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THE BIBLE AND CONTEMPORANEOUS FACTS.

Extracts from a Lecture by the Rev. J. B. Thomas, D.D., of Brooklyn, N. Y.

The Bible is itself a fact as well as a record of facts. It does not melt before the gaze, nor crumble in the hand. It is overhung by an immense cloud of subjective personal experience, more or less indefinable and incommensurable; it is wrought into the foundations of various ecclesiastical organizations; its words are recast into divers symbols of faith and systems of doctrine; it is closely encompassed by a heavy growth of gloss and comment; it is the nucleus of an immense body of devotional literature; it is continually taking new phases in strange languages and in new translations in our own; and yet it is no more in danger of losing its identity or concreteness of outline, by reason of these concomitants, than the lighthouse by reason of the floods of light it sheds, or the tree by reason of the fruit it bears. Unlike the Hindoo sacred book, of which the original outline is gone; the substance being transmitted indistinguishably into the parasitic growth of comment that has infested and consumed it, it bears but is not overborne. Like flower and bee, sealed up for future generations in the amber of geology, the Old Testament was deposited in the Hebrew, which forthwith congealed, escaping henceforth the mutations of a living tongue; and the New Testament in the more fluent Greek, copied by many independent writers—whose very errors were to become in time, by interlacing testimony, reaffirmatory of the true text—was unwittingly hidden from the tampering or curious, hoarded in dismembered sheets under prosaic, monkish essays, until the Greek language, being also dead, and movable type ready to hide it from mutilation by stereotyped publicity, it came forth the New and the Old Testament, linked thenceforth in double and abiding testimony, became one book, The Book, to work its marvellous ministry in the earth.

I trust a further study of the contents of the Bible itself may vindicate the suggestion as reasonable, that there is more than a casual coincidence in the fact that men who have seen deepest into the mystery of things, and