

one. Giesebr. and Duhm, following the LXX., read, 'Truly in vain are the hills,' etc. (with ה for כ); but Heb. idiom would surely not say absolutely that 'the hills' were in vain, but would specify what it was in connexion with them that was in vain.

iv. 1. *wander* (i.e. wander aimlessly from Yahweh). It has been objected to this rendering that נָגַד (of Cain, Gen. 4. 12 ['fugitive']; of a bird, Prov. 26. 2; of fugitives from a captured country or city, Jer. 49. 30, 50. 3, 8) does not express the idea of wilful wandering about, but rather of being driven out; but, in view of the rarity with which the word occurs in Heb., it may be doubted whether this negative position can be sustained (note also Prov. 26. 2, of the aimless flittings of a bird). At any rate, if a doubt should be felt whether, standing alone, the word would have a moral connotation, the reading of LXX., 'and dost not wander from before me' (מִפְּנֵי וְלֹא תִנּוּד for וּמִפְּנֵי לֹא תִנּוּד), quoted in the footnote, would go far to remove it; and the very slight alteration of תִּנּוּד to תָּרוּד, 'and dost not roam at large'—the rare word used by Jeremiah himself in 2. 31—would remove it altogether.

detestable things. On this rend. of שְׂקוּצִים see the art. *Abomination* in Hastings' *D.B.*

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THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN CERTAINTY.¹

THE ground of certainty in religion is a subject which has of late received very close attention from the thinking minds of Europe; and in our own country more works than one of a high order have been devoted to its elucidation. In countries like Germany and France, where Protestantism is confronted by Roman Catholicism, the disposition to raise this question is stimulated by the challenge of the Romish Church to Protestantism to produce its credentials, but the necessity lies far deeper: thoughtful and earnest minds cannot but ask, How can we be sure that our religion is true? It is only shallowness or recklessness that can long refrain from asking this question. The more

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the issues, for time and eternity, involved in religion are realised, the more imperative must the desire become to be certain that we are building upon the rock and not upon the sand.

I.

The old answer of Protestantism was, that the Bible is the impregnable rock: we are certain of what we believe in religion because it stands written in the Word of God. By such proofs as the evidence from prophecy and the evidence from miracles it was demonstrated that the Bible is divine—this was the major premiss—and then it had only to be shown that any doctrine or statement is in the divine book, and it followed immediately that it must be true and certain. Even in so recent a work as the *Systematic Theology* of Dr. Charles Hodge, which for a time obtained so complete a sway in the churches of the Reformed name throughout the world, this was the position taken up; and the inspiration of the Bible was unhesitatingly assumed to be equivalent to inerrancy: indeed, it was expressly stated that the proved presence of any errors, of whatever kind, would vitiate the credibility of the whole.

But in recent years the position of the churches—even of those in which the name of Dr. Hodge is still held in veneration—has changed. Theologians are doubtful whether they ought to undertake to prove that there are no mistakes of any kind in the Bible, and in the general mind there has sprung up a widespread feeling that it may not be so certain as it was once thought to be, that, if anything is found in the Bible, it is *ipso facto* true. There are theologians who go further, and expressly argue that there do exist mistakes and contradictions in the Bible, but at the same time, they affirm that this in no degree lowers their belief in it as the infallible rule of faith and conduct; indeed, they maintain that, while they have

been discovering these imperfections in the Bible, their own reverence and affection for it have been continually increasing; and they are satisfied that the acknowledgment of a human element in the Scriptures, so far from prejudicing them in the eyes of the common man, would have the opposite effect, enabling him to admire the wisdom of the Divine Inspirer who has enshrined the eternal truth in an earthen vessel.

This confidence is not, indeed, universally shared. There are many who feel great difficulty in understanding how a book which is apparently careless in regard to some modes of truth should be absolutely trustworthy in others. Why does not the old rule of logic apply, *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*? I am not sure that the newer theology has realised how difficult a task it has on hand when it undertakes to prove that a book which exhibits a disregard of truthfulness as to fact and history is infallible in what it states about life and doctrine. At the same time, it is undeniable that the conviction of the Church about truth may be deep and still deepening while its own faith in the traditional method of proving it is giving way. There is nothing in theology so mutable as Apologetics. The arguments by which the Church recommends its convictions are dependent on changing conditions both in the Church and in the world; and the point from which the defence is directed may be abandoned without confidence in the citadel being in the least impaired. This is probably the case with belief in the Bible at the present time. It is probably true, as the representatives of a reverent criticism allege, that not only interest in the Bible but reverence for it, as a message from Heaven for salvation and as the unique guide to a holy life, is on the increase instead of on the wane, although the apologetic relied upon a short time ago to prove its divinity has been given up.

A favourite formula with those who are feeling their way to a doctrine of Scripture which will embrace all the ascertained facts is, that the Bible is independent of criticism. Criticism may, it is contended, find as many mistakes and contradictions and assume as late dates and as many authors for the different books of the Bible as it pleases, but this will in no way affect the kernel of revelation, which remains pure and sacrosanct amidst all the changes of opinion which scholarship can undergo. Frequently, however, as this maxim is repeated, it is misleading, because it is ambiguous.

There is a sense in which it certainly is not true. There is a criticism possible, and by no means only possible, but actually emerging from time to time, which would destroy the very foundations of Christian certainty, because evaporating all the facts which afford any reason for believing that there has appeared in the world a divine Redeemer at all. In what sense can it be alleged that the Bible is independent of a criticism like that of Strauss and Renan? Certainly not in the sense that the readers of the Bible could universally adopt these views of the Gospel history and still remain a Christian Church. I do not believe that the fantasticality of a critic of the Old Testament like Cheyne or the levity of a critic like Duhm could take possession of the Christian pulpit without emptying the churches; because the occupants of the pews would refuse to be parties to the pretence that documents deserving to be handled with such licence could have any claim to be the oracles of God.

No doubt, however, many who repeat the maxim, that the Bible is independent of criticism, merely intend to express thereby the conviction that the Bible has nothing to fear from a criticism which is sound and scientific, and that it will, by the force of its inherent truthfulness, ultimately convict and expose all critical views that are not

in accordance with fact and reason. They are expressing their conviction, formed from actual intercourse and traffic with the Bible, that it is akin to all that is noble, true and enduring, and therefore has no reason to fear the light.

In this sense the maxim is a valuable one; and it indicates whence the force of belief in the Bible is derived. The Scripture shines in its own light; and the true policy of the Church is to keep multitudes in actual contact with it; for the more any are in contact with it the more will their spiritual instincts be quickened, and the more quick these instincts are the more frequent and eager will recourse to the Bible be. The better and holier people become the more do they love the Bible; and the more they love it the better and holier do they become. Let the Spirit of God be working in the soul, and at once the voice of God will be heard speaking in the Word. Let men and women, in the arrangement of their own lives or in the management of public affairs, be earnestly desirous of divine direction, and they will hear from this book at every crisis an authentic voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." When the awakened religious nature, going back, plants itself beside Christ in the Scriptures, it finds itself encompassed with such a warmth and radiance of truth that it ceases to ask questions because it is certain that this must be the native home of the spirit.

It is a remarkable circumstance that the ground on which the authority of Scripture is based in the symbolical books of our Church is not that on which Dr. Hodge, following the chiefs of post-Reformation orthodoxy, took his stand. The following is the answer in the Larger Catechism to the question, "How doth it appear that the Scriptures are the Word of God?" "The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the Word of God by their majesty and purity; by the consent of all the parts and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God; by their light and power to

convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation; but the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man is alone able fully to persuade it, that they are the very Word of God." It is on positive foundations such as these that the Protestant theory of Scripture must be rebuilt; and, when so much that is merely negative is being advanced about the Bible, there ought to be no delay. If the traditional apologetic for the Scriptures be abandoned, it will be the urgent duty of the Church to invent a new one; for it is a perilous want when the common man is not able to give a prompt and plain reason for the hope that is in him.

II.

A second ground on which religious certainty has been based is the authority of past ages. What has been believed always, everywhere and by all must be true—it is astonishing how many Christians have been content with this as the foundation of their faith. The Greek Church, which comprehends over eighty millions of adherents, practically reposes on the faith of the early centuries and prides itself on neither requiring nor desiring any change. To it the restless movement which goes on in the Protestant world, every decade evolving new opinions, appears a form of insanity: hundreds of years ago the fathers ascertained and codified the truth, what advantage would there be in departing from that which is already perfect? In the Church of England there is a strong disposition to ascribe normative authority to what is called the Undivided Church, that is, to the opinions of the Fathers and the decisions of the Councils before the Church was split into the divisions of East and West—the more extreme adherents of the party sometimes allowing themselves to speak even of the Scriptures in a tone of disparagement, when these are quoted in criticism of the teaching and usages of the first

six or eight centuries, to which they pin their faith. But of course it is in the Romish Church that this tendency has been most fully carried out. Not only is equal authority with that of Scripture ascribed to the Fathers and the Councils in her creed; but there has been developed in recent times, by such writers as Möhler and Newman, a theory of the development of doctrine by which all the changes of belief and custom in that Church are attributed to the Holy Spirit; and this theory has been crowned by the solemn decision of the Vatican Council, that the Pope has the power of sealing every stage of this development, as the time becomes ripe, by declaring with infallible certainty what is truth.

This is a singular extreme to which to carry the principle of the authority of tradition; and one would suppose the age of the world in which it has been broached to be singularly inappropriate. There was once a time when Rome was so inaccessible and the Pope so distant from the great mass of the Christian world that it was comparatively easy to surround the head of the Church with a reverence almost amounting to deification; but Italy is now, through the multiplication of the facilities of travel, a highway over which every cultivated person passes, and the fierce light of publicity shines even on the Pope. Everyone knows what kind of man Pio Nono was, during whose pontificate this extraordinary decree was promulgated, and it requires an amount of credulity difficult in these realistic times to command to connect the notion of infallibility with a character so common. The glare of historical research is falling more and more unsparingly on the preceding occupants of the papal chair, and no mode of distinguishing between the office and the occupant of it can do much to mitigate the absurdity of supposing that infallible insight into truth can have been the prerogative of some of these. In fact, the doctrine of papal infallibility has erected an insuperable

barrier, which will be felt with ever increasing poignancy as time goes on, between the Christian religion, as represented by the Romish Church, and the intellect of the world.

At the same time, the principle to which such grotesque expression has been given by the Romish Church is a true one. There is a legitimate sanction which the truth derives from the fact that many centuries have believed in it and lived upon it; and the attempt, of which we are hearing so much at present, to push the nineteen Christian centuries entirely aside and go back totally untrammelled to the original documents of our religion is one to which only a modified assent can be given.

Here, for example, is the way in which the late Dr. Martineau sums up his view of the history of Christianity in a well known work on the subject we are now discussing :

“As I look back on the foregoing discussions, a conclusion is forced upon me on which I cannot dwell without pain and dismay, viz., that Christianity, as defined or understood in all the churches which formulate it, has been mainly evolved from what is transient and perishable in its sources, what is unhistorical in its traditions, mythological in its preconceptions, and misapprehended in the oracles of its prophets. From the fable of Eden to the imagination of the last trumpet, the whole story of the divine order of the world is dislocated and deformed. The blight of birth-sin with its involuntary perdition; the scheme of expiatory redemption with its vicarious salvation: the incarnation with its low postulates of the relation between God and man, and its unworkable doctrine of two natures in one person; the official transmission of grace through material elements in the keeping of a consecrated corporation; the second coming of Christ to summon the dead and part the sheep from the goats at the general judgment—all are the growth of a mythical literature, or Messianic dreams, or Pharisaic theology, or sacramental superstition, or of popular apotheosis. And so nearly do these vain imaginations preoccupy the creeds that not a moral or spiritual element finds entrance there except ‘the forgiveness of sins.’”

That is to say, the conclusion of this eminent writer is that Jesus Christ has been entirely misconceived from the very first; that Christianity has rested its claims from the beginning on an interpretation of its Founder.

wholly false and mistaken ; and that of the attempts that have been made by means of the creeds, put together by fathers and councils and used in the most solemn acts of worship by millions of people throughout the centuries, only a single sentence is right, all the rest forming a compound of superstition. If this were really the case, what hope would there be of attempting to understand Christianity at this time of day ? The men of the present age are only men ; we cannot flatter ourselves that our intellects are more penetrating or our hearts more sincere than those that have been devoted to the apprehension of the meaning of Christianity in the centuries before our own ; and, if these failed in a manner so absolute, what hope is there that we shall be successful ? I venture to say that, if it could be proved that Jesus and His teaching had been so entirely misapprehended for two thousand years, it would be far better for the human race to drop Him altogether and make a new beginning without entanglement with a history which would have been proved to be so liable to misunderstanding.

We do not require, with the Church of Rome, to believe that no mistakes have been made. On the contrary, error has often been admitted through human weakness, and epochs of appalling corruption have marred the history through human sin. It is no wonder that the truth was not always found ; for often men were seeking it not for its own sake but as a means of maintaining their own ascendancy ; it is no wonder that popes and councils often erred, when it is considered what popes and councils often were. But, when men were seeking the truth with their whole heart and soul and strength and mind, is it credible that they not only erred but erred wholesale ? We dare to assert, on the contrary, that God has never said to any, " Seek ye Me in vain," and that Christ has always been accessible to the upright and the humble. The Church did not begin by totally misunderstanding her Lord, and

it has not been a false Messiah she has preached to the centuries. There has been a development of doctrine, though it has not pursued the unbroken course which the Church of Rome pretends. There has been an apostolic succession, though it has not depended for its continuity on popes and bishops or on the virtue of clerical orders. There has been a real presence, though it has not been produced by any priestly incantation, and though the mass has no sanction in the teaching of Jesus. Christ did not forsake His cause when He quitted this world; in every age He has been present wherever two or three have been gathered together in His name; His Spirit has been inspiring, comforting and guiding all who have looked to Him for assistance; and the religion of Jesus is better understood today than it has ever been before. For nearly two thousand years Christianity has been the animating principle of history. It has lifted the human race from the low levels of paganism to the table-land on which it marches today; it has given to the common man the sense of his dignity as a son of God, and to womanhood and childhood the consecration they now enjoy; the nations which have been formed by its teaching occupy the front rank in the march of progress; the finest minds of the modern world have acknowledged its reasonableness and the finest characters have been inspired by its spirit. In the thoughtful book on this subject published a few years ago by the present Prime Minister we see the impression produced by facts like these on the mind of a statesman; and, while it is a degrading thing to hand over to any external authority the function of thinking or believing for us, it is no sign of breadth of view, but the opposite, to act as if we were the first who had ever begun to apply our minds to the subject of Christianity.

III.

A third ground on which certainty has been rested is Christian experience.

At the Reformation men were conscious of such an emancipation from the tyranny of tradition, and they enjoyed so keen a sense of immediate contact with the actual objects of religion, that it was not easy for them to measure exactly how far the new movement was able to carry them, and it is no wonder if the expectations of ardent spirits transcended the limits that are set to human nature. Some went so far as to believe themselves favoured with an illumination which left even the Bible far behind. We live, they said, in the epoch of the Spirit, and, if the Spirit inspired the prophets and apostles who wrote the Bible, why should He not inspire us with more advanced revelations? What reason is there to believe the canon of revelation to be closed? to fix such a limit is merely an act of unbelief; but, if we have faith, the hand of the Almighty is not shortened. In the same way, in our own day, there are those who are asking why the age of miracles should be supposed to be past. If by the hands of apostles signs and wonders were wrought in the primitive ages, to clear the pathway for Christianity, why should not the same authentication accompany the religion of Christ now, when it is trying to break into new territory? If Jesus in the days of His humiliation displayed the mastery over disease and distributed health wherever He went, why should He not exert the same powers now from heaven? Did He not say, when He was leaving the earth, "He that believeth on Me the works which I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father?" It is easier to ask such questions as these than to answer them. Yet it seems certain that in the divine economy of the world an epoch of revelation closed with the apostolic age which will never be transcended. There was a finality in the revelation of the Father and of the way of salvation through Christ to which nothing needs to be added. There is a sense in which the Scripture stands

forever above experience ; there is always more in the Bible than anyone has ever taken out of it ; and our salvation lies in approximation to its fulness.

It is less extravagant when the claim is made to transcend the experience of the period since the close of the apostolic age. Why should we not hope for an ampler blessing and a clearer light than were vouchsafed to a St. Augustine, an Aquinas or a Calvin ? There is in Protestantism a strong disposition to ignore the importance of the period between the close of the canon and the Reformation ; and I have already referred to the strength of the movement, at present so much heard of, to go back to Christ, disregarding all that has been thought about Him in the interval. But it is not in this spirit of contempt for others that the pursuit of truth is likely to be successful. Christianity is a uniting not a disintegrating force. It is of no private interpretation, but makes the individual conscious of an experience which he shares with others. Not only is the life of the individual derived from the community in the spiritual as well as in the natural order, but the life of the community is far richer than that of any individual can ever be, and is always able to furnish it with a programme of attainment which it has not yet made. The arrogance which wishes to be alone and refuses to recognise the attainments of others is always revenged by impoverishment. In philosophy the attempt has often been made to constitute the individual the measure of truth ; but a psychology which does not recognise the existence of other consciousnesses besides that of the individual is an affectation and is doomed to intellectual barrenness. And this principle is much more imperative in the sphere of religion, the very watchword of which is sympathy and fellowship.

In spite, however, of these exaggerations and dangers, the individual has his rights in religion, and personal experience possesses a unique value. There is a kind of certainty

arising from having oneself "tasted and seen" which on all the levels of knowledge, from the lowest physical one upwards, is felt to be of a superior order to that due to hearsay. Everyone recognises the difference between the man who has merely acquired the theory of any art and the man who has mastered the same by years of practice. It is one thing to learn what love is by the reading of romances and another to learn it by loving and being loved. Not less different is the knowledge of religion due to personal contact with the objects of religion from that due to the testimony of others; and the true aim of all testimony on the subject is to lead us to acquire that knowledge for ourselves. Both the Bible and the Church have been far too often represented as making demands on the individual—demands to believe what they teach on pain of perdition. It is a far juster view of both to regard them as approaching the individual with promises that, if he seek God, he shall find Him. From prophets and apostles, from fathers and doctors comes the testimony, that, when in their sin and misery they stretched forth their hands, they encountered not vacancy, but a living God and Saviour; and the intention of their testimony is not that we should adopt as our creed that which they regarded as true, but that, when, in the stress of our own life and the consciousness of our own misery, we lift our eyes to the hills, we should be able to do so with hope of finding what they found. And, if we have found it, our impressions of its reality and blessedness will be of the same nature as theirs. It may be mediated through their testimony, yet it will be immediate, the soul and God, the sinner and the Saviour, coming into direct contact; and, when we are experiencing the blessedness of this union with the actual objects of the spiritual world, we can say to every witness, including even the Bible, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying, but we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

This personal and immediate contact with the spiritual world itself, and not merely with any authoritative record, is both the secret of religion and the soul of theology. It ought to be a constantly growing experience, for there is always more in God than anyone has made his own, and none have ever exhausted the unsearchable riches of Christ. These attainments of Christian experience are the equivalents of the statements of the Bible and the propositions of the creed ; but they are the Bible and the creed transmuted into meat and drink, so that they may become bone of a man's bone and flesh of his flesh. This is the certainty of which Luther used to say that on a dying bed it is not enough to be assured by even the angel Gabriel that our religion is true ; we must be as sure of it as that three and two are five or that an ell is longer than half-an-ell ; we must be so sure of it that, if the whole world declared it to be false, we could quietly and joyfully rest on our own conviction.

So perfect is the certainty begotten of personal experience that some have considered it independent of every other authority whatsoever. If, they reason, in my sin and misery I have been told of a supernatural deliverance and, accepting this testimony and seeking relief where it is to be found, I have obtained a God and Saviour so real and priceless that I whisper to myself every day, "The half had not been told me," of what consequence to me is now the authority of those who informed me of the possibility of making such a discovery ? The discovery itself makes all other authentication superfluous. It is even conceivable that false witnesses might indicate the way to a buried treasure ; but, if the treasure had been found, what would it matter to the happy discoverer if it were demonstrated that the character of his informants was unsatisfactory ? In the same way, what does it matter to me what may be proved against the authority of the Bible and the Church,

if I am rejoicing in the great salvation and finding the Saviour every day more precious ?

Such argumentation appears forcible, yet I fancy there is somewhere a flaw in it. Strongly at least as I believe in the reality of personal experience and in the immediate and joyful certainty which it produces, I have never been able to think that this certainty could survive, if the facts of the Gospel history were thoroughly undermined—if, for example, it could be proved that the supernatural birth and the bodily resurrection of our Lord were fables. It is a significant fact that the title of Dr. Dale's contribution to the subject now under discussion is *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels*. His purpose was to bring out the evidential value of the presence of the living Christ in the heart ; yet his masculine sense told him that this is only one hemisphere of the truth, the other being the truthfulness of the Gospel history.

On the other hand, however, the certainty of personal experience lends the strongest support both to the authority of the Church, which one has to acknowledge as the birth-place of one's own spiritual life, and to the authority of the Bible, the original witness to the existence of those forces which have made one what one is ; indeed, this may be so strong as to beget in the mind a prejudice, thoroughly reasoned and perfectly justified, against everything which would subvert the authority of the Church or the credibility of the Scriptures.

There are tens of thousands whose religious experience is the most certain of all the things they know ; and every year of their life it is becoming more certain. As they advance from one promise of the Bible and of the creed to another and find it true, not in the sense of its being well authenticated or logical, but in the sense that Christ is found to contain all that has been asserted about Him, the possibility that this Saviour should turn out to be

unreal, and the record of Him supplied by the Bible and the Church untrue, grows every day more unthinkable. All the reality, all the blessedness, all the glory of life are simply the conversion into experience of what the Bible has recorded and the Church has taught. To deny the reality of Christ would be to deny life itself; for "it is not I that live, but Christ liveth in me."

It is obvious to what conclusion the course of this reasoning is conducting us. The Bible has been declared to be the religion of Protestants; tradition is in the same sense the religion of Catholics; and the disposition of more recent times is to recognise in personal experience the sole and sufficient ground of certainty. But each of these views is one-sided. The certainty on which religion is suspended is a threefold cord, and it is a mistake to attempt to hang all the weight on a single strand. I will not say that each of the three grounds of certainty is equally secure. There is a sense in which the authority of Scripture is supreme; and there is a sense in which the authority of the Church transcends the experience of the individual; while, on the other hand, there is a kind of certainty inherent in personal experience far more reassuring than any external authority. But the three are intended to go together: religious truth is that which is revealed in the Scripture, borne witness to by the Church, and realised in individual experience.

These three sources of certainty correspond, it will be observed, with the three principal divisions of theology; for the exposition of the testimony of Scripture is the task of Exegetic Theology; the tradition of Christianity, throughout the centuries, is the theme of Historical Theology; and the scientific presentation of the contents of the Christian consciousness is the problem of Dogmatic Theology.

It is with the middle link of this threefold chain that this Chair is occupied, and it is the most laborious of them all; because not only is the literature of Historical Theology itself of vast extent, but, inasmuch as the scope of Church History embraces, besides the external organization and fortunes of the Church, the growth of its thought as well, the historical theologian would require, if it were possible, to acquaint himself with everything of importance that has been written in every branch of theology in every age. Of course this is out of the question, but approximation to it must be the endeavour of everyone who seeks conscientiously to fulfil the duties of such a position.

It cannot be claimed that hitherto the genius of our country has applied itself very sympathetically to this branch of study. On the contrary, while in Germany, for example, there never passes a month which does not witness the publication of some book on Luther or Melancthon or some other hero of Protestantism, or of a monograph on the ecclesiastical history of some particular city or province, publications of a similar kind in this country are few and far between; it is no unusual thing in our religious and ecclesiastical controversies to find points feebly argued by protagonists totally ignorant that the same points have been exhaustively discussed in the literature of our country in earlier times; and some of the foremost writers of the day, while incessantly quoting from the literature of the Continent, hardly display even an elementary acquaintance with the classical works of the theology of their own country. On the other hand, historical investigation in general is extremely characteristic of the spirit of the age, forming one phase of the passion for facts which has manifested itself in recent times in every department of knowledge. A thoroughly trained mind feels the necessity of ascertaining not only that a thing is, but how it has come to be what it is; and the more theology

is imbued with the scientific spirit, the more will everyone desire to know where exactly he stands in the historical development.

But the real hope of winning for the work of this Chair the sympathy and enthusiasm of the student lies in the recognition of it as having to do with one of the elements by which Christian certainty is constituted, and in the constant remembrance of the connexion of this element with the other two on which certainty depends.

Church History has been treated too much as if the development which it records had been purely a product of external circumstances and of human endeavours. Great men, it has been supposed, have made it by their intuitions and resolutions, and small men by their ambitions and intrigues. But the maker of history is God. It is Christ at the beginning of the history who has determined the development. The Church has grown from the seed of the Word. History is the unfolding of what was given to the world in Christ; it is the interpretation of the Scriptures not by the wit of man but by the ever changing and ever growing light of Providence. Man has not made history; but history has taken men up one by one, using them as its agents, and then has passed on to make use of others in the same way, gradually through their means unfolding the principles which have lain from the beginning at its heart. .

And, as thus Church History is connected with the Scriptures on the one hand, so it is connected with Christian experience on the other. There is a sense in which Christ may be said to step straight out of the Scriptures into the heart; but is He not a greater and grander Christ when He comes into the heart not only out of the Scriptures but also along the avenue of history? If the strength and the health of Christian experience depend not only on the internal acts by which the Saviour is laid hold of, but also on the kind of Saviour He is believed to

be, the apprehension of Christ must be enlarged and enriched by the knowledge of what He has been to the generations that have gone before us.

Christ, however, not only comes into the heart but passes forth from it to others. He is on a journey and only touches at our door by the way. The whole of history is the march of Christ down through the ages. When He calls at our door, we join the triumphal procession, the subsequent progress of which becomes the aim and the inspiration of our lives. Church History ought to awaken a passion for the kingdom of God. It discloses the appalling contrast between the ideal and the actual—between what Christianity ought to have been and what it actually has been—but at the same time it shows how much has been accomplished; it reveals the figures of those who by their testimony, toil and martyrdom have so far stamped the image and superscription of Christ on the different departments of the life of man; and even from the very mistakes and errors of the past it learns to prescribe the path for the future. Among the colleges of our Church the one in Aberdeen has been hitherto distinguished for the number of men of ability and consecration it has sent forth into the mission field; and I should regard it as the greatest honour that could fall to this Chair during my occupancy of it if it should contribute to the continuance of this tradition. It ought to be exhilarating to be brought so close as we must be in a class of Church History to the great spirits of the past and to the movements of evangelisation and reform in which they were engaged; and, if in any degree their example enkindle imitation, the study of history will lead on to the making of history, and out of the knowledge of the past will be born the shape and body of the future.

JAMES STALKER.