

On the various counts of the indictment at Capetown something has been said already.¹ A few remarks may bring out more clearly the results which might be expected to follow from such charges if preferred against a clergyman in this country. For the whole of them, as urged against the Bishop of Natal, Archbishop Longley's reference to the Twenty-sixth Article was altogether inapplicable. He had not been rightly tried, and he had not by just judgement been deposed. When we come to particulars, we find, on the first head, that the Bishop of Natal's patent says nothing of the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan over himself, and that it is doubtful whether the English Metropolitans have jurisdiction over their suffragans. On the second head, it is certain that the references made from time to time by the Bishop of Natal to the opinion and advice of Bishop Gray involved no pledge of submission, if need be, to be tried and deposed by him. On the third head, we find that the principles by which the English ecclesiastical courts are guided differ indefinitely and most widely from those by which Bishop Gray claimed to pass judgement. On the fourth head, which related to Holy Scripture, Bishop Gray and his advisers made assumptions which must end in the conviction of every one brought before his tribunal, but which the judge of the Arches Court had emphatically repudiated.² According to Bishop Gray, the Church of England "holds what the Church has always held," and this common faith commits her to the decisions of Councils for the first thousand years of the history of Christendom, "silence upon any particular point of faith, or upon any great question of religion [being] no reason for supposing that the Church of England was indifferent to that portion of the faith." Of the soundness of this argument Bishop Gray asserted with haughty assurance that he had no doubt. In the Gorham judgement it had been "*established*

¹ See p. 280 *et seq.*

² See p. 325.

that all theological doctrines not determined by the Articles or formularies are open questions." On the one side we have the Bishop of Capetown's dreams, dreams which have inspired the ecclesiastical zealots of all ages : on the other we have the sober utterances of the Supreme Court of Appeal for the Church of England. The Gorham judgement scatters to the winds by anticipation the truculent theories of Bishop Gray.

"If the case be, as undoubtedly it is, that in the Church of England many points of theological doctrine have not been decided, then the first and great question which arises in such cases as the present is, whether the disputed point is, or was meant to be, settled at all, or whether it is left open for each member of the Church to decide for himself according to his own conscientious opinion. If there be any doctrine on which the Articles are silent or ambiguously expressed, so as to be capable of two meanings, we must suppose that it was intended to leave that doctrine to private judgement, unless the rubrics and formularies distinctly decide it. If they do, we must conclude that the doctrine so decided is the doctrine of the Church. But, on the other hand, if the expressions used in the rubric and formularies are ambiguous, it is not to be concluded that the Church meant to establish indirectly as a doctrine that which it did not establish directly as such by the Articles of Faith—the code avowedly made for the avoiding of diversities of opinion and for the establishing of consent touching true religion."

In other words, we have on the one side a clearly-defined principle ; on the other, we have a grim apparatus for the fabrication of arbitrary and constructive treasons.

The fifth head of Bishop Gray's "judgement" was a plain defiance of the judge of the Court of Arches. Dr. Lushington had ruled that the declaration of belief in the Holy Scriptures made by candidates for ordination must be interpreted as meaning that the Scriptures contained everything necessary

to salvation, and that to that extent they have the direct sanction of the Almighty.¹ In this decision Bishop Gray flatly refused to "concur." "It is a wrong," he said, "to the Church thus to limit the meaning and diminish the force of its plain language." It was, in short, a wrong and a hardship to himself to be thus interfered with in the exercise of an instrument admirably adapted for the conviction of every accused person; but it was no wrong and no hardship to the Bishop of Natal to be arraigned and condemned in Southern Africa on charges which could not even be entertained in England. Incumbents in this country were perfectly free to use language which was to be regarded at Capetown as justifying his deposition, and his excommunication for not yielding obedience to that sentence; and yet this was no denial of justice to the accused.

Under the sixth head Bishop Gray objected to the Gorham judgement as taking an inadequate view of the Sacrament of Baptism, and he therefore condemned the Bishop of Natal for holding the same inadequate view. Under the seventh he admitted that the passage impugned on the subject of the Atonement

"was not so at variance with [the doctrine] of the Church as to call for any condemnation, did it stand alone. There are, however, other passages in his work besides those complained of which show that he uses the words 'atonement,' 'redemption,' 'sacrifice,' 'satisfaction,' 'propitiation,'—which are, so to speak, ecclesiastical and historical words—in a sense of his own, that he does not mean what the Church intends by them. . . . I must consider the charge as proved,"—

that is, he condemns, while he confesses that the passages arraigned do not furnish materials for condemnation. It is an amazing thing; but "ecclesiastical words" are ready to

¹ See p. 323.

hand, and the sense in which he interprets those words supplies a safe and easy path to the sentence. The ruling of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council that "the accuser is, for the purpose of the charge, confined to the passages which are included and set out in the articles as the matter of the accusation," was for him not worth consideration.

Such are the main grounds on which Bishop Gray claimed the right to try, and, on condemnation, to depose, Bishop Colenso, and it was with regard to such grounds as these that Archbishop Longley stood committed to the belief that they would be sufficient for the deprivation of an English beneficed clergyman. Whatever his belief might be, the statement was false. It is quite certain that they could not be applied in this country. It is equally certain that if they could be applied they would, in Dean Stanley's words,

"exclude every one possessed of a moderate knowledge of Biblical criticism, or even of intelligence enough to disbelieve the universal deluge; and equally would they exclude every party in the Church but that in whose name Bishop Gray tries to lord it over the South African dioceses, assuming on all occasions that mere Church membership is a sufficient recognition of its principles, though both common notoriety, and the opposition which he has himself encountered from far other quarters than the Bishop of Natal and his friends, must have made him as well aware as any man that that party numbers no majority of the clergy, and but an insignificant proportion of the laity, of this great Church and nation."

Twelve years later, 1880, the old allegations of Bishop Gray, repeated often, and as often refuted, were brought forward once more by his successor, Bishop Jones, who did what he could to fasten again a moral stigma on the Bishop of Natal in the following words:—

“There is such a thing as a moral obligation which no human law can enforce, but which is paramount *in foro conscientiæ*. And surely there is a moral obligation on a Bishop who has recognised his Metropolitan as his judge by accepting his letters patent, and who has, at the most solemn moment of his life, bound himself by a solemn oath to render due obedience to his Metropolitan, to obey the sentence which, even though not binding in civil law, that Metropolitan in his court, with the consent of the Bishops of his Province has pronounced against him, and which the Synod of the Bishops of the Province at the same time has solemnly accepted.”

This charge has been proved to be absolutely without foundation, and it would be mere waste of time to go over ground already traversed with care. The language of Bishop Cotterill has shown that the opposition to the ecclesiastical theories of Bishop Gray was not confined to the Bishop of Natal; and Bishop Jones deserves no further reply than that he has misinterpreted declarations set forth in the plainest language. It is true that, by the letters patent granted to him, Bishop Colenso was to be

“subject and subordinate to the see of Capetown and to the Bishop thereof;”

but it was declared that he should be subject only

“in the same manner as any Bishop of any see within the Province of Canterbury is under the authority of the Archiepiscopal see of that Province and the Archbishop of the same;”

and it has certainly never been maintained that the Archbishop of Canterbury can try, sentence, and depose his suffragans without appeal; and from the Primate appeal can lie only to the Crown. But it is not less true that by the letters patent of Dr. Gray the Sovereign declared that the Bishop of Capetown

“shall be subject and subordinate to the Metropolitan see of Canterbury and to the Archbishops thereof, and in the same manner as any Bishop of any see within the Province of Canterbury is under the same Metropolitan see and the Archbishops thereof;”

and it cannot be pretended that the former could be tried, condemned, and deprived by the latter without appeal, and this appeal must of necessity be to the Crown. By the so-called judgement at Capetown, Bishop Gray assumed to deprive Bishop Colenso of a right to the loss of which it cannot for a moment be supposed that he would himself have submitted, had he been arraigned before the tribunal of the Primate. According to the second patent granted to Bishop Gray, it is stated that he is to be

“*subject* to the general superintendence and revision of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and *subordinate* to the Archiepiscopal see of the Province of Canterbury.”

These words settle absolutely the relations between the Bishop of Capetown and his suffragans, and between these and the English Primate. These relations involve the right of appeal to the Crown; and this right cannot be taken away, or these relations affected, by the clause in Bishop's Gray's second patent which authorised him

“to exercise Metropolitan jurisdiction over the Bishops of Grahamstown and Natal, and all the clergy in their dioceses.”

This authorisation, whatever it be, must be taken as involving nothing antagonistic to the former; and the question is therefore settled without going into further controversy with reference to this patent. This question has been sufficiently examined by Bishop Cotterill in the letters already cited; but when all doubt on the subject has been removed by

these general considerations, it becomes pertinent to lay stress on the fact that Bishop Gray's second patent, dated December 8, 1853, was not issued till a fortnight after those issued to the Bishops of Grahamstown and Natal, dated November 23, 1853.

"Such a clause," the Bishop of Natal remarks, in his reply to Bishop Jones, in 1880, "would not legally override my older patent; nor would it bind me in any sense morally, unless I had been informed of its existence before accepting my own patent. In point of fact, I was not aware of it until I saw the Capetown patent in the report of the proceedings of the first Synod of Capetown, published in 1857. Nor was it likely that I should have known anything about it, since on November 15, 1858, Bishop Cotterill wrote to me: 'It shows how loosely these matters are managed, that both the Archbishop and the Government (I mean officials at the Colonial Office) knew nothing about that formidable visitation clause, until I drew their attention to it.'"¹

What Bishop Cotterill thought at that time of this claim to jurisdiction has been sufficiently shown in his own words. The fact that he took different ground later on may not be to his credit; but it does not lessen the force of his earlier reasoning. To this reasoning there is obviously no answer; and he himself never ventured to make any. He had then declared his conviction that

"in the matter of judgement on a suffragan Bishop, the letters patent are directly opposed to the principles of Church law."

If then, the Bishop of Natal asks, Bishop Cotterill could express these convictions, although

"he had received his letters patent with full knowledge of the contents of Bishop Gray's," "what right has Bishop

¹ See p 338.

Jones to charge me—who had no such knowledge—with an act of gross immorality and the violation of a solemn oath ?”

The idea of a consensual jurisdiction could not be maintained in this case for a moment. The Privy Council, in Bishop Colenso's words,

“took their stand on the principle that a public functionary, appointed by Royal letters patent, cannot by his own private act so modify the conditions of his office as to subject himself to deprivation in a way not pointed out by the law, since others are interested, as well as himself, in holding his office according to law, and not allowing the law to be overridden by ecclesiastical phrases or arguments, as the clergy and laity of the Church of England in other parts of South Africa, but especially in Natal, are interested in the maintenance of my position against the arbitrary action of Capetown.”

But Bishop Jones insisted that he had a further moral hold on the Bishop of Natal.

“Bishop Colenso's contention,” he says, “as to the illegality of which he would have been guilty had he obeyed a sentence which the Metropolitan Court (through an undue reliance on the authority bestowed by letters patent) had assumed to pass, but which it had no power to enforce, is tantamount to his saying that when the law says that a sentence has no legal force, it forbids a man to obey it; that even what is binding on a man's conscience, so long as a court of law refuses to allow its enforcement, it is wrong and illegal to do. He might as well say that should the law refuse to support a father in requiring obedience from his son, it would be illegal for the son to keep the fifth commandment.”

“I have shown,” the Bishop of Natal replies, “that it was not ‘binding on my conscience’ according to my own view of my duty, confirmed by the decision of the Privy Council—

not to speak of Bishop Cotterill's opinion—to appear before the illegal court of the Metropolitan, or obey its illegal judgement, though approved by Bishops Cotterill and Twells. The appeal of Bishop Jones to the fifth commandment is a mere fallacy, since he tacitly assumes that the command in question was one which the son was 'bound in conscience' to obey, whereas a son would be perfectly justified in disobeying a father who commanded him to do what was wrong, either morally or legally, and which therefore the father had no right to command—*e.g.* to betray a trust confided to him for the sake of others—nor in the eyes of sensible men would he appear to have broken the fifth commandment by such disobedience.

“But Bishop Jones has taken no notice of the fact that I wrote in my letter, ‘it would be illegal for me or *for any other loyal subject, e.g.* Bishop Jones and others, to recognise Bishop Gray's sentence of deprivation as having any force, which has been pronounced by the highest authority to be null and void in law.”

CHAPTER IX.

BISHOP HAROLD BROWNE AND THE ANTAGONISTS OF THE BISHOP OF NATAL.

THE publication of Bishop Colenso's criticisms on the Pentateuch was for many reasons an important event,—important, not more, it may be, for the conclusions reached by the inquiry than in its relation to the religious and the general thought of the land. The way in which these criticisms were received by that which is commonly spoken of as the religious world was still more remarkable. The object of the investigation was simply the discovery and the establishment of the truth ; and it was obvious to all impartial minds that the result must affect the value put upon certain books, either by adding to that value or by lessening it. The volumes thus submitted to examination were some of the sacred books of Christendom ; and the sacred books of Christendom were, admittedly, only a part of the sacred books of the world. But there was this vast difference between them, at least in the eyes of Christians generally, that all those other books were wrong—wrong in history, wrong in philosophy, wrong in the statement of facts, wrong in the conception of spiritual realities. In all these respects the Christian books were right, absolutely right ; and the great task of Christendom was to convince the world of the error of the rest.

This work, it was clear, could not be accomplished without a firm conviction on the part of the assailants that their own position was impregnable ; but it was an indispensable condition to their success that the task should not be confined to assertion. If it should be so confined, nothing could be looked for but an infinite series of wranglings. The mere assurance of Christians would be met by equal assurance on the part of the adherents of Zoroaster, of Buddha, or of Mahomet. The worship paid by the Rabbinical schools to the letter of the Hebrew Scriptures was equalled, if not surpassed, by the reverence shown by the Hindu for the text of the Rig Veda. Each had his sacred history, his sacred law, his sacred psalms, hymns, and prayers ; nor could the Christian hope to sweep all this aside, if he chose to challenge them on the authority of other sacred books, except by showing that these books were in every respect superior to all others. If they really were so, they could be submitted fearlessly to the most searching scrutiny ; and the examination could be carried on without excitement and without passion, the results being left to take care of themselves. To say that the value of the Christian sacred books must in no case be affected would be a begging of the whole question. In the general opinion of Christendom all the series of sacred books were wrong but one. It was at least conceivable that this one series might be found to be no exception. It was further conceivable that the progress of the Divine work in the Church and in the world might render necessary a complete change in the estimate put on all sacred books and in the methods to be applied to them ; and it was, at least, possible that the idea of an external infallible authority in books or in Churches must give way to something higher and better.

But in any case, if the veracity or accuracy of a book should be assailed, its correctness could be maintained only by showing the untenableness of the specific charge, and not

by shifting the question to any side issue. If it should be said that the genealogies of the Book of Genesis are self-contradictory, that the book speaks of Methuselah as dying before the flood and after it, that it gives an impossible chronology for the family of Abraham and of Jacob, these charges could only be met by showing that on these points, and not on some others, there was no mistake. Either let this be shown in every instance, or let the admission be candidly made that the Hebrew or other Scriptures had been regarded in a wrong light, and made to answer purposes for which they had never been designed. There had seldom been a question which called for greater clearness of thought and precision of language in those who should undertake to deal with it; but the putting of the question evoked, in fact, a very Saturnalia of untruthfulness. Writer after writer committed himself at starting to conclusions of which he had never attempted to foresee the consequences. There was constant shifting of ground, constant shuffling, equivocation, and evasion; and these disingenuous methods were employed by many who had won, and won deservedly, a high reputation, not only for their learning, but—in a far higher degree—for the integrity of their lives, for their earnestness, and their zeal. They had done, and they continued to do, good work; and it might be thought that there is no justification for expressing a disparaging opinion of any of them personally. Judgement must be left to the Divine Judge; but we are bound to point out and to denounce methods which involve the least disingenuousness, if our own sense of truthfulness is not to be tampered with and impaired.

Before he published the First Part of his work on the Pentateuch, the Bishop of Natal had written (without forwarding it) a letter to Dr. Harold Browne, then Norrisian Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. At the time when he thought of consulting his friend, he could little have

anticipated the mode which some two years later that friend would feel himself called upon to adopt in answering him. The employment of this mode involved a great wrong to the Bishop of Natal, and this wrong has never been repaired. In mere justice to him, the history of this controversy must be given; but its real nature cannot be shown except by reference to some other historical controversies, somewhat earlier in the century, which throw a full light on the questions raised about the historical value of the Pentateuch.

We must suppose, then, that a writer is examining the history or the so-called history of the invasion of Greece by Xerxes. Taking the several portions of the narrative in succession, and submitting them to those tests to which narratives of facts in our daily life must be submitted, he comes clearly and definitely to the conclusion that a great, perhaps even the greater, part of the story is not to be depended upon; that the accounts given of the causes which led to the war are clearly fictitious; that the whole tale of Demokédés is full of inconsistencies and contradictions; that the debates which are said to have preceded the march of Xerxes are mere fictions; that the account of the march is highly embellished, and that the whole Hellenic land could not have supported the invading army for a week; that even the most notable incidents are full of suspicious circumstances; that not a detail in the records of the battles of Marathon or Salamis, or even Plataia, can be relied on; that the beautiful history of Leonidas contains much more of fiction than of fact. We must suppose, further, that this writer, after making so much havoc of the traditional narrative, distinctly avows his belief, and positively maintains, that Xerxes did invade Europe with a large force, that he made strenuous efforts to enslave a free people, and that he was beaten back; and, further, that these facts were of the utmost

importance for the future history of mankind ; that the victory of the Persians would have retarded for hundreds, if not for thousands, of years, the development of European civilisation ; that the victory of the Greeks attested the profound sagacity of Themistokles, and bore fruit in the freedom and splendour of Periklean Athens.

It is obvious that anyone who proposed to answer such a writer might fairly say, if he so thought, that he was absurdly incredulous, and that he had made an extravagant use of the pruning knife. His only duty would be to show this, as well as to assert it. But what would any impartial critics say if the reply took the following form ?

“ I have carefully examined the writings of Herodotus, and in my opinion everything tends to prove that his history must in its main facts be true. The Persians beyond question marched out of their own country, passed through Asia Minor, invaded Western Hellas, and were beaten back by the Athenians and their allies. The latter must have been in a far higher state of discipline, and influenced by far higher motives than their enemies, or such a victory would have been impossible. This is exactly what the history of Herodotus says, and what this writer denies.”

There is not, it may safely be said, a man with a particle of honest feeling, who would not at once answer that the critic had given utterance to a tissue of false statements, which, if he had read the book before him, he must have known to be false, and the uttering of which, without reading the book, aggravates the offence ; and that the critic was bound to make an unqualified apology not only to the writer whom he had slandered, but to the public whom he had led to believe the slander.

But here the terms must be changed. The history of the Jewish conquest of Canaan in many remarkable points closely

resembles that of Herodotus. Like the latter, it describes an invasion, and exhibits a striking picture of the effects of political and moral foresight. We will suppose that the narrative of this Hebrew conquest has been very patiently and closely analysed by a writer who comes to the conclusion that very much of the tale is unhistorical ; that the conferences with Pharaoh could not have taken place as they are related ; that the numbers throughout are exaggerated ; that the story of the invasion of Midian is as contradictory as that of the attack of the Persians on Delphi ; that the elaborate "Mosaic" legislation is as much the composition of a later age as is the legislation of Servius Tullius at Rome ; that the long speeches put into the mouth of Moses are to be classed with the long speeches put into the mouths of the counsellors of Xerxes ; that the story of the exploits of Joshua is deserving of about as much credit as the story of the exploits of Leonidas ; and that the account given of the political career of Moses is at least as inconsistent as the account given of the political career of Themistokles. But this writer, while thus pulling to pieces the traditional narrative, has, we will suppose, taken special care to record his conviction that the people had sojourned in Egypt ; that they did pass through the wilderness ; that they invaded Canaan and established themselves in the conquered territory after partially subduing the inhabitants ; and that these facts are of the greatest moment in the history of mankind, as opening the way to that higher faith and deeper conviction of the Unity and Righteousness of God which it was the mission of the teachers of the Hebrew people to exhibit to the world.

It is clear that against such a writer also an opponent might fairly, (provided that he alleged the proof for it), bring a charge of over-much incredulity or over-minute analysis, or too great a severity in applying the ordinary tests of evidence to a narrative of events which took place in very remote ages.

But what would the impression be, if the critic, after asserting that he had with the greatest care examined this history and read his opponent's works, were to say :—

“ Everything tends to prove that the history of the Pentateuch must be in its main facts true. The people without question came out of Egypt, sojourned in the wilderness, conquered Canaan, and must have been both numerous and well-trained, or such a conquest would have been impossible. This is exactly what the Pentateuch says, and what [this writer] denies.”

The verdict of every honest man must be in this case precisely that which it would be in the case which I have previously supposed. Is the offence lessened because the writer criticised is not the incredulous Mr. Grote, or the more incredulous Sir Cornwall Lewis, but a clergyman? and is our honest judgement to be suppressed because the critic has a high repute as a scholar and as being in general a fair and moderate controversialist,—because, in short, the writer criticised is the Bishop of Natal, and the critic is Dr. Harold Browne, now Bishop of Winchester?

The question concerns not so much the personal character of Bishop Browne as the strength of theological prepossessions and prejudices; and it must be said plainly that, if one who should ascribe to Mr. Grote a denial of the fact of the Persian invasion would owe him the best reparation in his power, the same reparation was due to the Bishop of Natal for charging him with a denial of the fact of the Jewish invasion and of its success, the reality of which he distinctly and positively affirmed. The refusal or failure to make this reparation leaves on the critic the responsibility of a man who should accuse Thierry or Lappenberg of denying the fact of the Norman invasion of England. In the interests, not of individuals, but of the nation, the matter is very

serious. The abuse of criticism in questions which affect the traditional or popular belief has become so gross, it appears so completely to blind the eyes and pervert the nature of men who in other things show themselves upright and generous, that it can no longer be borne with. Is our faith in the honesty and truthfulness of Englishmen to be shaken altogether? Are we really to be brought not to the hasty thought, but to the deliberate and fixed belief, that the moment' they think their shibboleths (whether religious or political) endangered, all men become liars?

To the demand for retraction made through the columns of the *Examiner*, August 26, 1865, Dr. Browne, then Bishop of Ely, returned the following answer:—

“Your correspondent and Bishop Colenso charge me with wanton misrepresentation, when, after having proved that the Israelites had dwelt long in Egypt, had gone out of Egypt in large multitudes, had sojourned for a great length of time in the Sinaitic wilderness, and had then poured in vast hordes upon the plains of Canaan and so conquered the country, I add, ‘This is exactly what the Pentateuch says and what Bishop Colenso denies.’¹ Now really, if I have failed at all, it has been in the summing up of my own conclusions, which I did not wish to press too far; and so, perhaps, those conclusions do not seem so very much beyond Bishop Colenso’s admissions as they would have done if more clearly and forcibly put. This may be formally and in the letter unfair to Bishop Colenso: but it is not so in spirit and reality. . . . My object in the argument referred to was to show that the history of the Pentateuch was most strongly confirmed by indubitable facts in those very points on which Bishop Colenso most strongly attacked it; that facts, which could not be gainsaid, proved a long residence in Egypt, proved a long sojourn in the wilderness, proved especially that the num-

¹ *The Pentateuch and Elohistic Psalms*, 1864.

bers which went out of Egypt and dwelt in the wilderness must have been enormous, and that the conquest of Canaan could, humanly speaking, only have been effected by the invasion of masses or hordes of an almost countless multitude. . . . Such being the real conclusion at which I arrived, I surely do Bishop Colenso no wrong if I say that this is what the Pentateuch says, and what Bishop Colenso has written on purpose to disprove."

A comparison of these words with the sentences previously cited (the words *this writer* only being substituted for *Bishop Colenso*) displays a most material shifting of ground. How, it might be asked, was any one to know that, when Bishop Browne said that "the people came out of Egypt," he meant that they came out after dwelling there "a long time"? When he said that "they sojourned in the wilderness," who was to know that here also "a long time" was to be supplied? When he added that "they must have been both numerous and well-trained," who was to imagine that they were to be numbered by thousands of myriads, and again that these well-trained warriors were mere masses and hordes? To make the point more clear, we are driven back to the records of the Persian invasion of Europe. To his supposed critic Mr. Grote might reply:—

"It is most unfair, it is most false, to say that I deny the march of the Persians through Western Asia and their defeat by the Athenians and their allies. You cannot say that this is what the history of Herodotus affirms and what I deny, because I do not deny this any more than you deny it yourself."

But what would be Mr. Grote's astonishment if his critic were to reply:—

"My object was to assert that facts which could not be questioned proved that the march of the Persians extended over years, that thousands of ships were arrayed against

each other on either side, and more especially that the number of the invading force must have been enormous—in fact an almost countless multitude.”

But how would it be if the historian were to urge further :—

“And even now I cannot make out your meaning, or what you believe or do not believe about the matter. You tell me now that the history of Herodotus especially proves the enormous, nay, the countless, numbers of the Persians ; but a little while ago you told me that you were quite perplexed and could not tell what to do with them, and that the substitution of hundreds for myriads would remove most of the difficulties, while yet again you said that the smaller number would be just as puzzling as the larger. What am I to infer from all this but that our notions of truthfulness cannot agree together ?”

Yet this was precisely the position in which the Bishop of Ely placed himself by his letter in the *Examiner*. In that letter he said that the Pentateuch “proved especially the enormous, almost countless, numbers” of the invading Israelites ; and he forced on his readers the question whether he himself really believed this,

(1) Because he had said in his volume on *The Pentateuch and the Elohistie Psalms*,

“It would be rash to deny that the numbers of the Exodus are inordinately great, and proportionately puzzling.”

He added, it is true, that the story is professedly miraculous, and said that it is very unreasonable,

“in the consideration, to keep out of sight miracle altogether.”

But in his letter he said that

“the conquest of Canaan could, humanly speaking, only have been effected by the invasion of masses or hordes of an almost countless multitude.”

(2) Because in his book he had asserted, when "puzzled" to know what to do with these multitudes,

"if for 600 (thousand men fit to bear arms) we might read 60, all would be clear; every numerical difficulty worth thinking of would vanish at once."

In other words, that the numbers are "inordinately great and proportionately puzzling," whereas in his letter he said that the work of conquest could not have been done without almost countless numbers, and that, therefore, the numbers are not exaggerated at all.

(3) Because in the very same page of his book in which he made the preceding statement he said :—

"Sixty thousand would, perhaps, be as much too small, as six hundred thousand seems too large, a number. On the whole, notwithstanding the *admitted* difficulty of the large numbers, it is very questionable whether the difficulties would not be greater on the supposition that the numbers were much less"—

whereas in his letter he urged that

"the insuperable difficulty would lie in the supposition that the numbers fell short of an almost countless multitude,"

and that, therefore, there is *no admitted* difficulty in the larger number.

It is, indeed, pitiable to find such a man as Bishop Browne struggling vainly in the nets of inextricable contradictions. He wishes to uphold the credit of the Pentateuch; he can do so only by saying or implying that its statements cannot be trusted. He will give up as unhistorical and impossible the alleged fact that seventy souls could in four generations grow into six hundred thousand armed men. The difficulty, he holds, lies in the paucity of generations, there being four

only from Levi to Moses. The generations in the family of Levi were, he thinks, "abnormally few," and he insists that

"eight or nine is the more probable number for the generality of the descendants of Jacob."

But even if we grant that there were eight or nine, or that there were ten, this would not expand a troop of seventy persons into a nation of more than two millions. The positive promise is, however, given in Genesis xv. 16, that "in the fourth generation they" (the Israelites generally) "shall come hither again"; and this solemn declaration Bishop Browne summarily sets aside. But, as the Bishop of Natal remarks,¹

"the 'abnormally few' generations are *not* confined to the family of Moses and Aaron. They occur in every instance which is recorded in the Pentateuch or, with one exception, anywhere else in the Bible."

The exception is the genealogy of Joshua, as given by the chronicler in a book full of errors, written two centuries after the captivity, and a thousand years after the commonly received date of the Exodus. Bishop Browne's rejection of these alleged facts is a plain admission that the "*Scriptural* account, as it stands, is incredible."

Nor is this the only straw at which he catches. He clings to Abraham's retinue of three hundred and eighteen followers, and holds that the family of Jacob must in their descent to Egypt have been accompanied by a corresponding number of shepherds and herdsmen. But of this the narrative of Genesis gives not the slightest indication, and Jacob himself, on his return from Padan-Aram, says, "I am few in numbers." But if he had this retinue, why did he send his darling Joseph *alone* to look for his brethren? How is it that the ten sons went unaccompanied to buy food from Egypt? The whole

¹ *Pentateuch*, Part V. p. xiv.

story shows that they had no attendants, and how would their *ten ass-loads* of corn have supplied food for these hundreds of shepherds and herdsmen for a whole year, as well as for their own family of seventy persons? ¹ But he has yet another resource remaining. The numbers as they now appear are large. The difficulties are not removed by striking off a cipher and reducing six hundred thousand warriors to sixty thousand ; but the text of Moses may have been affected by the carelessness or blundering of copyists. It may have gone through some such changes as happened to the poems of Homer, collected by one and re-edited by another, and the "slight corruptions" so introduced "might have affected most probably and easily the numbers in the Pentateuch." This is, indeed opening the flood-gates of speculation. The so-called Homeric poems are an accretion of songs or lays which grew up through a long series of years, and the story contained in them is inconsistent or impossible from beginning to end. But here again Bishop Browne cannot escape from the morass. He shows that he is very well aware that the numbers in Exodus are not corrupted.

"I must freely confess," he says, "this solution of the problem 'by the reduction of the numbers' is not so simple or satisfactory as it sounds at first. The number 600,000 does not stand alone. In the first two chapters of Numbers we have all the constituents of that number. Twice over the number of fighting men in each tribe is mentioned, and the second time they are arranged in four camps . . . the number in each camp is given, and in both cases the sum is 603,550 fighting men above twenty years of age. All the way through the history the numbers, more or less, correspond, by what is not the simple recurrence of *the* figure, which might have suffered equally in every place from error of transcription."

So far then as the numbers are concerned, we know that the

¹ *Pentateuch*, Part V. p. xv.

text is not corrupt, that they are checked, and counter-checked in so many cases that there is no pretence for any such hypothesis.

What right then had Bishop Browne to talk of corruptions such as these in the text, and then to speak of these corruptions as "slight," when in truth they would be of the most serious kind? What right had he to assert that

"without miraculous intervention the numbers in the writings of Moses were a thousand-fold more liable to have become corrupted than those in the writings of the great Greek historians"?

What right had he to assert this, when he had himself already given the strongest possible reasons for saying that they were not corrupt, and when he must, or ought to, have known that the numbers in the Greek historians have also not been corrupted? He is speaking of corruptions caused by the fault of transcribers, and in this sense the numbers in Herodotus, for instance, are not corrupt. They are impossible numbers, it is true, but they are the numbers which Herodotus himself wrote down. These also have been checked and counter-checked, and the sums total correspond. Critics may have rejected both these totals and their constituents; but no one supposes that they have been falsified since first Herodotus set them down. Bishop Browne further takes comfort from the thought

"that much greater difficulties than inaccuracy in numerals would not invalidate the general truth of the Persian history of Herodotus or the Athenian history of Thucydides, or the retreat of the 10,000 related by Xenophon."

But the numerals in these histories are *not* inaccurate, in the sense that they have been tampered with by later transcribers. Wrong they may be; but if they are, they were so written by

Thucydides or Herodotus or Xenophon. The cases moreover, as the Bishop of Natal remarks, are not parallel.

“What credit,” he asks, “should we give to the details of Xenophon’s narrative if, starting with 10,000, he had gone on to describe his doings as those of a general of a million of men, sending 50,000 here and there, losing tens of thousands by plagues and other accidents, and besides all this deliberately and systematically falsifying the numbers of his troops throughout, even when professing to give the exact results of the different marshallings, which he himself had superintended?”

But Bishop Browne was well aware also that difficulties even more formidable than any connected with the numbers of the Israelites at the time of the Exodus were involved in the characteristics of the Elohist and Jehovistic portions of the Pentateuch. The Bishop of Natal brought out the evidence of actual facts as furnished by the narratives: the Bishop of Ely sought only to give some “probable” explanation of these narratives. His first hypothesis was that Moses would write first only a very brief sketch of the previous history from the Creation onwards, reserving a fuller account for the closing years of his life. If so, he would be likely in the earlier tale to use the word Elohim, and would defer the *constant* use of Jehovah till his people had become more thoroughly familiar with it. In the more recent portions of his books, the portions interpolated in the older parts and the portions added at the end of them, he would introduce the more sacred and now long known name of the Almighty.

Bishop Colenso remarks here that Bishop Browne has overlooked a point fatal to his theory—viz. that certain sections in which the name Elohim is used exclusively, are almost identical in style with the Jehovistic, yet are entirely distinct from the old Elohist narrative, which forms the basis of the Pentateuch.¹

¹ *On the Pentateuch*, Part V. p. xxvi.

The Bishop of Ely's second hypothesis is that, writing at two different periods of his life, Moses would naturally use different sets of documents. For the earlier portions he would use the ancient records; and these would

“pretty certainly have been Elohistical, for otherwise the people could not have been ignorant or forgetful of the great name of their Creator. The portions written and mingled in with the traditional portions by Moses would on the other hand most probably be Jehovistic.”

Of these two hypotheses he says:—

“These explanations are surely possible solutions of the difficulty which Bishop Colenso declares to be insuperable. I firmly believe that one of these solutions is indeed true.”¹

It is a happy thing that we have only two hypotheses; Bishop Browne might have found a dozen, and then expressed his conviction that one of them was the true one. But he would be bound to say which of the dozen was the right interpretation: it is not easy to see why or how this duty is changed because he confines himself to two. But he has, as in the former case, overlooked a point which upsets his hypothesis. The account of the revelation of the Divine name to Moses in Exodus vi., which *must* have been written by Moses himself, if any part of the history was so written, is due undoubtedly to the very same hand which wrote the old Elohistical narrative.² It is useless to speak of the name Jehovah as having been known and then forgotten. The Elohistical writer abstains throughout his narrative from using the name Jehovah at all, *until* he has recorded its revelation to Moses, and it follows therefore inevitably that he meant the statement

¹ Bishop of Natal, *Pentateuch*, Part V. p. xxi.

² *Ib.* p. xxviii.

“I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by El-Shaddai, but by my name Jehovah was I *not known* to them,”

to be understood as saying that the name was actually not known at all to the Patriarchs.¹

What the Bishop of Ely may have meant by his reference to miracle is not clear. Could his reasoning be that numbers which are utterly perplexing on any human supposition may in some way or other be received on the ground that the narrative is professedly full of miracles, just as the enormous numbers of the army of Xerxes, utterly inexplicable by any reference to the supplies of any human commissariat, may be received in a narrative in which, as is the case in that of Herodotus, superhuman agency is manifest throughout? This is an opinion which might perhaps be legitimately expressed by one who will adhere to it; but in his letter the Bishop of Ely shifted his ground by saying that the conquest of Canaan could, *humanly* speaking, have been effected only by an almost countless multitude.

But this is not all. Dr. Browne had, in his letter, charged Bishop Colenso with reckless and irreverent treatment of records

“thrown into the sacred, solemn form of the Pentateuchal narrative, a form in which they have for three thousand years been accepted as a true and heaven-inspired history;”

but it can scarcely be denied that he has himself laid violent hands on at least one cardinal statement which in the Book of Deuteronomy is put into the mouth of Moses. On the supposition of the Mosaic authorship of this narrative, the intimate familiarity shown with minute local features in the land of Canaan had to be accounted for. According to Dr. Browne, this familiarity was attained by Moses during the many journeys of exploration which he made through Palestine

¹ Bishop of Natal, *Pentateuch*, Part V. p. xxix.

before the final entrance of the Israelites; but except on the hypothesis that the Book of Deuteronomy is historically untrustworthy, this point is not left an open one. The words ascribed to Moses not merely imply, but state with the utmost possible clearness, that he had never visited or seen the Promised Land. The very pathos of his pleading lies in this fact, that his eyes have never rested on its hills and streams. "I pray thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan." But the prayer was not to be granted. From the top of Pisgah he might indeed gaze on its faint and distant outlines, but nearer he might not approach. "I must die in this land: I must not go over Jordan." What meaning, or rather what truth, is left in these words, if they were spoken by one who had many a time crossed the stream, and made himself familiar with the future inheritance of his followers?

These are matters which cannot be treated as questions of mere detail. The supposition last mentioned strikes directly at the truthfulness of the Hebrew lawgiver. The Bishop of Ely's charges, as put forth in his volume on the Pentateuch, are amply refuted by those passages in which Bishop Colenso distinctly maintained that

"the Israelites did leave Egypt, and remained for a time in the wilderness of Sinai, under circumstances which produced a profound impression on the national mind,"

and in which he further affirmed that

"there is not the slightest reason to believe . . . that there was no residence of the Israelites in Egypt, no deliverance out of it."

They could be established at all only by shifting ground; and Bishop Browne shifted his ground accordingly. But in doing so he took no notice of the two histories to which his

attention had been specially called. The systematic Mosaic, legislation, and the elaborate minuteness of the Levitical organization, had been regarded as conclusively proving the accuracy and authority of the Mosaic narrative. But of this network of laws, and this intricate priestly system, the national history down to the time of the Captivity exhibits not a trace. How could the inference be avoided that both the system and the code belong to a period subsequent to the Captivity? And how could the student, examining the records of this legislation, forget that the early history of Rome furnished the closest parallel to that of the Jews? Here also we have a legislation (the Servian) drawn out with the precision of an English Act of Parliament, a legislation affecting directly the whole body of the people; and with it we have a subsequent traditional history which ignores it. Hence, after the closest examination, Sir Cornwall Lewis concludes that whatever the Servian legislation may have been, we have of its details no knowledge whatever, or rather we have ample evidence that in its main provisions no attempt was ever made to carry out that legislation. Why may not that which took place in Italy have taken place also in Canaan?

But, if Bishop Browne might legitimately strive to uphold the historical value of the Pentateuch so far as it could honestly be upheld, it was unworthy of him to insinuate that the Bishop of Natal admitted even less than he professed to maintain. The Bishop had spoken of some of the Pentateuchal narrative as derived "from legendary recollections of some former residence in Egypt under painful circumstances, and of some great deliverance," and Dr. Browne, fastening on the phrase, ascribed to him not quite accurately a constant use of the word, which he pronounced to be in itself "somewhat suspicious." *Legend*, he remarked, became so soon almost identified with fable

“that one chief sense attached to it by Johnson is ‘an incredible unauthentic narrative;’” and he added, “I cannot think that the Bishop would have used the word so frequently without intending to throw some discredit even on that traditional basis which he does not wholly deny.”

The constant use of the word imputed to Bishop Colenso cannot be proved; and of the traditional basis it is enough to say that he not only does not deny, but positively maintains it. But the word was used in a few cases simply to denote the transmission of this basis, through a series of generations, by oral traditions. It would have been more accurate, probably, to speak always of “stories orally transmitted” instead of “legendary stories”; but the former phrase is more cumbersome and awkward, and the latter implies no greater disbelief of the narrative than the other. If the historian of Greece speaks of the narrative of Herodotus as legendary, he asserts no more than that it was transmitted by oral tradition only, until Herodotus committed it to writing.

Whatever, then, may have been the motives and the purpose of the Bishop of Ely, his criticism of Bishop Colenso was not fair, not just, not true. It was criticism which must cause gratuitous pain; but in this respect another of the Bishop's friends was a worse offender. Not much, perhaps, may be gained by attempting to trace the workings of a mind like that of Mr. Maurice; but the supreme unselfishness and beauty of his character give his words a weight which makes it the more needful to point out the fallacies running through them or underlying them. The thought that charges of historical inaccuracy can be disproved only by proving the correctness of the history seems never to have entered his mind. Although for quite other reasons than those which influenced the traditionalists of the day, yet with not less vehemence than theirs, Mr. Maurice took upon himself the office of the judge

and the doomster. None, he said, could be more indignant with the Bishop of Natal than he was himself.

“He seemed to be taking from us the very message which we had been suppressing and mutilating ; to be indorsing the crime which we had been committing against the laity ; to be using physical facts for the sake of cheating us of moral and political facts ; to be destroying the great link between God and national life ; to be driving us to the old platitudes and abstractions about the necessity of order to freedom, and freedom to order, which have no power over any human spirit, when we might, if we believe the Exodus, speak of an everlasting God of Freedom, who is also, and for that reason, the God of Order.”¹

What, it might be asked, is all this talk about ? What did Mr. Maurice mean by physical facts, and by the application of them to overthrow spiritual truths ? What did he mean by saying that the Bishop of Natal had struck out sparks and invented theories,² and that the answers to him, so far as they have not consisted of shrieks and ridicule, have been directed to an exposure of his physical facts ?³ Any one who had not opened the Bishop’s work on the Pentateuch might be led by these words to suppose that it broached some new geographical or astronomical ideas which upset the Mosaic cosmogony, or that it urged the evidence furnished by the science of language or of comparative mythology against the Mosaic accounts of the fall of man. He could not possibly learn from Mr. Maurice’s pages that the Bishop of Natal had pronounced the narrative of the Pentateuch to be not historical, because it exhibited palpable contradictions ; because its chronology was artificial ; because it embodied a legislation which, as we see on the face of it, was never carried out, and exhibits a state of society which never existed ; because,

¹ *Claims of the Bible and of Science*, p. 76.

² *Ib.* p. 125.

³ *Ib.* p. 73.

finally, it would be impossible to account for the later history of the people, if the Mosaic history was a genuine relation of events which passed before the occupation of Canaan. To physical facts there are only indirect and incidental references : and all that Mr. Maurice could do by such remarks was to place the question on a false issue. The truth is that no one was more profoundly conscious than Mr. Maurice that spiritual things must be spiritually discerned ; but he remained not less assured that it was indispensably necessary for all others to discern the truth where he saw it himself, and that, if they failed to see it where he saw it, they would not find it at all. His own conviction of the Divine righteousness was a rock not to be shaken ; but it also drove him to make a crowd of assumptions about the records in which he traced the several steps in the Divine government of the world. From the Book of Genesis he learnt the sacredness of the order of the family, the misery which comes with the infraction of it, the blessings which flow from obedience to it. The Book of Exodus taught him that God had sympathy with sufferers, that He was the Judge of the tyrant, the Deliverer of the bondman and the captive ; and from these convictions he drew the inference that the books were, throughout, trustworthy historical narratives. At the same time his respect for the letter of the narrative was not so unswerving as to satisfy the adherents of straiter schools. Thus, for instance, he resolved the incidents of Balaam's journey into a spiritual impression left on the mind of the seer¹ in the teeth of the comment in the New Testament that the dumb ass spoke with the articulate speech of man. But when the same freedom with regard to this same narrative was used by another who went on to the further question of the time of its composition, and who reached the conclusion arrived at more recently by the most

¹ *Sermons on the Old Testament*, Sermon I. p. 28.

eminent of modern Jewish interpreters,¹ Mr. Maurice expressed his aversion not of a critical method which was too lax or too arbitrary, but of the spiritual perversity which was robbing men of lessons indispensable for the vindication of the Divine righteousness. It mattered not that Dr. Stanley spoke of the national religion of the Jews, down even to the Babylonish captivity, as a sensual and bloody idolatry. It was enough for Mr. Maurice that the Book of Genesis enforced in his opinion certain spiritual truths, and he insisted with an amazing pertinacity that apart from this book the knowledge of those truths could not have been attained. The lessons which it taught were or had been needed by Englishmen. Like the Israelites in Egypt, they had been sorely oppressed by the ecclesiastical yoke before the Reformation, and deception had gone hand in hand with tyranny. With astonishing simplicity he failed to see the irrelevance of the tirade called forth by the thought of that time of bondage.

“If there was a Lord God who had proclaimed His commands out of heaven amidst thunders and lightnings; if He was really what He said that He was, a Lord God who brought His people out of bondage, . . . then Englishmen might hold up their heads against their foes and rise up, were they ever so sunken, in the might of Him who had promised not to forsake them or forget them.”²

Such comments, it is clear, might be drawn out to any extent, and Mr. Maurice had at his command wealth of illustrations which proved that the lessons taught by the Book of Exodus were living lessons.

“They raised the English middle classes into moral and political existence; they ratified the great oath of the peasants at Rutli; they raised the Dominican Savonarola to be the witness against Alexander the Sixth; they made

¹ Dr. Kalisch.

² *Claims of the Bible and of Science*, p. 70.

the German monk mightier than Charles the Fifth ; their echoes woke again among the peasants of the Tyrol ; they stirred the scholars of Germany to a new life ; they roused the Czar of the Russias to drive back the invader who had profaned the holy shrine of Moscow.”¹

If it was the Book of Exodus, and this book only, which taught all these men their lessons, there ought surely to be some record of the fact. The force of the lessons is not disputed, but the fact that the peasants of Rutli had any intimate familiarity with the narratives of that book, or that some or many of them had any knowledge of it at all, is one rather to be proved than assumed ; and it is not easy to see why Arnold of Brescia and Savonarola could only have been roused to their condemnation of sacerdotal corruption by the story of the Exodus. It is nothing less than absurd to assert that without this story the clergy would no longer be able to say to the laity :—

“The God who rules over you is verily such an *One* as this book, taken in its simplest sense, says that He is. We proclaim to you that God is the Deliverer of nations. He did not pretend that He delivered them ; He actually delivered them.”²

But such deliverance does not come always. It did not come to Harold and his brave Englishmen who fought under him at Senlac ; and there has surely been no invasion marked by more monstrous wrong than that of the Norman Conqueror. Mr. Maurice’s teaching may seem to be edifying, but it is really dangerous. It is dangerous because it stakes our faith on a wrong issue, and because our inference may be used to support the authority of other sacred books besides our own. We may, with Mr. Maurice, hold up the Pentateuch, and ask whether the events related in it are not all “discove-

¹ *Claims of the Bible and of Science*, p. 71.

² *Ib.* p. 72.

ries to us of a Divine Lord, speaking to man, and of man." If we reply that this is so, our answer does not prove the historical accuracy of the Pentateuch except by involving the historical truth of the Koran. When we ask—

"Has not this story of the Red Sea given faith to men in sore trials, when they needed something else than fictions to rest upon?"¹

many a professor of Islam might retort—

"Has not the history of our Prophet nerved our arm for conquest, and supported us in times of defeat and shame? Have not our heroes received fresh strength in the conviction that there is no God but God, and Mahomet is the Prophet of God?"

When we say that the books of the Pentateuch educate us, as no other books can, out of the temper of mind which makes us think of God as a very great Being who does not care about little things, when we assert that

"they compel me to believe that God does care for the sanitary condition, for the bodily circumstances, of the people of my land, and of every other land,"²

we use words which might come as earnestly from the lips of a Mahometan as from our own. The lesson is in either case true and good, but it does not prove the historical truth whether of the Koran or of the Old Testament.

Mr. Maurice's canon would carry us even further than the Koran. It would prove the historical truth of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The Greek could not afford to dispense with the lessons taught by the friendship of Achilleus for Patroklos, or the still higher lessons of self-sacrifice, of filial and brotherly love, displayed in the person and the career of Hektor. Nay more, these epic poems taught them that long ago their

¹ *Claims of the Bible and of Science*, p. 104.
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² *Ib.* p. 142.
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fathers were not like the barbarous Thracian and Scythian tribes of their own day,—that the Achaians of Agamemnon had, like themselves, a respect for law, and a greater respect than they had for the equal companionship of men and women; and so these epic poems are genuine and veracious histories. After all, the evidence for facts is a matter of little consequence. Great events, like the victories of Salamis and Plataia, are truths rather than facts.

“They are taken out of the region of letters. They do not depend any longer on the credibility of records. They have established themselves in the very existence of humanity. You cannot displace them without denying that, or re-making it anew, according to some theory or fashion of your own.”¹

These utterances of Mr. Maurice were to me unintelligible at the time when they were published, and they remain unintelligible still. But we have to note them patiently, if we would see how far he was qualified to deal with the criticisms of the Bishop of Natal, or indeed with any narrative of facts. It is hard to see what end can be attained by his method but that of complete bewilderment. Mr. Maurice spoke with something like contempt for those who “believe in nothing but contemporary testimony,” and asked how Sir Cornewall Lewis could reach such a conclusion

“with all the proofs which the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny gave him of its utter untrustworthiness.”

Sir G. C. Lewis, he insisted

“could believe in no evidence coming to his own reason and conscience; he could, after living through the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, depend upon the contemporary testimony which told him one day that the defeats of the

¹ *Claims of the Bible and of Science*, p. 75.

Russians were entirely due to the French, the next that the French had almost no share in them ; one day that hundreds of men and women were mutilated by the Sepoys, the next that there were none."¹

If, on reading these sentences, bewilderment gives place to a weaker feeling, or even vanishes, it is only because we are driven to the conclusion that, when a question is treated thus, words are wasted. Did Mr. Maurice disbelieve absolutely the occurrence of the Crimean War and of the Indian Mutiny ? Whatever notions either he or any one else may entertain about either of these events, if they be events, what proofs apart from contemporary evidence can be adduced in support of either of them ? If Mr. Maurice knew of any testimony which has fallen down from Jupiter, he has given no hint of his knowledge. But, in truth, all this declamation comes from the familiar logical fault of an undistributed middle. Sir Cornwall Lewis never said that all contemporary testimony was of necessity absolutely trustworthy ; and most assuredly he never would have allowed that all must be worthless because some may be false.

Such statements, many of them altogether irrelevant, almost all of them proving too much, serve only to show how greatly and urgently Bishop Colenso's criticisms were needed. The device of plausible fiction has been employed, often with marvellous success, in most countries and ages ; but Mr. Maurice was able to shut his eyes to the fact, and found a proof of the historical trustworthiness of the Pentateuch in the style and form of its contents. The Levitical legislation was exceedingly minute, and has very little of the air of a romance ; we may therefore, forsooth, safely assign it to the age of Moses. Moses himself is not such a personage as an epic poet might picture to himself. He is described as encountering all manner of difficulties and opposition.

¹ *Life of Maurice*, vol. ii. p. 510.

“But He who has sent him prevails over the tyrant, bears with the murmurs of the slaves, educates them to trust through their distrust, orders their society, gives them laws, statutes, a tabernacle, and priests to minister in it.”

We may therefore without misgiving ascribe the Levitical legislation to the time of the sojourn in the wilderness, although the sentence simply begs the whole question. With the same wonderful assurance Mr. Maurice asks his readers to give credence to the story of Noah, on the ground that it is “familiar and prosaic,” although the remark applies strictly, so far as language is concerned, to every tale in the *Arabian Nights* legends. There is the less reason to distrust it, because it is “not surrounded with all kinds of romantic incidents.” This may be a matter of opinion; but it is at least as easy and as reasonable to maintain that the incidents are romantic from beginning to end. The building of a house or ark larger than the largest of modern ships, the mighty procession of living things which are to inhabit it, the rising of the enormous structure with its flat floor on the swirling waters which have engulfed a world, the success with which it keeps its balance in the tumult of the currents sweeping round a submerged globe, the story of the dove and of the olive-branch which has been some miles under water for a year or more, keeping its leaves still green, are surely not familiar incidents of every-day life; but if they were, such incidents cannot of themselves give weight to any narrative. Some of the legends of Numa Pompilius are familiar and prosaic. The constitution of Servius Tullius is exceedingly minute and utterly free from the slightest admixture of romance. It is as calm, sober, and practical as an English Act of Parliament; and yet it is nothing more than an elaborate piece of plausible fiction, thrust into a narrative of traditions which are utterly incredible and impossible. It

does not, indeed, follow that because the constitution of Servius has no reality, therefore the Levitical legislation is a fiction ; but it is absurd to infer the reality of the latter from the particularity of its details or the homeliness of the language in which its precepts are conveyed.

To all such considerations Mr. Maurice shut his eyes, while yet his own method was both eclectic and rationalistic. It was eclectic, because he chose to dwell on those parts of the narrative which told in favour of his teaching, while he made no reference to other portions which told against it. It was rationalistic, because in many cases he substituted a narrative of his own in place of that which he professed to receive as the Mosaic record. It is true that this method may be applied to the Koran ; and it may be rightly applied, so long as it is done openly. There are some Suras which are as nearly perfect as any words uttered by human lips can be ; and if in dealing with the Pentateuch we say plainly that we are separating the gold from the alloy, the process is thoroughly legitimate. But it is disingenuous and sophistical to leave the impression that the alloy either is absent or is infinitesimally small. This is what the Bishop of Natal refused to do, and what Mr. Maurice did systematically. The latter omitted all mention of laws which appear cruel and actions which seem inhuman, when these laws are stated to proceed, and these actions to receive encouragement, from God. He would not assert in so many words that God gave His expressed sanction to the laws of slavery, concubinage, and marriage,—to the extermination of whole nations, whose extermination was never accomplished or attempted,—to wholesale massacres of enemies and prisoners. He denied in plain terms¹ that Jewish slavery was caused or decreed by God, although the whole legislation about slaves is asserted to come from God as distinctly as the declaration that He

¹ *Sermons on the Old Testament*, Sermon XVI. p. 306.

dwells in the high and holy place with those that are of a contrite heart and humble spirit. Some might, perhaps, be perplexed to know what Mr. Maurice meant by the Divine sanction; and on this difficulty some light may be thrown by the following words:—

“The Jewish legislator, referring all his wisdom, all the sanction of his laws, to the unseen Deliverer and Ruler, sinking himself altogether, exhibiting the sins of his family and tribe, conferred a blessing upon Israelites which we can only appreciate by considering its effects on those who accepted his words most strictly.”¹

If we accept Mr. Maurice's words strictly, it would follow that in every single instance in which Moses or other Hebrew leaders and judges propounded a law or an ordinance under the sanction, “Thus saith the Lord God,” he or they were referring their wisdom to the unseen Deliverer and Ruler; and that when they claimed that sanction for the law of jealousy or the massacre of the Midianite children, they were only sinking themselves altogether, out of reverence to Him in whom all live, move, and are. It would follow, further, that the words of the Hebrew prophets are utterances of deep moral conviction, coming from men who habitually refer their thoughts to God, and sink their own individuality in the sanction which they claim for their words. If this was (and there can be little doubt that it was) his meaning, Mr. Maurice was virtually saying that, while God speaks in every true word contained in the Pentateuch and every other part of the Bible, yet the book contains at least some things which do not proceed from Him at all. It would have been more simple and straightforward to say this, instead of indulging in generalisations which exhibit the Hebrew Scriptures as a grand and harmonious unity never marred by the faintest

¹ *Claims of the Bible and of Science*, p. 143.

discord. So thinking and speaking, Mr. Maurice naturally disliked any careful or rigorous handling of these old narratives. It is perhaps his strongest ground of complaint against the Bishop of Natal that he assumed the Pentateuch to be giving

“not a revelation of God’s ways to men, of His mode of governing men and holding intercourse with them, but a narrative of events which are unlike any other events that have happened in any generation since.”¹

Mr. Maurice was, as usual, overstating his case. The Bishop had treated the story simply as a narrative of historical events, to be tested by the rules which are applied to all events in any generation whether before or since. In so doing, the Bishop was only applying to Jewish history the method which had been already applied to the ancient traditions of Greece and Rome, of Egypt, Assyria, Persia, and India. There remained only the earlier history of the Jews to serve as a field for the same rigorous scrutiny. That history, like the traditional history of Rome, was found on examination to present a number of narratives more or less contradictory, with details apparently as inconsistent as they were minute. It exhibited a chronology not less artificial, and institutional legends not less clearly declaring their own character; while, to complete the parallel, it contained an elaborate political and religious legislation, of the actual existence of which the subsequent history of the people fails to give sufficient, if indeed any, evidence. The conclusion was inevitable. The traditions of the Hebrew nation before the rise of contemporary writers could not be accepted as authentic history. The traditions themselves might enforce the sublimest of all lessons, the most precious of all truths. The critic was concerned with the simple question of fact. They might

¹ *Claims of the Bible and of Science*, p. 102.

contain much real history mixed up with the colouring of legend ; but the critic had no warrant for determining positively in every instance what was fact and what was fiction. Such was the simple conclusion to which an examination of the Pentateuch brought the Bishop of Natal : and this is the simple question, which must be held up as the only point at issue. It matters not what or how great may be the interests or the hopes involved, or supposed to be involved, in it. We have before us, in the early Hebrew history, a narrative of alleged facts ; and each one of these alleged facts either took place or did not take place. That history may exhibit lessons which we can ill afford to part with. It may carry with it, for certain minds, a consolation and encouragement which they will tell us that they cannot do without. But the Mosaic and Levitical legislation remains, nevertheless, as much the subject of historical criticism as the reforms of the Spartan Lycurgus or the constitution of Servius Tullius.

But, having so overstated the case, Mr. Maurice added that the Bishop

“demands that there should be a minute accuracy in all the details of these events, to insure *their* credibility, which would not be needed to insure the credibility of any other events.”

To a certain extent this depends on the judge ; and as a judge Sir Cornwall Lewis would have been probably far more rigorous than the Bishop of Natal. Not content with this, Mr. Maurice further insisted that “the moment he missed that accuracy,” the whole narrative was dismissed as worthless. This charge was both unjust and untrue, although Mr. Maurice had no wish to be either untrue or unjust. Was it a “minute inaccuracy” which carries the life of Adam down to that of Noah, and makes the life of Noah overlap, or

nearly overlap, that of Abraham ; or which records as actually working from the time of the Sinaitic sojourn a legislation to whose existence the later history bears little testimony or none? The results might, of course, be unwelcome. They would be so in the highest degree to a mind which, like that of Mr. Maurice, could not see the positive gain which might often come from negative conclusions.

“Researches into ancient history which lead to merely negative results are important and useful, as well as similar researches which lead to positive results. They distinguish between fiction—which, however diverting, instructive, and elevating, can never be historical—and reality, which is a necessary attribute of an historical narrative.”¹

These are the words of Sir Cornwall Lewis, than whom in this domain of ancient history few critics have been more destructive. But it would be absurd to say that even under his potent wand the whole of early Roman history vanishes into air. The cardinal fact of that history is the conflict of the several orders in the State ; and that fact remains, and is borne out by the subsequent history of the commonwealth ; or, in Mr. Maurice’s language, we still have that from which we may draw “lessons.” It would not be less absurd and untrue to say that all Jewish history vanished at the touch of the Bishop of Natal. The Exodus remained, with the ascendancy acquired by a poor and exiled people over the inhabitants of a land in which they had once sojourned themselves. There is still the sharp contrast between them and the Canaanitish tribes by the belief of their leaders in one Living God, and by their possession of a law higher than any known to the nations whether of Palestine or of Egypt. There remained, in fact, enough to yield all those lessons which animated the countrymen of Wyclif and Cranmer,

¹ Sir G. C. Lewis, *On the Astronomy of the Ancients*, p. 433.

and nerved the hearts of the sturdy peasants who met at Rütli. Bishop Colenso did not, indeed, profess to receive the narrative as it stood; and in this lay his strength. Mr. Maurice did profess this; and the result was language which had too much the likeness of sophistry. The lay correspondent whose question led to the writing of the book on *The Claims of the Bible and of Science* had spoken of many as fearing that, "if once they allow the historical reality of the physical account of the Deluge to be called in question, they are guilty of doubting the word of Him who is Truth"; and on this point Mr. Maurice gave the following explanation:—

"There may be an historical reality in that which does not in the least correspond with those facts with which the physical student is occupied. It might be true of a deluge covering a very small portion of the earth, that God saved a man and his family from perishing in it; that He gave him a warning of the calamity which was coming, before it came; that He taught him how to save his family, and how to save creatures of various kinds in the same building in which he himself took refuge. All this might be a very simple, child-like narrative of an historical fact, not in the least legendary."¹

Of course it might; and if Mr. Maurice had intended to give this as the historical nucleus round which the Noachian story had grown up, it may safely be said that no objection would have been offered by the Bishop of Natal. But it did not follow that because this nucleus was historical the Noachian narrative was historical also. The inference would rather be the other way; but whatever Mr. Maurice's hypothetical story might be, it was not the narrative of the Book of Genesis, and it violated the Mosaic record in its essential particulars. That record spoke of a flood over all the earth,

¹ *Claims of the Bible and of Science*, p. 109.

covering the high hills ; of the gathering of all living creatures of every kind ; of the destruction of every living thing which did not enter the ark, and of every living substance on the face of the ground, although the olive-branch survived with its leaves several miles under water. It was a strange method of dealing with the Book of Genesis. According to Sir Cornewall Lewis, any fact of history is a fixed quantity ; from Mr. Maurice's words we might suppose that it was an elastic line. That the plain statements of the tale involved some difficulty, he was constrained to admit ; but he asked :—

“ Has then that length or breadth anything to do with it ? I should say ‘ absolutely nothing,’ if I did not reflect that just in proportion as my thoughts of the earth expand, I must treat the *principle*—the *law* of this narrative—as also expanding. If it was true once that God punished men for their lust and violence, it is so still.”¹

Who doubts it ? But why is it said ? The remark applies with fully equal force to the overthrow of Xerxes, and Herodotus insists on the lesson again and again with all the earnestness of Mr. Maurice. But although he had thus got rid of some of the restraints of ordinary historical criticism, Mr. Maurice had still some qualms, and he proceeded to allay these by objecting that, for Bishop Colenso,

“ a small fact is no fact at all. Noah's deluge must have been universal, else why make so much of it ? I reply, because the whole Bible is occupied about small areas, little families, contemptible tribes.”²

Mr. Maurice may have made this statement in good faith. It is, nevertheless, not true. It is absurd to speak of kings who could make equal alliances with some of the mightiest monarchies of the East as the sovereigns of little families or

¹ *Claims of the Bible and of Science*, p. 111. ² *Ib.* p. 114.

contemptible tribes, absurd to speak of the empire of Solomon as a small area ; and the account of this empire is certainly included in "the whole Bible." It remains further an open question whether the historian of the Deluge was altogether unacquainted with the larger area which extended "from the one sea to the other—from the flood unto the world's end." Here, however, as elsewhere, Mr. Maurice escaped with instinctive eagerness into that ethereal region in which alone he could breathe freely, and then returned to defend himself against the charge of cowardice for not informing his people that they have been deceiving themselves in heeding the story of "a deluge." This contempt he admitted that he should deserve, if ever he bade them hold any opinion about the Deluge which he "did not hold" himself. What then was his opinion? The Book of Genesis asserts that the flood was universal: he had said that it was very partial. The former says that all species were represented in the ark: Mr. Maurice said that some only were sheltered in it. The Mosaic record maintains that all other men and all other flesh died: Mr. Maurice declared that, for all we know, a great many in other parts of the earth may have remained alive. He had left scarcely an incident of the narrative unmodified, and then asked his readers to heed the story of *a* deluge, when the simple question was whether the Noachian story, and no other, is a matter of fact or not. It is mere specious argument, if it be not rank absurdity, to talk of the *principle* of the story. There are thousands of overwhelming calamities which, if the Noachian Deluge were proved to be the merest fiction, might still teach us that God "punishes men for their lust and violence." Only we have received a caution not to judge those who were crushed by the falling tower in Siloam, or the earthquake of Lisbon.

In short, Mr. Maurice, in these criticisms on Bishop Colenso, dealt with the Mosaic story of the Deluge much as Thucydides

treated the tale of the Trojan War. It is conceivably possible that both Mr. Maurice and Thucydides may have hit upon the real historical residuum in each case ; but we cannot have any warrant or evidence for this, beyond their own word. In both the tales the several incidents form one coherent whole. In the Trojan story,

“If we are asked whether it be not a legend embodying portions of historical matter and raised upon a basis of truth ; whether there may not really have occurred at the foot of the hill of Priam a war purely human and political, without gods, without heroes, without Helens, without Amazons, without Ethiopians under the beautiful son of Eôs ; . . . if we are asked whether there was not really some such historical Trojan war as this, our answer must be that, as the possibility of it cannot be denied, so neither can the reality of it be affirmed.”¹

It is not easy to see what would under any circumstances be gained by dissecting in the same fashion the Noachian story of the Deluge, and then talking of the principle of an event which, in the form propounded, had been really fabricated by Mr. Maurice himself. Had Mr. Maurice put forth these conclusions as his own, *in place* of the Noachian story as it has come down to us, it would have shown at once that he ranked the Pentateuch with all other histories, although the soundness of the method by which he reached the residuum might still be questioned. Critics like Sir Cornewall Lewis might have said that he spoke too positively about events which belong to a pre-historic age ; but the admission that Mr. Maurice regarded the history of the Pentateuch as a fair subject for scrutiny would have gone far towards quieting the stormy waters of the controversy provoked by the publication of the Bishop's volumes. It would have shown that he shared

¹ Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. i. p. 434.

Dean Milman's conviction that "the words of Christ, and His words alone (the primal, indefeasible truths of Christianity) shall not pass away."¹ It would have dealt another blow on that exaggerated or false dogmatism which has overlaid those words by doctrines which are not His. It would also have shown that the vast gulf which Mr. Maurice supposed to intervene between himself and the Bishop of Natal was really but a narrow channel created by his own unreasonable and unreasoning fears.

We should, however, be doing Mr. Maurice a gross injustice were we to put out of sight the really vast gulf which separated him from the rank and file of those who came forward to uphold what they called the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures. For him every narrative even of the earliest books of the Old Testament was instinct with a living spirit; and this spirit was the Spirit of the God of Truth, of Righteousness, and of Love. These books revealed to him nothing but things lovely, and beautiful, and of good report. They pointed to the conflict between truth and falsehood, and to the great consummation in the victory of righteousness over sin. They left him, therefore, precisely on the ground on which the Bishop of Natal had taken his stand, although they had reached it by opposite ways. The former had insisted on his right to draw all these lessons from these books, and to contend, by some strange mental process, that apart from these books they could not have been learnt at all. The latter showed that in many, if not in most, cases, these narratives did not teach the lessons so extracted from them, and that Mr. Maurice's attitude in the matter gave unfortunate encouragement to those who made use of their Bibliolatry to enforce on the people the most horrible falsehoods and superstitions. It is useless to blink the facts of the case. The Bishop of Natal had tested the historical accuracy of the Pentateuch,

¹ *History of Latin Christianity*, vol. vi. book xiv. ch. x. p. 447.

partly because he was moved by a natural desire for historical knowledge, as for all other truth; partly by a wish to throw off the yoke which thrust on him as historically true a narrative some of which at the least is uncertain; but, most of all, by a longing to take away the foundation of those cruel notions or doctrines which are scarcely less fatal than the Manicheism of Simeon Stylites,—in short, to break the chains of a cruel and deadly tyranny. It may be true that no great amount of arithmetic would be needed to “induce men,” in Mr. Maurice’s words, “to throw off the incubus of an authority which they suppose exists to curse them;”¹ but it is equally true that they who represent God as dooming “the immense majority of His creatures to hopeless destruction,” profess to speak on the authority and by the command of an infallible book. The blow struck against this fetish worship had called forth an outburst of this malignant dogmatism. The Primate himself had declared that the endless torturing of individual sinners was our only warrant or assurance for the endless happiness of the righteous, and that the latter must fall with the former. Another, pleading expressly the sanction of the New Testament, held that it would be an insult to the saved if a harlot or a thief dying impenitent were admitted, after atonement extended over billions of years, to take but the lowest room in the house of their Father and Redeemer.² On this sanction, together with the authority of that which he spoke of as the Church, this same writer condemned, not to the *limbus puerorum*, or limbo of children, but to the hell of bodily torture, all infants dying unbaptized.³ To these he had unquestionably the authority of Fulgentius for adding those who die before birth in their mother’s womb. Against this horrible blasphemy the Bishop of Natal and Mr. Maurice were both fighting; and we have to

¹ *Claims of the Bible and of Science*, p. 136

² *Christian Remembrancer*, April 1863, p. 476. *Ib.* p. 477.

remember that Mr. Maurice had come forth first to bear his righteous testimony. While he was reproaching the Bishop for taking away the foundations of trust, he was also denouncing

“the popular interpretation, not for its severity, but for the practical laxity which its fierceness engenders, . . . because it deters from no crime, and cultivates the despair which is the cause of ten thousand crimes.”

While he looked on his friend as obscuring the light of the Divine Love, he was uttering the golden words—

“If I preached that there would be no deliverance from eternal death, I should be preaching that no sinner can be raised from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God.”¹

He who could thus speak might well have withheld the hard words which he cast at the Bishop of Natal. But, great and good man though he was, in Mr. Maurice the historical sense was very weak. He was but scanty capable of weighing the laws and applying the tests of historical credibility; and hence it was that, in dealing with alleged records and statements of facts, his method assumed, in the eyes of men who wished simply to know the truth of facts, very much the appearance of sophistry, although he expressed just indignation at the

“race of quacks who can always prove what they are wanted to prove.”

Strange to say, the utterance of his censure is followed by an attempt to prove the harmony of the two accounts of Creation, which provokes a comparison with the mysticism that spoke of the seven sons of Job as meaning the twelve Apostles, and of his daughters as representing the faithful laity. It was,

¹ *Claims of the Bible and of Science*, p. 133.

therefore, scarcely possible for him to do justice to the Bishop of Natal, who broached no theory, who put forth no hypothesis, propounded no solutions, but set himself sedulously to determine the historical value of certain professedly historical records.

The controversy provoked by Bishop Colenso's writings raised some curious side issues. For the time High Churchmen and Low Churchmen alike seemed united in their enthusiasm for a book (or series of books) which they regarded as a direct gift from God ; and of Broad Churchmen or muscular Christians some at least seemed resolved that they would not allow others to outrun them in their zeal. But it never seems to have struck any of them that they might have to encounter difficulties with other prodigies than those related in the Bible, or to defend themselves against home-thrusts on the score of relic worship. Of these champions of Christendom not a few insisted that the Hebrew Scriptures had during three or more millenniums been preserved by special Divine interposition from mutilation, interpolation, or corruption, that they were in short like a picture or a statue fresh from the hands of the painter or the sculptor ; and they insisted with not less vehemence that a series of wonderful incidents recorded in those books were all historical facts, and that no other wonderful incidents could be included under the same term. Prominent among these was Mr. Kingsley, who, being then Modern History Professor at Cambridge, undertook to hurl his lance first at the Bishop of Natal, and then at Dr. Newman. The discussions which ensued threw a singular light first on the arbitrary method which regarded as fact certain miracles because related in particular writings, as against others because they were not recorded in those books ; and next on the dogged pertinacity which will take up any ground rather than give up the genuineness of a relic. Mr. Kingsley had applied some very strong language to Dr. Newman, charging him, among other things, with " stupendous