

originally perfect. Do these statements, which criticism exhibits to us as a legend, embody, as some legends do, any objective truth? To answer this question we must turn from literary criticism, as I said just now, to other sources of knowledge; and it so happens that, along with the development of criticism, a mass of knowledge has been developing during the past fifty years which bears on the very point at issue. And what does this knowledge show us? If all modern methods of study are not an absolute illusion, it shows us that the legend of Genesis is, in the present respect, absolutely false—that the first human beings were not, as Genesis says they were, transcendent creatures more like angels than men, but were on the contrary only a little better than monkeys; that instead of falling, they represented a rise; and that, since their death, their descendants, by slow and irregular steps, have, on the whole, continued to rise also. Thus, so far as the first of the four cardinal statements of traditional Christianity is concerned, the knowledge of to-day—a knowledge which we cannot escape—simply turns, at one blow, the whole Christian scheme topsyturvy. And now,” said Glanville, “having done with group of statements number one, let us go on to group number two. These need not keep us long. What they come to is this—that God, when revealing himself afresh to his lost and unhappy children, took every precaution that none of them should hear his message, excepting the family of a single obscure sheik, who proved his pre-eminent fitness for this stupendous favour by his willingness to murder his son and roast his limbs on a bon-fire. This story again has no other source than legend. Genesis is its origin also. Now, waiving the fact that, if Abraham was an historical person at all, magnificent civilisations, having lofty religions of their own, had been flourishing at the time when he lived for some eight thousand years, can we believe, on the authority of a legend comparatively modern, that this story of the election of Abraham is any truer than that of the Fall with which, in the Christian scheme, it is expressly and inseparably connected?