

silliness" because he thought it difficult or impossible to withstand the evidence which is brought for the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples, and also because he thought that the holy coat of Treves may possibly or probably be a genuine relic, whereas "the very texture and material of the thing prove it" to Mr. Kingsley's satisfaction "to be spurious." But Mr. Kingsley had read, or he ought to have read, the preface on ecclesiastical miracles which Dr. Newman had prefixed to a translation of a part of Fleury's *Ecclesiastical History*, and in which he argued that the question of miracles is one wholly of evidence, and that the fact of a miracle in any age or country must be accepted if the evidence offered for it be adequate. It followed from this that no sharp line could, as Mr. Kingsley held that it could, be drawn, on one side of which miracles are possible, on the other impossible. It would be absurd, therefore, to say that they ceased with the close of the Apostolic age, or with the conversion of Constantine, or to deny that they may be extended down to our own time. Logically, therefore, no one who accepted the miracles of the Bible could reject contemptuously the miracles of St. Augustine or St. Boniface without examining the evidence in each case; and any one who urged difficulties with regard to the latter must be prepared to face difficulties which may be urged against the former. But Mr. Kingsley would have it that, as miracles do not occur nowadays, modern narratives of miracles must be false; and he insisted at the same time that the Pentateuch was written by Moses, settling the debate by the triumphant question, "If Moses did not write the Pentateuch, who did?" Dr. Newman had his own answer ready, and the following words, though nowhere used by him, may be taken as fairly representing it.

If I believe that the blood of St. Januarius liquefied at Naples, you believe that a long time ago an ass spoke with

articulate human speech ; that an iron axe-head was made to float on the water, instead of remaining at the bottom ; that handkerchiefs which had touched an Apostle's body were endued with the power of healing diseases. If I see no special harm in people crowding to look at the coat at Treves, you have no special condemnation for those who fancied that their sicknesses would be cured if merely the shadow of an Apostle passing by fell on them. Moreover, for my belief I may bring up the testimony of a hundred living witnesses : to what can you refer me but to the mere statement of a record which does not profess to be contemporary, and for which there is no corroborative evidence whatever ? If I believe in the genuineness of the holy coat, do you not believe in the genuineness of the Pentateuch ? Have you not been calling the Bishop of Natal hard names, and charging him with abandonment of the faith, because he asserts, and gives his reasons for thinking, that your holy coat is no genuine relic, inasmuch as "the very texture and material of the thing prove it to be spurious" ? If I believe that portions of the true cross are at Rome and elsewhere, do you not hold that not a portion only but the whole, or something very like the whole, of the writings of Moses have come down to us in their integrity ? If the tradition of the Jews, who, as you say, ought to know best, is that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, does not the tradition of Catholics, who ought to know best, affirm that the holy coat was worn by our Lord ? What are the difficulties against this supposition compared with those which Bishop Colenso has urged against your theory of the authorship of the Pentateuch ? I see that in your opinion the debate is ended by asking, "If Moses did not write these books, who did ?" Bentley, as the Bishop of Natal remarks, would, of course, have said that it was no part of his business to determine, if Phalaris did not write the epistles of Phalaris, who did write them. But at the least I have as good a right to ask, "If the holy coat is not the work of those who wove it for our Lord, whose work is it ?"

It is strange, indeed, that Mr. Kingsley should not have seen with how serious a matter he was dealing. He was bound, by the terms of Dr. Newman's *Essay*, to prove that miracles called ecclesiastical stand on a different footing from those in the Bible. He attempted nothing of the sort; but he turned savagely on the Bishop of Natal because he called into question the genuineness of a relic about which Mr. Kingsley refused to entertain a doubt. These facts alone would suffice to show not merely how thoroughly the Bishop of Natal was justified in undertaking his task, but how urgently his work was called for. If the clergy and laity of the Church of England had seen things in the light in which they were beheld by Dr. Thirlwall, all the criticisms proving that the really historical residuum in the Pentateuch was less than they had taken it to be would have been received with interest indeed, but dispassionately, as in no way affecting any higher concerns. Questions relating to the families of the Patriarchs, to the sojourn of the Israelites first in Egypt, then in the desert, to the promulgation of the moral, the civil, and ecclesiastical codes, would have been treated on the footing of questions relating to the expulsion and return of the Heracleids, to the legislation of Lykourgos (Lycurgus) or Drakon (Draco), of Solon, or Numa, or Manu. One man, and one man only, amongst the Bishops of English sees, had the insight to discern and the courage to say this, and he said it with a clearness which left no room for misapprehension.¹ In his judgement we were no more called upon to explain away difficulties in the story of Samson, or in the annals of the children of Jacob, than to take part in the search for the philosopher's stone or the elixir of life. But the replies which came forth in shoals on the publication of each part of the Bishop's work implied without exception that, if the defence of these narratives were not made good,

¹ See p. 310.

Christianity itself must fall. The Bishop's First Part pointed out the self-contradictions in the accounts of the children and grandchildren of Jacob, and other like difficulties in the earlier portions of the Pentateuch; and the self-styled orthodox champions hurried into the fight without waiting to see whether their labours might not all be rendered useless by arguments and evidence still to be adduced. Such evidence was produced in the Third Part, which had for its special object to show the composite character of the Pentateuch, and the later date at which much of it must have come into existence. On the supposition that it was all the work of one author, some of the explanations proffered might seem to prop up a tottering wall; but if it should be proved that it was not, and could not be, the work of one author, then these efforts must, as the Bishop insisted,

“be dismissed at once as merely ingenious attempts—like the cycles and epicycles of the old Ptolemaic system of astronomy—to build up a theory which has no real foundation in fact, and which falls at last by the weight of its own cumbrous additions, and must be swept away together with them.”¹

Some of these pleaders seemed to think that, if they shifted a difficulty ever so slightly, they had got rid of it altogether. The Bishop had pointed out the very astonishing consequences involved in the directions given to the priest, Leviticus iv. 12, about the carrying of the dead victims to a place without the camp. The Bishop had treated this as a task imposed upon the priest personally; and at once a broadside was opened against his Hebrew scholarship, and his folly in forgetting that the verb had here a causal meaning. The point is by no means certain; but the difficulty remains much where it was.

“I am quite ready,” the Bishop rejoined, “to admit that the Hebrew word here employed *may* be used in the sense of

¹ *Pentateuch*, Part III. p. viii.

carrying out with the help of others. But the stress of my argument is not laid upon the necessity of the priest himself in person doing this, but upon the fact that it *had to be done by somebody*,—that all the ashes, offal, and filth of every kind, for a vast city as large as London, without any kind of sewage arrangements, had to be carried out daily through the crowded streets a distance of six miles.”¹

Difficulties such as these were met by Mr. Maurice with an indignant remonstrance against the temper which could cast such foulness in his face,² when the only matter of any moment was the training of the people to the conviction of the Divine rule and the Divine love. To this, again, no objection needed to be made, provided only that all were ready with Mr. Maurice to treat the Pentateuch merely as a storehouse of wholesome lessons and edifying instruction. The case was altered when others spoke as if the way was made fairly clear by the hypothesis that many of the laws were never meant to be carried out in the wilderness. Thus they disposed of the difficulty about the pigeons or turtledoves, although these are ordered, as the story states, by Jehovah Himself, as an easy offering for a poor man to bring, with express reference to their life in the wilderness.³

This method of putting a part for the whole runs through many or most of the replies put forth to the Bishop's earlier volumes. A writer in the *Edinburgh Review*⁴ eulogized an anonymous layman's treatise⁵ as effectually disposing “of the greater part of Dr. Colenso's objections” by appealing “entirely to the direct evidence of the Pentateuch itself, interpreted by common-sense.” The Reviewer was mistaken. The objections in general were not removed at all; and it is

¹ *Pentateuch*, Part II. p. xiv.

² He had himself already spoken of sanitary laws as a necessary part of the Divine work. See p. 433.

³ *Pentateuch*, Part II. p. xiv.

⁴ No. 240, p. 505.

⁵ *The Historic Character of the Pentateuch Vindicated*.

obvious (1) that, so long as any remained, the ground taken by Mr. Burgon and Dr. Baylee was lost ; and (2) that it was only against this position that the Bishop's labours were directed. Had it been universally admitted that the narratives of the Pentateuch were records comparable precisely with the records of the invasion of Xerxes, or the exploits of the Roman kings, the "intelligent Zulu" would have had no need to put his searching questions, or, if he had, even Lord Macaulay's school-boy would have known how to answer them. The layman's method, however, affected to dispose of one of the chief difficulties connected with the numbers of the Israelites at the time of the Exodus by assuming that Jacob went down into Egypt with "a thousand or more" followers, who were all reckoned as his children, and as the forefathers of the two or three millions who escaped from captivity ; and this in the teeth of the plain statement in Deuteronomy (x. 22), "Thy fathers went down into Egypt with three score and ten persons," and although, as the Bishop adds,

"it is equally plain that ten asses (Genesis xiii. 26, 27) could scarcely have brought up corn enough from Egypt to support a thousand servants, besides Jacob's own children and grandchildren, for twelve months in a time of famine."

After the same fashion the perplexities involved in the numbers of the priests are supposed to be met by the supposition that the priests formed originally five households, of which Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar were the heads ; that each of the families consisted of about forty souls, including a considerable number of servants ; and that all the males of the proper age among them all were reckoned as sons of Aaron, and priests, although it is distinctly stated that there were only three. Another objection, which, the layman allowed, would, if established, be fatal to the entire argument, was thought to be disposed of by the

assertion that the first-borns of man were not to be "openers of the womb," although it is distinctly stated (Exodus xiii. 2) that they were.

The Bishops generally seemed to think it their duty to treat Dr. Colenso's work as almost beneath contempt. Bishop Wilberforce spoke of his arguments as "but the repetition of old and often-answered cavils," but at the same time denounced the book as doing an amount of evil which it was difficult to estimate. If Bishop Wilberforce meant that these arguments had been satisfactorily and conclusively answered, it was surely nothing less than his duty, and that of all his colleagues on the bench who agreed with him, to put forth these answers, and commend them with their solemn sanction to the whole body of the faithful. But nothing of the sort was done, or seemingly even thought of. Of collective action there was none. Individually some of them pronounced his criticisms to be "rash and feeble," "unfounded, false, and childish;" and one of them in one short letter, forbidding him to minister in his diocese, applied either to him or to his work the following choice expressions—"heretical," "blasphemous," "abominable," "unhappy," "blind," "daring," "ignorant self-sufficiency," "instrument of Satan," "poor Bishop Colenso."¹

In truth, while from all parts of the country he was receiving letters of sympathy from clergymen and laymen, urging him to carry on and complete his labours, he might well confess himself disappointed at the course adopted towards him by the great body of his episcopal brethren.

"I had no reason," he said, "to suppose that I should receive from *all* of them expressions of sympathy or encouraging help in my work. . . . But I did not imagine that so many Bishops of England, with the Bishop of Oxford at their head, would have absolutely ignored the existence of such a science as Biblical criticism, and its undoubted and

¹ *Pentateuch*, Part III. p. xv.

undeniable results in its application to the earlier Hebrew Scriptures. I believed that there were men of science and scholars among them, who, being acquainted generally with these results, would be aware of their reality and importance, and who would feel it to be impossible, in this age of inquiry, any longer to bar out their admission, as facts to be taken account of, like any of the facts of science, by the more intelligent minds of the Church of England. I had hoped that their influence would have prevailed to check the hasty judgement of others, less informed than themselves on these matters ; and that if my episcopal brethren generally, did not think it expedient to hold out to me a brotherly right hand of fellowship—if they condemned me as going too far in my conclusions, or as reasoning too confidently on insufficient premises—they would at least have recognised that my arguments were not altogether without some real foundation, and ought to be judged upon their merits, ought to be considered, and, if need be, checked and corrected, not merely thrown aside with contemptuous language, as unfounded and ridiculous. I could not have believed, for instance, that the Bishop of Oxford would have ventured to say that my ‘speculations, so rash and feeble in themselves,’ are ‘in all essential points but the repetition of old and often-answered cavils against the Word of God,’ and still less that his Grace the Primate of All England would have pronounced, with the high authority of his office, that my objections ‘are, for the most part, puerile and trite ; so puerile that an intelligent youth who read his Bible with care, could draw the fitting answers from the Bible itself—so trite that they have been again and again refuted, two hundred years ago by Archbishop Ussher, one of the most learned analysts of this or of any country, more recently by Bishop Watson and others.’”¹

If nothing more was needed for their complete refutation than the intelligence of an average youth who read his Bible carefully, the great learning of Archbishop Ussher must have

¹ *Pentateuch*, Part III. p xviii.

been wasted on a task unworthy of his powers. But not one word of the Primate's statement was true in fact ; and, as the Bishop of Natal temperately urged, "the writings of Archbishop Ussher and Bishop Watson will throw no light whatever upon the most important questions which are here discussed." But, in truth, Archbishop Longley allowed himself to use language which, if employed for instance in the long controversies on the origin, growth, or composition of the Homeric poems, would have covered the critic with disgrace. Not content with expressing his contempt for the Bishop's "puerilities," he ranged the readers of his book into three ranks or categories—the ignorant, the half-informed, and those who rejoiced "in anything which can free them from the troublesome restraints of religion." This is one of those vast falsehoods of which we may hope that Archbishop Longley, were he Primate still, would be now ashamed. But the Bishop, now as always unruffled, replied simply :—

"The object of my whole book is to bind the consciences of men more imperatively than ever by the law of true religion, which is the law of life and happiness. But inasmuch as multitudes have already broken loose from the restraints of that traditional teaching, which they know to be contradicted by some of the most familiar results of modern science, now made the common heritage of every educated English child, I believe that I have only done my duty, as a minister of the National Church, in endeavouring to re-establish a permanent union between the teachings of religion and science, and to heal effectively that breach between them, which otherwise will assuredly widen day by day, with infinite injury to the Church itself, and to the whole community."¹

But again and again the Bishops tried to divert the controversy to false issues. They would have it, for instance,

¹ *Pentateuch*, Part III. p. xviii.

that Dr. Colenso "denied the inspiration of the Bible." He had not done so, and indeed he had not in these volumes entered into the question at all. His only aim had been "to examine critically the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua," with the special purpose of determining, as far as possible, the age and authorship of the different books. They insisted further that he wished to prove the whole Pentateuch, and, in fact, the whole Bible, to be untrue. Nothing, he replied, could be further from his wish and purpose.

"Rather," he said, "I desire to know what *is* true in the Pentateuch history, and in the Bible generally. I wish to know, if possible, in what age, by what persons, under what circumstances, the different portions of the Bible were written, that I may be able to judge for myself, and help others to judge, the amount of credibility to be attached to the different narratives. . . . The process of critical inquiry, so far from eliciting proofs and confirmations of the Mosaic origin of these books, leads quite to the opposite conclusion. All the arguments drawn from an examination of the Pentateuch point in one direction. It is well to observe this. There is literally *nothing* in these books distinctly indicative of Mosaic authorship. The whole force of the argument for that authorship rests upon tradition, and may be referred back to the opinion of the Jews who lived nearly a thousand years after the date assigned to Moses. It is not a question of *balanced internal evidence*, but a case where there is a *host* of indications all tending to show diversity of authorship and late date, and *none* discoverable, by all the ingenuity yet brought to bear upon the subject, which tends decidedly the other way; and the supporters of the traditional view will be found to be constantly occupied—not in producing 'internal evidence' to show that Moses *did* write the Pentateuch, but—in trying to account for the existence, on the assumption of his authorship, of so much internal evidence of the contrary. In short, the strength of the resistance to the critical

conclusion lies in the feeling that we do not *like* to think that those books could have grown up in the way which the 'internal evidence' clearly indicates,—the way in which, be it observed, the religious books of all other nations are known to have been formed."

"I have felt it to be my duty," he went on to say, "to lay the facts of the case before the English reader. . . . I believe that I have succeeded in this to some extent, though I must confess that I have been surprised at the amount of ingenuity which, even in an age like this, can still be expended in framing all kinds of possible or impossible ways of escape from the most overwhelming difficulties."

Further than this, the Bishops charged him with imputing dishonesty to the clergy generally for concealing their views about the Deluge, and using the Baptismal Form of Prayer without believing it. The charge was not true; and if any words used by him could fairly be made to express this meaning, he would, he said, have regretted and apologized for the use of language capable of being so misconstrued.¹ He had acted simply in self-defence. Accused of dishonesty himself, in retaining his clerical office while disbelieving many or most of the details of the story of the Exodus, he replied

"that Wyclif did not retire from his sacred office, though disbelieving the doctrines of the Church of which he was a minister; and that Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer, and other Bishops, though consecrated as Bishops of the Roman Church, and bound by the solemn vows of their ordination in that Church, did not resign their sees as soon as they became Protestant Bishops, and the National Church by the national will had become Protestant also; nor afterwards, when, by the same will, the Church ceased to be Protestant, and once more became Romanised. But I felt that in the present instance there was far less reason for urging upon me such a course as a plain duty, inasmuch as

¹ *Pentateuch*, Part III. p. xxi.

very many of the clergy, I believed, and certainly not a few of my episcopal brethren, did *not* accept the story of the Noachian deluge as literally and historically true, and yet justified themselves in retaining their offices in the Church. If my conduct was dishonest, so, too, was theirs; for my 'dishonesty,' surely, could not consist in openly professing that which others secretly held."¹

Far, however, from imputing dishonesty to them, he gave certain reasons which he thought would satisfy different classes of minds, and enable them still with a clear conscience to use the form of prayer which referred to that narrative.

But the disingenuousness of the great majority of the prelates of the Church of England was shown still more glaringly in the joint letter which they addressed to the Bishop of Natal, calling upon him to resign.² They were well aware that the position of the clergy in England had been much affected by recent decisions of the Court of Arches and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and that the effect of these judgements was greatly to extend the range of their freedom. Of some of these facts the Bishop of Natal could not be aware at the time of writing some of the sentences on which the prelates fastened; but they proceeded, nevertheless, to judge him out of his own mouth, without betraying any consciousness that the circumstances of the case were no longer what they had been.

"(1) We understand you to say," they wrote, "that you do not now believe that which you voluntarily professed to believe as the indispensable condition of your being intrusted with your present office.

"(2) We understand you to say that you have entertained, and have not abandoned, the conviction that you could not use the Ordination Service, inasmuch as in it you must

¹ *Pentateuch*, Part III. p. xxiii.

² See p. 236.

require from others a solemn declaration that they 'unfeignedly believe all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments,' which, with the evidence now before you, it is impossible wholly to believe in.

"(3) We understand you further to intimate that those who think with you are precluded from using the Baptismal Service, and consequently (as we must infer) other offices of the Prayer Book, unless they omit all such passages as assume the truth of the Mosaic history."

The comments added to these three suppositions show that they were meant to serve as nooses to catch an unwary victim. How different the comments might have been, and how different the results following from those comments, the Bishops were not aware. Their words had not ascribed to the Bishop of Natal any definite offence, or shown that these three headings involved any offence at all. They do not state what it was that the Bishop of Natal had, at the time of his ordination, voluntarily professed to believe; and it did not of necessity follow that, in believing this, whatever it may have been, he was right. The fact is that he was not right, and one at least of the English Bishops, Dr. Thirlwall, of St. David's, felt that he had not been right. Had all of them seen things as Bishop Thirlwall saw them, their comments would have taken probably the following form :—

We understand you to say that you no longer hold a certain belief which you held at the time of your ordination; and from your writings we gather that you felt yourself bound by this belief to accept every single incident in the narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures as historical fact. We are thankful to be able to disabuse you of a mistaken notion, and to assure you that in accusing yourself of failure in duty by abandoning this notion you were led astray by an over-sensitive and scrupulous conscience. Your error lay in the old belief or idea, not in the abandonment of it. We are aware that such ideas are still entertained by some

amongst both the clergy and the laity ; but it is a groundless superstition. The Church holds, and has always held, that the voice of God may be heard in the Scriptures of the Old Testament and of the New ; but it has never said or meant that they should be treated as though the narratives found in them were all genuine history, or as though the prophets and righteous men whose words we read in them were guaranteed against all mistakes and errors. If we have at any time so spoken as to countenance this popular delusion, we take blame to ourselves ; and we welcome your work as showing clearly how the Scriptures should be studied, and as helping the people to realise more fully the real nature of the Divine Kingdom and the Divine work in the world.

These things might have been, and should have been, said ; but we have to come down to hard facts.

The Bishop's answers to these inferences or assumptions are so important that they must be cited almost in full. He had to reply to one of the craftiest documents that ever came from a body of hierophants conscious that the popular faith in their own authority was being assailed and shaken. They were trying to pin an honourable and single-minded man to his own words in a sense which might, as they hoped, constrain him to withdraw from the struggle, and leave them masters of the field. They were careful at the same time so to lay their snare as to impart the semblance of a judicial authority to their interpretations of the promises made at ordination and consecration. They juggled (the word cannot be withheld) with their phrases, when they said that the Bishop had to obtain from candidates for orders a declaration 'that they "*believe* the canonical Scriptures" which now he found it impossible to *believe in*. Christians, and, it is to be hoped, all men, believe in God alone : to other things they may give credit, they can do no more. But the Bishops were insinuating throughout that the acceptance of an immense number of

incidents of all sorts and kinds as historical events was the most important condition imposed on candidates for orders, so that when in the daily office the priest declares the forgiveness of sin for all who unfeignedly believe the Holy Gospel, this means not so much the thankful welcome of the message of healing, strength, peace, and love, as the receiving without question as genuine historical events every incident in the narratives relating to the Nativity or the Passion. By speaking of certain prayers in the offices of the Church of England as assuming the truth of the Mosaic history, and insinuating on this ground that an acceptance of every incident in that history as actual fact was imposed as a sacred duty on all the clergy, they were making a demand still more monstrous, and were doing their best to choke the spiritual life of the country. When, as a candidate for orders, Mr. Maurice was asked what were the erroneous and strange doctrines which he undertook to banish and put away, he specified among others the doctrines that there is any goodness in the creature disunited from God ; that there is any bar to the admission of a sinner into God's presence, except that which his own unbelief creates ; that men are more anxious to attain the knowledge of God than He is anxious to bring them to that knowledge ; that man can worship God except in the Spirit ; and that there is any reward so great or glorious which God can offer to His creatures as that of making them partakers of His Divine character. These are truths or realities on which men can live, without which they cannot live ; and yet the prelates could speak as though their own minds and those of their clergy were, or ought to be, running at least equally on the duty of believing that historically the ass of Balaam spoke with articulate human speech, or that Samson smote a thousand Philistines with an ass's jaw-bone. The very thought of such superstition is to the last degree humiliating ; and it was a happy thing for the future history of English thought

that the Bishop of Natal avoided the trap thus laid for him.

As to the first of the three assumptions made by the prelates who addressed him, he said that at the time of his ordination he understood the words "believe unfeignedly all the canonical Scriptures"

"in their obvious and most natural sense,—the sense in which some of the Bishops and many of the clergy at this very time receive them,—as implying that those Scriptures were, in matters of historical fact, as well as in statements of moral and religious truth, divinely and infallibly true."

"I have said also," he added, "that I had ceased to believe this, and that I was pained to find my convictions contradicting, as I conceived, the words of the Ordination Service, until it was declared, on the highest legal authority of the Church of England, that my former view—I may say the popular view—of the meaning of those words was mistaken, and that they must be held to mean no more than a simple expression of a *bonâ fide* belief that 'the Holy Scriptures contain everything necessary to salvation,' and that, 'to that extent, they have the direct sanction of the Almighty.'"

On the second of their remarks he reminded them that, although he had at one time

"felt the impossibility of demanding from a candidate for orders such a confession of belief in the Holy Scriptures as [he] then considered, and as many still consider, to be required by the formula of the Ordination Service,"

he had added, since reading in England the judgement of Dr. Lushington, that his words were written before that decision, which had, of course, materially affected his conclusion.

Of their third assumption he said that it

"is contradicted by my own language already referred to (Part II. p. xxii.), where I have said that many clergymen

who do not believe in the historical truth of the Noachian Deluge will yet be able to justify themselves, in one of two ways, in using still such a form of prayer. If it is perfectly understood that a minister is at full liberty to explain to his people freely his opinion respecting the Biblical account of the Deluge, the unhistorical character of the Mosaic story, or the age and authorship of Deuteronomy (and this appears likewise to be decided in the affirmative by the same legal judgement), I apprehend that many who have an intelligent acquaintance with the results of modern criticism, may still be content to read the allusions in the Liturgy. But I felt also that there might be others, of more scrupulous conscience, who would not be satisfied with this mode of meeting the difficulty, and to whom I could give no other advice than that which I have given—viz. to *omit* such expressions, and take the consequences of such omission. I consider, however, that such passages ought no longer to be retained, as of absolute obligation, in our Prayer Book; and I hold it to be my duty, as a Bishop of the National Church, to labour for their removal—or, at least, for the liberty being granted of omitting them—as soon as possible.”¹

In giving this advice the Bishop was, as it so happened, fully borne out by the Primate, Dr. Longley.² To the Bishop of Natal this support was satisfactory, and in a certain sense it was eminently so; but there was, nevertheless, this difference, that, at the worst, the using of the words in the Burial Service over the remains of those who had lived unworthily, or shockingly, would but express trust in a love stronger than spiritual death, trust in a righteousness which will make each undergo the discipline which they have deserved and which they need, trust in a will which is eternally at war with evil, and which will remove and destroy it in the end. By the advice which he gave, Archbishop Longley was virtually expressing distrust in this Almighty love and this righteousness; by his

¹ *Pentateuch*, Part III. p. xxvi.

² See p. 326.

counsel to clergymen in perplexity the Bishop of Natal was affirming it.

But the Bishop was the last person to say or to think that the course which he took or the position which he occupied must in every instance be right. As against the prelates, who, if they were to be judged exclusively by the words of their letter, seemed dead to all spiritual perceptions, he was perfectly right. The extravagant views or fancies which were fast becoming an incubus on the thought of the country made his challenge indispensably necessary; but apart from these absurdities it would have been less urgently called for. Dean Stanley was one of those who would put all these follies out of sight and keep them out of his mind, and if this could always have been done by all, it might perhaps have been a gain for Christendom. For those who can throw themselves into his mode of thought, questions of historical credibility become, in reference to the province of faith, matters of supreme insignificance and indifference. If some portions of the offices of the Church of England make mention of the Noachian flood, and the passage of the Red Sea, of the marriage of Abraham and Sara, of Isaac and Rebekah, all these are merely illustrations of the Divine government of the world or of the Divine love. They mean nothing else; and apart from this significance the incidents themselves become mere chaff, husks, and straw, lacking utterly all nourishing power. If these illustrations fail, millions more are forthcoming. It was Mr. Maurice's special fallacy that, without the narrative of the Exodus, the truth that God is a deliverer from bondage and tyranny could not be brought home to the hearts of men.

Regarded in this light, all so-called historical difficulties may be said with truth not so much to be solved as to fade away. In another channel the history of Christianity has been the history of the petrification of spiritual life into a set

of outward symbols, which are supposed to point to historical incidents; and its future history must be the history of deliverance from this house of bondage. In the words of an eminent layman :—

“Such terms as forgiveness, reconciliation, and salvation, instead of representing experiences of the believer—processes of his spiritual life—came to represent certain Divine transactions, in which the believer had no personal part, though through faith he had the benefit of them in the acquisition of final happiness. The death and resurrection of Christ ceased to be looked upon as perpetually re-enacted in the surrender of the fleshly self, and the substitution for it of a new man in the moral life. They became past events by which certain blessings had been obtained for us, or Divine testimony given to an authority claiming our obedience.”

Against this falling back, which was also a falling away, there had been more than one protest already.

“Having come to be understood as no more than an acceptance of the authority of the Church and obedience to its rules, faith was restored by Luther to the meaning of an assurance of sonship in Christ, founded on personal experience. This was so far a gain; but it did not carry with it—most Christians would have said that it would have been pernicious if it had carried with it—any change in the view of man’s redemption as achieved by past historical events. The death and resurrection were not interpreted into present realities within the experience of the believer.”

With reference to these eternal realities, St. Paul

“seemed to himself to die daily, and rise again with Christ, and it was this moral and personal experience that gave reality in his eyes to the supposed historical events.”

But, by the hardening process which marks the dogmatic theology of the Christian Churches,

“faith is regarded as necessarily involving the belief that propositions asserting the actual occurrences of these events are true. The saving faith on which Protestants insist is doubtless held to imply much more than such an acceptance of certain propositions ; but though much more, it cannot, according to the common conception, be less than this. But the more strongly we insist that faith is a personal and conscious relation of the man to God, . . . the more weakened becomes its dependence on events believed to have happened in the past. . . . It is not on any estimate of evidence, correct or incorrect, that our true holiness can depend. Neither if we believe certain documents to be genuine and authentic can we be the better, nor if we believe it not, the worse. There is thus an inner contradiction in that conception of faith which makes it a state of mind involving peace with God and love towards all mankind, and at the same time makes its object that historical work of Christ of which our knowledge depends on evidence of uncertain origin and value.”¹

From the serener region in which the layman is free to move and breathe, we are drawn down to the heavier air of the traditional dogmatism which does not represent the true spirit of the Church of England, and which can never do more than give a stone where bread is asked for. It is a wretched necessity ; but the language of his opponents left the Bishop no alternative. Well might he ask how, if the acceptance of the old Pentateuchal or other narratives as historical was the Christian's first duty, his conduct differed from theirs in respect of honest adherence to the principles

¹ *The Witness of God, and Faith*, two lay sermons, 1870, 1878. By T. H. Green, M.A., Whyte's Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Oxford. Pp. 59 and 68.

I make no apology for quoting these passages from one of the most remarkable sermons written within the life-time of any now living. These two sermons were preached in the Chapel of Balliol College. Their importance, as showing the channel into which the deepest religious thought of the age is flowing, can scarcely be exaggerated.

of the Church of England. After his reply to the letter of the prelates, the Bishop of Oxford was the first to issue a letter of inhibition, and most of the other Bishops had "followed him in adopting this extraordinary mode of public Church censure, upon the mere judgement of each individual Bishop, without any hearing or trial of the accused." Before his countrymen, therefore, he put to the Bishop of Oxford, as the guide and representative of his colleagues, this question :—

"Does he, a Fellow of the Royal and other scientific Societies, believe unfeignedly in the literal historical truth of the account of the Creation, the Noachian Deluge, or the numbers of the Exodus? . . . If he does not, then how, I repeat, does his present conduct differ essentially from mine? *He* has some way of explaining these matters, which satisfies his own mind, as I have. And the only difference is this, that I think it to be my duty, and shall make it my practice, to tell my people plainly, on such points, what I believe, and what I know to be true; and the Bishop of Oxford has not yet, as far as I am aware, thought it necessary to say what he really thinks upon any one of these subjects."

It was indeed difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain what Bishop Wilberforce and his colleagues did believe as to this matter. They had expressed themselves in strong terms as "resting their hopes of eternity on the Word of God." "But that," the Bishop remarks, "I trust I do as truly and entirely as they." What, however, is the Word of God, which, in the language of the first Homily, is "contained in Holy Scripture"? The question was answered by Dean Milman in these few plain words :—

"The moral and religious truth, *and this alone*, I apprehend, is the Word of God, contained in the sacred writings. I know no passage in which this emphatic term is applied to

any sentence or saying which does not convey or enforce such truth."

To the Dean's words the language of the Bishops presented a pitiable contrast ; but the qualifications and reservations which underlay their professed unanimity call for a harder term. On the one side was the assertion that

"the very foundation of our faith, our nearest and dearest consolations, are taken from us, if one line of that Sacred Book be declared to be unfaithful and untrustworthy."

On the other hand there was the assurance that

"every line of Scripture will amply bear the pressure of any test applied to it, if viewed with relation to the subject it really refers to, the state mentally and morally of those to whom it was addressed, and the effect it was intended to convey."

Probably nowhere, certainly not among Mahometans, or Brahmans, or Buddhists, could a more barefaced method be propounded for the easy covering of every difficulty, for establishing any preconceived conclusion, and for making anything mean anything.

Of the value of the results which this method might be made to yield Dr. Pusey had never a moment's doubt. It would meet all objections urged by the Bishop of Natal, or by any one else, as fast as they were made. The Bishop might appeal to Galileo, as one who upset the Mosaic account of the Creation. The appeal was irrelevant. It was wrong to condemn Galileo. The Book of Genesis really said only what Galileo said. It never was of faith (*de fide*) to hold that the earth stands still while the sun moves. It was simply a wrong interpretation ; and the same may be said of every other question. The language of the books in the Bible may seem to assert or to imply that the earth is

a flat plane, with a solid heaven stretched over it, which God may bow to touch the mountains and make them smoke. The words of St. Paul may seem to speak of all men as rising together at the end of the world from a plane surface to a common centre in the air. The Psalmists may seem to speak of an earth which cannot be moved. But the appearances are all delusive. What they really set forth is the Copernican astronomy, which the accusers of Galileo most culpably failed to discover in its pages. What if it be, as the Bishop of Natal urged, a scientific fact that the universe existed for unimaginable ages before man walked the earth? This may have been puzzling once, but why should it cause any difficulty now? Is there not a great *chasm* between the verse, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and "The earth was waste and desolate"? It is strange, perhaps, that no one should have thought of this before; but then "we had," Dr. Pusey replied, "no occasion to think of a gap which we had no data to fill up." Dr. Buckland and Sir Charles Lyell have supplied the data, and the gap is found. There is nothing more to be done. It is, he insisted,

"absolutely certain that the Bible does not say that the earth was created at any definite past time, and that between its original creation mentioned in verse 1 and man's creation there is room, if need be, for time countless by man."

If any are so unrighteous as to think that Dr. Pusey's chasm does not much mend the matter, inasmuch as the first verse is followed by a consecutive history which places the creation of the sun and moon at a later stage than that of the earth, we must suppose that more gaps will be found which carnal sight is too dull to espy. So with the Deluge. If some ask how the wingless birds of New Zealand or Australia came into the ark, the answer is that they never

came at all, and that God created them afresh when the waters had subsided. If anyone be perplexed by the chronology of the Noachian genealogies, the doubt is knocked on the head by the answer that God did not mean them to be "exact measures of man's existence on the earth." If, according to Augustine, God has a right to doom to endless agonies the infant of an hour old who dies unbaptized, has He not also the right of setting forth a pictorial chronology? Dr. Pusey could not see the possibility of doubting this.

"St. Matthew," he insisted, "omitted purposely in one place some names, in others, others; and used the word *beget* of the grandfather or of the grandfather's grandfather. . . . Since, then, St. Matthew employed fourteen, not as an actual number, but probably as a symbolical number, we need not say positively that Moses did not in like way employ ten, as it often seems to be used, as a mysterious number, significant of completeness, and the word *beget* of the grandfather, as St. Matthew did."

From reasoning such as this it would seem to follow that one falsehood is rendered historical by adducing the parallel of another falsehood. Of one thing only can we be assured. The Gospel according to St. Matthew, as we have it, says that from Abraham to David *there are* fourteen generations; what the writer really meant, it seems, is that there were a good many more than fourteen, but that his symmetrical chronology made it inconvenient to mention them.

If we can speak seriously of this astounding method of adaptation, should we not say that Dr. Pusey deserved the gratitude of all who have Sacred Books, the statements of which seem to need manipulation in order to bring them into harmony with scientific or historical facts? But miserable as all this shuffling may be, it is somewhat less repulsive than the brazen hypothesis which would uphold the credit of the Hebrew Scriptures by charging God Himself with falsehood.

According to this hypothesis, the whole existence of man on the earth to the present time, has not exceeded six millenniums ; and the earth's strata point to a lapse of many myriads of years. If the chalk cliffs had never grown from the first at a more rapid rate than that of coral reefs and islands now, the years of the world must be reckoned almost by millions. But all these appearances are, we are told, delusive, and were purposely caused to be delusive. God imparted this semblance of age to works by comparison of yesterday, in order to confuse the human mind, and humble the pride of the human intellect. This is, indeed, to make God a liar, and to make Him such for the express purpose of bewildering and misleading His creatures ; and yet some who could stoop to such wretched shifts could denounce the Bishop of Natal for deliberate impiety for saying that when Jesus spoke of Mosaic books or of the Mosaic law, he may have only shared the popular opinion of the day. It was, perhaps, scarcely necessary that the controversy thus provoked should have been raised ; and on the whole we may regret that it was raised. It was renewed with almost more than its first virulence at the Capetown trial ; and it may be that the abuse heaped on the Bishop, both there and in England, might have been avoided, by insisting simply that it was *impossible* for Jesus to speak otherwise than as He spoke.¹ But the theological hatred had been fully roused by the Bishop's words. The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke of them as "derogatory to the person, the attributes, and the work of our Divine Redeemer," and as "charging Him who knew what was in man, with ignorance and imposture." The Archbishop of York reproached him with "having imputed to the Lord of Glory ignorance of holy things," and with "having described our Lord as a blind guide, quoting for the very bread of life the baseless fables of men." One prelate

¹ See p. 307, *note*.

only, the courageous and judicially-minded Bishop of St. David's, came forward to say that this was not a question of holy things at all, and that, if the Bishop of Natal was on this point in error, the error was shared by Jeremy Taylor.¹ But, in truth, the notion which the two Archbishops seemed to regard as indispensable to soundness in the Christian faith was practically unknown to the Ante-Nicene Church. Athanasius himself had said plainly that "as, on becoming man, He hungers and thirsts and suffers with men, so with men, as man, *He knows not.*" Of this language Dr. Pusey was constrained to say that it certainly *seems* to impute ignorance to our Lord as man. To Cyril it was evidence of His love, that He could "bring Himself down to so great humiliation as to bear all things that are ours, one of which also is *ignorance.*" The utterances of Chrysostom and Augustine are not less explicit; nor is Jeremy Taylor the only theologian of more recent times who has entertained the same opinion. The words of Hammond, Lightfoot, and many others, are cited in an admirable letter addressed by Mr. Houghton to the Bishop, and inserted by the latter in the preface to the Third Part of his book on the Pentateuch. The Bishop felt deeply the sincerity and courage shown by Mr. Houghton in thus coming forward in a controversy in which he had at first taken the opposite side. Mr. Houghton had published a pamphlet in reply to Part I.; but before he wrote his letter he had withdrawn that reply from circulation. It was impossible for him to deny that "the Bible and science were opposed to each other." A four years' examination of almost every word in the Bible relating to natural history had convinced him that

"in many and essential points, the Biblical and natural records are, to use the words of the learned and candid Kalisch, utterly and irreconcilably at variance."

¹ See p. 309.

It was, therefore, absurd to speak of the Bible as being infallible in the sense in which the popular creed assumes it to be ; but Mr. Houghton was sure, nevertheless, that it contained "a jewel of heavenly lustre and of priceless value," and that it was madness in men to refuse to drink of the water of life because it was offered to them in an earthen vessel.

From these manly and wholesome utterances it is, in truth, depressing to return to the Report of the Committee of the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury appointed to examine the first two parts of the Bishop's work.¹ Of this Committee, Archdeacon Denison, who had moved for it, was the chairman ; but here, as elsewhere, the paramount influence was that of Bishop Wilberforce, whose own convictions as to the historical value of the Old Testament records it was then, as it is still, impossible to ascertain. It was Bishop Wilberforce who had striven to impress upon the nation the duty of taking a signal vengeance on the Indian mutineers. It was his crusading zeal which now led his followers to break the bounds of all decent moderation. Whether among these Archdeacon Denison was to be reckoned, it might be rash to say. He might be acting as a fellow-leader, when, having expressed a wish to "avoid the appearance of approaching to intemperance in thought and language," he confined himself to speaking of the Bishop of Natal as "a sacrilegious person," as one ready to "damage the Bible by misrepresentation, to tear out its leaves, mutilate it, and desecrate what is left."

"I am going to say," he added, "if any man asserts such things as are asserted in this book, '*Anathema esto!* Let him be put away.'"

Nor was this enough to satisfy his sense of fairness. He, a judge, addressing himself to judges, who were about to

¹ See p. 303.

examine and pronounce on the merits or demerits of a given book, could have the triple brass to say—

“I have no doubt—at all events, I hope—that there are many here who have not read the First Part, and I am sure that there are many who have not read the Second Part,”

of the work on which they were about to pass sentence. Such was the justice of English ecclesiastics in the latter half of the nineteenth century, a justice which might seem to be borrowed from Archbishop Laud and his colleagues in the seventeenth. But it had a strange look, as being exhibited to the world after the decision of Dr. Lushington in the prosecution connected with the volume of *Essays and Reviews*. On three points the terms of this decision were broadened by the final ruling of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. In other respects it was unchallenged, and remains the law of the Church of England. Dr. Lushington's judgement was rejected with contempt at the so-called trial of the Bishop of Natal by the Metropolitan of Southern Africa; but it is for all who have not, like the clergy of the Church of South Africa, bartered away their rights, a safeguard for the liberties of the Church of England. It rests on the principle that the judge is not to travel away from the Articles and formularies, either to the decrees of Councils or to passages of Holy Scripture, of which it would become necessary that the judge should be the interpreter.

Dr. Lushington's comment¹ is almost more important than his ruling. All liberty carries with it its own especial danger; and the man who acts or speaks as though all things were expedient for him because they were lawful must be as strangely wanting in charity as in discretion. The office of the Christian priest or teacher is to guide, educate, comfort, and cheer his people. Will he be discharging his duty, if to

¹ See p. 325.

the folk of a country parish who possess perhaps not a book beyond the Bible he bluntly announces that Deuteronomy is the work of the Prophet Jeremiah, or that the belief of an immediately impending Parousia in the Apostolic age was a delusion? It is enough that the clergy are as free as the laity in the Church of England to examine and criticise the books of the Bible by the tests applied to all other books, and that they are not under the yoke which Bishop Wilberforce and Archdeacon Denison would have imposed upon them.

The Report¹ of the Committee over which Archdeacon Denison presided is in many respects a noteworthy composition. It embodied the conclusions reached by fourteen clergymen after an inquiry extended over nine days. These judges might wish and intend to be truthful and impartial; but many or most of them had previously expressed themselves in terms of severe censure on the books, and "could not therefore," as the Bishop of Natal rightly supposed, "be likely to spare any traces of heresy which might fairly be detected in them." But in spite of this the Committee did not report that his criticisms were unfounded, or his critical conclusions false. They impeached not the scientific truth, but only the orthodoxy of his reasonings. In the words of one of them, they had simply taken expressions from the book, and "placed them side by side with the Bible and expressions from the formularies and Articles;" and even with the large license so assumed, they found four points only in which the Bishop of Natal was in their judgement guilty of having transgressed the law of the Church. How these points were dealt with by the Bishop of St. David's, we have seen already.² It was strange that on the subject of the Divine and human knowledge of Christ the Committee should in their haste to condemn the Bishop of Natal condemn the

¹ See p. 303.

² See pp. 304-11.

teaching of some of the greatest doctors in Christendom, who had either avowed conclusions similar to those which had been reached by Bishop Colenso, or had declared that others were free to hold them. With reference to these opinions of Cyril, Athanasius, and other theologians, Dr. Colenso remarks that it is surprising

“that neither the Bishop of Oxford, nor any one of the Bishops who voted with him, uttered one syllable to imply that he was aware of any such passages existing, or expressed a brotherly hope that on this particular point at all events, I might not be altogether so guilty as some supposed. It is, I repeat, an amazing fact, that so many Bishops, doctors, and divines, should have adopted this Report, without one single voice breaking the dead silence to intimate that there was even the slightest doubt in the Church upon this question ; still less to give utterance to the simple truth that, here at least, I am supported by the consentient opinion of very many of the greatest divines, both ancient and modern.”¹

A legitimate, if not the only, inference is that they wished to keep this consentient opinion out of sight, in the hope that they might succeed in arrogating the authority of the Church of England for a decision which would have for its effect the exclusion of the Bishop of Natal. Their policy was one of treachery to the English Church, involving sooner or later its downfall and ruin. It was not meant to be such. Of any such intention they may be most thoroughly acquitted ; but the true friends of an institution or a constitution are often not those who are loudest in protestations of their zeal. The Committee of Convocation had not eyes to see the real bearing of their own words and acts, or the real mission of the Church in which they were ministers. This mission had been well set forth in the memorable words with which Dean

¹ Part III. p. xlvi.

Milman closed his long and arduous toil as the historian of Latin Christianity:—

“As it is my own confident belief that the words of Christ, and His words alone (the primal, indefeasible truths of Christianity), shall not pass away, so I cannot presume to say that men may not attain to a clearer, and at the same time more full and comprehensive and balanced, sense of those words than has as yet been generally received in the Christian world. As all else is transient and unstable, these only eternal and universal, assuredly, whatever light may be thrown on the mental constitution of man, even on the constitution of Nature and the laws which govern the world, will be concentered so as to give a more penetrating vision of these undying truths.”

This happy consummation can be brought about only by a readiness to receive and to acknowledge the truth of facts, when they are shown to be true. It must be retarded by the exercise of authority barring the way to impartial and unprejudiced research, on the books included in the Canon of Scripture as on any others; and here the warning of Dean Milman is still indispensably necessary:—

“If on such subjects some solid ground be not found on which highly educated, reflective, reading, reasoning men may find firm footing, I can foresee nothing but a wide, a widening, I fear an impassable, breach between the thought and religion of England. A comprehensive, all-embracing, Catholic Christianity, which knows what is essential to religion, what is temporary and extraneous to it, may defy the world. Obstinate adherence to things antiquated, and irreconcilable with advancing knowledge and thought, may repel, and for ever—how many, I know not—how far, I know still less. *Avertat omen Deus!*”

CHAPTER X.

THE PENTATEUCH: ITS MATTER.

NEARLY a quarter of a century has passed away since Archbishop Longley was pleased to pronounce Bishop Colenso's criticisms on the Pentateuch "so puerile that an intelligent youth who read his Bible with care could draw the fitting answers from the Bible itself," and so trite that they have been threshed out and refuted again and again during the last two centuries. The two statements are not altogether consistent. Mere trivialities, of which a child could detect the worthlessness, could scarcely need so often to be knocked on the head, and ought scarcely to cause so much excitement or provoke such fierce and even malignant denunciations. The value of Archbishop Longley's judgement must be tested by some account of the Bishop's method and of the results attained by it. If the Bishop was assaying a silly and ridiculous enterprise, then seldom, if ever, has an unprofitable task been undertaken with such single-hearted devotion to truth and with so steady a resolution to surrender everything else, if need be, for the sake of it.

The fact is that Luther himself, when he nailed his Theses on the church door at Wittenberg, was not committing himself to a more momentous work than the Bishop of Natal when he resolved to search into the structure of the

Pentateuch. Each was proposing to fight with a strong delusion ; and the superstition which worshipped the letter of a book was not a jot better grounded than the superstition which regarded a Papal indulgence as the remission of sin and the restoration of the penitent to peace. The circumstances of his past life and work had drawn away the Bishop's mind to other channels ; but the unswerving truthfulness of his nature compelled him to go thoroughly into the matter, so soon as inquiry was forced on him as a duty which he owed to others, and to none could he owe this duty more than to the ignorant and helpless, who yet had wit enough to ask whether certain things were really so. Having once felt that he was called upon to go into the question, he never for a moment hesitated in his purpose ; but he wished to give as little pain and create as little of disturbance as possible. He soon found that the work was much more serious and extensive than at the first he thought that it might be ; and feeling that above all things he needed counsel, he turned to Dr. Harold Browne, then Norrisian Professor at Cambridge, now Bishop of Winchester. To him he wrote, although he did not forward, a letter from which the following passages are extracts :—

“ My remembrance of the friendly intercourse which I have enjoyed with you in former days would be enough to assure me that you will excuse my troubling you on the present occasion, were I not also certain that, on far higher grounds, you will gladly lend what aid you can to a brother in distress, and in very great need of advice and assistance, such as few are better able to give than yourself. You will easily understand that, in this distant colony, I am far removed from the possibility of converse with those who would be capable of appreciating my difficulties, and helping me with friendly sympathy and counsel. I have many friends in England ; but there are few to whom I would look more readily than to yourself for the help which I

need, from regard both to your public position and private character ; and you have given evidence, moreover, in your published works, of that extensive reading and sound judgement, the aid of which I especially require under my present circumstances.

“You will, of course, expect that, since I have had the charge of this diocese, I have been closely occupied in the study of the Zulu tongue, and in translating the Scriptures into it. Through the blessing of God, I have now translated the New Testament completely, and several parts of the Old, among the rest the Books of Genesis and Exodus. In this work I have been aided by intelligent natives ; and, having also published a Zulu Grammar and Dictionary, I have acquired sufficient knowledge of the language to be able to have intimate communion with the native mind while thus engaged with them, so as not only to avail myself freely of their criticisms, but to appreciate fully their objections and difficulties. Thus, however, it has happened that I have been brought again face to face with questions which caused me some uneasiness in former days, but with respect to which I was then enabled to satisfy my mind sufficiently for practical purposes, and I had fondly hoped to have laid the ghosts of them at last for ever. . . .

“Here, however, as I have said, amidst my work in this land, I have been brought face to face with the very questions which I then put by. While translating the story of the Flood, I have had a simple-minded, but intelligent, native—one with the docility of a child, but the reasoning powers of mature age—look up, and ask, ‘Is all that true? Do you really believe that all this happened thus,—that all the beasts, and birds, and creeping things upon the earth, large and small, from hot countries and cold, came thus by pairs, and entered into the ark with Noah? And did Noah gather food for them *all*, for the beasts and birds of prey, as well as for the rest?’ My heart answered in the words of the prophet, ‘Shall a man speak lies in the name of the Lord?’ I dared not do so. My own knowledge of some branches of science, of geology in particular, had been much

increased since I left England ; and I now knew for certain, on geological grounds, a fact of which I had only had misgivings before, viz. that a *universal* Deluge, such as the Bible manifestly speaks of, could not possibly have taken place in the way described in the Book of Genesis, not to mention other difficulties which the story contains. I refer especially to the circumstance, well known to all geologists, that volcanic hills exist of immense extent in Auvergne and Languedoc, which must have been formed ages before the Noachan deluge, and which are covered with light and loose substances, pumice-stone, &c., that must have been swept away by a flood, but do not exhibit the slightest sign of having ever been so disturbed. Of course, I am well aware that some have attempted to show that Noah's deluge was only a *partial* one. But such attempts have ever seemed to me to be made in the very teeth of the Scripture statements, which are as plain and explicit as words can possibly be. Nor is anything really gained by supposing the Deluge to have been partial. For, as waters must find their own level on the earth's surface, without a special miracle, of which the Bible says nothing, a flood which should begin by covering the top of Ararat (if that were conceivable), or a much lower mountain, must necessarily become universal, and in due time sweep over the hills of Auvergne. Knowing this, I felt that I dared not, as a servant of the God of Truth, urge my brother-man to believe that which I did not myself believe, which I knew to be untrue as a matter-of-fact historical narrative. I gave him, however, such a reply as satisfied him for the time, without throwing any discredit upon the general veracity of the Bible history.

“But I was thus driven—against my will at first, I may truly say—to search more deeply into these questions ; and I have since done so, to the best of my power, with the means at my disposal in this colony. And now I tremble at the result of my inquiries ; rather, I should do so were it not that I believe firmly in a God of Righteousness and Truth and Love, who both IS, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Should all else give way beneath me,

I feel that His Everlasting Arms are still under me. I am sure that the solid ground is there on which my feet can rest, in the knowledge of Him in whom I live, and move, and have my being, who is my faithful Creator, my Almighty and most merciful Father. *That* truth I see with my spirit's eyes, once opened to the light of it, as plainly as I see the sun in the heavens. And that truth, I know, more or less distinctly apprehended, has been the food of living men, the strength of brave souls that 'yearn for light,' and battle for the right and the true, the support of struggling and sorrow-stricken hearts, in all ages of the world, in all climes, under all religions."

Having mentioned some of the chief difficulties in the account of the Exodus, the Bishop went on to ask advice in the selection of books, and to mention that he had sent for Hengstenberg's work on the Pentateuch, which he had seen commended in the *Quarterly* article on *Essays and Reviews*. Of this article he spoke as a remarkable paper, which shrank, however, from treating the real question at issue, and as occupied chiefly with pitying the essayists, or censuring them, instead of meeting them with arguments.

"I cannot," he said, "think it to be a fair way of proceeding to point out, as the *apparent consequence* of the course which they are pursuing, that it will necessarily lead to infidelity or atheism. It may be so with some: must it, therefore, be so with all? The same, of course, might have been said—and probably was said—freely, and just as truly, by the Jews of St. Paul and others; and, in later times, by members of the Romish Church of our own Reformers. Our duty, surely, is to follow the truth wherever it leads us, and to leave the consequences in the hands of God. Moreover, in the only instance where the writer in the *Quarterly* does attempt to remove a difficulty, he explains away a miracle by a piece of thorough 'neologianism'—I mean where he accounts for the sun 'standing still' at the word of Joshua, by referring to 'one of the thousand other modes by which

God's mighty power could have accomplished that miracle, rather than by the actual suspension of the unbroken career of the motions of the heavenly bodies in their appointed courses,' which last the Bible plainly speaks of to a common understanding, though the writer seems not to believe in it.

“After reading that article, I felt more hopelessly than ever how hollow is the ground upon which we have so long been standing, with reference to the subject of the inspiration of Scripture. I see that there is a very general demand upon the clerical authors of *Essays and Reviews* that they should leave the Church of England, or, at least, resign their preferments. For my own part, however much I may dissent, as I do, from some of their views, I am very far indeed from judging them for remaining, as they still do, as ministers within her pale,—knowing too well, by my own feelings, how dreadful would be the wrench, to be torn from all one has loved and revered by going out of the Church. Perhaps they may feel it to be their duty to the Church itself, and to that which they hold to be the truth, to abide in their stations, unless they are formally and legally excluded from them, and to claim for *all* her members, clerical as well as lay, that freedom of thought and utterance which is the very essence of our Protestant religion; and without which, indeed, in this age of advancing science, the Church of England would soon become a mere dark prison-house, in which the mind both of the teacher and the taught would be fettered still with the chains of past ignorance, instead of being, as we fondly believed, the very home of religious liberty, and the centre of life and light for all the world. But, whatever may be the fate of that book or its authors, it is surely impossible to put down in these days the spirit of honest, truth-seeking investigation into such matters as these. The attempt to do this would only be like the futile endeavour to sweep back the tide which is rising at our very doors. This is, assuredly, no time for such trifling. Instead of trying to do this, or to throw up sandbanks which may serve for the present moment to hide from our view

the swelling waters, it is plainly our duty before God and man to see that the foundations of our faith are sound, and deeply laid in the very truth itself."

The Bishop went on to speak of the possible need of resigning his office if the difficulties pressing on him could not be removed. This question will come before us in its proper place later on. We have only to remember here that he did not forward this letter, which ends with the following words :—

"God's will must be done. The law of truth must be obeyed. I shall await your reply before I take any course which may commit me in so serious a matter. And I feel that I shall do right to take time for careful deliberation. Should my difficulties not be removed, I shall, if God will, come to England, and there again consult some of my friends. But then, if the step must be taken, in God's name I must take it ; and He Himself will provide for me future work on earth, of some kind or other, if He has work for me to do."

A few weeks before this letter was written the Bishop had taken part in an episcopal conference at Capetown, January 1861. At the time of that conference, to which he had gone for the purpose of taking part in the consecration of Bishop Mackenzie,¹ he had not entered into the inquiries which led to the writing of his book on the Pentateuch, nor had he, of course, any idea of their results. The admission of these facts might, he was well aware, suggest to some that his conclusions had been hastily reached and might be as hastily given up. This retort he was prepared to endure, as he was prepared for the further rejoinder that his exposure of the difficulties connected with the Pentateuch was stale and flat. They had all been put forth by German critics, who had been perfectly answered by their own countrymen. This was just the point which called for settlement. There were, it is true, in Germany as in

¹ See p. 125.

England, orthodox critics and liberal critics ; and there, as well as here, the former charged the latter with merely following their leader and repeating parrot-like each his statement of difficulties, with the addition of little or no new matter of their own. At the worst, this charge could but reduce many voices to one voice. It could not silence that one voice, except by showing that its utterances were false or foolish ; but it was also obvious that, if there were a hundred independent critics working on the same records, they would all, or almost all, fasten on the same difficulties, *if those difficulties really exist*. The seeming repetitions would be really the most cogent evidence of their reality and their importance. Still, wishing to avoid all bias in what might be thought the wrong direction, the Bishop resolved to confine himself to the orthodox Kurtz, whose *History of the Old Covenant* "maintains the ordinary view of the Mosaic origin and historical accuracy of the Pentateuch with great zeal and ability" ; and not till he had gone through this work did he turn to the ponderous volumes of Ewald. Having grappled with these, he read carefully the orthodox works of Hengstenberg and Havernick, and on the other side those of De Wette, Bleek, Kuenen, and Davidson, the last of these being in his opinion "the most able work which has yet appeared in England on the subject of Biblical criticism."

During all this time, he retained the letter which he had written to Dr. Browne, "to see what effect further study and consideration would have upon" his "views."

"At the end of that time—in a great measure by being made more fully aware of the utter helplessness of Kurtz and Hengstenberg in their endeavours to meet the difficulties which are raised by a closer study of the Pentateuch—I became so convinced of the unhistorical character of very considerable portions of the Mosaic narrative that I decided not to forward my letter at all. I did not now need counsel

or assistance to relieve my own personal doubts: my former misgivings had been changed into certainties. The matter was become much more serious. I saw that it concerned the whole Church—not myself and a few more only, whose minds might have been disturbed by making too much of minor difficulties and contradictions, the force of which might be less felt by others.”¹

But teachers and modes of teaching are not of one kind only. There are methods of shirking difficulties or of slurring them over; and there is a mode of bringing out a negative conclusion by drawing a vivid picture of the condition of things which seems to render any other conclusion impracticable. We may trace the popular or national religion, worship, and society of the Jews through the days of the Judges to those of the earlier and later Kings, realising their persistent polytheism, their gross, sensual, and cruel idolatry, their solar and phallic cultus. We may dwell on the protests and struggles of the scanty band of prophets in every age against these abominations, showing that at no time was there anything more than a weak and evanescent reformation, wrought by an appeal to a higher sanction for which the people could not be brought to care at all. We may mark the dense ignorance and obstinate adherence to their degrading rites as clear evidence that they had no acquaintance with a higher law; and so we may imply that the Mosaic and Levitical codes and the discourses in Deuteronomy were not so much a system carried at any time into practice as ideal pictures of a state of things which ought to have been but never was realised. This method and these conclusions clearly sweep away the historical character of the Pentateuch, because they insinuate that the civil and ecclesiastical codes which bear the name of Moses were put together

¹ *Pentateuch*, Part I. p. xviii.

in after times by some who wished to bring their countrymen, even at the eleventh hour, to walk in a better path ; but the strictly negative character of this method, and of its results, might very probably not be perceived by those who regarded the Pentateuch as historical. The impression made by it would, therefore, be in proportion weaker, and, except to the enlightened few, the real state of things would not be made known at all.

This method was recommended to the Bishop, only to be summarily rejected.

“A friend,” he says, “to whom I had submitted the book before I had decided to publish it, was afraid that I might give offence by stating too plainly at the outset the end which I had in view. . . . And he suggested that I might do more wisely to conceal, as it were, my purpose for a time, and lead the reader gradually on, till he would arrive of himself, almost unawares, at the same conclusions as my own. But however judicious for a merely rhetorical purpose such a course might have been, I could not allow myself to adopt it here, in a matter where such very important consequences were involved. I *must* state the case plainly and fully from the first. I do not wish to take the reader by surprise or to entrap him with guile. I wish him to go forward with his eyes open, and to watch carefully every step of the argument, with a full consciousness of the momentous results to which it leads, and with a determination to test *severely*, with all the power and skill he can bring to the work, but yet to test *honestly* and *fairly*, the truth of every inference which I have drawn and every conclusion to which I have arrived.”

In short, for the Bishop, as for St. Paul, there was a sacred call from One whom he dared not to disobey, and whom before all things he longed to obey. There was a woe on both if they failed to answer to the call ; and for himself the constraining power of this call was strengthened by the

circumstances of his past life. For him, therefore, it was as with the prophet of old. The Lord God had spoken : who can but prophesy ? He was asked, " Why publish to the world matters like these, about which theologians may have doubts ? " To such questions he could give no heed. They were no longer doubts to him ; and it was not theologians only who were troubled with such doubts.

" We have," he said, " a duty to discharge towards that large body of our brethren—*how* large, it is impossible to say, but probably much larger than is commonly imagined—who not only doubt, but disbelieve, many important parts of the Mosaic narrative, as well as to those whose faith may be more simple and uninquiring, though not, therefore, necessarily, more deep and sincere, than theirs. We cannot expect such as these to look to us for comfort and help in their religious perplexities, if they cannot place entire confidence in our honesty of purpose and good faith—if they have any reason to suppose that we are willing to keep back any part of the truth, and are afraid to state the plain facts of the case."

Thus in the course which he took he had no alternative. Arriving in England as a missionary Bishop, he must receive calls from many quarters to plead the cause of missions ; and he could not decline acceding to such calls without assigning, by the publication of the First Part of his book, the reason why, with his present work in hand, he could not comply with them. The question was to him a matter of life and death. He was not aware, after the delivery of the judgement in the case of *Essays and Reviews*, that he had in any way violated the law of the Church of England ; and in any case, as a Bishop of that Church, he dissented entirely from the principle laid down by some that the question with which he intended to deal was not even an open question for an English clergyman. Against this contemptible sophistry Dr. Stanley had,

about eighteen months before, protested with all his might in the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*.¹ It was a shame to Englishmen that any among them should say or think

“that truth was made for the laity and falsehood for the clergy—that truth is tolerable everywhere except in the mouths of the ministers of the God of Truth—that falsehood, driven from every other corner of the educated world, may find an honoured refuge behind the consecrated bulwarks of the sanctuary.”

The Bishop of Natal himself could scarcely denounce with greater earnestness this godless theory of a National Church as tainted with a far deeper unbelief than any which could ever be ascribed to professed infidels. He could scarcely urge more strongly that they who can sincerely accept as a whole the constitution and the worship of the Church of which they are ministers will count it treason to the Church and to its Divine Head to desert either its communion or its ministry. He would heartily approve, but he could scarcely add force to, Dr. Stanley's words, that if the obligations laid upon the clergy involved such differences between their belief and that of the educated laity, it would be the bounden duty of both,

“in the name of religion and common-sense, to rise as one man and to tear to shreds such barriers between the teachers and the taught, between Him whose name is Truth and those whose worship is only acceptable if offered to Him in spirit and in truth.”

It was well, indeed, for the Church of England that the Bishop of Natal, in full accord though he might be with all these utterances of Dr. Stanley, did not adopt the critical method which was, no doubt, best suited to Dr. Stanley's circumstances, but which would have fallen with little effect

¹ April 1861, p. 495.

on one of the chief superstitions and extravagances of orthodox Christendom.

But while smiting this superstition, the Bishop never made any attempt to deny the fact that he had himself shared it. The belief that every chapter, every verse, every word, every syllable, every letter of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures is the direct utterance of the Most High, was the creed of the school in which he was educated, and it cost him a hard struggle to break away from it.

“God is my witness,” he says, “what hours of wretchedness I have spent at times, while reading the Bible devoutly from day to day, and reverencing every word of it as the Word of God, when petty contradictions met me, which seemed to my reason to conflict with the notion of the absolute historical veracity of every part of Scripture, and which, as I felt, *in the study of any other book* we should honestly treat as errors or misstatements, without in the least detracting from the real value of the book! But, in those days, I was taught that it was my duty to fling the suggestion from me at once, ‘as if it were a loaded shell shot into the fortress of my soul,’¹ or to stamp out desperately, as with an iron heel, each spark of honest doubt, which God’s own gift, the love of truth, had kindled in my bosom. . . . I thank God that I was not able long to throw dust in the eyes of my own mind, and do violence to the love of truth in this way.”²

It may suit those who sneered at the “puerile simplicity” of the Bishop who could be converted by an intelligent Zulu, to say that nothing else could be expected in one who had thus himself been in bondage to the letter. But all unprejudiced and impartial thinkers and judges will be thankful that a man has been found whose powers of judgement were not stunted and starved by the creed which he shook off.

¹ Bishop S. Wilberforce ; see p. 164, *note*.

² *Pentateuch*, Part I. p. 6.

This warping and withering of the mental powers is so sadly manifest in all but an infinitesimally small minority of Bibliolaters, as to make it matter both of wonder and rejoicing that the early bondage quickened, rather than dulled, the Bishop's powers of perception, and thus excited in him only an unflinching resolution to seek out the truth at all hazards, and a manly candour in setting forth the nature of his conclusions. It was supposed at the time, and some may suppose still, that the Bishop came to regard the historical books of the Old Testament as unhistorical, solely because he could not bring himself to give credit to the stupendous wonders recorded in them, to the standing still of the sun and moon, the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea and the Jordan, the articulate human speech of Balaam's ass, or the marvels of the Egyptian magicians, or because he recoiled from some of the precepts or laws of the Mosaic or Levitical codes. One or two such laws he mentions—the provisions, for instance, which directed that in certain cases a man gaining his freedom should leave his wife and children in slavery, or that a master who beat his slave to death should not be punished if the slave survived his torture for a day or two, because he was his money. Cynical critics a quarter of a century ago may have laughed at the sentimentality which could make a fuss about nothing ; but their jeers furnish no reason for omitting the Bishop's record of the impression made by these laws upon Kafir minds.

“I shall never forget the revulsion of feeling with which a very intelligent Christian native, with whose help I was translating those words into the Zulu tongue, first heard them as words said to be uttered by the same great and gracious Being whom I was teaching him to trust in and adore. His whole soul revolted against the notion that the great and blessed God, the merciful Father of all mankind, would speak of a servant or maid as mere ‘money,’ and

allow a horrible crime to go unpunished, because the victim of the brutal usage had survived a few hours. My own heart and conscience at the time fully sympathised with his. But I then clung to the notion that the main substance of the narrative was historically true. And I relieved his difficulty and my own for the present by telling him that I supposed that such words as these were written down by Moses, and believed by him to have been divinely given to him, because the thought of them arose in his heart, as he conceived, by the inspiration of God, and that hence to all such laws he prefixed the formula, 'Jehovah said to Moses,' without its being on that account necessary for us to suppose that they were actually spoken by the Almighty. This was, however, a very great strain upon the cord which bound me to the ordinary belief in the historical veracity of the Pentateuch, and since then that cord has snapped in twain altogether."

The temper of mind which mocked at the questions of the intelligent Zulu may regard his revulsion of feeling as a matter to be treated rather with a laugh than seriously. But it was on no such considerations even as these that the Bishop's trust in the historical accuracy of the Pentateuch was finally dispelled. It was not only a question of marvels, of external revelation, of the moral character of Mosaic or other precepts or enactments. The doubt, first, and lastly the rejection of the narrative as history was forced upon him by the "many *impossibilities* involved in it, when treated as relating simple matters of fact," and it was his bounden duty to set forth this conclusion plainly. Infidelity, or lasciviousness, it might be urged, must be in many cases the consequences of his publishing it. It was enough to reply that infidelity and lasciviousness were as rampant under the strictest traditional theology as under the freest German criticism, and that the greatest license prevailed where the popular creed was that of the Westminster Confession. It might be said that all faith

in God must go if belief in the historical trustworthiness of the Pentateuch be lost. But the statement would be a mere falsehood.

“Our belief in the Living God remains as sure as ever, though not the Pentateuch only but the whole Bible were removed. It was written on our hearts by God’s own finger, as surely as by the hand of the Apostle in the Bible, that God IS, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. It is written there also as plainly as in the Bible, that God is not mocked,—that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap, and that he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.”

The Bishop had here touched the very root of the matter. The superstitious reverence paid to the mere letter of a book points to the failure or to the absence of the conviction that the Church is a living society under a living Head, who is ever present with it and in it, and in every member of it. With the foresight of true spiritual perception, he could say :—

“It is, perhaps, God’s will that we shall be taught in this our day, among other precious lessons, not to build up our faith upon a book, though it be the Bible itself, but to realise more truly the blessedness of knowing that He Himself, the Living God, our Father and Friend, is nearer and closer to us than any book can be, that His voice within the heart can be heard continually by the obedient child that listens for it, and *that* shall be our Teacher and Guide in the path of duty, which is the path of life, when all other helpers, even the words of the Best of Books, may fail us.”

But, let the historical untrustworthiness of its narrative be what it may, the Pentateuch still contains abundance of matter “profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness.”

“It still remains an integral portion of the Book, which, whatever intermixture it may show of human elements,—of error,

infirmity, passion, and ignorance,—has yet, through God's Providence, and the special working of His Spirit on the minds of the writers, been the means of revealing to us His true Name, the Name of the only living and true God, and has all along been, and, as far as we know, will never cease to be, the mightiest instrument in the hand of the Divine Teacher for awakening in our minds just conceptions of His character, and of His gracious and merciful dealings with the children of men.”¹

This confession fully satisfies any requirements of the Articles and formularies of the English Church ; it more than satisfies the demands of Dr. Lushington's judgement in the case arising out of *Essays and Reviews* ; but it failed altogether to satisfy the Metropolitan and his adherents, who were resolved on imposing the ecclesiastical yoke on the neck of the Church of Southern Africa. The Bishop was, nevertheless, right in saying that

“the time is come, in the ordering of God's Providence and in the history of the world, when such a work as this must be taken in hand, not in a light and scoffing spirit, but in that of a devout and living faith, which seeks only Truth, and follows fearlessly its footsteps ; when such questions as these must be asked—be asked reverently, as by those who feel that they are treading on holy ground—but be asked firmly, as by those who would be able to give an account of the hope which is in them, and to know that the grounds are sure on which they rest their trust for time and for eternity.”

The first passage of the Pentateuch selected by the Bishop for examination relates to the birth of Hezron and Hamul, sons of Pharez, son of Judah. This birth is stated most positively to have taken place in Canaan, and Hezron and Hamul are mentioned as included in the list of seventy

¹ *Pentateuch*, Part I. p. 13.

persons (Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's two sons being among them) who went down from Canaan into Egypt. We get then the following chronology for the incidents in the life of some of the sons of Jacob. Joseph is spoken of as thirty years old when he stands before Pharaoh as ruler over all the land of Egypt. When his father came down to Egypt nine years later, he was, therefore, thirty-nine years of age; and so his brother Judah, who was three years older than himself, was at that time forty-two. But if we turn to Genesis xxxviii. we find that in the course of these forty-two years the following events happen. Judah grows up, marries, and has three sons. Of these sons two grow up, marry (the second marrying his brother's widow), and die. The widow deceives Judah, and has by him twin sons, of whom one grows up, marries, and has two sons, Hezron and Hamul, who are thus great-grandsons of a man not forty-two years old. The Bishop remarks:—

“The above being certainly incredible, we are obliged to conclude that one of the two accounts must be untrue. Yet the statement that Hezron and Hamul were born in the land of Canaan is vouched so positively by the many passages which sum up the seventy souls, that to give up this point is to give up an essential part of the whole story. But then this point cannot be maintained, however essential to the narrative, without supposing that the other series of events had taken place beforehand, which we have seen to be incredible.”

Here, then, is a manifest contradiction. If we choose to admit, as in all honesty we are bound to admit, that this portion of the story is not a narrative of facts, we may pass on without entangling ourselves in so-called reconciliations. The commentator Thomas Scott saw that Pharez at the time of the descent into Egypt would, if born, be only an infant, and could not, therefore, be the father of children whom he

took with him from Canaan ; but he thought that he had solved the difficulty by saying that the heads of families born in Egypt during Jacob's life were included in the list. The record, however, says that Pharez and his sons were all born not in Egypt but in Canaan. Kurtz professes to rid himself of the perplexity by asserting that the grandsons and great-grandsons of Jacob and Judah, though not born, were in their fathers, and therefore entered Egypt with them. But so assuredly were their great-great-grandsons and all their children from that day to this. With calm effrontery Kurtz adds,

“Objections have been raised to this interpretation from various quarters ; but we must adhere to it.”

Certainly we must, the Bishop replies, if the historical character of the Pentateuch is to be maintained at all costs ; but it can be maintained only by the assertion of an equivocation or a falsehood—only by tearing to pieces the statements of the book whose veracity is to be defended. The very principles by which commentators like Hengstenberg allow themselves to be guided involve insincerity ; words mean in many or most cases what they seem not to mean ; and theological or religious considerations are introduced to account for or to justify this misuse of language. It is true that in the vision of the Apocalypse the number of the servants of God sealed on their foreheads is twelve thousand for each tribe ; and we see at once that there is here no pretence of an historical enumeration. But it is quite otherwise when we find the family of Jacob at the time of the descent into Egypt mentioned as consisting of seventy souls, Jacob himself with Joseph and his two sons being included to make up the total ; and when elsewhere—Genesis xlvi. 26—the number excluding these four is given at three-score and six. In spite of this, Hengstenberg treats the numeration as mystical.