

PAULINE AND OTHER
STUDIES

IN EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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IX

THE OLIVE-TREE AND THE WILD-
OLIVE

PLATE IX.



FIG. 15.—The American College in Tarsus and the Snowy Taurus (Mrs. Christie of Tarsus)

To face p. 218.

See p. 278.

IX

THE OLIVE-TREE AND THE WILD-OLIVE¹

I

But if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wast grafted in among them, and didst become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree ; glory not over the branches : but if thou gloriest, it is not thou that bearest the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well ; by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not highminded, but fear : for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will He spare thee. Behold then the goodness and severity of God : toward them that fell, severity ; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in His goodness : otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in : for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wast cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree, and wast grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree : how much more shall these, which are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree ?—Romans xi. 17-24.

FEW passages in St. Paul's writings have given rise to so much erroneous comment as the above ; and the widespread idea that he was unobservant and ignorant of nature and blind to the ordinary processes of the world around him seems to be mainly founded on the false views that have

¹ I have consulted my colleague Professor J. W. H. Trail, Professor of Botany, on the subject of this paper ; and he has cleared up several points for me ; but I refrain from quoting his opinion on any special point, lest I should be mixing my own with his more scientific ideas.

been taken of his allusion to the process of grafting. The misunderstanding of this passage has caused such far-reaching misapprehension that a careful discussion of it seems to be urgently called for. It is advisable to treat the subject in a wider view than may at first sight seem necessary; but the wider treatment is forced on the writer by the necessities of the case and the demands of clearness, though his first intention was only to write a short statement on the subject. The unfortunate omission in Dr. Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, iii., 616, of any description of the cultivation of the Olive, closely though the subject bears on the understanding of many passages in the Bible, at once compels and excuses the length of the treatment here. Dr. Post, who wrote the article "Olive" in the *Dictionary*, would have been an excellent authority on this subject, on account of his long residence in Syria; but by some oversight he has omitted it entirely. A fuller account of the tree is given by Dr. Macalister under "Food" (ii., 31) and "Oil" (iii., 591); but the culture of the tree could not well be treated under those headings, and is therefore wholly omitted in the *Dictionary*. Under "Grafting" Dr. Hastings himself refers forward to "Olive," anticipating the account which after all is not there given. Moreover Dr. Post's article "Oil-Tree" (iii., 592) states views which are in some respects so diametrically opposed to ordinary opinions and supported by arguments which are in some respects so questionable, that the subject requires further treatment.¹

The expression "questionable," which has been applied in the preceding paragraph to a statement made by so good

¹ Mr. McLean's articles "Olive" and "Oil-Tree" in *Encyc. Bibl.* are good but very brief. He is bold enough to hint that there is no proof of the recently invented British view that the Oleaster is *Eleagnus angustifolia*.

an authority as Dr. Post, needs justification. He says (iii., 591) that, when Nehemiah viii. 15, in a list of five kinds of foliage brought from the mountains "to make booths," mentions both Wild-Olive and Olive, "the difference between the latter and the Wild-Olive is so small, that it is quite unlikely that it would have been mentioned by a separate name in so brief a list of trees used for the same purpose". Accordingly he infers that the Hebrew word, which is there translated "Wild-Olive," is the name of a different tree, and that Wild-Olive is a mistranslation.¹ It is difficult to justify this inference. Pausanias (ii., 32) mentions Olive and Wild-Olive in a list of three trees; Artemidorus (iv., 52) mentions them as two different kinds of foliage used for garlands. The Olive crown was considered by the ancients essentially different from the Wild-Olive crown, sacred to a different deity and used for a different purpose. Many modern botanists (as Professor Fischer mentions in his treatise² *Der Oelbaum*, p. 4 f.) consider that Olive and Wild-Olive are two distinct species, wholly unconnected with one another. It seems natural and probable that the order should be issued, as Nehemiah says, to bring both Olive and Wild-Olive branches: had either name been omitted the order would have excluded one of the most abundant and suitable kinds of foliage.

I do not pretend to be able satisfactorily to give the required treatment of the subject; but I may at least be able to call attention to it, point out defects in the recognised English authorities and in the statements which are repeated by writer after writer as if they were true, and provoke a

¹ It will be necessary to discuss the nature of the Wild-Olive more fully in the second part of this article.

² This work is more fully described below.

more thorough treatment by some better scholar. Even, if I should in turn make some mistakes in a subject in which I am only an outsider, devoid of scientific knowledge, these will be corrected in some fuller discussion which may hereafter be given. The present article is written by a geographer and historian, not by a botanist ; but the modern conception of geography, and especially of historical geography, compels the writer in that subject to touch often on historical botany, the diffusion of trees, and the discovery and spread of the art of domesticating and cultivating and improving fruit-trees.

Clearness will probably be best attained by stating first of all the interpretation which is suggested by the actual facts of Olive-culture, and thereafter it will be easier to see how mistaken are many of the inferences that have been drawn from misinterpretation of the passage. I had long been puzzled by it, feeling that there was something in it which was not allowed for by the modern scholars who discussed it, and yet being unable to specify what the omitted factor was. The perusal of an elaborate study of the Olive-tree and the Olive-culture of the Mediterranean lands by Professor Theobald Fischer, who has devoted thirty years to the study of the Mediterranean fruit-trees, revealed the secret. Professor Fischer has discovered a fact of Olive-culture which had escaped all mere tourists and ordinary travellers, and even such a careful observer as Rev. W. M. Thomson in that excellent old work *The Land and the Book* (which deserves a higher rank than many much more imposing and famous studies published by more recent scholars and observers, who had not seen nearly so much as Mr. Thomson did during his thirty years' residence, and who in respect of accuracy about facts and details of Palestine sometimes leave something to be desired).

No better authority than Professor Fischer could be desired or obtained. He knows the subject in all its breadth better probably than any other living man: an experienced practical Olive-cultivator might surpass him in certain points of knowledge as regards one country, but Professor Fischer has studied it for all countries and all times. He has created a method and a sphere of research, and gathered around him a school to carry out his system of observation and study. As regards Palestine, but no other Mediterranean country, he points out that the process which St. Paul had in view is still in use in exceptional circumstances at the present day. He mentions that it is customary to reinvigorate an Olive-tree which is ceasing to bear fruit, by grafting it with a shoot of the Wild-Olive, so that the sap of the tree ennobles this wild shoot and the tree now again begins to bear fruit.¹

It is a well-established fact that, as a result of grafting, both the new shoot and the old stock are affected. The grafted shoot affects the stock below the graft, and in its turn is affected by the character of the stock from which it derives its nourishment. Hence, although the old stock had lost vigour and ceased to produce fruit, it might recover strength and productive power from the influence of the vigorous wild shoot which is grafted upon it, while the fruit that is grown on the new shoot will be more fleshy and richer in oil than the natural fruit of the Wild-Olive. Such is the inevitable process; and it is evident from the passage

¹“An das noch heute in Palästina geübte Verfahren, einen Ölbaum, der Früchte zu tragen aufhört, zu verjüngen, indem man ihn mit einem der wilden Wurzeltriebe pflöpft, so dass der Saft des Baumes diesen wilden Trieb veredelt und der Baum nun wieder Früchte trägt, spielt der Apostel Paulus an Römer ii. 17” (*Der Oelbaum*—Petermanns Mitteil., Ergänzungsheft, No. 147, p. 9).

in Romans, even without any other authority, that the ancients had observed this fact and availed themselves of it for improving weak and unproductive trees. The words of Romans xi. 17 show the whole process employed in such cases ; the tree was pruned, and after the old branches had been cut away the graft was made. The cutting away of the old branches was required to admit air and light to the graft, as well as to prevent the vitality of the tree from being too widely diffused over a large number of branches.

This single authority would be sufficient proof to one who brings to the account a right estimate of St. Paul's character as a writer ; but further independent ancient authority corroborates him, though set aside by modern writers. Columella (v., 9) says that when an Olive-tree produces badly, a slip of a Wild-Olive is grafted on it, and this gives new vigour to the tree. This passage suggests that the tree was not thoroughly cut down, for the intention is not to direct the growth entirely to the graft alone, but to invigorate the whole tree by the introduction of the fresh wild life. Columella does not say whether the engrafted shoot was affected by the character of the root ; but St. Paul's statement that it was so affected is confirmed by the modern views as to the effect of grafting, *viz.*, that the old and the new parts are affected by one another. The fully grown tree is presumably able to affect more thoroughly the engrafted wild shoot, whereas in the first grafting the young tree was thoroughly cut down, and the whole was more affected by the character of the engrafted shoot, which constitutes the whole tree. See p. 227 f.

A frequently quoted passage of Palladius, who, though he wrote in verse about grafting, was also a recognised authority on agriculture and horticulture, confirms Columella and St.

Paul that the Wild-Olive graft invigorated the tree on which it was set, though he adds, apparently, that the wild graft did not itself bear the olives which the rest of the tree bore : this last statement is probably a rhetorical flourish, and he means only that the Wild-Olive had never borne olives such as it caused the reinvigorated tree to bear. The fruit of the Wild-Olive was poor and contained little oil ; but the oil which it produces is not bad in quality though poor in quantity.

The comparison which St. Paul makes is sustained through a series of details. The chosen people of God, the Jews, are compared to the Olive-tree, which was for a long time fertilised and productive. The cause of their growth and productiveness, the sap which came up from the root and gave life to the tree, was their faith. But this chosen people ceased to be good and fertile ; the people lacked faith ; the tree became dry, sapless and unproductive. Surgical treatment was then necessary for the tree ; the more vigorous stock of the Wild-Olive must be grafted on it, while the sapless and barren branches are cut off. In the same way many of the chosen people have been cut off because of their lack of faith ; and in the vacant place has been introduced a scion of the Gentiles, not cultivated by ages of education, but possessing some of the vigour of faith. The new stock makes the tree and the congregation once more fertile. But the new stock is helpless in itself, unproductive and useless, a mere Wild-Olive ; only in its new position, grafted into the old stock, made a member of the ancient congregation of God, is it good and fertile ; it depends on and is supported by the old root. Faith, or the want of faith, determines the lot of all ; if the Gentiles, who have been introduced into the old congregation of God,

lose their faith, they too shall be cut off in their turn; as every unproductive branch of the tree is rigorously eliminated by the pruner. If the Jews recover their faith, and do not continue in their unbelief, they shall be restored by being regrafted on the tree. They are naturally of noble stock, and the regular natural process of grafting the Olive with noble stock shall be carried out afresh for them. They have far greater right, for they are the chosen people, and the noble scion is the ordinary graft; and if God can, contrary to the ordinary process, graft the Wild-Olive scion into the Olive-tree in certain exceptional circumstances, much more will He give a place in the congregation to all true Israelites and graft the noble scion into the tree.

This complicated allegory, carried out in so great detail, suits well and closely; and the spiritual process is made more intelligible by it to the ancient readers, who knew the processes of Olive-culture, and esteemed them as sacred and divinely revealed. Here, as often in the Bible, the reverence of the ancients for the divine life of the trees of the field must be borne in mind in order¹ to appreciate properly the words of the Biblical writers. It is proverbially difficult to make an allegory suit in every part; the restoration of the amputated branches of the Olive cannot actually take place; but here St. Paul invokes superhuman agency, for God can regraft them on the stock, if they recover faith. Does he mean to suggest that, while this is possible with God, it is not likely to take place in practice, for the ejected Jews show no more sign of recovering faith and so establishing a claim to restoration than the amputated branches show of recovering vigour and deserving regrafting on the

¹ On this subject I may be permitted to refer to *The Letters to the Seven Churches*, 1904, p. 247.

old stock? Just as the process does not occur in nature, so the spiritual process is impossible except as a miracle of God's action. If we could press this suggestion, then the allegory would suit with quite extraordinary completeness.

The reference to nature in xi. 24 is probably to be understood as we have explained it in the preceding paragraph. Commonly, the produce of grafting was spoken of by the ancients as contrary to nature, and was compared with the adoption of children by men, which also was contrasted with the natural process of generation. But here the ordinary and invariable process of grafting with a noble scion is called natural, while the unusual and exceptional process of grafting with the Wild-Olive is said to be contrary to nature. The changed point of view is obviously justified, and needs no further explanation.

I do not know certainly how far it is safe to press the expression used by St. Paul, "some of the branches were cut off". It is a well-known and familiar fact that every young Olive-tree, when grafted with a shoot of the cultivated Olive, is pruned and cut down so thoroughly that hardly anything is left of it but one bare stem, on which the new scion is grafted. Thus the entire energy of the young tree is directed into the new graft. Does St. Paul imply that, in the process of grafting at a later period of growth, when the tree has become enfeebled, only some of the old branches were cut away, while others were allowed to remain? Both Columella and Palladius seem favourable to this interpretation. I should be glad to receive correction or additional information on this point; and I mention it here chiefly in the hope of eliciting criticism. What is the exact process, when this exceptional kind of grafting takes place? How far is the fruitless old tree cut down? Is the tree left still

a tree with some branches, or is it cut down to a mere stock? It is well established, according to Professor Fischer p. 31, that every fifty years the Olive ought to be closely pruned and thoroughly manured in order to give it fresh vigour; and it is natural to suppose that the still more drastic method of regrafting with Wild-Olive was connected occasionally with this process of rejuvenating and reinvigorating the worn-out tree, and that it would be accompanied by a thorough pruning and cutting down, though this does not imply a reduction of the tree to a single stem, as in the first grafting of the young tree at the age of seven to ten years.¹

The idea in this regrafting evidently is that reinvigoration will be best accomplished by mixture with a strange and widely diverse stock; and this idea has sound scientific basis. It is not strange that the ancient rules of culture implied the knowledge of such secret and obscure facts. The account given in the present writer's *Impressions of Turkey*, p. 273, of the rules for maintaining the highest quality in the Angora goat (as observed in its original home) may be compared here. It is necessary to recur occasionally to the natural ground-stock, the original and fundamental basis of the Olive; and though the existing Wild-Olive is not exactly the fundamental and original stock, it is as near it as the possibilities of the case permit, and crossing with the Wild-Olive is the only way possible now of replacing the weakened original elements in the cultivated tree.

Most of the modern writers on this subject have been betrayed by the assumption (which they almost all seem to

¹ The nature of the Wild-Olive is discussed in Part II,

make¹) that in this passage of Romans St. Paul is speaking of the ordinary process of grafting the young Olive-tree. This grafting is a necessary and universal fact of Olive-culture. An ungrafted tree will never produce really good fruit, however noble be the stock from which it is derived. The process is familiar; and yet it must be briefly described in order to eliminate a certain error. The Olive is grown from a shoot of a good tree, planted in well-prepared ground, carefully tended and treated. When the young tree is seven to ten years old, it is grafted with a shoot from the best stock procurable. The Wild-Olive plays no part whatsoever in the life of the ordinary Olive-tree, which is of noble stock and grafted anew from noble stock.

St. Paul was not referring to that process when he used the words of xi. 17. He was quite aware of the character of that process, and clearly refers to it in xi. 24, when that verse is properly understood. But in xi. 17 he describes a totally different and, as he clearly intimates, unusual process, employed only in exceptional circumstances (as Columella also implies), when the Wild-Olive was called in to cure the inefficiency of the cultivated tree.

Two different kinds of unfavourable comment are made on this passage. Some writers consider that St. Paul is merely supposing a case, and does not intend to suggest that this is a possible or actually used method of grafting; this supposed case illustrates his argument, and he moulds his language accordingly. Other writers consider that St. Paul was wholly ignorant of the nature of the case; that he had heard vaguely of the process of grafting, and fancied that a wild shoot was grafted on a good tree; and they

¹ Ewbank (quoted by Howson in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, ii., 622) has taken so far the right view; but I have not access to his Commentary.

rightly add that such ignorance would prove him to have been wholly uninterested in the outer world.

The first view—that St. Paul merely takes this impossible and unused method of grafting as an illustration of his argument, without implying that it was actually employed in Olive-culture—has been widely held by British scholars. It is stated very strongly and precisely in what may fairly be styled the standard Commentary on Romans, by Professors Sanday and Headlam, and we shall have their work chiefly in mind in this connection.¹

This view seems unsatisfactory. St. Paul is attempting to describe a certain remarkable spiritual process, to make it clear to his readers, to enable them to understand how it was possible and how it was brought about. The spiritual process was in itself, at first sight, improbable and difficult to reconcile with the nature of God, who in it cuts off some of the people that He had Himself chosen and puts in their place strangers of a race which He had not chosen and which therefore was inferior. This seemingly unnatural process is, according to the view in question, commended to the intelligence of the readers by comparing it with a non-existent process in Olive-culture—"one which would be valueless and is never performed," to use the clear and pointed words of the two above-named authors. They say that "the whole strength of St. Paul's argument depends on the process being an unnatural one; it is beside the point, therefore, to quote passages from classical writers, which even if they seem to support St. Paul's language

¹I hope that I shall not misrepresent their view. Owing to certain widespread misapprehensions about Olive-culture (described in the sequel), I have found some difficulty in catching their real meaning, in spite of the apparent clearness and sharpness of their language.

describe a process which can never be actually used. They could only show the ignorance of others, they would not justify him."

It is, however, hard to see how a spiritual process, confessedly contrary to nature and improbable, is made more intelligible by comparing it with a process in external nature, which is never employed, because it would be useless and even mischievous if it were employed. Other writers have tried to make spiritual processes credible by showing that similar processes occur in external nature. St. Paul, according to this view, proves that the spiritual process is credible, because it resembles a process impossible in and contrary to external nature.

We cannot accept such a view—in spite of our respect and admiration for the distinguished scholars who have advocated it. Nor can we admit that they are justified in setting aside the statement of a writer like Columella with the offhand dictum that it "shows his ignorance". Columella, in a formal treatise on horticulture (v., 9), describes very fully the process, stage by stage. He describes it as unusual and exceptional; and he describes in another chapter (v., 11) the usual and regular process of grafting. The fact is that it is the modern commentators who have misunderstood and misjudged. Columella, Palladius and St. Paul agree and are right: and modern science has justified them, as we shall see.

Rejecting this first view, and concluding that St. Paul was here quoting what he believed to be an actual process used in external nature in order to make intelligible a spiritual process, we may for a moment glance at the other view, that his belief was wholly wrong. Thus, for example, Mr. Baring-Gould, in his *Study of St. Paul*, p. 275, finds

in this passage of Romans the occasion for one of his contemptuous outbursts against the narrowness, dulness and ignorance of the Apostle. "Inspiration," he says, "did not prevent him from bungling in the matter of grafting of an Olive-tree, and from producing a bad argument through want of observing a very simple process in arboriculture."

It would certainly be a very strong proof of blindness to the character of external nature, if St. Paul had been mistaken in thinking that this process was used; and it would fully justify some strong inferences as to his character and habit of mind. This point is one that deserves some notice. Olive-culture may seem to the northern mind a remote and unfamiliar subject, about which a philosopher might remain ignorant. Even in the Mediterranean lands it is now very far from being as important as it was in ancient times. It was practically impossible for a thinker, at that time, if brought up in the Greek or Syrian world, to be ignorant of the salient facts about the nature of the Olive, and yet to be abreast of the thought and knowledge of his time. So important was the Olive to the ancient world, so impressive and noteworthy were its nature and culture, so much of life and thought and education was associated with it, that a gross mistake about the subject would imply such a degree of intellectual blindness as is quite inconsistent with the conception of St. Paul which the present writer believes to be right.

About three years after grafting the young tree begins to bear fruit; but eight or nine years are required before it produces plentifully. Thus Olive-trees require from fifteen to nineteen years before they begin to repay the work and expense that have been lavished on them. Such a slow return will not begin to tempt men except in an age of peace and complete security for property. The cultivation,

when once established, may last through a state of war and uncertainty—if not too protracted or too barbarous in character—but it could not be introduced except in an age of peace and security. The Olive was the latest and highest gift of the Mother-Goddess to her people.

The Olive has therefore always been symbolical of an orderly, peaceful, settled social system. The suppliants who begged for peace, or sought to be purified from guilt and restored to participation in society, according to Greek custom (probably derived immediately from Asia Minor),¹ carried in their hands an Olive-bough. On the other hand, a district which was dependent for its prosperity on Olive-cultivation suffered far more than others from the ravages of war, when the war, as was not uncommon in a barbarous age, was carried to the savage extreme of destroying the fields and property of the raided or conquered country. At the best the ruin was practically complete until the new Olive-trees which were planted had time to grow to the fully productive stage about seventeen years later. But, if security was not felt, if people were afraid to risk their labour and money in outlay which might be seized by others long before it could begin to be remunerative, the ruin was permanent, and the country sank to a lower economic and social stage; it was impoverished, and could only support a much more scanty population. As an example of the effect of the Olive-cultivation on the density of population Professor Fischer² mentions that in the arrondissement Grasse in the south of France, one-third of the land, in which Olives were produced, contained in 1880 a population

¹ See an article on the "Religion of Asia Minor" in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, v., p. 127.

² In his already quoted treatise *Der Oelbaum*, p. 2.

of 60,000, while the other two-thirds, where no Olives grew, supported only 10,000 people. The importance of this production becomes more evident when one remembers that the Olive grows excellently on hill-slopes, where the soil is thin and scanty and otherwise of little value; while the rich soil of well-watered plains produces fruit large in size, but poor in oil. Abundant air, light and sunshine are necessary, and these can be best obtained on sloping ground, while artificial enriching of the soil supplies all the needed nourishment to the tree.

Several passages in the Bible refer to the uncertainty of possession in Olive-trees that results from war. The Israelites were promised the ownership of Olive-trees in Palestine which they had not planted (Joshua xxiv. 13, Deuteronomy vi. 11). Such is the invariable anticipation of the tribes from the desert, which from time immemorial have been pressing in towards the rich lands of Syria, eager to seize and enjoy the fruits of the cultivated ground which others have prepared. The anticipation can be best realised if the conquest is quick and sudden. In case of a long resistance and a tedious evenly balanced contest, the land is injured more and the fruit-trees are cut down; the inhabitants of a besieged city may cut down the fruit-trees to prevent the enemy from sheltering behind them in their attack, or the besiegers may cut them to make engines and other means of attack (as the Crusaders did at Jerusalem in 1099). Invaders who were repulsed, or were not strong enough to hope for permanent possession of the land, were the worst of all in ancient warfare. They commonly burnt, ravaged and destroyed from mere wanton desire to do as much harm as possible to the country and the enemy who possessed it.

As the cultivation of the Olive requires so much prudence, foresight and self-denial in the present for the sake of gain in the distant future, it belongs to a higher order of civilisation, and in modern times it has almost entirely ceased in many Mohammedan countries, and where it persists in them it is practised, so far at least as the present writer's experience extends, almost solely by Christians. In part this is due to the savage nature of the Mohammedan wars; but that is not the whole reason. The Olives were not wholly cut down at the conquest, for it was too rapid and easy, but they suffered terribly in the Crusaders' wars; though even so close to Jerusalem as the Garden of Gethsemane there are still some trees which, according to common belief, pay only the tax levied on Olives that existed before the Moslem conquest, and not the higher tax levied on those which were planted after the conquest.

But Mohammedanism is not favourable to the quality of far-sighted prudence needed in Olive-culture: the Mohammedan tends to the opinion that man ought not to look fifteen or nineteen years ahead, but should live in the present year and leave the future to God. Where this quality of prudence fails, Olive-culture must degenerate, since the outlook to a distant future, which is needed at every stage, becomes neglected more and more as time passes.

The cultivation of the Olive therefore has practically ceased wherever a purely Mohammedan population possesses the land. This arises not from any inherent necessity of Mohammedanism, but from the character which that religion gradually wrought out for itself in its historical development. No Mohammedan people, except perhaps the Moors in Spain, has ever constructed a sufficiently

stable and orderly government to give its subjects confidence that they will retain their possession long enough to make it worth while to cultivate the Olive. As confidence grows less, the outlook over the future is narrowed, the Olive is more and more neglected, and the spirit of fatalism grows stronger.

Similarly, even in Corfu, it is said, the culture has much degenerated, owing to the people becoming idle, careless and improvident. At Athens the Olives of the famous groves are now oversupplied with water, and the fruit has become large and oil-less: whereas in ancient times that grove produced finer and more abundant oil than any other trees.

In short, the Olive is a tree that is associated with a high order of thought and a high standard of conduct. It demands these; it fosters them; and it degenerates or ceases where the population loses them. In the beginning the collective experience and wisdom of a people living for generations in a state of comparative peace¹ formulated the rules of cultivation, and impressed them as a religious duty on succeeding generations.

So important for the welfare of ancient states was the proper cultivation of the Olive, that the rules were prescribed and enforced as a religious duty; and, as gradually in Greece written law was introduced in many departments, where previously the unwritten but even more binding religious prescription had alone existed to regulate human action, so in respect of the Olive law began in the time of Solon to publish and enforce some of the rules to be observed. The Olive-tree requires a certain open space around it to admit freely the air and light which are indis-

¹ Hastings' *Dictionary*, v., p. 133.

pensable for its growth, and in Solon's time the principle was that there must be a space of at least eighteen feet between two trees.¹ The wood of the Olive was extremely valuable, and there was a danger that short-sighted selfishness might cut down trees for immediate profit regardless of the loss in the future; therefore an old law in Attica forbade any owner to cut down more than two Olive-trees in a year.

Dr. Post and others have well described the usefulness of the Olive in modern life in Mediterranean lands. Study of the inscriptions and authors shows that its usefulness to the ancients was far more highly esteemed, just as it was far more abundantly and widely cultivated. It was regarded as being more than useful; it was necessary for the life of man, as life was understood by the ancients.

Such was the lofty conception which the ancients, especially the Greeks, entertained of the sacred character of the Olive; and a modern writer might be justified, if he tried to describe in more eloquent terms than mine the importance of the tree. St. Paul might well go to the Olive-tree for explanation and corroboration of his argument; but the effect of his illustration would depend with his ancient readers entirely on the correctness of his facts. They respected and venerated the tree: to make an absurd suggestion or display an erroneous belief about the culture of the tree would only offend the ancient mind. We, who have to go to books in order to find out the elementary facts about the Olive, and who regard the whole subject as a

¹Plutarch, *Solon*, 23. The distance is inferred from the form of the order; a man must not plant a fig or Olive within nine feet of his neighbour's boundary. Professor Fischer, p. 30, has incorrectly apprehended the rule; he says that Solon ordained that Olives must be nine feet distant from one another, which would be far too close.

matter of curiosity, will naturally be lenient on a writer who errs where we feel that we should ourselves be prone to make errors; but the ancients did not judge like us in this case. This is one of the many cases where ancient feeling and modern are widely separated; and St. Paul must be judged by the requirements of his time. I almost cease to wonder that Mr. Baring-Gould became so severe a critic of St. Paul's character and intellect, after he had persuaded himself that the great Apostle had made such a blunder in such a matter, for Mr. Baring-Gould is a man who has observed and judged frankly for himself.

If the process of grafting with the Wild-Olive shoot was a known one in ancient Olive-culture, the question may be asked how it happens that Origen was ignorant of it, since he asserts positively that St. Paul in this passage is putting a case which never actually occurs.¹

In the first place, it is evident from the nature of the case that this kind of grafting was not very frequent: only in exceptional cases was a tree in such circumstances as to need this surgical treatment. It might therefore quite well happen that Origen might know about the ordinary process of grafting and yet be ignorant of the extraordinary process, so that he declares as emphatically as most modern writers except Professor Fischer, that there was no grafting with Wild-Olive but only with the cultivated Olive.

In the second place, Origen lived in Egypt, and this explains his ignorance. The Wild-Olive was and is unknown in Egypt.² It does not grow in the country naturally; and, of course, only the cultivated Olive would be introduced artificially. Origen, therefore, could never have seen the

¹ The passage is quoted in the edition of Professors Sanday and Headlam,

² Fischer, p. 10.

process in Egypt, where Olive-culture must have made shift without this surgical treatment. Similarly, the modern scholars, who assert so positively that there is only one kind of grafting, are all ignorant of the practical facts, because they belong to lands where Olive-culture is not practised, and they speak all from theory, or as the result of questions which they have put to Olive-growers during their travels. Now, it is very easy for misunderstanding to arise on this subject: the practical growers even in Palestine assured Mr. W. M. Thomson¹ frequently that all grafting was done with cultivated shoots, because they were speaking of the regular grafting: the extraordinary process for surgical reasons was not in their mind at the time. Moreover, those men are always extremely unwilling to reveal the secret and exceptional processes of their occupation. An example of this unwillingness, connected with the breeding of the mohair goat, is described in the present writer's *Impressions of Turkey*, p. 272.

In the third place Origen evidently was entirely ignorant of Olive-culture as it was conducted in Egypt, and knew it only from literature, not from observation. He says that the cultivators grafted the cultivated Olive on the Wild, and not *vice versa*. But, as we have seen, the Wild-Olive is unknown in Egypt; and the Olive there, both root and graft, was the cultivated Olive.

Finally, as the most important reason of all, St. Paul introduced the illustration from the spontaneous fountain of his own knowledge; he selected a good illustration where he found it. But Origen is here the commentator toiling after his author and forced to go where the author leads him, whether or not his own experience and knowledge are

¹ *The Land and the Book*, p. 53.

competent. In such circumstances the author's knowledge and statement must be reckoned higher than the commentator's, even if they were both equally unconfirmed from external sources.

It may also be added here that, not merely is the cultivation of the Olive now carried out on a very much smaller scale than in ancient times, having entirely perished in many districts and entire countries where formerly it was practised on a vast scale; it is also, in all probability, done now in many districts (though certainly not in all) after a less scientific fashion and with less knowledge of the possible treatment of weak and exceptional cases than in ancient times.

The method of invigorating a decadent Olive-tree, described above as practised in Palestine, is, I believe, not employed now in Asia Minor. I have consulted several persons of experience, and they were all agreed that this process is unknown in the country. But this forms no proof that the method was unknown there in ancient times. The culture has entirely ceased in many districts, and where it remains the methods are, as I believe, degenerated in several respects (as in many other departments of the treatment of nature for the use of man) from the ancient standard.

II

The slight account given in the first part of this paper of the importance of the Olive-tree in the economy of an Olive-growing country brings into clear relief the meaning of many passages in the Bible. Only one of these will be touched on here. When in Revelations vi. 5 f. the rider on the black horse, who symbolises famine resulting from invasion, goes forth, scarcity is announced with dearness of wheat and

PLATE X.

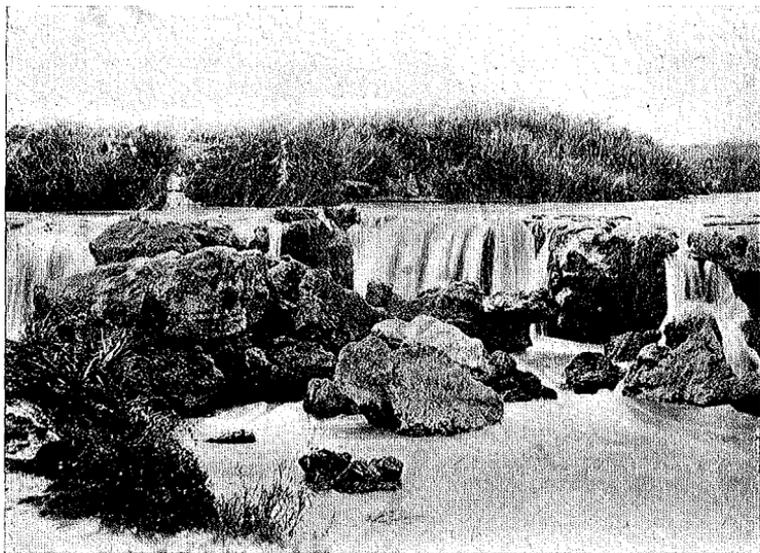


FIG. 16.—Falls of the Cydnus on the North side of Tarsus
(Mrs. W. M. Ramsay).

To face p. 240.

See p. 279.

barley, but the oil and the wine are not to be injured. The standing crops shall be wasted by the Parthian invaders, but the fruit-trees shall not suffer. The raid shall be a passing one, and shall not do permanent and lasting destruction. The land shall be able to recover with the coming of the next summer harvest, according to the facts stated above, p. 234.

In view of modern opinion it is advisable before concluding to say a word about the Wild-Olive. So far as ancient literature is concerned there is no special need of much explanation. The ancients clearly distinguish between two trees—the cultivated Olive-tree, and another which is always regarded as different in kind, called *kotinos* in Greek and *oleaster* in Latin, terms which are ordinarily and (as I believe) rightly rendered Wild-Olive by modern students of ancient literature. As was pointed out in the first part of this article, p. 221, these are mentioned separately in lists of different trees; they were regarded as different and distinct in kind; and they were sacred to different deities. Zeus was the god to whom the Wild-Olive was sacred; but Pallas Athenaia presided over the cultivation of the Olive, she produced the tree from the ground, and the Olive-garland was the symbol of her worship. In the following remarks the term Wild-Olive is used to designate the tree which was called by the ancients *κότινος* and *oleaster*. The ordinary unscientific, yet not unobservant, traveller,¹ or the ordinary inhabitant of the Olive-growing districts of Asia Minor, would have no doubt as to what tree is meant by these terms: he is familiar with both: they are both ex-

¹ Throughout these articles I have been indebted to the observant eyes and retentive memory of my wife for such facts, though she must not be held responsible for any mistakes I may make.

tremely common, yet different in appearance and character. He cannot doubt that these two trees would both be frequently mentioned by the ancients, and would be regarded by them as separate and distinct kind of trees.

The case of the Wild-Olive is totally different from that of the Wild-Fig: this is a false name, a mere expression of ignorance, denoting the male Fig-tree (called *ἐπίβεος* by the Greeks, and *caprificus* by the Latins). The Wild-Fig tree, or Male Fig, is in appearance exactly like the Fig-tree, so far as the ordinary person can detect. It very often grows in walls or stony places. The fruit is smaller, and drops off about two months before the edible figs ripen. This fruit is full of dust and flies; the flies carry the dust to fertilise the edible figs. I have been told in Asiatic Turkey that unless fertilised by this dust or pollen the figs do not ripen; but I believe that this is not strictly correct. The pollen quickens the growth and improves the fig; but is not absolutely necessary. The statements made by some modern writers that ripe figs can be found on the trees for many months¹—statements which so far as I know are quite incorrect—perhaps originate from a confusion between the two kinds of fig.

It is different when one comes to investigate modern opinion on the subject. Then one is involved in endless

¹Canon Tristram says that in the hot and low lands beside the Dead Sea the figs are ripe during most part of the year. Even if this be so it does not affect the case of the barren Fig-tree mentioned in Matthew xxi., Mark xi., which was nearly 4,000 feet above the Dead Sea, where no person could dream of finding fruit at Easter. That incident is one of the most difficult in the New Testament; and nothing that has been written about it seems of any value; but I am not prepared to offer any opinion. I do not see the way open to any explanation of the difficulty, whether in the way of moral teaching or of erroneous popular mythology affecting in this case the Gospels. The passage is to me utterly obscure.

difficulties and differences of opinion, amid which it is extremely hard to pick and choose.

There is a great deal of misapprehension about the relation between the Olive and the Wild-Olive. As a general rule recent writers in English seem to have missed the truth owing to the erroneous idea that a much closer similarity exists between these two trees than is really the case. It would almost seem as if many of them thought that the Wild-Olive is simply an ordinary Olive-tree in its natural state before it is grafted, and that it is made into a true Olive by the process of grafting. That is erroneous, as Mr. W. M. Thomson recognises, in the book which we have often quoted with admiration above. So much I think it is quite safe to say, though I may not be able to state the facts as I have seen them without falling into mistakes due to unscientific habits of mind and the inevitable inaccuracy of the mere untrained observer.

The Wild-Olive is a distinct kind of tree, which even the superficial observer would not mistake for the true Olive. It bears small fruit, which produces little oil;¹ it has ovate leaves of a greener colour than the grey Olive-tree, while the leaves of the Olive are more pointed and lancet-shaped; the bark of the Wild-Olive is smoother, and the twigs are thorny and more square in section, whereas the Olive has no thorns and the twigs are round. The Wild-Olive is usually only a bush, which grows very widely in all those parts of the Mediterranean world that I am acquainted with (except Egypt). Where it has room and good soil, however, it grows to be a considerable tree, as is mentioned below; and its wood is tough, hard, and useful.

¹ The oil, though small in quantity, is perfectly good.

The Wild-Olive grows in many regions where the cultivated Olive is now entirely unknown; and it grows abundantly in regions which are so high and inclement that, according to modern statements, the cultivated Olive could never have flourished in them. The modern opinion which I have heard is that the Olive requires a temperate and even warm climate; and, as far as the facts of the present day go, it never grows on the high central plateau of Asia Minor. But this modern opinion seems to be unjustifiable. The failure of the Olive on the plateau is only an example of the general fact that the tree is never cultivated where a purely Mohammedan population possesses the soil. Strabo mentions that the mountain valley in front of the Phrygian city of Synnada was planted with Olive-trees. Now this plain lies very high, and lofty mountains surround it. It must be one of the most inclement districts in central Anatolia, and is not much below 4,000 feet above sea-level. Formerly, misled by the modern idea, I proposed to alter the text of Strabo's account of Synnada, supposing that the original epithet ἀμπελόφυτον had been corrupted by losing the first three letters into ἐλεόφυτον for ἐλαιόφυτον; but now I follow Strabo, and understand that, where the Wild-Olive grows, the Olive can be cultivated.

The *kotinos* is never mentioned by Homer; and, considering the importance in Greece of the tree alike in religion and in wide diffusion, this is strange. It is, however, probable that in some cases, where he speaks of the Olive-tree ἐλαία, he means the Wild-Olive, κότινος; and Professor Fischer seems to hold this opinion (unless he has made a mere slip, for he says that the marriage-bed which Ulysses constructed in his palace was made in the stem of a Wild-Olive, but Homer uses the name ἐλαία for that large tree

(Odyssey, xxiii., 190 ff.). The description given in that passage certainly suggests Wild-Olive rather than Olive.

The ancients were quite familiar, as might be expected, with the difference between the *kotinos* and the cultivated Olive; for Theophrastus, in his *History of Plants*, II., 3, states the principle that the *kotinos* can never develop into a true Olive-tree. This seems to imply that the ancients did not graft the true Olive shoot on the *kotinos*, though the modern cultivators in France and Spain, as well as in Greece and the islands of the Ægean Sea, often do so: yet Origen says that the process was common in his time, but (as we saw) Origen is probably speaking not from personal knowledge.

The relation of the true Olive to the Wild-Olive is very far from certain; the most diverse and very contradictory opinions are stated, sometimes with diffidence, sometimes with unhesitating confidence, by different modern authorities; and it is extremely difficult to know what to believe. While the appearance of the two kinds of tree is very different, yet the fact is indubitable that a Wild-Olive stock, grafted with a shoot from a cultivated Olive, produces a good and productive true Olive-tree. The two species are certainly very close to one another; and it is quite possible that to the scientific mind they may be much more nearly akin than they seem to the ordinary unscientific observer.

The young Olive-tree is, in course, selected from a good stock, and is a true Olive from the beginning. It is, however, the case that the true Olive can be obtained by grafting a noble scion on a Wild-Olive, and this process has been frequently employed in modern time in the Mediterranean, where groves of Wild-Olive have thus been utilised on a

large scale. But, where cultivation is long settled and Olives are planted and tended from the beginning, the young stock is noble ; and this beyond all doubt was the regular ancient practice.

This leads up to a misapprehension, into which Canon Tristram has fallen in his *Natural History of the Bible*, p. 377, and which has been commonly repeated on his authority by English writers subsequently (*e.g.*, by Messrs. Sanday and Headlam in their commentary). Canon Tristram asserts that there are three different kinds of Olive : (1) the ungrafted tree, which is the natural or Wild-Olive, ἀγριέλαιος; (2) the grafted tree, the cultivated tree, ἐλαία; (3) the oleaster, “a plant of a different natural order” (Sanday and Headlam), which “has no relationship to the Olive” (Tristram), yielding inferior oil, bearing long, narrow, bluish leaves, *viz.*, the bush or small tree called *Eleagnus angustifolia*.

There is just sufficient resemblance to the truth in this account to make it peculiarly dangerous. The ungrafted Olive is, of course, different from the grafted tree ; and it would in its natural ungrafted condition produce inferior fruit, containing little oil. That is the almost universal rule among cultivated fruit-trees : they must be grafted to produce well.¹ But this natural ungrafted Olive-tree is not ἀγριέλαιος, and is not the tree which St. Paul here has in mind.

Canon Tristram does not mention the Greek name for the shrub which he identifies with his oleaster. He could hardly avoid the view that the Greek *kotinos* is the Latin *oleaster* ; but if he stated that, he would be face to face

¹ The fig-tree is one of the few exceptions. It may be grafted, but grows quite well from shoots alone.

with a serious difficulty. Many Greek authorities¹ say that *κόττωος* and *ἀγριέλαιος* denote the same tree, and most add that *κόττωος* is the name used in the Attic dialect. There can be no doubt that this tree is the Wild-Olive, *oleaster* in Latin; and the Latin version of Origen states that this was the ground-stock on which the true Olive was grafted (an erroneous statement as regards Egypt, but correct in regard to some places).

It is, as Fischer says, still a matter of dispute among botanists whether the cultivated Olive and the Wild-Olive (*Oleaster*) are entirely distinct species, or whether the Wild-Olive is only the original and natural tree out of which the Olive has been gradually developed by generations of cultivation: or, thirdly, whether the Wild-Olive is the form into which any ordinary specimen of cultivated Olive degenerates when it is left neglected for a long time.

Professor Fischer (p. 4 f.), who takes no notice of the second alternative, but only discusses the question between the first and third alternatives, inclines to the view that Olive and *Oleaster* are distinct species, though he admits that the grafting of the true Olive on the *Oleaster* produces a perfectly good productive Olive-tree. Though I have no claim to be a scientific observer, yet one argument, which Professor Fischer does not notice, seems to me conclusive against his view. This argument was stated to me by the late Mr. George Dennis, author of that excellent book *Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria*, whom I had the advantage of knowing well about 1880 to 1882, when he was H.B.M. Consul in Smyrna. Mr. Dennis was an extremely accurate observer, and his great book derives its value from its trust-

¹Suidas, Hesychius, Etym., Dioscorides, i., 136, Pollux, i., 241, Schol. Theocr., v., 32, etc.

worthiness and accuracy, not from learned theories or ingenious combinations. Moreover, he was familiar for many years with Spain, Italy and Sicily; and he had travelled widely in the Greek world. He said that in the neighbourhood of Cyrene, where he had travelled and excavated, the cultivated Olive no longer exists, but the Wild-Olive abounds; and since Cyrene was once rich in Olives, he inferred that the Olive, when left uncared for during many centuries, went back to its original and natural condition as a Wild-Olive.

If this observation is correct, it seems to demonstrate that, when the cultivated Olive is left uncared for during a series of generations, it gradually relapses into a form which is closely similar to the Wild-Olive or Oleaster (though I am assured that probably a scientific observer would find differences, proving that the line of descent had been modified by generations of cultivation); and the easy explanation of this appears to be that the Wild-Olive or *κότινος* is very closely akin to the original natural tree out of which the cultivated Olive was developed by generations of care.

On the other hand Professor Fischer (p. 5) quotes Von Heldreich, who in a letter written from Athens in 1882 declares that the Olive in countries like Barka (the district of Cyrene), where it has been uncultivated for so many centuries, does not degenerate into a Wild-Olive, but remains a true Olive, though becoming poorer and less productive. This statement does not seem to rest on observation, but on theory. It cannot be denied that the Wild-Olive is abundant all over the Cyrenaica; and Professor Fischer's account of the Cyrenaica, p. 69, is hardly consistent with Von Heldreich's words, though he does indeed quote some allusion to true Olives still surviving in small numbers there.

The facts are that (1) the Wild-Olive, when properly

grafted with the nobler shoot, gives rise to the true Olive (though of course when ungrafted it can, as Theophrastus says, never become a true Olive): see examples in Fischer, p. 5. (2) The cultivation of the Olive, which originated in Western Asia several thousand years ago, has produced a well-marked difference in the tree. (3) The Olive, if neglected, would naturally revert to the primitive type in the course of centuries, though not completely so, for it would still retain distinguishable traces of the cultivated tree; and thus both Mr. Dennis and Von Heldreich may be correct in their statements about the Cyrenaica, from different points of view. (4) A shoot of the finest cultivated Olive, if planted, will not grow into a good and productive Olive unless it is grafted just like a Wild-Olive. The essential and indispensable fact is everywhere and in all cases the grafting of the young tree. (5) The ordinary practice in the Levant regions is to plant shoots of the cultivated Olive, and not to graft the Wild-Olive.

The conclusion is unavoidable that the Wild-Olive or Oleaster is the tree here referred to by St. Paul and contrasted with the true Olive, which is essentially a cultivated tree. It may indeed be conceded to Canon Tristram that the ungrafted young tree, even if grown from a noble shoot, may probably have been sometimes loosely called by the Greeks *ἀγριέλαιος* because it had not yet been ennobled;¹ but this furnishes no proof that such was the regular and ordinary use of that word.

The opinion of Canon Tristram that the *ἀγριέλαιος* is

¹Theophrastus seems to use *ἄγριος ἐλαία* in this way. Pausanias, ii., 32, 10, seems to distinguish three classes of Wild-Olive, *κότινος*, *φυλία* and *ἀγριέλαιος*; but the best authority on technical matters, Blumner, refuses to pronounce any opinion on the passage. Presumably, the second term was used by Pausanias to indicate the ungrafted tree.

totally distinct from the *oleaster* of the ancients has been widely adopted by English writers; but there seems to be no authority for it. Several passages in Latin (for example, Virgil, *Georgics*, ii., 182) seem to demonstrate that the Oleaster was the *kotinos* or ordinary Wild-Olive; and in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. "Oil-Tree," an argument is advanced about the corresponding tree in Hebrew, which seems to dispose entirely of the proposed identification with *Eleagnus angustifolia*, which is a mere bush and not a real tree. Dr. Post says (iii., 591), "The oleaster [which he assumes to be the *Eleagnus*] never grows large enough to furnish such a block of wood as was required for the image [ten cubits high, to be placed in the Holy of Holies]. It is also never used for house carpentry." These statements are doubtless quite true in the modern state of the country: Dr. Post is a thoroughly satisfactory authority for what comes in the range of his experience in the present time. But the Oleaster or Wild-Olive (Greek *κότινος ἀγριέλαιος*) was far more widely used and more useful in ancient times. It grew sometimes then, and grows sometimes still, to be a stately tree, though generally it is only a bush ten to fourteen feet high. Professor Theobald Fischer, one of the leading authorities of the day, mentions that it grows in suitable circumstances to a height of fifty to seventy feet and forms large forests.

In this difficult subject, in regard to which I find hardly any statement made by any authority which is not flatly contradicted by some other equally great authority, I cannot hope to have avoided error. I have no botanical training; and when I was in Asia Minor I had never any occasion to pay attention to Olive cultivation, but merely picked up by chance some information. I shall be grateful for correction and criticism.