

Is the Bible True?

(By the Rev. C. H. Grundy, M.A., Vicar of St. Peter's, Brockley, England, in 'Hand and Heart'.)

The young people of the present day ask questions about the bible which must be answered if this wonderful book is to retain its hold upon the English nation. I hold in my hand a collection of books called the bible. Here are sixty-six books bound up together in the same cover and called by one comprehensive name. Now at the very lowest calculation it took at least fifteen hundred years for the writing of the bible. Between the writing of Genesis and that of Revelation more than a thousand years elapsed. Of course we can allow our scientific friends as many millions of years as they need for any theory of creation between the first and the second verse in the bible, while it should be noted that there is not a single date given in the first chapter of Genesis. Periods are spoken of, but not dates, for the dates in your reference bibles are not inspired, and have nothing to do with the critical investigation of the making of the world. Theology may safely hand science a blank cheque on the bank of eternity to be filled up as required for the formation of the world.

Let us first consider the organic unity of the biblical books. Sixty-six books, written by all kinds of people, in various ranks of life, in succeeding centuries, and in some cases apparently without any knowledge of the existence of other books now included in the canon of Scriptures, are not likely, when bound up together, to show cohesion of thought or any signs of a definite plan, or of development of a design. Collect any sixty-six books from any fifteen centuries, arrange them as best you can, take them to some London publisher, and ask him to publish them in one volume, on the ground of their intrinsic merit and the certainty of their value to the world at large, his reply will help to show you how unique is the bible in its structure, the method of its compilation, the beauty of its contents, and its moral and religious influence.

Imagine some scientific man in William the Conqueror's reign, giving us the origin of the universe, and a rough outline of the order of creation. Then let a soldier of the Joshua type portray his country's battles in, say, King John's reign. Then let various clergymen write pamphlets in succeeding reigns partly in prose. Let, say, Edward the Sixth write Psalms, then later let a taxgatherer, a traveller, a doctor, and a fisherman give some memories and some reminiscences of a great teacher and national healer, to be followed by writing in other reigns by a fisherman, tentmaker, and one or two others, until at last, in Queen Victoria's reign, a book full of dreams, mysteries, visions, ends the series.

Now try and realize the awful and useless medley in such a haphazard mode of producing a book. Yet the bible, from beginning to end, shows evidences of a design expanding, a God revealing himself, a scheme unfolding, a progress in describing humanity, a pressing forward to a definite aim, and the gradual but complete evolution of man's moral and spiritual nature. The organic unity of the bible proves it to be more than human.

Secondly, the Old Testament says, by teaching, by words, 'Some one is coming to redeem humanity; keep a sharp look-out for him.' Then for nearly four hundred years the world cried, 'Why doesn't he come?' until at last, in Bethlehem, the cry was, 'He has come at last.' But how could we

be certain we had found the right, real, genuine Saviour? By comparing what he was foretold to be with what he was. But the weight of the evidence is cumulative. One prophecy fulfilled would not be enough. By piecing together the predictions of the Old Testament we can get a clear sketch of what Christ would be like.

Supposing you were asked to find some one in Deptford, who was to be short, dark, dressed in a particular way, and who had a peculiar walk, and an unusual tone of voice. If in one person you found all the points mentioned you would feel certain you had met the man required. The combined evidence of all the characteristics in one person would prove it, although the various marks taken apart might be of little or no use. It is the same with the Messiah. Hundreds of years before Christ was born the writers of the Old Testament stated definite tests by which the identity of Christ can be verified: e.g., to be born of a virgin (Isaiah) in Bethlehem (Micah); adoration of Magi (Psalms); betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zech.); bone not to be broken (Psalm xxxiv.); death in prime of life (Psalm lxxxix, xlv, cii, xxiv); with malefactor's (Isaiah liii. to lix.); piercing (Zech.); potter's field (Zech. xi.); silence (Isaiah liii.); vicarious suffering (Isaiah liii.); etc. Now these references cannot be all accidental, and if not accidental, where did they come from? How did they come to be where they are? They could not have been written after Christ came, for they are in the Septuagial translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, made during the time between Malachi and Christ's birth. There they are. How did they get there?

I wait for an answer. Dare you prophesy the weather for to-morrow, the events of the next parliament, the nature of the next Prime Minister? Our very ignorance shows that these Old Testament worthies had a knowledge more than human; in other words, they were inspired.

Again, no man save Christ ever stated beforehand exactly what he was going to do, and what would be done to him, and found everything turn out as he had indicated. Did Alexander the Great know from the first the miserable death in store for him, and did he state it to the world? Did young Napoleon Bonaparte expect to die an exile after being captured by the English? Christ's own predictions about himself compared with after events prove him to have been more than human, and he set his seal to the Old Testament. To get rid of the Old Testament you must first get rid of Christ. He continually quoted the Old Testament, and applied the text to himself.

Lastly, is this book true to the facts of human life or not? It begins with ideal happiness. Each one of us longs for that happiness. It speaks of a disaster which spoilt life. Has your life been spoilt or not by something which makes that disaster a moral certainty? Do you want to get back into Paradise? The bible shows you a plan of return. When your little child dies, do you long to see it again some day? The bible promises that you shall do so. The bible gives rules for conduct. When tried, do they fail? No! The result of obedience to them is just what was promised. Do you desire to test religion? Try it. By experiment you can settle the question for yourselves.

I contend that the organic unity of the bible, the argument from prophecy, the predictions of Jesus and their fulfilment in his life, and since then all down the ages of

his church, and the experimental value of the bible fairly and honestly followed out, justify me in asserting that this book is true; true in its sketch of the character of God; true in its analysis of the human heart; true in its remedies for the ills of life; true in the fitness of its promises and gifts to the needs of man; true in its wonderful lessons in the past and its knowledge of the future; true in its marvellous completeness as a history of the origin, failure, redemption, restorator, and glorious destiny of the sons of men.

'Harry, You're a Fool!'

(Light in the Home.)

Henry Bell was the son of a stage-player; from his early childhood he had been trained for the same profession. Nothing he loved better than being in the theatre behind the glaring footlights, acting his comic part and listening to the uproarious laughter of the audience from the gallery. Although he was now sixteen years of age he had never been inside a church door. He had been taught to look upon religious people as canting hypocrites. One beautiful summer evening, as he was standing dreamily looking into the Thames, the voices of two women close beside him attracted his attention. He could not help listening. They were talking very earnestly indeed. A few words that were spoken fastened themselves upon Harry's heart—'The wages of sin is death.' He walked hastily away, whistling loudly to drown the small voice that was awakened within; but, whistle as he would, the words still haunted him. They haunted him all that night in the theatre—all the next day. He was becoming very miserable. At last in despair he exclaimed: 'I'll go and see a clergyman—he will be able to tell me what to do.' He did not know where one lived, but he would find out. So away he started.

'Can you tell me,' he said to the first policeman he met, 'where a clergyman lives?'

'What clergyman, my lad?'

'Any clergyman—the nearest.'

'The nearest lives there,' replied the policeman, pointing to a large house to the left. Harry's heart sunk within him, but he hastened on and rang the bell, and was immediately shown into a small study. Presently a venerable old gentleman appeared, and his kindly manner quite overcame the lad's timidity, so that he told him his life's story and his anxiety about his soul. The clergyman quietly got the Bible, placed it on a small table between them and began to read the parable of the Prodigal Son. Harry had never in his life heard such beautiful words—never—his heart was melted within him. The tears began to trickle down his cheeks. Still the clergyman read on slowly and distinctly, at the same time praying in his heart for the youth before him. 'Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' At these words Harry sprang to his feet and, forgetting his surroundings, threw himself on his knees, sobbing, 'That's me—that's me! Father, I have sinned.' The clergyman knelt beside him, prayed with, and pointed him to the Rock of his salvation.

Harry left that house a happy, rejoicing lad. He felt he could no more go on the stage. He must find other employment. The same evening he went to his employer and told him that he could be an actor no longer, openly giving his reasons for doing so. In amazement and annoyance he exclaimed, 'Harry, you're a fool; but it's all right—you'll soon come back.' His scorn did not move the boy. He sought and found other employment, and never went back, as the manager said he would; but is now a burning and shining light in his Master's service.—Christian Callister.