

THE BIBLE:

ITS EVIDENCES, CHARACTERISTICS,
AND EFFECTS.

A LECTURE

BY THE

RIGHT REV. CHARLES PARRY, D.D.,

BISHOP OF MICHIGAN.



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THE BIBLE:

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A LECTURE on the Bible would be at any time a task of great responsibility, but it is especially so at the present day, when so many are endeavouring in various ways to undermine the authority of the sacred volume. For this very reason, however, a servant of Christ, when required to undertake it, may the more confidently depend upon the help of his Divine Master for its successful accomplishment. In dependence upon that help I have prepared this essay; and I trust that, notwithstanding its defects, it will prove, by God's blessing, conducive to a firmer belief in, and higher appreciation of, this most wonderful book.

As the subject admits of being treated in many different ways, I would in the first instance caution you against expecting what I do not purpose to attempt, and so misapprehending the nature and purport of my argument. It is no part of my plan to explain or defend the peculiar doctrines of

Christianity. The fact of those doctrines being derived from it is doubtless the cause of that repugnance to the Bible which makes the rationalist use all manner of sophistical artifices for persuading himself and others that it is unworthy of belief; but I shall not now try to dispel his prejudices by convincing him of their unreasonableness. Neither shall I adduce any of the usual arguments for proving the "divine and miraculous origin" of the Bible. Again, I shall not discuss the question whether this or that particular book ought to be included in the Bible; for if every book and portion of a book concerning whose genuineness there is any the least ground of doubt, were omitted, the observations which I am going to make would not need to be in the slightest degree modified. Neither shall I concern myself about the various readings—to the number, it is asserted, of 150,000—which are found in the existing manuscripts of the Bible. The fact of their occurrence can be easily explained: and they are of such a kind as not to affect at all materially the character of the volume or any of the books which compose it. One other preliminary remark I wish to make. While desirous, as far as possible, to avoid giving offence or causing pain to any of my hearers, I must ask you to remember that, speaking as a bishop of the Church of England, I must state as they appear to me the facts to which

I refer, and therefore some of my statements may probably be contrary to the conscientious convictions of individuals among you. As, however, I do not profess to be infallible, I am quite willing to concede to every one what I claim for myself—the free exercise of that reason with which God has endowed us, and for the right use of which we are severally responsible to Him alone.

Having told you what you must not expect from me, I will briefly state what I now propose to myself. My purpose at present is to consider the Bible simply as a volume of ancient writings—such as those of Homer, or Herodotus, Plato, Demosthenes, or any other classical author. Regarding it in this character, I shall first adduce some evidences of its authenticity—*i. e.*, reasons for believing that all the books of which it consists are really what they profess to be, and worthy of credit. I shall next enumerate some of its peculiar characteristics; and, lastly, I shall remind you of the effects which it has produced in the world.

THE EVIDENCES OF THE BIBLE.

First, then, regarding the Bible simply as a volume of ancient writings, and therefore omitting all consideration of that witness which the believer "hath in himself," (1 John v. 10,) I will adduce

some evidences, which, although far from including all that might be alleged, appear to me conclusively to establish its authenticity. The volume which we call the Bible, consists, as you know, of two parts, the Old and New Testaments, each of which may properly be regarded as a distinct volume, and requires to have its evidences considered separately.

I will begin, then, with those of the New Testament. This contains the Scriptures which belong exclusively to the Christian Church, and are accounted sacred only by that Church.

Authenticity
of the New
Testament.

Among the evidences of their authenticity are, *first*, the numerous ancient manuscripts which have been found in various countries very distant from, and having little or no intercourse with, one another; some of them as old as the fourth century of the Christian era, and all substantially agreeing with one another.

Secondly, besides manuscripts, there exist many ancient versions of these Scriptures, such as the Ethiopic, the Armenian, the Arabic, two Egyptian, quite distinct from each other; the Latin of Jerome, known as the Vulgate of the fourth century; together with one much older, of which Jerome's was a revision; and the Gothic. No such evidence from manuscripts and versions can be adduced for the authenticity of any other

writings of the same or nearly the same antiquity with the New Testament.

Thirdly, in addition to that of manuscripts and ancient versions is the evidence of quotations and allusions made by a series of Christian authors, commencing from the age of the Apostles, and continuing onwards without any break through all successive generations. Among them may be enumerated Barnabas, Clement of Rome, and Hermas, whose names occur in the Acts of the Apostles or in St. Paul's Epistles; Ignatius, Polycarp, and Papias, who were certainly contemporary with St. John, and probably with others of the Apostles; Justin Martyr, Hegesippus, and Irenæus, who followed a little later; then, in the next generation, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, and afterwards Origen of Alexandria. Subsequently to him is a host of writers, too many for me to name, in whose works not only do quotations and allusions occur, but the historical books—the four Gospels and the Acts—are distinctly mentioned. The value of this testimony is greatly enhanced by the fact that the several witnesses lived in different countries, very remote from one another. The first Clement lived at Rome, Ignatius at Antioch, Polycarp at Smyrna, Justin Martyr in Syria, Irenæus in France, the Second Clement and Origen in Egypt, and Tertullian at Carthage. No such testimony as this can

be adduced for the authenticity of any other ancient book.

Fourthly, and this is especially important, we have not only the private opinions of individuals, indicated by quotations and allusions in their writings, but also the judgment of the whole early Church—that Church which, despite the most terrible persecutions, extended itself throughout all parts of the world, and at length embraced the whole Roman empire. This judgment is shown by the manner in which these scriptures are always spoken of “as books *sui generis*, possessing an authority which belonged to none others, and conclusive in all questions and controversies among Christians.” They were in very early times collected into a distinct volume. They were distinguished by appropriate names and titles of respect. They were publicly read and expounded in the religious assemblies. Commentaries were written on them, harmonies formed out of them, different copies carefully collated, and versions (as I have already noticed) made into different languages. And, besides all this, when those heresies, of the springing up of which we have indications in several of the Epistles, began to disturb the peace of the Church, not any of their leaders ventured, so far as appears, to dispute the authority of the Christian Scriptures. On the contrary, they “were usually appealed to

by both sides in their controversies." Even the early adversaries of Christianity, by attacking the Gospels as books containing the accounts on which Christianity was founded, have helped to confirm their authenticity. These propositions, as remarked by Paley (from whose admirable work on the evidences of Christianity I have borrowed the substance of this part of my argument), cannot be affirmed of any other books besides those which at present constitute the volume of the New Testament.

It may indeed be alleged, and truly, that some books now included in that volume—viz., the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of St. James, the Second Epistle of St. Peter, the Second and Third of St. John, that of St. Jude, and the Book of Revelation—were not universally received by the Church as canonical until some time after the rest. But this fact, instead of invalidating, really confirms the argument for the authenticity of the whole; for it shows that great care was taken by the early Church in the formation of what is called "the Canon of Scripture," *i.e.*, the volume of writings which contain the acknowledged rule of Christian faith and practice. Such is the evidence which I would now submit to you for the authenticity—not, I repeat the inspiration, but simply the authenticity—of the volume of the New Testament; and I do not hesitate to say, that if it be pronounced insuffi-

cient, none of the ancient classics can be proved genuine.

2. I proceed to adduce evidences of the Old Testament containing the writings which, though regarded as sacred by Christians as well as Jews, may properly be termed the Jewish Scriptures. Considered in reference to the periods of time to which they respectively relate, they may be arranged in the following divisions, viz., the Pentateuch; Joshua and Judges; the Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, with those of the prophets who wrote before the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar; the Book of Daniel; and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, with those of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, who wrote after the return of the Jews from Babylon. The Psalms were probably written at different times throughout all these successive periods; but although the approximate dates of some have been determined with tolerable certainty, those of the greater number can be only doubtfully conjectured. I have therefore left them out of this arrangement. I have also omitted from it Job, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Solomon's Song, and the Book of Esther; because I shall not notice them in the argument upon which I propose to ground the authenticity of the Scriptures included in

Authenticity
of the Old
Testament.

its several divisions. This argument, which appears to me conclusive, I will now briefly state.

(a) The Old Testament Scriptures, as we now have them in their original language, or rather languages (for a small portion of them is in Chaldee), are substantially the same with those in possession of the Jews at the commencement of the Christian era. This is proved incontestably by the ancient MSS. which have been preserved by that people themselves in different parts of the world, and likewise by the Greek version of the whole volume, known as the Septuagint, no portion of which was made later than 150 B. C. Starting, therefore, with this admitted fact, I would lead you backward through the several divisions under which I have classified them, beginning with the books relating to the period which followed the return of the Jews from Babylon. Of this period, extending from about 535 to about 400 B.C. it is to be observed that the whole comes within the recognised historic age, and the authenticity of the Jewish writings must be determined by the same evidence as Greek, or any others professedly written within it. What evidence, then, have we for the authenticity of the histories of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the prophetic writings of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi? We have this, that they were accepted in the time of our Lord by the whole

nation of the Jews—not by the inhabitants of Judæa and Galilee only, but also by those Jews who were dispersed abroad in every land, “Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia and in Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt,” and in all other countries. Such universal acceptance of them at that time might alone be esteemed conclusive proof of their authenticity, but we have likewise the independent evidence of the Septuagint version, which carries us back more than 150 years further. No reasonable doubt, therefore, can exist as to the genuineness and trustworthiness of that portion of the Old Testament which belongs to the period after the return of the Jews from Babylon.

(b) Assuming this, I would next point out the testimony which these bear to the authenticity of those preceding them. The allusions which they contain to what “is written in the law of Moses,” to the praising of the Lord “after the ordinance of David, King of Israel,” to the re-peopling of Samaria by Esarhaddon, King of Assyria, to the widely-extended dominion of Solomon, and to all the long series of God’s judgments and mercies, as recorded in the Pentateuch and the Book of Judges—clearly show, as does yet more certainly the reading of the book of the law in the presence of all the people by Ezra, that the

more ancient Scriptures belonging to all the antecedent periods of their history were then in the possession of the priests and rulers, and were regarded by the Jews of that age with the same implicit belief and reverence as by the Jews of the present day. Moreover, it is to be remembered that, while a large number of the Jews remained in the lands to which Nebuchadnezzar had removed them, some of the ten tribes who had been carried away by Esarhaddon, or had previously joined the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, returned with their brethren and settled in the land of Judæa. The testimony, therefore, of Ezra and Nehemiah to the earlier books of the Old Testament, shows them to have been the sacred Scriptures, not of the Jews only, but of the whole nation of the Israelites at the expiration of the captivity in Babylon. This is an important link in the chain of evidence for their authenticity. But that which I now wish you particularly to observe is, that since the captivity lasted only seventy years, and we are expressly told of old men who lived through it, and remembered the glory of Solomon's Temple which Nebuchadnezzar destroyed, this acceptance by all the Jews of the books of Daniel and Ezekiel, who wrote during the captivity, and of the Book of Jeremiah, who for the latter years of his life was contemporary with

them, is conclusive evidence of the authenticity of those writings. In respect to them, at least, the united testimony of the Jews who returned from Babylon, and those who remained behind, must be received as decisive evidence of their general authenticity. I say general authenticity, because I am not concerned now with the genuineness of each particular portion.

(c) We have thus advanced another step in our progress, and may now proceed upwards to the historical books of Chronicles and Kings, and from them to the two books of Samuel, and thence to Judges and Joshua, until we come to the Pentateuch or five books of Moses, observing as we go along how, throughout the whole course, each portion of the history bears testimony to that which precedes it, and how perfectly in accordance with each are those prophetic books which belong to it. The whole series thus resembles a chain, all the several links of which are inseparably connected with one another. This connexion of the several portions with one another, which I must leave you to trace out, appears to me incontrovertibly to establish the authenticity of the Old Testament Scriptures. But, in confirmation hereof, the providence of God has furnished us with two additional and perfectly distinct proofs.

As we ascend in the history, we arrive at

what we should call the disastrous division of the twelve tribes into the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah. But, disastrous as it undoubtedly was to the nation, that division has afforded the strongest possible confirmatory evidence of the genuineness both of the Scriptures which relate to the period antecedent to it, and of those relating to the subsequent period which intervened between it and the carrying away of the ten tribes by the King of Assyria. For you will remember that, while the two kingdoms were always jealous of each other, and often in a state of open warfare, there was never wanting in that of Israel a remnant who continued faithful worshippers of the Lord God of their fathers. If, therefore, their ancient Scriptures had been added to, or in any way corrupted, by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, or if it had been attempted to foist upon them forged writings as new Scriptures, there must have been on their part a determined resistance, and of this resistance some indications must have remained. But, instead of there being an allusion to anything of the kind either in Jewish annals or other ancient writings, all history and tradition concur in witnessing to the unanimous consent of both kingdoms, during all the period of their separation, to the authority of their sacred books. This is our first confirmatory proof, and the second is of a similar character.

After the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, when Esarhaddon had caused the people whom he transported to Samaria to be instructed in the worship of Jehovah, the new nation of Samaritans, a mixed race, but quite distinct from the Jews, retained, and regarded with the highest reverence, the oldest portion of the Jewish Scriptures, the Pentateuch; and it is an interesting fact that there exists at the present day a Samaritan manuscript of the first five books of the Bible, which is quite independent of, and yet in substantial agreement with, all the Jewish manuscripts.

There is other confirmatory evidence of a different kind which I must not altogether pass over. My present plan does not allow me to enter upon the argument, clear and convincing as it is, from the fulfilment of prophecy, because that implies the Divine origin of the Old Testament; but regarding its Scriptures, as I now am, simply in the character of ancient writings, I may adduce two remarkable facts, which I believe cannot be disputed concerning them. The *first* is, that researches of critics, historians, travellers, antiquaries, and other scientific men, have all tended to confirm their accuracy, so far at least (and this alone concerns my present argument) as they refer to facts which could be known by human observation or learnt from human testimony. The *second* is, that, with

respect to several portions of them, their language, and the knowledge of various countries and national customs which they display, prove that they must have been written nearly at the times to which they are ascribed, and by persons in the position of their reputed authors. For example, the Book of Exodus could have been written only within a short period after the children of Israel went out of Egypt, and by some one who, like Moses, combined with an intimate knowledge of the Egyptian language and customs a perfect acquaintance with the wilderness of Arabia; and the Book of Daniel could have been composed only by a writer of the age in which that prophet lived, and who was thoroughly conversant both with the Chaldean language and mode of government and also with the usages of the Medes and Persians.

The testimony borne in the New Testament to the truth of the Old, which would alone suffice for a believer in Christ, I have purposely omitted to notice. The evidences which I have now adduced, and the force of which every man of ordinary intelligence and information is capable of appreciating, appear to me conclusively to establish the authenticity both of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, *i. e.*, of the whole Bible. I now proceed to the second branch of my subject.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BIBLE.

The *first* which I shall mention appears to me very greatly to conduce to its practical value, viz., its historical framework. The one subject of the Bible is religion; but the volume does not consist of religious essays. It relates a series of events, beginning with the creation of man after the image of God, and proceeding onwards, through his fall and its immediate consequences, to the destruction of the whole human race—except Noah and his family—by the deluge, the call of Abraham, the establishment of his descendants—the Israelites—in the land of Canaan, and the varied dealings of God in the way of judgment and mercy with that nation, during a period of 1000 years. Then, after 400 years, during which it is silent, taking up the story again with the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and carrying on its narrative through His Life to His Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven; and thence onwards to the labours, sufferings, and success of His Apostles and their associates in the evangelization of the world. All its doctrines and precepts, all its promises and threatenings, all its sublime visions and prophecies, are interwoven with its historical records. With the exception of Proverbs and the Song of Solomon, there is no

book of the Old Testament which has not its own historical origin and connexion. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other ancient prophets, were all messengers of God to His people Israel. The Psalms contain the utterances of Israelites in the various circumstances of their national and personal life; Ecclesiastes the experience of the wisest of their kings. So, likewise, the writings of the New Testament, besides those which are directly historical, consist, with the exception of the Revelation of St. John, of letters addressed to existing churches; and the Book of Revelation is itself nothing else than a prophetic history of events which should befall the Church. In consequence of this peculiar construction of the Bible, it conveys to us its lessons of Divine Wisdom, not in the dry, dogmatic form which they assume in human treatises, but simply and, as it were, incidentally, so as to be most easily understood by the unlearned reader, and to find their way most readily to the hearts and fix themselves firmly in the memories of men.

2. This historical framework of the Bible is the cause of another of its characteristics, which also deserves our special notice, Gradual growth. viz., its gradual growth. Regarding the book of Genesis with the four which follow (excepting a few passages obviously inserted by way of explanation or added afterwards), as written by

Moses, we date the first Scriptures of the Old Testament at about 1500 years before the coming of Christ. To these were gradually added the other historical books, the Psalms, and the writings of Solomon and the Prophets. Nothing is certainly known of the date of the Book of Job; but it has been conjectured to be of an age not later than that of Moses. It is possible, and perhaps not improbable, that Moses introduced into the earlier portion of his history passages taken from yet more ancient writings, and he may even have entirely compiled the Book of Genesis from such writings. But the question of his doing so does not at all affect my present argument. I am concerned only with the fact that Genesis is one of those books of the Bible which we call the Pentateuch, and which we believe to have been written by Moses, from whatever sources he derived his information, more than 1500 years before the Christian era. Assuming this, what I wish you to observe is, that from the time of their commencement, the Old Testament Scriptures received a series of successive additions, until the volume was closed with the Book of Malachi at about 400 B.C. The earliest book of the New Testament was not written until about 430 years after Malachi, and the latest about 60 years afterwards. Hence the interval between the dates of the earliest and

latest books of the Bible was not much less than 1600 years.

3. With this gradual formation of the Bible during so long a period, is strikingly contrasted the fact which I would next notice, the completion of the volume before the end of Completion of the volume. the first century after Christ. As after a period of 1100 years, during which the Old Testament was in the course of formation, there followed one of 430, in which nothing was added to it, so since about the year of our Lord 90 no addition has been made to the New Testament. During nearly 1800 years the Bible has been, according to the belief of the whole Church of Christ, perfected. In all these centuries no sect, no individual, has ever ventured even to suggest the insertion into it of any writings of confessedly later date. If we bear in mind its previous gradual growth—that it was not, like the Koran, compiled and published as a whole at once, but was formed by the continual accretion of new parts—this acceptance of it by the universal Church as at a particular period completed, and this abstinence, notwithstanding the manifold heresies and schisms which so soon destroyed the unity of Christendom, from any attempt to add to it, must be regarded as an extraordinary attestation to the peculiar nature of the several books of which it consists.

4. Another characteristic of the Bible is its marvellous variety. This is observable, first, in its language. The Hebrew of the later is somewhat different from that of the earlier books. A portion of the Old Testament is in Chaldee, and the whole of the New Testament is in Greek. Again, what is more remarkable, its authors, as we learn from themselves, differed from one another in almost every particular. Some were kings and rulers, others priests; one a herdsman, others fishermen; one a pharisee, another a publican; some renowned for wisdom and knowledge, others "unlearned, ignorant men." The Bible also contains almost every sort of composition both in prose and verse; plain, unadorned history, a code of laws, the most sublime orations, the most touching elegies, the most terse proverbs, the most beautiful odes, a series of admirable letters, together with prophetic visions, the imagery of which is, I suppose, altogether unrivalled.

5. But while no collection of writings in the world exhibits so great variety as the Bible, one of its most wonderful characteristics is the harmony which subsists throughout the whole. Although the Old Testament contains the sacred writings of the Jews, who, as a people, have hitherto denied the title of Jesus to be the Messiah, and continued irreconcilable

enemies to Christianity; although the several books of the Old Testament are of such various kinds, and were written in different ages by men so diverse in station, education, and natural character; although likewise the writings of the New Testament are strongly marked by the idiosyncrasies of their respective authors; although, above all, the law which was given by Moses, and which remained in force until our Lord's coming, is exhibited to us in direct contrast with the grace and truth which "came by Jesus Christ;" yet does there exist the most perfect harmony on all subjects, both between the Old and New Testaments in general, and between the several books of each in particular. In saying this, I am well aware of the many contradictions which it has been asserted, are to be found in the Bible. Of these, however, almost all are utterly insignificant, and the few which are of any importance generally admit of a satisfactory explanation. Many of them occur in the same book, and sometimes in the same chapter, so that that they cannot have escaped the observation of the Jews themselves, as well as of the early Christians, none of whom seem to have been at all perplexed about them. Those, and there are some, which the best expositors have failed to reconcile, do not at all materially impugn the substantial harmony of which I am speaking, and of which

many of the other characteristics which I am about to notice are conspicuous instances. It is remarkably seen in the two which I shall next mention, the unique representation which the Bible contains of God and the unique representation which it contains of man.

6. The unique representation which the Bible contains of God is one of its most remarkable characteristics. In no other book are the attributes of the One living and true God, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe, similarly set forth; and yet in all the various books whereof the Bible consists, God is identically the same divine Being—a Spirit Whom no man hath seen or can see; infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness; holy and jealous, Who will not overlook iniquity, nor allow Himself to be dishonoured with impunity; yet merciful and gracious, long-suffering, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; a just God, and yet a Saviour. Moreover, this character of God is not merely described, but also vividly displayed, in His actual dealings with mankind—in the severity of His judgments and in the multitude of His loving kindnesses. God, Who brought in the flood upon the multitude of the ungodly, Who turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, Who commanded the Israelites to exterminate the idolatrous

Representa-
tion of God.

nations of Canaan, Who slew the men of Bethshemesh for looking into the ark, and Uzzah for touching it, Who caused Herod to be eaten up of worms because of his self-glorification,—is the same God Who, the Bible tells us, so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son to be a propitiation for sin, that He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. The God of the Pentateuch is the God of Joshua and Judges, the God of the Kings and the Chronicles, the God of the Psalms and all the Prophets; and He is the God also of the Gospels and the Epistles. He is “light,” combining in himself all moral excellence. He is “a consuming fire,” which shall execute judgment upon the multitude of the ungodly. He is “love,” desiring that all men may be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth. That the attributes thus ascribed to Him appear to the natural reason inconsistent with one another, only renders this harmony of the Bible in its representation of God the more remarkable.

7. Again, the unique representation which the Bible contains of man is almost as remarkable as the representation of God, and is likewise throughout the volume perfectly consistent with itself. According to the Bible, God made Adam, the first man, in His own image—a rational and moral being, holy and happy, free

Representa-
tion of man.

from sin and not liable to death. But Adam transgressed the commandment of God, and so sin obtained dominion over him and over the whole race of mankind who sprang from him; and with sin death entered and passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Thus the Bible portrays man as a fallen creature, born in sin, a child of wrath. But it further represents him as an object of divine mercy, for whom God has provided a way of reconciliation unto Himself, deliverance from the dominion of sin, and resurrection after death unto eternal life. This representation of man is, as I have said, unique. Nowhere else is to be found any similar to it. But it is consistently preserved throughout the whole volume. As in every book of the Bible the same God, so also the same man is portrayed—corrupt, but retaining visible traces of the divine image in which he was made; guilty before God, but not forsaken by his Creator; shapen in iniquity, but capable of renewal in righteousness and true holiness; suffering the evil consequences of sin, but, when spiritually renewed, able through divine grace to rejoice always in the Lord. Such is the wonderful picture which the Bible draws of man.

8. Nor is it only a unique representation of God and man separately that we find in the Bible; it also contains, what is much more wonderful, a representation of God

Representa-
tion of the
God-Man.

and man in union with each other—the Godhead and manhood joined together in one person. The God-Man, Jesus Christ, stands out alone in the world's history. Never was any man like this man. Never did any historian, or any poet, portray such a character as His—the character of a perfect man, a man without sin; but not one of the world's heroes, not a mighty sovereign, nor a victorious general, nor an eminent philosopher, nor a great orator or poet, but a man despised and rejected by his fellow-men, one in Whom they saw no beauty that they should desire Him. In Jesus Christ we have exhibited to us—not by a formal description, but by His own words and works, His Sufferings and Death, His Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven—a man Who, while He spoke and acted with a divine authority, lived in poverty, not having where to lay His head, submitted to every kind of reproach and indignity, and suffered an ignominious death, the death of a malefactor; a man Whom no outrage ever irritated, no insidious question ever perplexed, no danger ever alarmed; a man Who in all companies was the same example of holiness, the same teacher of divine truth, the same reprover of sin, the same pardoner of the penitent sinner; a man by Whom no servile office was deemed too humiliating for Him to assume, and Who yet did not hesitate, in the presence of

the High Priest and of all the council of the Jews, to claim the dignity of "the Son of Man," and to foretell His future sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven. The attempt to substitute for Him another Jesus, stripped of all His distinctive features, as the founder of Christianity, must appear to one who, in however imperfect a manner, has realized the character of the Jesus of the Bible, the most extraordinary instance of man's infatuation.

9. The next characteristic of the Bible which I would mention is the silence observed in
Silence. it upon all those particulars which men so eagerly desire to know concerning the nature and attributes of spiritual beings, the place and condition of the soul after its separation from the body, and the possibility of living men holding intercourse with spirits or with the dead. In the Bible is to be found nothing to gratify our curiosity as to any of these matters. We learn from it that there are spirits—angels sent forth by God to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation; and devils, permitted by Him for a time to exert a malignant influence upon mankind, but destined hereafter to receive the righteous retribution for their wickedness. We learn also that of the dead some sleep in Jesus awaiting the resurrection of life, and others are reserved (in torments, if we

may draw such an inference from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus) for the resurrection of damnation. But this is all that the Bible tells us concerning the one or the other. As to the holding of intercourse with the dead, or with spirits of any kind who do not come to us as messengers from God, the Bible does not tell us whether this is possible or not; but it repeatedly, in the most emphatic manner, forbids the attempt. We are not informed whether consulters with familiar spirits and necromancers are impostors, or under a delusion, or actually receive communications from beings of another world; but it is plainly declared that every such person is an abomination unto the Lord. In all this there is a perfect agreement among the several books of the Bible.

10. I pass on to some characteristics of a different kind. Among these is the pure moral teaching of the Bible. This is sometimes Moral teaching. impugned, on the ground that the Bible represents God as seemingly sanctioning customs and practices that are clearly immoral, and as commanding, or commending, actions which are abhorrent to the feelings of every good man. But although the reasons which we may be able to assign for God not having prohibited slavery or polygamy and concubinage, or for His having commanded the Israelites to exterminate the inhabitants of Canaan,

and, apparently, approved of the slaying of Eglon by Ehud, and of Sisera by Jael, may not be deemed satisfactory, yet our failure to explain the motives of God in these and other particulars of His conduct towards men does not affect the character of the moral teaching which we find in the Bible. The fact which I affirm to be patent to all attentive readers is that the volume everywhere inculcates pure morality. The precepts of its earliest scriptures are, "Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness; Thou shalt not covet;" and the language of a prophet 800 years after is, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Herewith agrees the teaching of all its several books; and what I would have you particularly notice is, that not in any of them, from the first to the last, can there be found a single sentence incentive to lasciviousness, injustice, covetousness, or to any evil passion or iniquitous practice. All unrighteousness, deceit, malignity, and whatever the enlightened conscience condemns, the Bible enjoins the people of God to put away; and all that the enlightened conscience approves—whatever things are just, honest, true, pure, lovely, and of good

report—it exhorts them to practice. Am I not, therefore, right in adducing as a characteristic of the Bible, its pure and moral teaching?

11. At the same time—and this is not inconsistent with what I have just said—its teaching, as we proceed through the volume, may be observed to become of a progressively higher spiritual character. Whatever explanation we may give of the fact, it is certain that we may perceive, in passing from the earlier to the later books of the Old Testament, how the Prophets—and yet more clearly in passing from the Old Testament to the New—how our Lord and His Apostles, taking the law of Moses as a foundation, have erected upon it their own superstructure of spiritual doctrine. To quote particular passages would occupy too much time; but in illustration of my meaning I would refer you to Isaiah i. 10-20, where the prophet declares that the offering up of sacrifices and the observance of festivals by the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord; and to the fifty-fifth chapter of the same prophet, where he describes what kind of fast is acceptable to God, and in what manner the Sabbath-day should be kept holy. I would remind you also of our blessed Lord's Sermon upon the Mount, and of His summing up all the commandments in love to God and to our

neighbour. The increasingly clear prophetic indication of the Divine plan for the redemption of mankind is yet more remarkable than this progressively higher moral teaching; but I refrain from insisting upon it, because to do so would be to assume the existence of a supernatural element in the Bible, which I am desirous at present to avoid.

12. The consideration of its moral teaching naturally leads to the notice of another characteristic of the Bible, viz., its constant appeal to a man's own conscience and reason. The Bible always addresses man on the principle that he is to be convinced and persuaded, not to be coerced into belief and obedience. Its language is, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore, choose life." It reproves the wicked for their folly: "Do ye thus requite the Lord? Oh, foolish people and unwise!" It describes God as remonstrating with his people: "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at My reproof." To the same effect write all the prophets of the Old Testament. In like manner our blessed Lord appeals to the Jews, "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?" and declares the ground of their condemnation to be,

Appeal to
conscience.

that He had done among them "the works which none other man did," and they had not believed on Him. So St. Paul writes, "I speak unto wise men; judge ye what I say," and again, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." This characteristic of the Bible will appear the more remarkable by contrasting with it the principles and practices prevalent for so many centuries in Christendom.

13. The Bible is characterised further by its uncoloured narration of the bad deeds of good men. It affords no encouragement to hero-worship. The actions which it records of some most eminent saints have given the enemies of God in all ages occasion to blaspheme. In many instances, they were such as we should have supposed those guilty of them to have been, from their general conduct, least likely to commit. Abraham, who was especially distinguished by his faith in God, twice persuaded his wife to pass herself off as his sister, that he might escape a fancied danger to his own life. Moses, who was renowned for his meekness, was on one occasion provoked to speak and act so unadvisedly that he was not permitted by God to enter the land of Canaan. Solomon, the wisest of men, was seduced into the folly of idolatry. Elijah, one of the boldest of the prophets, fled

Plain facts
about good
men.

for his life at the threat of Jezebel, and seems to have yielded himself up for a season to despair. The good king Hezekiah, when the Lord left him in order to try him, manifested his natural pride and vain-glory. David, the man after God's heart, perpetrated the two atrocious crimes of adultery and murder ; and St. Peter, one of Christ's most zealous followers, thrice denied his Divine master. This characteristic also belongs not only to one or more books, but to the whole volume.

14. Together with its faithful delineation of the faults of individuals, may be noted the
 Silence upon national virtues. absence throughout the entire volume of any commendation, or even recognition, of national virtues. As having been chosen of God to be a peculiar people unto Himself, and as having received from Him statutes and judgments such as none other people possessed, the Israelites are addressed in the Bible as superior to all the nations of the earth ; but at the same time they are told that the privileges they enjoyed had not been bestowed upon them for their righteousness, for they were "a stiff-necked people." In like manner, when their heroic deeds, such as the conquest of Canaan, the destruction of the Midianites by Gideon and his 300 men, and others not surpassed by any achievements of the Greeks or Romans, are any where related, no glory is

attributed to them; all is ascribed to God alone. They might not say, "My power and the might of mine hand hath" done this or that. The only instance of commendation that I remember is of Zebulun and Naphtali, in the Song of Deborah, for jeopardising "their lives unto death in the high places of the field." Other historians, such as Thucydides and Tacitus, have impartially related the mistakes and misdeeds,—and other poets, such as Juvenal and Johnson, have held up to reprobation the vices,—of their fellow-countrymen; but of such persistent silence by a long series of historians and poets upon the virtues of the nation to which they belonged, and for which they wrote, the world has certainly never known another instance. I have referred only to the Old Testament Scriptures, but the same remark is applicable to those of the New, only in them the fact is not so surprising.

15. In connexion with this last I would point out, as another characteristic of the Bible, that, while its various writings Promises. contain threatenings of God's most terrible judgments upon the Israelites for their idolatry and other wickednesses, the same writings, often in the very same page, proclaim the promise of His ultimate forgiveness of them as a people, and their future unexampled prosperity and greatness.

I need not quote to you any of the numerous threatenings in Deuteronomy, and in almost every prophetic book from that of Isaiah to that of Malachi, but I would ask you to observe, what you may perhaps have overlooked, how these are always followed by predictions of future blessings. Not only Moses, but Isaiah also, and Jeremiah, Hosca, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, prophets who lived before the captivity in Babylon; Ezekiel and Daniel, who lived during it; and Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, who lived after it—all declare in one form of words or another, that the Lord their God will bring again the captivity of His people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; that they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof; that they also shall make gardens and eat the fruit of them; that He will plant them upon their land, and that they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which He hath given them. Of this characteristic also we find, as was to be expected, the most numerous instances in the Old Testament Scriptures; but it is to be observed also in the New, *e. g.*, in our Lord's lamentation over Jerusalem, when, after foretelling the approaching desolation of the city, He added—"I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that

cometh in the name of the Lord ;” thus intimating that there would be a time when they, the Jewish people, should see Him again and welcome Him as their deliverer. Another instance occurs in the Epistle to the Romans, where the Apostle St. Paul says, in reference to God’s dealings with Israel, that blindness in part is happened to them until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved ; quoting in confirmation the words of the prophet Isaiah, “There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

16. Two other characteristics I must not omit. One is the Bible’s simple manner of relating the manifold miraculous works which are recorded in it. Its writers, one and all, appear to have been so thoroughly convinced, and so constantly mindful of God’s providential government of the world, that any extraordinary manifestation of His power was regarded by them not as a matter of wonder or sceptical disputation, but merely as a means used by Him on special occasions for establishing His authority, and making men to know and do His will. Hence in the Bible we are quite unable to separate the miraculous from other historical events. The former are so interwoven with the latter that the two cannot be disconnected, and therefore if

Mode of
relating
miraculous
works.

the one be received as authentic, the other also must be acknowledged to be equally entitled to belief. At the present day this seems to be often strangely overlooked.

17. The last characteristic of the Bible which I shall mention is its uniform tone of Divine authority. I do not mean that every Inspiration. book—or, indeed, any entire book, except the Revelation of St. John—claims to have been written by inspiration of God ; but in them all is a tone which, unless they were so written, would be unbecoming in the writers. It is not, perhaps, remarkable that the historical events should be related in a manner which implies that the accuracy of the narrative is not to be questioned : but it is very remarkable that all comments, wherever introduced, should be made, not as expressing an opinion which may be erroneous, but as declarative of a judgment which cannot err ; and yet more, that all references to God, all statements concerning Him, all precepts, promises, and threatenings, should indicate a conviction that they express the exact mind, will, and purposes of Jehovah. This is a characteristic of all the Old Testament Scriptures, and in accordance therewith our Lord repeatedly spoke of them as possessing a claim to the unhesitating belief and unreserved obedience of the Jewish people. The

same tone also pervades the Scriptures of the New Testament, although in some of the letters to particular churches, of which a large portion of these latter consists, the sympathy of the writer with the persons whom he is addressing, and his earnest desire to conciliate them, have caused him to use a tone of human persuasiveness which may appear at the first reading inconsistent with that of Divine authority. Upon an attentive perusal, however, this latter may always be perceived to underlie the former, and he who—as Paul, the aged, and a prisoner of Jesus Christ—beseeches, does not himself forget, and would not have others forget, that as an Apostle, he might be much more bold in Christ to enjoin that which is convenient. Even the very manner in which he recommends, but does not enjoin, testifies to the authority with which he writes.

Such is the Bible; a volume of religious writings fitted, so to speak, into an historical framework, and hence of gradual growth, but received by the universal Church of Christ as having been for nearly 1800 years complete; a volume characterised by the marvellous variety and perfect harmony of its several parts, by its unique representation of God and man, and by its yet more wonderfully unique representation of the God-Man (Jesus Christ); characterised also by its silence upon

those particulars concerning the spiritual world which men desire to pry into;—by its uniformly pure and yet progressively higher moral teaching, and by its constant appeal to the human conscience and reason—by its uncoloured narration of the bad deeds of good men, and by the absence in it of all commendation, or even recognition, of national virtues; and, lastly, by its quiet, simple, manner of relating miraculous occurrences, and by its uniform tone of Divine authority. I probably have omitted some particulars which you may think I ought to have mentioned; but these are sufficient to show the singular nature of this volume of Scriptures; that none other in the world is comparable to it; and that it stands alone by itself, unapproachable by any rival.

THE EFFECTS OF THE BIBLE.

It remains for me to speak of the effects of the Bible, which form the third branch of my subject. They may be considered under two heads—those produced by the Old Testament Scriptures alone, and those produced by the Old and New Testament Scriptures together. I shall first direct your attention to the former.

The Old Testament alone. (a) The effect of the Scriptures of the Old Testament may be summed up in the forming of a peculiar people, the people of

Israel, and in the preservation of that people in their identity from the time of their settlement in the land of Canaan until the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and thence unto the present day. Reflect for a few minutes upon the history, character, and influence in the world of this people. Assuming the general authenticity of the Bible to have been proved, we learn from it that, after coming out of Egypt and taking possession of the land of Canaan, they experienced during a period of 1500 years, all manner of vicissitudes. Again and again their country was invaded and laid waste, their cities destroyed, themselves subjected to the most cruel oppression, and often reduced to a mere remnant. Again and again, however, they were delivered out of the power of their enemies, recovered their independence, and became, as before, numerous and prosperous. In the reigns of David and Solomon they acquired the dominion over all the surrounding nations; afterwards they were divided into the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, of which the former was ultimately destroyed, and the people carried away captive by the Assyrians; and in like manner the latter was subdued by Nebuchadnezzar, and its inhabitants taken to Babylon. Of the ten tribes which constituted the kingdom of Israel there is no further mention; but the other two, Judah and Benjamin, or rather a

large proportion of them, returned from Babylon, and settled again in Canaan, where they remained until their final dispersion by the Romans. Throughout all these centuries, under every change of condition, in prosperity and in adversity, united in one and divided into two kingdoms, before the invasion of the Assyrian, the twelve tribes, and afterwards the remaining two, continued always identically the same people, isolated and diverse from other nations. And what was their distinctive character during this portion of their history? The most remarkable particular to be noticed in it is, that of all the nations of the earth they only worshipped One God as the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the Universe, the only rightful object of man's adoration and service. Notwithstanding their adoption at various times, for longer or shorter periods, of the idolatrous practices of their heathen neighbours, they were, as a people, during those 1500 years, witnesses in the world to the unity of the Godhead and the vanity of all idol worship.

Again, it will, I think, appear evident from a careful examination of the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament, that the Israelites were distinguished from other nations by their superior morality, political freedom, and social and domestic happiness. From the frequent

reproofs of them by the prophets for their ungodliness and iniquity, their covetousness, hypocrisy, and formality, we are apt to form an unfavourable opinion of them as a people; but if we observe the manner in which the vices of the heathen are referred to, and how they are admonished not to imitate those vices, we shall see reason to believe that they were not so bad as we might at first suppose, and that the picture which St. Paul has drawn in Romans i. of the Gentiles, was never appropriate to them. That they enjoyed great political freedom can scarcely be disputed; and of their social and domestic happiness during the many long periods in which they were free from foreign invasion, we may judge from the description which is given of them during the reign of Solomon, that they "dwelt safely every man under his vine and under his fig-tree." Nor were they characterised only by their superior morality as a people. They were yet more remarkable for the virtues of conspicuous individuals among them. In what ancient history do we read of rulers like Samuel and Nehemiah, or of kings like Jehosaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, eminent for their justice, their fear of God, and care for the people whom they governed; or of men like Daniel and his three companions, willing to expose themselves to a terrible death rather than sin against God; or of such men as the Psalms

teach us were to be found in every generation, faithful servants of God, who looked to Him in all dangers for deliverance, and in all sorrows for consolation ; whose great strength was in prayer, and whose delight was in praise and thanksgiving ? With respect to the influence of the Israelites in the world, it is to be remembered that in consequence of their being brought successively into contact with each of the chief nations of antiquity—first the Egyptians, then the Assyrians and Babylonians, and afterwards the Persians, Greeks, and Romans—all these became in turn acquainted with the peculiarity of their religion, and the excellences of their national and individual character. Of the influence which they thus exercised we have two remarkable instances in Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and in Darius the king of the Medes and Persians, recorded in the book of Daniel. It is to be remembered, also, that during the years which elapsed between the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the commencement of the Christian era, a large number of them were dispersed, as at present, over all the civilised countries of the earth, and that, wherever they dwelt, they bore the same testimony, as in their own land, by their synagogue worship and otherwise, to the unity of the Godhead and the vanity of idol-worship. We have no means of

determining the results of that testimony in each particular country, but the facts incidentally mentioned in the book of Acts, with other historical evidences, show that they were not inconsiderable ; and we have good reason for believing that it did much to prepare the minds of the Gentiles for their reception of Christianity. At the expiration of the time of which I have been speaking, *i.e.*, about the time of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, there prevailed, as you will remember, among them a general expectation that there would shortly be born of the family of David one who should become their king, and, as the Messiah or Christ, *i.e.*, the anointed of God, raise their nation to all its former, and more than its former, greatness and prosperity. But when He in Whom Christians believe that expectation to have been fulfilled, Jesus of Nazareth, came unto them, they rejected Him and procured Him to be crucified. Within seventy years after this their temple and city were destroyed, and thenceforward up to this day (*i.e.*, for more than eighteen hundred years) they have been scattered over all the earth. Nevertheless, although without a country which they could call their own, without a temple in which to celebrate their religious rites, without prophets or any miraculous aid, and often subjected to the most cruel persecution, they have still preserved their character as a distinct people,

and have lived—sometimes in possession of enormous wealth, sometimes in the most abject poverty—in the midst of, and yet separate from, all other peoples. Under every variety of climate, government, national custom, and private circumstances—notwithstanding the difficulty, often the impossibility, of mutual intercourse—they have maintained their identity, preserving all their recollections of the past, and, what is more remarkable, continuing to cherish the expectation of a future deliverer, and the gathering together of their whole nation under him. Thus their truly marvellous history can be traced backwards from the present day through a period of many years, during which they have retained all their distinctive peculiarities; and in respect to their belief, their religious rites (so far as it is possible in their present condition), their isolation from the rest of mankind, and their relationship to one another, they are now essentially the same people with those who, centuries ago, under the leadership of Joshua, entered and took possession of the land of Canaan, and with those who eighteen centuries ago mocked at the dying Jesus, saying, “If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.”

To what then is the first formation and continual subsequent preservation of this so peculiar a people

to be ascribed? The answer must surely be, to the Bible, *i. e.*, to those portions of the volume of Old Testament Scriptures which their successive generations possessed. The only possible explanation of all their marvellous history is their earnest unshaken belief in these Scriptures. The influence of their religious rites and customs, their sacrifices and festivals, in causing and maintaining their distinctive nationality, is not inconsistent with this explanation, for those rites and customs were all prescribed by the Law, which was a part of the Scriptures, and are therefore to be included among their effects. Nor, again, is the special providence which has been manifested, and the miracles which have been wrought from time to time on behalf of the Israelites, inconsistent with it; for every such special interposition of God, whether providential or miraculous, was designed to enforce, not to impair, the authority of the Scriptures. I repeat, therefore, that the effect of the volume of the Old Testament apart from that of the New has been to form and preserve unto the present day a peculiar people, altogether diverse from others, who, during the time that they dwelt in Canaan, were the sole witnesses in the world to the truth that there is One God, and none other besides Him; and who since, during another period that they have been dispersed over the earth, have maintained their

identity, and, while bearing still their testimony to the Oneness of God, have persistently refused to acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah, holding fast the expectation of another deliverer who shall re-establish them in their old land, and reign over them as their king for ever.

(b) I pass on to the effects of the whole Bible, the volume of the New in conjunction with that of the Old Testament. These also may be summarily described as consisting in the formation and preservation during a long series of centuries unto the present day, of a peculiar people, diverse from all the rest of mankind—the Church of Christ. Let us consider some particulars concerning this people. Reflect, first, upon the origin of the Church, how it sprung up suddenly above 1800 years ago, among the Jews, a small and despised nation; and not among the higher class and ecclesiastical rulers of that nation, but among the poor and unlearned of the people. Reflect further upon its rapid growth, how it extended itself from Judæa and Samaria to the neighbouring countries, and thence, in a few years, throughout all parts of the Roman world. Reflect how everywhere it had to endure either official opposition and ill-usage or popular outrage; how one emperor of Rome after another attempted to extirpate it; how, neverthe-

The Old
and New
Testament
together.

less, it still lived and increased, and became more and more powerful, until it gained the imperial favour, and Christianity, having supplanted heathenism, was recognised as the established religion of the Roman empire. So it continued, as you will remember, except for the brief period of the reign of Julian, while that empire lasted. Carry, then, your thoughts onward to the overthrow of the dominion of Rome by the barbarians and reflect how, during the revolution which followed, the Church still survived, and how it gathered into itself, first, the hordes which overran the Roman provinces, and afterwards all the nations in the regions beyond, even to the farthest extremities of Europe. The circumstances which next attract our attention are of a different character. Previously to the establishment of Christianity by Constantine as the religion of the Roman empire, much corruption both of doctrine and practice had crept into and spread itself in the Church; and this increased more and more afterwards, until it led in the seventh century to the rise and triumphant progress of Mohammedanism throughout the East, and to the gradual establishment in that and the following centuries of the usurped dominion of the Bishop of Rome throughout the West. Of the Eastern Church, which fell before the arms of Mohammed and his followers, I

shall say no more than that, although partially freed from the tyrannical oppression to which it was formerly subjected, it still remains in a corrupt and for the most part very degraded condition, and, like the ten tribes of Israel, has not yet been restored to its ancient purity and prosperity. But on behalf of the Western Church, as formerly on behalf of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, the providence of God has graciously interposed. By the Reformation in the sixteenth century, a large portion of the Church in Europe, including that in our own fatherland, recovered the independence which it has ever since retained.

I ask concerning this peculiar people, the Church—as I asked just now concerning the people of Israel—To what is its first formation and subsequent preservation to be ascribed? Surely the answer in this case also must be, To the Bible. It may indeed be said that the origin and early growth of the Church cannot be ascribed to the Bible, because, when the Gospel was first preached by the Apostles and their associates, none of the New Testament Scriptures were written; but this does not really affect my argument. For these Scriptures, as I have already shown, contain all those things which were believed among Christians. In fact, the writers of them were among the first preachers of the Gospel, and wrote only what they themselves had previously taught. Nor is the

result of the first preaching of Christianity to be the less regarded as the effect of the Bible, because of the miracles with which we believe it to have been often accompanied; for they, like the signs and wonders wrought at the introduction of the Mosaic economy, were simply means of convincing the people that the things spoken—which, I repeat, were the same with the things now written in the New Testament—had been commanded the speaker by God. For the preservation of the Church after the destruction of the Roman empire, and its subsequent comprehension of all the European nations, no adequate cause can be assigned except doctrine taken out of the Bible. The Book itself may have been, and doubtless was, little known; but the truths contained in it, and conveyed in some way or other to the minds and hearts of the people, must have been the means of converting them to Christianity, *i. e.*, bringing them into the Church. That the Reformation was the effect of the Bible is yet more plain. The men by whose agency it was accomplished did not claim to possess any miraculous powers. A copy of the Bible, which had then become almost altogether an unknown volume, was discovered by a monk in a German monastery, and, like the copy of the book of the Law discovered in the Temple during the reign of Josiah, wrought at once a religious

revolution, which spread not only through Germany but over a large portion of the continent of Europe. Thus the mighty work effected by Luther and his coadjutors was the direct and manifest effect of the Bible. In England, also, the bringing of it to light by Wiclif, who had translated the volume into his native tongue more than a century before the subsequent re-translation and circulation of it during the reign of Henry VIII., prepared the way for and really effected the Reformation under Edward VI. These effects of the Bible—the origin and rapid growth of the Church, its establishment throughout the Roman empire, the surviving of it after the downfall of that empire, the gathering into it of barbarian conquerors and of all the nations of Europe, and the reformation of a large portion of its Western branch—are facts patent on the pages of history.

But we shall not duly appreciate their importance unless we observe the political and social changes involved in them. I would therefore ask you further to compare in your minds the condition of the people under all the great empires of the ancient world previously to the time of Constantine, and under the heathen dynasties of India and China in modern times, with the condition of the subjects of any, even the worst, government in Christendom. Such a comparison will show us—

in the mitigation of despotic tyranny, in the increased personal freedom, in the greater domestic happiness, and in the more friendly social intercourse which characterise every Christian nation—the ameliorating effects of the Bible. And if this can be perceived in countries where the Book itself is little known by the people, and its influence only indirectly and feebly felt, how much more may it be seen in lands where the volume may be listened to in public assemblies for religious worship, and read in their own private houses by all of every class who desire to become acquainted with it. There needs not that I should expatiate upon the civil privileges, the moral virtues, the social blessings, and the home comforts by which our own favoured fatherland is distinguished. However much of vice, and of misery consequent upon vice, exists among the people of Great Britain and of many provinces of the British empire, none can deny that we are remarkable above almost all others for our liberty, our independence of thought, our sense of justice, our truthfulness, our generosity, our observance of the duties and enjoyment of the happiness of domestic life. And to what are we indebted for all this? Not to any natural superiority of the Anglo-Saxon or Norman race; for the Arab, the Persian, the Turk, the Maori, is physically by

nature as fine a man in body and in mind as the Englishman. Not to any law of progress observable in the history of the human race, for no such law can be observed. What evidence have we of growth, intellectual or moral, in the transfer of empire from Babylon to Persia, and from Persia to Greece, and from Greece to Rome? What progress do we perceive in the succession of Eastern dynasties, or in the establishment of the Mohammedan rule in Greece and Asia Minor? The history of the world refutes the hypothesis of such a law. The only rational explanation of our high position as a nation is, that we have been raised to it by the Bible. To this we owe all that distinguishes the British government and the British people throughout the world.

We shall, however, greatly err if, in considering the effects produced by the Bible, we confine our attention, as is too common at the present day, to the beneficial influence which it has exerted upon governments and upon society. Far more remarkable than these is its influence upon the consciences, the hearts, and the lives of individuals. I speak, not of matters of faith, but of facts concerning which there can be no dispute, when I remind you how in numberless cases the Bible has spoken peace to the troubled conscience, and enabled the contrite sinner to rejoice in the assurance that his

iniquities were forgiven and his sin pardoned; how fornicators and drunkards, thieves and extortioners, the covetous and the selfish, the implacable and the unmerciful, have been wholly transformed by its teaching, and become in very truth new creatures; how it has spoken comfort to the mourner, quieted the restless sufferer upon the bed of sickness, sustained the spirits of the destitute, and enabled the prisoner to sing for joy; how it has constrained men to make long and wearisome journeys, expose themselves to all manner of perils, suffer all kinds of privation, take up their abode among the most barbarous nations, endure mockery, and violence, and death itself, for no other purpose than to make known to their fellow-men the Book which they had found to be so precious to themselves; how it has made others, rather than abjure their belief in it, or deny any portion of its doctrine, submit to be torn in pieces by wild beasts, or burnt at the stake; how it has formed a Luther and a Melancthon, a Wiclif, a Ridley, and a Latimer; a Carey, a Schwartz, and a Henry Martyn; a Williams, a Moffat, a Patteson; with a host of heroes of faith—some renowned in history, others known only to God and to those who have themselves seen their work and labour of love. And lastly, (for I must not, as I might, linger longer on these, its infinitely most important effects,)

how it has enabled the believer, in the prospect of death, to say with him of old, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

CONCLUSION.

I have now completed my task. I have adduced evidences which I think must be deemed by you conclusive for the authenticity of the Bible regarded as a volume of ancient writings. I have opened, as it were, this volume before you, and pointed out some of the characteristics which distinguish it from all others extant in the world. I have briefly noticed its effects in the formation and preservation of the people of Israel during their existence as a people, and of the Christian Church during 1800 years, up to the present day;—its effects in the superior morals, freedom, and social and domestic happiness of the ancient Israelites and of all existing Christian nations, especially those by whom it is best known; and, above all, in the changed lives and peaceful deaths of multitudes who have believed in it.

Here, then, I might conclude; but before doing so, I would ask whether you who have patiently followed my argument can help drawing from it

the inference that the Bible is *not* the product of man's unassisted reason and knowledge? The fact that the writings of a number of men, living at times so remote from one another, of such diverse natural characters, and in such different positions and circumstances, should exhibit such a perfect agreement upon so great a variety of subjects, many of which have always been and still are matters of controversy among the most learned philosophers and theologians; and yet further, that the writings should be distinguished from all others by such peculiar characteristics, and should have produced such wonderful effects in the world—appears to me of itself, an irrefragable proof that they had a “divine and miraculous origin.” Their composition without supernatural assistance would be to my mind as inexplicable, as—without the exercise of divine power—the giving of sight to a blind man by the anointing of his eyes with clay, or the calling forth of a dead man from the tomb. The only reasonable explanation of their origin is that they were “given by inspiration of God.” Believing, therefore, that the Bible, and the Bible alone, contains a revelation from God to man, and contemplating the effects which it has wrought, and is now working in the world, what, I would further ask, is the duty of the Church of Christ, and what the duty of private Christians in respect to it?

Surely it behoves every particular Church to make the Bible its one standard of faith and duty ; enjoining its ministers that they teach nothing as required of necessity unto eternal salvation but what may be concluded and proved by the Holy Scriptures ; and, further, to take care that in its modes of prayer, rites, and ceremonies which, not being prescribed by the Scriptures, may be regulated at its own discretion, there be nothing “repugnant to the Word of God.” Moreover, it behoves every Church to promote as much as possible the reading of the Bible by all its people, and especially to provide for the training up of the young in such a knowledge of the sacred volume that they may be strengthened to resist the manifold temptations to evil-doing to which they will be exposed in after years, and enabled to “walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.” In proportion as particular Churches distinctly recognise and faithfully fulfil their duty herein, they will severally maintain in themselves “the faith which was once (for all) delivered to the saints,” and likewise “the holiness without which no one shall see the Lord.” In the same proportion also will they promote the attainment of that true catholic unity for which our Lord prayed, and which, therefore, all who love and serve Him ought to pray, confidently expect, and earnestly endea-

your to hasten on. The desire now so generally, in various ways, expressed for it, may not improperly be regarded as an indication of God's purpose at no distant time, in answer to the prayer of our Divine Mediator, to make all Christians to become so manifestly one that the world may again see, acknowledge, and admire the love which they have one towards another.

Again, turning from the consideration of particular Churches as organised bodies to that of individuals, I would ask, What is the duty of ministers of Christ with respect to the Bible? Surely it behoves each one of them to remember that by no other means can he "compass the doing of so weighty a work as that intrusted to him, pertaining to the salvation of man, but with doctrine and exhortation taken out of the Holy Scriptures." Vain are all the discoveries of science, vain all the speculations of philosophy, vain all the arguments and appeals of human reasoning and human eloquence, except so far as they illustrate, confirm, and set forth the truths of the Bible, either for the conviction and conversion of a sinner, or for the edification or consolation of a saint. "To the law and to the testimony"—to the Bible in its imperfect state—was the exhortation of the prophet Isaiah; and to the Bible as we now have it in its completeness, must every faithful steward of the mysteries

of God direct his hearers; for, if any speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Once more, what is the duty of private Christians with respect to the Bible? Does it not behove each individual to "search the Scriptures," as knowing that in them we "have eternal life"—to search them for *himself*, not to take what they teach upon trust from others? While every Christian should be willing and thankful, for the better understanding and more profitable use of the Bible, to receive instruction from the voice of the living and from the writings of the dead, no one who can read the Scriptures ought so to call any man "master," or teacher, as not to "prove all things" by them, and so, with God's help, certainly distinguish, and firmly "hold fast that which is good." To all who have received an ordinary education, the Bible ought to be the "lamp" unto their feet, and the "light" unto their path. Out of it they ought to draw arguments for belief, motives for obedience, strength against the day of temptation, and confidence and joy for the hour of death. But Christians have also another duty with respect to the Bible. It teaches us that we should "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Hence every Christian ought not only to read the

Bible himself, but also to take care, so far as he is able, that it be read by all the members of his family and household, and by others under his personal influence; and not only so, but likewise to help his poor neighbours, who would otherwise be unable, and persuade the ungodly, who are naturally unwilling, to procure and use the sacred volume. Nor should he stop here. He should endeavour to extend the blessings which the Bible brings with it over a wider circle still—throughout the land he dwells in, and further yet, even to the uttermost regions of the earth. And this, blessed be God, by the agency of various Societies, each of us may help to do. By them we can severally aid in circulating over all the continent of Europe, among the English-speaking population of the world-wide British dominions, and among all the chief nations of the earth—European and Asiatic, African and American—in their own native languages, that Book which has made our fathers, and will, we trust, make us and our posterity throughout all generations, a free, intelligent, prosperous, and, comparatively at least, a moral and religious people.

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