

*A PARISH CLERGYMAN'S THOUGHTS ABOUT
THE HIGHER CRITICISM.*

SOME little time ago I was asked to read a paper on the higher criticism before the Clergy Home Mission Union. This I declined to do, as being wholly unfitted for the task. The cause of truth has suffered grievously from ignorance of the subject handled by the higher critic, and it is at least conceivable (for we are rightly told that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing) that the cause might suffer still more severely, if one who knows but little should attempt to speak as an expert. What, however, I felt that I could do was to give some account of my own thoughts and attitude on the subject. I therefore called my paper *A Parish Clergyman's Thoughts about the Higher Criticism*; my object being to answer, more or less in public, questions which I have been often asked in private: How far has the higher criticism affected me? how far has it influenced my mind and modified my teaching? how, not having the ability or learning or opportunity of becoming an expert, have I dealt with it? The question is one that all thinkers and readers of the present day must face, and my aim has been to show how the ordinary teacher meets it. For, in expressing my own thoughts on the subject, I was confident that I should express the thoughts of many. This I found to be the case, and this must be my apology for allowing my paper to appear in print; viz., that in it I am saying what many are thinking, that it puts into shape and formulates views that are shared by vast numbers of thoughtful and studious evangelicals, both of the clergy and the laity.

From this point of view, and no other, the following pages may have some slight and ephemeral value.

My aim, let me say at the outset, is twofold. First, I shall try to show that, while by no means bound to follow the critic wherever he may wish to lead, the Bible student of the present day is deeply indebted to the researches and results of the higher criticism; and in the second place, that there is nothing in what one feels oneself bound (I speak of course for myself) to accept from the critic to disturb one's faith as a believer in Christ.

With the revolutionary criticism, which is at open war with the creed of Christendom, I need hardly say I have no sympathy. "The faith of the Christian rests unceasingly on the person of Jesus, the very Reason and Word of the Father."¹ Any criticism, therefore, that is really dishonouring to Christ as the Divine Head of the Church, reducing Him to mere man, however great, however unique, is to be resisted as an enemy to the faith. The Christian religion for me stands or falls on the question of Christ's Godhead. If He be not very God as well as very Man, I give up as hopeless my search for the pearl of great price.

Now in regard to much of this revolutionary criticism it appears to me that, without pretending to the knowledge and learning that would enable one to meet the critic on his own ground, the gift of practical judgment comes to one's rescue. Am I presumptuous in saying that in this gift of practical judgment (or shall we call it common sense?) the critic of the extreme school is often lacking? As I read what is advanced by representatives of that school, I am reminded of the man who cannot see the wood for the trees. Often they appear to me to raise mountains out of mole-hills, whilst they shut their eyes to the towering difficulties of unbelief, difficulties before which unbelief has again and again fallen back baffled, if not

¹ Gore's *Bampton Lectures*, p. 177.

defeated. One sometimes longs to tear the critic from his desk and microscope, as he examines, beneath the lens of analysis,¹ some minute discrepancy or trifling contradiction, and place him on a coign of vantage, some breezy height, whence he can get a healthy, bird's-eye view of the subject, and whence the minutiae, which are engrossing his attention, will fall into their place and occupy their true relation to the whole. Without expert knowledge, I am sure a very ordinary amount of practical judgment will do much for us in the presence of the advanced critic.

Let me illustrate my meaning from one of the latest developments of the more extreme school of criticism. A learned Swiss professor assures us that we cannot point to more than nine unquestionably genuine sayings of our Lord. Such an assertion is startling indeed to those who believe that the four Gospels are the main pillars of the Faith, and who clearly see that the faith of Christendom would be more than jeopardized, if it could be proved that the Gospels are to all intents and purposes the invention of the early Church working upon legend and tradition. But surely common sense with the New Testament in its hand can deal with this contention of the advanced critic. Will nine genuine sayings or the teaching of Christ, as we have it in the Gospels, best account for the contents of the Acts and the Epistles? Where, for example, did St. Paul get his teaching about rendering tribute to those in authority (Rom. xiii. 7), his pronouncement on the subject of divorce (1 Cor. vii. 10), his note as to the washing of the saints' feet² (1 Tim. v. 10), and why, on two recorded occasions, did he shake the dust from his person as a testimony against

¹ "Critics of documents, especially Biblical documents, appear to me very seldom to know where to stop in their analysis."

"It is remarkable how critics, like apologists, are apt to go for everything or nothing."—Gore's *Dissertations*, pp. ix., 21.

² The argument is the same, whether the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles be accepted or not.

wilful unbelief? (Acts xiii. 51; xviii. 6.) When he speaks of the Lord coming as a thief in the night (1 Thess. v. 2), and of the last trump (1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 16), and makes the *παρουσία* one of the leading features of his teaching, it is surely more reasonable to trace such utterances to the recorded words of Christ (Matt. xxiv. 27, 31, 43) than to any floating and untrustworthy tradition of the primitive Church. What again of St. Peter's allusion to Christ as the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (1 Pet. ii. 25), his insistence upon the example of Christ (1 Pet. ii. 21), and his reference to the "corner-stone" both in his first Epistle (1 Pet. ii. 7) and in his speech before the council (Acts iv. 11)? Is St. James giving his own words or his Lord's, when he writes, "Above all things swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay"? Further, to illustrate the correspondences of thought and word alike between the Gospels and the other writings of the New Testament, we may compare the following passages: Matthew x. 33 and 2 Timothy ii. 12; Matthew v. 16 and Philippians ii. 15; Luke xii. 42, 43 and 1 Corinthians iv. 1, 2; John ii. 19, 21 and 1 Corinthians vi. 19; John viii. 36 and 1 Corinthians vii. 22; John xv. 26, 27 and Acts v. 32, x. 39; John xxi. 16 and 1 Peter v. 2¹; Matthew v. 10 and 1 Peter iii. 14; Matthew xiii. 39 and Revelation xiv. 15ff.; Matthew xxiii. 12 and James iv. 10; 1 Peter v. 6, Matthew xxiv. 30 and Revelation i. 7; Luke xxi. 8 and 1 John ii. 18; Luke xxi. 36 and 1 John ii. 28; Luke xxiii. 30 and Revelation vi. 16; John v. 27-29 and Acts x. 42, xvii. 31; John viii. 34 and Romans vi. 16 ff.; John xiii. 36, xxi. 18 and 1 Peter i. 14.

¹ Not one of the correspondences of thought and language mentioned above is amongst the nine sayings unquestioned by Schmiedel. I have not included Luke xxii. 19, 20 and 1 Corinthians xi. 24, 25, because the true text of St. Luke in this passage is very uncertain.

To the substantial, if not verbal, credibility of the Gospel record of the teaching of Christ we can bring still more abundant testimony of the Acts and Epistles. Who can read the Epistle of St. James, with its frequently recurring echoes from the Sermon on the Mount, without the conviction that the writer was familiar with the sayings recorded in Matthew v., vi., vii., and in the parallel passage in St. Luke.

Take again the First Epistle and the Gospel of St. John. Here are two documents almost without question from the same hand. Even if we set aside what we believe to be overwhelming proof of Johannine authorship, how is it possible to avoid the conclusion that the teaching of epistle and gospel alike must be traced to a common origin in One, who spake as never man spake, and whose sayings are to be found substantially, if not verbally, in the Gospel which claims to record them?¹ Again, how are we to account for the teaching of St. Paul and other New Testament writers concerning the Fatherhood of God and the work of the Holy Spirit? Deny the genuineness of Christ's utterances, as reported in the Gospels, and you reject the only and the all-sufficient source of apostolic teaching on these subjects. Or where, if not in Christ's own instruction as given by St. John, especially in xv. 1-8, shall we find a key to St. Paul's view of the relation of Christ to the believer and of the believer to Christ, the membership of the believer, the indwelling of the Christ—"abide in Me and I in you"? The same might be said in reference to the unquestioning belief of the New Testament writers in the Godhead of our Saviour.

The judgment of nineteen Christian centuries which has, on the one hand, accepted the Gospels as the necessary

¹ NOTE.—This statement would hardly have to be modified even if Professor Wendt's theory as to the origin of the gospel and epistles of St. John came to be accepted.

antecedent and groundwork of the Acts and Epistles and, on the other, the Acts and Epistles as the natural sequel and corollary of the Gospels, is a perfectly sound one, nor is it too much to say that the Acts and the Epistles prove, as well as postulate, the historicity of Jesus Christ and the genuineness of His recorded sayings.

A study of the apocryphal writings brings us to the same inevitable conclusion. It is true that the greater part of the Christian apocryphal writings dates from the fifth century onwards; but we have enough of the second century to show what might have come down to us instead of our four priceless Gospels, had the life of Jesus been a legendary tale and had but a few scattered sayings of His been treasured and preserved. Mr. Harris Cowper, the latest editor of the Apocryphal Gospels, closes his Preface with these words: "I will only add that, before I undertook this work, I never realized so completely as I do now the impassable character of the gulf which separates the genuine Gospels from these." To that impassable gulf our judgment appeals, as proof that the advanced critic, who would rob us of the historicity and the words of Jesus, is wholly mistaken. The rabbinical writings of the same period, together with such Jewish apocryphal literature as the book of Enoch, the Apocalypse of Baruch and the Assumption of Moses, will further illustrate this contention.

Taking a wider view of the question, common sense asks (and so far waits in vain for a reply), how does the extreme and naturalistic school of criticism account for the vast and imposing structure of historical and experimental Christianity without the foundation which it is trying to prove a tissue of illusion and self-deception? The Incarnation and Resurrection are denied; we are left with nine unquestionably genuine sayings of Christ; the personality of the Founder of the Church is almost obliterated; and thus a vast and towering structure is left with less than a

foundation of sand.¹ This, I contend, is a position with which the unbiassed reason of the ordinary man is as well qualified to deal as the erudition of the expert, possibly even better.

Did time permit, one might apply the same method to other branches of evidence, and especially to the internal evidences which the Bible contains of its own general and substantial veracity. We cannot, for example, shut our eyes, at the critic's bidding, to the unity, simplicity, candour that characterize the Scriptures, nor question the numerous proofs they embody of first-hand knowledge and eye-witness report; we cannot ignore those undesigned coincidences which Blunt and Paley collected but surely did not exhaust; nor can we bow to the forced and unnatural attempts which have been made to depreciate, not to say excise, the prophetic element of Scripture.

But short of the revolutionary and destructive criticism of which I have been speaking, there is much in the views now freely expressed by the higher critic, and generally accepted by the theological world, which is unsettling and disturbing to some of those whose opinions were formed in the evangelical school of an earlier generation. What effect then has this movement had upon those of us who have really faced the questions with which the modern critic deals? I venture to say that the vast majority of such inquirers have come, it may be reluctantly, to the conclusion that it is impossible to read the Bible exactly as we did when children, or even as we did forty years ago. The critic has had a hand in our training. To him we owe part of our mental and spiritual furniture. This being so, our attitude cannot be one of antagonism. We confess that, as Bible students, we are deeply indebted to modern

¹ "We cannot eliminate from history either the person or the work of Christ; and the more we discredit the recorded account of them, the more hopelessly perplexing does their supremacy become."—Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*, p. 88.

criticism ; for, if I mistake not, it has enabled us to believe in the inspiration of some portions of Holy Scripture where we had found difficulty in admitting it before, has put meaning into what was meaningless, and has illuminated what once was hopelessly obscure. And if, in the course of years, our views on unessential points have been modified and changed by the critic, it is only in accordance with a conviction that the study of religious opinion has forced upon us, viz., that it is wise, nay indispensable, to keep an open mind in reference to questions which are not vital to our faith.

I shall clear the ground and prepare the way for what follows, if I further admit that the general effect of the higher criticism has been somewhat to qualify the views of inspiration with which one started in life. We have abandoned the *a priori* views in which we were brought up, and form our ideas of inspiration inductively from the Scriptures themselves.¹ As Dr. Salmon well says, "we follow a very unsafe method if we begin by deciding in what way it seems to us most fitting that God should guide His Church, and then try and wrest facts into conformity with our preconceptions."² We resolutely bear in mind that it is the Word of God, not any human interpretation of it, that binds us. We are careful to maintain the distinction between revelation and inspiration,³ and to remember that the Old Testament is a history, not a set of theological dogmas. We no longer contend for an inspiration which excludes all human error and guarantees accuracy of detail in every particular. We accept the axiom that, in His revealed Word, God has not anticipated the results of critical and scientific inquiry ; we do not "confuse inspiration with omniscience."⁴ We better understand the

¹ Otley, *Some Aspects of the Old Testament*, p. 29.

² *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 511. (³ Lee on *Inspiration*, p. 27.

⁴ The expression is from a passage in Canon Girdlestone's *Foundations of*

πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως of Hebrews i. 1, and the contrast which, in that verse, is drawn between Old Testament and New Testament inspiration. We acknowledge the presence and power of the Holy Spirit just as fully in the allegory, the poetry, the drama of the Bible as in the most literal and prosaic of its statements and narratives. We can understand how the Spirit of God should take legends hoary with age, the myths of an early world with their historical germ, but lack of historical substance, and so purify, elevate, spiritualize them that they became vehicles of revealed truth for all time. Finally, it is more obvious to us than it once was that, just as St. Paul as an individual appears to have been conscious of varying degrees of inspiration, so inspiration was not given in the same measure to every inspired writer; that the flight of an Isaiah, who proclaims the gospel with no uncertain sound, was immeasurably higher than that of a Nahum, who did little more than voice a world's hatred of the Assyrian power. The Church does not define inspiration, therefore demands no definition from me. But whilst, on the one hand, I utterly disown any view of inspiration which virtually eliminates the Divine guidance and authorship, I am equally on my guard against a view which, as it seems to me, would bring dishonour upon the Holy Spirit by attributing that which is admittedly imperfect to His agency. God indeed, in the old time, spake by holy men, but I do not forget that man also spake; and if we find, as unquestionably we do, discrepancies and confusion in parts of the Old Testament, I know at whose door to lay the defect.

Let me illustrate my position from various points of view, confining my remarks almost entirely to the Old Testament. 1. I will first touch upon the early chapters of

the Bible, which shows how far even the most conservative writers are prepared to go in the direction of the higher criticism.

Genesis. I cannot but think that we owe a debt of gratitude to the modern critic for making it so clear that, in the account of the Creation, the Fall and the Flood, we are not reading history in the strict sense of that word. It has (for most of us) been conclusively shown that in these chapters we are dealing with tradition, not history. Once admit the legendary or traditional character of the first eleven chapters of Genesis, and that it is just as much within the power of the Holy Spirit to fill with ethical and spiritual teaching an ancient legend, as a poem, a parable, or a vision; and a portion of the Bible, which, if taken literally, can never cease to be a most serious obstacle to faith, becomes luminous with inspired meaning. Moreover the immeasurable gulf, from an ethical and spiritual point of view, which divides the Babylonian and Assyrian traditions from the early narratives of Genesis, is almost as forcible argument for the reality of inspiration as the contrast between the true and the apocryphal gospels.

It will be seen that the conclusion here advocated, viz., that in the early portion of Genesis we are handling not history but tradition, at once removes all cause of contention between science and revelation; for, if the critic be right, the account of the creation, whether of the world or of man, does not pretend to be scientific. Every attempt to reconcile the first chapter of Genesis with the fully established results of science has proved a failure.¹ The process of harmonizing the two fails in many specific points, or is only carried out by most unfair use and interpretation of language. But, irrespective of detail, the unbiassed mind, which imperatively demands the natural treatment of language in the Bible as in other books, will never be persuaded that the writer of Genesis, with his

¹ The best discussion of this subject that I know is a paper by Dr. Driver in *THE EXPOSITOR*, series iii. vol. iii. p. 23, though it might perhaps be fairly maintained that the argument needs bringing up to date.

oft-repeated statement concerning evening and morning, could have meant anything but a day of twenty-four hours;¹ and whatever may be said on the difference of word used for "created" in *v.* 1, and for "made" in *v.* 16, no amount of ingenuity can eliminate the geo-centric view of the universe from *vv.* 14-18.

So, too, in respect of the creation and fall of man. It must be increasingly felt by the thoughtful that any idea of placing these events within the historic period of man's existence upon earth must be abandoned. It is no longer possible to reconcile the traditional interpretation of Genesis with the conclusions of anthropology, except by the forced and artificial treatment of Scripture, which provides us with a pre-Adamite man. And if the evolutionist be right, as not only the scientific world, but also a large and important section of theologians, believe him to be, then the Bible, literally interpreted, is wrong. The critic rescues us from the dilemma by showing that this portion of the Bible is not to be literally understood.

Coming to the story of the Flood, whilst to deny the fact would be to ignore an almost universal tradition as well as the statement of Scripture, it is clear both from the use of two irreconcilable accounts,² and also from the physical impossibility of what is recorded to have taken place as to the preservation of terrestrial life within the ark,³ that we are dealing not with historical, but traditional, records of the event in question.

¹ This seems to me absolutely certain from *v.* 5. "God called the light day, and the darkness He called night; and there was evening and there was morning, one day" (R.V.).

² The most serious discrepancy relates to the duration of the Flood. In the Prophetic narrative the whole period of the Flood is sixty-eight days; in the Priestly narrative the period exceeded a year.

³ Gen. vi. 17-22. The physical impossibility of which I speak is not materially relieved, but almost comically exaggerated, by the suggestion, which may be found in the *Speaker's Commentary*, that insects and snakes were preserved in egg-form.

That there is nothing rash or arbitrary in the belief that, in these earliest records of revelation, the Holy Spirit used tradition and legend for the purpose of instruction is shown by the fact that St. Paul,¹ St. Peter,² and St. Jude³ incorporated Jewish legend in their own inspired teaching. This New Testament use of legends does not stamp them as authentic history; they remain legends although embodied in Holy Writ; but they serve their purpose of illustration, and that is enough. If then we can without difficulty⁴ learn from legend when introduced into the New Testament, why should it surprise, much less stagger, us to find it in the first pages of the Old Testament, where its use is so much more natural and suitable. As it has been well said, "When we seek reassurance in regard to the inspiration of those books of the Old Testament to which our Lord and His Church refer us, we find it primarily in the substance of the books as they are given to us, not in any considerations of the manner in which they came into existence."⁵ We do not look in vain for this reassurance in the portion of Scripture of which I am now speaking. Take Genesis ii. and iii.⁶ as an example.

¹ 1 Cor. x. 4. The names Jannes and Jambres, 2 Timothy iii. 8, are derived from tradition.

² 1 Pet. iii. 19, probably; but certainly 2 Peter ii. 4.

³ St. Jude makes much freer use of the apocryphal writings. In v. 6 the allusion to the book of Enoch is unmistakable, and the story of Michael in v. 9 is from the assumption of Moses. This use of legend will help to remove any difficulty we may feel in St. Peter's accepting what we may deem to be a legendary accretion in the story of Balaam (2 Pet. ii. 16). The fact that St. Peter accepted the prodigy as authentic history no more makes it such than his use of the book of Enoch substantiates the teaching of that book. I am assuming the Petrine authorship, but the argument is the same whoever was the writer.

⁴ This may seem a little strained to some in view of the fact that (humanly speaking) the Epistle of St. Jude almost lost its place in the Canon of the New Testament on account of its copious use of apocryphal matter; but it must be borne in mind that it was not a critical age, in the modern sense of the term, that dealt with the question of the Canon.

⁵ *Lux Mundi*, tenth edition, p. xxiv.

⁶ As a matter of fact there are few educated teachers who would now

I can best indicate my own view by quoting the words of another writer. "All came back to life again. The second and the third of Genesis had been a difficulty for a while, but now they glowed and shone, appearing more definitely inspired than ever they had done in the old literal days. That out of all the overwhelming events of the prehistoric world, the wars and feuds and catastrophes, the founding of kingdoms on mere force and the confusions of violence, the writer should have selected to relate in full the awakening of the human conscience and the first sense of responsibility of man to his Maker, this is a wonderful thing. That out of the dimness of the very early dawn, this one event, so silent, so hidden, so utterly unnoticed by the course of the world's history, should have been thus singled out, told us in full detail with complete fidelity to psychological truth in every step, and put forward in the clearest and most attractive light as an all-important thing for us to know, and as the very deepest laid and strongest foundation stone of our redemption—here surely was not the work of man, but of God; here was true inspiration, the very inbreathing of the Most High." ¹

2. Another result of the higher criticism has been to exhibit and emphasize the inferiority of the Old Testament as a whole to the New Testament. Dealing, as it does, very plainly with the comparatively low moral standard which prevailed in the earlier ages and was even sanctioned by the Divine approval—accentuating the crude anthropomorphism of Old Testament thought and language—tracing the connexion of the religion of the Hebrew race with that of other Semitic peoples, the higher criticism brings into prominence the true relations and the relative value of the two Testaments. But is this any loss to the

publicly insist on a literal interpretation of these chapters. But there are many who continue to obscure the truth either by silence or by oracular ambiguity.

¹ EXPOSITOR, October, 1901, p. 260.

Church? Is it not rather a gain, and a gain because it represents the truth? Does it not clear the ground and contribute to establish the main issue, bringing into a real, instead of fanciful and artificial, harmony God's dealings with the world, placing upon a firm basis the progressive character of revelation?

The moral problems arising from a comparison of the Old and New Testaments cannot but cause difficulty until the key to their solution has been found. These were the rocks which threatened to wreck the Church in almost the earliest stage of her history. The Gnostic heresies represent the acutest crisis, not even excepting Arianism, that the Church has ever encountered, and the strength of Gnosticism was Old Testament exegesis. Gnosticism was to a very great extent an Old Testament question. Partly by the use of allegory, which evaded and did not meet the difficulty, partly by anticipatory rather than systematized employment of the historic method, the early Fathers dealt with these questions.¹ The Church had to some extent created the difficulty for herself; for, speaking generally, she had "taken over the Old Testament from the Jews, and, by spiritualizing it, had treated it, as many treat it still, as an earlier edition of the New."² By thus equalizing the two Testaments the Church was in imminent danger of succumbing to the assaults of Gnosticism. Yet, had the Master's method been followed, such a mistake would not have been made. Our Blessed Lord frankly recognized the rudimentary character of the Old Testament, and emphasized the imperfection of its morality as

¹ Origen's principal weapon in dealing with these points was the negative use of allegory. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Augustine, Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Ambrose, St. Basil, St. Chrysostom and others, anticipated to some extent the historic spirit in which the Old Testament is now read. The principles of educational revelation and Divine accommodation were familiar to the Fathers.

² Professor James Orr on *The Old Testament Question in the Early Church*. Expositor, series v. vol. i. p. 356.

compared with that which He had come to teach, "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, but I say unto you." "The New Testament," it has been said, "sets us the example which modern criticism has enforced—that of reading the Old Testament with discrimination, with readiness to judge the part in the light of the whole and to recognize in each fragment its true, but not more than its true, value and function in relation to the entire organism of which it forms a part."¹ As Bishop Westcott points out in his *Lessons from Work*, there are few Old Testament difficulties which cannot be met and illuminated by the historic spirit.² Without the cultivation of this spirit the Old Testament is as full of moral difficulties and stumbling-blocks to faith for us as it was for the Gnostic of the second century; by its use the progressive character of God's revelation of Himself is recognized and becomes one of the most powerful arguments for the reality of inspiration. To a very great extent the difficulties of which I speak (and which are still the stock-in-trade of the infidel press and platform) disappear before the historic spirit. And the higher criticism has done an essential service to the faith by not only evoking and training this faculty, but by insisting upon its being brought to the study of Holy Scripture. We do not now expect to find a Christian conscience and a code of Christian ethics in the days of the Judges, we are not stumbled at the *lex talionis* and imprecatory psalms. We see that God took the conscience of each age and gradually trained it to higher views of truth and duty. We recognize the fact which Origen stated, when he said that God's gift to His rational creatures was not virtue, but the capacity for virtue. It is that capacity which God, through succeeding generations drew out and educated, until, in the fulness of time, it was ready for the manifestation of God in Christ.

¹ Otley, *Some Aspects of the Old Testament*, p. 378. ² pp. 133, 134.

3. I pass to another branch of the subject. The higher critic may sometimes admit the dramatic element where we should decline to follow him. But no one in the present day would exclude that element from Holy Scripture. We should all acknowledge that, whatever foundation of fact there may be in the story of Job, yet the book, as a whole, is the creation of the inspired poet who wrote it. The same may be said of the Song of Solomon and the book of Ecclesiastes, which was written in the name of Solomon, but certainly not by Solomon himself. This being so, we need not be surprised to find the same form of composition employed to lend effect to the allegorical teaching of the book of Jonah. No one will dispute the fact that the supposed necessity of accepting the whole story of Jonah as literally true has proved a very serious stumbling-block to faith; it will not be denied that there is no part of the Bible that so naturally exposes itself to the shafts of sceptical ridicule as this narrative. That it was interpreted as literally true by the later Jewish Church can cause no surprise, since dramatic composition soon passes for history in an uncritical age,¹ but to the majority of readers in the present day I venture to think that the allegorical character of the book has been made clear; and we are deeply indebted to the modern critic for finding a key to the literary problem of this portion of the Scriptures in Jeremiah li. 34, 44, where Nebuchadrezzar, under the figure of a sea-monster (the word is the same rendered "whale" in Gen. i.), is represented as swallowing the kingdom of Judah, but forced by Jehovah to disgorge his prey, "I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up." So that in Jonah's sojourn in the whale's belly we have a striking picture of Judah carried into captivity for a season as a punishment for failing to discharge her mission to the Gentiles, while, in the prophet's

¹ *Lux Mundi*, p. 356.

dealings with Nineveh, we find a declaration of God's universal purposes of grace. The book, as Dr. Dale says, is "a statement of certain great truths in an imaginative form."¹

Thus, poetically interpreted, the book of Jonah is full of spiritual meaning—meaning all the more obviously inspired because the main purpose and aim of the book are so far above the level of contemporary thought. It is a book (once more to quote from Dr. Dale) "that no Jew would ever have written except under the teaching of the Spirit of God."²

¹ EXPOSITOR, series iv. vol. vi.

² Jonah Ben-Amittai lived *circa*. B.C. 780. It is not unlikely that the story of Jonah took its rise from some traditional incident in his career, but this is quite uncertain. The date of the Book is probably late. The Hebrew text of iii. 3 indicates that Nineveh had ceased to be a great city. The fall of Nineveh was in B.C. 606.

The argument for the literal interpretation of the story generally turns on Matt. xii. 40. To this it is replied that our Lord quoted Scripture according to its current interpretation. Moreover, we ourselves, without the slightest suspicion of bad faith, speak of the characters of our Lord's parables, *Pilgrim's Progress*, Shakespeare's plays, etc., as if they were real persons. It must further be borne in mind that by anticipating the slow development of natural knowledge and by dealing with His contemporaries on other than their own level, Christ would have violated the principle of the incarnation (see *Lux Mundi*, p. xxxiv.). It is, further, important to remember that the revelation of God in Christ was in the moral and spiritual, not in the intellectual sphere, and it is an *a priori* view of the incarnation and *kenosis* which would attribute omniscience to our Lord in the days of His humiliation. (On the *kenosis* see "The Consciousness of our Lord in His Mortal Life," Gore's *Dissertations*, p. 71 ff.).

But is it certain that our Lord did make direct reference to Jonah's sojourn in the whale's belly? It is remarkable that St. Luke omits this reference altogether in his report of the words, Luke xi. 30-32. The MS. authority for the allusion in St. Matthew is undeniable, but it is almost more conceivable that the Evangelist should have added v. 40 as an interpretative gloss on his Master's words than that it should have dropped out of the report which St. Luke used, had the words actually been spoken by Christ. It is obvious, moreover, that the preaching as recorded by St. Luke, and not the sojourn in the whale's belly, was the sign to the Ninevites (see Sanday's Bampton Lectures, p. 433; A. Wright, *St. Luke's Gospel in Greek*, p. 109; also David Smith, EXPOSITOR, October 1901).

For the interpretation of the book of Jonah on the lines advocated above, and from a thoroughly believing standpoint, see G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve*

Further, I can admit, at least as a possibility, that the hand of the dramatist has been at work in other portions of the Old Testament. I do not think that we are called upon, at this stage of the discussion, to form definite and irreversible conclusions on questions of date, authorship, composition and compilation. But believing, as I do, that the proof of Old Testament inspiration is to be sought and found in the advent of Christ, I am not going to be robbed of my faith in Him or in the Old Testament by the discussion of such matters; and even if the late date and more or less artificial character of the Chronicles and even large parts of Deuteronomy¹ should be fully established; if it should be finally proved that the spirit of the idealist prevails in these books, I can see nothing in such conclusions subversive of faith.² The dramatic spirit may conceivably find expression in Chronicles and Deuteronomy as it unquestionably does in Job and Ecclesiastes, and it would have been as natural for a Jewish writer, trained in the literary school of his own time, to put a speech into the mouth of Moses, Abijah or Solomon as into the lips of Job. The historic spirit, as Bishop Westcott reminds us, finds no difficulty in acknowledging the inspiration of writings composed in accordance with contemporary opinion on literary questions.³

4. The only other point that time will permit me to

Prophets; C. H. H. Wright, *Biblical Essays*; and Dr. Dale in the *Expositor*, July, 1902; also Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.

¹ There is no positive evidence in support of the view that the discovery of the Book of the Law in the Temple was a got-up proceeding or that there was any fraud in what was done. All the evidence is satisfied by the hypothesis that an earlier prophet, some hundred years previously, working upon an actual and possibly written tradition of Moses' last speech, had cast this tradition into the dramatic form. See *Lux Mundi*, preface to tenth edition, p. xxix.

² The Jewish idea of history was not ours, that of a record of events. History was regarded much in the light of prophecy and the historical books were reckoned among the prophets.

³ *Lessons from Work*, p. 134.

touch upon is the discrepancies of the Bible. When I read for Holy Orders I was led to suppose that the only real and impracticable discrepancies of Scripture were few in number, and that we probably needed but some slight connecting link to be supplied, or some side-light to be thrown upon the subject, to find them disappear. Attempts were at the same time made at reconciliation which appeared to me forced and unnatural in the last degree. The modern critic has delivered me from this artificial method of dealing with the Word of God by conclusively showing that the discrepancies are not few but many, and that the attempt to reconcile a large proportion of them is hopeless. But the effect of such a conclusion is surely no loss of faith in the inspiration of those books which contain the discrepancies, but, as I have already intimated, a modified view of their inspiration. We no longer demand that the inspiration of the writer shall be such as to guarantee him against every inaccuracy, but only that the inaccuracy shall not be such as to impair the general historic truth of the document in question. And if we find contradictions, discrepancies, anachronisms, confusion in Genesis, Joshua, Samuel, the Chronicles, Ezra or any other historical portion of the Old Testament, they no more disturb our faith in the inspiration of the narrative than the fact that Stephen was historically inaccurate in his speech before the Council robs us of our belief that the Holy Ghost was speaking through him.

We come to the same conclusion from a comparison of the Septuagint version with the Hebrew text, and a comparison of New Testament quotation with either. Had verbal accuracy, exactitude of interpretation and absence, not only of obscurity, but also of discrepancy, been of the essence of inspired Scripture, the Septuagint translation would not have differed as it does from the Hebrew text, nor would the New Testament writers have been permitted

to quote so indifferently, and not only indifferently but so loosely and independently, from both texts alike.¹

Time fails me to deal any further with the various elements of criticism ; but the question I would ask in conclusion is this, What is there, so far, in the accumulated results of unbiassed criticism to overthrow my faith as a Christian? Bishop Gore, in his *Bampton Lectures*, says : "From the platform of belief in Christ Old Testament inspiration is unmistakeable."² How true this is ! The light that shines in the Old Testament is one that "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And living beneath the light of the risen Sun, we plainly see that the light of the Old Testament is the light of the New Testament, and the difference (immeasurable if you like) is yet a difference only of degree.

I have admitted that, in spite of the extravagant, and I must add irrational, lengths to which some members of the critical school have gone, we owe a deep debt of gratitude to the higher critic ; and if this is not a platitude to-day, it certainly will be ten years hence. I have been speaking chiefly of the Old Testament, and I cannot but believe that the history of New Testament criticism will be repeated in that of the Old Testament. It has often been remarked that the fiery trial through which the New Testament passed more than fifty years ago has, on the whole, resulted in greatly reassuring the Christian Church as to the historical and literary foundations of her faith ; and I say this in the

¹ Thus we find that St. John changes the language of the LXX. in John i. 23, xii. 40, xix. 37.

For instances of looseness of quotation, we may examine Acts xv. 16 ff. ; Rom. ix. 27, xi. 3, 4 ; 1 Cor. xiv. 21, xv. 54 ; Gal. iv. 30. New Testament writers sometimes, probably, quoted from memory.

In Hebrews the writer usually follows the LXX., even when it differs materially from the Hebrew text ; sometimes he deserts both texts, substituting a free paraphrase or quoting from memory. See Swete's *Introduction to the LXX.*, pp. 398-402.

² p. 195. Cp. also *Lux Mundi*, p. xxxviii.

face of such criticism as, for English readers, is represented by the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, the very extravagance of which in many instances will prove its own refutation. It is, perhaps, not so often pointed out that the now antiquated criticism of which I speak has left its mark in a material change of attitude towards the study of the New Testament, viz., in a freer, less arbitrary view of inspiration, and a more open mind in regard to matters that do not touch the vitals of our faith. So I believe it will be—nay, with many of us has been—in respect of the criticism of the Old Testament. Its effect has been twofold. On the one hand, we come to the study of the Old Testament, not in a less reverent, but in a more natural spirit of inquiry; with less rigid, less *a priori*, but not less decided views of inspiration; with a mind, moreover, less easily perturbed by the unexpected and problematical, more ready to wait for further search and light. On the other hand, the general effect of criticism has been not to weaken, but strengthen our conviction in the Divine guidance under which those ancient records were produced, and to make more clear to our faith the pathway of type and promise by which God led the world into the presence of its Saviour.

At the same time, grateful as I am to the critic, I have a great idea (I hope I am not presumptuous in saying so) of keeping him in his place. It seems to me that to the critic is often conceded a position which does not really belong to him. He does not hold the key of the position. In his own sphere of scholarship and literary analysis, in questions of chronology and historical interpretation he may be supreme, but not in the sphere of evidence, and he must not be allowed to divert our mind from the really fundamental and convincing arguments for the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. Multitudes are drifting from the essentials of the Faith because they are under the mistaken impression that the higher critic has swept the foundations from

beneath their feet and made it unreasonable to believe. The inevitable effect of exaggerating objections is to minimize and depreciate proofs, and there is a real danger of becoming so preoccupied and engrossed with more or less superficial difficulties, whether raised by criticism or otherwise, as to lose hold of the great outstanding evidences, which make it easier to believe than disbelieve the Christian revelation.¹

The certainty we feel in regard to our faith is through the convergence of many lines of evidence, some appealing to the mind, some to the spirit, the majority of them to mind and spirit alike, but forming, in the aggregate, a mass of cumulative evidence on which we rest secure. Now, if we should tabulate the main proofs to which, as Christians, we appeal, we might be almost surprised to find how little they are affected by the higher criticism, always excepting that purely destructive form of criticism which denies the supernatural. In perfect independence of the higher critic (whatever he may have to say as to the details of the subject) I can point to the history of the Jewish nation from its call in Abraham to the present day;² I can see—nay, I can watch—as I read the pages of ancient history, God's providential preparation for His Christ outside the limits of the chosen people;³ I can trace the pathway of promise in the Old Testament, and claim the evidence of prophecy; I carry on the argument of fulfilled prophecy

¹ On the importance of keeping the question of inspiration distinct from that of criticism, see an admirable passage in Illingworth's *Personality, Human and Divine*, pp. 181-5.

² "A sceptical prince once asked his chaplain to give him some clear evidence of the truth of Christianity, but to do so in a few words, because a king had not much time to spare for such matters. The chaplain tersely replied, 'The Jews, Your Majesty.'"—Liddon's *Bampton Lectures*, p. 97, 4th edition.

³ Much has been written—and forcibly written—on this subject. I should like to draw attention to the masterly essay in *Lux Mundi*, by the present Bishop of Rochester, on the Preparation in History for Christ. Printed as a pamphlet, this essay would be a most powerful "aid to faith" amongst the educated.

into the New Testament, and no critic will persuade me that the words of Christ and His Apostles have had no fulfilment in the history of the Christian dispensation.¹ Taking the Bible as a whole, and comparing it with the sacred writings of other religions, it is to me impossible to conceive of a purely human authorship. Disregarding anything and everything that the most revolutionary criticism may say, I can appeal to the greatest of all Christian evidences, viz., the unique and transcendental Personality of Jesus Christ, the Catholicity, as it is well called, of His Manhood and (to the spiritual instinct) the self-attesting union of the Divine and human in His person. I can fall back, as we all of us do again and again, upon the amply attested fact of His resurrection, that great miracle of power, carrying with it the credibility of other miracles.² From the Resurrection my thoughts pass to the conversion and career of St. Paul, and that career³ summons to my mind the rapid spread of the Christian faith to every part of the known world. I recall the moral triumphs of Christianity, and how, more and more, as time went on, Christ was recognized as a universal conscience. Finally, I make my appeal to Christian experience; that is to say, I look into my own heart and the heart of the world and acknowledge Christ's marvellous power, His all-sufficiency to meet that spiritual need of man, which is essentially the same

¹ "The Gospels are full of prophecy."—Illingworth's *Divine Immanence*, p. 91. The author proceeds to show that nineteen centuries of fulfilled prophecy may well appeal to us, as signs and wonders appealed to our Lord's contemporaries. While every century, to some extent, lessens the evidential value of the miracles, every century increases the value of the prophecy.

² This is not to say that the higher criticism does not attack, and has nothing forcible to say against the Gospel account of the Resurrection; but the narrative rises superior to the criticism directed against it, and is supported by a chain of evidence which has borne the strain of nineteen centuries.

³ I would especially refer to Professor Ramsay's treatment of St. Paul in *The Church in the Roman Empire*, and *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, as very helpful. Ballard, in his *Miracles of Unbelief*, writes forcibly upon this subject, p. 177 ff.

from age to age. And where does the higher criticism stay my thoughts? how does it give the lie to the great arguments and proofs on which I rest? I had them before I even knew what "higher criticism" meant. I have them now that I know what the higher critic has to say. Whatever he may do with details, he does not touch my faith in Christ. Sometimes, in facing the questions raised by criticism, as in facing the questions of philosophy, or of one's own mind, one may be baffled and perplexed; but surely the very perplexity works out God's purpose in throwing us back on Christ Himself, and we say, to quote the words of the old hymn in a somewhat different sense from that intended by the writer:

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in Thee I find."

G. S. STREATFEILD.

THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR.

THE twofold description of Jesus which occurs at the close of the book of Revelation (xxii. 16) is probably Messianic in both of its features:

*I am the scion and the offspring of David,
The bright star of the morning.*

The first part of the former title has been already used by the prophet in another connexion (v. 5). An Isaianic reminiscence and category, it denotes the legitimacy of Christ's position as the true Messiah—an anti-Jewish idea which underlies all the book. Jesus is the real Messiah, the authentic heir of Israel's hopes and history. His own people know this now, and the Jews will know it to their shame and sorrow at the end (i. 7). The Davidic descent of Jesus from the tribe of Judah was a tenet to which certain Christian circles in the first century attached keen importance, and the prophet John twice reproduces it in his