

of science, I thought to have in it a sure refuge from all the contingencies of life. This illusion is vanished; when the tempest came which plunged me in sorrow, the moorings, the cable of science, broke like thread. Then I seized upon that help which many before me have laid hold of. I sought and found peace in God. Since then I have certainly not abandoned science, but I have assigned to it another place in my life."

Happy are they who learn to build upon a sure foundation before the final storm descends, when the hail shall sweep away the refuges of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding places of infidelity and unbelief.—*The Armory*

HOME REUNION NOTES.

THE BIBLE.

Mr. Spurgeon is reported to have said at the meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society:—

'There is nobody here that loves the divisions of Christendom. We would all end them if we could. How to do it I cannot tell. Unity I love, but attempts at unity always create fresh divisions. All the schemes I have ever seen have been but partly successful. When we shall all come to the Word of God, and each man shall say, "There, I retract everything I have said if it is not in accordance with that Book; I will come down to the strict Word of Christ and walk in the spirit of it to the utmost of my ability,"—then shall we all come together.'

How heartily do we all echo this desire, and yet how far are we from the attainment of it! For just as the great Sacrament of Love, which should be the means of binding together all Christians in one Body, has become one of the greatest causes of division, so the Bible, which we all accept as the ultimate appeal—the final law—is at present made the cause and justification of every division.

It is clear, therefore, that something is wanting, some authority to tell us the true interpretation of the Word of God; for as soon as private interpretation is allowed to come in, the floodgates of division are opened for all time, and the good influence in a common belief in Holy Scripture as the Word of God is immediately neutralised.

One of the errors into which the Reformers fell was to claim for themselves the exclusive right of an appeal to Holy Scripture, as if all Christians had not from the very first accepted that appeal. We must never forget that when our Lord dwelt on earth, the Holy Scriptures were the Old Testament Scriptures, and to Him and to His Apostles they were 'the Word of God.' Our Lord, by quotations from them, silenced Satan himself, and the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and His discourses are full of references to the Old Testament Scriptures. From this, two important inferences are to be drawn:—(1) That whatever the limits of what is called the 'higher criticism' should be, they cannot assail what He has attested in regard to the Old Testament; (2) that the Scriptures, thus authoritatively accepted and interpreted, so completely silenced the gainsayers that they never attempted to bring any private interpretation of their own against this testimony.

Further, this appeal to the Word of God was continued by the Apostles and other writers of the New Testament; the New Testament, not only in the Gospel narratives but in the Epistles, is full of references and quotations from the Old. This reference to Holy Scripture as the final appeal was always acknowledged by the great defenders of the faith. As the Archbishop of York puts it in his great speech at the meeting above alluded to:—

'When Athanasius is vindicating against

Arius the Divine character of our Lord, it is notable that he does not appeal to the traditions or the like; he appeals, text by text, to the blessed Word of God. When Thomas Aquinas, in the days of the great new literature then reviving, has to grapple with the mighty task of putting in its proper place that new literature, he again appeals constantly to the final law and word—the Divine Book. He as clearly acknowledges Holy Writ as the authority as any one of us present in this hall could do.'

And so to the present day the Roman Catholic controversialist will appeal against the Protestant to the Holy Scriptures, which, especially in the teaching about the Holy Eucharist, in its literal interpretation would apparently vindicate the Catholic rather than the Protestant teaching on the Sacraments.

Again, the Reformers, from their zeal to utilize printing for the dissemination of translations of the Bible in the vulgar tongue, ignored the fact that such had been the Church's mode of proceeding from the beginning: there were from the first the translations of the Old Testament into the Greek language—overruled, I think, by God Himself as one of the means for the conversion of the heathen. Then there were Syriac and Greek versions of the New Testament, and Jerome's translation of the whole Bible into Latin, called the Vulgate because written in the *then* vulgar tongue. And there was no mission to the heathen in older times in which some MSS. of the Gospel did not form an important part of their equipment.

The Roman Church is blamed for not having at the Reformation put itself at the head of the movement for the dissemination of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue; to have done so would have been in strict accordance with Catholic traditions, but it was a critical time. The corruptions of the Church had to be dealt with; the Reformers were very naturally impatient; the putting forth of a perfectly fair and true translation at such a period of bitter controversy was almost an impossibility, and yet great evils must and did arise from the rapid dissemination of any version not duly authorised, because it could not be carefully considered.

There is therefore nothing in history against the Bible being the rallying-point of all, because it has been accepted by all, or as the Archbishop put it, 'The Bible is our authority . . . the authority of every one who in the name of God preaches Christ's Gospel day after day.'

The great *crux* is, Who is to interpret it? Christ interpreted it so that none could gainsay or resist it. The Apostles interpreted it, and as the whole undivided Church has accepted their teaching as canonical, none can gainsay or resist it. And in the same way we believe that Christ has given power to His Church at all time to interpret it even as He and His Apostles did. We all accept this interpretation so far as the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds go, which have not only been passed by successive Oecumenical Councils, but have received the general assent of Christendom from all times.

Many are eagerly asking for such authoritative teaching in reference to the 'higher criticism' of the Bible, telling us how much we are to receive, how much of it we are to reject. And a chance of fresh divisions on the Bible question is apparent, for much danger to the weaker members is caused by our professed friends on either side of this controversy. The Bible is the Word of God, and as far as the Old Testament is concerned it has been attested to be such by our blessed Lord Himself. This surely must be a warning against the advanced criticism 'approaching' too near the burning bush, as the Rev. J. McNeill cautioned in his speech at the Bible Society meeting. But there are dangers also from other friends, who would teach that every word of our original and every word of the translation is actually infallible and

inspired, and therefore that criticism can do us no good.

But the Archbishop wisely says:—

'It would be rash for anybody in my position not to speak gratefully of all that has been done by enlightened criticism of the New Testament. But it does not necessarily weaken our faith in Scripture: quite the contrary. It gives us a reason now for what we have all along believed, that in receiving the history of Christ, His Death and Resurrection, and all He has told us of the power of that Death and Resurrection, we feel that we are on stronger ground; that the historical facts are as good, and better than any other historical fact; and that we may open our Bible with a believing eye and mind, and love it, and trust it, and live upon it.'

And the two modes of criticism are well described:—

'The fact of the matter is that we, from our point of view, begin from the centre and go outwards, while [adverse] criticism begins from the periphery and works inwards, with the hope sometimes of destroying the centre itself, which is the supernatural.'

I gather from all this that the authoritative interpretation of Scripture must not be so given as to shut up a reverent criticism of our version of the Bible, or in such a way as to check individual interpretation of God's Word for the comfort of individual souls. All in this particular that we have to ask in the name of Unity is that such individual interpretations may not be forced on others as if they had received the consensus of Christendom.

And to those who ask for the authoritative teaching of the Church, I would point out that they ask what cannot be immediately obtained. We have it as regards the essential doctrines of the Faith as embodied in the Creeds. If fresh and further definitions are demanded, they cannot come until either a Council of the undivided Church can be summoned together, or until such a consensus of opinion can be won from all divided Christendom as will with one voice give the teaching desired.

It is a question of 'in your patience possess ye your souls.' The Church is not a human institution, and can afford to wait. If we could only agree not to enforce with authority what the Church has not defined as of faith, we should have made one step towards making our common acceptance of Holy Scripture a bond of Unity.

And to control those who are afraid of the advanced criticism, I conclude with a beautiful passage from the Archbishop's speech:—

'It is no use blinking the matter—Will you have a religion in which the supernatural is recognized, or a religion without the supernatural? Richard Reuter, the great German scholar, says: "I do not see how there can be a revelation without the supernatural, for what is revelation? It is the voice of the supernatural. A religion which should be a Divine revelation, and yet so conceal its divinity as to have neither prophecy nor miracle, would be a religion almost impossible to conceive." The supernatural, then, must always be. And when we turn to Christ Himself, the Centre and Core of our Religion, it is not criticism that must give us the evidence that we want about Him—it is Christ Himself Who must give it. As surely as when He walked on the shores of Galilee; as surely as when He spoke to men, and by His speech convinced them and made them love Him, so surely will He convince us who walk about in this busy nineteenth century, and lead us, and win us, and govern our consciences, if we give ourselves to Him. . . . Experiences have come down to us from afar, not on the strength of the historical argument that they were indeed what they were supposed to be, but by the inward force by which they first showed us Christ and then led us captives to Christ. Never man spake like this Man; never a love like this Love; never such a Life was seen on earth before. Never did the dream