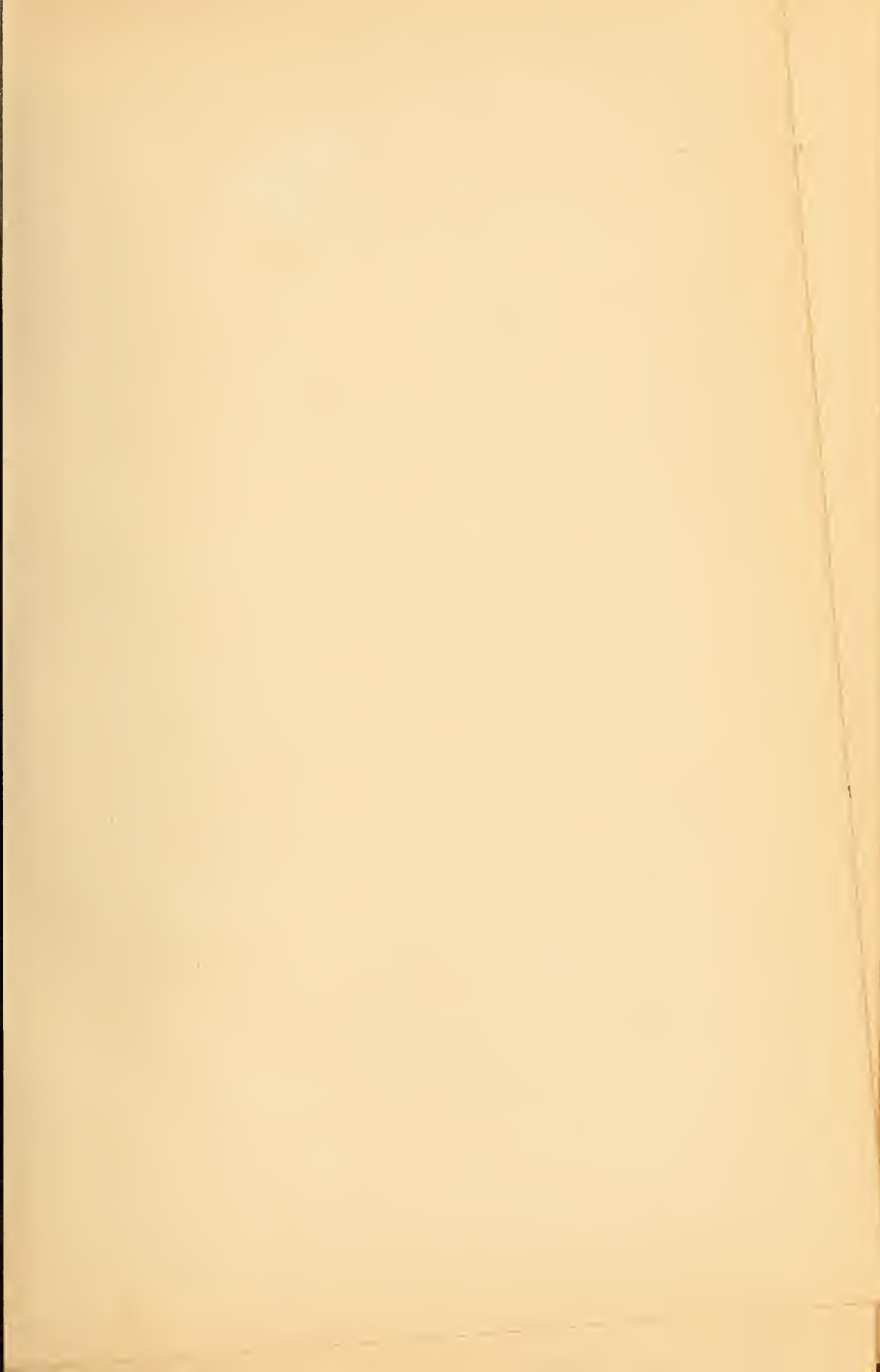
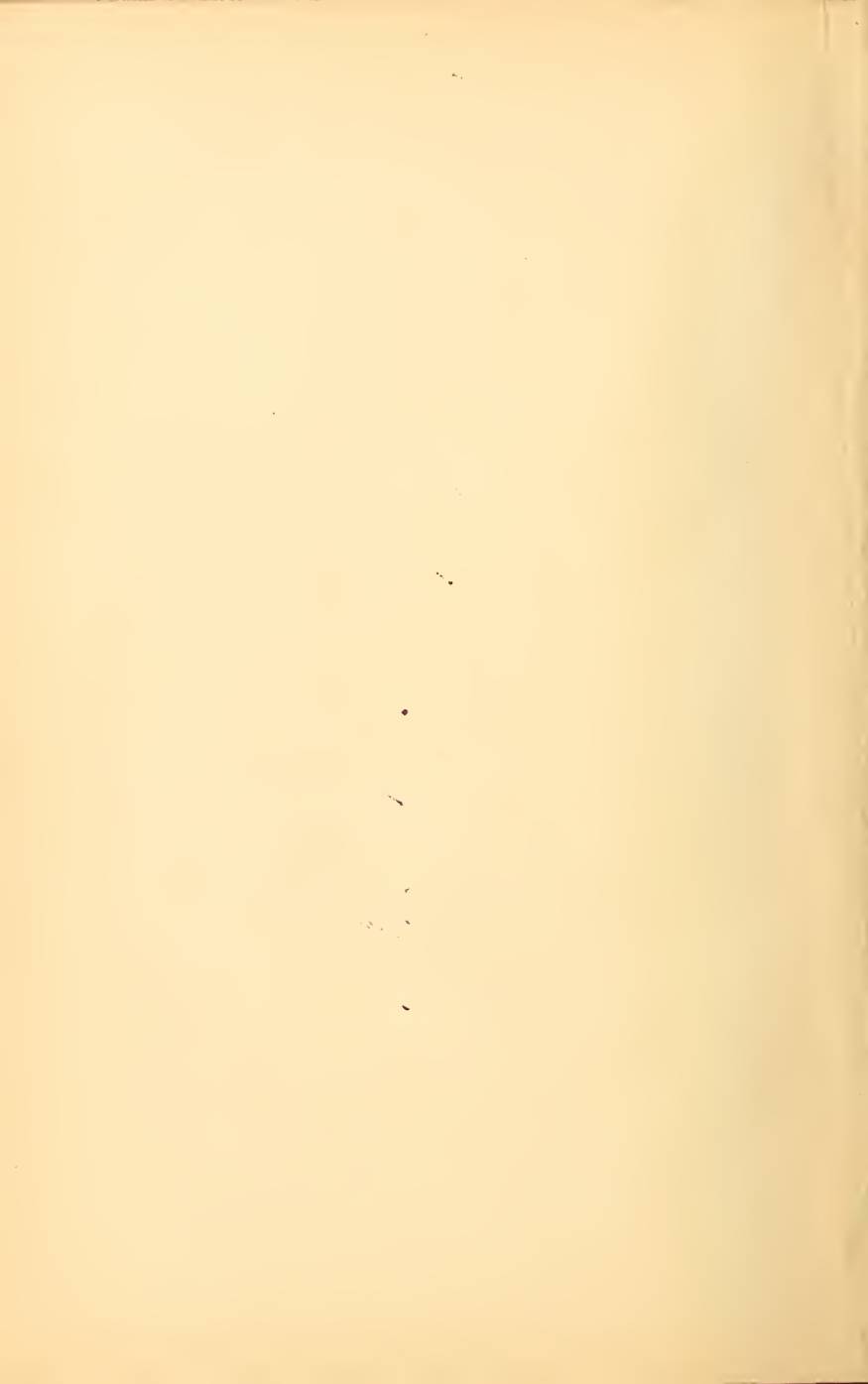


THE BIBLE AND MODERN THOUGHT

GEO. H. EMERSON, D.D.





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AND
MODERN THOUGHT.

BY

GEORGE H. EMERSON, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "DOCTRINE OF PROBATION EXAMINED," ETC.



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P R E F A C E.

THE contents of the pages that follow are in substance and largely in form a series of editorial articles which have appeared in "The Christian Leader." The original intention had in view a few brief statements touching certain fundamental matters involved in current Biblical criticism, — matters in regard to which there seems to be some confusion of thought, which a popular and, as far as practicable, non-technical elucidation might do something towards removing. The discussion reached an extent which far exceeded expectation. The several articles, as they appeared week after week, received an unlooked for and very gratifying degree of approval, and this from sources that

made it very assuring. The publication in book form is in part a response to what seems to be the suggestion of the judicious, and it is believed that, in this convenient form, the thoughts and explanations proffered may render a new and more extended service.

In the shaping of the articles, as they appeared in their first issue, into the chapters of this book, a few, but very few, modifications have been found needful. The most notable change is the placing at the beginning what in the weekly paper was put at the end. There are a few transpositions of paragraphs, a few emendations, and occasional additions to the text, and also to the notes.

The aim being to help the unlearned, terms are used in the following pages with more flexibility than the masters would approve. For one example, the "higher criticism" is made to include, not alone the process which determines the historic verity of the Biblical books, but also — a liberty which experts may censure — the accuracy of the text; while

“rationalism” is restricted to the process of determining what the books must contain as a condition of giving their teachings credence. The master-instructors would probably more rigidly limit the application of these words; but it is believed that the text all through consistently adheres to the meaning as defined. Scholars writing for students very properly recognize distinctions in much detail that would be simply confusing to the general reader. This book is not meant for students.

The realm of criticism as applied to the Bible does not, to any great extent, involve matters of sectarian difference. With the exception of a few paragraphs which discuss the Catholic claim of Papal Infallibility, and a few others which declare against the almost effete notion of Verbal Inspiration, there is hardly a line in the following pages that will disturb the prejudices or the prepossessions of any class of Christian believers. In fact, believers of every name and sect, finding themselves confronted by a common foe, are glad to

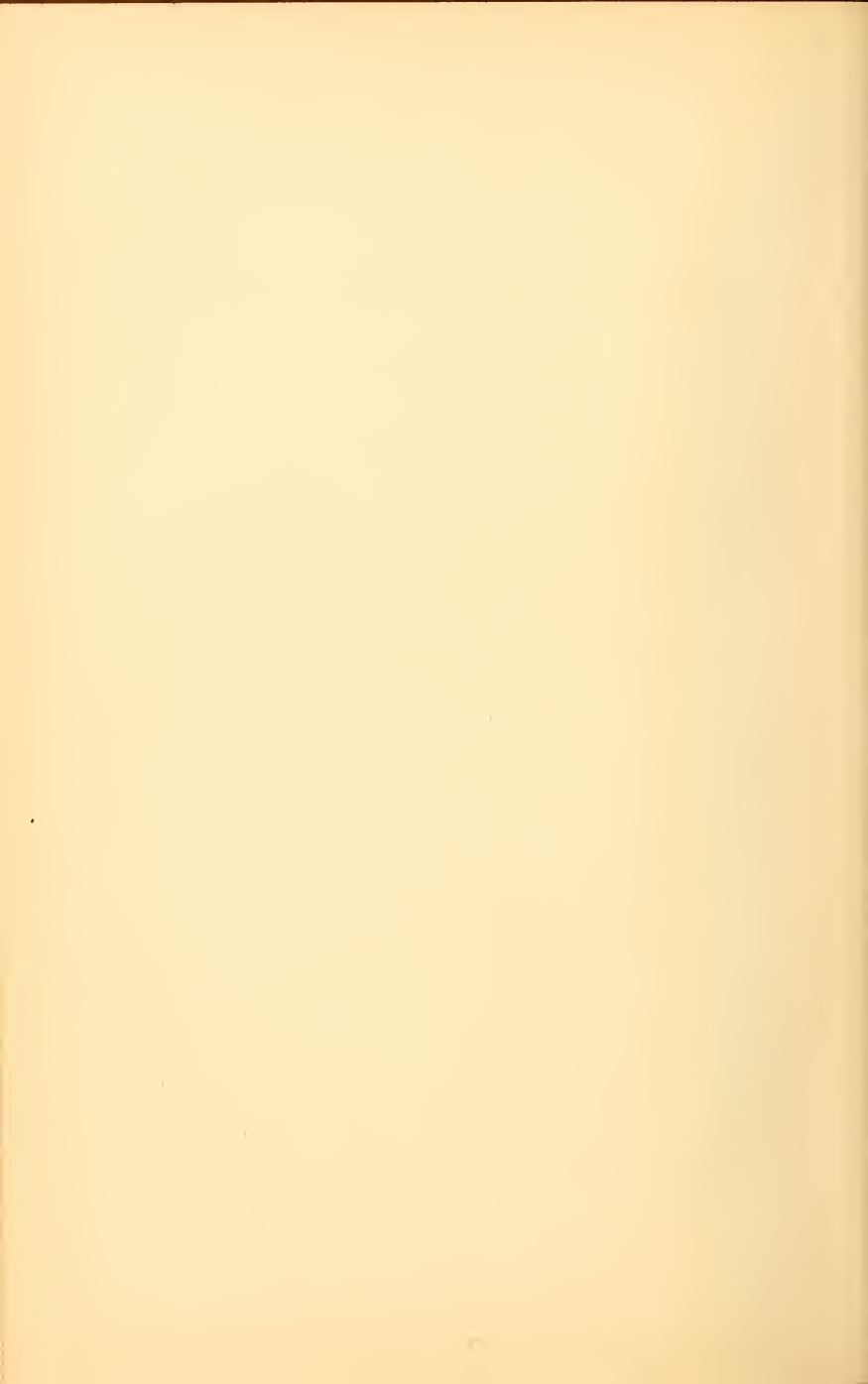
waive for the contingency their differences of exegesis and also of inference, and battle together in defence of that which is their common umpire in matters of faith and conduct. The introduction of sectarian specialties in such a work as is here submitted would be as needless as it would be unwise.

G. H. E.

BOSTON, November, 1889.

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THE BIBLE AND MODERN THOUGHT.

INTRODUCTION.

THE attempt to consider the Bible in the light of Modern Thought is a concession that in some important sense there is an umpire to which our estimate of the book must submit. The question therefore naturally and justly arises: What *is* Modern Thought, and what is there pertaining to it that gives it a semblance of authority?

It must be clear on the statement, that no particular thought has commanding merit in the mere fact of modernness. What is now even stigmatized as old thought was once modern. There was a time when Jesuitism was modern, and if modernness gives authority, at that time Jesuitical thought not only was respected but merited respect. Gnosticism was modern in its day, yet the first chapter of John's Gospel was probably

intended to antagonize it. Pessimism is modern; none the less, as the "gospel of despair" it has no claim to sit as umpire on any belief. Agnosticism is modern, but we do not therefore defer to it as having special claims. The notion of the Pope's infallibility is hardly a quarter of a century old, — it is "modern thought," — but the fact is not supposed to weigh in its favor.

It is in history that peculiar trends of belief, of sentiment, are characteristic of different epochs. There is always a "spirit of the age," always a movement of public sentiment, always a popular belief. This age trends, and very strongly, towards materialism, secularism, spiritualism, "Christian science," rationalism in its technical meaning, and the notion of worship is perfunctory and formal as opposed to heart-worship. Instead of taking our cue from current mental tendencies, it is often our duty to resist them. Some of the brightest intellects of the age are unmoral, — we do not say nor imply that they are immoral. In chairs of science the ethical spirit is weak; often it is logically repudiated.

Of course the call to follow the trend of the age, to get into the current of thought, to go with the "thinkers," must give some other reason than that of the bald fact that such is the demand of Modern Thought. Every pulpit, every religious journal, every teacher of ethics, is doing all that strength and opportunity permit, to stay the materialistic current, — of all kinds of thought just now the most vigorous and relentless. In fact, the advice to note the thought of the time and then resist it would, on the theory of probabilities, be the more likely to prove the wise direction.

We have said that what we call Modern Thought, and to which we should in great measure defer, must have something to commend it other than the fact that it is modern. In what does its virtue and seeming authority consist? ¹

¹ Even those who most disown all connection with modern thought are sometimes found strongly reflecting its influence, — more frequently perhaps mistaking its real meaning. It seems to be the duty, therefore, of all intelligent persons to try in some degree to understand the impulses moving their time. Such and such opinions, it is often said, are "in the air." The

1. We should say that any intellectual movement that takes with it a broad consensus of opinion, that wins minds of very diverse antecedents, that brings to its championship persons who have acted therein from isolated convictions and impulses,—that the modernness that has these marks cannot fail to gain a just control. It is a fact that two astronomers of different nationalities, each ignorant of the work of the other, were simultaneous in reporting the existence of an hitherto unknown planet. This accidental and mutual confirmation made doubt of the revelation morally impossible. Now Modern Thought, as it relates to the Bible, has a great deal of this accidental certitude. Scholars of all creeds, with conflicting prejudices, each having no knowledge of what others were doing, yet working on substantially the same material, have, in important regards, reached the same conclusions and thought of our own time, in its evolving phases or folds of varied hue, bathes us like an atmosphere. It wraps us round, penetrating often to our inmost sentiments.—*Movements of Religious Thought in Britain*, etc., John Tulloch, DD., LL.D., p. 3.

put forth the same postulates. There is so much of this in the literary department of Modern Thought that the authority is nearly autocratic.

2. Further, a wide observation distinguishes between a current of thought and an eddy. A general and comprehensive trend of the thinking and scholarly world will, in the nature of the case, incite counter-currents. Boatmen on the Maine rivers, even masters of quite large vessels, show no little skill in taking advantage of "side eddies." When the tide is ebbing, and so running strongly towards the sea, there will be, for short distances, owing to something peculiar in the contour of the coast, movements in the contrary direction, getting into which the very contrariness of the current is made to help. But woe to the skipper who mistakes an eddy for the current or the current for an eddy! When exhorted to follow in the direction of Modern Thought, and a specification is made, the first thing to be determined is whether the specification is the broad current or merely a temporary and spasmodic

eddy. Broad minds, broad sympathies, and variety of attainments can easily determine what is the real Modern Thought and what the counter-irritant; the narrow and the bigoted will not discern the vast difference.

3. Specially in reference to Christianity, the particular Modern Thought which makes the basal evidence moral, and which places the Historic — in all its departments — in the secondary realm, rests on so broad a consensus of opinion, that the apologist who confronts it will forfeit the respect of the devout and scholarly world. This “modernness” is not the utterance of a coterie, or of a particular school. It is a very general “trend.” Every section of the Protestant world — each often ignorant of what is going on in other sections — is sending forth testimony and adding to a movement which unmistakably indicates a “current.” It is a “modernness” which has not simply toleration but favor in even the conservative schools of Orthodoxy, only less than that which it finds in the perhaps too forward schools of Liberalism. Surely it would be a somewhat

grotesque spectacle — that of a “liberal” arguing, and in the interest of conversatism, that which the leaders of conservatism have sloughed!

4. It cannot be “modernness” in thought to know and declare that Christianity does not rest *upon* the human mind and soul as the lowest tier of bricks in a building often rests upon a basis of granite; to know and declare that it relates to the mind and the soul, in the sense of pervading them, being appropriated by them, ingrained as part and parcel of them, — the same as skill upon a musical instrument is not an entity held by the mind and muscle of the expert, but a subtle quality worked into mind and muscle. This is not Modern Thought, for Jesus anticipated it in his dialogue with doubting Thomas, and it is elaborated by Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The acceptance of the miracles as facts, and the acceptance of them as testimony, by no means include the process of working the essential principles of Christianity into the appreciation and assimilation of sympathetic souls. There is no modern-

ness in the knowledge of this fact; but it is Modern Thought that compels its general acceptance.

5. Finally, while in what has just been affirmed it is implied that the Bible must be held to the tests of what are called first truths, the fundamentals given in the intuitions of intellect and soul, it would be superficial to infer that, as related to the Bible, Modern Thought is constructive. It passes upon testimony that *is*. It weighs documents, compares them, declares how one supplements another; but it does not confound intellectual and spiritual first truths with a category of opinions determined in an *a priori* way. It does not force things into or out of the records for the bare reason that the things accord or do not accord with itself. This method is rationalistic, — of course not in the sense of the opposite of the irrational, for in *this* sense not to be a rationalist is to be a fool. To those who honestly so elect, the process is legitimate, for thought is free, but it must not be confounded with what is technically called Modern Thought. In fact, it is anything but

modern. It is as old as Celsus, of the second century.

We rest our case — so far as authoritative-ness in Modern Thought is in question — with the five particulars here elucidated, not however in the presumption that the statement is complete, but in the hope and trust that it covers the subject sufficiently for our present ends, and gives in distinct outline the particular Modern Thought that forcibly bears upon the claims of the Bible.

CHAPTER I.

MODERN THOUGHT DEFINED.

BY Modern Thought as specially and directly related to the Bible, with the higher criticism as the method, is meant that general outcome of historic research and criticism, and of somewhat new and generally accepted canons of historic verity, and of the quite modern application of psychological postulates to every kind and form of human belief, which, with rare exceptions, Biblical specialists of every sectarian relationship now concede to be authoritative.

The subject in itself is vast and comprehensive. No one mind has taken in the whole of it. It has many departments, and every department gives scope for a specialist. The literature — that which has grown up in the past twenty years — makes a very large library. One has but to look at the bibliog-

raphy which an occasional author appends to his treatise on a single phase of the great subject, to be assured that the most industrious student can do no more than refer to works for the consecutive reading of which a long life would be too short. For one example, Prof. E. C. Bissell, D. D., appends to his book on "The Pentateuch" a catalogue of authors on the one subject, which fills sixty-four pages, making a total of more than two thousand authors! And every one of the many departments of Biblical study has been pursued by a full regiment of specialists. Whoever makes a serious attempt to master one department soon finds that he has time left for no more than a superficial nibbling at any other.

In treating of the general theme the best furnished mind can promise no more than conclusions drawn from conclusions, and possibly conclusions at even a third or fourth remove. Nor is this at all peculiar to Biblical labors. The same holds of popular, even profound, writers upon geology, natural history, astronomy, and certainly of the history of our

race. In all things, even in regard to our annual almanac, we must trust not a little to the erudition, the fairness, the reliability, even the authority of our fellow-men. In all things — in the things of religion not a whit more than in the things of sense — we walk a hundred miles by faith where we walk one by sight. It is needless to add that within our narrow limits, and in a few short chapters, we can give but a few out of the multitude of lines of thought, and these in terms quite general. Were our knowledge of the subject-matter a hundred-fold greater than it is, we could, under the conditions, do no more.

It would, however, be very superficial to infer from the fact that comparatively little can be said and understood that no light is thrown upon the comparatively much which, in its profounder meanings, cannot be grasped. In the simplest of the physical sciences it will be found that, for the masses, for the untrained, the intelligible little carries, justifies confidence in, the unintelligible much. In astronomy, for example, the prediction of an eclipse

fulfilled to a second in time, and to the width of a line in bulk, carries what Sir John Herschel calls the "elegant theories" of Lagrange: "If the mass of every planet be multiplied by the square root of the major axis of its orbit, and the product by the square of the largest of its inclination to a fixed plane, the sum of all these products will be constantly the same under the influence of their mutual attraction."¹ How many of our readers know, or ever can know, what *things* Lagrange here says? But does any one have a shadow of doubt that the astronomer states the truth? The little we actually can know carries the much that is out of our ken. To justify our intelligence in giving assent to the theory, we are not compelled even to tell what it means. Even so, a few salient statements in regard to the Bible, easily understood and winning assent, justify confidence in hundreds of recondite and scholarly statements, which only experts can understand, and which only greater experts can make. And the fact that we have no conception of

¹ Outlines of Astronomy, sec 639.

the *things* stated does not forbid belief in the reliability of the statement.

Were we to allege that we enter upon the great subject without any bias, we should be more likely to deceive ourselves than our readers. It may be doubted if anybody wholly escapes the effect of prepossession. We have been accustomed to regard Ralph Waldo Emerson as getting very near the ideal of a judicial temper; yet it is not difficult to trace in his writings the modifying influence of Unitarian prepossessions. What has won us to Charles Darwin, far more than the cogency of his argumentation, is the singular candor which apparently gives as much accent to the facts that weigh against his theory as to those that apparently sustain it; yet we doubt not that those who habitually associated with him discerned that even Darwin was human. At the outset we will say that, after something more and better than a hasty glance at our subject, we find our views of the Bible quite unlike the impression which in childhood and youth we got from Puritan divines. Yet we have seen no occasion to relax our belief that

it "contains a revelation from God," and in a sense which differentiates it from other literatures ; and our belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Sent of the Father, is all the stronger and clearer after undergoing the tests of Modern Thought. There are religious books, instructive, uplifting, and helpful, but now as never in our earlier years the Bible seems to us distinctively The Book ; and this after trying to weigh the recent and cumulative tests put upon it. If this is "bias" we cannot help it, for we are not conscious of the fact. If it so seems to the reader, he is free to "scale down" as he may think he sees occasion to ; but we add the caution that he do not, in the act, exhibit the weakness he fancies he sees in us.

CHAPTER II.

CRITICISM NOT RATIONALISM.

A MOST provoking characteristic of modern emendations of the Bible is the ignorance or else recklessness which seems to confound the two wholly dissimilar things, criticism and rationalism. Results which are thought to come from the one are passed off as products of the other. We refuse to accept certain rationalistic dicta and forthwith we are set down as bigots who refuse to accept the outcome of scholarship! In this we are not complaining of the real masters in either realm, but of their half-fledged imitators, not a few of whom know just enough to confuse untutored minds, but not enough to remove the difficulties they create.

Let us here distinctly declare our position. *We accept everything that comes as a verified result of criticism.* We resent technical rationalism

as an interloper, — as the most audacious sample of egotism known to the age. The difference between criticism and rationalism is profound. It may be put into a formula, thus: Criticism aims to determine *what the Bible is*; rationalism has contempt for the actual Bible, and impudently aims to make it into what, in its judgment, *a Bible ought to be*. Criticism studies documents, parchments, historic veracity; rationalism produces all results from the particular individual's consciousness. But here we must take extreme pains in defining terms.

The natural meaning of the word "rationalism" unquestionably operates to commend it in even its technical meaning. But between the natural and technical meanings the difference is as marked as it is between Orthodoxy defined as "sound doctrine," and Orthodoxy as a name for Calvinistic theology. Happily, Orthodoxy has practically parted with its early meaning, as soundness in belief, and now comes to the popular mind as only a Calvinistic interpretation or version of doctrine. Rationalism, considered

as a comprehensive word for the results reached by the human reason,— in which sense it is not to be confounded with what is called technical rationalism,— can move the dissent of no one capable of taking in the meaning of the words. That the Bible must vindicate itself to the reason of the believer is so obvious a truth that it has the force of a first principle. That it is wrong to lie and steal and to be wantonly cruel; that two contradictions cannot both be truths; that reason, as a comprehensive term for the distinctive qualities of mankind, should assent to nothing that contradicts it, and for the sufficient reason that it is psychologically impossible that it shall assent to such a thing,— no one who knows what thinking is will presume to deny or doubt any of these propositions; to do so would be mental stultification.

Of course it is true that rationalists habitually assume these and kindred postulates. And so do all who are not rationalists. So do Calvinists, and Mohammedans, and boot-blacks, and chimney-sweeps. It is impossible

to make an intelligible proposition without presuming their truth. We can no more get away from them than from the conditions of time and space. There is no doubt that the technical rationalist gets a good deal of popular effect by virtually assuming that he has a monopoly in the principles of reason, which are of necessity the common beliefs of all intelligent persons. There is no doubt that he gets the particular effect that all who criticise *technical* rationalism do in the act antagonize the *inevitable* rationalism. But this is a matter of course. Scepticism has always started off with the postulate that men of faith are fools.

In fact, what we call technical rationalism is a modern name for a set of opinions no more to be confounded with the primitive postulates which are the birthright of every soul than are the pictures or the cartoons put upon canvas with the paint which the artist or caricaturist has made use of for the particular end. Nothing can be Bible, nothing can be revelation, nothing can have evidence enough to make it respectable, which con-

flicts with the instincts of the human soul. But before ingeniously constructed opinions can have weight as opposed to Scripture, or to anything, it must be demonstrated that the opinions are true reflections of the soul's first beliefs and not grotesque contortions thereof. Technical rationalism would assure the King of Siam that the notion imported from the temperate zones that water will harden is a fiction to be dismissed without argument,—an invention which the experience of every Siamese at once pronounces a lie. But if his Majesty would take a balloon ascension to the height of two or three miles with a flask of water in his pocket, he would discover that the technical rationalism was anything but a real one. The Bible does not live by the consent of any man's opinions, no matter how sonorous the name he gives to them.

We wish in these reflections to be impartial as well as just. We have expressed indignation with the technical rationalist who parades the results of criticism as *his* achievement. Perhaps we have not felt indignant,

but we have been grieved and embarrassed when those with whom we are in general agreement make a not less inexcusable blunder in the opposite direction. There are men who, in the interests of faith, call certain results of scholarly research by the name of rationalism; they do this to give the new statement a bad repute. In fact, a class of Biblical champions do the cause more harm than do the enemies of Scripture. The question whether David wrote a single psalm is not at all a question of rationalism, — has no more to do with this than it has with alchemy. Rationalism does not raise the doubt, and the doubt is not suppressed by calling it rationalism. From first to last it is a question of the higher criticism.

In fact, neither party is without fault in this matter. It is of supreme moment that in every instance and in every particular we call rationalism rationalism, and criticism criticism. The two are wholly dissimilar. From the one we indignantly recoil; to the other we go with eager, grateful hearts.

CHAPTER III.

THE HIGHER CRITICISM.

WE have said, and we renew the statement, that we accept every result of the higher criticism. We may add, — of course we do. In fact, we can have no option. To presume on the contrary would reenact the famous inanity of holding to an opinion, “the facts to the contrary notwithstanding.” Possibly, in some instances, it may come hard to do so, in that a long habit of belief is thereby disturbed. From mere force of custom we may go on reiterating the old form of words even after we have discovered that they have no rightful place in our beliefs.

For one example, — we never repeat the Lord’s Prayer without including the doxology, “for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory;” yet at this date

every student has discovered that it is an interpolation or an accidental addition. Again, we never add the newly discovered word, "deliver us from the evil *one*," yet, whatever the meaning, the "one" is a part of the authentic petition. On every Lord's Day millions of people, on both sides of the water, repeat the prayer in their sanctuaries; yet such is the force of habit, we doubt if a hundred, all told, make the modifications which the Revisers have authenticated. But in every instance of exegesis applied to the words of the prayer, the polemic would insist or concede that the doxology shall count for nothing and the "one" be added. To anybody refusing to do this we might look with sympathy, but we should think it a waste of time to dispute with him.

Let us "start with clear ideas" and answer the question, What is the higher criticism? We can give no better answer than this, for it is precise: The higher criticism aims to determine *what the Bible is*. As we have explained, rationalism undertakes to determine what the Bible must be. When the

pettifogger asked his client, "What kind of facts do you want?" he gave, in the realm of law, an exact example of rationalism. When the counsel on the other side proceeded to show what the facts actually were, he gave an example of the higher criticism. Whatever criticism throws out of the volume as we have it, one thing it never presumes to do; it never attempts to throw out any part of the real Bible. It throws out the doxology in the current form of the Lord's Prayer for the reason that it has found out that the doxology is no part of the real Testament; Jesus did not utter, nor ask his followers to repeat, that form of words.

Though we have implied the fact, it may be needful to state implicitly and in form, that the higher criticism does not in any way concern itself with the doctrinal meanings of Scripture,—it is not exegesis. Commentators who give such diverse interpretations of Matt. xxv. 32-46—the Parable of the Sheep and Goats—take it for granted that the passage was really spoken by Jesus, that it is veritable Scripture. But the higher

criticism, paying no regard to the interpretation would argue the position which the commentators assume; it would restrict itself wholly to the question whether it is Scripture, whether Jesus actually spoke it, whether it is an addition or the modification of a copyist, and so on.

We recall an episode of an anti-slavery meeting held before the war, in which the newly enacted Fugitive Slave Law was under discussion, — rather, malediction. One of the orators, with more heart than head, recklessly affirmed, and to the great merriment of the assembly, that the clause in the Constitution which the wicked law proposed to make effective was the forgery of plantation politicians, and by them foisted into the fundamental law! Could he have proved the truth of his assertion by documentary evidence, it would have been exactly analogous to what we now call the higher criticism; whereupon an honest Supreme Court would have ruled the clause out, and with it the barbarous statute based upon it. Unfortunately, he could only say in support of his allegation that the fram-

ers of the Constitution were patriots and the champions of liberty, and that men of that character *never could* have framed such a constitutional clause! But this was exactly akin to what we now call rationalism; no court would have wasted time thereupon.

To give proof from documents, or from inference based upon them or the lack of them, that the passage which says that Jesus at the wedding feast converted water into wine is an interpolation or copyist's error, would be a case of higher criticism, to resist which would be the folly of bigotry. To deny the genuineness of the passage on the ground that Jesus, being the friend of all righteousness, could not have done such a thing would be a sample of rationalism, for which the higher criticism would not be responsible; and to call such an assumption a case of proper criticism might be the well-meaning utterance of an uninformed, untrained mind, or the knavish declaration of one who knows better than to get an effect by a false method.

Were we writing for the help of the com-

paratively few who have given somewhat of patient thought to the general subject, we might rest this part of our theme here. But we are making an attempt to help and inform the much larger class who, having little time or perhaps aptitude for the proper study of the theme, may thank us if we give "line upon line and precept upon precept." And for all we are paving the way to make as impressive as our use of words will permit us to do, our full, hearty, even grateful assent to every verified result of the higher criticism; not, keep in mind, to a real rationalism posing as criticism, but to the genuine thing, — higher criticism thoughtfully and honestly so called.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXTREME CLAIMS OF THE HIGHER CRITICISM.

I N the period of a generation an army of scholars in America, England, France, Holland, and — by great numerical preponderance — Germany, has had for its objective point the recasting of the Bible by applying, or professing to apply, thereto certain canons of historic criticism. So far as these scholars have been true to their profession, there has been no attempt to make or unmake, to modify, to weaken or to strengthen, the real Bible. To reiterate what we find ourselves often iterating, — in so far as they are loyal to what is now called the higher criticism, they have attempted solely, exclusively, simply this: to find out what *is* the Bible. They take up the Bible as, too often covered with dust, they find it, gilt-edged and resting on parlor tables, and say: “There is much in

that book — in the Bible as *there collated* — that has no right to be there; there are mistakes in the order of the several books, mistakes of commentators first written in the margin, which subsequent copyists accidentally or purposely put into the text; there are accidental and also wilful interpolations; there are things in that *particular edition* of the Book that sectarians put there in order to get a seeming support for certain pet dogmas; there are instances in which the leaves of manuscripts got misplaced, — things that would have been congruous in their rightful place that are quite incongruous in the present popular compilation; there are whole books and parts of books in that *particular edition* that have no rightful place in our Scriptures; and there are passages, perhaps whole books, not there which have a right to be put therein; and so on.

Let us here say that readers who may be disposed to accompany us are forewarned that they will see much in reference to the higher criticism, the office of which is, in some detail, explained in the chapter im-

mediately preceding. In itself right and needful, many of its experts assure us that some viciously abuse it to the ends of scepticism and doubt. Two in particular are censured as passing off under its name their own fancies and guesses, — A. Kuenen, LL. D., D.D., professor of theology at Leyden, and Julius Wellhausen, professor at Marbury; Kuenen in particular is censured as being a theorist rather than a scholar. We will, therefore, in attempting something in the way of particulars, select the extreme pretence, and note more especially the radical theories of the two authors named; in doing which the reader is asked to remember that we pass no judgment upon the theories, for or against, but simply state what they are.

1. The most radical and voluminous of the results which are claimed as the outcome of the higher criticism pertain to the Pentateuch, and particularly to the promulgation of the Law. When those in middle life were children, it was a general, almost an unquestioned belief, that the “five books of Moses” were literally the literary work of the great

Hebrew leader, — of course excepting the brief passage which narrates his own death. This belief made those books antedate everything after the Pentateuch as the books appear in our present Bible, — Joshua, Judges, Kings, and Prophets.

But the claim of certain scholars now is that the higher criticism has almost reversed this matter-of-course belief of thirty or forty years ago. Moses, it is now said, did not write any part of the Pentateuch. This — so the particular scholars aver — is a composite of many different and even diverse writings. Dr. Charles A. Briggs, professor of Hebrew in Union Theological Seminary, says: “The consensus of criticism is that it is an anonymous writing made up of four principal earlier histories, which have been compacted together, and that the Mosaic material is confined to the original sources and the essential features of the legislation.”¹ Deuteronomy is

¹ “Whither? A Theological Question for the Times,” p. 85. Dr. Briggs does not admit that the statement in any serious sense affects what he calls the “inspiration and authority” of the Pentateuch.

by some pronounced a forgery, and its authorship is assigned to a period subsequent to the Babylonian Captivity. The ceremonial part of the Pentateuch is set down as a comparatively late production; and the Law part of it at a still later date, — by the Dutch Kuenen to the “post-Exilian period,” the period next after the return from Babylon; by the German Wellhausen, who treats it as a Hebrew evolution, to the yet later period of the Persian supremacy; by both to a period between five and six hundred years before the Christian era.

2. The most emotionally religious of all compositions, the “Psalms of David,” it is now affirmed, pertain, for most part, to events and experiences of a much later date than the Davidic period; and in the opinion of not a few, not one of the Psalms was written by the great King. It is argued that the Psalter covers widely remote epochs in Israelitish history.

3. It is at this date denied that either Matthew or Mark wrote a Gospel; that even on the supposition that we have in the canon the Gospel “according” to Matthew, the lit-

erary work belongs to a later date, the facts being preserved by tradition. With greater assurance we are told that John's Gospel is neither the work of John, nor is it a gathering up of things said by John, but belongs to the second century, — a few place it as late as the fourth century, — the literary composer being unknown.¹

In the particulars we have given, the reader is confronted with "the worst of the situation," — if we may apply such a phrase to any possible result of criticism: we mean that it does not seem probable, even possible, that anything more revolutionary will be attempted. The physician who purposely estimates the disease at less than its real seriousness, in order to make the treatment less difficult, is not simply a quack, — he is an impostor, and any jury would convict him of the crime of wilful malpractice. We are

¹ It must be remembered that even a bald summary of extreme views — such as attempted in the text — cannot be made with precision, for there are several schools of the extremists. They all make the general statement that the Law and Ceremonial date long subsequent to Moses; but whether before, during, or after the Captivity, they by no means agree.

proceeding upon the ground that the higher criticism has possibly made some difficulties in the way of Biblical credence. It would be the practising of an imposition on every confiding reader were we, in selecting the difficulties with which to deal, purposely to pick out those most easily disposed of, and hide from sight, and flinch from the discussion of, those which present the greater obstacles to conservative faith.

Very many particulars pertaining to the relations of the Old Testament to the New — for examples, the Messianic thread that leads up to Christ; the historic allusions in, even the basal matter of, many of the Psalms; the reliability of the evangelistic records — are profoundly affected if it shall appear that the three particulars we have outlined are the results not of rationalism but of genuine criticism. The most radical of iconoclasts will concede that, in giving samples of the new difficulties, we have gone to the bottom in our brief delineation of the Wellhausen evolution and the Kuenen theory of the Pentateuch and its incidentals.

CHAPTER V.

A WORD OF CAUTION.

IT has been said of Butler's "Analogy" that it may be a question whether it has not made more sceptics than it has converted to Christian belief! The reason given for this fear is the fact that an untrained reader can easily get that great writer's meaning when he simply states the position taken by unbelievers; but that a reader so poorly equipped may fail to get the meaning when the author proceeds to show that those positions are untenable. The language of negation carries its meaning on the surface; the language of argument, in the line of affirmation, is usually exacting, and to the untutored it may be obscure. We think it probable that a *superficial* reading of Butler may raise doubts; while we are confident that an *appreciative*

study of that master thinker, will not only remove the doubt but make its return quite improbable.

We hold that every one whose vocation it is to instruct mankind in the things of morals and religion is bound to do something more than put his thoughts into the words that, rightly understood, properly convey his meaning. He is, in great degree, *responsible for the impression he makes*. If he address experts he may speak in technical terms. If he address people who, however intelligent, are not trained to the niceties of statement, he must speak in the language of those who listen to him. If he uses terms and illustrations which, while technically correct, must none the less mislead all not informed in regard to the technicalities, he is a deceiver; if he so speaks foreseeing that his words will be mischievously perverted, he is a false teacher and merits the deepest censure. We would have no such man on our list of friends, for his heart is bad.

In the last chapter we gave three particulars of what, in the judgment of two noted

Orientalists, are the outcomes of the higher criticism. We have been careful to state that we have selected them with a view to get "the worst of the situation." A scholarship that has placed the "Law of Moses" in the fifth or sixth century before Christ; which aimed to revolutionize our early beliefs touching the most devout of all literatures; which has set aside Matthew and Mark as authors, and which takes the generally accepted date and authorship from the Fourth Gospel, — may be presumed to have touched bottom. Were we writing for instructors and students, we should proceed with the question, *What of it?* Conceding *for the sake of the argument* that all these and kindred points are really forced upon us, what then? And in reply we should give reasons for our trust that, despite the startling situation, there is, after all, no great occasion for being startled.

Before, however, attempting the reflections which a candid recognition of the "new difficulties" calls for, and which it is the purpose of these pages to present, we deem it

not simply prudent — which it is — but needful and just to submit a few explanatory considerations in the way of caution.

1. While the purpose now had in view requires that we proceed upon *the supposition* that the extreme views advanced in the name of the higher criticism are true, we have a very strong impression that well-meaning readers may, despite our warning, get confused. And we must do a little more than put up the notice, “Conceded only for the sake of the argument.” We must explain and “hedge.”

Bridges are built, not for seasons of drought, but for the freshets of March and April. Ships are constructed, not for gentle breezes and smooth seas, but for the possibilities of cyclones and engulfing waves. We reiterate, therefore, that we are simply taking into the account the situation of Biblical believers *in case* they are compelled to assent to the extreme conclusions of the Dutch and German critics. But while we proceed *as if* their conclusions were inevitable, we in literal fact make no concession what-

ever; we neither concede nor deny, — we simply *suppose*.

2. While it does not comport with our present purpose to express or even hint any opinion of our own in regard to the alleged results of the higher criticism, it is, however, but proper and needful that we state most explicitly that scholars who have made the study a profession, and who rank very high in the estimation of their contemporaries, stoutly deny, confidently challenge, the extreme positions of which we have given salient examples. They affirm, and by elaborate and detailed argumentation maintain, that the “results” which we have outlined are *not* the outcome of the higher criticism, but of rationalism; and they are particularly emphatic in controverting the theories of Kuenen and the deductions of Wellhausen in reference to the Pentateuch. Edersheim pronounces the evolution theory of the Law and its assignment to the post-Exilian period, a creation of fancy, and says it is intrinsically absurd. Dr. Bissell regards Wellhausen as an ingenious inventor. The English Light-

foot is not less pronounced in his antagonism to the "results." Chancellor Howard Crosby, — whom we must distrust in view of the fact that he is of the school of plenary inspiration, — in terms not exactly judicial, characterizes the Wellhausen theory as a "barefaced falsehood," and he avers that "Kuenen, Grof, Reuss, Wellhausen and others," are working in the service of Satan! The late Dr. Ezra Abbott made a scholarly endeavor to sustain the Fourth Gospel as the literary work of John, and the late Dr. James Freeman Clarke inclined to the theory of its genuineness, deeming the matter somewhat uncertain.

Yet further, we must warn the reader not to infer from the refusal of eminent scholars to accept, as fairly determined, certain extreme results now insisted upon in the name of the higher criticism, that any great number of scholars, of any sectarian name, presume to deny everything that comes as a result of scholarly criticism. There may be exceptions to the rule, but they will be found exceptions of such a quality that they will

confirm the rule, while the rule is that very great results have certainly been put out of the realm of thoughtful discussion — results of a genuine criticism applied to the Bible. Hardly any one at this date has the estimate of the Scriptures that was popular and practically dominant in a former but not very remote generation. Not merely Andover, but Princeton, and yet more conservative Hartford concede that the Bible is not, in certain important particulars, what their teachers assumed it to be forty years ago. Prof. C. A. Briggs of Union College, nominally Orthodox, stirs the opposition of some of his brethren by making the confession that the theory of verbal inspiration has been swept away. Prof. G. T. Ladd, of Yale, also Orthodox, distinguishes between the subject-matter of Scripture and the literary vehicle, and abandons many of the positions formerly held by his theological brethren.

We should add that while Germany has been a fruitful source of revolutionary theories touching the contents of Scripture, at the present date most of the German scholars are

conservative. Nearly all the students and at the outset disciples of the iconoclastic critics have, by more extended research, been led to declare against their masters. Wellhausen has few sympathizers and many antagonists among his German contemporaries.

CHAPTER VI.

“LET IT COME.”

RETURNING to the question, — from which with a view to emphasizing a caution it seemed expedient to digress, — on the supposition that the extreme claims of Dutch and German scholars shall be established, what then? we may reply, what all along we have implied, *Accept them, of course.* What else can we do? To fight against facts is to fight against our intelligence; and to do this is to fight against God. In the exercise and application of our reason and our spiritual intuitions, we, as Christians, profess to build upon the Scriptures, Christ Jesus being the chief corner-stone. Our creed statement is that the Scriptures “contain a revelation from God.” Does the fact — if it shall prove to be a fact — that the Law of Moses, as we have been taught to call it, was not formu-

lated by the Hebrew, but took its present shape a hundred years after the return from Babylon, make any vital difference as to the essential contents of Scripture? The *things* are still there; in what regard is the nature of the things affected by a change of their chronology, or a change in the methods and circumstances of formulating them? The modification is wholly that of the envelope, not necessarily that of the contents. God is said to have promulgated the Law through Moses, speaking from Mt. Sinai. Suppose it shall be proved—not guessed, which is the rationalistic way, but proved, which is the way of the higher criticism—that so much is literature, a rhetorical form of noting the fact that God was with Moses in the particular of making intelligible to him His will and purpose, leaving the matter of shaping the knowledge to a later and maturer experience,—is there any occasion for a panic? If there is we fail to see in what important particular.

The most that can be said in the way of dissent pertains wholly to a disturbance in our habits of belief; and a disturbance of this

nature is always very painful. All this is felt when a Pagan becomes a Christian, when a Catholic becomes a Protestant, when a Baptist or a Presbyterian becomes a Universalist, but there is nothing in the essentials of the record that requires that it be dated B. C. 1800, or that is injured by bringing it down to B. C. 600. There is a sense of violence in so radical a reconstruction of the letter, but the spirit is in no way affected by the “redaction.” True, we have learned to love the old Bible; but if the extreme criticism is able to sustain itself, the *old* Bible is the one it finds for us; what it disturbs is a later, and, so far, an inaccurate Bible. If the critics are not theorizing but are doing genuine work as scholars, we ought, despite the pain incidental to the invasion of our mental habits, to give them our profoundest thanks; they have, so far, found the real Bible.

Again, suppose that it shall be established by a general concurrence of many scholarly minds that David did not write a single Psalm, and that most or even all of that matchless utterance of devotion pertains to

a subsequent epoch in the history of Israel; is it essential to the validity of the sentiments which the psalms breathe, and to their quickening power as they touch the human heart, that they should have been written about a thousand years anterior to the Christian era, and that the man who wrote them should have been the same who took Mount Zion? Again, it gives us pain to have our mental habits broken, but the quality of the "Psalter" is not dependent on the historic setting. No accurate change of the letter has any injurious effect upon the spirit.

The case is, it must be conceded, a little more serious when it comes to the authorship of the Gospels. If the Gospel "according" to Matthew means a record actually written by one who heard and saw Jesus, the probability of accuracy is greater than it would be if the meaning is that some other person wrote down what Matthew said; and the danger of inaccuracy is increased as the number of persons through whom Matthew's recollections were repeated enlarges. If it shall so appear, — if the higher criticism shall

as its final word date the first writing of the Gospels at a period subsequent to that of the evangelists, — we must in candor concede that so far it creates new difficulties. But despite all, the new difficulties cannot prove very serious, for happily there are corrective agencies and contingencies of very great authority.

Those who have been led to make even a superficial study of the methods by which any one of the Oriental histories is verified will, we think, concede that there is a special reliability in the New Testament records. At the first blush it may seem startling to learn that of the Bible not a single author's manuscript survives. We have not a single word in the chirography of any of the Biblical authors. But neither do we have a word in the hand-writing of Herodotus, Plato, Demosthenes, Julius Cæsar, Seneca, or any other of the Greek and Roman classics. But who doubts the substantial accuracy of the “History of the Peloponnesian War,” or of the “Retreat of the Ten Thousand”?

Whoever reads the translations of Plato, or

of any of the ancient authors, discovers that in reference thereto there has been something akin to the higher criticism. There are doubts in regard to an occasional word or phrase; and there has been resort to the process called canons of historic accuracy, to correct the text. But no one has ever felt that the critics have disturbed the foundations of classical literature, or have given occasion to question its genuineness. We have copies of copies and yet further copying, but that the original both as to matter and form is safely in our hands is never matter of intelligent doubt. Why not have at least equal confidence in the reliability of Matthew and Mark? No reason whatever can be given why we should distrust the accuracy of our New Testament that does not hold with equal force, we may say with greater force, of Plato's "Republic" and of Livy's "Rome." There is no occasion for a substantial distrust in either case. For one conspicuous example, it is with classical scholars a matter of course, a factor hardly within the realm of discussion, that all the manuscripts

of Æschylus are copies, with incidental variations, of a single manuscript, and this dating not earlier than the tenth century. Suppose this could be said of the manuscripts of the Gospels or of the Epistles to the Corinthians; would there have been this matter-of-course belief and confidence? Yet why not in the case of the Corinthians as well as that of the Greek tragedies? Echo answers, Why not?

In fact, had rationalists in the garb of critics done for Greek and Roman authors a tithe of what they have attempted in regard to the Gospel narratives and epistles, there would have been, ere this, a host stoutly denying that Alexander or Cicero ever lived save in the imaginations of the credulous!¹

It is to be said that, even accepting as genuine scholarship the extreme views, we simply *have very much* of what with every commentator there is *not a little*. The Revisers of the Bible had quite as much difficulty

¹ In another connection there will be occasion to give something in detail concerning the relative ages of the Biblical and classic manuscripts. It will appear that all the facts are immensely to the advantage of the Scriptures.

in finding out what the Bible is as in putting it into accurate English. Wellhausen, *as a critic*, travels exactly the same road that the Revisers travelled, only going considerably further. He returns with exactly the same kind of a harvest, only the load is considerably bigger. If we can take the one per cent of the scholars who have given us the latest edition of Scripture and not feel that the essentials of the record are hurt in the least, why need we hesitate to take the ten per cent of the Dutch and German redactors, and with equal confidence that no foundation stone has been disturbed, — provided, always remember, that these men are scholarly redactors and that they are not evolving from their own consciousness?

We dwell upon this point, for though it is not all-important, it is at least the greater half of the matter now in discussion. By the side of it all other questions fade, with the great exception, — that pertaining to the canon of Scripture, including the basis of its authority. Ere long we hope to consider this most vital matter. But as the victory at

Gettysburg presaged the surrender at Appomattox, so do “clear ideas” in regard to the nature of criticism, and our duty in accepting and welcoming all that scholars really prove in regard to the contents of Scripture, prepare the way for such a statement touching the distinctive place of the canonical Scriptures as may challenge the criticism of intelligent doubters. Therefore *in patience wait*. Let the scholars do their best. Very likely every one will mistake in some regard, but what one does amiss another will correct. It is reasonably certain that in good time there will be that practical agreement among the learned and candid which, in all historic matters, is practically authoritative. And whatever the verified result, let all be prepared to accept it and be thankful.

For this connection our final word is this: Touching the results of the higher criticism, we cannot at this stage of the investigation foresee precisely what they will prove; they may go back to conservative standards; they may go on to the point reached by Robertson, Kuenen, and Wellhausen; they may go

even further. But whatever they shall unmistakably prove, we counsel in regard to them what Patrick Henry counselled in regard to a very different issue: "Sir, *let it come*; I repeat it, sir, LET IT COME!"¹

¹ The one point aimed at in the text is that the verified results of true criticism are to be accepted, not in condescension, with a mental reservation, but in gratitude, — gratitude in that so far we have an accurate Bible in the place of an inaccurate one. It may contribute somewhat to this needful impression if the fact is given that not a few scholars of even conservative orthodoxy have given their assent to certain of the extreme conclusions or claims of critics. A notable and quite recent case in point is a contribution to the "Homiletic Monthly" for October, 1889, by J. H. W. Stuckenberg, D.D., of Berlin, Germany, in which, with comments of his own and citations from an article in the "Contemporary Review" for August by Professor T. K. Cheyne, D.D., Canon of Rochester, he says:

"Already results have been attained in Old Testament criticism which are recognized by the most conservative critics. These results should be accepted. 'They mean reform as an alternative to revolution.' The extreme views cannot be harmonized, but he [Prof. Cheyne] thinks a provisional compromise possible. 'Why should not a provisional compromise be entered into, in all suitable cases, between church teachers and Old Testament criticism on the basis of facts generally admitted by the experts?' The admitted facts he thinks are: that the Book of Daniel is not by Daniel, and that the second part, 'the book of visions,' was composed in the Maccabæan period; that Ecclesiastes was written long after the age of Solomon, most probably in the last century of the Persian

rule; that Isaiah xl.-lxv. is not by Isaiah, and that its chief part, if not the whole, is to be explained as of Babylonian origin. Of the Hexateuch [The Pentateuch with Joshua] Professor Cheyne says that ‘German critics of the orthodox as well as the liberal theological school are agreed in admitting that the Hexateuch is a composite work, and that it only arrived at its present form in the exilic and post-exilic periods, — that the legislation in particular was repeatedly adapted to the changing conditions of the national life.’ Respecting Deuteronomy he thinks that the church teachers, if they are to act in concert, must say with Delitzsch, ‘that, though containing a Mosaic element of uncertain amount, this element, like every other in the book, has “passed through the subjectivity of the later writer,” and that “Deuteronomy in all its parts is a work from a single smelting, and though possibly earlier than Isaiah’s time, undoubtedly later even than Solomon’s; and further, that the great body of Jehovistic and proto-Elohistic narratives, though possibly not post-Solomonic is undoubtedly post-Mosaic.”’ Those who imagine that the safety of the church consists in ignoring critical questions make a fatal mistake. Scepticism he pronounces ‘a force which can only be met, on the historical ground, by complete readiness to accept and assimilate critical facts.’ The true issue before us is this: Shall the Old Testament be an abiding possession of the educated laity, or shall it be given up?”

CHAPTER VII.

RELATION OF REASON TO THE BIBLE.

THE course of inquiry indicated by the cognomen, "higher criticism," pertains, as we have labored to show, simply to the contents of Scripture, and not to the meaning of the contents, their value, or their authority. It simply answers the question, *What is the Bible?* It is a specifically distinct inquiry, which takes the Bible as criticism has found it, and proceeds to explain its meaning and use. It is to this quite dissimilar department of our topic that we now purpose to turn the attention of those who read what we have to offer.

We pause, however, in making this departure, to impress one important lesson in regard to the issues involved in the criticism which we have labored to define. And this lesson is simply a warning to the unlearned

and also to the average scholar, — in fact to all save the specialist. The warning is to this purport: The battle is by no means over. Considerable time must elapse before a victory in either or any direction can be declared. In the past, real scholarship has triumphed over passion and prejudice. It assuredly will do so in the present Biblical controversy. Meantime it will be well for non-experts to read with a reserve of judgment.

And surely it cannot be thought strange that believers who find their prepossessions rudely disturbed hesitate and demand much in the way of argument before subscribing to the new opinions, — even if at the last they must do so. The human mind cannot take off and put on convictions or opinions as the body can take off or put on garments. What it has *grown* into it must *grow* out of, — supposing there is occasion for radical changes of belief. To be “blown about by every wind of doctrine” would indicate a natural fickleness, even if it shall at last be found that the wind blows from the right quarter. We are

not to be "blown" in any direction. If the mind does the work of change it will be done slowly, cautiously, gradually. When we remember that thirty years ago it was deemed by such periodicals as the "Westminster Review" a sign of dotage to dissent from the conclusions reached by the German scholars of that day, and now reflect that the pupils and successors of those scholars, standing upon their shoulders, seeing things in their time beyond their ken, refuted by a greater learning the lessons they at first accepted as finally determined, — it will be seen that not only the unlearned reader, but even the average scholar, will, if wise, wait until the "masters" can hold their throne for at least two generations.

We turn, however, to a different phase of our discussion, and shall try to explain the attitude of Modern Thought in reference to the value and authority of the Bible.

We begin at the beginning by considering that which is at the base of the entire discussion, and we raise the question: What is the relation of reason to the Book?

No phase of the general discussion calls up more unwelcome memories. In reference to no other matter in the whole realm of human thought has there been so near an approach to idiocy, — to self-stultification. Some not now very old readily recall the time when it was, in theological circles, stupidly denied that reason had anything to do with religion. It was assumed that reason and the Bible were wider apart than the poles, — indeed, that no practical tie connected one with the other. About two generations ago Dr. Channing, preaching on occasion of the ordination of Jared Sparks in Baltimore, devoted the whole sermon to proving that Christianity is reasonable! At that date no one smiled at such a gratuitous performance. On the contrary, the sermon had the flavor of novelty, and the orthodoxy of the day considered it a heresy. A generation later orthodoxy condescended to admit that reason might be heard. This strange inanity was an inheritance from a church that affected to speak by authority. And it may be confessed that in the early phase of the post-Re-

formation period, when it was customary to make a Scripture mosaic and call it theology, — in a period when the relations of human nature to human belief had not received attention; when Scripture could be mangled into such an inanity as the “being wise above what is written” and pass for a genuine quotation, — that in such a period, more cabalistic than thoughtful, occasion was given for such an argument as the great Unitarian put forth; but it must be taken as proof that mental progress is slow, that at any date within the century the Baltimore sermon could meet a want.

And we find that we must not flatter ourselves that the particular inanity is wholly a thing of the past. In humiliation we are compelled to note the fact that within very recent months a minister, having made the statement that reason underlies all our beliefs, giving the final verdict in regard to the Bible itself, was congratulated by one party, and censured by another party, in that he had become a rationalist! *Our* criticism would be that he wasted time in affirming a

platitude, — in affirming a proposition which every mental act presupposes; in making a statement the opposite of which, in Hamiltonian phrase, he could not even think.

If it is rationalism to assert that reason is at the base of all convictions — if it is infidelity to say this, then class us with the infidels. The eye was made before there was a telescope. Even Lick's monster glass does not displace the natural vision; to the blind it is of no more value than a stone; it is the eye's immense helper. A true Bible assists the reason; it does not crush or fear reason. We want no Bible, no Gospel, no ecclesiasticism, no church that can stand only as the image of God within us is cast down. Woe to the churchman, the apologist, the theologian, who gives thereto any other than the seal of final authority. We accept the Bible because we have been led to think that reason is under it, upholding it by its power. We will add that no man intelligent enough to apprehend the meaning of the word would dare to dispute our averment and then submit to a cross examination. In this age such

a man would not rise to the dignity of being contemptible.

The welfare of every cause has its chief peril in the house of its friends. When, by its own champions, a system of belief is put upon foundations which the unprejudiced cannot fail to see are unstable, the "champions" become in the result the most effective of assailants. The unprejudiced and thoughtful have good reason to exclaim, "It must be a weak faith that can have no better defence;" and it is natural, even if not wholly excusable, to presume that a cause will get proper treatment at the hands of its earnest friends.

The bad favor with which the Bible is at this date received by not a few, and often by thoughtful and candid people, is due, in no small degree, to the half-inane defences of the Book which make no small proportion of the bulk of so-called apologetics. When men are called upon to believe in Christianity — and hence in the book which gives us Christianity — by a process of argumentation which calls upon them to abdicate their reason,

their humanity, and their common-sense, they indeed *should* distinguish between the things to be believed and the method by which men, with a zeal far exceeding their knowledge, would have them believe; but, with those who do not reflect, the temptation will be strong to judge of doctrine by the quality of the proffered argument. Without doubt millions of people have been driven into hostility to the Bible by the strong feeling that there was no alternative if they would retain an intelligent self-respect. Voltaire was not made an infidel by a study of the Bible itself, but by the presumption, not unnatural in his age, that the Romish mummerly accurately represented the Bible. It was the priesthood, and not the evangelists and apostles, that led him into scepticism. To-day, the most popular of the platform champions of unbelief is, by the informed, seen, in not a small proportion of his diatribes, to be fighting a man of straw. Not a few of the "points" with which he makes the unskilful laugh have long passed as good coin on the counters of even the New Orthodoxy.

In the chapter immediately preceding, we called attention to the practice that prevailed in a former but not remote generation, of putting reason and the Bible into a relation of antagonism, — the assumption being that it was so much the worse for reason; the real effect on thoughtful people being the exact opposite, — so much the worse for the Book. It would seem to be enough to call attention to the folly and briefly characterize it. Unfortunately there is, even in this wiser age, an inheritance of that cabalistic past. We half suspect that some of our readers pause, with possibly something of a shiver, when we, in the clearest and most emphatic terms at our command, affirm, and re-affirm, that for man the final court of appeal is reason, and hence that the Bible itself will stand or fall exactly as that umpire shall decree. Yet had we more than the Platonic faculty for statement, and more than the Demosthenic power of persuasion, we would use our best gifts to iterate and re-iterate that affirmation.

We state our position with some warmth

in that we have suffered in our allegiance to the proposition we here lay down. Though it happened, often happened, years ago, — but not very many years ago, — we cannot, even now, suppress the rising of some indignation as we recall how well-meaning seniors have brought our own attempts at reasoning to a sudden stop by the cheap and shallow warning not to be wise above what is written. At such times and in such contingencies we were told by one class that reason is carnal; by another class that the Bible is the only authority, — with a meaning to the word “only” that was virtually exclusive of the use of reason as having any part or lot in the matter. It is something of a satisfaction to know that a time has at last come when that sort of drivel is no longer heard — *in form*.

We say “in form,” for though the snake is “scotched” it is not killed. Hence, at the risk of reiterating what to our best-informed readers may seem but platitude, we must clear the ground for a proper continuation of our theme by something of an *elucidation* of that which we have as yet but baldly *affirmed*.

We begin with a notable case in point. Somewhere in his writings Dr. Shedd, if we mistake not, imagines that he pays tribute to John Calvin in saying of him that no theologian ever paid such simple deference to the Bible, building his creed thereupon with no admixture of elements from any other source. As a form of words the tribute has a gracious sound. It seems to imply that the great Genevan took the Word of God and not the word of man; that he distinguished between a Divine revelation and man-made philosophy; and that he placed the Divine infallible assurance above and over the utterances of fallible human reason. In fact Dr. Shedd implies something quite other than this, as a simple analysis will show.

When we say that Calvin builded a theology upon the Scriptures, precisely what do we say? It is in the terms of the statement that he constructed something. Now when man constructs he uses tools. If he constructs a bridge, a house, a piece of cloth, a shoe, he in every instance makes use of some implement. The derrick, the hammer and

saw, the spindle, the knife, awl and thread, — some one or more, according to the exigency of the particular work, is put to use.

Calvin constructed a theology. Well, with what, — in the use of what implements? Did he construct his theology with his hands? Certainly not. With his feet? Of course not. With his teeth? The ridiculousness of the question makes an answer needless. Then, we again ask, with what? There can be but one answer: *With his reason*. Grant as we may that the Scriptures gave him the objective material, in the work of construction Calvin relied upon his reason. Yet if Dr. Shedd can be supposed to mean what he says, he denies the self-evident fact.

Now in what *way* did Calvin reason? The answer is — it can be no other — by thinking, comparing, inferring; the gathering of facts, and deducing conclusions from them; the weighing of evidence, sifting out sophisms, arguing; at least all of these processes are included in the working with reason. Dr. Shedd virtually tells us that building out

of Scripture, Calvin reasoned its facts and averments into a creed. He does not tell us by what sort of legerdemain the Reformer reasoned *out* his reason. Yet if he built a creed exclusively upon Scripture, — exclusively in the sense that reason being carnal would have been an interloper, — this inconceivable thing he must have done! When the Apostle says, “I speak as unto wise men, *judge ye* what I say,” he talks no such nonsense.

CHAPTER VIII.

NOT "ROME OR REASON."

MODERN Thought is by no means a fetish, nor is it a final mental estate, nor has it the grace of infallibility. Yet, as was sought to be explained in the introductory chapter, it is presumably an advance upon the past. The notion that men have studied and thought to no definite purpose is not to be entertained. Every generation has at least the advantage of standing upon the shoulders of the preceding generation. Progress in the realm of ideas is not simply a duty, — it is a fact.

As related to the Bible the influence of progressive ideas is very great. Every newly verified fact in regard to the nature of the human soul, is at once felt as a modifying agency in regard to the book which every stage of human progress entrenches

only the deeper in the appreciation and thoughtful veneration of mankind. What has been made reasonably certain in the world of scholarship, of psychology, of moral science, has made it impossible that the Bible shall be looked upon to-day as our parents and grandparents looked upon it. What a succeeding generation shall do in the same direction, we cannot conjecture. Doubtless there are at this date in the world's history, as there were in the Elizabethan age, more things in heaven and earth than philosophy has yet dreamed of. But we can only look at the things which now are; and to these we *must* look, and with something of authoritative appeal, if we would think wisely of what yet remains the Book of books.

Modern Thought compels us, first of all, to consider how the Bible came to be. That it contains a revelation from God is, we are confident, made all the more certain as the result of progressive wisdom. But we can no longer have the eyes and the ears of the thoughtful, unless we can be more specific in some statement of what this revelation is,

and also detail the process by which it comes in particular books rather than in others.

Modern Thought no longer permits us to look upon the Scriptures as wholly and absolutely separated from other kinds of literature. In some things it is new, — a thing by itself; in other things it is old, — a reprint of what was known before the books of the Bible were composed. It is needful that we not only distinguish between these two kinds of knowledge, but that we intelligently apprehend the difference.

Modern Thought makes it imperative that we not only concede the fact, but that we act upon it, that the different parts of the Bible have unequal values. It may remain true that every part is best *in its place*. The Apostle could not be blind to the fact that the several members of the body have different degrees of merit, — some are more "honorable" than others. The head has a higher office than the hand or the foot. Yet the head cannot take the place of the foot. Each part, the least honorable part, is best in its place. The genealogies, the Jewish

wars, the Mosaic legislation, the devout Psalms, the Sermon on the Mount, the distinctively spiritual element of the Gospels and the Epistles, — for an example, the second chapter of First Corinthians, — each may be, each must be, of best service for the particular place and contingency; but it would be the idolatry of the letter to class all as of the same intrinsic importance. Every part of a fruit-tree is best in its season, but the *best season* is that of the ripe fruitage. Modern Thought makes it imperative that we wittingly and formally apply this principle to the Bible. And finally, — that is, for this connection, — Modern Thought will expose us to contempt if we fail to consider in the light of reason, in constant deference to reason, *and in absolute submission to reason*, all the great questions in regard to the origin, the canonicity, and the authority of the different books and the collection of books which make the Bible.

The Roman Catholic Church has a royal road towards the solution of every question pertaining to the Scriptures, and in happy

contemplation of its lofty prerogatives, it pities, while it has contempt for, the poor Protestants. The notion of an authoritative book, in any sense of the word authoritative, in connection with the other notion that every one may and must be at liberty to determine what the contents and authority are, is to the Romish mind simply ridiculous. What would law be, what would law become, if every man were, as respects his public obligations, a law unto himself? In respect to legislative enactments every civilized people sees, and acts upon the sight, that there must be a court whose decree is final. The pretence that the Bible has any sort or degree of general authority utterly negatives — makes self-contradictory — the other Protestant pretence of the "right of private judgment;" so the Romanist affirms.

A few years ago, when rationalism was championed in a style somewhat unlike its present form, it was customary to flatter this conceit by conceding that it is either "Rome or Reason,"—which meant that it could not be Reason *and* Protestantism.

The principle in all this was and is that nothing can be authoritative over more than one person, over two, a hundred, a thousand, unless a prerogative is lodged somewhere rightfully to *coerce* the two, the hundred, the thousand,—exactly as we have it in the administration of our civil statutes. The notion of an authoritative Bible takes with it as an indispensable correlative, *an authoritative Church*. When the Reformers threw off the latter, without knowing what they had done they, by the same act, threw off the former. Romanism, therefore, flatters itself that it, and only it, can be entitled to proclaim such a book. When disputes arise as to the text, as to interpretations, as to the chronological order, as to the authorship and canonical verity of any particular manuscript, instead of referring it to a coterie of German scholars, a court, absolutely exempt from the possibility of error, is fully enrobed and equipped in the Vatican. In syllogistic form this is the boast of Romanism:—

1. The Bible is infallible and authoritative.
2. Only that which is itself infallible and

authoritative can affirm so much of the Bible ; for the stream cannot rise higher than the fountain.

3. Protestantism has no such qualifications, by its own concession.

4. *Therefore*, by elimination, the prerogative of infallible authority rests with the Catholic Church, it alone even pretending to possess it.

It must be said that with the addition of a single "if" this claim of the Romanist is literally superb ; it exactly meets the want ; it is the solid bedrock of belief. We are, however, compelled to believe that it is all this "if" it is true ; it is in fact all this "if" it is any part of it ; it is absolutely solid "if" it is not absolutely shallow.

We expect to show, we shall be disappointed if we meet with any difficulty in showing, that of all syllogistic bubbles this of Romanist blowing is the thinnest. Pricked it will vanish, leaving not so much as the semblance of argument behind. It is, if we mistake not, the most grotesque assumption that ever deceived a part of mankind.

The Catholic pretence, observe, is that it alone gives a guarantee of a reliable Bible, in that the Church alone even pretends to be the unerring instrumentality that is needful. Though this only needs to be stated to evoke the contempt of the Protestant mind, the situation calls for something more and other than contempt. In fact, the average Protestant mind carries not a little of the very thing which in terms it ridicules. When the Reformation of the sixteenth century fancied it had cast off the Romish superstition it, in fact, retained very many of its worst features. The bulk of the "difficulties" which confront and embarrass the nominal Christianity of the present day, is but an inheritance from the Romish Babylon. The Lutheran school did not go far enough. It went so far as to throw off the papal *supremacy*, but it retained of the papal *system* several things which can be justified only on the ground of the papal assumption. From the days of Luther till now Protestant Christianity has been handicapped, has been forced into an illogical position, by a certain

part of Romanism which it took with it in the act of separation. We must, therefore, if we would treat our full theme with intelligible justice, not only vent our contempt of the Romish prerogative, but also justify our contempt with argumentation.

The Catholic, as we have noted, makes against Protestantism the point that it does not even pretend to have—and certainly it does not have—an authoritative argument upon which to base its authoritative Scripture. The Protestant has no option but that of conceding that the point is conclusively taken. But how much better is the plight of the Catholic, — if the word "plight" is pertinent in such a connection? The Catholic will say: "But we do not base the reliability of the Bible on *argument* at all. At the best, argument is fallible. It is purely of human creation. It cannot be greater than its creator. And 'to err is human' must apply to man's reasoning not less than to his conduct. In the place of argument, therefore," the Catholic will continue, "we put authority, reliable and final authority, — we put the dictum of the

infallible Church." So far all goes smoothly and with invincible logic. But now comes the question, *On what does the reliable Church rest?* The Bible, we are told, does not rest on human reasoning, which, however cogent, at least *may* mistake. It rests on an unerring decree. But who or what authenticates the decree? Is *this* also unerring? Back of this, or under this, is there infallibility number three? If so, what holds up number three? Has this also a hard-pan in a yet lower order of infallibility? And how long can this thing go on? Just inform us when we really touch the bottom round in this ladder of infallibilities, and then we must ask, *What is under the lowest?* Find, who can — imagine, who can — anything save argument, save a process of human reasoning, save a fallibility.

In classic story, framed in ignorance of astronomic law, the question, "On what does the earth rest?" got for answer, "On the back of an elephant." The inevitable question next in order, "But on what does the elephant stand?" brought the response, "On the back of a tortoise." We are not told

how far this questioning ran. But as in the nature of things there must have been a close to the series of questions and answers, in this end it could but have been apparent that the "difficulty" was only placed further off; in no particular was it destroyed or even lessened. The Roman Catholic Church is, we will suppose, the "elephant" supporting the world of reliable Scripture. But we do not learn that its wisest champions have ever produced, or affected to produce, the equally firm "tortoise." When the Church talks to one of its own devotees, the bald assumption of authority may not be doubted, — at least, it will not be formally questioned. But when it talks to a Protestant, or to a heathen, or to any kind of an unbeliever, it will not have the audacity simply *to assume* its authority. It must at least attempt to support the claim with reasons. That is to say, it must — actually it will — present the much derided argumentation!

By virtual concession — concession in the condescension to argue the proposition — the Catholic has no better, no other basis than

has Protestantism. It is indeed one round lower in the ladder of supports, *but it is the same thing*, — REASONING! Even the infallible decrees of the Vatican have, by the practical concession of all Catholics, can have, none other than the fallible basis.

The old-time rationalistic boast, "Rome or Reason," is a fallacy. Its disjunctive is wholly misleading, for Rome itself is reason, — as we think, as Protestantism avers, very poor, misdirected and misdirecting reason, yet that and necessarily that. In fact everything affirmed of the mind, or for the mind, is in the last appeal a thing of reason. It is the basal fact of the situation, presupposed in all stages of affirmation. If not the elephant, if not the tortoise, then that on which the tortoise stands, is — Argument.

The truth is, all of man's mental estates must share in the limitations of his mental structure. Finite man cannot have an image of infinite reality. The metaphysical conception of the Infinite, as the French eclectics affirmed it, is not a conception, — it is simply a negation of the finite. It is a trust with

no corresponding intellectual image. Job was wiser than most modern theologians in that he knew his finiteness and accepted the logical sequence. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" Job felt — for it is a mental necessity to feel — that the infallible *is*; he also felt — and the fact is apparent on the statement — that the human mind cannot *take it in*. Romanism has ever, in this regard, attempted the impossible. The Reformation inherited and reaffirmed it. Modern thought rules it out.

CHAPTER IX.

REASON BOTH BOWS AND IS BOWED TO.

OUR theme grows upon us as we proceed in its elucidation. We have promised—from the first it has been our thought—to make some statement of what modern thought makes imperative in regard to the making of the Bible; what limitations it imposes when we consider the question, How did we get the Bible? what of our traditions it rules out when we consider the question of its canonicity and special authority? But as we proceed we find that the contemplated discussion of these very practical matters must take its place. It seems expedient that we explain, more in detail, the *principles* which are dominant, and which must be applied in determining the construction and value of the Book.

Meaning by reason, not simply the logical faculty, but the entire mentality of man, inclusive of the ethical as well as the intellectual, — meaning, that is, the manhood of man, — we have iterated and reiterated the absolute supremacy of reason in the determining of all matters of knowledge and faith. We have conceded this of Protestantism; we have, we think, put the fact beyond question that the Roman Catholic Church is, despite its sublime arrogance, in the same situation.

But while we shall not and cannot modify this statement in the least particular, we assert — all along we have implied — that the Bible, in that it contains, or is presumed to contain, “a revelation from God,” has *its* authority, makes *its* demands, has *its* supremacy. To those of our readers who are not trained to make careful distinctions — it would be a marvel if we did not have such — we are aware that we may seem to deal in contradictions. If Reason is supreme, of course the Bible must bow to it. On the other hand if, in any practicable and intelligible sense, the Bible has authority, — that is to say, has in

any practical sense a supremacy, — then in that sense reason must bow to the Bible. It will be asked: Is not the one proposition exclusive of the other? Can reason both bow and be bowed to? We answer at once that, when rightly apprehended, neither proposition excludes the other. It is not only a thing conceivable, it is also a fact, and the fact has innumerable analogies in all departments of research, that while the Bible must bow to reason, none the less if the Bible contains a revelation, reason must bow to *it*. The contradiction is verbal; definition and explanation will show that it is not real.

Forty years ago, in his "Discourse of Religion," Theodore Parker started the "Only truth is authority," — a statement in its immediate impression so obviously true that it became a proverb. It has, however, had the effect of blinding many, not to its opposite or contradictory, but to its correlative, "Testimony is authority." Definition and discrimination are therefore needful.

We have recently taken in hand a little book, "A Vindication of the Mosaic Author-

ship of the Pentateuch," by Professor Charles Elliott, D.D., the general purport of which has our sympathy, much of his argumentation being pertinent and very thoughtful. But we come upon this, — exactly pertinent to the present stage of this discussion : —

“ If the Holy Scriptures contain a revelation from God, if their inspiration is fully established as fact, then reason, though it may be exercised in the examination of their divine origin, *must bow to their authority.*”

To this the answer is, Yes and No. In one sense of the words they conceal, in sauce that is palatable, the grain of virus that is germinal of the most venomous form of scepticism, the stuff on which Ingersolls feed and fatten. The malignant part of the virus is a metaphor, — a metaphor which to readers in a certain mental attitude conveys not only opposite but contradictory meanings.

It is, we now repeat, an axiom that reason — using the word as a generic term for all the mental and spiritual gifts — is for each man the supreme and final arbiter. It may therefore be asked, What can a sane man

mean by the "bowing" of reason to anything? The very phraseology offends a certain class, putting them into a state that makes them impervious to all appeals. We know a minister who in reading one of Cowper's noblest hymns, uniformly left out the couplet, —

"Too weak thy secrets to discern,
I lay my reason at thy throne."

Yet as a matter of fact, every man, every day of his life, does, in a quite intelligible sense of the phrase, "bow his reason" to authority. When a judge, having looked into the statutes and estimated the intent, gives a "ruling" he "bows his reason" to his own decree, — bows to the very thing reason has discovered and verified! When a jury take the law from the judge their several reasons compel them to bow to that authority; each individual reason defers to the superior wisdom. When they find a verdict, in the doing of which reason has been their guide, they "bow" their reason to the conclusion.

But, in a quite dissimilar use of the word, it is an inheritance of the past, it comes as a

relic of the old theory of a verbal inspiration, to assume that revelation and reason may be in conflict, in which contingency reason must bow to its superior. In form and in definition we may have thrown off this incubus, but enough of it sticks to confuse our judgment. We suspect that Dr. Elliott, in the passage quoted, has involved himself in such a sophism. If he is presuming a possible conflict between revelation and reason, why does he forget that if he is intelligent in his notion of revelation, it is his reason that has led him to its acceptance? Put the Bible into the hands of an educated Japanese. What do you ask of him? Certainly not to take your word for its verity. You inform him that it rests on a certain body of evidence, and then invite him to test its value by his reason. You expect *him* — why not expect the same of the traditional believer? — to make reason the final arbiter. But in case you succeed in convincing him that the evidences are conclusive, you then expect, have a right to demand, that his reason shall submit — shall “bow” to the testimony.

In the spring of 1849 the Asiatic cholera broke out in the city of Dayton, Ohio, and in a very malignant form. A certain person at the time residing in that city, was suddenly attacked while upon the street. He was instantly in charge of a skilful physician, who was also a personal friend. The physician said to his patient: "I see what has got hold of you. Fortunately, your habits are temperate. Have no anxiety whatever. The remedy will be effectual." He filled a small tumbler with a liquid, of the nature of which the patient knew nothing. In a vein of pleasantry quite natural to the genial doctor he said: "Were you in the condition you were in yesterday that would be the death of you. Take it and it will save your life." The patient, full of faith in the skill and experience of his physician, drained the tumbler to the last drop. In three days he was completely restored.

Now for this particular contingency, *what was authority* to the sudden victim of the malignant epidemic? Was that authority truth, — truth in the efficacy of the remedy?

In one sense it was ; in a different sense it was not. Was that authority testimony, — testimony in the assurance of the man of skill? In one sense it was ; in another sense it was not.

This chapter has been written in vain for every reader who still needs that the application of this personal experience to the question under consideration shall be formally made.

CHAPTER X.

CONCERNING THE MANUSCRIPTS.

IF the adults of the present day, those reared under nominally Biblical auspices, were to give their early impressions in regard to the origin of the Bible, there would, we think, be a general agreement to the effect that there was in its composition very little that is at all analogous to the making of other books. In commercial chambers the proprietor dictates a letter pertaining to the business of the house, which a specialist puts into the letters of the type-writer. It is not needful that the scribe shall apprehend the meaning of a single word. He hears the vocalization and accurately puts it into "black and white." It is not the *scribe's* letter in any sense; he is simply the automaton that writes out or prints out the words that fall upon his ears.

In like manner God was supposed to have dictated the words of his Word to lawgiver, psalmist, prophet, and apostle, — such at least was the “impression.” Every word, every syllable of the two Testaments was, in some indistinct way, thought to have been divinely vocalized. In such a passage as “And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt,” there may have been a glimmer of an impression that the clause “And the Lord appeared unto him and said” could not have been God’s utterance in the direct sense in which the clause “Go not down into Egypt” was, for it was not possible to suppress wholly the working of the brain. But the “glimmer” did not attain to the strength of an “impression.” And so there was a similar “glimmer” when we read that “God spake to his servant” and the servant made answer, “Here am I.” Yet the impression remained, as history at least, that the very phraseology was a heavenly dictation; as an historian God could of course dictate the words of the servant as well as his own words to which the servant replied.

As the clergy of two and three generations ago were educated men, and therefore must have known that in the "impression" which we have described the people were misled, we must think that they were culpable in their habitual neglect frankly to state the facts. Worse than this, they read the Scriptures from the pulpit, and in their sermons made references to them, with a look and accent that strongly confirmed the inane impression. In fact, if an occasional hearer, constitutionally compelled to do a little thinking, had the temerity to put a question to his minister in regard to the accuracy of the popular notion of the Scriptures, he was quite sure not to get an answer but a rebuke; he was bordering on sacrilege in daring to be wise, in even wishing to be wise "above what is written"! Probably the clergy of the days of our grandparents were, to an extent which they themselves could not suspect, the victims of the same cabalistic "impression." While as scholars they must have seen some of the real facts, "seeing they could not perceive."

But whether culpable or simply unfortunate, whether themselves deceived in the things respecting which they deceived the people, they *were* deceivers. And the penalty is upon their children to the third generation. For the time has come when the people are getting the knowledge which their spiritual guides withheld; and a result is a shaking of confidence, with the reaction that is natural though not wise. The Biblical "apologists" of to-day find themselves compelled to remove difficulties and resist prejudices which, in very large degree, would not have existed had the clergy of the olden time frankly told all they knew.

A full answer to the question, What are the facts at this date unchallenged save by the incorrigible in loyalty to ignorant tradition? would fill volumes, and very much of the details would not be intelligible to any save experts. It must answer our present purpose to give very general statements, and these in few words.

First of all,—in another connection we had occasion to anticipate the fact,—we are

in respect to the Bible just where we are in reference to Plato, Demosthenes, Thucydides, Seneca, Cicero, and Tacitus, and every other of the Greek and Roman classics; just where we are — strange to say — in reference to Shakspeare; we have not so much as a paragraph, a line, a word in the hand-writing or original manuscript of a single Biblical writer. In respect to the classics we have not a manuscript that antedates the tenth century. In regard to the New Testament we are vastly more fortunate, — we can go back to the fourth century; but not beyond this. Every Biblical manuscript is a copy, probably the copy of a copy, and possibly this of a yet older copy, — yet a copy.

Before the invention of types — before the art of printing — copying was at once a useful and a fine art. Men were trained to the vocation. They acquired in legibility a precision and in ornamentation a skill that in this age seems marvellous. But of course they made mistakes. Occasionally a word or a line would be missed, — the omissions, with others of a similar character, to be re-

peated by successive copyists. In some instances the zeal of a scribe in behalf of what he thought *ought* to be the meaning in a particular passage, would tempt him — if there was any obscurity in the text the temptation became so much the stronger — to amend or even add. At first the amending might be put into the margin; but it was quite sure, in succeeding transcriptions, to get into the text. Hence different copies of the Bible would have different mistakes. In a *numerical* estimate the different readings in the mass of manuscripts became very great. We give our opinion, but do not argue it in this connection, that the number of mistakes of a *serious nature* is very small.

We however state the case exactly as it is: we have no Biblical manuscript written before A. D. 300; the oldest date is possibly a little later than this. The number of manuscripts written in Greek is very great, — there are more than fifteen hundred still in existence; and they cover a long period, from A. D. 300 down to the invention of printing. Of the earliest copies — remember that every

existing manuscript is a copy — no one is wholly complete; chapters, sections, verses are left out in all; though happily what time and the destroyer have taken out of one is, as a rule, found in some one of the others. In many passages the readings differ. As we have explained, it has been the task, and also the immense service, of the higher criticism to deal with the difficulties of the situation and very largely to remove them. Indeed, this was no small part of the work of the Revisers, — a work needful as introductory to the business of translating.

Does any reader, to whom these statements may be new — very likely we have such — chill at our free concession? Does it seem to such that the foundations are shaky; that the historic foundations of faith have in them a suspicious proportion of sand? In a preceding chapter we had occasion to remind all such that they do not take the same alarm, nor suggest the same doubt, in regard to the “Republic” of Plato; the “Philippics” of Demosthenes; the “Orations” of Cicero; the “Germanic Sketches” of Tacitus.

In regard to the dates of the copies of Biblical manuscripts as compared with those of the copies of the Greek and Roman authors, the contrast in favor of the Scriptures is so great as to justify, what in a preceding chapter was promised, a somewhat detailed statement; and this is the fitting connection Professor C. E. Stowe, dealing with this phase of our present subject, says:—

“Of the manuscript copies of the Greek Testament, from seven hundred to one thousand of all kinds have been examined already by critics, and of these at least fifty are more than one thousand years old, and some are known to be at least fifteen hundred years old; while the oldest of the Greek classics scarcely reach the antiquity of nine hundred years, and of these the number is very small indeed, compared with those of the Greek Testament.”¹

Says Rev. John W. Haley:—

“Notwithstanding its minute discrepancies and ‘various readings,’ the text of the New Testament is better established than that of any other ancient book. No one of the so-called ‘classics,’ not Homer

¹ Origin and History of Books of the Bible, p. 60.

nor Herodotus, compares favorably, in this respect, with the New Testament. . . . Among the Greek classical writers, Herodotus and Plato are of the first importance. The earliest manuscripts of Herodotus extant are, one in the Imperial Library at Paris, 'executed in the twelfth century,' one in the Florentine Library, which Montfaucon assigns to the tenth century, and one in the library of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, England, which may possibly have been written in the ninth century. One of the earliest manuscripts of Plato is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and was executed not earlier than the ninth century."¹

Alleging that "so far as an authenticated and settled text is concerned, the classics are very far behind the New Testament," Mr. Haley quotes from Tregelles:—

"There is not such a mass of transmissional evidence in favor of any classical work. The existing manuscripts of Herodotus and Thucydides are modern enough when compared with some of those of the New Testament."

The same author, in close connection quotes from Dr. Bentley's reply to Collins in

¹ An Examination of the Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible, pp. 44, 45.

reference to the manuscript copies of Terence, the oldest and best of which, now in the Vatican Library, has “hundreds of errors :” —

“I myself have collated several, and do affirm that I have seen twenty thousand various lections in that little author, not near so big as the New Testament; and am morally sure that if half the number of manuscripts were collated for Terence with that niceness and minuteness which has been used in twice as many for the New Testament, the number of the variations would amount to above fifty thousand.”

Mr. Haley adds : “Yet Terence is one of the best preserved of the classic writers.”

We make further use of Mr. Haley’s very instructive book by reproducing “the fitting words of Scrivener :”¹

“As the New Testament far surpasses all other remains of antiquity in value and interest, so are the copies of it yet existing in manuscript, and dating from the fourth century of our era downwards, far more numerous than those of the most celebrated writers of Greece or Rome. Such as have already been discovered and set down in catalogues are hardly fewer than two thousand; and

¹ Criticism of New Testament, pp. 3, 4.

many more must still linger unknown in the monastic libraries of the East. On the other hand, manuscripts of the most illustrious classic poets and philosophers are far rarer and comparatively modern. We have no complete copy of Homer himself prior to the thirteenth century, though some considerable fragments have been recently brought to light which may plausibly be assigned to the fifth century; while more than one work of high and deserved repute has been preserved to our times only in a single copy. Now the experience we gain from a critical examination of the few classical manuscripts that survive should make us thankful for the quality and abundance of those of the New Testament."

Our author reproduces a quotation from an article in the "North American Review," given by Professor Stowe, in which the writer says of Shakspeare, the text of which is less than two hundred years old, that it is —

"far more uncertain and corrupt than that of the New Testament, now over eighteen centuries old, during nearly fifteen of which it existed only in manuscript. The industry of collators and commentators, indeed, has collected a formidable array of 'various readings' in the Greek text of the Scriptures, but the number of those which have any

good claim to be received, and which also seriously affect the sense, is so small that they may almost be counted upon the fingers. With perhaps a dozen or twenty exceptions, the text of every verse in the New Testament may be said to be so far settled by the general consent of scholars that any dispute as to its meaning must relate rather to the interpretation of the words than to any doubts respecting the words themselves. But in every one of Shakspeare's thirty-seven plays, there are probably a hundred readings still in dispute, a large proportion of which materially affect the meaning of the passages in which they occur."

The bearing of these citations on the value of the copies of Biblical manuscripts does not need to be pointed out. It must, however, be conceded that the facts as they pertain to the Scriptures make bad work with the theory of Verbal Inspiration, and with the Infallible Protection of the Romish Church.

CHAPTER XI.

MANUSCRIPTS. — VERSIONS. — QUOTATIONS.

WE have said that the number of Greek manuscripts — copies within a period of something less than a thousand years — exceeds fifteen hundred. We specify *Greek* manuscripts. It may not be amiss to explain that the oldest *Hebrew* manuscript of the Old Testament does not date earlier than the tenth century. Happily, Hebrew scholars made a revision of the Old Testament about a thousand years ago, thus doing — we now quote J. Paterson Smyth — “for the Hebrew of the Old Testament what has recently been attempted for the Greek of the New. All the old manuscripts were collected together and compared for the purpose of a great revision, and thus at that date the Hebrew Old Testament was made as nearly correct as the best scholarship of the Jewish academies

could make it, after which the older manuscripts disappeared.”¹

Of the large number of Greek manuscripts — all of which have been found more or less serviceable in the work of revision — three, on account of their antiquity, have almost supreme importance, and a brief word in regard to each is proffered.

1. THE VATICAN. — So called because it is kept in the Vatican Library at Rome, the almost enviable possession of the Romish Church. The larger part of Genesis, a few of the Psalms, and all of the New Testament that succeeds the Hebrews are missing; with these not extensive exceptions the manuscript is complete. Its exact date cannot be determined; but by general agreement it belongs to the fourth century, probably the early part of it. It is the oldest of existing manuscripts.

2. THE SINAITIC. — So called because of its discovery in Saint Catherine’s Convent near Mount Sinai. It was discovered by the great German “manuscript hunter,” Dr. Tisch-

¹ How we Got our Bible, p. 30.

dorf, and with many incidents of romantic heroism. It is deposited in the St. Petersburg Greek Church. It contains the bulk of the Old Testament, and the New Testament complete. After the "Vatican" it is the oldest of extant manuscripts.

3. THE ALEXANDRINE — next in the order of time — contains nearly the whole of the Old Testament, and all of the New Testament with the exception of parts of Matthew, John, and the Corinthians. It is deposited in the British Museum. Its precise date is uncertain, but it comes as early as A. D. 450.

The Bible, so far as the contents are concerned, rests mainly on these three manuscripts; though relatively less but positively very great support is derived from many other Greek copies. Nor are these in every particular identical in the matter. The three testimonies would otherwise be conclusive that we at least have the real Bible; so much would be secure whatever might be our opinions, or reasons for our opinions, as to its value. Unfortunately, there are a *few* serious differences, and *many* verbal differ-

ences which Biblical scholars do not regard as of vital importance. The difficulties thence arising would certainly weigh not a little against the reliability of the Book as we now have it, were they not overcome by strong testimonies coming from a different source. Fortunately, such strong testimonies we have.

The reader will keep in mind the fact that there is such a thing as a “science of history,” — a metaphorical use of the word “science” to signify certain canons of historic verity which have been matured very much after the manner of scientists in dealing with physical phenomena. The so-called early records of history are not exactly, often not even approximately, “records” at all; that is to say, scribes did not record events in their chronological sequence. In very few cases are there annals to which we may go as we do to a secretary’s minutes. To make out a date, to distinguish and verify a particular event, to fix a place in chronological relations, may — often does — demand an elaborate and complicated process. Experts

in dissimilar realms of research may have to be summoned. For a reliable example, the date of a disaster of a Greek armament in an attempt to conquer Syracuse has been determined — at least confirmed — by an astronomical table of eclipses. The age of a temple in Thebes is reached by a deciphering of the hieroglyphics on its walls; compared with the thickness of the mud above its base, — the Nile depositing about five inches in a century; compared again with some vague record in the priestly annals; compared, yet again, with some correlated event in Assyrian or in Biblical history or both; compared once more, it may be, with very conclusive philological criteria; and so on. That is to say, that which is lacking in one kind of testimony is supplied by what comes from a very dissimilar source. The systematizing of these confluent lines of testimony is what is called the “science of history.”

Now in the work of determining the real Bible — not in this raising the question of its worth, this depending on a different and distinct line of argumentation — the “con-

fluent lines" are an immense factor. In fact, the circumstantial testimony is often stronger than the positive. It is to examples under this head that our discussion now brings us.

We are not restricted to the testimony of the three ancient manuscripts, nor to that of all of them. Very far from that. The concession has been willingly made — of course willingly, for it is inane to kick against facts — that we have no Biblical manuscript of earlier date than the first part of the fourth century. This, as we have noted, is but a copy, it may be the copy of a copy, and this again copied from an earlier copy. But if we have no first manuscript, *we do have translations of first manuscripts!* The churches way back to the close of the Apostolic age, in Latin-speaking lands and in those of other tongues, had versions, which yet survive, of manuscripts much older than those which we have described. The *manuscripts* of later date can therefore be compared with *versions* of manuscripts of a much earlier date.

Yet again, the Church Fathers — from the

first Clement, who may have seen the Apostle Paul, way down to Augustine — make *quotations from manuscripts at the times extant*, some of which must go back to very near the days of the Apostles. Students who have made the Fathers a special study assure us that were all the manuscripts and all the translations wholly lost, no small part of the Scriptures — particularly of the New Testament — could be recovered from the writings of Ignatius, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine.

The significance of these collateral testimonies makes them worthy of a more detailed statement.

CHAPTER XII.

THE "CONFLUENT LINES."

IN these chapters we assume that no reader will fancy that we are posing as original, — save of course as respects "the literary form;" wherever we may get our facts we mean to express them in phraseology of our selecting. In historic matters no one is strictly original except the annalist or reporter getting the matter at first hand. In a sense less strict yet genuine, the scholars who deal directly with manuscripts, and such printed matter as records, official reports, and the material of historic canons, are original. Bunsen, Rawlinson, Grote, Niebuhr, and Mommsen are original. The name, however, of original authors in any department of history, even of science, yes, of theology, is *not* legion.

The literature of the particular topic we now have under consideration is copious and varied, and it is growing with great rapidity. Of the few works which we have read, in some instances studied, and of the larger number to which we often refer, — detached parts of which we may say, in Baconian phrase, that we have “chewed,” — it may be of service to some of our readers to name a few, particularly those which we have found of special service, while the enumeration will serve as credit given in “the lump.”

Pertinent articles in McClintock and Strong’s “Cyclopædia” are invaluable, though in disputed matters they are often unwarrantably conservative, while not a little of the matter would be written differently at this date. By way of reference, Reuss’s “History of the Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament,” translated by Edward L. Houghton, A. M., has exceptional value. We owe something to “The Chief End of Revelation,” by Alexander Bolman Bruce, D. D., — the trend of which is anything but conservative.

"The Old Testament in the Jewish Church," by W. Robertson Smith, M. A., has not the prestige it enjoyed eight years ago, but it is still of some service. "The Old and New Testaments in their Mutual Relations," by Frederic Gardner, D. D.; "A Companion to the Revised Old Testament," by Talbot W. Chambers; and "Old Testament Revision," by Alexander Roberts, D. D., — each contributes valuable matter to the general study. Of course, and by great pre-eminence, and as a check upon some effete notions which handicap not a few conservative writers, we must mention Prebendary C. A. Row's "Christian Evidences Viewed in Relation to Modern Thought," and also, of course, the recent works of Professor G. T. Ladd, — "The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture," and also his "What is the Bible?" — a sort of directory to the larger work. For this connection, last, and least in quantity but by no means least in quality, we name J. Paterson Smyth's manual, "How we Got our Bible."

According to the taste and particular purpose which may have led others to look into

the general theme, each might make out a list of authorities unlike that prepared by any other; but all would be sure to include the works of Row and Ladd.

We have promised a few particulars in regard to the "confluent lines" of testimony or of information in regard to the contents of the real Scriptures. The oldest manuscript or copy dates, as we have seen, about A. D. 350. Of course the translations made at even that date must have been based upon manuscripts of an earlier period and now lost. There is a Syriac version thought to have been in use fifty years after the New Testament was in manuscript. How much this may mean depends upon the date of the writing and collating the New Testament. The Syriac is very nearly the language of Judea in the days of Christ and the Apostles, — presumptive proof that the translation must greatly antedate any existing manuscript. The version of Ulphilas, mentioned by Gibbon, was made A. D. 350; of course the manuscript on which it was based is much earlier.

But by far most important of all was

the achievement of the great Jerome, — the Latin Vulgate, or the Bible in Latin, which for a thousand years was the Bible of Western Europe, and the one upon which all subsequent translations and revisions have been based. The New Testament part of it was completed A. D. 385; the Old, from the original Hebrew, a little later. On what manuscript — whether an original or a copy — it was based, we do not learn; but on the statement it is clear that it could not have been very long subsequent to the Apostolic period. There are other versions of real but relatively of much less importance.

It will be seen therefore that the means for purifying the manuscripts, even if not perfectly adapted to that end, are very great. If, for an example, the three oldest manuscripts should differ in some one passage, and it should appear that a translation of one of an earlier period agrees with one of the three, the presumption in favor of the accuracy of that particular one would be very great; and the presumption would be increased if other translations bore the same

testimony. In fact the late revisers, in striving to get at the exact text, derived very great help from the ancient versions.

Not less helpful are the copious extracts from the Scriptures found, as we have said, in the writings of the early Christian Fathers. In candor it must be added that the value of this testimony is somewhat impaired by the fact that the Fathers usually quoted from memory, and were thus led into many mistakes. Theirs, it must be remembered, was an age of manuscripts. These were costly and rare. In this age of printing-presses we can have our Bible and dictionary on our tables for easy reference. But the Fathers had to go to the places where the precious manuscript was kept and guarded. Naturally they made their memories do great service. But no memory is unerring. But after "scaling down" the testimony, as we must, the fact remains that testimony it is, and of a very decisive character.

One of the authors named above — J. Paterson Smyth — has collated several of these valuable citations. For one example, Barna-

bas, who *may* have been the companion of Paul, — probably he was not, — and who must have lived very near the time of that Apostle, has these quotations in his epistle: "There be many called but few chosen;" "Give to him that asketh thee;" and "He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Certainly the part of the New Testament in which these passages are found must, at the time, have been in manuscript, or else in composition and held accurately in memory;¹ and their substantial accuracy is a clue to the correctness or incorrectness of the manuscripts of A. D. 300–450. Clement, Bishop of Rome, makes, in an epistle, this citation: "He said, 'Be merciful that ye may obtain mercy; forgive that it may be forgiven unto you. . . . With what measure

¹ It is not improbable that, in the period long preceding the art of printing, poems and even histories had literary form in the memories of their authors before they were written upon parchments. In the belief of classic scholars, Homer recited his Iliad, and Herodotus his History before the pen had put them in writing. If criticism shall show that the same is true of the Gospels and other Biblical records, the fact will not militate against their genuineness. Even if not written they were phrased. The difference is substantially a mechanical one.

ye mete it shall be measured unto you.'” St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, less than fifty years after the crucifixion, quotes this: “Be ye wise as serpents in all things, and harmless as a dove.” Polycarp, a disciple of John, in an Epistle, “has,” says J. Paterson Smyth, “nearly forty clear allusions to New Testament books.” Justin Martyr, A. D. 150, quotes many passages from the Gospels. And these are but samples of many citations.

The double value of these writings hardly needs to be explained; they attest an early date for the manuscripts quoted from, and they are of great assistance in the correcting and perfecting of the text in the manuscripts that are extant.

We have, then, in an endeavor to find out what the Bible is, these three witnesses: the manuscripts as far back as early in the fourth century; the versions of manuscripts of a much earlier date; and the quotations from manuscripts as far back as Ignatius and Polycarp, — back almost to the days of the Apostles. Out of the mouths of three witnesses, what is confirmed?

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCERNING INFALLIBILITY.

THE question What *is* the Bible? is one of very great importance. Of much greater importance is the question What is it *good for*? When the dogma of Verbal Inspiration was dominant, the formula was, "The Bible *is* a revelation from God." Now that the Verbal Inspiration theory is virtually effete, the formula is, "The Bible *contains* a revelation from God." The new statement distinguishes between the revelation and its literary record; between the substance and the envelope; between the spirit and the letter. Christianity as a principle — as the truth of God's free and constant love to man, and this without condition of character or merit — always existed; is as old as God and man. Christianity as inclusive of the principle, yet supplementing it with an historic

method, as not simply the fact of saving love but as a particular manifestation of the fact, dates with the advent of Jesus the Christ in Palestine.

The value of the Bible is in its manifestation, and hence in all the historic conditions of the manifestation. And this value is inclusive of another fact, to the purport that to the end of this manifestation the Bible may be relied upon; *it is authoritative.*

The immediate question therefore pertains to the authority of the Bible. Is the Bible in the particular of its authority—in reference to the purpose upon which it speaks with authority—*infallible?* To this question we answer, Yes, and No. This means that the answer must be accompanied with definition.

The word “infallibility” as applied to the Scriptures has been used very loosely, and often with an implied meaning that is forever negated by the limits of the human mind. If the term is used to assert that there is a method whereby we may know not only that absolute truth *is*, but also

whereby we may be absolutely sure *when we have it*, — as we have explained, this is the Roman Catholic notion, and Protestantism in some of its forms has inherited the notion, — we have this to say, “The pretence is simply an impossible one. Human nature has no room for it, and the Bible itself, so far from asserting it, declares its impossibility.”

The Rev. G. Frederick Wright, the present editor of the “*Bibliotheca Sacra*,” a firm conservative and a champion of the Old Orthodoxy in its conflict with the New, has seen and confessed the necessity of greatly restricting the word “infallibility,” — of defining it by annexing limitations as applied to Scripture. He says : —

“In ascribing infallibility to the Bible it is very desirable that we observe the same moderation and caution that were exercised by the divines who framed the Westminster Confession of Faith. It is not so generally known as it ought to be that that eminent body of theologians applied the word ‘infallible’ to the Scriptures only in an incidental manner, and in a limited sense. The Westminster divines emphasized the practical and religious character of the revelation, together with the peculiar

exposure of such writings to misinterpretation. Their Confession well says that ‘all things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are *necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation* are so clearly propounded and opened in *some* place of Scripture or other that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a *due use* of the ordinary means, may attain unto a *sufficient* understanding of them.’”¹

In the above we are not now concerned with the particulars in reference to which Mr. Wright and the “Westminster Confession” aver that the Bible *is* infallible; but we take a profound interest in their limitations and modifications in the use of the term, — in the fact that modern thought has compelled even conservative Orthodoxy to use it with a definition. And we must be understood to the same purport in quoting still further, and also in reference to an allusion to the opinions of the extremely conservative Dr. Hodge, as Mr. Wright continues:—

¹ Confession of Faith, chap. i. sec. 1.

“The phrases which we have italicized indicate some of the respects in which infallibility may not be ascribed to the Bible. The utterances of the Bible are not infallible except as pertaining to things ‘necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation.’ Upon this point the language of Dr. Hodge is also sufficiently clear and emphatic. ‘They [the sacred writers] were not imbued with plenary knowledge. As to all matters of science, philosophy, and history they stood on the same level with their contemporaries. They were infallible only as teachers, and when acting as the spokesmen of God. Their inspiration no more made them astronomers than it made them agriculturalists. Isaiah was infallible in his predictions, although he shared with his countrymen the views then prevalent as to the mechanism of the universe. Paul could not err in anything he taught, although he could not recollect how many persons he had baptized in Corinth.’”¹

It will, we think, be apparent on a simple statement that the limitations which this able writer specifies, and those which he credits to the Confession and to Dr. Hodge, go considerably further than he and they seem to

¹ Systematic Theology, vol. i. p. 165: Studies in Science and Religion.

be aware of. When it is affirmed that some things in the Bible are infallible, and that other things are not, it is clear that a line of demarcation is to be drawn between the two classes of things. But who or what is to draw the line; and can the line have an accuracy greater than the agent which draws it? As shown in a former chapter, Romanism exults over this dilemma in the Protestant position, and with a flourish of trumpets boasts of its prerogative of infallibility in the Church, an infallibility always at hand to "draw the line." We trust that it was shown in the same chapter that the trumpets come to a sudden stop when the Romanist is confronted with the question, "Who or what gave you the prerogative of infallibility?"

The fact seems to be that Mr. Wright's well-meant definition, or the one which he endorses, is seriously defective. Its great value is in the testimony it gives that thoughtful Orthodoxy has discovered that a time has come when it is no longer prudent to play fast and loose with so mighty a word as that of

“infallibility.” But the definition itself needs defining; and we suspect that the second act of defining would need a third; and so on *ad infinitum*. That is to say, the *principle* of the definition is fallacious.

We here add a bit of autobiography. In childhood and youth we were reared in the strictest deference to the letter of Scripture; were taught to read it with no discrimination as to selection; and were led to assume that for all matters of belief and conduct we could go to it, not simply with the *confidence* with which a carpenter goes to his rule and square, but in *exactly the same way!* In later years, having occasion to make a study of Romish argumentation or assumption, the absurdity of our inherited notion of infallibility flashed upon us so vividly that we can never return to it unless our mentality undergoes a reconstruction. To apply to it a phrase we often quote from Sir William Hamilton, we cannot “construe it to thought.”

But at this date we do believe in infallibility. We find a necessity for this belief in our mental constitution. And we affirm it

in no fanciful play of words. We are confident that the definition is legitimate, — that the principle of it is God-given; whereby we re-affirm our hereditary faith in infallibility, — even Biblical infallibility.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHAT RESPECT INFALLIBLE.

WHEN we affirm belief in the infallibility of the Bible, with the reservation that we may give our definition of the term, we make the concession that the freedom of definition must, in fairness, be used with great moderation and with deference to generally accepted usage. It is a common device to conciliate prejudice by giving assent to the technicalities of an opponent, while adroitly so twisting them as to make them convey meanings quite hostile to the meanings in the mind of the particular opponent. We once heard a pro-slavery politician say that he believed in freedom for the Southern black; but in his definition he made that freedom consist in the "undisturbed exercise of his rights in his proper estate," adding that servitude, bondage to one of a more intelli-

gent race, is the natural estate of the negro! In this the meaning of the salient word was not simply made elastic and so modified; it was wholly set aside and a wholly different meaning put in its place. The act was fraudulent; it was lying in order to hedge a prejudice, — rather, to befog an instinctive conviction.

Is there in the historic use of the word “infallibility,” as applied to the Bible, that which restricts it to the meaning that the Bible in every word is void of error? Dr. Howard Crosby has recently averred the “absolute inerrancy” of every statement within the lids of the Bible, and this is obviously *his* notion of Biblical infallibility. If in this he is right, — that is to say, if he is true to the proper meaning of the term, — we have no alternative but to reject the word as we do the thing it means. But if the Rev. G. Frederick Wright, of the “Bibliotheca Sacra,” the very conservative Dr. Charles Hodge, and the Westminster Confession may be accepted as authorities, the historic usage of the word is not so rigid and inelastic, and

infallibility may be affirmed of the Bible with a definition which makes Biblical history, geography, and geology in no respect more authoritative than was the wisdom of the particular age in regard to the same secular matters. This is high conservative testimony that the word is elastic, and that there is no wrench in its application when it is applied to the Bible with very great modifications. We are fully, firmly, warmly committed to the Bible as having a special authority, an authority that differentiates the Book from every other religious literature, as averring certain things of God, the soul, the divine life, with a certitude not simply greater in degree than, but *different in kind from*, anything in Plato, Seneca, or Fenelon. For this certitude, both great and also peculiar, we must have a technical word, and if Mr. Wright, Dr. Hodge, and the Westminster divines are legitimate authorities, we may find in the familiar word "infallibility," a technicality ready for our use.

The truth is, and the fact has huge importance, that there are no words *made on*

purpose for spiritual uses. God, holiness, sin, virtue, do not in their primitive meanings so much as include an ethical, much less a spiritual significance. In the cosmic unfolding physical things antedate spiritual things, and words to express them were matured before there was a knowledge of things strictly ethical and spiritual. First were things natural or material, and words came to denote them; after that were things spiritual, and words did *not* come to denote *them*, but the physical terms were borrowed and put to a new use. Every ethical and spiritual term was, at the outset, a metaphor.

It is a part of the situation thus delineated that many ethical and spiritual things must be indicated by phrases rather than single terms. If such words as "certainty," "demonstration," "knowledge," "reason," are made of cast iron, if they cannot be modified without being broken and destroyed, it becomes a contradiction in terms to speak of Practical certainty, Practical reason as less than Absolute reason, Moral demonstration as less than Logical demonstration. Yet whoever has

got so much as a smattering of learning knows that the masters of thought, in dealing with rational, ethical, and spiritual things, habitually prefix the modifying and limiting adjective, and honor it with a capital letter.

Now there are — despite a seeming verbal incongruity, as in an exact square (as if a square *is* a square when it is not “exact”) — degrees of certitude, and yet what is properly called certitude in the lowest degree. The late Theodore Parker would have it that he had absolute knowledge of the being of God, and he was intolerant in his censure of Dr. Dewey, who frankly confessed that *he* could not deem his strong faith in the being of God as the equivalent of knowledge, — for example, such certainty as we have in regard to the mathematical axioms. The fundamental of religious faith, the being of God, is but a probability, — with religious natures a probability so intense as to have the effect of mathematical certainty, yet a probability. With great candor, Prof. Borden P. Bowne, one of the ablest and the clearest of theistic writers, lays down the

proposition that theism goes no farther than this: the doctrine of a God best explains the phenomena of the universe, and is therefore practically certain. With regard to the mathematical axioms, even they are not *absolutely* certain; the certainty of the mathematical faculty must be greater than the certainty of anything exterior to and dependent on the faculty. We know that we *are*, that we have and exercise faculty; we know this with more of certainty than we know all else. Our faith in God, and conception of his character, *are dependent* on what we know of ourselves. The reader who will follow out the suggestions we have proffered must see that, in many ways and directions, even certainty may have, must have, its limiting and modifying adjectives. Absolute certainty is rare; the practical certainties are many and diverse.

Now in regard to Christianity, in all the particulars in which it depends on the records, — that is, in regard to the Bible, and particularly the New Testament, — it would be folly to make the pretence of more than practical

certainty. That which depends upon what was said and written eighteen hundred years ago, upon manuscripts which do not now exist, upon copies, and copies of copies, with all the incidental risks of accidental and perhaps intentional additions, subtractions, emendations, modifications, — why, the degree of certainty lessens at every stage of the historic proceeding. But, as we trust was shown in another connection, “confluent lines” of testimony come with very specific and very great help, — so much so that there remains, for all who rightly take the name of Christian, a practical certainty.

Yet again, — and here we give the central proposition, — Christianity is not a word, a record, an act, though it indicates and carries many words, many records, many acts; it is a certain person, and that person a life in itself; while it is a life in the believer’s soul, it *is* Christ and Christ is *IT*. For ages great sermons have been preached upon the words “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Correct interpretations have been given, and the “Word was made flesh” has come with

power to millions of human hearts. Nevertheless scholarship has but just got hold of the real significance, the comprehensive significance, the authoritative significance, *the element of infallibility in the significance*, of that great affirmation. The being of God as our Father is the first of truths; the Christ as the embodiment of his special revelation to mankind is the second in rank; and this is not a part of Christianity, *it is the whole of it*; it is a whole with a vast body of various particulars.

We know well enough that we cannot speak for all, but we can speak for a vast multitude of every sect and name in nominal Christendom, and certainly speak for ourselves, when we say that the Bible, as leading up to Christ, as having in him its flower, perfume, and fruit, is infallible in every sense in which this grossly and grotesquely abused word can have meaning. It is an infallibility resting not upon records, not upon spiritual instinct, not upon the testimony of God's spirit in man, not upon the consensus of opinion in a community of saints; it is infallibility

resting upon *all of these*, all in correlation, all as mutually reciprocal, all as ramifying and clasping, all as having in the Perfect Life unity and solidarity.

The Mosaic cosmogony, the Mosaic astronomy, the ancient topography and geography, the Biblical allegories and parables, — real fiction in form and in particulars that is real truth in the intent and service, — the annals of Jewish wars, the crude characters of patriarch, lawgiver, judge, and king, the outbursts of prophets suggesting infinitely more than they said, and doubtless far more than they themselves suspected, — these are the literary setting; and the setting is ever in the style of the time and the place and the epoch in history. As secular matters they are on a par with the contemporary wisdom; we are glad to know that a long time ago the Westminster divines were aware of the fact; it may seem a matter for regret that they did not, by greater explicitness, more deeply impress their wisdom on their contemporaries and successors. But the “drift,” the purpose, the salvable and saving end, culminating in

the Perfect Man and the Anointed of God, — this is the Bible ; for us — we know we can add, for millions — *this* Bible and the real one is infallible, if such a word has any place in the world's literature.

XV.

THE QUESTION OF CANONICITY.

THE question of Biblical canonicity is a great synthesis in which a vast number of particulars — and these of very dissimilar characters — combine, coalesce, and render mutual support and explanation. It is, in its fulness, a question upon which it is idle for any to enter unless their special attainments are exceptionally scholarly; and to the casual reader, or to readers lacking a special preparation in the distinctions and technicalities of the theme, the erudition involved is perplexing, often quite unintelligible. The literature of the subject considers the authorship of each book in the total which as a unit we call the Bible; considers the time when it was written, and its relation to what came before and what after; it *generally* assumes that the question of authorship involves that of

canonicity, yet not uniformly, — the great doubt whether the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the author of the Second of Peter have been identified does not operate wholly or necessarily to destroy their canonical character, for the reason that the internal quality almost forces the conclusion that they are genuine Scripture, despite their possible anonymous source ; it passes judgment upon the acts of Church councils and synods, which, at different times, have thereon given decrees, reconsidered, and finally presumed to give a last judgment touching the contents of the book ; it weighs the capital matter of internal testimony, — the line of demarcation which, for one example, unmistakably puts most of the Apocryphal books on the one side, and the Epistle to the Romans on the other side ; it traces the thread of unity which runs from the first verse of Genesis to the last verse of Revelation ; and so on in a host of particulars which only very erudite minds, and those of pre-eminent synthetical genius, can even hold, much less pursue.

It is needless to add that were our quali-

fications a hundred-fold greater than they are, no attempt to give even a general sketch of the canonical problem could be thought of in the limits now at our command. Fortunately, however, there are certain *principles* — like those of gravity, repulsion, and cohesion in the physical world — which may be understood, even though the vast body of particulars which they include and explain may be beyond the ken of all save the small body of specialists. To a few of these principles we may call attention, — referring the reader who seeks the details to the pertinent works of the masters.

1. First of all we note that, while popular assumption and particularly hostile criticism put into the question of canonicity many things not necessarily there, there is a pronounced agreement in this general belief, — of Jews in reference to the Old Testament, and of Christians in reference to both Testaments, — that a *something* quite peculiar pertains to the several literary compositions, and also to the method whereby they were collected into a single volume. Those which

bear the mark of this peculiarity are said to be canonical; those which lack that mark — if any such there are — would be adjudged to have got into the volume by mistake or accident. As examples in illustration, we may state that the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Second Epistle of Peter, that of Jude, and the Second and Third Epistles of John, and even that of James, have — some by one critic and some by another, and often many critics concur — been looked upon with great distrust, and not a few reverent scholars have pronounced them wholly without authority. On the other hand the genuineness of the Epistle to the Romans, the two Epistles to the Corinthians, and that to the Galatians, are among the determined; their genuineness, both as to their Pauline authorship and their rightful place in the canon, goes, at this date, without challenge on the part of any reputable scholar. There is less of certainty, yet great certainty, in regard to Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians. It thus appears — and the fact is no concession to the sceptic, for in historic fact it antedates

scepticism — that canonicity is not a matter of absolute certainty; that it has degrees of reliability; and that while *practically* at an end, it has never been *officially* closed. If they can give good reason for doing so, scholars are still at liberty, at least with the consent of Protestantism, to take from or to put into the Bible, — the Book as we now have it.

It is true, as we have intimated, that church councils have affected to decide what books are canonical; and so have later church councils amended and corrected former decrees as to what has a rightful place within the same Book. In no case has the action been final, — final in the sense that an infallible decree has made it heretical and presumptuous to interfere with the collection of books which at any period has made the Bible. In fact, the action of church councils and synods has never had the arbitrary character which Protestant prejudice has attributed to it. It has never pretended literally to make or to determine the canon, it has rather *recognized* the canon as other agencies have determined it. In all this we are but

reiterating matters which with judicious Protestant scholars are simply commonplaces; and in doing so we take out of the way men of straw at whom unlearned scepticism is perpetually thrusting its wooden blades. Protestantism in its very nature negatives the popular notion of Biblical canonicity.

2. But has not the peculiar "something" got together the many books of the Bible and asserted a unity and an identity and cumulative purpose and authority, whereby the Bible is unlike other books, and has an authority distinctively its own? Certainly there is just such a "something;" and happily one of the latest philosophies or sciences — we hardly know under which of the cognomens to class it — has given us a term or phrase that exactly describes it. We are indebted to Charles Darwin for the particular term "natural selection;" or we accept Mr. Herbert Spencer's more precise definition, "the survival of the fittest." Whether or not new species in the vegetable and animal world have been evolved at all, or if evolved, whether by the law of Natural

Selection, we undertake not to say; this is matter for the particular specialist. But we can hardly conceive a more fitting term for that providential guidance under which books produced at wide intervals — altogether covering thousands of years, books written by authors of very diverse natural gifts, each often having an end peculiar to himself — have by a common magnet been drawn together; books in which are marks disclosing a common quality and purpose.

To those who cannot accept the Christian teaching of God's Spirit injecting itself into the affairs of men, revealing truths which the logical understanding cannot discover or even identify, and compelling various minds, in various ages, to execute his will, — very often doing this most effectively when they knew it not, — to all such our theory of canonicity, as we in very bald terms disclose it, will seem no more than the vision of a dream, — the bauble of an inane fancy. But to those who in that Christian teaching see a reality more solid than marble, and who have but to see it in statement to give it exultant

assent, our "theory" will seem no theory at all, but rather the obviousness of a first and self-evidencing truth.¹

3. Modern Thought does not require that we settle a host of questions touching the contents of Scriptures, as a pre-requisite to

¹ From the time of Abraham, the dominant, though struggling, faith of the Hebrew people held, with constantly increasing clearness of perception and tenacity of grasp, to the conception of one God, — a God of righteousness, a God whose approval could be won only by righteous living, a God gradually perceived to be one who had sympathy as well as justice, and who not only punished sin and rewarded virtue, but who helped struggling virtue to its victory. Out of the life of the Hebrew nation there emerged prophets who were themselves the spiritual teachers of a spiritual people; and they from time to time gave forth that truth which God had wrought into their experience, and as they were able to receive it. Out of all their deliverances — many more than have been preserved — there survived that which was fittest to survive. No one Divine Council, no one ordained potentate or priest selected, but the ages took these utterances of eighteen centuries and shook them in the sieve of time, and all that was light was floated off by the water, and all that was worthy to remain was retained. This is, briefly put, the history of the Bible. It is a collection of the most spiritual utterances of the most spiritual race of past time. You are to come to it as such a collection. It is as such that you are to study and take advantage of it, — as such a record of spiritual experiences. — *Signs of Promise: Sermons Preached in Plymouth Pulpit*, by Lyman Abbott, D.D., p. 262.

accepting the canonicity thereof. In itself it is a very interesting question whether the prophets in rapt vision really saw the *full purport* of the things they unmistakably disclosed. We give our own judgment — let it pass for what it is worth — that law-givers, prophets, and apostles, that Isaiah, or the two Isaiahs, Micah, and even Paul, uttered truths in regard to which, had they been critically questioned, they might have been lost in attempts to answer! It may be that the Messiah of the prophets is simply Israel in captivity, yet as we read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, it seems as if the Nazarene must, in the prophet's eye, have sat for the portrait. The question thus involved, though one of deep interest, does not in any way affect the matter of canonicity. In regard thereto let the scholars pursue their high vocation, while all others wait for results, — wait in readiness to accept.

4. Modern thought does not permit the selecting of any one line of evidence *as in itself complete*, or the equivalent of completeness. The root, the fibre, the bark, the twig,

the leaf, even the dominant factor, the sap, — no one of these is the tree. The bone, the muscle, the tendon, the nerve, even the principal factor, the blood, — no one of these makes the physical man. The plank, the rib, the cordage, the sail, — no one of these makes the ship. In the Bible, as in the tree, the animal, the ship, the unit is the combination of many parts. The external proofs and the internal proofs, with a vast body of subdivisions, are compacted together, one part supplying what another lacks. The Bible, having in Christ its full outcome, interpretation, and power, is a body of various parts, — a body “fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.” Not even the chief factor — that of the witness within, the certitude which comes of the soul’s spiritual verification (as related to which all historic particulars have subordinate and secondary places and values) — is in itself complete or sufficient. Each part must be in its proper place, but all must work together; the full testimony is the concrete witness.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BIBLE AND MANKIND.

AMONG the things which it might be presumed would "go without the saying" is a proposition to the effect that the Bible, if it would have a durable place among men, must have its foundation in the welcome of mankind, — its welcome not simply, as already explained, in the reasoning faculties, but also and not less in the sympathies and affections of men. No beliefs or commands can be superimposed upon humanity, nor forced thereupon by external fiat; the relation between the two must be analogous to the branch and the vine. Yet this statement, which in general terms seems obvious on the bare utterance, is really the chief trophy of modern thought. For long ages the last thing which theologians thought of consulting was humanity. This had no more voice in the

matter of such supreme importance to its condition, than has the humblest private in an army in the planning of the battle in which he is to risk life and limb. Even within the years of a generation, Dr. Mansel, in his "Limits of Religious Thought" soberly argued what we may call the equivalent of the proposition that the Bible can have no respect for the constitutional proclivities of human nature; it comes thereto in the character of autocrat, and not of supplicant. The thought which has got control, almost within the years of a decade, now makes it needless that we argue the exact contrary proposition; there does, however, seem occasion to elucidate and illustrate.

There is a strong analogy between two things which in their natures are widely dissimilar, — the body and the soul. Certain facts in regard to the physical suggest certain facts in regard to the spiritual. Making no attempt at fulness of statement, nor at anything more than a superficial accuracy, it may help in this elucidation if we specify a few things in regard to the physical body.

If we could suppose the body to have its Bible,—a book or collection of books purporting to give the things needful for bodily welfare, that book would very likely instruct the body in at least these four regards:—

1. The structure of the human frame would be explained; at least there would be no maxim, no rule of conduct, that in any essential would do violence to any part of the structure. Muscle and bone, tendon and nerve, joint and socket, each and all would be respected, and in so far as the manual gave rules of conduct it would provide for the normal use of the body in all its parts, and would urge nothing in despite of them. That is to say, this physical Bible would be rigidly anatomical.

2. Yet again, the human frame is more than a frame; it has certain vital functions. It not only *is*; in life it *acts*. And it acts in definite ways. The blood goes from the heart by one avenue; it returns by another. Certain nerves move; other nerves feel. The cell which is the unit of the body grows and decays, waste and supply being the law.

The particulars are familiar to all persons of average information. Technically they are called functional. They make physiology, as supplementing, yet distinct from, anatomy; and in regard thereto a true physical Bible would make no attempt to alter, to suppress, to violate, certainly not to make; it would simply find *what is*, what existed with the first man, and explain. Its rules would aim to assist and guide in the natural unfolding, — in an unfolding rigidly natural.

3. But the physical frame in its structure and in its vital operations, is *not sufficient unto itself*. It constantly depends on food. This it cannot evolve, it must be taken from without. The eye does not create its own light; the light is not a constituent of the structure. The thirst does not find the fountain within itself. The fruits of the field and waters from the fountain are external to the structure, — external to the function. The structure and the function may elect what they will have, but they cannot make what they will have. They may refuse this, that, and the other, but what they at last take

must come *to them* and exist *independently of them*.

4. The body, in the present stage of its development as in the past, — whatever may be the status in some remote future, — is subject to infirmities, to ailments, to injuries; and hence there has been developed the healing art; pathology is the technical name, and the physician is the expert. It is the fact, within strict limits, that the body has recuperative vigor; but it often needs help from without. The ailment may be in the bone, or nerve, or muscle; but the specific that aids is not in the body; it is an outside agency. Hence, in addition to wisdom touching the structure, function, and nutrition, there will be medicine.

Now if we take these identical technicalities, *and give to them spiritual meanings*, we have an intelligible analysis of the Bible as the soul's instructor, nourisher, and healer; and the analysis takes in the whole Bible. There is a soul anatomy in certain faculties. There is a soul physiology, as in certain loves, sympathies, hopes, trusts, joys, ethical im-

pulses. There is a soul hunger, for which the meat, the bread, the water of life are supplies. There are certain soul ailments,—especially there is sin, for which there is a balm in Gilead, and the Physician who, as such, comes not to the whole, but only to the sick; salvation is exclusively for the sinful.

We select one comprehensive illustration from the physical body; yet we easily make the analysis and the application to the soul in Bible terms. The eating that which is good, the drinking from living fountains, the bread that comes down from heaven,—prophet, evangelist, and apostle seem to revel in these great and pertinent analogies. We have been forced to confess that modern thought has but recently contributed to theological literature, and as its noblest trophy, the fact that the Bible relates to mankind, and mankind to the Bible. Yet no exponent of the instructive thought has done the work in terms clearer, more cogent, more comprehensive, than have the Biblical writers.

But up to this point our statement is quite fractional. To leave it here would be to leave the great theme in confusion. We have to round out the proposition: Man relates to, respects, recognizes, but never by any sort of fiat violates human nature. The question immediately arises, *Who* is human nature? Is it the first person you meet upon the street? Is it anybody in particular? Is it the sinful wretch to whom your first faithful word is one of restraint, of opposition, of at least the semblance of violence?

All will agree with us when we repeat that the supposed physical Bible takes anatomy as it is; but this does not mean the anatomy of the deformed, of the stunted, of the perverted. So in reference to the functions and the foods. It simply analyzes the ideal body; but in dealing with particular persons, it — within certain limits — shortens, lengthens, crooks, straightens, with the view of bringing the individual as near as possible to the ideal standard. And similar statements apply to the same treatise in relation to structures and functions, hungers and thirsts.

We do not find the ideal body; we have to imagine one. But,— and if it has the accent of cant it need not have when we ejaculate, “Thank the Lord!” — we *do* have the ideal soul; we have him “in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord,” “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God *unto a perfect man*, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

Whether or not the Bible relates with this ideal humanity — relates with *it*, while chief among the agencies in the struggle to bring the present crude and incongruous actual up to the “measure of fulness” — cannot, from the nature of the case, be matter of present knowledge. For our belief to this purport we make no claim other than that it *is* belief, — so strong, however, that we find it the equivalent of practical certainty. For long ages to come, as in all the ages up to the apostolic era, the matter may remain in controversy. . But we know that in the present it does not relate, as in the past it has not

related, to humanity in the sense of winning a universal allegiance. Nor would it do this even though it were confirmed by audible voice from heaven.

The present humanity is far from being the possible and ideal. Individuals range all the way from the Hottentot to the classic Greek; from the cold-blooded, matter-of-fact delver in details to the imaginative Hindoo; from the estate in which belief is credulous and instinctive, needing curb and check, to that in which unbelief is obstinate and exacting to the last particular; from the moral imbecile of the slums of the city to apostolic saintliness. Then diversities of race, as marked in mental as in physical characteristics, are seen to be tenacious beyond estimate; while to the single individual there are great diversities pertaining to age, experience, moods, and environments.

Every one of the peculiarities in this enumeration is a factor in the determining of religious faith. Hence, there are for the time — it may be for a long period there will be — natural atheists, natural deists, natural

rationalists, natural believers in the spirit with distrust of the letter, natural believers in the letter, — to the very extreme of verbal inspiration, without the omission of jot or tittle or even King James's punctuation points. All these, left to the trend of their several mentalities, uninfluenced by hereditary attachments and social affiliations, would drop, with unflinching precision, into accordant and mutually co-operative sectarian relations, so that sects would at least be spared the vexation of finding room for even two to walk together while native impulsions are striving to keep them apart.

If the Bible is the kind of book which we have attempted to show that it is, there will be, in the fulness of time — when the individuals have reached the ideal unfolding — as strict an accord between it and humanity as there is between the healthy eye and the light of the sun. In regard to this perfect outcome we — repeating in apostolic phrase what we have somewhat elaborated in other connections — “walk by faith and not by sight.” And we rejoice in this faith wherein

we stand. We seldom tremble lest the mountains fall, — yet at times they fall. We have less anxiety in regard to the book which, as we read it, flowers and fruits in the Ideal Man, — Jesus the Christ.

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