribes,' still speaks 'as never man spake.' We feel that if there is such a thing as Divine inspiration, it breathes in His words as in those of no one else before or since. It culminates in Him. We echo again the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews. That of which we saw broken gleams in the Old Testament prophets is concentrated, focussed, in One for whom all that went before was but a preparation. The grey dawn has been succeeded by the perfect day. But if this be the full and final revelation, the plenary inspiration, it still conveys itself through the limitations and imperfections of human language. It is still clothed for us in a vesture that is definitely Palestinian, Jewish, and of a particular generation. The Lord spoke to the men around Him in language that they could understand; the metaphors, the imagery that He used, were such as were familiar to them—nay, He spoke exactly as though, in all ordinary things, He shared their outlook upon the world—their scientific, historical, literary ideas, their views on demoniacal possession, and so on. Some of these conceptions were such as are not possible to us now. Yet we feel that the inspiration does not lie in these. These are not the building, but the scaffolding. If Christ had spoken to the first century in the scientific jargon of the nineteenth, His message would have been unintelligible for at least eighteen centuries; as it is, it has spoken with a living voice to every succeeding generation. Where it has been interpreted wrongly, as though He had laid down some principle of natural science, it has not borne fruit, for it is not in that region that the inspiration lies. Where His message has been interpreted in its true moral and religious sense, the language of first-century Judaism has made a direct appeal to every different type of humanity. Throughout the whole field of the world the seed of the Word is fruitful still, provided it fall on 'good ground.'

And so criticism has operated for good in bringing out more clearly the humanity of the human side of the Bible, in narrowing the field in which we are to look for the work of inspiration, and focussing our gaze upon the religious teaching. And from the crucible of criticism that religious teaching has emerged in a more intelligible form than it ever assumed before. It has emerged as a progressive revelation from rude beginnings, as a light, at first grey and uncertain, but shining more and more unto the perfect day; as an inspired selection of a race gifted beyond all others with the religious temperament; an inspired selection for them and in them of elements, institutions and customs capable of high transfiguration, from the mass of material common to them and to their heathen kinsfolk; as a steady drawing and disciplining of the selected people in a given direction; a shedding off of the unworthy, and a retention again and again of the loyal remnant; an *inspiration of selection* as regards both men and principles.*

It is a far cry from the Palestine of the Book of Judges to that of the Gospels; from the days of Moses and of Elijah to those of the Transfiguration; from the dying curse of Zechariah, son of Jehoiada,† to St. Stephen's 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge';‡ from the narrow Judaism of Ezra and Nehemiah to the world-wide Gospel of St. Paul. But these are all, as mirrored in the Bible, seen to be parts of one great whole, elements in a great, complex, growing organism —the organism of Progressive Revelation.

There is a great tree which has its roots struck deep into the soil—the soil of myth and legend where anthropologists dig; but its top reaches up to heaven, and from heaven it draws those vital influences which make its leaves effectual 'for the healing of the nations,' and its fruit the staple food of the spiritual life. But its connection with the soil is never broken or interrupted. 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels.'

It is only when we consider the whole and the parts alike—first the variety and apparent incompatibility of the individual elements in the Bible, and then the great living organism which they combine to form—that the conviction of the Divine impulse and control which we call inspiration comes home to us with its full force. Here is an impulse and a control that touches at once the individual voice and the great chorus. The Holy Ghost, 'who spake by the prophets,' is seen initiating and directing the movements of gifted souls in that region which psychology is only just beginning to map out—the vast, mysterious region of the subliminal consciousness, the realm of vision and trance, of sensory automatism, of telæsthesia and telepathy. 'From generation to generation this Spirit of Wisdom, passing into holy souls . . . maketh men friends of God and prophets.'* But the Divine impulse comes not to one type of temperament alone; on each and every artificer at work in the great temple of Scripture the Spirit descends as upon the Bezaleel and Aholiab of the Book of Exodus,† putting into his heart the necessary wisdom for the particular task allotted to him. And over the great outlines of the whole He presides as a Divine architect. Thus it is that a unity of purpose is visible amid all the rich diversity of detail; thus it is that Law and Prophets and writings supplement each other; that the Old Testament as a whole leads up to the New, that the New completes and interprets the Old; that both alike are focussed upon the central Figure of the world's history, even on Him to whom God gave not the Spirit by measure,‡ and that there flows out from them a love which is able to make 'wise unto salvation'§ those who are seeking God.

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* Some would say that it is the entire Hebrew people which must be regarded as inspired, and that the literature of inspiration is so various because it is nothing more nor less than the complete literature of the ancient Hebrews. We must not, however, forget that the Bible itself refers to other books now lost.

† 2 Chron, xxiv. 22.

‡ Acts vii, 60,

For no doctrine of inspiration is complete which does not include the reaction of the Holy Ghost upon the believer's consciousness as he 'searches the Scriptures.'

The promise of the Comforter was the promise of an abiding presence that should lead Christ's disciples into

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* Wisd. vii. 27.

† Exod. xxxi. and xxxvi. *et seq.*

‡ John iii. 34.

§ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

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all truth. We cannot confine His activity within a given period of past time. If the Canon is closed, there are other forms of inspiration still at work among us, and not least of these is the gift of the power to use that Canon as a key to unlock the many mysteries that confront each successive generation of men.

'We ought not to think of inspiration' (it has been well said), 'as though it were some strange abnormal process taking a man out of himself, and making him, as it were, a mere passive instrument for the Spirit to play on; we ought rather to regard it as the normal and natural way by which God will give ordinary people like ourselves the power to use and develop and beautify our mental gifts, and to believe that the more God shines upon us and guides us, the more there will be in us for Him to illuminate and teach.' They were men of like passions with ourselves who wrote and compiled, who edited and transmitted, the Bible literature. The vehicle of Scriptural Inspiration was just human nature—human nature with its limitations, conditioned by time, place, race, and temperament; human nature, liable to all sorts of irrelevant errors and mistakes of science, as of history and chronology; but a human nature swift and unerring in its delivery of the essentials of God's message, because it was purely devoted to His service, and never deliberately faltered in its response to His call.

V

THE ENGLISH BIBLE

No study of the Bible in its general features and fortunes would be complete without some consideration of our own vernacular Bible, which, though born comparatively late in the history of Christendom, may boast that it has outstripped all other versions (except perhaps the Latin 'Vulgate') in the range and the intensity of its influence. The so-called 'Authorized Version' of 300 years ago has so insinuated itself into our affections, so interwoven itself with the fibre of our intellectual and devotional life, that the average Englishman, who, when asked, would answer at once that the Old Testament was originally a Hebrew, and the New Testament a Greek, book, is apt to relapse into the acceptance of the English version as something original and ultimate, even if he does not go further still and regard it as itself the product of a process of verbal inspiration.

Yet until these last years, when the demands of the mission-field have led to the issue from an English press of the Bible or parts of the Bible in almost every language and dialect under the sun, the revered English translation was simply one among the younger of the great family of versions which have attested in all ages the adaptability of the Scriptures to the needs and aspirations of the various races of mankind. The Hebrew Canon was scarcely completed before the great 'Septuagint' translation into Greek was begun under the auspices of Ptolemy Philadelpus (284-246 B.C.), and when the learned scholar Origen, about A.D. 232, compiled his sixfold Bible in parallel columns, he was able to copy out three independent Greek versions, besides the Septuagint—those of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. Before the end of the second century we have traces of an old Latin version of the entire Scriptures, and at least one Syriac (the Curetonian) and two Egyptian (the Thebaic and Memphitic), and at least one Latin version in North Africa; and these are followed by later Latin, Syriac, and Egyptian versions, and later still by Æthiopic and Armenian translations, the last-named dating from the fifth century. It will be realized of what inestimable value the earlier versions are to the textual critic of the New Testament, since each translation implies a Greek manuscript already in existence; while some, by their evident literalness, enable the scholar to recover a hitherto unknown reading, or to date, within limits, a variant reading already known. It will be realized, too, how reassuring is the evidence which these early versions supply, that, two centuries before the date at which our earliest extant manuscript of the Scriptures came into being, and considerably less than two centuries after the Lord's ascension, these Scriptures were already in existence, and substantially in the form in which they have been handed down to us.

But for our immediate purpose the significance of these versions is of another kind. They shew the power of the Scriptures to acclimatize themselves, to live and work in a new dress, to adapt themselves to a new environment, to make themselves at home among peoples of different race and tongue, of different religious antecedents and mental habits from those among whom they first saw the light. They witness to that strange way the Bible has of becoming 'original' wherever it makes its home. If we come to achieve a more microscopic knowledge of the structure and a more detailed and minute familiarity with the history of the languages in which these versions were made, we may probably find that they exercised a strong formative and fixative influence upon the tongues themselves. When Ulphilas, in the fourth century, wished to take the Gospels to the Goths, he had to invent an alphabet, for their language had never been reduced to writing. The same was, to all intents and purposes, true of the Romansch language of the Grisons at a later date. Not that it required a new alphabet, but the vernacular Bible was its first considerable piece of permanent literature. The Reformation and the art of printing came upon it when it had not yet emerged from the folk-song stage. In a hundred different mission-fields the same thing has been enacted in our lifetime. Languages and dialects that have never been written down before, some that have scarcely attained maturity of grammar and syntax, now possess the Christian Scriptures as their first specimen of vernacular literature. It is a fact of great significance.

The vernacular Bible tradition was carried on, more or less fitfully, in Europe during the Middle Ages. Quite early in the history of the Provençal and Italian tongues (whose literary career, properly so called, began with lyric verse) we find successful attempts to put into the vernacular the more familiar parts of the Latin Vulgate. There was a complete Vaudois translation about A.D. 1100. A new impulse was given to this movement almost all over Europe by the Reformation, following close upon the heels of the invention of printing, and then it was that some tongues awoke for the first time to a literary life.

Our English literature was not born at the Reformation, nor in the earlier evangelical age of primitive Franciscanism, when vernacular versions of the Scriptures began to spring to life in Southern Europe. Its continuous life, which reached early manhood with Chaucer and maturity with the Elizabethans, and in these latter days still shows itself full of unexhausted vigour, can be traced back for some twelve centuries along the track of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, across the watershed of the Norman Conquest, to the days of Alfred and beyond, when the land was not yet one.

But the Bible is there, at the dawn of English poetry, in Cædmon's paraphrase of Genesis. And we shall see that the Scriptures exercised a practically continuous influence, now stronger, now weaker, upon our national literature, till the day when the great version of 1611, marking an epoch in the literary history of Europe, should set a standard of classical English. This it has done so effectually, and in so many departments—in vocabulary and phraseology, in syntax, in rhythm and cadence—that 'Bible English' has become a recognized and well-understood expression, denoting a style at once eloquent and chaste, lofty and simple, graceful and severe—a style inimitable in its unselfconscious dignity and grandeur.

Our familiarity with the subject-matter of the Bible will have prepared us to acknowledge that the matter itself reacted very powerfully upon the style of the translation. True, the event is happily timed, following close upon the glorious literary awakening of the Elizabethan Age, and so finding ready to hand a medium of literary expression; but if this version of the Bible be compared with the rest of English literature of the period, worthy and dignified as that is, it will be found still supreme. Moreover, the best of the contemporary literature—Shakespeare's verse and Bacon's prose—owes not a little to the leaven of scriptural ideas and phrases—ideas and phrases which had begun to exercise a potent influence upon the literary language two centuries earlier, as a result of Wycliffe's work at Bible translation.

If we are to make clear to ourselves the antecedents of the Authorized Version, it will be necessary to traverse ground familiar to many, and sketch the outlines of a literary evolution of many centuries' duration.

The history of the English Bible, in one sense, goes back to Tindale's New Testament of 1525-26. To this, and his subsequent translations of many of the Old Testament books, every subsequent English version owes very much; its diction and phraseology have left an indelible mark, not only upon the translations of the Scriptures now in use among us, but also upon English literature as such, and upon the language which is its instrument. Tindale's work marks a fresh start, because his version is based largely upon the originals—the Hebrew Old Testament and the New Testament in Greek.

Yet that work itself would have been impossible without the inspiration due to John Wycliffe. The century which passed between the death of Wycliffe (1384) and the birth of Tindale (1484) had been a momentous one for European culture. It had seen the invention of printing and the fall of Constantinople. This latter event had flooded the West with fugitive Greek scholars and with precious Greek manuscripts, and given an enormous impulse to that revival of learning which Petrarch had done so much to foster a century earlier still. The century had also witnessed the birth of men like Erasmus (1467), Reuchlin (1455), and Luther (1483), who were, each in his different way, to be the pioneers of a new and more discerning biblical scholarship. Tindale thus started on a different plane from that on which Wycliffe had laboured. If the opposition he had to encounter was better organized and more bitter, his material and personal advantages were more numerous and efficacious. Yet Wycliffe, as the great English pioneer of revolt against Roman abuses, was more or less responsible for the atmosphere in which Tindale found himself — an atmosphere stimulating enough, charged with immense possibilities.

And although Wycliffe's noble work, being, at best, a translation from the Vulgate translation, and from a poor text of that, had less direct influence on subsequent versions than might have been expected, its influence was still felt, through Tindale, and has returned in these last days with greater force; its renderings having been restored in not a few places of the Revised New Testament of 1881.

But its main significance is as a monument of the national love of Scripture, and the national desire to have access to the holy writings in the vulgar tongue. That love and that desire were not born in the fourteenth century, nor do they owe their origin to so negative an impulse as the revolt against the corruption of the friars and monks, and against the obscurantism and oppression of the Papal Court.

We must go back, as we have seen, to the dawn of our national history—to the time when we were not yet a single nation—if we would trace the beginnings of this great drama of the English Bible. Before the end of the seventh century Cædmon had written his famous paraphrase, which was at once the first attempt to put the Bible into an English dress, and the beginning of English poetry. Bede it is who tells us the story how, when past middle life, the modest lay-brother of St. Hilda's Monastery at Whitby burst into song under the stimulus of what seemed to him a heaven-sent inspiration; how in his sleep One came to him and said, 'Cædmon, sing me a song'; and how, when he answered that just because he could not sing he had left the festive hall, and gone to rest by the cattle that were his care, the Voice insisted, 'However, you shall sing.' And when he asked, 'What shall I sing?' he received the answer, 'Sing the beginning of created things.' 'Others after him,' Bede adds, 'attempted to make religious poems, but none could vie with him, for he did not learn the art of poetry from men, nor of men, but from God.'

Whether we have or have not some parts of Cædmon's original paraphrase extant in the earlier portions of the 'Junian Cædmon' is still a matter of dispute; unfortunately, there can be no doubt that Bede's own translation work is lost to us. For if Cædmon is the first who attempted to put the Bible into an English dress, it is Bede's own version of the Fourth Gospel that opens the long and noble list of attempts to translate Scripture faithfully into English prose. He was at work upon this on his death-bed (in 735), as the pathetic narrative of his pupil Cuthbert assures us; so that the story of the English Bible in this very definite sense takes us back to the first half of the eighth century, some six centuries and a half before Wycliffe accomplished his work of translation, and nearly eight hundred years before Tindale's publications ushered in the last phase in the evolution.

Between Bede and Wycliffe there is not wanting a series of efforts, more or less ambitious and more or less successful, to render portions of the Bible into the vernacular. Besides the early version of the Psalter ascribed (but erroneously) to Aldhelm, who died more than twenty years before Bede, King Alfred, at the close of the ninth century, prefixed to his code of laws a free English rendering of Exod. xx.-xxiii. and of Acts xv., and further projected a translation of the Psalms. The period between his death and the Norman Conquest is rich in specimens of biblical translation, considering the small total bulk of the English literature of those centuries. Several versions and 'glosses' (*i.e.*, literal renderings, interlinear with the Latin) of the Psalms are extant, and three translations and several glosses of the Gospels, while, during the first years of the eleventh century, Ælfric, who became Archbishop of York in 1023, translated a large proportion of the Old Testament, though his work—a metrical version—was freer and less complete and exact than those named above. The Norman Conquest, though it failed to stem the course of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which was maintained at Peterborough till the close of Stephen's reign, left little scope or leisure for English writing; and the literature of our tongue all but disappeared for a time, to arise again enriched by the 'alluvial deposit' left by the Norman-French flood. Yet for this dark period we have, besides early homilies steeped in Scripture, the work of Ormin (called the *Ormulum*) dating from the beginning of the thirteenth century, which originally comprised an English metrical paraphrase of some 230 Mass-Gospels, followed in each case by a commentary. The first half of the fourteenth century has left us two prose versions of the Psalms, those of William of Shoreham and Richard Rolle of Hampole, each of them a somewhat crabbed gloss, literally rendering the sometimes unintelligible Latin with which the version is interlined. After each verse Rolle adds his own comment. This last-named glossator, since he died in 1349, must have been living after the birth of Wycliffe, who, in 1360, was already Master of Balliol. But as regards the extent and value of their work on the Bible, there is no comparison. Alike in quantity and in quality, Wycliffe's work is immeasurably the greater.

John Wycliffe, the last of the Schoolmen, the precursor of the English Reformation, is a figure of almost inestimable importance, by reason of his influence upon the future of English literature and English life and thought.

He was the last of the Schoolmen. By taste and training a scholar and student, of paramount influence in the University of Oxford, where he spent the best years of his life, he was well versed in all the scholastic lore of the Middle Ages. The bent of his mind was amazingly independent, not to say revolutionary. He was a follower of William of Ockham and Marsiglio of Padua, who repaid the Emperor Lewis of Bavaria for the protection his sword afforded them against a persecuting Papacy by wielding their pens with great effect on behalf of the rights of the imperial sovereignty and its independence of the ecclesiastical power. In those days the Papacy was already discredited by its flight from Rome and by the corruption of the 'exiled' Curia at Avignon. Wycliffe lived to see a still further blow to its prestige in the spectacle of two rival Popes, one supported by France and her allies, the other by England and her friends, each claiming to be Christ's own Vicar, and each hurling abuse and anathema at the other. This stimulated his already considerable suspicion of all things traditional, of the whole mediæval Church system, root and branch, and of much that was not ecclesiastical at all—like the traditional rights of property. The centre of his religious system is the right of every soul to deal immediately with God. His theory of society and of government is really all but anarchical, but he did good service to posterity by the immense number of questions he raised and the fearless way in which he raised them. The time was not ripe as yet. Many of Wycliffe's ideas, indeed, overshot the Reformation, and have only reappeared in quite recent days. The Reformation in England, itself the inevitable result of so many and so complex causes, owes more to him than to any one man. His influence seems, indeed, suddenly to disappear soon after his death. The Lollard movement was outwardly a failure. In 1401 Lollardy became, under the famous statute *De hæretico comburendo*, a penal offence by express desire of the prelates, clergy, and commons of the realm, and it did not even furnish many martyrs But Wycliffe's influence was not annihilated, only eclipsed. It was like a stream flowing underground and then reappearing. He himself had diverted it into the soil. Despairing of an appeal to the dominant ecclesiastical authority, and finding the support of John of Gaunt a failure, this scholar and student decided to 'appeal to the people.' He abandoned the Latin for the English tongue, and wrote tract after tract in rough, clear, homely English, denouncing pardons, indulgences, worship of the saints, and the doctrine of transubstantiation, and appealing to the Bible as the one ground of faith. These tracts were distributed everywhere by his 'Poor Preachers,' and leavened the masses of the people not only with a suspicion of all things traditional, but with a love of Holy Scripture and a taste for good, simple English. And so, when Wycliffe died in 1384, under the ban of Rome and in disfavour with the local ecclesiastical authorities, his influence did not really die. His ideas remained to germinate under the soil; his English prose remained, and, above all, his vernacular Bible. Wycliffe is the father of the later English prose, as Chaucer of the later poetry. Both his version of the Bible and his pamphlets did much to determine the future type of English prose, the former also influencing to an indefinite extent the still more influential version of Tindale.

The first edition of Wycliffe's Bible, in which he himself was responsible for the New Testament and the last books of the Old Testament from Baruch onwards, while the bulk of the Old Testament was translated by his assistant, Nicholas of Hereford, was marred by the presence of a large number of Latinisms. Even Wycliffe's nimble mind could not shake itself free at once from the tongue in which, as schoolman and Oxford divine, all his best work had been done—the tongue in which, no doubt, he had hitherto done all his *thinking* as well as his writing and speaking on theological subjects. These blemishes and others were afterwards removed by John Purvey under Wycliffe's directions, and thus came into existence what we know as 'Wycliffe's Bible.' A typical specimen of the style of this work may be found in the familiar Twenty-third Psalm — numbered by him, of course, Twenty-second, following the Vulgate Version, which was throughout the basis of his translation:

THE TITLE OF THE TWO AND TWENTITHE SALM.
THE SALM, ETHER THE SONG OF DAUID.

> The Lord gouerneth me, and no thing schal faile to me; in the place of pasture there he hath set me. He nurschide me on the watir of refreischyng; he conuertide my soule. He ledde me forth on the pathis of riȝtfulnesse; for his name. For whi thouȝ Y schal go in the middist of schadewe of deeth; Y schal not drede yuels, for thou art with me. Thi ȝerde and thi staf; tho han coumfortid me. Thou hast maad redi a boord in my siȝt; aȝens hem that troblen me. Thou hast maad fat myn heed with oyle; and my cuppe, fillinge greetli, is ful cleer. And thi merci schal sue me; in all the daies of my lijf. And that Y dwell in the hows of the Lord; in to the lengthe of daies.

Even from so short an extract it will be seen how crabbed the version is to modern ears, a characteristic due, of course, in part, to the primitive and unformed state of the English prose as a vehicle of solemn literature, partly to the fact that the translation is from the Vulgate, some of the obscurities and defects of which are carried over into the very un-Latin English of Purvey's revision. That the translators were aware of the defects of the Vulgate, and of the corrupt state of the manuscripts of it current in their day, is abundantly clear from Purvey's prologue. 'The comune Latyne Bibles,' he says, 'have more need to be corrected as many as I have seen in my life than hath the Englishe Bible late translated;' and, again, of the Psalter: 'The texte of our bokis discordeth much from the Ebreu.' But neither he nor any of his contemporaries would have been able to compare the Vulgate effectually with Hebrew or with Greek.

They claim their place in the line of those great men who had endeavoured, from the beginning of English history, to bring Holy Scripture within the reach of the people. They appeal to the examples of Bede, of Alfred, and of Grosseteste; but it was left to a later generation to take up Grosseteste's *rôle* of an appeal to the originals.

We have coupled Wycliffe's name with that of his contemporary, Chaucer, as accomplishing a work for English prose analogous to that which Chaucer achieved for poetry. It has been suggested that the poet may have actually used Wycliffe's work in the last of his Canterbury Tales; for while all the Scripture quotations in Langland's *Piers the Plowman* (published before Wycliffe had brought out his English Bible) are in the Latin of the Vulgate, the quotations in the *Persone's Tale* are in English, and substantially identical with Wycliffe's version. The years that followed Wycliffe's death (1385-1389) are those in which the greater part of the Canterbury Tales saw the light; and how many copies of the Wycliffe Bible must have been in circulation may be judged from the fact that though the book was proscribed by the authorities, some 150 manuscripts are extant to this day.

But neither to Chaucer nor to Wycliffe can we be said to owe the actual beginnings of the classical English language of to-day. That English was born in the Elizabethan Age, and the way was prepared for it by *William Tindale* more than by any other single man.

The labour, to which he devoted his life, of producing a sound English version of the Bible translated direct from the Hebrew and the Greek, has borne fruit that has remained.

It was rendered possible by that great revival of learning which, as we have seen, marked the century which elapsed between Chaucer's death and Tindale's birth in 1484. But there was needed a man also to seize the opportunity—a man of inflexible purpose, prepared to suffer persecution, and in the end to lay down his life for the cause. A man, too, was needed who should not only be ready to spend long years of labour in the study of Hebrew and Greek, but should also be a master of the purest English, and a discerning enthusiast in regard to its capabilities and powers.

His life's purpose is well expressed in the familiar challenge with which, at the age of thirty-six, he met a learned opponent. 'If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou doest.' His enthusiasm for the English tongue is expressed in the trenchant retort he made to those who urged that the English tongue was too rude to offer a good medium for the rendering of the Bible originals. 'It is not so rude,' he said, 'as they are false liars. For the Greek tongue agreeth more with the English than the Latin; a thousand parts better may it be translated into the English than into the Latin.' The words are words of one who knew what he was saying, even if the construction be a little involved by reason (shall we say?) of suppressed feeling. It is a commonplace of modern scholarship that the genius of the Greek language is somehow more akin to the English than to the Latin, but it needed uncommon insight to observe the fact in those early days.

Similarly, too, he is able to speak from his familiarity with the Hebrew tongue: 'The properties of the Hebrewe tongue agreeth a thousand times more with the Englishe than with the Latine. The manner of speaking is in both one, so that in a thousand places thou needest not but to translate it into Englishe word for word.' Here again modern scholarship would probably support his judgment.

That Tindale should have made no use at all of the work of former translators would have argued perversity rather than honesty. As a matter of fact, a close comparison shows that, besides referring to the Vulgate, he used Luther's rendering for the Pentateuch, and both Luther and Erasmus for the New Testament; but he used them as their master, not as their servant.

Nor was Tindale lacking in a sense of the solemnity of the task to which he devoted his life. 'I call God to record,' he said, 'against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus to give a reckoning of our doings, that I never altered one syllable of God's Word against my conscience, nor would this day, if all that is in the world, whether pleasure, honour, or riches, might be given me.' And he sealed his testimony with his blood. After a life spent in loneliness and exile, working at Cologne, at Worms, at Antwerp, because the English Bible was proscribed in his own country, he was entrapped in May, 1535, at Antwerp, and carried off to the fortress of Vilvorde, where he was burnt in the October of the following year. During those months of imprisonment he was still at work upon the Bible; when he begged the governor of the fortress for warmer clothing, he asked also for a Hebrew Bible, a grammar, and a dictionary. It is like St. Paul's touching request to Timothy written during his last imprisonment: 'The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.'*

Equally touching are his last recorded words: 'Lord, open the King of England's eyes!' Less than two years later, in 1537, an English Bible ('Matthew's') was published by the authority of Henry VIII., and the pseudonymous author of it was really Tindale's friend and collaborator, Rogers.

Tindale's own work, which appeared in successive portions and successive versions between 1525 and his death, was never completed by him. The New Testament was his first work; but though he had translated the Pentateuch and the Book of Jonah by 1531, he published nothing more of the Old Testament in his lifetime. It is now thought, however, that he finished in prison the translation of the section Joshua to 2 Chronicles, which was published in the following year.

The value and importance of his work, both for the diffusion of scriptural knowledge and for the English language and literature, can scarcely be over-estimated. If the Authorized Version of 1611 set the standard of English for generations to come, we must not forget that its English is very predominantly that of Tindale, of whose vocabulary it has been said that in his two volumes of political tracts there are only twelve Teutonic words that are obsolete to-day.

The first complete English Bible was published some months before Tindale's martyrdom by *Miles Coverdale*

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* 2 Tim. iv. 13.

(1535).* It is a far inferior work, in that it is not drawn from the original tongues, but compiled out of such English, Latin, and German materials as came to hand, including Tindale's own work. Yet it has the merit of a fine, dignified, and grandly rhythmical style. Englishmen can never repay the debt they owe to Coverdale for his version of the Psalms.

The Psalms have had a peculiar fate in vernacular translations, a destiny marked out for them by their peculiar use in the Christian Church. Already in the early centuries of Christendom the regular devotional use of them had become established among the faithful, and this use became further systematized and stereotyped by the rise of monasticism and the cœnobite life. When St. Jerome replaced the Old Latin Version, then in general use (a version based, for the Old Testament, on the Greek of the Septuagint), by a more scholarly and accurate translation from the original tongues, he found it impossible to dislodge the old rendering of the Psalter from its place in the people's affections. Its cadences, its phraseology, its very crudities and obscurities, had become a part of the hallowed furniture of the devotional life.

Twelve centuries afterwards the same thing happened in England. When in the year 1549 the immemorial custom of the regular recitation of the Psalter was carried over in a new form into the English vernacular Prayer-Book, it was Coverdale's translation that was chosen, from his edition of 1540, commonly called, from the size of its page, the Great Bible. This edition,

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* The title of the first edition runs : 'Biblia | The Bible, that | is, the holy Scripture of the | Olde & New Testament, faithfully translated out | of Douche & Latyne | in to Englishe | M.D.XXXV.'

'printed by Richard Grafton and Edward Whitchurch, *cum privilegio,*' was the Bible ordered to be set up in every church in the land. It spread northwards across the Tweed, and by its influence assimilated the English of the Scottish Lowlands to the English spoken in London. It won its place quickly in the hearts of the people; and when, some sixty-two years after the promulgation of the Book of Common Prayer, the Authorized Version of 1611 was substituted for the Great Bible in the reading of the Gospels and Epistles and the Lessons, the old story of the days of St. Jerome was repeated. The people loved the noble, rhythmical version of the Psalter to which they had been accustomed from their youth; it had interwoven itself into the very texture of their religious life. Dear to them were its grand poetic roll, its dignified phraseology, the happy and almost inspired renderings which now and again represent with remarkable faithfulness an original which the translator had probably never seen. But they loved it all—its very crudities and obscurities; its quaint mistranslations of immemorial ancestry, which can be traced back more than seventeen centuries; misapprehensions passed on from the original Septuagint translators of the Hebrew to the Old Latin version which St. Jerome was powerless to dislodge from its liturgical use.

Coverdale himself had been associated with Tindale, and is said to have helped the latter at Hamburg in 1529; it is probable, also, though not quite certain, that Coverdale's first edition was printed at Amsterdam in 1535, the year when Tindale was arrested in that city.

The next edition to be mentioned, the mysterious 'Matthew's Bible,' has a still closer connection with

Tindale. This version, in which we have seen the answer to Tindale's dying prayer—it is 'set forth with the Kinges most gracyous lycẽce'—is adorned with three groups of mysterious initials. The title-page has I. R. at its foot. Before the Prophets, and after the quaint utterance, 'the End of the Ballet of Ballettes of Solomon,' is a page on which R. and G. figure at the top, and E. and W. at the bottom. At the end of Malachi appear the initials W. T.

The initials R. G. and E. W. are explained as those of Richard Grafton and Edward Whitchurch, London printers, who apparently bought the sheets as they were passing through the press in Antwerp.

The earlier initials I. R. doubtless represent John Rogers, and the last, W. T., William Tindale. John Rogers is the 'Thomas Matthew' whose name appears on the title-page. When his turn came to die, like his master, for the faith—Rogers was the first to suffer in the Marian persecution—he was condemned as 'Rogers, *alias* Matthew.' From 1534 to 1536 Rogers had been chaplain to the English factory at Amsterdam, where he came under the influence of Tindale and Coverdale. It is probable that Tindale, when 'spirited away,' left his precious manuscripts in Rogers' care, and possible, also, that he managed somehow to convey to him the work accomplished in prison. For in Matthew's Bible not only are the entire New Testament and the Pentateuch Tindale's work, but probably also the translation of the following books to the end of 2 Chronicles. The rest—from Ezra to the end of the Apocrypha—Rogers drew from Coverdale, except the 'Prayer of Manasses,' which seems to be his own work.

Through 'Matthew' and through Coverdale Tindale influenced all subsequent versions. The 'Geneva' Bible of 1560, the work of Marian exiles, of whom Coverdale himself was one (a version to which we owe the division into verses, and the italics for words not in the original), largely followed Tindale and Coverdale's Great Bible. The 'Bishops' Bible' of 1568 was based upon the Great Bible, followed very closely in the Old Testament. On these the Authorized Version of 1611 largely depends, though it draws something of its phraseology from Wycliffe, and of its vocabulary from a Roman Catholic Version, published partly at Rheims in 1568, and partly (the Old Testament) at Douai in 1610.*

The forty-seven who worked at this Authorized Version, while justly claiming to have made their rendering 'out of the Original Sacred Tongues,' openly declare their debt to 'the labours, both in our own and other foreign languages, of many worthy men who went before us.' A comparison of their text with that of previous English versions compels us to stretch back the range of this indebtedness over more than two centuries to the pioneer work of John Wycliffe; but it is to Tindale, after all, that the English Bible owes most.

The story of the version of 1611 is, perhaps, too well known to need detailed repetition. The idea of it originated at the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, and is due to Dr. John Reynolds, one of the four Puritan representatives at that Conference. But for the realization of the idea and the actual working out of it we have to thank the 'most High and Mighty Prince James,' without whose zeal and importunity the leaders of the Church of England would probably have let the matter drop. King James himself drew up a list of fifty-four learned men,* and appointed them 'for the translating of the Bible,' and he, too, probably with the assistance of Bishop Bancroft of London, drew up an elaborate scheme by which the accuracy and general perfection of the version should be, as far as possible, insured. The whole Bible was apportioned among six companies of divines, two of which were to sit at Westminster, two at Oxford, and two at Cambridge. Every man of each company was to make his own independent revision of each several chapter, and these independent revisions were to be considered by a conference of the entire company.

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* The occasional grotesqueness of this version may be judged from the following verse of Ps. lxvii. (our lxviii.): *The mountane of God a fat mountane. A mountane crudded as cheese, a fatte mountane. Why suppose you, you crudded mountanes?* (See Lupton, in Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, extra volume, p. 253, an article to which I am much indebted.)

Each book, when finished by its company, was to be sent round to each of the other companies for careful consideration, and, finally, the whole was to be overlooked and compared with the original Hebrew and Greek by 'three or four of the most ancient and grave divines in either of the Universities not employed in translating.' When dealing with passages of special obscurity, the appointed translators were permitted and advised to consult by letter the opinion of 'any learned man in the land.'

After seven years of labour, this carefully organized band produced the well-known version, skilfully interweaving with their own original work the best products of the toil and learning and devotion of their predecessors.

How it came by its name of 'Authorized Version,' and who stamped it as 'Appointed to be read in Churches,' remains something of a mystery. There is no trace of any resolution of Convocation, or Act of Parliament, or decision of the Privy Council, or Royal Proclamation, formally authorizing its use. It seems to have slipped as by right into the place of the duly authorized 'Bishops' Bible' which it superseded. Certainly it has had no rival (save among Roman Catholics) in the hearts of English-speaking Christians since the day of its birth. Its effect upon the fixing of the English language may be estimated by the fact that, out of the 6,000 words it employs, only 250 are not in common use to-day, after three full centuries of intellectual development. And as for its style—the grave, majestic English of this version, so different in its severe simplicity from the ornate and often affected diction of its contemporary literature, struck Newman as exhibiting the words of the inspired teachers in forms which, 'even humanly speaking, are among the most sublime and beautiful ever written.'

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* Reduced afterwards, presumably by illness or death, to forty-seven.

One can almost forgive the average uninstructed Englishman of the last century for slipping into the hazy belief that the Authorized Version was verbally inspired, it reads so convincingly like an original, it is so vivid, so varied, yet so homogeneous, so obviously (one would have said) the work of a single mind, and that the mind of a genius. If the mind of a single man pervades it, it is that of William Tindale. But much work was expended upon Tindale's heirloom—the work of more than two score individual minds—mechanical work of sifting, sorting, analyzing. And yet the version bears on its surface no trace of this division of labour, no trace of the multiplicity of forces brought to bear on it. This elaborate patchwork of translation, revision, and revision of previous revisions, has about it every characteristic of spontaneity. Surely, if ever any work of translation was 'inspired,' this noble version has a claim to the title? That we need not fear to apply it, in a secondary degree, our previous study of inspiration may have prepared us to acknowledge.

As a translation, however, it must be admitted that the Authorized Version has its defects. One of these arises from one of its chief virtues as a standard of literary English. The translators openly prided themselves on their deliberate practice of varying as much as possible the rendering of a given Hebrew or Greek word. They thus permanently enlarged the range of our common vocabulary, but did so at the expense of scientific accuracy in their rendering.

The advantages of their principle from a literary point of view, and its disadvantages from the standpoint of scientific exactness, may be equally demonstrated by a comparison of some passage of considerable length in the version of 1611 with the corresponding passage in the Revised Version of 1880-1884.

That revision—of which the history is common property, and the principles are set forth in the revisers' prefaces to the Old and the New Testaments—was called for on many grounds. The solid and splendid structure of the early seventeenth century was, to some extent, subject to the ravages of time. In other words, some of its words and phrases, though comparatively very few, had become obsolete, and so, unintelligible or positively misleading. Again, the edifice, with all its remarkable artistic merit, showed some minor defects of construction obvious to a more developed stage of science. Chief among these is the practice, already referred to, of capricious variation in the renderings. But the most serious matter of all was the insecurity of the foundations—that is, the defective character of the Greek and Hebrew texts on which the Jacobean translators had based their work. They used the best that the seventeenth century had to offer. They had predecessors of no mean talent to prepare the ground, especially in the New Testament region—men like Erasmus and Beza and Robert Stephen ('Stephanus')—but textual criticism has advanced enormously since then. A mass of new material—early manuscripts of the Greek Testament, early versions (almost, if not quite, as valuable, in some ways, as the manuscripts themselves)—has been sifted and classified. The quotations in early Christian writers, Greek and Latin alike, have been consulted with a view to distributing geographically and chronologically the different types of reading. We are probably less sure of the original Greek text of the New Testament than were the seventeenth-century scholars with their meagre apparatus, but we are vastly nearer the truth.

So, too, with the Old Testament, though here the conditions are different. The Hebrew manuscripts, though marked by slight textual variations, in addition to the marginal readings,* all belong to a single family, or, more strictly, all would seem to represent a single type of text, the so-called 'Massoretic' or traditional, which alone was allowed to survive, all other recensions having been sedulously destroyed by the misguided zeal of the

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* *K'ri* (read) indicating that the word in the margin is to be read instead of that which is actually written (*K'thibh*) in the body of the text.

Rabbis. There remains, however, the decision between *K'ri* and *K'thibh*, and also the use of ancient versions as a check upon the Hebrew text. These ancient versions, of which the Greek Septuagint is the best known and the most important, have not only a priority in actual date of manuscripts (we possess a Septuagint manuscript of the fourth century A.D., while the earliest extant Hebrew manuscript of the Massoretic text dates from 915), but also often represent an earlier text. This earlier text was deliberately rejected by the Massoretes, but it does not follow that modern experts, with a fuller knowledge of the principles of textual criticism, would have done the same. And so, both in the New Testament and in the Old Testament region, the foundations of the Authorized Version needed underpinning.

Considering the conditions imposed on them by the terms of reference, and the imperfect data for a certain reconstruction of the original texts, it may be claimed for the revisers that they have done their work faithfully and well. For the results of their labours we have abundant reason to be grateful. It is open to criticism, like every work of man. Its attempts to be consistent produce sometimes a weak, sometimes a rather pedantic, result, especially in the New Testament. But the long and deserved popularity of its predecessor militates against a just estimate of its merits. If to us it seems to lack in a lamentable degree the inspiration and the spontaneity of the Authorized Version, may it not be partly because we are still under the spell of that noble work—because its rhythm and cadence were taken in with our mother's milk, and move, as it were, in our blood?

In a text so important for the understanding of Holy

Scripture itself as 2 Tim. iii. 16, the revisers have wisely gone back behind the Authorized Version, which took its faulty interpretation of the Greek from the Geneva Bible's, 'The whole Scripture *is* given by Spiration of God *and* is profitable.' They have reverted, in substance, to the oldest English version, where Wycliffe wrote, 'al scripture inspired of god is profitable,' etc., and was followed by Tindale and Coverdale. And this is in line with one of their principles for which we owe them a double debt of gratitude, on historical grounds, and on grounds of sentiment. Wherever they were able, they reverted to Wycliffe's version, and in the Psalms they made all the use they could of the much-beloved rendering of Coverdale.

If Wycliffe himself could trace the spirit of his literary ancestry back to Grosseteste, to Alfred, and to Bede, the last product of the English translator's devotion, in claiming Wycliffe again for its own, has linked up the chain that binds these latter days to the dawn of our literature. That chain is the Bible, loved and honoured from first to last.

VI

THE BIBLE AS AN EDUCATOR

'Of all the terrible intellectual disasters of Europe, the Bible has been far the greatest.' So runs the ill-considered verdict of a typical modern maker of paradoxes. Such statements represent the extreme of reaction from that almost superstitious attitude towards the Scriptures which has been characteristic of much Protestant teaching. Searching for an external principle of authority to replace that of the discredited Papacy, the leaders of the Continental Reformation turned to those Scriptures which had been looked upon in the Church from time immemorial as a sort of documentary court of appeal. In substituting the Bible for the Pope, they found themselves constrained to concede to it a position as authoritative and supreme as that which the scribes and Pharisees of old had accorded to the Torah, the inspired Law of Moses. For the infallibility of the Church they substituted an infallibility of the Book which tended to assimilate the basis of Reformed Christianity to that of Islam.

The structure thus raised was from the first illogical. Combined as it was with a doctrine of private judgment and individual interpretation, it gave ample room for confusion and dissidence. The unity and objectivity of the external standard of truth was impaired. If the

Bible speaks with one voice to you, and with quite another to me, and in both cases speaks infallibly, who is to judge between us? Nor was this the only weak point. If the body of Scriptures was to be the ultimate, the only standard, there ought, at any rate, to have been no possibility of question as to the actual contents of those Scriptures.

Yet (as we have seen) this was far from being the case. In restricting the Old Testament Scriptures to the original Hebrew Canon, and rejecting the so-called Apocrypha, the Reforming leaders acted in an exceedingly arbitrary manner. Where a distinction was certainly warranted—a distinction for which they could claim the redoubtable authority of St. Jerome—they were, some of them, content with nothing less than a contumelious rejection. They spoke of the impiety of mixing the Word of God with that of man, and poured on 'Toby's fish' a ridicule which, as shrewder contemporaries perceived, was bound to overflow sooner or later upon 'Jonah's whale.'

But the full weakness of this 'Bible and Bible only' theory has only disclosed itself effectively in the last half-century, under the search-light of that historical and literary criticism which has been the subject of our study in a previous chapter.

The Bibliolatry, or perhaps we had better say tyranny of the letter, which, after three centuries and a half, still holds sway over a certain section of old-fashioned Protestantism, is now seen to be based on a fatally false conception of the method of inspiration; and with the crumbling of the foundation of verbal infallibility the whole superstructure threatens to collapse. The saner and more historical portion of our English Christianity is, however, most happily, not committed to such a doctrine, and is largely left free to welcome all new light, and to adapt itself to new conditions.

That the modern critical spirit—a greater and more thoroughgoing Renaissance, with its fearless questionings of all things in heaven and earth, and its application of the same criteria to all literature, 'sacred' and 'profane' alike—should have produced in some minds a violent reaction from the old, exaggerated views of the Bible is natural and, indeed, inevitable. That the discrediting of the old mechanical view of inspiration should lead the more impatient spirits to deny the fact of any inspiration at all was perhaps to be expected. And, side by side with the denial of any specially sacred or authoritative character to the Christian Bible, it is not unnatural to find a jealousy of the great Book's past supremacy over the minds of men and nations. Such a jealousy is, however, in the first place, a significant tribute to the Bible's power in the past. It is tantamount to an admission that the evolution of our modern Western civilization has been predominantly influenced by the Scriptures. As to the tendency and value of that influence, opinions may conceivably differ. The judgment pronounced will depend partly on our estimate of the progress of civilization among the nations of Europe. Has its movement on the whole been productive of a preponderance of good or of evil?

But even those who are prepared to cast their vote in judgment against modern Western civilization in the form of *material progress*, which it has more and more definitely assumed of late, have not committed themselves on the real question. For it remains for them to consider for what elements in that civilization the Bible is more directly responsible, and to what extent; and, further, how far the influence of its leading—admittedly decisive in the nursling days of Europe—has been thrown off in the period nearest to our own time.

On the other hand, the Bible is accused (and this with greater appearance of justice) of abusing its power; of throwing the weight of its influence into the scale against civilization and progress. The persecuting and intolerant spirit which so often emerges in the Old Testament, and not least in the Psalter, the most influential book of all, though expressly denounced by Christ, has been imitated only too faithfully by those who bore His name; and it was the misapplication of a phrase of His—'Compel them to come in'—in the mouth of the great St. Augustine that formed the germ out of which grew the horrors of the mediæval inquisition. Out of the belief in witchcraft and in diabolic agencies, which is reflected on the pages of Old and New Testament alike, sprang the superstitious cruelties which disgraced the judicial procedure of our own country up to two or three generations back. The absence of any direct teaching in the Bible against slavery is held responsible for the long continuance of the slave-trade. Science itself has been retarded again and again in its legitimate progress, in the Bible's name. The door has been shut in its face, as against an intruder into the sacred sphere of Revelation. Such charges as these express, perhaps, the principal cause of that jealousy of the Bible's past influence. It is not difficult to detect the flaw in the accusation. In all the cases mentioned, and probably in any similar ones that might be adduced, the fault is clearly not that of the Bible itself, but of those who misapprehended its meaning, or only partially or disproportionately grasped it. The New Testament teaching, and more especially the Gospel teaching, in which the Bible culminates, provides a sufficient antidote against all the poison of intolerance and other practical imperfections that may be drawn from this or that portion of the earlier revelation.* The crusade against natural science in the name of religious truth has been, wherever it has occurred, an instance of the 'ye know not what spirit ye are of.'† If the Bible did not denounce slavery, it did announce, in no uncertain language, the brotherhood of all men: a doctrine which, when allowed free play, was bound to annihilate slavery.

To these questions we may have occasion to return later on. For the moment our chief concern is with the acknowledgment of the Bible's paramount influence in the past on the part of the most defiant of its modern critics. The extent of that influence upon individuals and upon nations during all the ages of the Bible's existence has certainly been unparalleled in the history of literature. The sacred books of India, of China, of Persia, have wielded, indeed, great influence, and an influence in many ways beneficent, over large sections of mankind; but their influence has been essentially local and partial in its range. The influence of the Koran is a living force to-day in not a few parts of the world; but it is no mere narrowness of Christian prejudice that would laugh at the idea of its ever taking the place of the Bible among the dominant races of the modern world. Nor would it be extravagant to suggest that the highest influences that the Koran brings to bear on those who accept it are derived, directly or indirectly, from Jewish and Christian lore, and thus bear their own testimony to the sovereignty of the Bible.*

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* The Baptismal Creed (see Chapter X., p. 298 *et seq.*) shows us the proportion of the Old Testament Revelation to that of the Gospel as estimated by the primitive Church. It is by giving the Old Testament an *independent* value that the most grievous mistakes have been made.

† Luke ix. 55 (R.V., *marg.*).

We have not to wait for the formation of the Canon to discern the beginnings of the influence of Scripture on mankind. From one point of view, it is obvious that the earlier or later entrance of this or that book into the charmed circle of the Jewish or the Christian Canon depended on the degree of influence it was already exercising from an unprivileged position. It was their already achieved popularity that gave the claimants for admission a hearing, that made them candidates at all. According to the modern reading of history, Deuteronomy holds a typical position in this respect. If we may take it as established that the 'Book of the Covenant' discovered by Hilkiah was the nucleus—or an earlier form—of that work, we see a Scripture swiftly accepted on its own authority, moulding at once the whole course of a nation's internal religious policy, opening new vistas of revelation, becoming a standard by which even the history of past generations should be judged, and forming itself, a couple of centuries later, the nucleus of the first Hebrew Bible, the Canon of the Law.

Deuteronomy, however, in this earlier shape, appears to have achieved, from the moment of its discovery, a quasi-canonical position, due to the providential ordering of circumstances—to the character of the hands into which it first fell, and to the ready sympathy, with its aims and ideals, of a deeply religious king. A clearer instance of the pre-canonical influence of a book would be before us could we trace through all the stages of its early history the fortunes of one of the New Testament Epistles. Unfortunately, no detailed record is left to us; yet we have enough material to reconstruct the general outlines of the career of such a book, in the case, for instance, of St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians.

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* On the other sacred books, see pp. 254-273; on the Koran, pp. 230, 256, 259, 274-281.

In Central Phrygia, near the point where the Lycus joins the Mæander, there existed a triangle of flourishing cities, Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colossæ. These cities, which had close relations with one another, had all of them, probably, been evangelized by Epaphras or Epaphroditus, a convert and companion of St. Paul. In or about A.D. 61, St. Paul (apparently before he had visited the district in person) despatched by the hand of Tychicus letters to two of these Churches, Laodicea and Colossæ.

Unless the Epistle to the Laodiceans, mentioned in that address to the Colossians, was a circular letter actually identical with the one headed 'Ephesians' in our Bible, it has been lost, as have certainly other letters of the Apostle's addressed to the Church of Corinth. But the Epistle to the Colossians remains.

Written originally to a particular group of Asiatic Christians, in view of a particular crisis, it has become part of the general heritage of the Church Universal. St. Paul's main object in writing to the Colossians is to combat a heretical system of teaching, of which Judaistic extravagances, worship of angels and a false asceticism, formed the leading features. The chief peril of this teaching was its deficient Christology. Religious and devotional interest at Colossæ was dissipating itself on a number of unworthy objects, and the central things of the Gospel were being neglected. In opposition to this false tendency, St. Paul develops in the first chapter his doctrine of Christ as the central figure of the universe, the principle of its cohesion and, indeed, of its very existence.*

He takes up (it would seem) the catchwords of the new teaching, *aeon* and *pleroma*—catchwords that were adopted later on by the Gnostics of the second century—and brings them into subjection to the royalty of Christ, at whose feet he also places those angelic orders, 'thrones, dominations, principalities, and powers,' to whom the misguided Colossians were tempted to accord divine honours. Thus it is that we owe to the theological errors of the Colossians one of the most striking and important Christological passages in the New Testament, and one which is in every way worthy to be classed with the sublimest passages which the Old Testament has to offer. That the recipients of the letter should at once have placed the Apostle's words in the same category with what they had been taught to accept as Scripture inspired of God it would be impossible to conceive. That they prized the Epistle, its survival is sufficient testimony. That it was soon known beyond the walls of Colossæ itself we may infer from the Apostle's injunction written at its close:† 'And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea.' Doubtless it was passed on from Laodicea to Hierapolis, with which the other two Churches had close relations. Doubtless, also, other Churches borrowed it and copied it as time went on. Thus the Epistle would become known and valued over a comparatively wide area. The fact that it was ordered to be read in the Church assembly would of itself institute a comparison between it and the Old Testament writings, from which the Church seems to have read lections from the first in her Lord's Day meetings, following the Sabbath Day usage of the Jewish Church. And as there grew up the idea of a distinctively Christian appendix to the Canon of Holy Scripture, this letter, written, as we have seen, originally to a local group of Christians to meet a particular emergency, was found to have established its place among the writings generally acknowledged and esteemed by Christendom. Its pre-canonical influence won it a place in the Christian Scriptures, and when the assembled Bishops at neighbouring Laodicea, in the fourth century, made their pronouncement upon the Canon and its limits, the Epistle to the Colossians was, without doubt, among the books acknowledged by them.

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* Col. i. 13 *et seq.*

† *Ibid.*, iv. 16.

Much the same story might be written about the rest of the New Testament Books. Their influence as separate units was great enough to procure them in the end a place in the 'Divine Library.' But if their individual influence was great, their influence in combination—the constraining power, that is, of the completed Bible—has been incalculably greater. That this power was felt from the very earliest days of the Christian Church we have indisputable evidence: the influence, first, of the Jewish Canon, and then of the enlarged Canon of Christendom, is written unmistakably upon the history.

The Apostles of the Lord were originally devout Jews who (as their familiarity with the Scripture shews) had passed through the normal training of a Jewish boy and youth. The Jewish lad's education up to the age of ten was drawn exclusively from the Scriptures, supplemented for the next five years by instruction in the Mishna, or traditional Law. From his earliest years, while the precepts of Leviticus trained him in regular habits of devotion, the noble conceptions of the early chapters of Genesis would mould his thoughts of God and His world; and he would learn to repeat day by day the *Shĕma*, which opened with the magnificent confession, 'Hear, O Israel!'* in which man's attitude towards his Maker is expressed in language valid for all time. Week by week his early memories would be refreshed by listening to the Sabbath-Day lections in the synagogue.

Thus nurtured on the noblest literature that the world has ever seen, the Apostles obtained in middle life, through their intercourse with One who spake with 'authority, and not as the scribes'†—who spake, indeed, as 'never man spake'‡—a new insight into the meaning of Scripture; felt it being actually 'fulfilled in their ears';§ knew themselves to be the spectators of things which 'prophets and kings' had desired in vain to see. Progressively their Master opened to them the Scriptures, and showed them there what they had never seen before.‖ And then, when on the Day of Pentecost they received their baptism of fire, there was put into their hearts a hitherto unknown key to unlock the mysteries of the Scriptures, which they studied henceforth with a new earnestness and a new intelligence. Their experience was largely paralleled by that of Timothy, who, as the son of a devout Hebrew mother, had been familiar from his childhood—from his very babyhood the text suggests*—with the sacred writings, but had only come to realize their full power later on when, from the standpoint of a Christian believer, he knew them able to make him 'wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.'

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* Deut. vi. 4. † Mark i. 22. ‡ John vii. 46.
§ Luke iv. 21. ‖ Luke xxiv. 27, 45 *et seq.*

When the next generation began to appreciate at their full value, and to read, side by side with the Old Testament Scriptures, certain writings of their own immediate predecessors, the new writings were found to explain and to supplement the old, to flood them with fresh light, and to infuse into them the vitality of youth.

The old Hebrew Scriptures, thus rejuvenated, proceeded to play a remarkable part in leavening the literature of the future. The classic age of Greek and Latin literature was past never to return; but the New Testament writers had given a new dignity to the Hellenistic vernacular, and shewn it to be capable of giving expression to ideas beyond the scope of a Sophocles or a Plato; and, later on, in the hands of the Greek Fathers of the Church—men sometimes of considerable culture—the decadent Greek tongue becomes once more an object of intense interest. With Origen, steeped in biblical lore, a Hebrew scholar, and a deep and enthusiastic student of the Septuagint and other Greek versions, it becomes the medium of expression for nascent Christian philosophy. With Athanasius and his successors it is an instrument of profound theological discourse; of moving and inspiring oratory with St. Chrysostom; of both alike with the three Cappadocian Fathers, St. Basil and the two Gregories. Thus, a tongue which, as a vehicle of literary expression, was on the way to perish of inanition, was awakened to a new and vigorous life by that contact with the real, the moving, and the sublime, which it found in the Holy Scriptures. So, too, with the Latin tongue. The language of a Tertullian or an Augustine cannot, of course, be compared, for artistic taste or for scientific self-restraint, with that of a Tacitus, still less with the best writings of the Augustan Age. But not even the most bigoted purist in scholarship (provided only he had patience to grapple honestly with his author) can fail to be carried away by the epigrammatic originality of the Christian Fathers—the freshness and illuminating quality of their ideas. These men have drawn from a fountain of literary life. Their study of the Scriptures has been to them a liberal education. In the Old Testament they see mirrored the living God, apprehended by a 'lively faith'; in the New Testament, the Life Incarnate, who came that men might have life and might have it more abundantly, and they themselves have drunk of the fountain of the water of life freely. Their study of the Scriptures has affected not their subject-matter only, but their style, nor that alone, but also, and chiefly, their whole view of the world. Their writings are alive.

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* 2 Tim. iii. 15, R.V. (Gk. *ἀπὸ βρέφους*).

Then, with the decay of the Roman Empire, the Bible became, in the Church's hands, the educator of modern Europe. It was with the Bible in her hands that the Roman Church instructed the barbarian conquerors in the elements of an ordered and civilized life. And though the direct access of the laity to Scripture was restricted in the Middle Ages, much as it is now in the Roman Communion, it was from the Scriptures even then (if not from them exclusively) that the Church's most influential doctors drew the substance of their teaching. It was from the same Scriptures that the liturgical forms drew the inspiration with which they blessed the most solemn moments of a man's life from the cradle to the grave; on the Scriptures the individual priest based his public and private exhortations. Law and government, outside the distinctively 'spiritual' sphere, were leavened with scriptural principles and ideas. The Roman legal system, out of which modern law has been largely evolved, came to us through channels steeped in biblical phraseology and tendency—Justinian and Theodosius. The Teutonic idea of the 'divine right of Kings' is an inheritance from the Jewish theocracy of the Old Testament. The Book of Leviticus not only supplied Christian Europe with details of its marriage law, but also did much towards the establishment and support of the mediæval clergy. To it, for instance, we owe the institution of *tithes*. Indeed, the entire system of Canon Law, which in the later Middle Ages exercised so potent an influence on national, social and individual life, was directly based on the Bible. In Saxon England the Bishop sat side by side with the King's representative to administer a justice of which Divine Revelation was recognized to be the informing spirit. Prefixed to the Code of Alfred the Great (which contained, of course, many elements handed down from our pagan forefathers) was, as we have had occasion to note in another connection, an English translation of Exod. xx.-xxiii.—the Commandments and the Book of the Covenant—and of Acts xv.—the decrees of the first Christian Council.

Moreover, though there was, as we have said, no general access of the lay folk to an 'open Bible,' such as was initiated (or restored) by the Reformation, and has been facilitated progressively through subsequent centuries by the more universal instruction of the people; we yet have evidence that even in the Middle Ages many among the humbler classes were saturated with knowledge of the Scriptures. The evangelical tone of the first Franciscans, evidently drawn straight from the Gospels, was bound to influence their many admirers in the world. One of these, the great Dante Alighieri, shows a general acquaintance with Scripture which it would not be easy to match, certainly among the most cultured of his countrymen to-day, and in England, perhaps, only among professed theologians. And if ever the Bible shewed its educative power to full effect, it was upon that poem on which 'Heaven and earth have set their hand':

'Il poema sacro
Al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra.'
Par., xxv. 1.

And upon the man who, good Catholic as he was, put the Bible before the Pope:

'Avete il vecchio e il nuovo Testamento,
E il pastor della Chiesa che vi guida:
Questo vi basti per vostro salvamento.'
Par., v. 76.

But it is not only upon the learned laymen of the Middle Ages that this influence is visible. The Gospel teaching of the early Franciscans is paralleled very markedly outside the Church, among the original Waldensians* and kindred sectaries, who, revolting from the elaboration of external ceremonies, the superstitious accretions of contemporary Romanism, and, above all, from the theory of Papal autocracy, attempted, perhaps, in some cases, with more sincerity than knowledge, a return to primitive Christianity. And among the orthodox theologians, notably in Franciscan Oxford of the thirteenth century, there was a tendency to appeal from tradition to the fountain-head of Holy Scripture. This appeal is associated more especially with the name of Robert Grosseteste, the first Chancellor of that University, a name which will come before us again in our present study of the Bible as an educator.

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* The Vaudois translation dates from about A.D. 1100.

Nor was it not only in the domain of literature that the Scriptures set their broad seal upon the Middle Ages. Art, the handmaid of religion, acknowledges throughout the centuries her debt to Holy Writ. The rude drawings and sculptures of the catacombs evince a loving familiarity with the symbolism, not only of the Gospels—the Good Shepherd, the Loaves and Fishes—but with that of the Old Testament too, in their treatment of which the story of Jonah figures prominently. In the splendid fourth and fifth century mosaics of Ravenna a like influence is traceable; the story of the Shepherd of souls being still, perhaps, the favourite. Generation after generation must have imbibed central truths of Scripture lore from the imperishable decoration of those walls. Five centuries later the genius of Giotto makes the Gospel story live in fresco as never before. On the walls of the Arena Chapel at Padua we have, not just a few selected themes, but the whole pageant of the Saviour's earthly mission displayed before us, with the appreciative touch of one who clearly loved to linger over the sacred scenes, and expected others to do the same. In the age that follows, when the Renaissance floods all minds with new and wider interests, and pagan mythology begins to exercise a sway over the painter's mind, it is still from the Scriptures that a Michelangelo, a Raffaele, and a Titian draw their highest inspiration—from the Scriptures, and from that domain of hagiology (embodied, notably, in the 'Golden Legend') which encircled the Scriptures for the men of those days, as the nimbus encircles the face of a painted saint. And if some of them, like Botticelli, are known to us best by masterpieces which deal directly with classical and mythological subjects—a 'Venus Rising from the Sea,' or other less easily decipherable theme—can we not detect in their work, as in the non-theological passages of the Christian Fathers, a subtle difference of tone and treatment from that of classical days; a change that is not all loss, a touch of a new humanity and a new pathos, a something which whispers that since the Gospel story was written the world can never be the same theatre of naïve, unthinking natural enjoyment that it was in the days of old? But though the painter's conventional field is enlarged till at last contemporary historical scenes are followed by contemporary portraits, and portraits by *genre* pictures, and, finally, Giorgione ushers in the first dawn of the era of landscape painting, yet it remains true for many decades after the high and full Renaissance, that the Gospel reigns sovereign still in Umbria, in Tuscany, in Venice, in Flanders; the noblest efforts of all are those inspired by the scenes of the Saviour's infancy and the story of the Cross.

Nor does mediæval architecture lag behind the sister art in her homage to the sacred Canon. Ruskin's famous phrase, 'the Bible of Amiens,' singles out a conspicuous example of a principle that runs through very much of the religious architecture of the Middle

Ages. Not only do splendid Western façades exhibit to us again and again the outlines of the Old and New Testament story hewn in stone—a story frequently repeated in the quaint figures and deep, rich tones of the windows—but the very ground-plan of the church itself will often witness to the Cross, the symbol of that atoning Sacrifice which our fathers read in (or between) the lines of almost every page of the Bible. And when at last the builder's art had wholly freed herself from the agelong domination of the Roman tradition, with its round arches and its prevailingly horizontal lines, the style we know as 'Gothic' sprang up joyously heavenward, exhibiting that regenerate spirit which we have seen infused by the Gospel message into literature and painting: the spirit that seems to throb with fresh life, that communicates its own throbbing life to old material and old methods, transforming them, transfiguring them, with the magic formula, 'Behold, I make all things new.'*

It would be obviously mistaken to claim as the direct and immediate effect of the Bible all those developments in which Christianity has shewn herself the nursing-mother of our Western civilization. Christianity is older, and in a sense wider, than the New Testament, which grew up under her wing; and her influence upon humanity, though never divorced from that of the Scriptures, has not always been marked by a direct and immediate influence of the Bible, such as we are accustomed to in England. It is felt to-day in regions where Roman Catholicism (for reasons which cannot be discussed here) denies the private use of the Scriptures to the laity. But can we not draw a line of distinction between those countries where the Bible is open to all, and those where it is, or has been, practically prohibited? Do we not observe in the Reformed and the Protestant peoples of the North, certain characteristics more prominent than they are in countries where the Bible has not been the staple food of the people's spiritual life for many generations? It would be precarious, perhaps, to assign to a single influence what may be the result of a complex of causes. The special honour which is paid, for instance, to veracity and straightforwardness among the Teutonic nations, as compared with the Latin peoples of the Mediterranean region, has, no doubt, its root in racial tendency, modified by the moulding hand of national destiny; but that it has been developed and intensified by generations of familiarity with Holy Writ can scarcely be questioned. To 'love the truth and peace,'* to 'put away lying, and speak every man truth with his neighbour,'† these are very characteristic precepts of Old Testament and New Testament, and they are fundamental in the instinctive ethics of the Northern peoples. It might even be argued that the inborn Teutonic love of truth, and impulse to seek it at all costs, was a large, if unrealized, factor in the complex movement which led these nations of the North to shake off the Roman yoke, and to identify themselves each with some type or types of reformed religion that would offer them the Scriptures once more, free and open, as in the golden days of undivided Christendom.

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* Rev. xxi. 5

If Scripture and Church discipline do not actually create characteristics in the individual or the race, they have the power, at any rate, of drawing out and developing latent tendencies and capacities, of moulding and reshaping material ready to hand. And we cannot be wrong in holding that some of the most precious traditional features of our own national character have been the fruit of generations of diligent and earnest Bible study, guided and directed by liturgical practice, and, in its elementary stages, based during the last three centuries and a half, more, perhaps, than is generally realized, on the clear, practical teaching of the Church Catechism. If we are to take our own nation as an example, we shall be forced to acknowledge that the educative value of the Bible upon the individual can scarcely be exaggerated. One is apt, somehow, to regard as narrow and restricted the intellectual outlook of the typical religious cottager of past generations, whose only book was the family Bible. In the case of those to whom the Bible meant little more than the family chronicle, scrawled in illiterate script on its fly-leaf, such a criticism may be well-founded; but we are apt to forget the advantage that lies in the concentration of one's attention on the best in any department. To those 'men of a single Book,' who really studied that Book, and became familiar with its contents, the Bible could not fail to be a liberal education. One cannot be familiar with the noblest literature of the world, without receiving some beneficent impress from the familiarity. And here we may remind ourselves once again of the vast range of subjects treated in the Old Testament alone; of the wealth of metaphor and illustration with which the treatment of those subjects is adorned; of the infinite variety of style and method employed by its writers; of the stern majesty of its legislative enactments, the graphic simplicity of its narrative, the penetration and insight of its studies of human character, the pathos of its appeals, the thunder of its warnings and denunciations, the unearthly glory of its visions and its promises.

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* Zech. viii. 19.

† Eph. iv. 25.

One single book, the Book of the Psalms, traverses again and again the entire range of human emotion, and has supplied to the Church as a whole, and to her individual members throughout all generations, a voice with which to bring before God every state of heart, from the depths of despair to the sublime heights of mystic exultation. This marvellous group of hymns—lyric, epic, didactic, some of them personal, some social or national, but with a strong infusion of the personal element—has undoubtedly exerted a unique educative influence—intellectual, moral and spiritual—on those who, from religious motives, have made it their familiar companion: and that even when but a fraction of its utterances have been fully understood.

A mind stored with the imagery of the Old Testament, and accustomed to roam in the vast spaces of its historical background, can never be vacant, uninteresting, or commonplace. An ear trained to the rhythm and the cadences of our English Version cannot be destitute of artistic taste, or insensible to the music of language. A conscience nourished upon the Old Testament Scriptures may fail, perhaps, in width and sympathy, but cannot be wanting in definiteness or in force, in that practical clear-cut idea of duty which the Jewish lad imbibed with his early lessons from the Book of Leviticus. And the breadth of view and the sympathetic sensitiveness that such a conscience needs will be found in the study of the Gospels, and in a noble word-portrait of the central Figure of the Gospels, such as St. Paul has given us in the thirteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians.

When Robert Grosseteste was asked whence he had acquired his gentle, tactful and courtly manners, the peasant's son, who had developed into the greatest man of his generation, is reported to have answered: 'It is true that I come of a humble father and mother, but from my earliest years I have studied the best men in the Scriptures, and have tried to conform my actions to theirs.'

Grosseteste, it is true, was no ordinary man, and his reading of the Scriptures was of no ordinary type. Doubtless he shewed from early days the scholarly instincts which became afterwards the admiration of Europe. For him one Book was indeed supreme; yet he was not (in the natural and literal sense) a 'man of a single book.' His name recalls to us the advantage to be reaped from the application of a widely and deeply trained intellect to the pages of the Bible. Undoubtedly much is to be gained from a fuller and more scientific knowledge of the Scriptures in all their aspects, a knowledge such as enables its possessor to trace back the documents to their origin, and to reconstruct, with the help of archæological data, something of their original setting. Still more valuable, perhaps, from the point of view of the education to be gained from the Scriptures, is the gift of scholarly taste, the power to realize subtle distinctions, to see things in due proportion and perspective. These faculties may surely be classed among the gifts — *charismata* — of the Holy Spirit, which form, as it were, the complement of inspiration. But when all has been said, the traditional pious cottager reaped a goodly harvest of culture from the sacred pages over which he pored with no thought of culture, as such, in his mind; and his very familiarity with the whole mass of the material stood him in good stead. It took the place of glossary and of concordance; he acquired an exegetic instinct, or rather an instinct for results and conclusions, comparable in its way to that of the early patristic writers, who surprise us very often by the saneness of their conclusions, based on what seem to us the flimsiest and most far-fetched processes of reasoning. The sound result is in each case due rather to instinct than to argument, and the instinct is developed out of a loving familiarity with the whole range of the sacred literature.

Dean Church has taught us to see in Christianity a nursing-mother of the young nations that have grown up on the ruins of the old Roman Empire. He has taught us to watch her at work providing a civilizing school for them; not, as a machine, moulding them all in a single mould, or turning them out after one pattern, but rather as a sympathetic teacher bringing out the idiosyncrasies, the distinctive and individual potentialities, of each race; giving a new life and a higher sanction to the Teuton's love of freedom and worship of womanhood, to the Celt's fervid enthusiasm, as to the Roman's love of order and system. This contention receives remarkable corroboration from the results of modern missions to the heathen, carried on as they are now, if not with greater zeal than ever before, at any rate with more of systematic and scientific organization, year by year, and offering yearly a broader and more certain basis for classification of statistics and for generalization. Christianity, properly and fairly presented (as distinct from the many imperfect and disproportionate presentations of it which have been, alas! too common in the past), has shewn itself capable of educating, in the truest sense, every sort of humanity, from the Western types with which we are most familiar, to the Mongolian races of the Far East, the Bantus of Africa, and the degraded Australian aborigines.

With all its failures and imperfections, it has demonstrated the truth and the ultimate possibility of St. Paul's noble ideal of a corporate organization which, by union of countless diverse elements, each perfect in its own kind and degree—Jew, Greek, Barbarian, Scythian—shall sum up in itself the rich ideal of the perfect Humanity: 'the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.'*

It would be a mistake (as we have already remarked) to identify Christianity with the Christian Scriptures, and to postulate of the latter all that can be predicted of the former. Yet it is not too much to say that if the Church has been the chief educator of that portion of our race which has hitherto done most for the world's progress, the Bible has been its principal textbook. The textbook has not always been in the hands of the scholar. In some periods even the teacher has derived his precepts largely at second hand; but the primary authority of the textbook has always been there; there has always been an appeal, explicit or implicit, to the body of teaching represented by the Canon of Scripture.

Christianity is not, of course, the 'religion of a Book' as Islam is, and as was the Judaism of the 'Scribes and Pharisees' who opposed our Lord. It is fundamentally and essentially the religion of a life. Still, the first generation of Christians looked to the Old Testament Scriptures for spiritual guidance, even as did their best contemporaries among the Jews, but with a difference.

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* Eph. iv. 13.

The Jews 'thought they had in them eternal life;'* the Christians realized that their message was primarily one of hope,† and that the saving wisdom which they could instil drew its virtue from faith ‡ in One who 'was dead and . . . is alive for evermore.'§ The constant felt presence of their risen Lord who was the *raison d'être* of law and prophecy, while it gave the Scriptures, in the eyes of primitive Christendom, a new and living interest, forced them, of necessity, to take a second place. The Written Word is but the minister of the Word Incarnate. The Church, mystical body of Christ, comes first; the Scripture, second.

There were great ones, however, in early days, like Justin Martyr and Hilary of Poitiers, who were literally converted by the Bible itself, and drawn, through the influence of the Book, to the living system of the Church. To these keen, inquiring intellects the Scriptures formed a coping-stone of education. They found, or believed themselves to have found therein, the true philosophy, the key to the understanding of the universe. The appeal, however, of the Scriptures to the individual has been historically to heart or conscience as much as to head. A dramatic instance of the power of 'The Heart-Book,' as a Chinese inquirer once touchingly called it, is to be found in the well-known story of the conversion of St. Augustine of Hippo. A single verse of the Epistle to the Romans || changed his whole view of life, his life itself, and with it the whole future of European theology.

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* John v. 39. † Rom. xv. 4. ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 15.
§ Rev. i. 18. || Rom. xiii. 13.

And what happened to St. Augustine sixteen centuries ago happens to others all over the world to-day—to the Burmese who a few months ago came spontaneously to put himself under Christian instruction, because he had read in the words of St. John that 'God so loved the world . . .'*; to the great native Indian missionary who was first moved towards Christianity because once when he was detained for a fault at school a Bible chanced to be in the room where he was locked up. Modern mission work, indeed, offers the spectacle of thousands of souls so drawn and influenced, where in the early history of the Church we count (owing partly to the incompleteness of the records) but twos and threes. And the classical example is undoubtedly to be found in Uganda, where in a few short years a marvellous transformation has taken place, which has compelled the respect and attention of all thinking people. We may perhaps feel inclined to criticize this or that detail of the missionary policy which has produced such wonderful results; we may suspect that a neglect of the traditional lines of the Church's discipline may bear embarrassing fruit in a later generation; we may fear that a people nurtured so exclusively on the Bible of the great distributing Society, and by the methods corresponding, may shortly find itself plunged into intellectual perplexities and faith-shaking problems when the wave of criticism reaches it. But we cannot deny that here, where of all places Holy Writ has been 'left to do its own work,' its immediate success is beyond all parallel. A whole nation has been lifted from a low grade of civilization to high moral, social and intellectual ideals. The Bible has been for Uganda a liberal education indeed, and the 'Epic Poem,' as Stanley called it, of Uganda's conversion is a splendid eulogy of the Scriptures.

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* John iii. 16.

And what of the future? Has the Bible a future before it comparable to its past? The Book which more than any other has furnished to the nations of Europe and to the English-speaking people beyond the seas the manifold inspiration of their individual development: is its fund of inspiration exhausted? That inspiration of the painter's art, of which the galleries are full, the whole eloquence of the Old and New Testaments concentrated upon the typical figures of the Virgin Mother and her Child; that inspiration which by the sculptor's hand peopled the noble façades of our churches with figures that tell the entire Bible story from beginning to end; that inspiration which, acting through vernacular translations of the 'Divine Library,' has given its literary form to many a modern language, our own included, and forms to-day the entire literature of many a backward race. . . . Is the Bible's career as an educator finished and done?

Uganda strikes a chord of hope for its future. It is not only to the more cultured peoples of the world—so missionary experience assures us—that the Scriptures make their appeal. The child-races also hear the voice of the 'Heart-Book,' and respond to the thrill of it. The apparently unlimited appeal of the Bible is illustrated by the daily effect of the Gospel teaching and discipline on such diverse types as the peoples of Hindustan, the Chinese and Japanese, the Malays, the aborigines of Australia, the Red Indians of the New World, and the Esquimaux of the frozen north. And the principle of its effectiveness in such divergent fields is one that grows not old, one which, we may dare to say, will insure for it a work for humanity to the end of time. The inspired selection and infinite diversity of the contents of this vast treasure-house of spiritual experience, wide as human nature itself; the progressive character of the revelation it records; the crude simple beginnings recorded equally with the inconceivably glorious climax—here is the secret of the Bible's ubiquitous and undying power. Here is milk for babes as well as strong meat for adults. What we might have regarded as defects become an added strength; the imperfect leads up to the perfect; the law proves a 'schoolmaster' to lead us to Christ.

And yet there is certainly another side to the picture. It cannot be denied that there is an apparent loosening of the Bible's hold upon Europe—upon the nations that have known many generations of Christian tradition. If the Bible has still a useful field of influence before it among the backward races (as some hold that even the Koran has among tribes whom it reaches at a certain early stage of their upward advance); if it still has a part to play among the ancient nations of the Orient whose progress has been arrested for centuries back—what about the progressive peoples of historic Christendom? Has it not done all it can for them? Have they not passed beyond its control and reached a stage where its help is no longer welcomed or required?

Certainly there has been among intellectual Europeans of the last two or three generations an appearance of widespread revolt against the teachings of Holy Scripture, or, perhaps, we should rather say against the systems with which that teaching has been associated. In France the revolt has taken the form of a political movement; but it is not so much against the Bible as such as against clericalism and what it stands for that the energies of the secularist Government are directed. In France and Italy, as in practically all European countries, including our own, there is a vast deal of professed or unacknowledged agnosticism; some of it due to local or national causes too complex to be enumerated, some of it the result of honest doubt inevitable in a period of transition like our own; much more of it, probably, simply a habit or fashion of free and loose thinking, based partly on a wilful and undisciplined moral tendency, partly on scarcely justified deductions drawn from half-digested results of a criticism sometimes exaggerated or precarious. Modern Europe, since the Great Revolution, is restive under authority, suspicious of tradition, impatient of restraint, spiritual or intellectual. It is not merely the Bible, but 'godly discipline,' and indeed religious practice in general, that is in temporary disfavour. Yet the prestige of the Bible itself has been lowered, and its influence weakened by a number of causes, not the least of which is that general loosening of the hold of traditional beliefs which results from an unusually swift advance of knowledge in general, and the consequent difficulty which ordinary minds experience in readjusting themselves to new conditions.

The old views of the Bible need to be modified. They fitted very tolerably into the cosy and compact intellectual universe of our forefathers—fitted in quite naturally, for they were made expressly for the purpose. But now the intellectual horizon is vastly wider, the perspective of the objects it encloses is quite altered, and so the old views in this, as in other things, must be re-shaped if they are to find their place. What wonder that some cling doggedly to the old, and will not see that it is obsolete; that some grow tired of waiting for finality, and impatiently conclude that there is no place for the Bible at all—that it is, in the familiar and forcible phrase, 'played out'!

The certainty of the Bible's future usefulness lies with those who, while believing whole-heartedly in its inexhaustible message, and frankly ready to accept new learning as it comes, are prepared to devote their best powers to the elucidation of it in the light of the manifold knowledge of to-day.

Such men are to be found in every great communion of Christians here, and on the Continent, and beyond the ocean; but we may well believe that the English Church, which, on the whole, made so sound and sober a use of the 'New Learning' in the sixteenth century, has no mean part to play in the reinstatement of Holy Writ. With so many devout, honest, and competent scholars in the field, it is impossible to believe that the destructive forces undeniably at work will prevail.

The scientific and impartial study of other 'sacred' books, the cold analysis and surgical dismembering of the biblical literature itself—these will not, we may confidently say, issue in a dethroning of the Bible from its rightful place. A Bible made to usurp the place of the Word Incarnate, or of His mystical Body, must needs be dethroned, and the sooner the better. It may be that there has been something superstitious about the attitude of many devout people towards this Book in the past; it is certain that it has been only half understood; yet, hampered thus, how much it has accomplished!

If the Bible, scarcely half understood, unintelligently and superstitiously used, has been able to produce such remarkable results upon the culture of two continents, what may we expect from a more enlightened use of it—a use illumined by floods of light from every quarter?

Certain uses of it, irrelevant from the strictly religious point of view, are only just beginning to come into prominence — philological, anthropological, historico-psychological, and the like. The development of these aspects will doubtless attract to it in the near future the interest of many by whom its religious appeal is as yet unheard. But if it is to occupy in the ages to come a position analogous to that which it has held hitherto—that of a documentary sacrament of Divine knowledge—it will be because historical criticism, stripping off the accretions of ages, has left the Bible in all essentials what it was, only bringing out more clearly, besides the grand outlines, the more minute details of light and shade which had been obscured beyond all recognition. In all essentials, for its fundamental purpose, the changed Bible remains the same. The earlier library of the Old Testament is still the inspired record of God's revelation, though seen to be far more complex in its origin than was once supposed. Though the order in which its component parts were produced be far different from that which appears on the surface—though the form assumed by its utterances prove to be related much more intimately than used to be thought to the conditions, limitations, needs of the times when they came to birth—the Old Testament will still be recognized as the inspired record of God's revelation to a race peculiarly gifted by Him to be 'a sacred school of religious knowledge for all peoples.' The partial parallels (very partial) which can be obtained from ancient literature, or from a reconstruction of ancient Semitic religions, are, in one sense, from our modern point of view, a corroboration of the value set on the Hebrew Scriptures, for they take away from those Scriptures the character of an isolated portent without analogies—a character which would in no wise harmonize with what else we know of the Divine methods of working. In another sense the very partial nature of these parallels brings out by contrast the unrivalled authority of the Old Testament. And what is true of the Old Testament is true *a fortiori* of the New. Here criticism has been by no means so subversive of our old ideas, and it will probably be generally admitted within a few years' time that all its books are genuine products of the first century. The battle still rages fiercely over the *ipsissima verba* of the central Figure, and there is room, no doubt, for legitimate controversy. But Christians will certainly have to be content, for practical purposes, with the teaching embodied in the Gospels as they stand, and in the New Testament as a whole. Those by whom the doctrine of the Paraclete as it appears in the Fourth Gospel is acknowledged as, in substance, the Master's teaching, will find no difficulty in accepting, for practical guidance, the documents as they have come down to us.

If we may venture, then, to forecast the future of the Bible, we should have no hesitation in predicting for it a great work for humanity. What limits can be set to the work that it is to accomplish when it is really known—known thoroughly and scientifically in all its parts—when there are brought to bear upon the study of it all the most exquisite instruments and methods of scholarship and exegesis that humanity has gradually evolved, and these illumined by the various sciences which now conspire to cover the field of the knowable? Surely, with all these advantages, its achievement may be expected to prove as great, if not greater, than that which it wrought when historical narrative was frequently mistaken for allegory, and the extremes of symbolic imagery for literal fact; or when men looked to Genesis and to Aristotle for their physical science, and the assertion of the earth's rotundity was a 'damnable heresy'! Certainly the Bible has a great future before it as an educator—greater, perhaps, than ever before; but only if it be taken at its own valuation, when it claims to say, 'Thus saith the LORD.' If the generations to come look to it, as did their forefathers, for spiritual inspiration, they will probably derive from it also the maximum of intellectual culture. Even if we could imagine it deposed from its spiritual throne, it would still remain, for those who should approach it as a literary textbook, unique alike in its range, its quality and its historical associations.

And there is yet another ground for confidence in the Bible's future. It is not only the scientific, historical, and critical methods of the West that will be focussed more and more upon its pages. From every quarter and from every race will pour in contributions to the fuller understanding of its inner meaning and of its practical uses. We spoke of St. Paul's conception of the great Body of Christ, in which every race shall have a share. There is another aspect of that great organism which remains to be adverted to. If each shares in the mystic Life, each also contributes its characteristic gift; the different peoples 'bring their glory and honour'* into the City of God. But an enrichment of the Church is an enrichment also of the Scriptures. To the Chinaman, as to many another, the Bible is 'the Heart-Book'; but he brings to the interpretation of it a type of religious experience which, however parallel in its fundamental lines to that of all other believers, has on it the stamp of the Chinese genius. The Christ he sees depicted there is a Chinese Christ. Even so the Hindoo will find a Hindoo Christ in the Book, the Malay and the New Zealander each a Christ of his own race. We are just beginning to reap the harvest now; what another generation may garner of fuller and more proportionate understanding of the Scriptures we can only dimly guess. What we already see amounts to a powerful testimony to the Bible's universal message and appeal. It bears with it also the promise of a far richer and truer conception of what the Bible means. As yet it has been interpreted almost entirely by Aryan minds, and those of Europe and the Mediterranean countries; but a time is near at hand when the Far East and the Far South will make their particular genius felt in its interpretation, and then we shall begin to know it in a new way.

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* Rev. xxi. 24.

VII

THE BIBLE AND MODERN SCIENCE

For many of us this phrase, 'The Bible and Modern Science,' begins already to savour of obsolete controversy. It has a subtle mid-Victorian fragrance like that of lavender-scented heirlooms put away in rarely opened drawers. The stirrings of passion thinly veiled under the artistic phraseology of the poet of 'In Memoriam,' when his eye was fixed on 'Nature red in tooth and claw'; the *odium theologicum* aroused by Huxley and his circle, and the *odium agnosticum* with which they retorted; the almost frenzied clamour that would fain have shouted down the honest utterances of that gentlest and simplest of men, Charles Darwin—all these things have for us an exaggerated, almost melodramatic, touch.

There are circles still, no doubt, where the *crambe repetita* of last century's controversial talk still forms the staple dish; where collected scraps from the cuisine of Herbert Spencer and Huxley (phrases often violently torn from their context) are served up, garnished with all the bravery of journalistic eloquence. There are circles, too, of an opposite temper and tendency, to which the cheaper apologetics of two generations ago still appeal as forcibly as ever; to whom Darwin is still anathema; by whom 'Modern Science' and 'the Higher Criticism' are alike summarily characterized and dismissed as 'attacks on the Bible.' But neither the one circle nor the other can be claimed as representing the true tendency of intelligent thought and belief. For the average thinking man the 'Science and Religion' controversy in its mid-Victorian form is a thing of the past. The battle is 'passed over' to another region.

Our interest in the Bible, our reverence for its teaching, its religious and devotional value for us, may grow as years go on—well for us if they do!—but the point of view from which our minds approach it is changed. The Bible is no longer for us what the Koran is to the pious Mohammedan, what the Torah is to the Jew of the old school, a magical book, every word of which has been dictated miraculously to an unerring scribe. We are no longer concerned to prove that the implied geological basis of the first chapter of Genesis is identical with the lines marked out by the current theories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; or to demonstrate, with an ingenuity worthy of a less sacred cause, that the disturbance introduced into the entire solar system by the miracle associated with the name of Joshua was rectified, after the lapse of centuries, by the putting back of the shadow on the dial of Ahaz in the reign of Hezekiah. We do not lay ourselves out to champion Jonah's whale any more than Toby's fish; we feel that the magnificent teaching of the book which bears Jonah's name is equally valid whether the story in which it is embodied be history, allegory, or myth. Perhaps our tendency has been of late to take a too modest line about 'miracles'; certainly we are more ready to apologize for the presence of wonder-stories in Scripture than to use such stories as the basis of our apologetics. At any rate, we have come to the conviction that, if the Old Testament is a Divine Book, it is also an ancient Hebrew Book, bearing marks of its *provenance* on every page. Its view of the construction of the universe is, when grasped, simple and intelligible, but to our minds crude and primitive to a degree. We can reconstruct the Hebrew universe fairly completely by a comparison of the first chapter of Genesis with one or two other passages in the same book, and in Job, the Psalms, and the Prophets.

The earth is a flat mass, surrounded by the seas and floating upon the 'great deep,' 'the waters under the earth,'* whence hidden channels are connected with the springs and keep the rivers supplied.† Above the earth is the solid firmament or dome of heaven, conceived as stretched out‡ like a curtain,§ or beaten out‖ like a 'strong molten mirror' supported by pillars,¶ which rest presumably upon the earth's fringe. This firmament Jehovah thrust in between the upper and the lower waters, as Marduk did with half of the cloven carcass of Tiâmat in the Babylonian Genesis. And to it He attached the sun, moon, and planets, and studded it with the fixed stars. Above the firmament are gathered the upper waters,** in which the 'beams' of Jehovah's 'chambers' are laid—the floods above which He sits enthroned.†† These upper waters are kept off from the earth by the firmament, but there are sluices or 'windows of heaven' which may be divinely manipulated so as to let the waters pass through. The Noachian Deluge is represented as due to a simultaneous opening of these windows and a breaking up of the 'fountains of the great deep,'* so that upper and nether waters conspire to reproduce something like the original chaotic condition, out of which a renovated and purified earth is to emerge.

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* Gen. vii. 11, xlix. 25; Amos vii. 4; Ps. cxxxvi. 6; Isa. li. 10; Exod. xx. 4.

† Deut. viii. 7; Prov. iii. 20.

‡ Job ix. 8; Isa. xlii. 5, xliv. 24.

§ Ps. civ. 2.

‖ Job xxxvii. 18.

¶ Job xxvi. 11.

** Ps. cxlviii. 4; Gen. i. 6.

†† Ps. civ. 3; Amos ix. 6.

It is a childish conception, perhaps, worthy of man's childhood. It reminds us of the conceptions of our own early childhood, and of the primitive mythological ideas that have left their mark upon the world's best poetry, from Homer downwards.

We may concede to the Assyriologist his claim that this conception of the world as originating out of water—so tantalizingly like and unlike the nebular hypothesis of later physicists—marks the creation story as descended from Babylonian ancestry; that it was suggested by the spectacle of the long Babylonian winter, during which the flooded plains present the appearance of a vast sea of waters—waters which subside at the coming of spring, when the clouds lift, and the dry land and vegetation appear. We must concede, too, to the Hebrew scholar his contention that, whatever the Hebrew conception of the world's construction was, it was not that of modern Western science.

If we glance at the *ethical standards* of the Old Testament, we cannot disguise from ourselves the fact that there is much, especially in the narratives which purport to deal with early history, which revolts the modern conscience. If ethics is a science, then from this point of view also the Old Testament lays itself open to criticism.

The wholesale massacres of men, women, and children in the name and by the direct command of Jehovah portrayed in the Book of Joshua, and repeated, with something of a gloating spirit, in the later chapters of Esther;* the condemnation of an entire family for the sin of one man, Achan;† the commendation of the treacherous act of Jael;‡ the apparently condoned deceit of heroes like Abraham,§ Isaac,‖ and Jacob (though the last-named clearly pays due penalty in the end); and perhaps we may add the plurality of wives, mentioned without comment in the case of Abraham, Jacob, Elkanah, and David—such blots as these—and many others could be named—we rightly regard as incident to early stages in an upward progress. And the New Testament, with its announcement that 'the Law made nothing perfect,'¶ and its typical emendations of Old Testament precepts in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, corroborates our judgment. But in themselves these things are undoubted imperfections.

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* Gen. vii. 11.

So, too, is it with the *historical method* of the Old Testament chroniclers and historians. They are, from the modern point of view, unscientific. The results achieved fill us more and more with reverence and admiration; but it is something other than the writer's method, scientifically considered, that evokes our enthusiasm. That method, if recent criticism has rightly appraised it, consists largely in the manipulation and the piecing together of fragments culled from narratives and other documents, sometimes parallel, sometimes mutually inconsistent, the whole being then coloured with the tints of the writer's own age. The results of this process are themselves occasionally inconsistent with one another, and, so far as they can be tested by archæological data, marked here and there by grave chronological errors. The works—especially in the case of the 'Former Prophets'—are works of genius and something more, but the methods are, according to modern standards, imperfect. They resemble (as has been recently demonstrated afresh) the methods of the earlier Arab historians; they are, in fact, the methods of ancient days, and of an unscientific race. All this has emerged again and again in our previous studies, and we have become accustomed to see in it nothing strange. These crudities, these imperfections, this local colour—they are natural and inevitable in a revelation that is given progressively, from rude beginnings, and given through all its course through finite human media. Yet such a reflection somehow fails to content us when we see once more the Bible and modern science confronting one another. If the physical science of the Bible, its ethical and social standards, its historical method, are all recognized as being in a real sense relative rather than final or absolute, they must still have a certain validity in so far as they touch religion, unless the religious value of the Bible is to disappear. It is for this reason that the aspect of the Bible that faces science will always have an interest. If we do not go to the Bible for our principles of geology, astronomy, anthropology, history, or even metaphysics; if we recognize that these are not proper subjects of revelation, but rather fields for patient and honest use of those intellectual gifts with which the Creator Himself has endowed all mankind; we yet feel justified in demanding that the Bible's science and philosophy shall not be such as to lead us astray in the ethical and spiritual realms. It may be as crude and primitive as you like, this underlying science of the Bible, but it must not commit us to wrong principles, or put obstacles in the way of intellectual, moral and spiritual progress and expansion.

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* Especially ix. 5 *et seq.*, 13 *et seq.*

† Josh. vii. 24.

‡ Judg. v. 24.

§ Gen. xii. 11 *et seq.*

‖ Gen. xxvi. 7 *et seq.*

¶ Heb. vii. 19.

It is just here that the Bible asserts its unique sovereignty—the Bible, that is, intelligently read, with the illuminating conceptions of the genuine humanity of its writers and the progressive character of its revelation. Take the doctrine of Creation embodied in the first chapter of Genesis. How entirely the potentialities of its teaching would be changed if we were to substitute for its reiterated 'very good' a theory which makes matter in itself evil. The philosophical and theological consequences would have been enormously different. The chapter would have shown itself utterly unworthy of its present position—a position in virtue of which it not only forms a noble prelude to the record of revelation, but also supplies the opening phrase of Christendom's profession, 'I believe in God . . . Maker of heaven and earth.'

It is a commonplace of modern exegesis to institute a detailed comparison between the record in Genesis of the Creation and the Deluge with the Babylonian myths on the same subject recovered from the great library of Assurbanipal. Such a comparison brings out, perhaps, more emphatically than anything else the essential greatness of the biblical story, and the reality of that 'inspiration of selection' which enabled the Priestly writer of the fifth century B.C., or the earlier author, whose conceptions he embodied in this masterpiece of his, to pick his way so unerringly amid the confusing maze of primitive Semitic mythology: to 'refuse the evil and to choose the good.' The two accounts, the Hebrew and the Babylonian, have much in common, as has been pointed out again and again—so much that a common literary relationship of some kind must be accounted undeniable. Both alike are very far removed from modern ideas. But they are worlds apart from each other philosophically and theologically, because the theological basis of the Babylonian cosmology is a crude and misleading polytheistic mythology, while that of Genesis is a pure monotheism. In consequence, the cuneiform tablets of the Creation myth have a predominatingly archæological interest: their appropriate place is the museum of antiquities; while the Hebrew Creation story is in every hand and on every lip. The theological structure built on the rude foundation of that very unscientific cosmogony is valid even to-day. Nor can we fail to realize the importance of the *progressive* idea as it appears in the Hebrew narrative—the gradual educing of order out of chaos and of complexity out of the simple. We cannot actually identify this principle as exhibited in Genesis with the evolution of present-day science, still less can we expect to identify the 'Days' of Creation with the Eozoic, Palæozoic, Mesozoic, and Cænozoic periods of geology, or their animal and vegetable products with the products of those successive periods. But the principle of order and progress certainly underlies the Hebrew narrative of Creation, and its biological series works up to man as a climax, as does also the series of modern science. So it is that, while the physical science (so to speak) of Genesis is obsolete, its spirit and tendency, its philosophical and theological basis, is still valid; and the transfigured

Semitic myth has become an inspired picture or symbol, not only of the origin of this world, but of the Divine method of dealing with the world and with man in nature and in grace. Because it is essentially true, it adapts itself to a more modern view than its literal wording reflects: the language is patient of a much more modern interpretation than could have been understood by those who first put it into words.

But it is not, of course, in its earlier chapters alone that the Bible seems out of touch with the modern scientific temper. The presence of miracle all through its course, in Old Testament and New Testament alike, still tells against the Bible in the minds of many who are dominated by the conception of the supremacy of 'Natural Law.' This feeling is a reasonable reaction against that view of the Bible miracles which was associated with the theory of verbal inspiration. That all the records of miracles are of equal value and of equal weight; that they must all be accepted alike, and alike interpreted with equal literalness; that, in fact, they are all exactly on the same plane, and all 'stand or fall together'—a theory of this kind undoubtedly presented insuperable difficulties to the scientific mind. To say that if I find it difficult to accept the traditional explanation given in Josh. x. 13 of the old poetic phrase preserved in the same context, and to believe that the whole solar system was deranged at that moment, I am impugning at the same time the credibility of each and all of the Lord's 'miracles' of healing, would now be considered preposterous. But it was indisputably an attitude of this sort that embittered the 'scientific mind' of the last generation against the 'supernatural' element in the Bible. Recently a good deal has happened to reduce the bitterness on both sides; not least among the factors making for peace is the changed view of the world. The old controversy about Miracle and Natural Law has become less acute, as the organic conception of the universe has, in the best minds on both sides, taken the place of the former mechanical view. The champions of the supernatural have realized more than before the force of the many indications and analogies which point to a real oneness in the universe seen and unseen, material and spiritual. Grasping more firmly the implications of their belief in 'one God the Father Almighty, Maker of . . . all things visible and invisible,' they no longer tend to picture to themselves two mutually imcompatible worlds, the natural and the supernatural, in one of which a reign of law prevails, save where the other, ruled by chaos and caprice, encroaches upon it. Nature and grace, Providence and miracle, the natural and the supernatural, are seen to be parts of one great scheme, ruled by a single Mind and Will. That the Ruler of the universe is 'not a God of confusion,' but of law and order, is a truth latent in any satisfactory theological scheme; but it has been enforced for us strikingly during the last two or three generations by the general acceptance of the scientific principle of the uniformity of Nature.

On the side of physical science, too, a change has come over the scene. Men are conscious more than before that we are all

> 'Moving about in worlds not realized';

that the universe with which science may yet deal is larger and more varied than was supposed; that a complete analysis of the world in which we live must take account of elements that cannot be touched, tasted, or handled, cannot be measured with a line or weighed in a balance; that the phenomena which psychology is beginning to classify suggest the action and reaction of forces of which the physicist had not hitherto taken account, and imply the presence of yet more distant realms as yet unexplored. If the action of spirit upon matter, of the immaterial upon the material, is one of the most important factors in the moulding of things around us, then there is room, after all (as, indeed, Aquinas saw long ago), for the power of prayer, within a world ruled by law and uniformity. If, in the psychological direction, there is a whole realm (or realms) into which the scientific investigator has only just begun to find his way, then it was not unreasonable in the past for those who were granted from time to time to see glimpses of this realm, or to receive visits from its denizens, to speak of, or to look upon, such glimpses and such visitants as 'miraculous' or 'supernatural.'

As the organic is supernatural viewed from the standpoint of inorganic Nature, and man supernatural as compared with the chain of existences below him, yet each successive stratum stands upon the one below it, and is bound to the lower one by ties, so to speak, of affinity and of a common subjection to law; so, too, the series of strata may pass beyond our ken. We may posit a still higher order (or orders) above and beyond that in which man ordinarily moves, yet interpenetrating his habitual sphere, and governed by laws anologous to those of which he is gradually discovering the operation in Nature round about him.

Such ideas as these have become commonplaces, but they do not lose their importance thereby. The word 'miracle' has become almost out of place in this generation, not because we have ceased to admire with reverence the wonder of the Divine working, but because what an apparent 'portent' did for our ancestors is accomplished for us by the conception of natural law. To us, to whom so much light has been given upon the principle of law and of orderly growth in creation, that principle itself is a more convincing witness to the existence, the presence, and the working of the Almighty than any sudden or apparently capricious breach of the principle could be. Such a breach has become, in fact, inconceivable to us. An apparent instance of it we should interpret—and interpret rightly—as the intervention of a higher principle analogous to human will, which, after all, moulds, groups, modifies, but does not actually annul, the action of the natural forces already at work, nor 'break' the normal laws by which the universe is governed. By just lifting or dropping his thumb, the Roman spectator could give life or death to those in the arena below; by a nod or a shake of the head, one favourably placed may change the whole course of history. But we do not speak of these as 'miracles.'

Such thoughts as these, when associated with the principle of progressive revelation, have an important bearing on the problem of scriptural miracles as viewed in the light of modern science.

On the one hand, the recognition by science of such forces as telepathy, telæsthesia, and sensory automatism, and of the entire and largely unexplored domain of the subliminal consciousness, makes the former contemptuous dismissal of some of the Bible miracles appear arrogant and unscientific. On the other hand, the champion of the essential veracity of the Bible is brought face to face with new problems. What part is played by the belief in the miraculous in the drama of progressive revelation? What has literary criticism to say as to the evidence for the miracles of the Old and New Testaments? And how does its utterance bear on the solution of the former problem? He will find, if we are not mistaken, that two useful principles emerge into sight—principles harmonious and concordant. (i.) Criticism teaches him that the actual evidence for the miracles, regarded from the strictly literary and historical point of view, varies immensely, and is, on the whole, much stronger for the New Testament than for the Old. To this point we shall revert at a later stage. (ii.) The doctrine of progressive revelation, read in the light of recent studies of human nature, prepares him to concede that the miracles of one age may be to the next simply instances of the working of a natural law now recognized, but previously undiscovered.

Thus the miracles of the crossing of the Red Sea and of Jordan, for which criticism assures us the documentary evidence is, to all appearance, centuries later than the narrated event, might, on these principles, turn out to be the elaborate literary expression, in terms of the beliefs of a much later (but still uncritical) age, of old traditions of events conceived as miraculous (in the full, old-fashioned sense of the word) by those concerned, but which in our own age would explain themselves to a pious mind as providential coincidences, as involving the grouping and ordering for a particular purpose, at a particular crisis, of natural forces now well understood: or (shall we say) the modification of the action of such familiar forces by the introduction of another whose analogue is equally familiar to us under the name of human will.

That the events thus handed down by tradition were accepted as miraculous portents by those to whom they originally happened, as by those also who, after the lapse of time, idealized them (it may be), working them up into literary form, the modern student has no doubt. He does not suspect the *bona fides* of the original tradition nor of its historian. He realizes, however, that if these things happened to-day, they would not be (so to speak) the same to him as they were to the men of old time. There is a difference between their standpoint and his: a difference which enters into the Divine scheme of progressive revelation. In every age and in each successive stage of knowledge, our apprehension of the truth is but partial; but God condescends to teach us even by this partial apprehension—to teach man progressively, 'as he is able to bear it.'

The very 'misunderstanding,' as we might be tempted to call it, of the causes at work in this or that event in old time was made the occasion of revelation to those who sought to know God, and used the intellectual powers that had been given them. The authors of the tradition, and the chronicler who worked it up afterwards, each in all good faith, had in some ways a truer grasp of the matter than many have in a more scientific age. If they ignored or misunderstood the secondary causes at work, their instinct carried them straight to the primal cause, whom they rightly conceived as ordering history for beneficent and righteous ends. They were inspired, in fact, to draw the truest and most important lessons from the occurrences which they conceived so unscientifically.

The question naturally arises: Have there not been, then, in every age, and are there not existing even now upon the earth, souls in just that stage of development which is the correlative of the miraculous narratives of the Old Testament—even of those which appeal least to our modern 'scientific temper'? The question is a very wide one, and one that might lead us far afield; but it is not in itself irrelevant. The miracles of mediæval hagiology, which have their lineal descendants in those of Lourdes to-day, cannot (if the evidence of Lourdes is to be accepted on its merits) be dismissed as entirely fraudulent. If we try to find their nearest analogue in the Bible, we must look to those central chapters of the Books of Kings which narrate the story of Elijah and Elisha (chapters which, be it observed, criticism places comparatively near in time to the events they record); and it is not, perhaps, audacious to suggest that the grim epoch in which those prophets lived, with its superstition and strife, its sovereignty of the 'mailed fist,' its religious intolerance and free shedding of blood in the name of religion, supplies an environment for the miracles similar in very many respects to that in which the typical ecclesiastical miracles originated—an atmosphere which (to a very large extent) the pilgrims of Lourdes may still be said to breathe.

The contention we would make at the moment is not that all the recorded miracles of mediæval hagiology are equally credible. Those who find one or two of those recorded of Elisha an obstacle to faith—for instance, the swimming axe-head*—will be tempted to find in the *credulity* of Elisha's days a further parallel with the Middle Ages. But none, with the facts of history and psychology before them, will be likely to deny credence entirely to the wonder-stories of either period.

The God who, according to Ezekiel, answers the idolater 'according to the multitude of his idols,'* may be conceived as answering every man, and every group of men, the sincere as well as the insincere, according to the stage of spiritual and mental attainment reached. So it is that what to one age or stage of development would be a response to faith would be to another an implication of unbelief. Already in the thirteenth century St. Hugh of Lincoln felt that a miracle of the early mediæval type was out of place, was obsolete. When he was asked to come and witness a material transformation of the Blessed Sacrament, a proof of the doctrine of transubstantiation, he replied indignantly: 'In God's Name let them keep to themselves the signs of their own infidelity.'†

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* 2 Kings vi. 5-7.

A new point is given to the mention of Lourdes in this connection by the contention put forward by the late Father Tyrrell in his 'Christianity at the Cross-roads.' He claims that Romanism has so faithfully preserved the actual colour and material vesture of the Gospels—with its picturesque ceremonies, its exorcisms, its prevailingly eschatological conceptions—that the Christ of the New Testament would, so to speak, feel absolutely at home in its atmosphere. The typical Roman Catholic lives, he would suggest, his outward (and to a large extent his inward) religious life in an atmosphere not of the nineteenth century, but of the first. If this be conceded as true even in some degree, it will be natural to look for a response to faith in that region not altogether different from the response which faith received in the Apostolic Age. The question is, indeed, complicated by other considerations too wide to be dealt with here, such as arise from the grouping, *e.g.*, of the biblical miracles, and their concentration at certain periods of the history of revelation, and around the typical figures of Moses, Elijah, and Christ. And full justice cannot be done to the miraculous records of the Bible without entering somewhat deeply into these and kindred problems.

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* Ezek. xiv. 3 *et seq.*

† 'Magna Vita,' V., iv. 245: 'Bene, inquit, in nomine Domini, habeant sibi signa infidelitatis suæ.'

But at any rate we have advanced some way towards realizing the *relativity* of miracle, not only in the sense in which we can speak of the miracles of one age becoming the scientific commonplaces of a later—St. Augustine* had already observed that 'miracle is not contrary to Nature, but only to what *we know* of Nature'—but also in relation to the 'psychological climate' in which those live to whom the miracle happens. Within the circle of that *faith* which, in the Gospels, is the indispensable condition of the working of a miracle we may distinguish different types and grades of faith to which different types and grades of miracles will correspond.

It is not only that, from man's side, the same event would be viewed differently by eye-witnesses who had reached widely different stages of mental and spiritual development, but that (if we may assume a close analogy between our creaturely will and that which rules the universe) in the Divine ordering of things, whereby God teaches man through nature and history according to the capacity of the individual scholar or class, some lessons are more appropriate here and others there. A village schoolmaster would only destroy his own reputation in the eyes of his scholars if he wasted the time of the seventh standard on ABC. He would only muddle and mystify the infants by discoursing to them on the higher stages of algebra. So we may reverently believe the Great Schoolmaster, who orders all things, finds appropriate means to enforce and to illustrate the truths which it is essential for each age to grasp.

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* 'Civ. Dei,' xxi. 8.

In the New Testament, as in the Old, the scientific interest tends to focus itself more and more upon *psychology*, and the psychological aspect of the phenomena recorded, as also of the process by which the records came into being. We have no longer the crude antithesis of miracle and natural law when the wonderful works of the Lord come up for consideration; nor, when we would estimate the value of the records of that unparalleled life, are we faced by the crude and cruel alternative—credulity or fraud. The exact historical accuracy of some points in the records may give rise to doubts; but the scientist is more generally interested in discussing *how* it might have happened—how the words and ideas of the first-century narrative should be translated into those of a later and more scientific age—than in disputing whether it could have happened at all. And even where he finds the event, as stated, difficult to account for on modern principles, he remains hopeful of finding at any rate a clue to the psychological process by which the writer was led—presumably in all sincerity—to record what he has recorded.

Psychology, in the modern sense, is still too young, its growth has been too much retarded by prejudice and superstition, for it to be able to speak, as yet, on these most sacred topics with a voice of accepted authority. Yet none of us can fail to realize the change that its development has already wrought in the popular scientific attitude towards the Gospel miracles. The immense potentialities of 'suggestion'—the power, as it used to be called, of mind over matter—the vast region of personality now opening out before us under the name of the subconscious mind or subliminal consciousness—these tend to bring to the level of the commonplace, phenomena which a generation ago would have been voted miraculous, or illusory. The large majority of our Lord's recorded miracles, the miracles of healing, no longer offer any difficulty to a generation that has become habituated to the established facts of faith-healing both within and without the borders of the Church. A short time ago it seemed as though a line would have to be drawn between the cases that involved an organic change and those that are only functional, but now there are not a few indications that some day both alike may come to be accounted as falling within that region wherein spirit can react directly upon spirit, and so upon the bodily counterpart of that spirit. In short, if our Lord's wonderful works of healing are still accounted miraculous, it is not as involving any definitely superhuman power — still less any 'breach of natural law'—but rather as exhibiting the action of the psychic forces latent in man in a degree surprisingly beyond the average attainment, not only of the age when the works were wrought, but, so far as we know, of any age. Whatever may be the explanation of the so-called 'cosmic miracles'*—the Feeding of the Four Thousand and the Five Thousand, the Walking on the Sea, the Stilling of the Storm—the next generation may probably see in the majority of Christ's works of mercy the works of the Perfect Man. They will not need, that is, to look beyond the perfect humanity of the Incarnate Son of God to explain these phenomena amply and fully from the point of view of scientific psychology.

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* What right have we to pronounce inconceivable miracles such as those recorded of our Saviour, whose psychic endowment was undoubtedly unique, in an age in which, *e.g.*, wireless telegraphy, which would have been scouted as ridiculously impossible a century ago, has become one of the accepted adjuncts of daily life?

If we may venture, in all reverence, to revert to a more sacred and mysterious subject still, the subject of the consciousness of Jesus Christ as exhibited in His actions and His utterances, it will be obvious that the scientific psychology of the future may be able to throw new light also upon this. And it is not unlikely that a truer psychology, brought to bear especially upon the Messianic consciousness of Jesus, may do much to bridge the gap which the casual reader is apt to find between the utterances recorded by the Synoptists and those of the Fourth Gospel. We are here in a region where ordinary human experience can only carry us a certain distance, and where science can only feel its way if it leans upon the staff of mysticism. But our glance at the psychology of prophecy has done something to illuminate the subject. If the basis of prophecy is the response, by a specially gifted psychic nature, to the stimulus of a suggestion originating with the Holy Spirit acting upon the subliminal consciousness, what a concentration of the prophetic gift may be looked for in One who was wholly and habitually indwelt by that Spirit, and whose subliminal consciousness was, if we may dare to express it so, the meeting-place of heaven and earth, the proper field of the Incarnation, of the hypostatic union (to use a traditional phrase) between the Divine and human natures of the God-man!

Science may find much that it can explain and much that it can dimly discern in the wonders of the life of

Jesus Christ, but there will always remain (on the Christian view of His Person, which is that of the earliest records) a residuum of phenomena to which human experience affords no parallel. We are not concerned to combat and contest every advance it may make towards the scientific explanation of points in His life hitherto regarded as supernatural. The Incarnation is too wonderfully self-explanatory—too wonderfully explanatory of the world and its history, and of our own spiritual life—for us to be shaken in our faith because few or many of the 'miracles' may be proved to offer no direct testimony to the *Divinity* of the Worker. Like those phenomena which seem to call for an identification of His mental outlook more exclusively than had been supposed with the mental outlook of first-century Judaism, they testify the more strongly to the reality of His manhood.

Our attitude towards the scientific interpretation of the miracles of Jesus Christ will be, to a large extent, like that which we adopt towards the scientific interpretation of the miracles of the Old Testament. In the case of Christ the historical attestation of the facts is indefinitely stronger; but, assuming the facts recorded, we shall not be surprised if in many cases science is able to suggest a physical or psychic cause within her ken, where the Old Testament writers or the Evangelists of the New Testament, and the people to whom the things of which they write actually happened, could see nothing but an inexplicable marvel. Nor need we suppose that if the scriptural writer's view of the incident was unscientific, it was therefore necessarily untrue. That will depend on the presuppositions with which we approach the matter. No fact in this world is fully explained by the enumeration of its physical antecedents. I may say that the surgeon's knife cured me when it cut out the malignant growth, or I may say that the removal of the trouble cured me, or I may enumerate exhaustively and with scientific precision the whole process of cellular changes resulting from the operation, which marked the line of progress from disease to health. But if I simply say the surgeon cured me, I am perhaps proclaiming a more fundamental truth; and the fact that the surgeon cured me is equally valid if, in my want of scientific knowledge, I regard his operation as literally miraculous. May not the same be true of those who saw the Hand of God in the crises of their nation's fortunes, and of those who explained the marvels of the Saviour's works of mercy by the phrase 'the power of the Lord was present to heal them'?

It is, indeed, in the Gospels that we see most clearly exhibited the *raison d'être* of miracle—to help towards conviction, in a moment of religious crisis for the world, those who else might have found conviction difficult. That one whose life and teaching ran on the whole in a line so contrary to the prevailing expectations of the Jews should be accepted as the Messiah, probably needed in that age attestation which, to that age, should appear 'miraculous.' And so, as the Fourth Evangelist tells us, 'He manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him.'* For them the 'mighty works' supplied just the additional stimulus that was needed to make possible the final venture of faith. To a later generation the mere record of them is sometimes an *obstacle* to faith; not, however, an insuperable one, else Christ would not number His thousands of devoted followers amongst us: nor, perhaps, a permanent one, as science begins to find in them a less 'portentous' character.

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* John ii. 11.

We said above that the evidence for miracle—or for the occurrence of events which seemed miraculous to the beholders—is stronger for the New Testament than for the Old. Criticism would relegate the attestation of the miracles of the age of Moses and Joshua, for instance, to a date very far removed from the events described. Thus, granting a germ of historical fact, time is in these cases allowed for the working upon the fact of minds accustomed to reflect upon Nature and history in what we should call an unscientific way—minds to which the violent interference with the course of Nature suggested no difficulties whatever. There is room for an unconscious introduction of the folk-lore element which appears so prominently in the early narratives of the Creation and the Flood.

The story of Elijah and Elisha is recorded for us, according to the critical view, in a document much nearer the time—say, a generation after the events—but is the work of an obviously credulous and uncritical age; the wonderful psychic experiences of the Prophets are, many of them, autobiography. Thus we have very various grades of attestation within the limits of the Old Testament. The same is true, in a different degree, of the New Testament miracles; but here we feel at once that, from a scientific point of view, we stand on firmer ground. If the evidence for the Gospel miracles is not absolutely first-hand (and the answer to this question turns on our belief as to the authorship of the Fourth Gospel), yet we have absolutely first-hand evidence in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles of St. Paul. The author of the Acts is a witness to whom we shall listen with peculiar interest, because he is a man perhaps more obviously like ourselves than any one of his contemporaries whom we know. He is not a Jew—no Semite—but a fellow-Aryan; he is a professional man, whose career itself may be accounted a school of exact thinking and careful weighing of evidence. He is a travelled man, and one of developed literary and historical tastes. He is a man who used his powers to the best advantage, as the light thrown on his work by archæology shows. Finally, he is most certainly an eye-witness of the events he records in certain chapters of the Acts—chapters which seem to represent the working up of a diary made at the time of his journeys with St. Paul. This man it is who records the miracle wrought upon the soothsaying girl at Philippi, the earthquake which opened the prison doors, the restoration of Eutychus, the works of healing at Ephesus and at Melita, the prophecy of Agabus. These wonders have in them nothing contrary to Nature, though they may not be in all details explicable to us as yet. They corroborate St. Paul's own conviction, expressed in his Epistles, that he himself was a worker of miracles,* as were many of those among whom he moved. St. Paul's conviction of the reality of mysterious spiritual gifts is brought out in a way of peculiar interest to the scientist. The chapter† of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which treat of the gifts of tongues and of prophecy and of healing, do not attempt to prove the presence of these gifts. That is assumed alike by writer and by readers, and the Apostle proceeds to employ his reasoning powers and his judgment upon the facts in an attempt to solve the practical problems which, as a result of these phenomena, had become a pressing difficulty to the Corinthian Church. St. Luke thus, in his first-hand evidence about St. Paul, corroborates that Apostle's witness to his own miraculous powers, and both alike throw back light on the earlier history. St. Luke was not an eye-witness of the 'miracle of Pentecost,' or of the events of his earlier chapters. There is room for some development and modification of the facts, or at any rate some tingeing of the records with the tints of other minds before they reached that of the historian. But St. Paul is a first-hand witness of the phenomena of 'tongues' at Corinth, and this itself vouches for the possibility of similar phenomena at an earlier date. So, too, the Pauline miracles, of which St. Luke is a first-hand witness, offer parallels to some of the most characteristic wonders of the Gospels and of the Old Testament too. While the gifts of tongues and prophecy ally themselves with the psychological phenomena of Old Testament prophecy—Agabus, as depicted in a few short strokes by St. Luke, has all the air of a prophet of the old times—so, too, the miracle of the providential earthquake throws light, perhaps, upon the earlier deliverance of St. Peter at Jerusalem, and certainly brings us within sight of an explanation of some of the more difficult miracles of the Gospels and of the Old Testament—the miracles in which inanimate Nature plays a part. The healing of the soothsaying girl has many parallels in the demoniac incidents of the Gospel story, and the other healings, in Christ's frequent miracles of mercy. The story of the restoration of Eutychus, however we explain it, joins hands with that of St. Peter's raising of Dorcas, and our Lord's raising of Jairus's daughter, of the widow's son, and of Lazarus.

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* 2 Cor. xii. 11, 12: Neither St. Paul nor his Master lay much stress on the *miraculous* aspect of their 'works of power.'

† 1 Cor. xii., xiv.

Thus St. Luke the scientist takes us by the hand, and leads us gently into the central wonderland of Scripture, to the region where, if anywhere, heaven and earth are blended in the Son of man, who, to the same St. Luke, is also Son of God. For we must not forget that it is this man with whom, of all others whom we know of that period, the modern world has most in common—it is the one non-Semitic contributor to the New Testament—who has recorded for us the marvels of the Annunciation and the Nativity, the 'Gospel of the Infancy,' in his own special way. Nor is his description of the Lord's ministry, with its signs and wonders, of the marvels of the Holy Week, and the glories that followed it, one whit less 'miraculous' than that of the other Synoptists.

In these matters he does not claim to have been an eye-witness, and clearly was not such; but it is not a matter of no significance, that the Third Gospel should be from the pen of him 'whose praise is in all' mouths to-day because of the accuracy and general excellence which his historical narrative displays wherever it can be tested by archæological data.

That his narrative was coloured by the presuppositions of his age cannot be denied, but so would be that of the most scientific historian of the present day. The present-day writer would have the advantage of describing events from the point of view of a much greater scientific knowledge; but to say that his narrative would be more fundamentally *true* than St. Luke's is quite another thing.

Thus St. Luke, in his acceptance of the matter which forms his Gospel, shows that a mind accustomed to the practice of the physician's art, and trained in judgment, in diagnosis of symptoms, in the weighing of evidence, accepted as fact the substance of this marvellous record, which is paralleled by the other Synoptic narratives. There is every reason to suppose that he drew much of his matter from eye-witnesses, as also that St. Mark's narrative represents at second hand the testimony of no less an eye-witness than St. Peter.

To those of us who still believe that the Fourth Gospel is the work of the son of Zebedee (and that in a few years' time the force of converging evidence will bring the full weight of the best criticism to our side), there is evidence for the wonders of the life of Jesus of an absolutely first-hand nature. In our scientific estimate of the narrative we should bear in mind that the most trustworthy tradition would make it a work of the Apostle's extreme old age. We should allow, in his case, not only for the presuppositions and the psychological bent of a particular age and race, but also for the lapse of time, for the effect of long reflection upon the reminiscences of youth, and the unconscious modifications which happen to a story in the course of frequent oral repetition, even in the mouth of an eye-witness. We should admit that it is, in fact, the product of reflection and of spiritual experience upon the reminiscences of an eye-witness, who, since the days when he had 'seen' and his 'hands had handled,'* had formed a particular conception of his Master which grew with growing years; had fed his soul upon spiritual communion with One with whom he still believed himself to be in vital contact; and had had his ideas fixed and the expression of them determined by the necessity of combating what he—the only surviving eye-witness—believed to be false, unworthy, and misleading views of his Master's person and work.

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* 1 John i. 1.

So our own English poet pictures him:*

> 'Left to repeat, "I saw, I heard, I knew,"
> And go all over the old ground again,
> With Antichrist already in the world,
> And many Antichrists, who answered prompt,
> "Am I not Jasper as thyself art John?"
> Nay, young, whereas through age thou mayest forget:
> Wherefore explain, or how shall we believe?'

And the aged Apostle goes on:

> 'I never thought to call down fire on such,
>
> * * * * *
>
> But, patient, stated much of the Lord's life
> Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work:
> Since much that at the first, in deed and word,
> Lay simply and sufficiently exposed,
> Had grown (or else my soul was grown to match,
> Fed through such years, familiar with such light,
> Guarded and guided still to see and speak)
> Of new significance and fresh result.'

If this conception of the Fourth Gospel be true, we shall not be surprised to find St. John's account of the wondrous works less photographically exact than the Synoptic accounts. The fact that these had been set down earlier and with less dogmatic purpose would, in this matter, counterbalance the disadvantage the writers had in drawing their accounts at second hand—at second hand, because if St. Matthew's direct authorship of the First Gospel is no longer tenable, then there is no actual eye-witness among the Synoptic Evangelists.

But in comparing the Fourth Gospel with the first three, we must not forget that the mechanical veracity of a photograph does not and cannot rival the intense and vital truthfulness of a great picture.

Our estimate of the comparative value of the Johannine record will depend on our estimate of the processes through which it assumed its present shape; and of this science, as such, can only judge when it is prepared to recognize as a factor—in many cases the dominant factor—in human mental processes the work of the Holy Spirit of God. We know that the general estimate of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church was very high; we know the opinion of Origen, who, with all his allegorizing tendencies (borrowed largely from his Hebrew teacher), was not only one of the most learned Bible students that ever lived, but a pioneer in textual and historical criticism. He held that, if the Gospels are the 'first-fruits' of the New Testament, St. John is the 'first-fruits' of all the Gospels.

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* R. Browning, 'A Death in the Desert.'

If we trust St. Luke when he describes the miracles of which he was an eye-witness, and St. Paul when he describes himself as a miracle-worker, we shall surely admit the validity of an *a fortiori* argument from the heroes of the Acts to the Central Figure of the Gospels. To St. Luke and St. Paul the Lord Jesus Christ was on an entirely different plane from that on which they stood themselves. The spiritual gifts they possessed were derived from Him, the largess of His Ascension. The powers that worked fitfully and partially in His followers were inherent in Him; they belonged to Him. A straightforward, intelligent reading, then, of the first-hand record of the Acts would naturally lead us on to expect the occurrence of still greater marvels farther back, even if we had not the Gospel narratives before us. Thus St. Luke not only gives us, in his own personal experience, points of contact with the earlier record of wonders; he also leads us to look for something still greater in Christ, something absolutely unique. And shall our scientific susceptibilities be shocked if we find it there?

We have spoken* of the changed aspect of the old puzzle about prayer, and of the way in which the power of prayer seems natural to many now, in a world that is ruled by law. The more this is realized—that prayer can be a real influence in a world where psychic influence is at least as effectually at work as is any mechanical force—the more natural the atmosphere of the Bible will become. For this atmosphere is one of belief in a providential ordering of the universe by a God who is in a real sense Father to His creatures, and who hears and answers their prayers.

It is not only in the Epistle of St. James that the efficacy of the prayer of faith is emphasized, though that Apostle's incidental treatment of the subject is remarkably in harmony with the modern views; for though he adduces the 'cosmic' results of Elijah's prayer—the drought and subsequent rainfall—it is to point a spiritual moral: the actual reward of faith which he holds up before us is the conversion of a sinner from the error of his ways.†

But the efficacy of the prayer of faith is prominent throughout the Old Testament and the New, and most intensely in evidence in the Gospels, and in the precepts of Jesus Christ.‡ His striking metaphor of the 'removal of mountains' was already in St. Paul's day on the way to take its place among the proverbial commonplaces of language, and its principle has been exemplified abundantly in all succeeding ages by the phenomena of conversions—of moral and spiritual miracles within the Church. But though these represent the noblest results of prayer, they may not be always the most striking. The power of faith does certainly extend its influence into the physical realm. Wonders wrought in answer to prayer—and most of the scriptural wonders are represented as being such—are robbed at once of half their 'portentous' character, and made more intelligible to an age to which mental therapeutics in an atmosphere of religious faith are a matter of everyday experience.

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* See above, p. 208.

† Jas. v. 16-20.

‡ Every 'mighty work' is in response to faith. For precepts, *cf.*, *e.g.*, Matt. vii. 7; Mark xi. 22-24; Luke xi. 9, xvii. 6.

No attempt has been made to cover proportionately or exhaustively the whole field of the subject treated in this chapter. The purpose has rather been to suggest something of the change which has passed over the controversy, converting it from a struggle between scientist and theologian to something more like a fellowship in quest of the truth. We are all agreed, surely, not to look for nineteenth-century science in the early narratives of Genesis, and their failure to correspond in detail with the results of geological, biological, and anthropological research no longer brings panic to the believer's heart or sceptical contempt of revelation to the lips of the scientist. We are all agreed that narratives, even Scripture narratives, are coloured by the conceptions and presuppositions of the age in which they were composed, and that what appears miraculous to one generation may be scientifically explicable to the next. We are all agreed that phenomena of a psychic nature, and reactions of spirit upon matter, which the savants of fifty years ago would have scouted as scientifically inconceivable, and therefore pure fabrications, must now be acknowledged as both possible, and actually occurring. These principles, combined with allowance made for the results of a candid criticism of the evidence, put the modern scientific spirit into a more sympathetic attitude towards the miracles even of the Old Testament. Some of them, that formerly seemed incredible, are found to fall within regions that are just being mapped out. In some of them the portentous character of the narrative is accounted for by long transmission of a story founded on fact, and then passed from mouth to mouth among a people of an essentially unscientific temper and tradition. In all cases the believer, whether scientist or not, detects the hand of a teaching Providence, of a self-revealing Personality that uses even the defects and imperfections of its pupils as an instrument for the conveyance of Divine truth. The principles with which we approach the miracles of the Old Testament will be valid also for the New Testament miracles. Only we here have a double climax—a climax of the intensity of wonder-working power, culminating in the miracle of the Resurrection: and a climax in the security of first-hand evidence, culminating in St. Luke and St. Paul and (many would add) St. John. The scientist of the future will doubtless be prepared to see in the record of the Gospels no mere subject for pathological study, still less an elaborate (and miraculously self-consistent!) fabrication. He will see in it the record of a life whose activities as they touch fallen and suffering humanity move partly in a region where science is gradually making itself at home, but pass insensibly, and, as it were, without breach of continuity, without shock even to scientific sensibilities, into a region whither science cannot penetrate. Even so He is depicted at the moment of the Ascension by the devout scientist St. Luke: 'As they were looking He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.'*

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* Acts i. 9.

VIII

THE BACKGROUND OF THE BIBLE

The Bible, to which we and not a few other nations owe much that is best and most classical in our language, our most characteristic and idiomatic phrases, our most familiar metaphors, is a Palestinian book. A Palestinian book, racy of the soil and climate of Palestine—it was produced almost entirely* in that insignificant little corner of the world. It could not have been produced as it is, even in its main outlines, in any other region. And the result, strangely enough, is its universal appeal to all races, periods, climes!

What is there about that strip of land, with its rocky ridges of bare pasture, its olive-clad slopes, its corn-growing sea-board, its deep-cleft Jordan Valley, its fringe of desert—what is there that has so influenced the Semitic genius as to render its literature catholic in range and quality?

The Koran, product of Semitism in the Arabian desert—product, too, of religious enthusiasm, of a championship of pure monotheism against idolatry—cannot, in this respect, be accounted comparable to the Bible by any careful reader of both. Its appeal, except in a few isolated passages, is exclusively to the initiated. Vivid and graphic as is its rather incoherent language at times, and lofty as are its theological sentiments, it is not by any means a book with which all races can so readily feel at home; nor is it one that can compete with any single book of the Bible in literary charm and beauty.

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* St. Luke's writings are an exception. The Epistles of St. Paul, *e.g.*, are largely Palestinian in feeling (see below, p. 239).

The Babylonian Semites have left us a literature which has a growing interest for the learned Assyriologist, an interest which he communicates by means of his interpretations to the man of general culture. But the attraction of Assyriology for us is, first and foremost, due to our conviction that it will throw light upon the Bible. And though the vigorous people who chose the cumbrous yet durable form of baked clay tablets for their records are in many ways worthy of our attention for their own sake, there is a certain remoteness about them and their writings which keeps us, as it were, at arm's length. Further familiarity, leading to a more just appreciation, may remove something of this. But it can never make the great, all-important change. We cannot imagine ourselves *adopting* the ancient Babylonian literature as we have adopted the Hebrew. David is ours, Mary is ours, James and John and Paul are ours; not so the dignified, stiff-limbed monarchs of Babylonia, with their cumbrous names and their massive, muscular limbs. Such of them as have become familiar acquaintances—a Sennacherib and a Nebuchadnezzar—have become so because of their place in the Bible. The coronation prayer of Nebuchadnezzar, rescued from oblivion, wins our admiration by the loftiness of its language, and helps us to a conception of the agelong nobility of monarchy as such; but we turn to it first because the king's name appears in the Hebrew Scriptures, and we leave it without acknowledging any direct contribution to the sum of our theological ideas.

It is there, after all, in the domain of religious thought, that the true difference comes in.

For it is not only David and Mary and James and John that have become our very own. Ours, too, is Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary and the Son of God; ours also the Hebrew national God, Jehovah, conceived as He is in the developed Old Testament literature as the 'one living and true God,' 'the Lord of all the earth,' or, in the fine phrase of the Targums, 'the Lord of the universe.' Jesus is ours, and Jehovah is ours. Bel and Marduk are nothing to us except so much material for the study of human beliefs, of mythological evolution, of 'comparative religion.'

That, of course, is the secret of our deepest and most intimate relation to the great Hebrew literature, Jewish and Christian; the ultimate *differentia* which sets it apart for us, and divides it off from all other literature that the world has produced. And if we would probe further into the mysteries of it all, we shall quickly come face to face with the conceptions of revelation and inspiration. But all our previous studies have taught us to look for an appropriate material medium through which the force of inspiration should work, an appropriate material setting in which the revelation should be framed, preserved, and handed down through the ages. The analogy of God's working in the world in general suggests convincingly that He will work for men—in this matter, as in others—through men; that the men by whom He conspicuously works will be specially fitted for the task imposed on them, and that not the least of the contributory causes to their special fitness will be found in the material environment of their life. The air they breathe—bracing or enervating—the soil on which their feet are planted; the particular form taken by the struggle by which they wring their livelihood from the land; the flora and fauna of their country; the steepness of its slopes, the form of its landscape—all these affect a nation in a hundred ways. If the peculiar climate of our own island, so exasperatingly capricious in the foreigner's eyes, and from us demanding so much of resourceful alertness, has played its part in fitting us to be the world's chief colonists, it may well be that the land of Palestine and its climatic conditions have contributed to the Bible some of its ubiquitous quality.

The Hebrews themselves have, indeed, side by side with their astonishing exclusiveness and racial persistency, an equally marvellous faculty of self-adaptation. The Polish Jews are very Polish, the German Jews German, the Spanish Jews Spanish, the English Jews English, yet each and all are unmistakably Jews, and retain the characteristics which mark them off from the rest of mankind long after the barrier of religion has been removed, and the stock modified by mixed marriages. It is no ordinary race that produced the Bible. The religious genius that breathes through every page of the Scriptures has left its traces on the Jew of to-day. And yet the average Englishman feels further removed from the modern Hebrew, who speaks his language, deals with him in business, and commands, very often, his admiration and respect, than he does from the Hebrew literature of 2,000 years ago. The devout student of the Bible sees in this remoteness and isolation of the Jew a fulfilment of prophecy. The people of the Messiah, having rejected Him, have brought on themselves the Deuteronomic penalties of unfaithfulness—they are scattered, homeless, friendless. Nor would we dream of denying this. Rather, we would suggest that the divorce from the Land of Promise, the Land so eminently fitted to draw out what was best in them, has been, under God, a large factor in the change that has come over them. The doom of agelong banishment has robbed them of the environment of their inspiration.

What we are now concerned to consider in some of its leading aspects is the influence exerted by the Land upon the Book; how the Land of Promise left its impress on the Literature of Promise, and helped to fit it for its great *rôle* as the religious literature of two hemispheres.

Perhaps we shall best bring home to ourselves the significance of this point if we try to picture what the Bible would have been like, had it emanated originally from the snowy wastes of Greenland or from some tropical island. If the Almighty had willed to teach the world religion from one or other of those quarters, He would undoubtedly have found adequate means and methods of doing so; but they would certainly have been very different from those with which we are familiar. The long Arctic night, with its brilliant sky-phenomena occasionally illuminating the months of darkness; the dramatic reappearance of the sun after protracted, watchful waiting; the glories of the brief summer, with its uninterrupted radiance; the resurrection spectacle of life's renewal—witnessed indeed in action upon a humbler and more limited vegetation than ours, but acting with surprising swiftness; the vast, monotonous spaces and the immense expanse of sky; the vivid, if simple, joys; the characteristic toils, hardships, and perils of the vigorous life of man—all these, we can realize, would form material for illustration and for symbolism. But how poor, how limited, compared with the rich background supplied to the Bible by the remarkably varied products and processes of Palestinian life! And the same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of our other hypothesis. The Bible of the tropical islander, though lacking the characteristic illustrations of the Greenlander, would be enriched by a background of luxuriant vegetation, with its glories of magnificent foliage and blossom; and if the list of his fauna contained but few mammals—few or none of those animal companions that are such eloquent teachers of higher truths than they know themselves—he would still have the treasury of a rich and varied insect life to draw upon, and birds, the unique glory of whose plumage would rival Solomon in all his glory. But if the Esquimaux Bible suffered from poverty of background, from the excessive limitations of its illustrative material, the Bible of the tropical island, while subject to many deficiencies in the same respect when compared with that of the 'Promised Land,' would have a special defect of its own. Its effectiveness would be marred, in a sense, by the very richness of the island's products, because those products are in the main peculiar to a particular zone. Its characteristic glories would be unintelligible—or, at any rate, incapable of making a direct and swift appeal—to the inhabitants of other regions. It would be absurd to suppose that this difficulty is not experienced by missionaries working, Bible in hand, in remote parts of the world; but it is felt in a comparatively small degree. And the mere fact that the Bible, a book of Palestinian origin, exists now, and works with living force in some scores of languages and dialects, speaks eloquently to the same purpose. The Promised Land is, in fact, a microcosm. The perennial snows of Lebanon, and the annual winter snows upon the lesser heights, bring it into touch with the frozen North and South; the deep gorge of the Jordan Valley, actually some 1,200 feet below sea-level, with its luxuriant tropical vegetation, proclaims its kinship with the climes much nearer to the equator; while the intermediate regions, the limestone hills with their flocks at pasturage, the vine and olive-clad slopes with their attendant industries, and the cornfields with all that they imply of husbandman's skill and toil, patience and anxiety and harvest-home joy, offer illustrations that appeal directly and forcibly to the majority of mankind. But Palestine, with all its unique range and variety of climatic conditions, of flora and fauna, of pastoral, agricultural, and industrial opportunities, is still primarily a Mediterranean country. The corn, the wine, and the oil, that have become, under inspiration, the illustrating vehicles of profound spiritual truth—these proclaim its close kinship with Asia Minor and Greece and Macedonia, with Italy and Southern Gaul and Spain. And so it is that the Bible was fitted by its background to make itself speedily at home in that region where the Gospel first spread among the Gentiles.

And even the limitations—for such, of course, there are —of the Palestinian landscape were supplemented by the providential ordering of the history of the Hebrew people.

The stern wildness and grandeur of the Judæan wilderness, of the Negeb, or desert of the south, and of the eastern wastes beyond Jordan as viewed from the rocky background of the land—these were not sufficient to supply the essential note of utter austerity that forms the foundation of the purest of all religions. The lack must be supplied by reminiscences of former wanderings of the Hebrew tribes in the desert of Sinai, and of a national betrothal to their God amid the solemn grandeur of those solitudes.

The mountainous ridge of Palestine, with its foot-hills and its narrow strip of maritime plain, offered no natural background for a worthy vision of the earth's birthday pageant. For this was needed (as we have seen) the spectacle of spring-time in the vast Babylonian plain, with its lifting clouds and subsiding floods—the earth's emergence from upper and nether waters. Whether it was the Babylonian captivity that supplied this illustration, or (as seems more probable) the Mesopotamian origin of the Hebrew race, in either case the vicissitudes of history fill up the little that is lacking in Palestine's background, for a Bible that shall comprise all the essentials of religious truth, and compose them in a form congenial to the tastes and experiences of widely scattered humanity.

A well-known writer on Palestine* calls attention to the significance of the eleventh chapter of Deuteronomy, as showing a remarkable insight into the potentialities of the Promised Land as a religious teacher. In that chapter the very simple and mechanical processes of agriculture proper to Egypt, and resulting from the peculiar conditions of climate and irrigation which are characteristic of the Nile Valley, are contrasted with the freedom and variety, the uncertainties and complexities, of man's struggle with Nature in Palestine. The climate and conditions of agriculture in Egypt, simple, monotonous, mechanical, have all the appearance of the inevitable about them; they do not in themselves suggest the action of a personal Providence. Not so with the Land of Promise. Unlike Egypt, it is 'a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven; a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are upon it from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.'* That such a lesson would be obvious to every inhabitant of this rich and varied country by no means follows. The same climatic conditions, the same stimulating landscape, the same demands of pastoral and agricultural labour, had resulted for the Canaanites in unspeakable moral and religious degradation. The land spoke to them with a very different voice, because their ears were only attuned to certain tones. And with the same alluring voice, enticing them to base self-indulgence in the name of religion, it spoke to those souls in Israel who, unfaithful in their allegiance to Jehovah, were ready to join their pagan cousins in the festive orgies of the gods of Nature and of Reproduction. But the Deuteronomist, with the prophet's insight into the lessons of past history, reads the true message of the Land to the people of Promise.

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* G. A. Smith, 'Historical Geography,' p. 74.

This is the primary function of the Holy Land in relation to the Bible—to prepare Israel to produce that Bible; to educate them in man's part of working dutifully and patiently for his daily bread, and waiting trustfully upon God for the fruits of his labour; to instil into them, through the subtle influence of environment, the sense of an ever watchful Providence controlling the seasons of the year, with their else unaccountable variations, directing every force and energy and operation of Nature, and thus making Nature itself—alike in its normal and abnormal aspects, in the rain and sunshine, in the drought and the earthquake—a witness to Himself.

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* Deut. xi. 11, 12.

How well the best of them learnt this lesson the Bible amply testifies. Every page of it breathes the consciousness of a personal Providence, and the feeling that Nature is but the vesture of the Almighty—'the fringe of His garment.'

Once learnt, this lesson can be applied to any tract of country and to any clime; but few countries in the world could offer so advantageous an object-lesson: not the flat, alluvial regions of Egypt and Babylon, not the arid grandeur and severity of the Sinaitic Peninsula or the Arabian Desert; still less, perhaps, the tropical island or the polar waste. Each would have—and, indeed, has—its own special lesson to teach us about the God of Nature; but none offers to the devout mind so rich and so congenial a field for the reverential study of the providential working of God. It is natural that a fellow-countryman of him who wrote the Book of Deuteronomy should be the first to proclaim to the heathen world the unfailing witness of God in Nature. If he was born in Tarsus, he completed his education in the Holy City, and the air of Palestine was in his blood. It is a Benjamite of the first century A.D. whose heart was in the Land on which, as he had been taught, the eyes of Jehovah rested from moment to moment throughout the year; it was one who proclaimed himself a 'Hebrew of the Hebrews,' who urged the pagans of Lystra to turn to that living God, who 'left not Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness.'*

And if the intrinsic characteristics of the Land are significant, so, too, are its external surroundings, its geographical position. Isolated, yet, in a sense, lying on the highway by which the great imperial movements of antiquity passed and repassed, it possessed a uniquely educative environment. Its isolation, though far from securing it actual immunity from invasion, gave the nation breathing-spaces in which to recover its vitality. But for the intercourse with their Canaanite neighbours, in which the writers of Deuteronomy rightly see a fatal obstacle to their ideal growth in moral and religious purity, this people might have found in the Promised Land, with its desert fringe on two sides, and harbourless sea-coast on a third, a protected nursery for the true religion, guarded from the enticing or constraining influences which must beset those whose lot is placed in the midst of next-door neighbours. That the best of them did find it so is witnessed by the Bible, with its steady and growingly intelligent loyalty to a pure monotheism, to which antiquity presents no parallel. But while enjoying the advantages of comparative isolation, this little people was not allowed to sink into a state of self-absorption. They stand upon their limestone ridge, as it were upon a watch-tower, and scan the horizon for the advancing host of Assyria or of Egypt; spectators of great world-movements, over which (even if they themselves have no direct part to play in them) they must learn that Jehovah—no mere tribal god, but 'the Lord of all the earth'—lays His controlling hand. Just so the Prophets, from Amos onwards, stand at gaze, and read the Divine judgments upon the great and little nations stretched out beneath their feet.* The people of the Bible are learning to widen their outlook; they are being educated out of that self-centred spirit which we express by such terms as 'insularity' and 'provincialism.' They have a message and a mission (dimly understood as yet) to the whole world, and over the whole world their gaze must range.

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* Acts xiv. 17.

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* Amos i., ii. ; Isa. xiii.-xxiii., etc. ; Jer. xlvi. *et seq.;* Ezek. xxv.-xxxii. See further, p. 243.

An indirect tribute to the potentialities of the Holy Land in this respect may be drawn from the effect of the Babylonian captivity upon the Jews. We might have supposed that the sojourn among strangers would have broadened their minds and given them a wider and more liberal outlook. If we are to judge from the tone of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the immediate effect was quite the contrary. The temper of the first revivers of the Hebrew polity, full as it is of a strong faith, a noble zeal, and self-devotion, is marked by a narrowness that holds in it the promise of the bigotry and fanatical exclusiveness of the Jews of New Testament times.

If the land reacted upon the spirit of its inhabitants, and so upon the general tendency of their literature, it had also a direct effect upon the details of that literature, suggesting its metaphors and its illustrations.

The poetic imagery of the Old Testament, which furnishes it, not only with literary charm, but also with a vehicle of sublimest teaching, is largely drawn from Nature. This is conspicuously true of the Psalms. Here are the hills and crags, and the thunderstorms that from time to time enwrap them; the tree planted by the water-side; the valleys, 'so thick with corn that they laugh and sing'; the Lord's vine brought out of Egypt, and the vineyard, with its elaborate arrangements and its protecting hedge, all neglected and ruined by the wild animals that have burst in and are uprooting the plants. The great song of the Spirit's work in Nature, the hundred and fourth

Psalm, sketches, as it were, the whole range of Palestine's flora and fauna, with the great, wide sea beyond, and man in the midst, engaged in his daily round of husbandry. And what is true of the Psalms is true also of the Book of Job, in which Nature's wonders are again and again adduced to demonstrate the power and wisdom of the Creator.

Rich, too, is the imagery employed in the Song of Songs to express love's hyperbole: Carmel, Lebanon, and Hermon, vineyards, orchards, and well-stocked gardens, lovely blossoms and fragrant scents, flocks of sheep and goats, harts, roes, and fawns, and little foxes in the corn, lions and leopards—all are brought in to complete the picture. The song reaches its climax of grace and beauty in that lyric in praise of springtime, hallowed by the tradition of hundreds of generations as a mystic Easter song:

'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away,
For, lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone,
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
The fig-tree ripeneth her green figs,
And the vines are in blossom;
They give forth their fragrance.' *

And when the prophets would picture to themselves and to those who need, in dismal times, a message of far-off hope, the glorious age of the Messiah, it is in terms of a miraculous fertility of Nature that they picture it. No better example could be chosen than the familiar thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, sublime as it is familiar:

'The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom

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* Cant. ii. 10 *et seq.*

> abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon. . . . In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the glowing sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water: in the habitation of jackals, where they lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. . . . They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Or this from Amos:*

> 'Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God.'

But while Nature supplies with bountiful hand appropriate figures and metaphors for visions too remote and unearthly to be depicted in direct language, human civilization, commerce, and art have also their contribution to give. Except just once or twice in their history—in the reign of Solomon, for instance, and that of Jehoshaphat—the Hebrews of Old Testament times were not a great trading people, nor highly advanced in the arts of life, compared with the nations around them. But they had, as it were, at their doors the greatest commercial people of antiquity—the Phœnicians of Tyre and Sidon. Their immediate interest in Tyre probably began when David, having pushed his conquests up to the Phœnician hinterland, made alliance with the Tyrian King, Hiram. But the literary interest concentrates itself upon the eighth and following centuries, when the prophets Amos, Joel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and

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* Amos ix. 13 *et seq.*

Zechariah, gaze out upon the famous city to read its destiny. And the climax is provided by Ezekiel in his twenty-seventh chapter, which is a precious treasure-house of data for the student of ancient commerce. With inimitable vividness and grace the prophet depicts for us the prospect of the crowded harbour and the richly-laden quays of the Venice of the ancient world: the various nationalities of the traders who thronged her markets and the infinite variety of their goods; the glory of her present prosperity seen against the shadow of her coming doom—it forms at once the most gorgeous and the most pathetic of all Old Testament descriptions.

This chapter has been a quarry and a mine for subsequent writers to draw from. The inspired author of the Book of the Revelation drew upon it for his description of the mystic Babylon, even as he appears to have made free use of other works. But its treasure is unexhausted still; and had not Tyre entered within the range of vision of an Old Testament writer, we may safely say that the Old Testament would have lost much of its warning message to a great maritime and commercial nation like ourselves. The land was essentially rural, agricultural, and pastoral in its potentialities, yet its prophets were able to draw from its immediate surroundings imagery that should be directly applicable to the developed commercial and manufacturing civilization of a later age.

But, after all, it is Nature, first and last, that forms the true background of the Bible, and no sketch of this aspect of the Holy Land would be complete without some special reference to the lessons which our Saviour drew from Nature. When He came in the fulness of time to reveal the Father as none had revealed Him before, He came also into an environment rich in illustrations, by which Nature could be made to speak, not only of the God of Nature, but of the God of grace and of redemption.

We naturally picture Him on the hill-side or the lake-shore, or in His friends' fishing-boat upon the waters, walking through cornfields, kneeling in olive-grove; and such is the universality of Palestinian scenery that the background against which His figure stands out in such strong relief, while yet it harmonizes with it so well, means probably almost as much to us as it did to those who saw Him there. It makes us feel that He is a real figure, and it makes us feel at home with Him. True, the city and the house were the scene of some of His most significant words and deeds, the temple, also, of some of His sublimest teaching. The marriage feast at Cana was the scene of His first miracle, and royal marriage feasts and banquets form the basis of some of His most famous parables. But the majority of His parables are drawn from outdoor life, and, of the rest, some depend for much of their vividness on open-air scenes. We picture the starving swine-herd pining for the fertile surroundings of his father's homestead, and watch him as he plods wearily, yet determinedly, into sight, while the father runs to meet him across the open country. We picture the prostrate figure of the robbed and assaulted traveller lying shunned and unnoticed beside the lonely highway, and see the kind face of the Samaritan bending over him. But the outdoor life and its occupations supply direct material for a large proportion of the Lord's most characteristic teaching. The fisherman's craft, which has given us the deeply instructive parable of the draw-net, is one that speaks with familiar voice to almost every clime. Its teaching power is enriched by the repeated object-lesson of a 'miraculous draught of fishes'—the first when Andrew and Simon, James and John, received their formal call to discipleship, and were marked out to be 'fishers of men'; the second when the risen Lord appeared upon the shore in the grey light of dawn, and Peter, after a moment's hesitation, flung himself into the water, and swam to his Master's feet to be absolved of his denial. Had the geographical boundaries of the land been shifted but a few miles southwards, we should have missed all this type of teaching, and the other holy associations of the Galilean lake—the walking on the deep and the stilling of the storm—for no Jewish fishing-boats plied along the inhospitable Mediterranean shore, or in the barren waters of the Dead Sea.

But the land is still more fertile than the water in imagery and metaphor for the illustration of spiritual truth. The vineyard and its labourers form the basis of more than one deep lesson—the barren fig-tree is the subject both of spoken and of acted parable. The mustard-plant, like leaven, illustrates the wonderful development of the spiritual kingdom. There is, however, no happier or more telling subject for illustration than the corn-plant—happy in the variety of illustrations it supplies; telling, because it forms the familiar staple of life, the principal object of the husbandman's care and toil, over so vast an area of the earth. In the parable of the seed growing secretly, with a steady, sure, yet unseen development, the corn enforces the lesson of the mustard-seed. In that of the wheat and the darnel it teaches, like the parable of the draw-net, the mystery of the promised continuance of good and evil side by side until the Day of the Lord; while the harvest which is its consummation is fraught with important teaching about the end of the world. The ripening harvest-fields of Samaria suggested words which have inspired centuries of missionary intercession. The parable of the Sower introduces corn-seed as a figure of the Word of God sown in men's hearts; while the different types of ground, all lying under the speaker's eye as He spoke—the hard-beaten track, where seed would lie till it became a prey for wild birds; the bramble patch; the 'stony ground,' where the underlying rock emerges to the surface; and the deep, rich soil—all these offer ideal illustrations of the different kinds of welcome that the Word receives in the hearts of men. Husbandry contributes further pictures also—the slave who tills the field by day, and when evening comes, must gird himself and wait at his master's table ere he can take his own supper; the ploughman who, when he starts, must needs keep his eye fixed on the furrow-line, and not look back. The corn itself is given a still holier place when the Lord uses it as a figure of His own death and fruitful resurrection-life. The wild flowers—'lilies of the field'—the wild birds, the foxes, each has its sacred message. But the noblest teaching of all, surely, is that which draws its illustrations from the shepherd's life.

If the Bible reader has reason to bless the little Lake of Galilee, with its busy fishing industry, and the maritime plain of Philistia and Sharon with its corn-lands, and the intermediate slopes with their olive-yards and vineyards, how his heart goes out to the high limestone ridge that forms the background of the land! These bare domes, with their steep grassy slopes and rugged heights, are the things he loves best of all, for they have given him the Good Shepherd.

The pastoral imagery of the Old Testament, scattered far and wide, in the Books of Genesis and Exodus, in the story of David, in the Psalms, in the Prophets, is one of the most tender and moving elements alike in narrative, in song, and in prophetic teaching. The idyllic scenes of shepherding in the lives of the patriarchs and of Moses are among the most beautiful in the Bible. David, the valiant shepherd-boy, is the darling hero of Israel's golden age. The prophetic metaphors by which sinners are described as wandering sheep, and the suffering Messiah as the sheep dumb before its shearers, or the mute and unresisting lamb led to the slaughter, or the Divine Shepherd is depicted as gently tending His flock and gathering the lambs in His arms—these have become classical in all the languages of Christendom. The rich potentialities of shepherd life as illustrating God's main dealings with the human soul are gathered up in the matchless twenty-third Psalm, of which every syllable, even to the last (grievously misinterpreted) verse, is drawn from the vocabulary of the shepherd's calling.

But it is in Christ's own teaching that the pastoral imagery reaches its highest point, and becomes the vehicle of the noblest teaching of all. He whose wonderful nativity was announced first of all to shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch, with unremitting devotion, over their flocks by night; He who after His baptism was pointed out by the Baptist as 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,' sums up in the parable of the Lost Sheep the whole story of a world's redemption. We cannot fail to realize how much is contributed to the picture by the background of a Palestinian shepherd's rough and perilous life—the hardships he has to endure, the dangers he must face to keep his flock intact and entire, to preserve it from the temptation of its own misguided instincts and the assaults of insidious enemies.

In the allegory, or group of allegories, preserved in the tenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, our Lord draws out the various lessons of pastoral life—lessons drawn from the fold itself, and its door; from the shepherd's management of the sheep and their response to his guidance; from the mutual knowledge and confidence and the distrust the sheep have of a stranger. Finally, identifying Himself with the 'Ideal Shepherd,' He shows that this means 'giving His life for the sheep.'

How much the Bible, how much all Christendom, and all Christendom that is yet to be, would have lost if Abraham had made Lot's choice of the plain instead of the hill country; if the Promised Land had not included within its bounds those bleak slopes where David faced the lion and the bear, and where the shepherds of Israel from generation to generation imbibed the lessons of lifelong devotion, in storm as in sunshine, by night as by day—a devotion which dimly reflected, as some of them were led to realize, the ceaseless care of the Great Shepherd!

> 'Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.'
> 'I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.'

Many of the thoughts suggested in this chapter might be followed out with considerable elaboration, and other fruitful lines of thought have doubtless escaped mention altogether. Enough, however, has been said to show how much the Bible, and therefore the Bible-lover, owes, under God, to the Land of Promise—to its geographical position and its geological formation, to the outlines of its landscape and the nature of its climate, to the products of the soil and the influences of the sky. This microcosm of Palestine, combining traits of every country under heaven, from polar ice to equatorial luxuriance of vegetation—the only land, as has been said, where a man could do as Benaiah did, and slay 'a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow'*—is the fitting background for an object-lesson in revelation that must appeal to people of every clime.

Travellers to Palestine come back sometimes disappointed with the smallness, the meanness, the barrenness of everything. If they read their Josephus, and the records of subsequent history, they would be able to think away much of the barrenness. Centuries of war and neglect and the dead hand of the Moslem would turn the Garden of Eden into a wilderness. We need only remind ourselves of the wholesale denudation of the country round Jerusalem by the besieging army of Titus to furnish its colossal girdles of palisading and its thousands of gibbets. A week's denudation will take scores of years to repair, and will probably never repair itself spontaneously. Nor, again, will the discerning visitor to Palestine complain of the narrowness of its bounds. Diminutive size does not always go with insignificance, and if we spoke of the Promised Land at the beginning as an 'insignificant little corner of the world," we were using the language of the superficial observer. The Promised Land is large in its variety and in its wide outlook—'a good land and a large'—a land where the inspired imagination has free scope, where great ideals are born, and have space to live and breathe and develop. It is a land, in short, well fitted to be the background of the World's Book.

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* 2 Sam. xxiii. 20; G. A. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

IX

THE BIBLE AND OTHER SACRED BOOKS

The course which our studies have hitherto followed will not have left us destitute of guidance as to the path to be pursued in regions still more remote. Taking the Bible as it stands, and appraising it so far as we are able at its own valuation, we have found it to be, like the Incarnate Word, at once human and Divine; we have found it to be on its material side subject to the conditions and limitations which beset our humanity—limitations local and temporal, racial and individual—limitations natural to the finite when brought into close juxtaposition to the infinite. At the same time we have seen in it another aspect, the Divine, in virtue of which it has proved to be an unerring guide in the ethical and spiritual realm—'a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.'* Like man himself, made, according to its own dictum, in the image of God, it is yet formed of the 'dust of the ground'—its physical affinities are with the lower creation.

Investigation into the literary characteristics of the Bible, and the psychological basis of its religious phenomena, illustrated for us in various ways their double relationship, and made clear a close affinity between Holy Writ and what lies outside its bounds.

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* Ps. cxix. 105.

Literary analysis, with its complex results, while increasing for us the marvel of the completed Bible's undoubted unity, evolved out of such bewilderingly complex processes of compilation, such apparently accidental or casual processes of selection, brought us on to ground from which the vast plains of heathendom were clearly visible falling away (here and there almost by insensible gradients) from the heights of revealed religion. We found the sacred historians employing methods similar to those of Arab chroniclers; using language closely paralleled by that of their Moabite neighbours, incorporating, in a changed form, material indubitably drawn from the treasure-house of Babylonian mythology.

We glanced also at the phenomena of prophecy, with its humbler antecedents, and paused at the parting of the ways where Samuel stands still in the realm of clairvoyant divination, to mark the dividing line; where one road, steep and rugged, leads the soothsayer up to the mystic heights of inspired prophecy, the other, smooth and alluring, descends by easy gradients, amid smiling landscapes, to the low flats of pagan soothsaying and necromancy. The upper road itself we found to bifurcate at a certain point, where the choice has to be made between a response (at whatever cost of unpopularity and personal isolation) to the highest stimulus, and that following of the line of least resistance, that reaction of the psychic medium to the stimulus of popular tendency, which is the mark of false prophetism. It is the choice between the career of a Jeremiah and that of a Hananiah.

But the great bifurcation further back implied a common ancestry, a common psychic and physical basis, for the human side of scriptural inspiration as exhibited in the prophet and that of the quasi-inspiration (if it is to be called so) of Gentile religion. It is the same type of nature that is wrought upon, the same highly-strung, highly-gifted psychic endowment with susceptibility to trance and sensory automatism, with gifts of clairvoyance, of telepathy and telæsthesia; but in the one case the suggestions received and acted upon uplift, in the other case they, on the whole, degrade. The soul that is nourished upon the theological sustenance of a pure monotheism, upon faith in a living, personal, and righteous God, whose call is 'Be ye holy, for I am holy,' moves upward (in proportion to his loyalty) from height to height. 'To him that hath, it shall be given.' The soul which, though endowed with the same psychical characteristics, is nurtured upon a polytheistic mythology that degrades, though he prove occasionally better than his creed, has no strong antidote against the poison of the diviner's temptations to avarice and selfish ambition, temptations which speedily lead on to self-deception by the path of fraud and trickery. The gulf that divides Hebrew prophecy at its best from pagan soothsaying was thus amply accounted for, but a common ancestry and common basis for the two was established. And we saw further, in the example of the predominantly healthy and beneficent influence of such an institution as the Delphic Oracle, traces of the working of the 'Spirit of mercy, truth, and love' among those with whom (as Scripture itself teaches us) the light that lighteth every man left not himself at any time entirely without witness.

We were led to see the marks of inspiration more especially in the intrinsic truth and sublimity of the products, and in their fruits—their influence upon humanity. We seemed to see that the intrinsic test showed no rigid correspondence between intensity of psychic excitation and intensity of inspired result. The most imposing testimony to the inspiration of the sacred Scriptures of Christendom we found in their universal and undying appeal to humanity of every type, and in their power to educe the best in each—their educative power.

If (and so far as) like results are seen to flow from the sacred books of heathendom, can we deny to them also a measure of inspiration? Whatever is good in them, we are sure, must be of God. Be these scattered lights the survivals of a primitive revelation (or, at any rate, of a purer religious system that has suffered decay), or be they rather blind gropings of those whom God made to seek Him 'if haply they might feel after Him and find Him'—in either case their origin is the same. 'Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above.'

Not all of them, indeed, claim for themselves a special inspiration or a supernatural origin. The sacred books of China, for instance, though they contain some of the most beautiful and inspiring thoughts in all literature, make no such claim.

The extant 'Bibles' of other peoples and religions belong each and all of them to the Asiatic continent. The religions of Africa (except Egypt), Australasia, and Polynesia, never seem to have lifted their votaries, even in the course of countless centuries, to the stage of civilization at which language expresses itself in written symbol and rudimentary forms of literature. The indigenous civilizations of North and South America, which, when Europeans first penetrated into Mexico and

Peru, had already reached a comparatively advanced stage, involving elaborate and complex religious rites, have left to us nothing that can be called sacred literature.* Unfortunately for the modern anthropologist, the European conquerors of the sixteenth century took no scientific interest on what they found established in those lands, and concerned themselves only to enrich themselves with the booty which the helpless civilization of the New World provided, and to plant on the embers of that *régime* which they so sedulously destroyed, the structure of a somewhat degraded form of Christianity.

But Asia (from which our own Bible comes to us) is rich in sacred books—books which have become familiar to the present generation, thanks to Professor Max Müller's great scheme of publication, as the 'Sacred Books of the East.'

The one exception is Egypt, which, among a most bewildering mass of sacred monuments furnished with inscriptions, has left us one legacy at least which deserves the name of a sacred book—namely, the famous Book of the Dead. But perhaps Egypt may be regarded as only apparently exceptional, for by history and tradition the Nile Valley belongs more to Asia than to Africa.

In the remains of Egyptian and Mesopotamian sacred literature we are dealing with material partly coeval with and partly earlier than the literature of the Old Testament, and emanating from nations with which the Hebrews came into definite contact during the period in which their own Bible was growing up. The Egyptian religious literature seems, however, to have left no traceable impress upon that of the Hebrews; and though the Babylonian literature (wholly or largely Semitic) has left its mark unmistakably upon the Hebrew Bible, the date of the contact is probably to be placed very far back, in the beginnings of the Hebrew people. The only other sacred Semitic literature that will come before us is the Koran—the latest-born of all the world's sacred books—and the relation of the Koran to the Old Testament as to the Christian Bible is a derivative one. The founder of Islam seems to have incorporated in his book a number of scraps of half-understood Jewish and Christian tradition. The rest of the Asiatic Bibles come down to us from the other great branches of the human races—from our fellow-Aryans of Persia and Hindostan, and from the Turanian races of China.

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* The clue to the interpretation of such Aztec writing as remains is unfortunately lost.

The sacred literature of Persia is the only one of these that can, with any likelihood, be supposed to have exercised a direct influence upon the Hebrew Bible. The policy of Cyrus, predicted by their own prophet, doubtless affected the Jews in general with a more conciliatory attitude towards the Persians—in whom they recognized fellow-monotheists, worshippers of 'The God of Heaven'—than they adopted towards Gentile nations as a rule. If it is almost inconceivable that the Old Testament writers during the Exile should have borrowed religious ideas or phrases directly from the hated Babylonians, it is not, *a priori*, improbable that the latest phases of the Old Testament literature should owe something to intellectual contact with their Persian deliverers and benefactors. The actual traces of Zoroastrian influence may be difficult to discover, but the discovery of such traces would not surprise us.

A comparison, however, of the Bible with other sacred books — a comparison very rough and general such as can be given here—will gain rather than lose from the fact that the books are independent of each other.

And first we may point out certain general characteristics which all 'Bibles' seem to share—characteristics common to the sacred books of Persia, India, and China, and shared, presumably, by Egypt and Babylonia, as would doubtless be evident did we possess any great representative collection of the sacred literature of those countries.

In every case the Bible is a *Bibliotheca Divina*, a sacred library rather than a single work. To the Bibles of the Further East, as to that of Judaism and Christendom, many hands contributed; they were built up in the course of long periods, and form, more or less, a 'national literature.' The first Hebrew Canon (though not the earliest element in the nation's literature) was the Law, with its ritual and ceremonial directions, and its precise and elaborate provision for systematic religious observances. This is based, no doubt, on a tradition of simpler, yet still elaborate, formulæ passed down from generation to generation in the Priestly caste. So, too, in the most venerable sacred books of the East, the earliest portions, so far as can be traced, consist chiefly of liturgical formulæ and ritual texts, amplified later, sometimes, by elaborate hymns. This fact is also illustrated by the phenomenon of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, which is simply a mass of religious formulæ and magical incantations and hymns. But the Egyptian Book, while illustrating the principle aforesaid, and also the principle of compilation and gradual growth, is probably unique in the utter disregard of consistency with which additions and expansions were made by votaries of one or other of the numberless different cults embraced in the bewildering polytheism of ancient Egypt. But without such a degree of inconsistency, an immense variety is possible within the limits of a single collection, as we have seen in our study of that Divine Library in which we found the characteristics of unity and diversity exhibited side by side to an almost inconceivable degree.

If our Bible contains many types of literature, and much material that is far removed from the original nucleus of religious formulæ, so also do the sacred books of Persia and India.

In the Middle Ages the 'religious,' whether priests or men in minor orders, or monks or friars, had an almost complete monopoly of the scrivener's art. The very word 'clerk'—which with us most commonly means a writer—witnesses eloquently to this fact. It was the 'clergy' who wrote down whatever was written, and read whatever was read. In their hands tradition, in all its forms, was gathered up. So it came to pass that all the European literature that has come down to us from a certain period has passed through the hands of this clerical caste; that we owe almost entirely to it, not only the theological lore of the Middle Ages, but its gropings after natural science, its family records and genealogies, its chronicles and histories.

If Christendom had not already possessed its Canon of Scripture, fixed and closed, we may well imagine that much of this multifarious lore would have acquired, in the eyes of subsequent generations, a special sanctity, as emanating from the 'clerical caste.' Nor would there be anything obviously incongruous, from a literary and historical point of view, in imagining such a fate for the works of the saintly Bede or the noble chronicle carried forward with such pious care from generation to generation in the principal religious houses of England. Certainly such works would compare very favourably alike in religious quality and in historical value with much of the sacred literature of the ancient world. But the point we desire to emphasize at present is the way in which this fact—that the Priestly caste has always tended to be the learned caste—has affected all Bibles alike, with the single exception, perhaps, of the Koran, which stands in this, as in other matters, in a category by itself. The fortunes of the nation concerned, its historical vicissitudes, the prowess of its traditional heroes, are recorded side by side with the religious formulæ; laws and statutes of no directly religious character; scraps of national mythology, venerated because of their antiquity; sayings of wise men; precepts of philosophy, poetry of various kinds, genealogies, and a host of other matters—all these have found a place in the sacred books of the East, have shared the prestige of the more ancient and the more directly religious elements, have acquired a quasi-religious character from their association with the Priestly caste.

In all the Bibles alike, except the Chinese, a claim to some sort of inspiration is made, or implied, or at least a claim to supernatural origin; and in all alike there is a tendency to support this claim (sometimes with more, and sometimes with less, justification, but always, perhaps, without dishonest intention) by assigning the books to the great religious leaders of antiquity, or to the reputed founder of the religion.

Thus, the fragment of the Persian Zend-Avesta that remains—one book out of an original total of twenty-one—contains not only ancient liturgies and hymns and sacrificial litanies, but also laws civil and religious (especially concerning ceremonial purification), and a treatise on medicine. There is an account of the spread of Zoroastrianism, and the person of Zoroaster is depicted, in a convincingly human form in the earlier parts, and as the hero of fantastic legend in the later.

The Indian Bibles, the sacred books of Brahmanism and of Buddhism, show a like variety of style and matter in their component elements. Especially is this visible in the Brahman-Hindu literature. The Vedic hymns (*Mantras*) of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, in verse or prose, are supplemented by ritual commentary in the *Brāhmaṇas,* and doctrinal development in the *Upanishads.* The Laws of Menu—the foundation of the caste system—provide an elaborate rule of conduct, like that of the Pentateuch, bringing every aspect and department of life under the dominion of religion; while the great popular epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata,* supply the element of heroic legend and romance, with a slender foundation of far-off history. The sacred books of Brahmanism are remarkable also for the wide range of time they cover, comparable to that occupied by the composition of the various elements of the Christian Bible. The *Ṛig-Veda,* which itself shows clear traces of an elaborately composite origin, involving compilations, successive additions, and redactions or editings of its various parts, may lay claim, in some of its elements, to a very high antiquity (1200-1100 B.C.), even these being, probably, the products of a considerable previous development; while the great epics apparently date from about 500-200 B.C., the *Mahābhārata* having been subject also to later additions.

Nor do the sacred books of China fall behind the rest in this variety of matter and of style. The Bible of Taoism, it is true (representing the teaching of Lao-tsze, born about 600 B.C.), is almost entirely metaphysical and ethical in character, and akin in its subject-matter and the elevation of its ideas to some of the best philosophy of ancient Greece. But the sacred books of *Confucianism*, associated with the name of Confucius (Kung-foo-tsze, died 478 B.C.) and his greatest successor, Mencius (Meng-tsze, died 288 B.C.), 'range from extremely dry chronicles to the interpretation of magical formulas, rules of conduct, and sacred songs,' Mencius's teaching having for its main theme the inculcation of reverence in every department of domestic and social life.

The other sacred books show, then, countless analogies to the Bible, alike in the variety of the elements which compose them and in the fact that they represent a gradual growth—a slowly developed literature.

They show themselves amenable to the same methods of literary criticism (particularly the Brahman books), and several of them make a similar claim to Divine inspiration. Thus, the *Mantras* of the Vedic literature are ascribed to 'seers,' who wrote down what they 'saw' —things pre-existent, absolutely authoritative, eternal. Further, though the different portions of these great literatures vary enormously in dignity and elevation of style and spirit, all alike contain much that is lofty and inspiring, nobly expressed. The *Li-Ki* of Confucianism (completed in the second century B.C.), with its doctrine of an all-pervading reverence, is responsible for the best elements in the Chinese character to-day, and has set a standard still maintained with remarkable fidelity after the lapse of more than two thousand years.

The epics of Hinduism—to say nothing of the earlier books—are full of a fine heroic spirit, and of a genuine feeling after union between heaven and earth, expressed in the idea of transitory incarnations of the Divine Being. The sacred books of Buddhism, which offer less prominent analogies to the Christian Bible in the diversity of their contents, come perhaps nearest of all in the impressive beauty of their moral precepts, especially the *Sutta Pitaka*, in which are enshrined the discourses of Buddha himself. Nor is the Zend-Avesta wanting in noble and inspiring thoughts. And the same may be said in a sense of the Koran, though its peculiar character and history demand that it shall be left for separate treatment by itself.

If this be so, the question inevitably arises: Can we, in these days of free inquiry and impartial judgment, refuse to such books the title of 'inspired,' if we still accord it to our own Bible? We shall admit that the analogies between our Bible and those of ancient heathendom are many and striking. The Bible, like them, contains traces of myth and legend, tradition that is not quite history, genealogical and other matter which of itself has no direct bearing upon religion at all, apothegms of shrewd worldly wisdom, dramatic lyrics which (on the surface, at any rate) breathe the spirit of a mere human love-song. Like them, the Bible is, in one sense, an agelong collection of national literature, which probably attained to its place of honour and authority, as a matter of fact and history, in a way largely analogous to that by which the sacred books of the East were enthroned. Its books were first received partly, it would seem, on the authority of the 'caste' from which they emanated, or through whose hands they passed, partly because they, many of them, were ascribed (and that not always correctly) to the great national and religious heroes of the past—a Moses, a Samuel, a David, a Solomon, a Job, a Daniel.

All this may be granted, and yet we feel that the real question has not been touched. We have only dealt as yet with externals, with the body and soul of the literature we are comparing; the inner spirit remains unexplored.

When we were studying inspiration, we saw that, while the mere claim to announce the Divine message was important as a starting-point, it was not always to be looked for, nor could the manifest traces of psychic excitation in the writer be safely used as a test of inspirational intensity. More helpful criteria could be found in the intrinsic sublimity of a scripture and its power to touch and elevate and, in fact, *inspire*, not only those to whom it was first addressed, but subsequent generations too. Nor were we content with that. We found what seemed to be the controlling hand of inspiration as much in the whole as in the parts. Even the least obviously inspired elements of the Old Testament had a claim to their place as living members of a great organism; as contributing to a vast onward movement which culminated outside the Old Testament itself; as adding something to the concrete object-lesson of the Divine dealings with a race selected and trained to be the religious teachers of mankind.

Is this one 'increasing purpose' to be traced, however dimly, through the pages of the other sacred books? Are their various elements welded together not so much by forged logical links as by the bonds which unite living part to living part in an organism that lives and grows? Are they alive to-day at all, in a true sense, with a life that is progressive, expansive, self-communicating?

Bishop Westcott, after an appreciative survey of the Bibles of pre-Christian religions, condemned them as unhistorical, retrogressive, and partial; and though nearly twenty years have passed, and enlightened Christendom has, on the whole, adopted a more sympathetic attitude towards the religions of heathendom, and a more critical attitude towards its own sacred books, the judgment remains true and valuable. The two last counts depend, in a sense, upon the first. A religion, or a Bible, will be retrogressive and partial in proportion as it is unhistorical, and in the same proportion it will tend to be unfruitful. Revelation of truth is bound up with life. Inspiration implies that the conditions of life at least are present to receive the Divine inbreathing. As a matter of fact, we have come to realize that the permanent value of the Old Testament, as of the New Testament, lies in the fact of its close touch with life and history. Truth *grew* for the Hebrews because it was not relegated to the region of abstract speculation, but was worked out, often very painfully, in flesh and blood. The chastening discipline, as well as the success and progress, of the national life contributed their share to the many-sidedness of truth. So was wrought out, for instance, the lofty conception of God: thought, stimulated by the discipline of history, moving on from the idea of a mere tribal Deity to that of One who was, in a real sense, Lord of the Nations too; from that of a God who would support His favourite people, right or wrong, to that of One whose very intimate relation with Israel was a guarantee that He would visit upon them all their iniquities.* So gradually the God who had brought Israel out of Egypt was realized to be the same who had led the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir,† and who was ready to bring even the Ninevites to repentance in order that He might pardon them. The Deity whose sole worshippers the Hebrews were proud to be was One who would welcome Egypt and Assyria to His courts, saying: 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.' ‡

So it was also with other ethical and religious concepts—with the consciousness of individual responsibility, which appears only, in its mature form, in Ezekiel; with that of the superiority of heart-worship to religious ceremonial—one of the principal messages of the great prophets. Thus the conception of religion grows. At first narrow and partial, it is enriched progressively by experience, by the providential discipline of life from generation to generation. Because the revelation is constantly in touch with history, it grows and expands, till at last it is no longer national or even racial, but a message for mankind. Is this impression left on us by any of the other sacred books of the East?

Its historical character is essential to our Christian Bible. Its climax is in the New Testament, of which the message is that a Redeemer has actually appeared, and that at a given moment of time; that God has actually revealed Himself in a real human life, has conquered sin and death, not in idea only, but in fact; and offers to every soul of man an actual share in His victory on conditions which are practicable; that humanity, and every individual man, has the opportunity of a fresh start in Christ, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, and 'rose again the third day,' and is 'alive for ever more.' St. John felt that everything depended on the confession that 'Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,'* and the Church realized so strongly the importance of emphasizing the historical character of the grounds of her hope that she actually inserted into the framework of her creed the name of Pontius Pilate. The distinctively Christian part of our Bible is historical, or it is nothing. If Christ be not come in the flesh—if Christ be not man—our preaching and our faith are alike vain.† And we have already seen elsewhere how strong is the basis of our belief that its records are historical in every sense of the word that matters.

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* Amos iii. 2.

† *Ibid.*, ix. 7.

‡ Isa. xix. 24.

The Old Testament Scriptures are, in a sense, the historical prelude to the great moment of the 'fulness of time,' which is the theme of the New.

That we are bidden by criticism to read the history in a new way does not fundamentally alter this fact. If the chronology that lies on the surface, as it were, of the Old Testament—the chronology adopted by Archbishop Ussher, which adorns the margin of old-fashioned Bibles—has proved to be artificial and delusive, the fact remains, and comes out, in some ways more clearly than before, that we have in the Hebrew Scriptures the record of a revelation worked out in the life of a people. Historical matter forms the greater proportion of the whole book, and the non-historical books of the Prophets derive much of their significance from the fact that their place in the framework of the history is determinable.

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* 1 John iv. 2.

† *Cf.* 1 Cor. xv. 14.

And if the methods of the Old Testament historians are now known to have been imperfect from the scientifically historical point of view of a much later age, that does not affect the matter so seriously as might be supposed. Errors, as we should call them, in chronology, and the tendency to read back later ideas into earlier periods, do not affect the purpose of the sacred historians, which is clearly that of tracing the governing and disciplining hand of God in the nation's career. Nor do they seriously affect the final result. For not only did the Hebrew historians see this guiding hand, but they have enabled us also to see it. We who think we can detect some of their errors, and attain to a truer estimate of this and that period of their history than its own historians achieved, are deeply beholden to those whom we criticize, for by their help we, too, are able to mark the hand of God in the nation's career. We can see Him revealing Himself more and more in the history and in the people, in their prophets and their prophetic historians, their priests, their psalmists and poets, their wise men. We can watch the prophets as they unfold the Divine message and apply it to the varying circumstances of the national life. We can see the moral and spiritual character of the religion being perfected through suffering. We can watch the light growing as the day dawns, till the 'Sun of Righteousness arise' at the first Christmastide.

When we turn from the Christian Bible to the sacred books of the East, we find no such close and constant touch with history, and in consequence we miss the progressive, living, and growing character of the Bible's revelation, and its universal appeal, begotten of a vital contact with human nature on many sides and through a long series of centuries.

Of the *Zend-Avesta*, perhaps, it is not fair to speak so decisively as of the other books, because so little of it remains—scarcely a twentieth part, perhaps, of the original total. But it is significant that in what is left to us, the outcome, perhaps, of some eight centuries of accretion—a period equal to that which separates Amos from St. Paul—the historical matter, such as it is, covers little more than a single generation, and even the record of the mission of Zoroaster himself is given without any detail.

The Hindu Bible is even more remarkable for its want of historical substratum, a trait which partly expresses, and is in part, no doubt, the result of that curious insensibility to the force of historical argument which Western missionaries notice in the peoples of India to-day. With all the range of the Hindu sacred literature, of which the *Vedas* alone probably cover a period of more than a thousand years, it has been observed that the history of Hindustan 'remains dateless till after the invasion of Alexander the Great' in the fourth century B.C.

In Hebrew history a conjectural chronology, within a few years of the actual, can be carried back as far as Solomon or David (some would say still further), and by the eighth century we are on firm ground.

If the *Vedas* offer no sure historical standing-ground, what of the epics of later days? The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*—the latter a stupendous work, about seven times the length of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* put together—may contain, like the Homeric poems, a nucleus of history hidden away among its legendary and mythological matter; the Wars of the Kansavas and the Pāṇḍavas, with their countless episodes, may be as much (or as little) historical as those of the Trojans and the Achaians; but the record of them cannot by any stretch of language be described as historical in the same sense as are the records of the Old and New Testaments.

When we pass to China, we come to an apparent exception. The *Shoo-King,* one of the Confucian classics, professes to give continuous historical records of a period of more than 1,700 years—from 2357 to 627 B.C. (corresponding, according to the traditional chronology of Ussher, to the time between Noah's middle life and the last century of the Judæan kingdom): it recounts 'the rise and fall of dynasties . . . personal successes and failures . . . real and striking incidents illustrative of national policy and national character.' But this advantage is matched or outweighed by grave defects in other directions, which render the Confucian literature unworthy to be classed with technically religious books at all. It recognizes, in fact, no Divine object of worship.

If the pre-Christian sacred literatures offer a contrast to the Christian Bible in the matter of vital contact with human history, the contrast is perhaps greater still when we come to mark the movement and tendency which the literatures illustrate and express. In the one case there is, on the whole, an advance; in the other, a retrogression: in the one case it is an upward, in the other a downward movement. And this follows, as we have already seen, from the relation to history and life.

The Old Testament is marked off from all the rest of ancient literature in that it looks steadily forward, and not backward. The 'Golden Age' of the Gentile nations lay far back in the past. The so-called 'Messianic Eclogue' of Vergil, in which the poet has caught, perhaps, the spirit of the more than half Jewish 'Sibylline Oracles,' is an exception that proves the rule. And even here it is not so much a 'new heaven and a new earth' that are looked for as a return of the glories of primeval days:

'. . . Redeunt Saturnia regna.'*

As it was with the classical literature that had no 'Bible' of its own, so is it also with the sacred books of the East. The contrast with the Old Testament is fundamental. The Hebrew historians do indeed, in times of national gloom and depression, cast wistful glances back to the wondrous days of Moses, the heroic doings of David, the material glories of Solomon's reign; but the prominent and distinctive feature of the Old Testament literature is that Messianic hope, that constant looking forward to a Divine Deliverer, to a day of the Lord when righteousness and peace shall reign, which culminates in the psalmists and the prophets. The Cause of the world's religion was bound up with the history of the Hebrew people, and they knew it. Therefore they looked forward, and not back. The Old Testament needs the New Testament to complete it. 'It is easy,' says Bishop Westcott, 'to see how the Old Testament, if it remains by itself unconsummated by the New, passes through the Mishna into the Talmud.' Even inspired teaching, if it finds no opportunity of realizing itself consciously in the active life of a society, tends to evaporate into speculative theory, or to shrink into cramping formalism. So the Old Testament in the hands of unbelieving Jews lost its true goal, and dissipated its vital power in the arid wastes and dismal swamps of Rabbinism—deserts not without an occasional oasis, it is true; morasses not without points of secure and solid ground, but contrasting most strikingly with that Divine commentary upon the Old Testament which is furnished by the New. The candid Jew of to-day is foremost to admit that, while the Rabbinic literature of the second and following centuries A.D. has been grievously maligned and misunderstood by Christian scholars, even the Jewish student must search patiently through masses of useless and uninteresting matter ere he comes upon a nugget of gold; while the New Testament is, as it were, one mass of precious metal. There every word tells—every chapter, every verse almost, has a living message to the reader.

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* Ecl. iv. 6.

The same contrast appears when we compare the New Testament—or the Bible as a whole—with the sacred books of the East. As the Old Testament in Jewish hands fades away into Mishna and Gemara, so the Egyptian Book of the Dead becomes overlaid with mutually inconsistent commentaries of an exceedingly perplexing kind. So, too, the vigorous spirit of the Vedas melts away into the ritual commentary of the Brahmanas and the speculative dreams of the Upanishads. Here, as in the Chinese and the Persian sacred books, we find the noblest thoughts and aspirations at the beginning. As the Ṛig-Veda is the climax of the Hindu literature, so, too, the Gâthâs form at once the earliest and the noblest element in the Zend-Avesta. The same retrogressive principle is visible (though, perhaps, in a less marked degree) in the sacred literature of Taoism and Confucianism. In each of these the 'Primary Classics'—the works rightly valued most—come first in time: the 'Five *King*' of Confucianism before the 'Four *Shoo*,' and the *Tao-tih-king* of Lao-tsze before the less noble *Kan-ying-peen* and *Yin-chih-wan*.

Nor is the Pâli literature of Buddhism free from the same defect, if it be true that the *Abidharma Pitaka*, or 'Basket of Speculation,' is at once its least inspiring and its latest element.*

The sacred books that have not struck their roots deep and wide into the soil of human nature and human history have failed, not only to grow heavenward, but also to spread their branches abroad over the earth. They are not only stunted in their upward growth, but restricted in their range. It is the glory of the Bible that, having had its origin in narrow and insignificant Palestine, it has yet a real and living message to all the earth.

The potentialities of the Old Testament in this respect were not realized till it had been illumined by the completed life of Jesus Christ and the glory of His resurrection—not, indeed, until some time after the ascended Lord had sent down His illuminating gift at Pentecost. Once realized, however, those potentialities became obvious, and since then the Old Testament Scriptures, with their Divine commentary of the New Testament, have gone forth conquering and to conquer.

Each of the greater religions of the Orient—Zoroastrianism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism—has had its day of progress and of conquest

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* In frankness it must be owned that some would see a similar deterioration within the limits of the Old Testament, where the Hagiographa would on an average be regarded as on a lower level than the prophets, and also in the New Testament, if 2 Peter be accepted as the latest. But taking the Christian Bible as a whole, there is an ascending movement from Old Testament to New.

—far back in the centuries. Zoroastrianism has been dead for many centuries as an influential or a national religion, though a form of it still survives among the Parsees.

Brahmanism still holds sway over millions of people, and so does Buddhism in one or other of its forms; but their days of progress are over. Like Zoroastrianism, they have their eyes fixed on the past, and their feet meanwhile have become entangled in the meshes of an elaborate traditionalism. The civilization they represent is at a standstill, except so far as it is stirred by the stimulus of enforced contact with the West. Still more emphatically is this true of Confucianism. In China we have the spectacle of an arrested development of twenty centuries' duration, and it is directly due to the influence of its sacred books. 'Mencius,' says Bishop Westcott, 'gave his countrymen the type of Confucius as the attainable image of the perfect man, and for two thousand years they have rested in it.' Confucianism has produced that 'self-sufficiency' of the Chinese character which is content without progress or advance; a life that is no life because it is innocent of change.

The want of progress, and the failure to grow inwardly and outwardly, is due to a deficiency of expansive power, a lack of elasticity, of a faculty of self-adaptation to new conditions. This it is that gives to the religions of the East and to their sacred books their partial and local character. Each of them has its noble and inspiring thoughts; but they fail hopelessly to cover the whole ground. In the sphere of religion they represent at best little more than a 'psalter completed by a law of ritual.' Some of them are not *religious* in the strict sense at all. Confucianism is a positivist creed that refuses to look higher than man; Buddhism an agnostic philosophy too modest to glance upwards. Zoroastrianism, monotheistic in its tendency, was yet based on a dualism which practically divided the sovereignty of the universe between Ahuramazda and Ahriman—between a good and an evil power. Brahmanism, itself rather a philosophy than a religion, is based on the ancient Hindu polytheism represented in the Vedas and the Purāṇas.

Buddhism and the native Chinese cults are alike negative and repressive in their influence. Their sacred books know of no positive spiritual stimulus such as can transfigure a growing life and make it develop and expand ideally. Buddhism, with all the wonderful graces of the character it fosters, with all the moral beauty of its precepts, bears with it its own condemnation in its endeavour to annihilate the seats of temptation, its despair of purifying them, and turning them to 'newness of life.'

The Koran might, at first sight, seem more in a position to establish its claim to a place side by side with the Christian Bible, and that on several counts.

In the first place, the religion associated with this remarkable book is the only one except Christianity that is unquestionably enlarging its borders and spreading itself over new territories to-day. Zoroastrianism is a thing of the past, almost as extinct as the far inferior religions of ancient Egypt and Babylon, of Greece and Rome. Brahmanism and Buddhism and Confucianism and Taoism, though they still bulk largely within a certain defined radius, are losing rather than gaining ground. Meanwhile Islam, a religion which venerates its sacred book more, perhaps, than any other in the world, is making headway. In the Soudan especially (where it has been given, perhaps, more than a fair advantage by the scrupulousness of British policy) the religion of the Koran is making, among tribes long accustomed to Arab influence, a progress that is viewed with something like consternation by the Christian world.

Further, though the Koran itself, being the work of a single man, does not exhibit that working out of a revelation in the agelong history of a people which we have found impressed in a very rudimentary form on the sacred books of Gentile religion, and with remarkable perfection on the Old Testament, it does compress into the short period of a single lifetime the results of a growing mental capacity, of struggle and controversy, disappointment and failure, of progress and victory. It bears also, especially in certain places, the marks of a strong conviction of personal mission, of a nature highly strung and psychically sensitive, yet withal possessed of uncommon shrewdness and insight into human nature.

Moreover, though it is easy from the Christian point of view to judge and to condemn the Koran by its fruits, to denounce its policy of conversion at the point of the sword, its degradation of the family, and so forth, there is a retort ready at hand for the Mohammedan controversialist. Christendom has not always been innocent of using forcible methods of conversion. Indeed, a candid examination of the history of the conversion of Europe since the days of Constantine will shew few spots outside the British Isles where Christianity has been planted without the use of violent measures—measures analogous to those exhibited and approved in the early stages of Old Testament history, and drawn (so the Moslem might urge) from the Christian Bible. Nor from the side of sexual morality was mediæval Christendom, nor is modern Christendom, in a position to 'cast the first stone'; though in this the blame cannot be laid upon the Scriptures. In the days of heroic conflict between Christendom and Islam, the latter produced leaders of chivalry as noble as any on the Christian side. Richard Cœur-de-Lion must acknowledge in Saladin his knightly peer. And were not the Moslem Aristotelians the precursors of the scholastic learning of mediæval Christendom?

Mohammedanism was from the first, on its best side, a protest on behalf of monotheism against the idolatry prevailing among the Arabs — a protest uttered and reiterated by one who, at any rate at the beginning of his public career, believed himself called of God to extirpate idolatry, and to play the great legislative *rôle* among his own countrymen which he understood to have been performed for the Jews by Moses, and for the Christians by Jesus. It still retains some of the impetus of that early zeal and conviction, and that may account for its present-day successes where it comes upon African tribes in much the same state of religious development as were the Arabs among whom it was first launched. But whatever may be said for Islam, a first-hand acquaintance with its sacred book will quickly dispel any expectation of finding in the Koran a rival of the Christian Scriptures. Indeed, were it not for its noble monotheistic zeal, and for certain characteristics borrowed directly or indirectly from Jewish and Christian sources, an impartial critic would probably place it far below the level of those ancient sacred books of the Gentile world which we have been considering. To compare it with the Bible would be, frankly, ridiculous. Its confused and incoherent pages, interspersed with occasional passages of sublime beauty and truth, are apt to give the casual Western reader an exaggerated view of the disorder which must have prevailed in the mind from which they emanated. As a matter of fact, the disconnected and inconsequent character of the so-called 'revelations' as they stand is partly due to the way in which the Koran assumed its permanent form. The prophet's literary remains—written down by his scribes, partly on skins, partly on dried leaves—seem to have been left at his death in a disordered and incomplete state. His disciple Abu Bekr collected the writings, and, instead of attempting to arrange them in a chronological or logical order, had them transcribed on a principle of which the main point was to put the longest *Suras* first and the shortest last. Thus the revelation accounted earliest by tradition appears as the first half of Sura xcvi., which bears the unpleasant title of '*Congealed Blood,*' and runs as follows: 'Read, in the name of thy Lord, who hath created all things; who hath created man of congealed blood. Read, by thy most beneficent Lord; who taught the use of the pen; who teacheth man that which he knoweth not.'*

The orthodox theory about the Koran is that on a certain night, 'the night of Al Kadr,'† it was sent down by the Almighty from beside His throne to the lowest heaven, where it was placed in charge of the angel Gabriel, and by him delivered in portion to Mohammed from time to time. Contemporary criticism taunted the prophet with his inability to produce it all at once. At the end of the seventeenth sura he meets this criticism with a 'revelation': 'We have divided the Koran, revealing it by parcels, that thou mightest read it unto men with deliberation; and we have sent it down, causing it to descend as occasion required.'

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* Sale's translation.

† Sura xcvii.

In this 'revelation by parcels' we can discern a kind of evolution, in spite of the entire absence of order which characterizes the collection. The shorter suras, which are in many cases the earliest, have a preponderantly 'mediumistic' character, and are recognized as being the outcome of *séances,* in which the prophet was in a species of epileptic trance—a type of utterance that among the early Arab believers would carry with it its own credentials of inspiration. Later on the conditions of abnormal psychic excitation become less apparent; we have a period of longer utterances of a more logical and dogmatic type, and meanwhile there grows up also a tendency among the revelations to assume a more controversial character, and to become more obscure to us, because more and more directed against the assaults of contemporary criticism. At a comparatively early period we find Mohammed borrowing freely, and often most inaccurately, from Jewish and Christian legend. A typical instance is the identification he makes between Mary (Miriam) the sister of Moses and the mother of Jesus. At a later period, life, with its triumphs and disappointments, had given him enough to say without borrowing from such sources; though he retains the colouring of biblical phraseology picked up in early days from intercourse with Christians and Arabian Jews,* and not seldom has to use his wits to meet criticisms directed against his earlier borrowings.

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* Margoliouth, 'Mohammed,' p. 60, instances such phrases as 'tasting death,' 'to bring from darkness to light,' 'the trumpet shall be blown,' 'to roll up the heavens as a scroll is rolled up,' 'the new heavens and the new earth,' 'that which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man.'

Perhaps it may not be too much to say that the phenomena of the Koran itself go a long way in support of that title of 'The False Prophet,' which was his favourite designation in the mouths of mediæval Christians. His work, in its more rudimentary stages, evinces very strongly the impress of abnormal psychic excitation to which we have already referred. It is practically certain that he was subject to epileptic fits. The evidence shows that his 'revelations' were attended by fits of unconsciousness, 'accompanied' (or preceded) 'at times by the sound of bells in the ears, or the belief that someone was present; by a sense of fright such as to make the patient burst out into perspiration; by turning of the head to one side; by foaming at the mouth; by the reddening or whitening of the face; by a sense of headache.'* To such a subject the psychic phenomena which we have noticed in some of the Hebrew prophets might come naturally. He might see things in trance; he would certainly hear voices which had no material counterpart. He was fitted in certain specific ways to be the channel of a Divine message to his countrymen. Nor was he lacking in credentials which the more devout-minded of them would be ready to accept. Abnormal mental conditions have always tended to win the reverence of certain races, and 'madness' has something sacred about it in the ages of primitive peoples. Mohammed had great difficulties in dealing with scepticism among the people of Mecca, and it was long before he could produce any 'miracle' to convince them other than those 'revelations' which were afterwards embodied in the Koran. But the

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* Margoliouth, *op. cit.*

séances at which these were produced won him a faithful nucleus of followers, and his career as a prophet was begun. If the Koran had nothing else to show, we might have retained a belief in the sincerity of its author. But the later developments of the prophet's career as exhibited in the book suggest a declension through vanity and ambition to such self-deception as we found to be characteristic of the false prophets of the Old Testament. That his fits were as a rule subject in some degree to his own control would not in any case be surprising—we have witnessed the same thing in the case of the prophetic excitation—but there is reason to believe that the symptoms were often artificially produced. Moreover, the controversial passages of the Koran exhibit a tendency to 'bluff' criticism with a fresh revelation from the angel Gabriel; and there is more than one instance on record in which a spontaneous 'revelation'—sometimes correcting or modifying a previous one—followed immediately upon a suggestion to the same effect by a human friend.

In fine, whether or not we are right in our estimate of Mohammed as one who, in the circumstances in which he was raised up, had the choice of becoming a true or a false prophet to his people, and, after a sincere and strenuous beginning, chose the lower part, and prostituted his genius for the sake of a material success which he certainly achieved; the Koran has certainly no intrinsic right to be classed with the Christian Bible. Its sparks of inspiration, if such they be, are smothered in a heavy mass of barren controversy, with which are mingled numberless stray scraps of borrowed legend and story, cut away from their contexts, hopelessly misunderstood, yet reverenced, as all writings, good or bad, shallow or profound, are reverenced by a traditionally illiterate people.

If the Koran and its religion still live on, is it not in virtue of Mohammed's earlier zeal—a zeal against idolatry which was wholly pure and sound? That it can ever succeed, in these latter days, in making headway among progressive nations, its own record as a blight upon the countries it has conquered might well make us doubt. A politically regenerated Turkey may have some fruit to show; but the essence of the new *régime* is religious toleration, and that is the negation of traditional Mohammedanism.

Our Bible contains every type of true and valuable religious literature that is to be found in non-Christian sacred books, from the products of high psychic excitation to those of devout reflection and ratiocination: prose and poetry, vision and chronicle, mystic flights and apothegms of shrewd practical wisdom, religious outpourings and ethical precepts. What we admire in the Vedas, in the Zend-Avesta, in the works of Lao-tsze, Confucius, and Mencius, in the sublime precepts of Gautama-Buddha, in the splendid zeal of Mohammed—all is there, and far more besides. There is a theology latent in the Bible that will never become obsolete; there is a human life depicted there which will supply inexhaustible ideals for men of every race and generation; there is a regenerating power in the sacramental truths enunciated there that none of the other 'Bibles' can point to. By the side of the revelations embodied in the Christian Scriptures the sacred books of China show themselves not religion at all, but mere philosophy; Buddhism is but negative; Islam, with its remote, despotic God, void of all message of redeeming love, If we are still, in view of our previous studies, prepared to admit an outpouring of Divine inspiration beyond the limits of the Christian Bible, we shall be forced to admit that the comparative intensity of inspiration concentrated upon those Scriptures goes so far beyond what we can detect elsewhere in the recognized scriptures of other faiths—albeit we have learnt to see the hovering of

> '. . . The white wings of the Holy Ghost
> O'er dusky tribes and twilight centuries. . . .'

—that the difference in degree becomes, to all intents and purposes, a difference in kind.

We feel, therefore, that we are still justified in applying the word in a special sense to the Christian Bible, and that it might be well, in the interests of scientific precision and logical clearness, to use some other word, such as 'illumination,' to describe the Spirit's operation in other fields.

X

THE MEANING AND USE OF THE BIBLE

OUR study of some of the general aspects of that great collection of Hebrew and Christian literature which we call the Bible has helped us, it may be, towards the solution of some of the most pressing problems of present-day religion. The Bible itself, interpreted in the light of modern knowledge, has shown us the hand of God at work in human history more clearly than we had been able to discern it before; we see the Almighty revealing Himself concretely in the life and fortunes of a single nation, and more especially in its intellectual and spiritual life and fortunes—that gradual and progressive unfolding of Divine truth, revealed portion by portion as man was able to bear it.

And this progressive revelation, vouchsafed in and through Israel, culminating in the coming of One who summed up in Himself all Israel and all humanity, enabled us to see more clearly the 'broken lights' of Divine illumination scattered about the world; those gleams radiated from the 'Light that lighteth every man' upon the very darkest corners of the earth. Reading the Bible in this way, we have not felt it an outrage to the uniqueness and supremacy of the Divine revelation, given to all the world in and through a chosen people, to recognize and acknowledge the hand of God in Gentile history and in ethnic religion. There, too, we have watched the light and darkness in conflict, but we have seen the darkness more and more prevail. The heathen religions, if not, all of them, by any means as black as they have been painted by former Christian or Jewish controversialists, seem to be marked in general by a principle of retrogression. Thus, the frank comparison of the sacred books of the pagan world with our Bible, while it has taught us to recognize many analogies between the religions which those sacred books represent and that out of which our own has been, by God's Providence, developed—while it has emphasized for us the unity of mankind, the identity of its religious instincts and religious needs—has not seriously blurred the line of demarcation which we still can discern. The phenomena on this and that side of the line are more closely related than we had thought. If the surface, where life is actively at work, presents a remarkable and essential difference, the two regions are linked together underground by the uninterrupted *continuum* of the same geological stratifications. At the same time, the vital difference up above ground justifies us in using the old terms, though perhaps in a somewhat less rigid sense—justifies us in applying to the Hebrew and Christian religion and to its sacred Scriptures the words 'revelation' and 'inspiration' in a special way. If we hesitate to employ terms which would imply too definite and too absolute a restriction of the Spirit's action; if we no longer apply the epithets 'uninspired' and 'unrevealed' with the same confidence to the Gentile phenomena; if our claim for the Christian Scriptures is in some ways a less exclusive one, it is not because we no longer recognize a vital distinction. Call it, if you will, a mere difference of *degree* that separates the Bible revelation from the analogous phenomena of heathendom: the difference is yet so intense, so fundamental alike in its theoretical and its practical outcome, that it virtually constitutes a difference in *kind*. The Bible, and the Bible revelation—Judaism in the midst of ancient, and Christianity in the midst of modern religions—are unique, in spite of their many 'underground' relationships with what lies beyond them.

The situation as regards the Bible itself is somewhat as follows: As children in the faith we received the Scriptures at the hand of the Church, and on her authority accepted them, provisionally, as uniquely inspired by God, uniquely useful for the guidance of man's spiritual life. What we accepted originally (as children must do) on authority, we examined and tested later (as full-grown men will do) in the light of all our knowledge. We found much at first calculated to unsettle us; for, in fact, our views of 'inspiration' and of what Holy Scripture ought to be were unscientific, and failed, therefore, to fit into the framework of the larger knowledge. But, in the end, the traditional authority was, in a general way, abundantly and triumphantly justified. Study showed that the human qualities of the Bible, its limitations, local, racial, temporal, were but an effective foil to the Divine. Where at first sight it would seem to have most in common with the least scientific products of paganism—as in the story of Creation—there it most strikingly displays its superiority in the one matter that is germane to a revelation—in its theological and religious teaching. On the side of religious theory the Bible is found to be unique and supreme, displaying to us the gradual unfolding of a conception of God, man, and the universe which has proved acceptable, congenial, and inspiring to many of the best minds of every race, age, and clime. Its theoretical greatness has been matched by a practical efficiency quite as remarkable. The uniquely close relation between the theology and the ethics of the Bible has made it the power in the world that it has been.

A theology that is interwoven into the very texture of man's practical life—that, perhaps, Brahmanism may be said to offer in its Laws of Menu, though these are hardly, in strictness, theological. But that such a theology should lift man up to higher and ever higher levels, should restore him when he had fallen away, should offer a continuous spectacle of successive revivals and re-aspirations—this is a thing without parallel in the ancient and modern world, without parallel certainly in those sacred scriptures of heathendom in which the retrogressive principle is so clearly to be seen. In the great pagan religions the theology, speaking generally, either is negligible as a practical influence, or else it has a positively deteriorating effect upon character; so that a philosophical superstructure is necessary to counteract its evil effects.

The Bible, on the contrary, where religion and ethics are blended in the phrases, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy,' 'Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect,'* has exerted a uniquely powerful influence wherever it has passed. We have witnessed its magisterial and educative work upon the nations of Europe, and have realized that its power is just as remarkable upon the child-races of to-day. We have seen its hand upon our own history and literature from the days of Bede to our own time. We have noted the inspiring influence which it seems to exert upon those who feed their souls and their minds upon it—its influence upon individual character. All this, and much more, that resulted from our investigation of the different aspects of the Bible justified in our eyes the unique position given to the Scriptures by the Church, and encouraged us to augur for them a future worthy of their great past.

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* Lev. xi. 44, etc.; Matt. v. 48; 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

But two important questions remain unsolved and practically untouched. (1) What is the relation of the individual to the Church's authority with regard to the interpretation of the Holy Scripture? (2) What is the practical outcome of recent criticism in its bearing upon the religious and devotional study of the Bible of to-day?

Some attempt must be made to face these questions, unless the whole of our investigation is to be rendered futile—to face, at any rate, if not to solve. It may well be that here, as in the case of inspiration, no exact or scientific definition may be forthcoming as yet. More harm than good is done by premature attempts to bring to a final decision matters for the definition of which we have not as yet all the data at hand. But if we are to wait for a provisional answer to these two questions till criticism and archæology have found their final adjustments; till the Synoptic problem has attained a solution which no sane man can dispute; till the authorship of the Fourth Gospel and that of the Apocalypse have been demonstrated with mathematical certainty—then we shall have solved also, in a very unfortunate way, the problem of the Bible's influence upon our own generation. For while we wait, in doubt as to the precise attitude we ought to adopt, we deprive our spiritual life of its normal sustenance: like a man who should sit and starve with a generous provision of food laid out before him, because he is doubtful about the etiquette of the meal, or because—still more perversely—he is unable to follow out and to define clearly to his own satisfaction the series of digestive processes by which the food, if he take it, will repair the waste of his system and give him nourishment.

(1) As regards the question of the Church and the Bible, or, rather, that of Church authority and individual judgment in the use and interpretation of the Bible, we have already made some little headway. We have practically admitted the absurdity of both extremes. To exalt the Scriptures to a throne of absolute authority, and invent a religion of the Bible and the Bible only, is not only an insult and an outrage to the Church which gave us the Bible; it is a procedure at once unscientific in itself and self-stultifying in its consequences. It is unscientific in itself because it ignores altogether the history of the Bible—the way it grew up, and the means by which it attained its present commanding position. We have seen how the actual history of the growth of the Canon of Scripture makes the Church as a whole responsible for the preservation and the selection of those books which actually form our Bible. Moreover, as the Canon of Scripture grew up in the bosom of the Church, and the elements of which the Canon is composed had their origin and development within the Church—Jewish and Christian—any method of using and interpreting the Scriptures will be unscientific which takes them violently out of their context. The Epistles of the New Testament, for instance, were obviously written to individuals or communities already grounded in the faith, already

trained in elementary Christian duty and practice. It is the *differentia* with which they primarily deal—'not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands,'* and so forth, though these things come up incidentally from time to time. Taking for granted the 'form of sound words,' 'the deposit' of the faith, and the whole round of Christian practice, the New Testament writers dwell upon the problems with which their particular readers happen at the moment to be confronted, or emphasize those aspects of the truth which chance to be most neglected by them.

Thus, in a very important section of the Christian Scriptures, and one from which every devout reader would of necessity draw many of his leading ideas, history shows us that there is nothing like a regular or proportionate system of teaching set forth; and that to take these writings out of their context, out of the atmosphere of Church life to which they properly belong, with all its presuppositions and implications, would be fatally misleading. True, an elaborate and consistent system of doctrine can be drawn up from these and the other Scriptures—a system which amounts to a philosophy of life and a theory of the universe—but to make such a system true and proportionate; to give the right weight to the implications as well as to the direct utterances of Scripture; to restore in its true proportions the framework in which these utterances were originally set—this can only be done, if it can be done at all, from within. We may conjecturally reconstruct the details and the tendencies of primitive

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* Heb. vi. 1, 2.

Church life, and may form our own judgments as to what was essential, and what merely temporary and accidental. That we can do so at all is largely possible because of the light thrown upon the matter by the writings of the early Fathers and Church historians.

But to perform this reconstruction in a really satisfactory way is obviously possible only to those who have never lost touch with ecclesiastical tradition. The Bible itself is by far the most considerable document for the reconstruction of primitive Christianity, but it does not cover the whole ground. It tells us so itself in not a few places. 'Beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.'* Where are the details of this interpretation, unless they have diffused themselves through the consciousness of the Church and affected the general lines of her Old Testament interpretation?

'There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.'† Where are the results of these numberless unrecorded acts to be looked for, if not in that very strong conviction of the Lord's unique personality and work which the Early Church formulated in its creed?

'. . . Appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God.'‡ Where are we to look for the outcome of this assiduous teaching, if not in the life, practice, and faith of the Church which believed itself to be the kingdom of God upon earth?

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* Luke xxiv. 27. † John xxi. 25. ‡ Acts i. 3.

Granted that Holy Scripture, by the wonderful disposition of Providence, contains all things necessary for salvation; granted that out of its unsystematic and fragmentary records a complete system of doctrine can be elicited, it is clearly unscientific to take Scripture violently out of its historical context, to throw away the one means offered to us by which we may hope to discover the scope and the proportions of its teaching, unravel its enigmas and obscurities, supply its implications, fill up the blanks which it leaves unfilled.

Furthermore, to divorce Scripture from the historic Church, if unscientific and unwarranted in itself, is also fatal in its results.

Private judgment has its place, as we shall see, and the responsibility of individual conviction; but the effect of private judgment since the Reformation has been the indefinite multiplication of sects, each of which claims a monopoly of the truth. Private judgment which sets up an infallible Bible, verbally inspired, and claims for it inerrancy on all matters whatsoever, is already stultified by the results of modern knowledge, and needs to fear, 'lest haply' it 'be found even to be fighting against God.'* The infallibility of the Bible proves theoretically untenable, while practically it is just as elusive as the modern Roman doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope; seeing that every man's views drawn from the same infallible Scriptures will differ in greater or less degree from those of every other.

But while the extreme individualist attitude towards the Bible, which utterly ignores the relation of the Church to her own Scriptures, is clearly unhistorical, unscientific, illogical, and productive of disastrous confusion, we have already realized that there are difficulties also at the other extreme.

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* Acts v. 39.

A blind acceptance of ecclesiastical authority in deciding every question in heaven and earth is no longer possible for thinking men. That authority which, as represented by the mediæval and modern Papacy, has been a constant obstruction to the advance of knowledge, and an enemy to the very spirit of free inquiry, is in great disfavour now among large sections even of the Latin peoples of Europe. The Modernist who, while he pays homage to science and to intellectual truth, yet retains by an act of heroic inconsistency his allegiance to the historic Papacy, is constrained to draw a distinction between the principles of authority and its abuse; between the Church's Divine system and those who are at present exploiting that system in the interests of an obsolete mediævalism. And many of us who would share with the Modernist his faith in the permanent value of an ecclesiastical authority, and even of an ecclesiastical tradition, would now be inclined, not only to draw a distinction between the principle of authority as such and its partial expression in any given time or place; but to recognize also that there is a rival authority which claims to-day a share of our homage. The authority of the *scientific expert,* paramount within the limits of his expert knowledge, has been deferred to on every page of this volume. How are we to adjust the claims of these two authorities? How give the Church her due as witness and keeper of Holy Writ, and yet be true to the principle of free investigation, to the light which, though it come to us from another quarter, we welcome as radiance from the one Spirit of Truth? If we are to call the Bible inspired, yet acknowledge the fallibility and the actual incorrectness of some of its utterances where religious truth is not directly concerned, may we not perhaps take up a similar position with regard to the authority of the Church where it touches upon intellectual things? If the Bible is inspired, still more is the Church which gave us the Bible, the 'Spirit-bearing body' of Christ. But if the field of the Bible's direct inspiration is to be restricted to the religious sphere, to the realm of 'faith and morals' very strictly so-called, may it not be so with the Church too?

It is not the theologian, but the geological expert, who can judge of the *literal* truth of the first chapter of Genesis. It is not the theologian, but the expert in literary criticism, who can analyze according to the rules of his department the document we know as the Book of Genesis.

The defiant proclaimer of the earth's rotatory motion was an expert in that subject; his inquisitorial judges were not, though they had all the traditional ecclesiastical authority at their back. On the other hand, may we not say that some of the men who wrote the Psalms were experts in the spiritual life; that St. Luke was an expert not only in medical science of his day, but in the subjects on which he has written in his Gospel and in the Acts—at least, so far as the central teaching of them is concerned? May we not go still further and claim that the recognized doctors of the Early Church—men like St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Jerome—were experts in the interpretation of the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures as understood by the first centuries of Christendom, and that the Church of those early centuries alone has the key to the original setting and context of the Scriptures as she first received them?

What they meant to the Christians of the first few generations they should mean, substantially, to their successors, though there will be of necessity a change in the form of the interpretation corresponding to the change of general standpoint appropriate to each succeeding generation. 'As time goes on,' says St. Vincent of Lerins—'as time goes on, it is right that the old truths should be elaborated, polished, filed down; it is wrong that they should be changed, maimed, or mutilated. They should be made clear, have light thrown on them, be marked off from each other; but they must not lose their fulness, their entirety, their essential character.'*

The words are those of the author of the famous phrase which has been a watchword of reasonable dogmatism, the *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus,* by which necessary beliefs are restricted to that which has been always and universally held. They remind us that we of this generation are not the first to discover the necessity of restatement—of reinterpretation of old truths. In every department of knowledge the work of experts is apt to require modification as fresh discoveries widen the field of the knowable and bring into sight new relations and a new perspective. The expert work of the Church is no exception to this rule; in some ways the principle is more obviously applicable here than elsewhere. For whereas language is at all times an imperfect vehicle for the expression of truth, this is especially the case in regard to those deep and central realities which the dogmas and formularies of the Church attempt to put into words. The words were never adequate from the first, and their adequacy is diminished rather than increased by the lapse of time, in which both language and thought have suffered transformation.

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* *Cf.* 'Commonitorium,' xxiii. Dr. Lock in 'Lux Mundi,' Essay IX.

That the later Church should feel called upon to 'elaborate, polish, file down' the earlier expressions which represent the best effort of a previous generation would not be surprising. Contact with life, the necessity of combating new errors and of entering upon new fields of knowledge, would render inevitable such a process as took place in the successive modifications, *e.g.*, of the original Nicene Creed, by which it assumed its final shape. But now the problem assumes a wider form. It is no longer a question of later ecclesiastical experts amending or expanding the work of their predecessors.

Theological knowledge has ceased to be the exclusive property of a learned clerical caste. It lies open to all alike, without respect of character or creed. If it be still true, in a sense, that *pectus facit theologum*—that there is a theology unintelligible except to the devout, an inner shrine in which 'spiritual things' are discerned by the spiritual alone—it is true also that, in so far as theology is a science, accessible to the intellect as such, it is open to anyone of sufficient intellectual capacity to make himself an expert in this science, and in this sense of the word Satan himself may conceivably be the best theologian of us all! The alien expert may dispute, on grounds of philosophical reasoning or of historical evidence, the Church's *dicta* on any subjects that may come within the range of such evidence. What, then, becomes of the authority of the Church in matters of faith and morals? What place is left to her in the interpretation of her own Scriptures?

We may draw a distinction first of all between her authority as it affects those without and as it bears on those within her pale.

To those without, her authority is simply correlative to her expert knowledge, and to her unique relation to the Scriptures. To ignore the existence, character, growth, and permanence of the Christian Church would be the merest folly on the part of an investigator of the true meaning and value of the New Testament; he would be refusing to avail himself of by far the greatest mass of evidence extant. Indisputably the Church and the New Testament belong to each other; they were born in the same century, in the same region—nay, the New Testament was nourished in the bosom of the Church.

Further, in a more specific sense, the Early Church (as we have already seen) is the only expert who can give first-hand evidence as to the way in which the Scriptures were understood by those among whom they circulated during the period when the Canon was in process of formation. The expression of her expert knowledge may need revision, for the world has moved on since then; but substantially, if there is any hope of attaining to the substance of the truth, it is to be looked for in her statements. These statements may be tested by her documentary title-deeds—the Scriptures themselves. The Church herself has laid herself open to such testing, for no sooner was the New Testament Canon settled and finally received than she at once made the whole body of Scripture a standard of teaching, a touchstone of developments in tradition; placed the book of the Gospels upon the presidential throne in her councils, and based her dogmatic formularies—the Nicene Creed and its derivatives, and the so-called 'Athanasian' Creed—upon Scripture as interpreted by a tradition believed to be traceable back to the Apostolic Age. She thus makes herself the humble 'witness and keeper' of that 'Holy Writ' which was itself the nursling of her youth, acknowledging that its revelation comprises all essential truth for those who share her sacramental life 'in Christ.'

The outside investigator, then, owes no deference to the Church save that which her appeal to history and document demands. If he be wise, however, he will recognize her as one of the most important factors in the problem he is studying.

For those within, the case would seem to be different. Over these the authority of the Church (for what it is worth) is direct and paramount. What does this authority amount to? Not a blind submission or 'sacrifice' of the intellect, still less of conscience. Authority as such implies as its correlative private judgment—implies, that is, a reasonable as well as a dutiful submission on the part of one who is finally or provisionally, intellectually or morally, convinced of its credentials. It is only by a metaphor that I can be said to exercise 'authority' over the spade with which I dig, or over the pen with which I write. Again the Church, by appealing to history and to the Bible, sets limits to her own demands upon the individual intellect or conscience: and further, if those limits be overpassed in the name of Church authority, the filial disobedience* of the Modernists can hardly be called unreasonable; for to deny what my mind and heart and conscience know to be true would be a greater disloyalty to the Church than is involved in refusing to make a false submission.

What, then, does the authority of the Church amount to in the matter of use and interpretation of the Bible by her members? Its exact limits will be variously interpreted by different individuals and by different communions, but certain principles will be admitted, probably, by all alike.

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* *Cf.* below, p. 300.

First, for us, as for those outside, the Church has the authority of the expert; she alone can give first-hand evidence as to what was the original setting, framework, and filling up of those very fragmentary and incidental documents, the books of the New Testament. She alone can tell us, in brief, in what terms the Church of the first generations expressed the summary of her faith. In a formula which we English Churchmen repeat day by day she embodied this summary ere yet the New Testament Canon was settled. The so-called 'Apostles' Creed' is substantially identical with the Roman baptismal creed of the second century, and may be indefinitely earlier. Here, at any rate, the Church, in her character of expert, gives us most valuable testimony—testimony which Anglicanism receives as true, and accepts as a summary of the Bible's teaching, repeating it twice daily after the Morning and Evening Lessons, as though to place those lessons in the framework of their entire context, and set the whole 'proportion of the faith' before us every time we assist at the solemn reading of a chapter of the Old Testament or of the New.

In this profession of faith the Church links the revelation of the Old Testament with that made in Jesus Christ; but it will be observed that, except in so far as the whole substance of the Old Testament may be said to lead up to the New, there is nothing of its distinctive teaching specified (unless it be in the word 'Father') that might not be drawn simply from the first verse of the Book of Genesis. If we are to follow the expert leading of the Early Church, we shall then place our emphasis overwhelmingly on the later revelation, and see in the earlier but a preparation for it, an historical picture of its antecedents, and a valuable exhibition of its component elements ere yet they came together in Christ.

By far the largest part of the Creed is taken up with certain cardinal facts relating to the person and work of Jesus, who, in a single significant word—'Christ'—is identified with the Hope of Israel, the looked-for Messiah, the *raison d'être* of all the long education and discipline of the Hebrew race. His unique relation to the Almighty Father; His virgin birth, Divine and human; His actual suffering, death, burial, and resurrection (the 'descent into Hades' is an addition to the earliest form of the Creed); His ascension into heaven and exaltation to the Divine place of honour and glory; His future coming to be Judge of 'quick and dead'—these form the substance of the central and largest section of the confession of faith. We have already noticed in another place how the introduction of Pilate's name into this sacred circle of ideas, testifies in the strongest way to the Church's estimate of the supreme importance of a belief in the literal historical reality of the facts enumerated, and more especially of the crucifixion.

The ministry of Jesus, with its words and works which mean so much to us, becomes, in comparison to the importance of its final issue, only an interval (so to speak) between the Nativity and the Passion. His unique origin; His unique and abiding work for us, with its present and future results; the living organism of the Holy Church; 'the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting'—these are the points dwelt upon. This is, in short, the whole outcome, very briefly summarized, of the promise of the Old Testament as conceived by the Church of the second century (and perhaps we may say of the first): the Old Testament as read in the light of that common tradition concerning Jesus Christ which was to be handed down to future ages in the books of the New Testament Canon.

This outline must surely be accepted by all fair-minded people as being, in a sense, expert evidence, and as having the support of a New Testament, of which it was probably in origin independent. They may dispute the literal truth or the doctrinal implications of its statements, but they cannot deny that that was how things looked to the men who lived nearest the time, and who had a key to the meaning and context of the New Testament writings, to which we can have no access unless we borrow it from them.

To her own members, however, the Church is more than 'expert'; she is a spiritual mother, to whom filial obedience and trust is due. If authority be abused in her name, filial obedience of necessity changes its aspect, and must be rendered to that truth of which the Church is ideally 'the pillar and ground.' When Robert Grosseteste declined to fulfil an iniquitous demand on the part of Pope Innocent IV., he did so on the ground that such a demand, tending, as it did, 'not to edification, but to destruction,' could not possibly emanate from the 'blessed Apostolic See.' 'In dutiful obedience,' he said, 'I refuse to obey: *filialiter et obedienter non obedio, contradico et rebello.*'* But normally, until cause be shown, filial reverence will be shown to the Church's authority whenever it comes furnished with genuine credentials. A leading function of that authority is the mother's *rôle* of guiding the first motions of the infant mind. For the children of the flock the maxim of 'the Church to teach, the Bible to prove' is obviously in place; and for all alike the reasonable attitude would be to take at first on faith the Church's own estimate of what the Bible proves, of its general outcome, as given us in the creed of our baptism. History is warrant enough that in doing so we are following no 'cunningly devised fable,' no fantastic or artificial or disingenuous interpretation of the Bible's teaching. The profession of faith that grew up—we cannot tell how soon—side by side with the growth of the New Testament itself, and grew up in the same nursery, is not likely to lead us far astray. To many a Churchman of deep learning and high intellectual capacity, in our own age as in former ages, that creed has proved all through the years of pilgrimage a never-failing key to the inner mysteries alike of Scripture and of life. 'When we are young, we accept a doctrine because the Church teaches it to us; when we are grown up, we love the Church because it taught us this doctrine.'

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* Ep. cxxxviii.

What is true of the Apostles' Creed is true, in its degree, of the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds. If these latter are more elaborate and more dogmatic than the baptismal symbol, they are, on the other hand, more consciously and more definitely based upon Scripture. For this reason their appeal will be more forcible and more direct to one class of minds, while to another the spontaneous and, as it were, ingenuous utterance of the Early Church (itself in a way independent of Scripture) will come home more vividly.

Such thoughts as the foregoing may help in some degree to elucidate the difficult problem raised by the relation of the Bible to the Church. The Bible is at once every man's book and the Church's own book. As every man's book, it is open to criticism and interpretation as free and unfettered as is the human intellect, and the criticisms passed upon it by experts outside the Church need to be weighed and sifted by Churchmen. As every man's book it does not, however, lose its historical connection with the Church, and no sane critic can ignore the fact or the utterances of Christendom if he would enter into the meaning of the New Testament. As the Book of the Church, who is its 'witness and keeper,' it plays a double part—as a positive source of teaching, and as a check upon abnormal developments of doctrine. In this latter capacity it may be a weapon in the hands of the individual believer against the representatives of authority, as it was at the Reformation. As a source of teaching, its normal use for a Churchman is found in following the leadings of the Church's formularies.

But since every expression of truth in verbal formulæ is inadequate—and this must be especially true, as we have seen, in the case of the deepest and most fundamental truths which the Bible enshrines—these formulæ (which, after all, originated in an age very different from our own) may conceivably need restatement in view of modern knowledge. Happily the Church, guided, we believe, by the Holy Spirit, has not committed us in her creeds to statements fundamentally inconsistent with what the New Learning has taught us. For some, however, who would be the last to wish to tamper with the venerable formulæ which enshrine the 'deposit,' the words have become something more of the nature of symbols than they were to those who first put them together.

Yet they feel that, in the antiquated phrases which they themselves would despair of ever putting satisfactorily into modern phraseology, we are nearer in substance to the essential truths than we could ever have been brought by a mere process of free investigation. They also have a sense of the responsibility of inheritance—'Keep the deposit.' The best of them feel not only the passive responsibility of handing down the inheritance unimpaired to those who come after, but the positive responsibility of contributing their own *quota* of labour and thought to the inheritance. Or, rather, they realize that each generation owes both to its predecessors and to its posterity the duty of investigating afresh the grounds of its belief, and interpreting its own faith in contemporary language and in relation to contemporary thought. They thank the Church for her guidance during their intellectual minority, for they believe that they were guided aright, and they feel that the best way to show their gratitude is by taking up the responsibilities of their intellectual manhood and testing the faith and its documents, on their intellectual side, with every test that the laboratory of criticism can furnish. From such a process, they are assured, the fine gold of truth will come out brighter and purer than ever.

But meanwhile the Church is still their guide, and the Word is 'a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path.' It is not an external authority which imposes on them from without a certain restraint of the intellect; it is a great living sacramental organism, of which they are 'members incorporate'; and, normally, when there is no question of abuse of authority, there is equally no question of opposition between the Bible and the Church. To the communicant member of the Church, as to the alien expert, any attempt to interpret the Bible exhaustively without taking account of the Church would be ridiculous; but to the former it would be doubly so, for all through the Bible he sees the Church prognosticated, prepared for, born, and started on her career. Without her the Bible becomes to him comparatively meaningless.

Anyone can see the human side of the Bible; anyone, perhaps, can see its uniqueness, and stand on the threshold which must be crossed before the Divine side can be reached. But to appreciate aright the Divine side of the Scriptures is the gift of that Spirit by whom they are inspired; spiritual things are spiritually discerned. In these things the simplest and most unlearned reader may penetrate to depths to which the most eminent critic's keenest instruments give him no access—of the very existence of which the critic may have no inkling. Or if the critic, as such, has an inkling of this aspect of the Bible of which his science is not cognizant, it is because, as a student of human nature and human history, he cannot ignore the enormous weight of evidence supplied by the accumulated testimony of the words and lives of millions for whom the Scriptures have clearly contained secrets of most transcendent value.

To the inner circle of believers this aspect of the Bible is simply a matter of experience. The believer has learnt from his Church what to look for in the Scriptures, and how to look for it; and he looks and finds. Accepting the judgments of the critical expert on the material vesture of the Bible, and adjusting to the new theories his view of the documents, he does not abate anything of a reasonable reverence for them. If he feel himself capable of criticizing, from the standpoint of modern science, the historical methods of the

Chronicler, he is yet ready to sit at his feet as a religious teacher, and take upon his lips at the most sacred moment words put by the writer of Chronicles into the mouth of King David: 'All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.'* If compelled to admit the pseudonymous character of the so-called Second Epistle of Peter, he yet takes to heart its distinctive teaching, and rejoices to account himself, in its noble phrase, a 'partaker of the divine nature.'† Nay, when the Church calls on him to recite the 'imprecatory' Psalms, he learns to see in them no mere expression of personal spite or resentment, but a call to range himself decisively on the side of Divine righteousness and against evil—to condemn evil on principle, if need be in himself.

(2) We have been led on insensibly into the region where our second problem may look to find its answer. If it now be asked, What is the practical effect of recent criticism upon the religious and devotional study of the Bible? we shall answer that such a use of the Scriptures is left to the loyal son of the Church, not unchanged, perhaps, but unimpaired. It comes to him, indeed, with new sanction, for he has learnt that it is upon this aspect of Holy Writ that the force of inspiration is concentrated.

Criticism and archæology, while they have opened up new lines of investigation for the *human* side of the Bible, and lifted the literature of the Old and New Testaments to a place in the interest of the general intellectual world which it certainly never held before, have left its own votaries free to study it with undiminished ardour, as the inspired record of revelation.

Our devotional use of the Bible is no more impaired by an intelligent knowledge of the processes by which its component documents came into being than is the devotional use of the cathedral to the worshipper who has furnished himself with some knowledge of the principles of Gothic architecture, and so learnt to spell out the story of the great building's chequered life. His new-found knowledge may distract his thoughts, perhaps, at first, and make devotional concentration less easy, but in the end it will enrich and ennoble his worship.

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* 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

† 2 Pet. i. 4.

Criticism, however, leaves with the devotional student some hints and warnings which, if he is wise, he will not neglect. In the first place, it warns him never to forget the human side of Scripture. If the Almighty refuses so to insult the sacred prerogative of His image in man as to force on him the blessings of faith and of eternal salvation, is it likely that He would paralyze or ignore the personal individuality of those through whom He wills to reveal His most precious truths to humanity? A hundred indications in the sacred text force on us the conviction that He has not done so.

Henceforth it will be as inexcusable to ignore the human setting of the Bible revelation as to neglect, in theology, the real humanity of our Lord. Both have been over-emphasized of late, it is true, to the detriment of the complementary truths of divinity and inspiration; but the over-emphasis is largely a redressing of the balance.

Again, with the restoration of the individual and human element to its rightful place, will disappear that unintelligent and superstitious view of the Bible as one long, level, and homogeneous series of so many thousands of verses, all of equal value and authority for the spiritual life. We shall find, if we open our eyes, every variety of literary expression, from the bald statistical phrase ology of the priestly code to the vivid narrative of the prophetic historian, and on to the rhapsodies of prophet and psalmist, and the unparalleled simplicity and grandeur of the Fourth Gospel. We shall find every degree of historical validity, from the utterances of dramatic imagination and visionary symbolism to bare and truthful narratives of eye-witnesses. We shall experience every variety of spiritual stimulus, from the revulsion aroused by the spectacle of hideous iniquity to the supreme attraction of the one perfect Example; from the cumbrous and cryptic suggestions of Levitical symbolism to the heart-piercing precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. We shall breathe on every level of spiritual atmosphere, from the worldly shrewdness of much of the Book of Proverbs, the all but complete pessimism of Ecclesiastes, the narrow Judaism of the Book of Esther, to the glowing enthusiasm of St. Paul's splendid picture of charity, and the priceless embodiment of that charity in the Gospel narratives.

The old practice of looking on every verse of the Bible as of equal weight and equal value to the soul—equally adapted, say, for devotional reading—was never, surely, based on genuine conviction. Who could honestly assert, for instance, that the long series of names preserved in the genealogies of Chronicles meant as much to him (or to anyone) as the narrative of the Passion?

To say that each book, as a whole, is indispensable to the completeness of the revelation record is quite another thing. To take that for granted provisionally is an act of the merest courtesy to our spiritual mother, the Church, by whose instinct (guided, as some of us believe from above) the selection was made.

Without looking at the Song of Songs with Origen's eyes, and seeing in it a pure and simple allegory of Christ's love for His Church—nay, accepting the (now largely accepted) interpretation of Jacobi and Ewald, whereby King Solomon becomes the villain rather than the hero of this dramatic idyll—one can still see good reason why the long-disputed book should hold a place in the Canon. Just as the long-drawn chronicles of reigns, conspicuous for neither military nor administrative ability, evince to us God's interest in human history and politics; just as the passionate and deficient utterances of Job show His sympathy with honest doubt, so, too, this idyll of human love, faithful, proof against even royal blandishments, sets upon sexual passion at its best—upon that love which 'many waters cannot quench,' that love which is a 'very flame of Jehovah'*—the royal seal of Him who, at the beginning, ordained holy matrimony in the state of man's innocency. And in so doing it inevitably, without any artificial allegorizing, leads the student of the Epistle to the Ephesians to the contemplation of that of which our human love—honoured and cherished, nevertheless, for its own sake—is but a poor, weak symbol. These are mystical interpretations which come of themselves.

But to recognize the essential relation of every book to the completeness of the revelation record—a record which, after all, is supplemented further by the book of Nature and the book of human sympathy and experience—is not to say that each is of equal value and weight, still less that every verse has an equal applicability to the needs of every soul.

For purposes of Bible-class, as of devotional reading and meditation, where the study is minute and concerned with short passages, the critical movement will have impressed on us the importance of a careful selection of our subject. Equally important, however, from the point of view of the 'proportion' or 'analogy' of the faith, will be a grasp of the general outlines of the whole: so that, as far as may be, when our thoughts are focussed on a single verse, that verse will be set, as a gem, in the setting of the whole book from which it comes, and will stand out against the background of the entire Bible. Occasionally, where the spiritual pasturage is more diffused, it may be profitable to take an entire book as the subject of our meditation, focussing the eye, for convenience, on a representative verse. And while we always make an earnest effort to read each document and each passage as far as possible in the light of the age and circumstances of its human origin, we shall never forget the organic unity of all Scripture—each fragment, with all its individuality and diversity, being related to the others, as parts of a great progressive movement which culminates in the Gospel-story.

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* Cant. viii., 6 and 7.

The realization of this progress and of this continuity of revelation, which is one of the characteristic fruits of modern scholarship, gives back to us in a new form what we were beginning to fear we had lost—the right to look for Christ everywhere. If criticism has unsettled the 'Messianic' interpretation (in the old sense) of certain individual passages, if it has robbed us of the crude view of prediction which isolated it from all relation to the circumstances of its utterance, it has in return given us a healthier and more human, as well as a more scientific, view of the progress of revelation—a view in which there is still room to see Law, Prophets, and Psalms speaking of Christ. For it is not only clear-cut predictions that His advent has fulfilled, marvellous as many of these fulfilments will always be. Longings, yearnings, wistful questionings, the cry of the oppressed, the gropings of the bewildered, the unsatisfied spiritual ideas of an unconquerably expectant people—all these, as well as the clearer utterances of the prophets and psalmists, proclaim the coming of the Saviour. And so, while the Old Testament writings are for us something more human than mere allegory; their utterances, while vividly reminiscent each of a particular time and place, have a mystical and universal character lent to them by the ever-present consciousness of that to which it all is leading:

> 'God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers . . . by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken to us in his Son.'

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