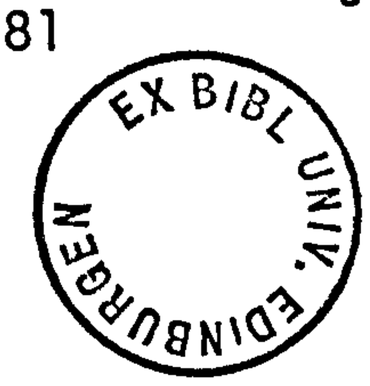
CRITICISM IN CONTROVERSY

Conservative Biblical Interpretation and Higher Criticism - in Nineteenth-Century Britain: a Study in a Conflict of Method

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I hereby declare that both this thesis and the research upon which it is based are my own work.

For Shenach, my beloved, who has sustained me throughout, and my delightful daughters Anastasia and Lydia, who arrived while work was in progress.

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Errors, however, in form and content, no doubt remain, and I acknowledge them squarely as my own.

N. M. de S. Cameron
19th September, 1981

Those who look upon the Bible as a message sent down by God from Heaven to men, will doubtless cry out that I have asserted that the Word of God is faulty, mutilated, tampered with, and inconsistent; that we possess it only in fragments, and that the original of the covenant which God made with the Jews has been lost. However, I have no doubt that a little reflection will cause them to desist from their uproar.

B. de Spinoza, Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, XII

Many a man who rejects isolated portions of Christian doctrine, on the ground that they are repugnant to his reason, would hesitate to avow broadly and unconditionally that reason is the supreme arbiter of all religious truth; though at the same time he would find it hard to point out any particular in which the position of reason, in relation to the truths which he still retains, differs from that which it occupies in relation to those which he rejects.

H.L. Mansel, The Limits of Religious Thought, p 1

The entire history of Christian theology may be regarded as the history of Biblical interpretation. This is especially true of Protestant theology, because it has been characterized from the outset by appeal to the Bible as the sole norm of faith and practice (sola scriptura). It is just for this reason that Biblical criticism poses such a fateful problem for the Protestant community.

Van A. Harvey, The Historian and the Believer, p 19

The really decisive and revolutionary thing about the critical historical method came from the fact that the modern historian sees himself compelled to take the sources of the past and set them, too, in the light of the new self-evident assumptions.... He is therefore ... unable to take over the recognition of a special historia sacra or scriptura sacra in the ontological sense as a self-evident intellectual presupposition influencing his method of research. He deals with all historic and literary phenomena of the past by the same method, viz - the critical historical method ... which cannot be put fundamentally out of currency by any historical object.

G. Ebeling, Word and Faith, p 47

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ABSTRACT

The controversy that surrounded the publication in 1860 of Essays and Reviews revealed how deeply the traditional conception of an infallible Bible was still held. In the preceding half-century a series of scholars, chiefly those associated with Coleridge, had sought to prepare British opinion for the advent of what was already commonplace on the Continent. That they had done their work well became evident as, in barely twenty-five years, the consensus of informed opinion moved from the old infallibilism (represented by such writers as Van Mildert, Lee and Bannerman) to the new Criticism. Traditionalists, however, stoutly rejected the new theories, and while prepared to make minor concessions they largely held firm to the historical as well as theological inerrancy of Scripture.

The debate which set the new consensus in place of the old may be epitomised in the controversy between Jowett (in his essay 'On the Interpretation of Scripture', in Essays and Reviews) and Burgon (in his University Sermons preached in reply to Jowett, published as Inspiration and Interpretation). Jowett - like Spinoza, and others, before him - contended for a Bible studied 'like any other book', Burgon for a Bible interpreted sui generis. This conflict set the tone for the following debate. But, while Essays and Reviews succeeded in stirring up controversy and thereby spread the knowledge of the questions at issue, the generally liberal theological stance of its writers did not commend Biblical Criticism to the Christian public. It was to be later scholars, who combined piety and mainstream Christian conviction with their Criticism, who would succeed in demonstrating that the conclusions of the Continental Critics could be accepted, while their 'rationalism' was repudiated. Robertson Smith and Driver played a special part in bringing this about. The church, it was maintained, could accept Criticism while retaining belief in the supernatural and continuing to use the Bible for preaching, private devotion, and, indeed, theology. The authority of the Bible remained, and was nothing but enhanced by the Critical removal of 'difficulties', historical and moral, from association with its religious significance.

Conservative scholars, in declining to follow the trend away from the traditional view, both re-asserted infallibilism as the 'Biblical' doctrine and the historic view of the church, and repudiated Critical arguments on their own terms by means of 'critical' responses. They maintained that Critical scholarship was decisively influenced by the naturalism of its leading proponents, and therefore fundamentally opposed to Christianity. In particular, they called upon the witness of Jesus Christ in the New Testament to traditional views of the authorship and historicity of the Old.

We suggest that the contrasting positions taken up were essentially circular in nature. By means of Toulmin's 'candid' way of laying out arguments, we endeavour to show that Critics and Conservatives assumed, respectively, the priority of historical and dogmatic arguments. Insofar as Conservatives came to admit the priority of the former, they began to abandon their distinctive position. While they remained open to the possibility of persuasion on historical grounds that their dogmatic convictions were mistaken, such a change would demand of them an intellectual conversion experience which they were able, reasonably and effectively, granted their own preferred view of the Bible and the Christian religion, to refuse.

INTRODUCTION

It would be a mistake to suppose that merely their own new discoveries have changed the scholars' attitude to the Bible. Beginning with different general conceptions they have come to the Bible with questions differently posed, and the new answers have depended on the new approach.... The best histories of Biblical scholarship have duly recognised how at every stage the scientific pursuit has been affected by the vogue of contemporary philosophy in a larger sphere....

We speak often of the Canonisation of the Scriptures, and we do well. But what lies behind the word in any official or ecclesiastical sense is a changed presupposition with which the casual products of an earlier age came to enjoy a different regard from their readers. What the special treatment of the Bible books has done for the understanding or misunderstanding of them is a subject that would take too long to summarize.... It meant a predetermined expectation on the part of the reverent reader. And the reader sought what he found. He expected unity, consistency, accuracy; he expected authority, regulation and prediction. He expected timelessness, universality and finality....

The Bible was not thought of as merely a record of revelation. That is one of the stages by which we ease ourselves away from the stricter view. The Bible was the Revelation. Judaism and Protestantism both, I take it, regarded the actual text as inspired, - verbally inspired, - literatim et punctatim,.as well as verbatim.

H.J. Cadbury, 'Motives of Biblical Scholarship',
Journal of Biblical Literature, LVI (1937), pp 2-4.

A century ago, Biblical study in Britain underwent a revolution which fundamentally altered the manner in which Holy Scripture was interpreted. In place of the special principles that had hitherto governed its interpretation were installed the general principles of literary and historical analysis. These 'critical'[1] principles, already axioms for most Continental scholars, in the 1870's and 1880's gradually overwhelmed the Conservative consensus in Britain. The conception of Scripture as the work of 'plenary inspiration' and therefore infallible and inerrant, so recently the shared orthodoxy of all branches of the church, became suddenly the belief of a minority only. The theology of the past hundred years has to a notable degree comprised a sustained attempt to face the implications of Criticism.[2] For better or for worse, the Critical revolution has bequeathed the church a problematic heritage.

It is not our intention here to propose new resolutions of the dilemma of Criticism and Scripture. Many have been proffered, and some have found a degree of acceptance.[3] Our interest lies rather in the controversy which first won over British scholarship

to Criticism, and in the cleavage that divided the early Critics from their Conservative colleagues. During the last decades of the nineteenth century the presses deluged the reading public with literature pro and con 'criticism'. To the Critics, the failure of Conservative scholars to be moved by their literary and historical arguments was inexcusable, and could be explained only as obscurantism. To the Conservatives, the Critical method and conclusions were so shot through with 'rationalism'[4] and so destructive of Biblical authority as to be patently out of harmony with the Christian faith. On a cursory reading, the controversial literature of the period speaks of a failure on either side to engage the other in actual debate. There is little sign that the protagonists were open to the possibility of their opponents' being correct (although, of course, they protested as much). On a closer reading, not only does such an analysis prove justified, but an unreal quality is seen to permeate the debate. The reader is found asking himself: how could men whose social and cultural background, and whose religious beliefs indeed, were so similar, have formed so dramatically different estimates of the single volume they knew so well? If what the Critics claimed to be obvious was so patent, how could intelligent and indeed learned Conservative scholars utterly fail to see it? Conversely, if the Conservative efforts at harmony and reconciliation actually satisfied their authors, why did they make so little impression upon the adherents of the new school? S.R. Driver, the leading English Critic, has left us this striking testimony:

> The ablest of the opponents of Criticism within recent years was Dr. W.H. Green, of Princeton, U.S., who sought to invalidate the analysis altogether.... But when he has finished, all that one feels him to have proved is that a particular critic has failed, or that the criteria are in certain cases ambiguous; the conviction that the narrative is composite remains as before.[5]

Thus little impact had the acknowledged doyen of American Hebraists upon his English counterpart. Green, no doubt, formed a similar assessment of Driver's advocacy of Criticism.

At the same time, of course, the two camps did maintain communication with each other, most obviously in that a succession of men left the one to cross to the other as the last decades

of the century passed. At an intellectual level, the Conservative position itself was worked out in detail as a response to Criticism. Traditional elements, such as the literary ascription of the whole Pentateuch to the pen of Moses, were discreetly abandoned, since it was held that the Conservative thesis of infallibilism did not require them. Yet the substance of the two positions remained unchanged throughout the debates. It was only as individuals abandoned one allegiance for the other, and as a new generation of scholars was born, that the map of British Old Testament scholarship was re-drawn.

To say that is not, indeed, to claim for the accepters and rejecters of Higher Criticism a greater degree of homogeneity for their groupings than was actually the case. As will emerge in the following discussion, amongst both those who welcomed Criticism and those who repudiated it there were scholars who differed both in practice and in principle in the warmth of their response. Yet, when that has been said, that British Old Testament scholars were comprised in two armed camps, from the Essays and Reviews debate until one effectively over-ran the other in the late 1880's, can scarcely be denied. United only either by their essential acceptance of the Critical method or their dogmatic conviction of Biblical infallibility, they were herded into one of two distinct schools by the coming of Criticism. Evangelicals, Tractarians and traditionalists generally made common cause against the new 'infidelity'. The Broad Church found allies in learned Non-conformists and, increasingly, in maverick Evangelicals, as well as in the new generation of Churchmen who did not bear the party allegiances of their fathers. It is our intention to analyse the characteristic positions and arguments taken up by these new parties, who were constituted by and may be defined by their attitude to Criticism.

The divide which lay between the two schools, for all that their members shared much in common with each other, ran so deep for two chief reasons. First, because - as to its significance - it concerned not merely one among other theological loci, but the rule of faith itself; and, secondly, because - as to its nature - it denoted not simply difference of opinion over a matter

of interpretation, but over how the Christian sets about interpretation as such. On the other hand - as the titles of chapters III and IV themselves indicate - we have the general principles of all historical and literary study; on the other, special principles with their warrants in Christian dogma. It is, indeed, a simplification to see critical history set over against dogma (since the British Critics, whatever they said, held to a dogmatic conception of Scripture, however modified; and since the Conservatives could not and did not avoid facing historical and literary problems, sometimes with great learning); but the realisation that the Conservatives' principal concern lay with dogma, and the Critics' with history, goes some way to explaining the absence of a meeting of minds in the controversy.

This absence of a logical meeting-point between the two positions does not, of course, suggest that the dispute was necessarily unlike disputes in other disciplines which are threatened by profound methodological change. On the contrary, analogies are readily available in the revolutionary changes that have come upon, for example, the natural sciences.[6] The classic example remains the Copernican revolution, and what took place in sixteenth-century astronomy well illustrates the methodological revolution which convulsed nineteenth-century Biblical scholarship. The replacement of critical history for the doctrine of plenary inspiration as the fundamental principle governing the interpretation of Scripture was no less catastrophic in its implications for Christian thought than that of helio- for geo-centricity for the study of the heavens. It was not merely that certain data required reinterpretation; the whole theoretical framework by which data were understood had been overturned. The Ptolemaic astronomers had come to terms with deviant observations by positing epicycles in the planetary orbits; yet now such observations were hailed as the key to a new astronomy. Orthodox Biblical scholars were well used to apparent discrepancies in the Biblical history, and well able to posit harmonistic devices which had hitherto been agreed to make full sense of them; yet now the anomalous phenomena were made the basis of a new science of Biblical interpretation. The old and trusted methods of harmonising observation and theory came to be seen as mere special pleading.

The epicycles of the old Biblical interpreters carried no more weight with Critical scholars than those of the old astronomy did with the disciples of Copernicus. A fundamentally different perspective had been attained which provided a new gestalt, and which was to a degree incommensurable with the old one. There could be no logical, step-by-step, movement from the one position to the other - in either direction - since the decision required of the theologian, as of the astronomer, was in essence a single one; and yet by it he travelled to a wholly fresh understanding of his task, in its method and in its results. The believer in 'plenary inspiration' could never logically come to doubt infallibilism, for his theory left no standing-ground for errors to challenge it. Van Mildert, and Lee, and Bannerman, and Ellicott and their colleagues were unable to discover error in Scripture, as the pre-Copernicans had been unable to discover helio-centricity in astronomy, since their fundamental method prevented any conceivable data from receiving such an interpretation. Only a revolution in their thinking, involving a step outside one logical pattern and into another, could bring this about; or, to put it another way, when nineteenth-century scholars first began to find errors in Scripture they implicitly acknowledged that such a revolution had taken place already, and that they had abandoned the interpretative framework of infallibilism in favour of that of critical history.

The Critical revolution has bequeathed the church fundamental problems in respect of the relation of its rule of faith and its historical consciousness. The Critics considered that such problems would not prove insurmountable, and that in any event they were much to be preferred to attempts to shield Scripture from historical study. The Conservatives, by contrast, while acknowledging that they faced difficulties, for instance in their interpretation of particular passages, considered the importance of maintaining the dogmatic principle of infallibility to outweigh any such problems. In the course of debate, the great majority of the church, in Britain at least, was won over to Criticism; but Conservatives remained, and in post-War years have increased in strength and influence, such that in the United States today

they form a very sizeable minority. Their more perceptive representatives would not claim that by repudiating 'Higher Criticism' they resolve the problem of Scripture and history. Where, for example, does 'Higher Criticism' begin, and 'Lower Criticism' end? And what is the distinction between asking valid questions about literary genre and invalid questions that cast doubt on the authenticity of Biblical statements (the problem that faced the prosecution in the Robertson Smith case)? But they consider the overall problem fundamentally religious rather than merely historical, and take their place beside H.P. Liddon, that great defender of Conservative nineteenth-century religion, when he set his own dilemma before the public:

> We have really to choose between the infallibility, moral no less than intellectual, of Jesus Christ our Lord on one hand, and the conjectural speculations of critics, of whatever degree of critical eminence, on the other.

And that because:

> The distinction between a critical judgment of historical or philological facts, and a moral judgment of spiritual or moral truths, is inapplicable to a case in which the moral judgment is no less involved than the intellectual.[7]

What the Critical revolution in nineteenth-century Britain brought about was the prima facie removal of the study of historical and literary phenomena in Scripture from the domain of the religious. Whether the tension inbuilt in the resultant dualism is patient of resolution is the essential question that the Conservatives raised then, and it is a question which Critical Biblical scholars and theologians still confront today. Whether, on the other hand, it is theologically and apologetically possible to subsume the literary and historical features of Scripture under the religious umbrella of inspiration, and thereby maintain a special hermeneutic by which the Bible alone is studied, is the question which faces Conservatives.

I
PROLOGUE
The Legacy of Benedict de Spinoza

In our time scholars generally study the Bible in the manner in which they study any other book. As is generally admitted, Spinoza more than any other man laid the foundation for this kind of Biblical study.

L. Strauss, Spinoza's Critique of Religion, p 35[1].

At what point in the history of thought one presumes to break in and embark on a discussion of one of the great matters of religious controversy must, ultimately, be decided on principles to a degree arbitrary. This is pre-eminently true of the matter in hand. The process that led to the overthrow of the old notion of an infallible Bible and its replacement by a myriad of new conceptions of Biblical authority cannot be isolated from the history of Christian - and for that matter Jewish - thought as a whole. Indeed, it might be questioned whether it is appropriate to speak of a unified 'old notion' of the nature of Scripture at all; whether we do not better talk of continually changing concepts which have gradually resolved into their modern forms. This is a major question which we cannot discuss here. In the course, however, of our exposition of the nineteenth-century debate about Scripture, we hope to show that - however it should be qualified to take account of exceptional cases and the pluriformity of actual opinion - as the picture that presents itself from the vantage-point of the conclusion of the debate such an analysis is fully in accord with reality. There comes a point at which minor differences of degree mount up and bring about what can be seen only as a difference in kind. It is our contention that that is what took place during the nineteenth century with respect to the doctrine of Scripture in the British churches.

The origins of this revolution in Christian thought may be sought at many points in the continuum - in the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, some have said even the attitude of Jesus Himself to the Old Testament. A major study would be required to weigh the strengths of these diverse suggestions, and this is not it. We shall later be tracing some of the more immediate influences on the British scene which brought the

Critical debate to a climax and set it in the centre of the theological stage. It is true, of course, that what the British Critics purveyed to their countrymen in the second half of the century was no new thing. It had, at least in its major aspect, been part of the common discourse of German scholarship since the beginning of the century and before. And individual elements within it - in particular, the roll of alleged 'problems' in Scripture that formed the focus of the controversy - had been recognised and debated for centuries, although only a tiny minority (almost all of whom had rejected Christianity) had read them as the Critics were to do. In English Deism they had their most widespread and popular discussion, though by no means their first. What was new about the nineteenth-century debate was that these phenomena ceased to be 'problems' for much of the Christian community and began to be seen as evidence instead for an alternative to the traditional consensus understanding of Scripture. Readings of Scripture long rejected as cause or fruit of unbelief became acceptable within the church. In the field of Old Testament scholarship, where the British controversy over Criticism and therefore our interest are concentrated, a new consensus developed, dating from the initial researches of Eichhorn, the so-called 'father' of Old Testament Criticism, which resolved itself into the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis which even today undergirds Critical Biblical scholarship.

The portraits of earlier scholars hang in the hall of fame of Old Testament Criticism. Simon, in his Critical History of the Old Testament (1680) questioned the extent of Mosaic authorship in the Pentateuch,[2] and Astruc (1753) sought sources behind the Mosaic account indicated by the use of different divine names.[3] The Scottish priest Geddes (1792) opted for a fragment analysis of the Pentateuch, with many of the fragments post-Mosaic, though with the law authentic.[4] Yet they and their fellows worked within the church (interestingly these three were all Roman Catholics), and their Criticism was, partly perhaps as a result, piecemeal. In choosing to begin our study with a scholar unlike them in both respects we suggest that from the advantage of our perspective the Critical revolution which the nineteenth century

witnessed was not merely the outworking of a recognition of problems in the traditional reading of Scripture, but that it involved an essentially novel attitude towards Scripture as such. Of all the precursors of the nineteenth-century Criticism none realised and argued and applied such a new perspective to the extent of Spinoza (1632-77). By way of prolegomenon to our study, therefore, we shall expound the chief features of Spinoza's discussion of Scripture, and, as the detailed examination of the nineteenth-century debate progresses, leave it to speak for itself.

We do not intend to imply that Spinoza originated historical criticism, or even that he was the major influence in its development, though it has often been maintained that he played a key part in preparing the ground for the early Critical scholars.[5] Our interest here is methodological and not, principally, historical. As we shall in due course argue,[6] the questions of method which he raised - and, to a considerable degree, the answers which he gave to them - lie beneath the debates of the nineteenth century, and, though they only occasionally break the surface, in fact provide a key to the detailed scholarly disputes with which this study is concerned.

Strauss, in his standard work on Spinoza's Critique of Religion, sets that critique in both an immediate and a broader context:

> The context to which it belongs is the critique of Revelation as attempted by the radical Enlightenment. That critique in its turn is only one particular form, one particular stage of the critique of religion which was originated in Greek antiquity and continued and renewed in the age in which belief in Revelation predominated.[7]

Accordingly, Strauss begins his discussion with the Greeks and continues with the 'sceptical' tradition that ran through the Middle Ages, particularly manifesting itself in the influential work of Averroës.[8] He focusses then on Spinoza's immediate predecessors, the (Spanish) Jewish 'sceptics' Uriel da Costa and Isaac de la Peyrère, and Thomas Hobbes. To a greater or lesser degree they approached the Bible 'critically' and came to what we should recognise as 'Critical' conclusions on such matters as the authorship of the Pentateuch. Their results were limited, and their method considerably less reflective than that of Spinoza.

Hobbes, for instance, has a preponderantly political concern; his interest in Scripture interpretation is secondary. Spinoza, however, while his political interest is evident from the title of his Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, is concerned also about theology, and in particular hermeneutics, as such. Only the last five of the twenty chapters of the Tractatus deal with the application of matters theological and Biblical to political economy. Strauss notes that it is 'indicative' that Hobbes 'begins his treatise with Adam and Abraham, whereas Spinoza begins with the people of Israel'. For Hobbes, 'the political preoccupation plainly predominates', for he is 'much less interested than Spinoza in a specific Bible science'.[9] By contrast, Spinoza's concern for the greater part of the Tractatus is to establish the methodological principles of just such a discipline. It emerges, therefore, that there is a threefold relevance for our study of the nineteenth century in the work of this philosopher: in his concern to establish a scientific approach to Biblical interpretation, in what that approach proves to be, and in the preliminary conclusions in matters of detail to which it gives rise.

Spinoza's entry into the discussion of method proper bears distinct similarities to that of Jowett.[10] He laments the tendency of theologians to impose interpretations on Scripture, and to attempt to impose acceptance of them upon others. 'Such persons', he declaims, 'never display less scruple or more zeal than when they are interpreting Scripture or the mind of the Holy Ghost.'[11] This is the cause of grave controversy, and is far removed from the proper concern for the right understanding of Scripture which dogmatic statements about its nature would lead one to expect. In particular - and this proves a key criterion in Spinoza's critique - 'they would not dare to adopt, as the teaching of Scripture, anything which they could not plainly deduce therefrom'.[12] Moreover, a tendency is common 'to admire and venerate that which is repugnant' to reason and nature, and, so 'for the sake of increasing the admiration and veneration felt for Scripture, men strive to explain it so as to make it appear to contradict, as far as possible, both one and the other'.[13] Therefore:

> If we would separate ourselves from the crowd and escape from theological prejudices, instead of rashly accepting human

> commentaries for Divine documents, we must consider the true method of interpreting Scripture and dwell upon it at some length: for if we remain in ignorance of this we cannot know, certainly, what the Bible and the Holy Spirit wish to teach.[14]

That is to say, the motive which Spinoza suggests lies behind his enquiry into the interpretation of Scripture is his repugnance at the multiplicity of interpretations common in the church, the fact that many seem to him to be contrary to 'nature and reason', and the unhealthy controversy which they provoke. What, then, is the proper method which he proposes?

'I may', he writes, 'sum up the matter by saying that the method of interpreting Scripture does not widely differ from the method of interpreting nature - in fact, it is almost the same.' It is an empirical method:

> as the interpretation of nature consists in the examination of the history of nature, and therefrom deducing definitions of natural phenomena on certain fixed axioms, so Scriptural interpretation proceeds by the examination of Scripture and inferring the intention of its authors as a legitimate conclusion from its fundamental principles.[15]

Spinoza repeatedly stresses that the Bible must control its own interpretation. We must 'admit no principles for interpreting Scripture, and discussing its contents save such as' we 'find in Scripture itself'.[16] 'We must come to our conclusion simply on Scriptural grounds, for if we are unable to do so we could not, unless strongly prejudiced, accept the Bible and bear witness to its Divine origin.' 'Our knowledge of Scripture must then be looked for in Scripture only.'[17]

Spinoza next introduces the idea of 'history'. We must interpret Scripture - as, he had said, we must interpret nature - 'historically'. He joins this with his concern that only what is quite distinctly 'taught' should be regarded as Scriptural:

> The universal rule ... in interpreting Scripture is to accept nothing as an authoritative Scriptural statement which we do not perceive very clearly when we examine it in the light of its history.[18]

What does he mean here by 'history'? The 'history of a Scriptural statement' comprises three elements: first, its full linguistic or grammatical description; secondly, its full context; and, thirdly, 'the environment' - 'that is, the life, the conduct, and the studies of the author of each book, who he was, what was

the occasion, and the epoch of his writing, whom he wrote for, and in what language'. There is also the question of the history of the text, and of the canon.[19] All this information is necessary if Scripture is to be properly interpreted.

But having obtained it we must seek to apply this rule as we draw the teaching from Scripture: 'we must seek first that which is most universal', that is, 'commended by all the prophets [sc., writers] as eternal and most profitable to all men'.[20] This is where Spinoza's hitherto (from a modern perspective) unexceptional discussion of method takes a significant turn. For he understands this criterion to admit 'that God is one, and that He is omnipotent, that He alone should be worshipped' and so on, but to preclude discussion of 'the nature of God, His manner of regarding and providing for things, and similar doctrines', since 'we have shown that the prophets themselves did not agree on the subject'.[21]

That calls to our attention the interesting and significant fact that the methodologically primary chapter 'Of the Interpretation of Scripture' (which we have been examining) lies only seventh in the ordering of the Tractatus. It is preceded by an extended consideration of prophets and prophecy, some discussion of the law, and a chapter on miracles. The way in which Spinoza construes the conclusions of his own discussion of method is evidently determined to a considerable extent by what he has concluded already. His reiterated desire that 'the whole knowledge of the Bible must be sought solely from itself'[22] is to be set in that context.

It is relevant at this point to notice a correspondence, to which Strauss draws attention, between Spinoza and Willem van Blyenbergh in the same year in which he began work on the Tractatus. Van Blyenbergh and Spinoza find themselves, in the course of discussion of a secondary matter, in disagreement over a matter of principle. Strauss writes of van Blyenbergh:

> Should it occur after intensive examination that natural reason seems to run counter to Scripture, then for him Scripture has so much authority that he is readier to suspect that his own clear ideas are erroneous than that Scripture is erroneous. For it is his intent to hold fast to the faith that Scripture is the word of God.... He admits that, following only the

> light of natural reason, he would have found himself obliged to accept the truth of many of Spinoza's expositions, but that, by reason of his belief in Scripture, he had been compelled to accept the other view.[23]

In response, Spinoza recognises that he stands in a fundamentally different position with respect to 'the first principles themselves'. His starting-point is that:

> he places full trust in the findings of his own intelligence. This trust is 'the first principle', the precondition of all philosophizing, preceding all substantive considerations. Before philosophizing can even be begun, belief in revelation, which calls trust in human reason into question, must itself be questioned.[24]

Spinoza unashamedly brings such a conception of the relation of his natural reason and Scripture to bear on his discussion of the interpretation of Scripture. He therefore finds himself arguing at two different levels: <u>from</u> the teaching of Scripture (as ascertained by the use of his reason), and <u>against</u> the teaching of Scripture (as necessarily subject to reason).[25] The two are connected by his argument from contradictions. On the principle outlined above that what is 'taught' in Scripture must be taught universally and clearly, any apparent variety of opinion on the part of Scriptural writers renders the matter in question unsuitable for inclusion in the 'teaching' category. For instance:

> Samuel believed that the Lord never repented of anything He had decreed (I Sam. xv. 29), for when Saul was sorry for his sin, and wished to worship God and ask for forgiveness, Samuel said that the Lord would not go back from his decree.
>
> To Jeremiah, on the other hand, it was revealed that 'If that nation against whom I (the Lord) have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them....' (Jer. xviii. 8-10). Joel (ii.13) taught that the Lord repented Him only of evil.[26]

He concludes, from this and other cases, that:

> We have now more than sufficiently proved our position, that God adapted revelations to the understanding and opinions of the prophets, and that in matters of theory <u>without bearing on charity and morality</u> the prophets could be, and, in fact, were, ignorant, and held coflicting opinions. It therefore follows that we must by no means go to the prophets for knowledge, either of natural or spiritual phenomena.[27]

The same essentially may be said of the teaching of the Apostles and of Jesus Himself, in respect of matters not pertaining to 'charity and morality': it is so 'adapted' to the individual and the age that it has no lasting validity, as its variety indicates.

We may refer also to Spinoza's discussion of the question of miracle. He vigorously repudiates the possibility of any breach of the 'fixed and immutable order' of nature.[28] He therefore proceeds to define a miracle as 'an event of which the causes cannot be explained by the natural reason through a reference to the ascertained workings of nature'.[29] Because 'the masses ... are wholly ignorant of the workings of nature, it is certain that the ancients took for a miracle whatever they could not explain' by reference to similar occurrences.[30] So

> we cannot doubt that many things are narrated in Scripture as miracles of which the causes could easily be explained by reference to ascertained workings of nature.[31]

The Biblical narrative is intended to appeal to the uneducated, and was written by men of old whose understanding was limited. In consequence:

> it speaks inaccurately of God and of events, seeing that its object is not to convince the reason, but to attract and lay hold of the imagination.[32]

Spinoza concludes his argument as follows:

> We may, then, be absolutely certain that every event which is truly described in Scripture necessarily happened, like everything else, according to natural laws; and if anything is set down there which can be proved in set terms to contravene the order of nature, or not to be deducible therefrom, we must believe it to have been foisted onto the sacred writings by irreligious hands; for whatsoever is contrary to nature is also contrary to reason, and whatsoever is contrary to reason is absurd, and, ipso facto, to be rejected.[33]

The question as to how the prima facie miraculous narratives came to be written remains, and Spinoza seeks an historical explanation. Thus, 'it is very rare for men to relate an event simply as it happened, without adding any element of their own judgment'.[34] What actually happens is that:

> men relate in chronicles and histories their own opinions rather than actual events, so that one and the same event is so differently related by two men of different opinions, that it seems like two separate occurrences....
>
> I could cite many instances in proof of this from the writings of both natural philosophers and historians, but I will content myself with only one from Scripture, and leave the reader to judge of the rest.[35]

He instances the case of Joshua and the sun standing still. The misunderstanding of the relations of sun and earth, coupled with

a desire to convince 'Gentiles, who worshipped the sun' that their deity was controlled by a greater, led to the present form of the narrative.

> Thus, partly through religious motives, partly through preconceived opinions, they conceived of and related the occurrence as something quite different from what really happened.[36]

In sum, as Strauss encapsulates Spinoza's method:

> The conclusion to be drawn is that the Scripture cannot be true and divine in every instance, but only in what is throughout taught without contradiction. The Scriptures teach throughout entirely without contradiction, that obedience to the Divine commandment 'Love ye one another,' manifested in works of justice and charity, is sufficient for salvation.... It is in the light of this doctrine that the whole of the Scriptures, and in particular all its [sic] contradictions, are in principle to be understood.[37]

In consequence, 'the Scriptures are the foundation of piety, only of piety'. They are not the foundation for philosophy, since that seeks not piety but abstract truth. 'Thus on the basis of Scripture, philosophy is liberated from the tutelage of theology.'[38]

Thirdly, we come to Spinoza's conclusions, which - as may be briefly shown - pre-empt some of the main lines of nineteenth-century Criticism, while marking advances on such earlier discussions as that of Ibn Ezra. Spinoza devotes several pages to anomalies in the text of the Pentateuch which contradict the 'almost universally' held opinion that its author was Moses.[39] The apparent anachronisms are analysed, and attention is paid to such matters as the differences between the law-codes.[40] Spinoza's own theory sees Ezra the Scribe as the author of the five books and the succeeding historical narratives as well. In the remainder of his brief 'introduction' to the Bible Spinoza covers such questions as the differences between Kings and Chronicles,[41] the date of the Psalms (the Second Temple) and Proverbs (the reign of Josiah),[42] the pagan background to Job,[43] and some textual-critical matters;[44] and there follows a tentative examination of the New Testament from the same perspective.[45] The chief aim of all this study and argument is to demonstrate that 'Scripture teaches only very simple doctrines, such as suffice for right conduct', as the head to the succeeding chapter has it.[46]

We may note also how Spinoza comes to see the Bible that results

from his interpretative activity in its relation to the Word of God. It is of great interest that, like the more theologically reflective of the later Critical scholars, the philosopher sees the need to prise apart 'Scripture' and 'the Word of God', if his 'mutilated'[47] view of the former is to tally with a Christian acceptance of the latter. The masses, to whom Scripture is addressed, have come to equate the two: 'the multitude - ever prone to superstition ... - pays homage to the Books of the Bible rather than to the Word of God.' But the revelatory Word may not be so identified with the written Books. Indeed, it 'was displayed to the prophets as a simple idea of the Divine mind', and their exposition of it in oral and written teaching has been overlaid by the errors of their culture and their own minds. In fact the revelation was confined to 'obedience to God in singleness of heart, and in the practice of justice and charity', since 'Revelation has obedience for its sole object'.[48] In consequence, 'in purpose no less than in foundation and method', it 'stands entirely aloof from ordinary knowledge'.[49] The authority and integrity of revelation is therefore independent of the Bible.

In a series of respects, we see that Benedict de Spinoza foreshadows the debate about the nature and study of Scripture which was to spread across Western Christendom in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Spinoza claims that his method is presuppositionless, that indeed his conclusions (though an aspect of his critique of religion as such) may beshown to arise out of Scripture, impartially examined. 'I determined', he writes, 'to examine the Bible afresh in a careful, impartial, and unfettered spirit, making no assumptions concerning it, and attributing to it no doctrines, which I do not find clearly set down therein.' He continues: 'With these precautions I constructed a method of Scriptural interpretation.'[50] And yet, upon examination, Spinoza's interpretative method proves to be controlled by certain determining principles which, in large degree, define its conclusions.

For he sets out to discount the traditional doctrine of Scripture, which he regards as 'laying down beforehand, as a foundation for the study and interpretation of Scripture, the principle that it is in every passage true and divine'. Such a

view, he allows, might indeed emerge upon enquiry (though it does not, in fact), but may not be 'set up on the threshold, as it were, of inquiry'.[51] He discounts it, as essentially determining its own conclusions, and thereby invalidating itself. What he does not appear to recognise is that, irrespective of his assessment of the traditional hermeneutic,[52] his own alternative is as widely open to objection upon this precise ground of petitio principii. This is particularly evident in the case of the miraculous, integral as it is with so much of the Biblical material. The high view of the 'reason' which Spinoza enrols as his interpretative key proves incapable of discovering in Scripture anything more than the bare bones of morality and theism. And, as Strauss comments:

> The disjunction 'without reason-with reason,' on which Spinoza's central proposition rests ... is complete only if subjection to revelation must have its ground in man himself, in his reason or his unreason. Spinoza's Protestant opponents however assume that true recognition of the authority of revelation rests on 'the inner witness of the Holy Spirit,' in other words, that its origin is not in man but in God. Therefore they are not reached by Spinoza's argument.[53]

While the traditionalists, from Spinoza's perspective, are encased in circular argument, so is he from theirs. As we saw earlier in his correspondence with van Blyenbergh, there is a far-reaching difference in principle between Spinoza's point of departure and that of traditional thinkers. It is not at all clear how his position, in assuming both the supremacy of the (sceptical) reason and the full accessibility of Scripture to unbelieving study, makes contact with theirs, which denies both.[54] Its conclusions with respect to Scripture are so manifestly drawn out by its presuppositions that, whether or not they could also be demonstrated without them, they do not provide grounds for the traditionalist to be convinced that his position is in error. They have a clear place within Spinoza's critique of religion as a whole, and the question is whether there is reason for accepting his hermeneutic and its (Critical) implications while rejecting the rest of the fabric of his challenge to traditional Christianity. Throughout the nineteenth century that question continued to lie behind the debate about the Bible, and it is still there today.

II

THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY FERMENT

It is the far-reaching question as to the seat of supreme authority in religion which is agitated. Like the attack of Strauss; like the attack of Baur, and his followers Zeller, Hilgenfeld, and Volkmar ... like the attack of Renan, in his naturalistic explanation of the life of our Lord; like the attacks of the Essays and Reviews and Ecce Homo, the assaults of Colenso and Kuenen and Wellhausen are delivered against the central keep of Protestantism, the supreme authority of the Bible in matters of Religion.

A. Cave, The Battle of the Standpoints, pp 4,5

It is perhaps necessary to add that the only study with which we have to do is critical and scientific. The Bible is to be studied just like any other book. We can come to it with no prepossessions, but simply with an open mind. We cannot let ourselves be intimidated by an appeal to tradition or authority, confident that we stand in a far more favourable position for knowing the truth than those who have handed on to us the guesses of an uncritical past. We can bow only to the argument of facts. It is this study which has restored the Bible to us and made it once more intelligible.

A.S. Peake, A Guide to Biblical Study, pp 8,9

1 'A Kind of Prescriptive Veneration'[1]

The nineteenth century witnessed a dramatic change in the beliefs of churchmen in Britain about the Bible. Before turning to some detailed examination of the two contending positions in the latter part of the century, we shall set that discussion in a context by surveying the course of the revolution in Biblical interpretation.

The century opened with British Christianity little ruffled by the debates about Biblical Criticism in which Continental scholars were already engaged. Generally speaking, little was known of them. There was no lack of awareness of the challenges that had been levelled at orthodoxy during the Deist controversy of the century preceding,[2] but only comfort could result from the knowledge that such challenges had come from outside the pale of faith, and had been kept there. Within Christendom - high and low, established and dissenting, evangelical and moderate - a remarkable consensus was maintained. Like every consensus, it lived with occasional exceptions; but a consensus it was.[3] Among the varieties of Christian belief manifest in the churches, G.S. Faber's description of the settled attitude to Scripture as that of 'a kind of prescriptive veneration' would have been

noted as entirely unexceptional.

Yet hand in hand with this veneration went an awareness - at least, amongst the best educated - that, though 'prescriptive', it could not be unthinking. Deism had exposed Scripture to virulent attacks, and it had proved necessary to defend it. The fact that defence had proved and remained necessary we find evident in the context in which Faber's comment is to be found: his Bampton lectures for 1801, on A View of the Mosaical Records, with respect to their Connection with Profane Antiquity, their Internal Credibility, and their Connection with Christianity. The Bampton lectures had been established for just such a purpose twenty years before:

> to confirm and establish the Christian Faith, and to confute all heretics and schismatics - upon the divine authority of the holy Scriptures - upon the authority of the writings of the primitive Fathers, as to the faith and practice of the primitive Church - upon the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ - upon the Divinity of the Holy Ghost - upon the Articles of the Christian Faith, as comprehended in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.[4]

Under the general head of apologetics was considered the nascent Critical scholarship, ranked alongside other varieties of 'unbelief'. Attacks on the literary and historical integrity of Scripture were regarded as attacks on the Faith. 'The argument', as Hunt has it, 'proceeded on the alternative that if the Pentateuch is not infallible there is no revelation.'[5]

The same author, in his extensive survey of nineteenth-century religious thought, comments that 'a general view of the tendencies of the religious thought of the century might be gathered from the Bampton Lectures'.[6] This is the case partly because of the status to which the lectureship had early risen, partly because - as we can see in retrospect - with some exceptions the lecturers stand as exemplars of the thought of their day, and partly because of the conditions laid down by Bampton for the selection of the lecturers: they were to be elected annually, at a gathering of all the heads of the Oxford Colleges.[7] Faber's general approach to Scripture and the 'attacks' that had been made upon it was thoroughly representative of the thought of his day.

We may proceed to illustrate this in more detail by reference

to a further set of Bampton lectures. William Van Mildert, Regius Professor of Divinity in the University, and later Bishop of Durham, was elected to lecture in 1814, and chose as his theme An Inquiry into the General Principles of Scripture-Interpretation. Van Mildert has been seen, with justification, as - his learning excepted - in all things a typical churchman of his day. Hunt epitomises him thus: 'The Bishop was essentially a prudent Churchman, his progress never exceeding that of the whole ecclesiastical body.'[8] The matter of Scripture was no exception. In the eighteenth century the orthodox (as opposed to the Deistic) conception of the Bible had been the traditional one. Locke, writing in 1703, had said that 'It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter';[9] and Abbey and Overton, surveying the century that followed upon Locke's majestic declaration, conclude that 'the doctrine of unerring literal inspiration was almost everywhere held in its strictest form'.[10] Bernard Reardon, writing of the early nineteenth century, finds that the infallibilist conception was 'the doctrine all but unanimously held by Christians in this country at the time'.[11] And V.F. Storr sets the scene for the nineteenth-century ferment thus: the 'chief obstacle' to the Critical theories in Britain was:

> the traditional view of the Bible as a volume inspired throughout from cover to cover, whose statements, whether they related to science, or history, or religion, were to be accepted without questioning. The Bible was treated as something apart from other writings. Its various books were regarded as being all on the same level of inspiration, and as having proceeded under a divine superintendence which protected them from any material error. Even a man of such large mind as Van Mildert could write that in the Bible 'it is impossible even to imagine a failure either in judgment or in integrity'.[12]

The bishop 'of such large mind', a High Churchman of the old school, spoke for his generation.

Van Mildert begins his Bampton lectures with a consideration of the evident diversity of religious opinion in the world. When this is set side by side with the fact that 'the sacred writers strenuously urge unanimity',

> we are naturally led to infer, that truth is certainly attainable by a right application of the rule of faith which these inspired Teachers have left us; and that a disagreement in the application of it indicates, on the part of some of its interpreters,

> a deviation from the rule itself.[13]

Yet, he laments, there are those for whom 'a boundless latitudinarianism is to supply the place of fixed principles';[14] such that all who claim to derive their beliefs from Scripture should be allowed to hold them without contradiction. By contrast, the New Testament exhortations to stand for the truth and against error proceed 'on the supposition that there is some acknowledged foundation, on which the matter in discussion rests'. Further, it 'presupposes some acknowledged rules or maxims, by which the discussion is to be regulated'.[15] That is to say, controversy for the Christian consists in 'maintaining what ... is supposed to be the true intent and meaning of the Sacred Word':

> The authenticity, authority, and truth, of that Word, are assumed as axioms or postulates, on which the whole inquiry is founded. It is presumed also, that truth, and truth only, can issue from this Divine source of knowledge: for, as contrary positions in human science cannot be received as such, so it is impossible that contrary doctrines in theology should have any real foundation in Holy Writ.[16]

The presupposition of theological discussion - and, implicitly, of any true theological knowledge - is an infallible Bible, he claims. Its correct interpretation is the sole guide to truth about matters religious. The problem of what are the proper canons of interpretation, therefore, presents itself as a fundamental one, and it is that which Van Mildert has set before himself in his course of lectures.

Clearly, he avers, the interpreter of Scripture requires linguistic and related skills as a sine qua non of his office. Further, he must exercise the 'rules of criticism common to every species of writing, and on which scarcely any difference of opinion may be supposed to exist'. Such principles 'appertain to the interpreter of Scripture as a general scholar, rather than as a theologian'.[17] Indeed, 'the theologian would be justly exposed to contempt, who, in his endeavour to expound the Sacred Word, should violate any established canon of ordinary criticism'.[18] And yet:

> if the Scriptures themselves have a peculiar and extraordinary character impressed upon them, which takes them out of the class of ordinary writings, that character, whatever it is, ought unquestionably to form the basis of his judgment respecting

> the matters which they contain.[19]

This caveat is of considerable significance. Scripture differs from all other objects of investigation in that 'it emanates immediately from the Fountain of infinite wisdom'; yet it shares the 'channel of human instruction' with the rest of man's literary material. Despite its divine source, we 'must nevertheless examine it as it is delivered to us, clothed in the language of men',[20] and therefore 'subject to the general rules of human composition'.[21] Van Mildert adds:

> The deference due to it as a Divine production does not interfere with this province of human learning; it only exacts submission with respect to the subject-matter of the revelation, to which the critical investigation is entirely subordinate.[22]

The next question to be raised concerns the 'moral qualifications for a right apprehension of the Sacred Word'.[23] The second lecture begins with the text: 'If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God' (John 7:17).[24] From this saying of our Lord,

> an inference appears to be deducible, that every error respecting the Christian Faith proceeds, more or less, from some perverseness in the mind; or, at least, that an earnest desire to know and to do the will of God, is so far a necessary preparative for a right understanding of its doctrines, that without it no proficiency in that respect is reasonably to be expected.[25]

In charity, Van Mildert does not press this principle to an extreme; but he takes it to add an essential moral factor to the discussion of truth and error in the interpretation of Scripture. In contradiction to Spinoza, for instance, we have it here asserted that the notion of objectivity and of an unprejudiced approach to Scripture is a chimaera, since every interpreter inclines either towards or away from the will of God. It is admitted that the will 'cannot absolutely control' the understanding - so that it should accept or reject any given notion - 'yet we are equally conscious that it can indispose it to the reception, or even to the consideration, of particular truths', and so have its effect indirectly; 'whether the bondage be of ignorance, of prejudice, or of moral corruption', the effect will be the same: to prevent the apprehension of truths of revelation in their proper form.[26] So, therefore, 'if there be, from whatever cause, an indisposition to do the will of God, there will ever be a proportionate difficulty in

coming to a knowledge of the truth'.[27]

The specific point of application of this principle in Biblical interpretation is met in the question of the revelatory significance of the text. 'The Bible has pretensions, exclusively its own.' The interpreter must be ever mindful of its having been 'the work of Sacred Penmen, not of unassisted human powers'. There must be a 'readiness to submit' in the reader - to submit both 'the understanding' and 'the affections' to 'what is propounded on such authority'.[28] Such a frame of mind is 'evidently included in that faith which the Scriptures represent as the proper inlet to spiritual knowledge'.[29] Scripture is to be interpreted in the context of faith.

The converse is this. When error arises out of Biblical study on a serious question, it 'may be traced to some lurking principle of infidelity operating upon the mind'.[30] The interpreter, instead of being willing to accept what is stated in the text, 'is predisposed to abide by his own will' and to reject the revealed will of God.[31]

> The main source of all contentions respecting the sense of Scripture, on points of fundamental importance, may be traced to a reluctance, on one side or the other, to renounce prepossessions militating against an entire reception of the truth. Men are led by partiality to their own opinions, or undue deference to those of others ... eventually to a departure from the plain and obvious meaning of the Word of God.[32]

The chief positive quality required by the interpreter Van Mildert describes as 'docility ... an aptitude to receive instruction'.[33] It is characterised by

> that profound submission, that prostration of heart and mind, which desires instantly to receive and obey whatever comes from God.[34]

Van Mildert turns next to the central issue of the authority of Scripture itself. It is, he says, foundational to the whole system of Christian truth. Since 'Revealed Religion is established' on 'an absolutely DIVINE authority', every assault on that basis 'will endanger the whole system'.[35] In practice, this has happened. A great proportion of the 'errors and corruptions' in the life of the Christian church

> spring from systems, virtually, if not formally, opposed to it; from maintaining the necessity of some ulterior tribunal

> of appeal for the decision of controversies and for framing unerring standards of interpretation.[36]

The question of challenges to the supreme authority of Scripture cannot be avoided. Are there indeed, Van Mildert asks, other authorities of comparable or superior status to Scripture? He finds three contenders, 'all asserting principles injurious to the just preeminence of Scriptural authority'.[37]

First, there is Rome. The 'Papist' accepts 'that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and therefore must be true'; 'the infallibility of the Scriptures is taken for granted: their sufficiency is the controverted point.'[38] Arguments are presented against the Roman position, resting on Biblical statements and such general doctrinal positions as 'plenary inspiration'. The nub of Van Mildert's case is that either Scripture should be accepted as the rule of faith, implying the subordination of Church and Pope to that rule, or the claim of Papal and ecclesiastical authority should be seen for what it truly is: a claim to be above Scripture, a position manifestly not in accord with the teaching of Scripture itself.

Secondly, we have 'those who set up human Reason as the supreme Arbiter in matters of faith'.[39] The matter is put thus:

> Here (since we are contending not with declared unbelievers, but with those who profess to receive the Christian Religion as a divine revelation) the question seems to lie between what reason can make known to us on religious subjects without revelation, and what revelation has actually taught us: - whether the former be so clear and perfect in its conceptions, as justly to claim an ascendancy over the latter, or whether it ought to acknowledge its inferiority with respect to its means and sources of information?[40]

Reason, it is acknowledged, is a gift of God of great value. But, Van Mildert asks, why did God give also revelation, if reason alone were sufficient for man's knowledge of God? Further, reason is now 'in a deteriorated state' and therefore 'no longer sufficient, by itself, to secure us against error'.[41] Van Mildert proceeds to conclude that, in consequence, 'it must be the province of reason, with respect to the subject-matter of what is revealed, to submit, not to dictate; to receive the commandment, not to prescribe the law'.[42] Furthermore, very much that we find in Scripture concerns matters about which the unaided reason could tell us nothing; 'they can only be received upon the credit

of the Sacred Oracles'.[43] The ultimate question of authority is raised here. In religious matters either we have an authority, or we have no certain knowledge at all. The 'capricious standard of every man's corrupt or fallible judgment' becomes our authority. And the question remains:

> if ... our reason might be allowed to overrule the written Word, where could we cast anchor in the depths of moral and metaphysical speculation?[44]

Where, indeed? It is therefore a 'dangerous position' to suggest that 'the authority of Scripture must bend to that of reason', and so it has proved down the history of the church.[45] The function of the reason is strictly limited: 'to satisfy itself of the genuineness of the text and its Divine authority, and then so to interpret the doctrine that Scripture shall not be made to contradict itself.[46]

Van Mildert proceeds to comment briefly on the nascent Critical scholarship under this head. In more recent as well as earlier times, he says, some 'professing more liberal and enlarged modes of thinking' have contended either openly or by implication 'for the supremacy of the human understanding in all matters of Faith', and claimed the right for it to decide 'by its own natural faculties, upon the truth of every doctrine of Revealed Religion ... as well as the testimony by which they are supported'. He comments:

> It is manifestly upon this principle, rather than upon the ground of any known law of evidence or legitimate canons of criticism, that considerable and very important portions, extending not only to single words or paragraphs, but even to entire chapters of the Sacred Writings, are regarded ... as spurious or interpolated.[47]

The Scriptures are not to be submitted to the judgement of the human reason, and such attempts 'to elevate the uninspired critic above the divinely-inspired Authors of the Sacred Oracles' must be resisted.[48]

Thirdly, attention is turned to 'the pretensions of a very different class of interpreters; those who hold the necessity of a supposed inward light' which is 'supplementary to Scripture, and, when received, infallible and irresistible in its operations'.[49] It is suggested that such a concept can only challenge the real authority of Scripture itself, no less than does the claim that

the church is the infallible interpreter.[50] No more is required for the reception of the message of Scripture than:

> the best human attainments, moral and intellectual; together with those ordinary aids of the Holy Spirit, which the great Author and Finisher of our Faith has promised to them who sincerely seek the truth.[51]

In sum, the essential error of these three false ideas of Biblical interpretation is their confusion of two distinct concepts: 'the obscurity of the doctrines revealed in Scripture', and 'the obscurity of Scripture itself'. The teachings of Scripture, however difficult to grasp and understand they may be in themselves, are nonetheless laid down 'in a clear and distinct manner'.[52] That is to say, attempts to subject Scripture to an external interpreter rest on a failure to recognise that Scripture does not need such an interpreter. What the Bible says may be hard for the human mind to understand, but that is not because the Bible speaks indistinctly, it is because God's ways are above the ways of men. The subjection of Scriptural teaching to external interpretative authorities can only undermine the authority of Scripture itself.

In a later lecture Van Mildert reverts to the question of the proper rôle of the reason in interpretation. He emphasises that he has no wish to deprecate its importance:

> Its powers of simple apprehension, of judgment, of argumentation and of arrangement and combination of the several parts of the subject are continually called forth, in proving the genuineness of the text, or the authenticity of the Canon of Scripture, and in digesting the matter diffused through the Sacred Volume into a compact and coherent body of truth.[53]

There is ample work here for the reason in 'solving doubts', 'removing difficulties', 'clearing up ambiguities', 'reconciling what seems to be at variance' and 'illustrating by human science what it nevertheless receives as grounded upon Divine testimony'. 'This is the legitimate province of man's Reason, when engaged in the service of Revealed Religion.' The error arises when 'instead of the interpreter, it assumes the character of an arbiter and judge'.[54]

As has been remarked, more than once the lecturer turns his attention to the incipient historical criticism of his day.

On one occasion he sets out well the kind of position that was to be much defended in the century to follow. Very great care, he says, is to be used 'in comparing sacred with profane history, and in employing the one for the elucidation of the other'.[55] Historical scepticism is 'never so misplaced as when sitting in judgment on these Divine Oracles', since their

> credit nothing may be allowed to impeach, but irreconcileable contradiction to facts and authorities established upon testimony the most indubitable, nay, which it is impossible to set aside.

Does this imply a readiness to consider Critical objections upon their merits? One may hardly think so. Van Mildert continues: 'To an investigation whether they really exhibit any such contradiction, we may confidently challenge inquiry.'[56] Since 'the general evidence of their authenticity and of their Divine inspiration stands unshaken', Critical comment may be considered but 'wanton surmise or irreverent suspicion'.[57] The early and (particularly in Britain) fragmentary nature of Critical discussion left Van Mildert without obligation to comment further or explain whether in practical terms he might be persuaded by a given piece of evidence that a passage in Scripture was in error. Indeed, such a question is seen to be anachronistic when considered in the light of the degree of confidence which the consensus of early-nineteenth-century opinion permitted a learned bishop of the Church of England.

Positively, the method of interpretation expounded by Van Mildert leaves little room for such doubts. Its whole tenor is 'from faith to faith': the Scripture is studied in the context of belief in it, and accordingly, no door is left open for the entry of doubt:

> The farther we advance in the investigation of Scripture truth, the more clearly shall we perceive that a right interpretation of it depends principally upon a due reverence for Scripture itself, as the work of Divine Inspiration. Whatever aids we may collect from other sources, they are subordinate, in point of authority, to the work on which they are employed.[58]

'Whatever difficulties might present themselves respecting detached parts of this Divine system' of revelation are 'to be obviated' not from reason or any other sources,[59] but 'upon reasoning from Scripture itself, the prime source of intelligence respecting the matters of which it treats'.[60] For, 'if we acknowledge' its inspira-

tion, 'it is impossible even to imagine a failure, either in judgment or in integrity' within the sacred volume.[61]

Thus we find William Van Mildert's Bampton lectures for 1814, largely expressive of the British theological consensus at the opening of the century. As the lectures make clear, Van Mildert was by no means an unintelligent man, or lacking in a due regard for learning and scholarship. He gives, indeed, much attention to the different academic disciplines which should proper be laid under tribute to the task of the interpretation of Scripture. He commends the application of all linguistic and historical and other tools, but ever within the confines of a special interpretative discipline, with its object the study of Scripture in a manner fitting to the revelation of God, the 'Sacred Oracles'. The reason of man must bow before God's work of inspiration, as it is not competent to be its judge. Van Mildert's exposition of the doctrine of his generation is well represented in Faber's rich phrase, 'a kind of prescriptive veneration'.[62]

2 Harbingers of Criticism

Insularity geographical and intellectual served to isolate British theology and church life from the great movements of thought sweeping across Continental Europe for the greater part of the nineteenth century. It is rather remarkable that the year 1860 and the publication of Essays and Reviews are generally seen to mark the opening of the controversy about Criticism and all that it entailed in the British arena. On the Continent, by then, the battle had been largely lost and won. A number of factors have been adduced to account for the delay, perhaps chief among them being the cultural isolation which both produced and was partly accounted for by the widespread ignorance of the German language, and went hand in hand with antipathy toward German thought as a whole. Of the position in the later eighteenth century, one authority notes that 'the political and social conditions proved especially unfortunate for the cause of the best in German literature', and in periodicals 'bitter and venomous

invectives' against German thought were the order of the day.[63] The onset of the nineteenth century saw increasing interest in both literature and language, though for several decades ignorance of the latter remained widespread even at the most learned level. Pusey, who in 1825 visited Göttingen for a period, was apparently one of only two Oxford men with a knowledge of German at that time.[64] Those who were - as scholars were increasingly - aware of the tendency of German thought, very largely rejected its conclusions and did all they could to ensure that such rejection was general. Surveying the periodical literature of the day, Morgan and Hohlfeld write: 'Many reviewers regard it as their solemn duty constantly to keep liberal ideas from reaching the unwary mind of the English reader.'[65] And even writers who came to terms with the new knowledge generally did not broadcast their insights. Elliott-Binns comments:

> Even those theologians who were convinced of the truth of much in the new outlook exercised a considerable economy in their treatment of it and tried to conceal from the public the results reached by German scholars; a procedure which was exposed and condemned by ... [those] who saw that it was impossible to keep knowledge at one level in Germany and at another level in England.[66]

But in the early part of the century they were few, and the bulk of scholarly and clerical writing, regarding the Continental theories as patently in error, had no wish for them to be disseminated amongst the faithful at home.

(i) The Interpretation of Scripture

Certain figures do, however, stand out, the brighter because they are so few, as the pioneers who introduced the Critical method and its implicit conception of Scripture to British soil. We may briefly survey them and their significant contributions to the spread of the new learning. Ironically, the first and most influential name that arises is that of S.T. Coleridge, neither BIblical scholar nor theologian, but directly and through the work of those whom he influenced of profound importance. 'The most important influence of this age', is how Carpenter assesses him,[67] and such a judgement would be shared by other commentators: for F.W. Farrar he was the primary influence in the revolution

in thought that swept through the Church of England in the following half-century, and from him a line may be traced encompassing Arnold, Thirlwall, Hare, Maurice, Alford, Milman, Stanley, and all the rest.[68] Pfleiderer remarks that Coleridge was 'above all his English contemporaries the student best acquainted with German theological science'; Hare 'adopted' his 'way of thinking', and he, of course, was the teacher of Maurice (and later his brother-in-law).[69]

It is also ironical that the most significant work which Coleridge wrote on this subject was published only posthumously (in 1840; Coleridge died in 1834). The 'Letters on the Inspiration of the Scriptures', published as Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit, sought to prepare the way for the acceptance of Critical methods, while defending the Bible's use for spiritual purposes. While in Germany he had read Eichhorn, Lessing and Reimarus, and so was thoroughly acquainted with the thought of the Critical school and its challenges to orthodoxy.[70] But Coleridge did not attempt to propagate Criticism directly. He sought, rather, to break up the ground, by undermining the infallibilist position and at the same time stoutly maintaining his Christian piety. His intention was to preserve what he saw as the kernel of the faith, while urging that the husk be discarded. In so doing, he succeeded in contributing to the century's debate in a fashion that did not soon appear out-dated, but which spoke to the heart of the question and to that of the age.[71] Willey writes:

> in demonstrating that Christianity could and must be disengaged from the millstone of fundamentalism he was in effect producing a blue-print for all possible future defences of the faith.... Coleridge's literary and spiritual insight placed him upon a point of vantage from which he could overlook the nineteenth century country in front of him, and reply in advance to all that the Zeitgeist would thereafter bring forward.[72]

Coleridge's case, in the gently yet potently argued 'Letters', is two-fold. First, he seeks to lay all possible emphasis on the rôle of the subjective consciousness in religion, an emphasis that declares the hand of Schleiermacher heavy upon his shoulder. He reacts vehemently against the evidential apologetics of the eighteenth century, and claims that the Bible must be its own evidence. The experience of Scripture is its own argument and its own defence, and he declares what has been his own experience

of Scripture:

> I have found words for my inmost thoughts, songs for my joy, utterances for my hidden griefs, and pleadings for my shame and my feebleness. In short, whatever finds me, bears witness for itself that it has proceeded from a Holy Spirit.[73]

The difficulty is that 'the Doctrine' of orthodoxy requires him to believe more than this. He opens the second Letter thus:

> In my last letter I said that in the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all other books put together; that the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being; and that whatever finds me brings with it an irresistible evidence of its having proceeded from the Holy Spirit. But the Doctrine in question requires me to believe, that not only what finds me, but that all that exists in the sacred volume, and which I am bound to find therein, was - not only inspired by, that is, composed by, men under the actuating influence of the Holy Spirit, but likewise - dictated by an Infallible Intelligence; - that the writers, each and all, were divinely informed as well as inspired.[74]

And that raises the essential problem, and moves us to his second contention. For 'here all evasion, all excuse is cut off. An Infallible Intelligence extends to all things, physical no less than spiritual.'[75] The doctrine of infallibility Coleridge rejects as 'superstitious and unscriptural', a legacy of the Jews.[76] The extension of the idea of inspiration from 'what finds me' to the whole of Scripture is to be repudiated, and with it infallibilism in total.

One reason for its rejection is that it 'at once petrifies the whole body of Holy Writ', turning 'this breathing organism, this glorious panharmonicon, which I had seen stand on its feet as a man and with a man's voice given to it' into 'a colossal Memnon's head, a hollow passage for a voice, a voice that mocks the voices of many men, and speaks in their names, and yet in but one voice, and the same'.[77] The individuals of whose passionate writing Scripture appears to be composed are turned into creatures of a 'superhuman ... Ventriloquist'.[78] A reading of the book of Job will suffice to show the impossibility of the traditional understanding. Coleridge asks:

> What! were the hollow truisms, the unsufficing half-truths, the false assumptions and malignant insinuations of the supercilious bigots ... the impressive facts, the piercing outcries, the pathetic appeals, and the close and powerful reasoning of the sufferer ... dictated by an infallible Intelligence?[79]

He is aware of the rejoinder - that such a 'mechanical' understanding of inspiration misrepresents the orthodox idea. Yet he maintains that the attempt to understand the infallibilist position otherwise is inconsistent, like a 'geometrician' who 'should name a sugar loaf an ellipse, adding - "By which term I here mean a cone"'.[80] Moreover, the harmonistic interpretation characteristic of orthodoxy suggests the mechanical idea: 'the curiously inferred facts, the inventive circumstantial detail, the complemental and supplemental history which ... they bring to light by mere force of logic' to explain historical discrepancies.[81] On the contrary, he maintains, such discrepancies are 'analogous to what is found in all other narratives', and speak rather of the independence and essential reliability of the authors.[82] He analyses the Conservative position thus:

> The substance of their syllogism, by which their [harmonising] procedure was justified to their own minds, can be no other than this. That, without which two assertions - both of which must be alike true and correct - would contradict each other, and consequently be, one or both, false, or incorrect, must itself be true. But every word and syllable existing in the original text of the Canonical Books ... the name in the copy of a family register, the site of a town, or course of a river, were dictated to the sacred amanuenses by an infallible Intelligence.[83]

From historical or geographical errors Coleridge then turns his attention to the question of morality, and in particular to the story of Jael. He refers to an unnamed theologian who, clearly working from the infallibilist view of Scripture,

> in answer to a question concerning the transcendent blessedness of Jael, and the righteousness of the act, in which she inhospitably, treacherously, perfidiously, murdered sleep, the confiding sleep, closed the controversy by observing that he wanted no better morality than that of the Bible, and no better proof of an action's being praiseworthy than that the Bible had declared it worthy to be praised.[84]

Coleridge finds such a comment 'so slanderous to the morality and the moral spirit of the Bible' as to be 'inexplicable, except as a consequence of the doctrine in dispute'.[85] There needs must be a line drawn between the contention that 'the Bible contains the religion of Christians' and that that 'whatever is contained in the Bible is the Christian religion';[86] the latter is nothing short of 'Bibliolatry'.[87]

The case is presented to the reader in its two-fold strength: it is apologetically essential, and it arises out of a proper study of Scripture. As time passed, a position essentially similar to Coleridge's was taken up by all the nineteenth-century Critics who wished to stand in the broad stream of Christian belief. Coleridge could see that with the rising tide of Critical argument there could be no other defence of the faith. The infallibilist doctrine would avail nothing against it, and should therefore be abandoned. To uphold it, he declares,

> I must submit to be silenced by the first learned infidel, who throws in my face the blessing of Deborah, or the cursings of David, or the Grecisms and heavier difficulties in the biographical chapters of the Book of Daniel, or the hydrography and natural philosophy of the Patriarchal ages.[88]

It is needful that the Bible be left to our experience of it, and that we should make it no longer the subject of credal statements.[89] It should be approached just as are all other ancient writings, and, as Coleridge confesses, 'this I believe by my own clear experience', that the enquirer will find that:

> the livelier and steadier will be his impressions of its superiority to all other books, till at length all other books and all other knowledge will be valuable in his eyes in proportion as they help him to a better understanding of his Bible.[90]

Thus Coleridge unfolds his manifesto for the new view of the Bible and the Christian faith that was soon to spread as widely in Britain as on the Continent. With its twin emphases on the over-riding significance of personal experience, and the necessity of abandoning infallibility and the apologetic which it entailed, it swiftly entered the intellectual life of the day and spread the influence of its author far beyond the personal circle which had long since imbibed the thrust of his thought. The fact that such novel ideas were expressed in the context of manifest piety did much to immunise their recipients against the violent response that was usual to 'German' thinking.

We move from Coleridge to another seminal influence who also produced a highly significant small book on Scripture. Thomas Arnold was:

> one of that very small group of scholars and clergymen who, through Coleridge's writings and through independent study were aware of German criticism, and awake to its meaning for

the future of Protestantism.[91]

Five years before Coleridge's 'Letters' were set before the public Arnold had read them, and he promptly wrote to the author's nephew (Mr Justice Coleridge) enquiring whether he had. Arnold comments that the Confessions will break the ground to prepare for the 'greatest shock to existing notions since' the Reformation undermining of the authority of the Pope.[92] Willey notes that just two days later he is found writing to Hare in support of his proposal for a new theological review, which should 'make some beginnings of Biblical Criticism, which, as far as relates to the Old Testament, is in England almost non-existent'. What Wolf and Niebuhr have done for Greece and Rome 'seems sadly lacking for Judaea'.[93] Arnold was eager for the spread of the Critical method, and to the end of his life regarded his brief Essay on the Right Interpretation and Understanding of the Scriptures (1831) as the most important thing he ever wrote.[94]

'No question', he begins, 'can be of greater importance to every man, than that which regards the right use of the Scriptures.'[95] Yet the greater the ability and education of the reader, the greater the difficulty in understanding:

> With greater powers and opportunities of discovering truth, [the educated man] gains, unavoidably, a greater sensitiveness to apparent error or inconsistency, - a greater impatience of obscurity and confusion.

It is not possible to suspend the activity of the mind when it comes upon problems; and say 'Here I will have the comfort of a reasonable belief, and here of a blind one.'[96]

> I wish to consider ... the great majority of young men of the educated classes.... His habits of mind render it impossible for him to read without inquiry: obscurities, apparent contradictions, and still more, what he would feel to be immoralities, cannot pass without notice.[97]

The 'commentators of reputation' do no more than 'bewilder' such an enquirer, because of their lack of both knowledge and judgement, and fundamentally because they confuse:

> the proper provinces of the intellect and the moral sense, so as to make questions of criticism, questions of religion, and to brand as profane, inquiries, to which the character of profaneness or devotion is altogether inapplicable.[98]

Arnold's aim is to assist in the overcoming of such difficulties,

to the end that 'a young man' may read his Bible with understanding and profit.

The first part of the Essay is taken up with moral questions, which Arnold regards as placing an even larger obstacle before faith than historical or literary difficulties. The case is developed for an understanding of revelation as progressive, in which distinctions are made between the differing circumstances in which particular commands were given. Further, some commands are binding on all men at all times, but 'other commandments may be of a transitory nature, and binding only upon particular persons or at particular times'.[99] These two rules form the key to the proper understanding of Scriptures.

Arnold then turns to the question of the accuracy of Scripture. Such difficulties as may arise do not threaten the 'truth of revelation' itself, they merely cast doubt on the 'inspiration of the historical record of it'. Indeed, it is not even the 'general truth' of Scripture that is called in question by 'the great majority of objections, critical, scientific, historical, and chronological, which have been brought at different times against the various parts of the Bible'.[100] There is a vital distinction to be drawn between the authenticity of the revelation itself and the detailed reliability of the record of it:

> undoubtedly, if a man utters a true prophecy, it is a very good reason for thinking him inspired; but what has this to do with his recording the fact of the utterance of such prophecies by another? And is it not as absurd to argue the inspiration of the history from the truth of the facts contained in it, as to argue the falsehood of the facts from the history not being inspired?[101]

There is no necessary relation between the two, and Christianity does not have a vested interest in trying to establish one. It is needful 'to distinguish carefully between' the 'Christian faith', and 'a variety of questions, historical, critical, scientific, &c., connected with parts of that Volume from which the grounds of our faith are derived'. He continues:

> With Christian faith, there can be no tampering.... We must, indeed, 'render unto God the things that are God's;' but we must also 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's,' that intellectual wisdom may not be denied her lawful tribute.[102]

It is for that wisdom - the human intellect - to decide on 'all

questions of science, of history, and of criticism, according to her own general laws'. There can be no question of an 'appeal' against the decision of the human wisdom on such matters to any 'spiritual wisdom', for in these matters the 'lower jurisdiction' has sole authority.[103]

Throughout the Essay emerges Arnold's clear conviction that Christianity, of the truth of which he is wholly convinced, is a matter of the moral and the spiritual; and that therefore the Christian is as such unconcerned about the outcome of debates on matters critical. Even the loss of all 'inspiration' for the Scriptures would leave the 'truths' contained within them unaffected. 'He protests', writes Willey,

> against the fear with which religious people regard critical enquiry; such fear turns 'critical' into 'religious' issues and forces critics to become impugners of orthodoxy.[104]

The moral and spiritual verities revealed in Scripture are left absolutely untouched by the process of Critical enquiry.

The influence of Arnold and of other Oxford men associated with him (the group known as the 'Noetics' or 'Oriel School') was lasting. R.D. Hampden, Bampton lecturer in 1832, in his Scholastic Philosophy in relation to Christian Theology challenged the authority of received dogma, and as a result became the focus four years later of a campaign by Pusey when the candidate for the Regius Chair of Divinity.[105] We may note, however, that Hampden still acknowledged an infallible Bible. 'It follows', he wrote in his Bampton lectures, from inspiration 'that whatever is recorded in those books is indisputably true'.[106] To put it yet more plainly:

> Any fact, therefore, that is found expressly written in the Bible, must be regarded, by virtue of its sole and primary existence there, to be ascertained with an evidence to which no further proof can add reality.[107]

By contrast, Whately's Essays on some of the Difficulties in the Writings of St. Paul (1827) was one of the first volumes to introduce English readers to Critical New Testament study.

Basil Willey tersely sums up the significance of Arnold and his school: 'Essays and Reviews ... may be taken to represent the delayed action upon Oxford of Thomas Arnold.'[108] It was in

Benjamin Jowett's essay, 'On the Interpretation of Scripture', that the preparatory work of Coleridge and Arnold came to a head in what may be seen as the most significant essay in the volume that launched Criticism into British Biblical scholarship.[109]

(ii) The Influence of the New Historiography

We have suggested that the causes of the rise of the modern view of the Bible may be traced far back in the history of thought, and the same may be said specifically of the new historical consciousness which contributed so conspicuously to bringing about the acceptance of that view, and in one respect accounted for it. Yet it was during the eighteenth century that, in Germany, the 'organic' conception of history now universally held began to gain acceptance.[110] The first application which it found was in the classical histories of Greece and Rome, but it did not stop there. With the growing acceptance of the applicability of 'general' rather than 'special' hermeneutics as the appropriate criterion for Biblical interpretation, the records of the Hebrews soon came under the same scrutiny as those of the Romans and the Greeks. Our concern here, however, lies not with the direct impact of the new classical learning upon the old Biblical, but with that impact insofar as it made itself felt in Britain. In fact, it proved a catalyst for the spread of the Critical method. For, as Storr acutely observes, the claim of the historical method to 'interpret history causally and genetically implies the abandonment of the customary antithesis between the natural and the supernatural'.[111] Nothing could have greater significance for Biblical studies than that, and, as one writer has put it,

> nothing did so much to forward the serious pursuit of historico-grammatical biblical criticism as the publication of Thirlwall and Hare's translation of the History of Rome (1827) by B.G. Niebuhr (1776-1831),[112]

and later, comparable, works.

We shall come in the succeeding section of this chapter to Thirlwall's other and somewhat briefer significant work of translation, Schleiermacher's Essay on St. Luke. His labour with Hare was of greater dimensions, and in that case the translators stood in the shadows and allowed the great German classicist to

speak for himself, adding scarcely a word of their own to the edition of his massive work. Yet Thirlwall did not only translate, he early embarked on the great scholarly endeavour of his own career, his history of Greece, patterned on Niebuhr's Rome. Gooch hails it as the 'first scholarly history' of Greece,[113] and warmly commends Thirlwall for his work.

> His classical scholarship was faultless, and he allows for the bias of his authorities. He was fully abreast of German scholarship. Mitford wrote before it was necessary to know German. Clinton lamented his ignorance of the language. Thirlwall was the first to incorporate the results of Böck and Otfried Müller ... and a host of other scholars who rescued Greek antiquity for the modern world.[114]

It was in the same spirit of dependence upon the German schools and of critical detachment from his subject that, as we shall see below, Thirlwall turned his hand to the New Testament and Schleiermacher's interpretation of it.

We may note also the historical studies of Milman. Though not a work of high scholarship of the order of Eichhorn and Ewald's Old Testament studies, Henry Hart Milman's History of the Jews, published in 1829, marked a milestone in the application in English of the new techniques of historiography to Scripture. It was a popular work, intended for the general reading public rather than the serious student. In the eyes of many, as might have been expected, this only heightened concern at the possible effects of its dissemination of the new ideas. As Carpenter remarks, 'it was more than public opinion could bear', and because of the 'anger and alarm' it provoked it was, initially, quickly withdrawn from circulation.[115] Pfleiderer, while pointing out that 'Milman was as far as Arnold from holding the principles of scientific criticism now followed by Wellhausen or Robertson Smith', recognises that the History of the Jews

> treated the narratives of the Old Testament in the same way as the historical traditions of any other ancient people, took up a critical attitude toward the chronological data of the Bible, explained not a few narratives as oriental poetry and allegory ... to deliver Biblical history from the bands of traditional sanctity.[116]

Milman was, indeed, under no illusions as to the implications of his historical method for the inspiration of Scripture. In a Preface added to the third volume of the first edition,

an unsuccessful attempt to dowse the fires of controversy, he wrote:

> It has been suggested, that the author has not sufficiently regarded the 'inspiration' of the Word of God. His views of inspiration are nearly those of Tillotson, Secker and Warburton. 'A spurious notion,' says the latter, 'begotten by superstition in the Jewish Church, and nursed up by piety in the Christian, hath passed, as it were, into a kind of article of faith, that every word and letter of the New Testament (the Bible) was dictated by the Holy Spirit in such a manner, as that the writers were but the passive organs through which the language was conveyed.'[117]

By the edition of 1863, the climate had changed significantly, and the author could reflect:

> Are [the Old Testament Scriptures], like other historical documents, to be submitted to calm but searching criticism as to their age, their authenticity, their authorship; above all, their historical sense and historical interpretation?
>
> Some may object ... that Jewish history is a kind of forbidden ground ...: the whole history, being so peculiar in its relation to theology, resting, as it is asserted, even to the most minute particulars, on divine authority, ought to be sacred from the ordinary laws of investigation.[118]

The historical details are of no particular concern to the believing interpreter: 'The moral and religious truth, and this alone, I apprehend, is the "Word of God" contained in the Sacred Writings.'[119]

Milman set out to approach Scripture just as he approached other historical documents, not merely in theory, but, in his case, in practice. He wrote his History of the Jews as the man who would later embark on the great History of Latin Christianity. He had imbibed the historical spirit, and succeeded in popularising it by treating the history of the church and the history of Israel by the accepted canons of secular history.

(iii) Early New Testament Criticism

This study is largely concerned with the debate about the Critical approach to the Old Testament, but not out of any lack of interest in the New. As it happened, the great controversy in Britain during the decades after 1860 concentrated upon the one rather than the other almost entirely; and the chief reason was the hegemony in the field of New Testament studies of the Cambridge School (of Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort) which succeeded

in insulating British thought almost completely from the influence of the radical scholarship which dominated Continental debate. The Cambridge scholars were not, indeed, 'Conservative' in the sense in which we are using the term - they were Critical in their method, and rejected the traditional dogmatic assumption of infallibility. But they succeeded in arriving at markedly conservative conclusions on almost every matter, so much so as to arouse the particular ire of liberal commentators. Pfleiderer writes, of Westcott's Introduction to the Study of the Gospels:

> This work, which appeared in six editions between 1851 and 1881, belongs to that class of apologies which, by their learning, an air of superiority towards the main arguments of the critics, and occasional minor concessions on secondary points, are accustomed to make a great impression, and really perform the service ... of retarding the progressive theological spirit of an age.[120]

Nonetheless, the effect of their combination of Critical method and conservative conclusions was in the long term all to the benefit of Criticism. Criticism was made to appear respectable and benign, as not tending to overthrow the fundamentals of Christian belief, but as working rather to establish them on a footing which none could deny. This in turn gave Old Testament Critics an increasing credibility in the minds of pious but open-minded thinkers, since the 'believing Criticism' which characterised the mainstream of English and Scottish Critical work made much of its adherence to orthodox Christianity and of the invulnerability (on Critical grounds) of the New Testament to the kind of analytical dissection which they applied to the Old.[121] Many came to accept the methods of Old Testament Criticism in the hope and indeed the expectation that they would ultimately be used to overthrow the conclusions of the German Critical scholars, in the same way as the Cambridge School had used Critical tools to set aside the Tübingen thesis. Wellhausen was readily expected to go the way of Baur. Yet, as the later history of New Testament scholarship has made clear, the work of the Cambridge Trio isolated British scholarship from the main line of that on the Continent, and the price was paid when, with the passing of the generation of Westcott and his colleagues, the defence of such conservative bastions as the 'authenticity' of the Fourth Gospel was abandoned without a fight. Not only did Wellhausen fail to go the way

of Baur; while the extremes of the Tübingen Criticism had indeed been abandoned even by some of its staunchest adherents,[122] the British reaction was shown to be simply an anomaly.

Yet in Britain, for half a century, it had succeeded in stemming the tide of German influence. The irony is that earlier in the century the British public had had considerably greater access to the nascent Critical approach to the New Testament than to the Old. There had been several inlets of German thought producing, indeed, some indigenous scholarship comparable in method with that in which Continental scholars were engaged, but it had almost no influence in the long term. The reason is not far to seek. The innate conservatism and traditional piety of British Christians were revolted and alarmed by the radicalism of Baur and his fellows, and, above all, by the speculative flights of Strauss' Leben Jesu. Strauss was first translated into English in 1846 (by George Eliot), and it is worthy of notice that the first edition of Westcott's influential Introduction to the Study of the Gospels, referred to so disparagingly by Pfleiderer, appeared just five years later. Its Preface contained the following paragraph:

> My chief object has been to show that there is a true mean between the idea of a formal harmonization of the Gospels and the abandonment of their absolute truth. It was certainly an error of the earlier Harmonists that they endeavoured to fit together the mere facts of the Gospels by mechanical ingenuity; but it is surely no less an error in modern critics that they hold the perfect truthfulness of Scripture as a matter of secondary moment. The more carefully we study the Bible, the more fully shall we realise their importance; and daily experience can furnish parallels to the most intricate conjectures of commentators, who were wrong only so far as they attempted to determine the exact solution of a difficulty, when they should have been contented to wait in patience for a fuller knowledge.[123]

This section of the original Preface was reproduced at the front of each of the many editions, and it vividly captures the spirit with which Westcott and his colleagues set about their Critical task, a spirit itself expressive of the British reaction to the excesses (as they were seen) of Continental scholarship.

So the beginnings of Critical New Testament study in Britain failed to produce, during the nineteenth century, the fruit in

which the parallel Old Testament scholarship was rich. It is nevertheless of importance to survey briefly the significant British attempts at New Testament Criticism, since they did succeed in setting a context in which such men as Westcott, while desiring to repudiate the conclusions of Baur and Strauss as vigorously as any Conservative, chose to do so without attempting to defend the full Conservative doctrine of Scripture, and by means of the same Critical tools as their radical opponents. As we have suggested, this was to be of profound significance for both Old and New Testament scholarship, since it baptised the idea of Criticism and rendered it acceptable to many who retained - as did the Cambridge scholars - something close to a de facto infallibilism, and who were ever hopeful that Criticism (as a method) could be used to defeat Criticism (as unacceptable conclusions) in the field of Old Testament as it had in the New. It paved the way for the rapid capitulation of British Old Testament scholars, especially during and after the 1880's, to Continental theories, and (in the field of New Testament) for the succession of the Cambridge Trio by scholars who knew not Joseph.

Brief reference has already been made to Whately and his volume on the Pauline Epistles (published in 1827). There were other precursors of Critical New Testament scholarship. At a somewhat later date we have Samuel Davidson, whose Critical stance earned his dismissal from the Lancashire Independent College in 1857.[124] Pfleiderer hails Davidson's espousal of a (moderate) Criticism:

> Samuel Davidson's Introduction to the Study of the New Testament (2 vols., 1868) presents noteworthy evidence of the progress of historical criticism in England since the beginning of the sixth decade. In the first edition (1848-51) the author had maintained the genuineness of the whole of the New Testament writings, not excepting even 2 Peter, against all the objections of criticism. He then published an Introduction to the Old Testament (1862-3), in which the standpoint of the apologist is abandoned, and the intermediate position of Ewald taken.[125]

Jowett, also, the celebrated contributor to Essays and Reviews, had published Critical New Testament studies, notably his Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians and Romans, with Critical Notes and Dissertations (2 vols., 1855), in which Pfleiderer

states that he 'introduced to his countrymen the results of Baur's critical labours'.[126] Willey writes of Essays and Reviews that, since its 'centre of gravity' lies in Jowett's contribution, 'it is in Jowett's thinking and writing, during the previous decade and after the publication, that the setting of the book is best perceived'. And Jowett spent the 1850's 'reading Lessing, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Baur and much other German literature highly compromising to an English clergyman of those days'.[127]

But such men as these were able to pursue their studies, partly because, as we have seen, Coleridge, Arnold and the others had made it appear theologically feasible for Christian scholars so to do, and partly because, much earlier, two men in particular had made the tendency of German New Testament scholarship available to English readers.

Herbert Marsh, later Bishop of Llandaff and of Peterborough, studied at Göttingen under Michaelis in the late eighteenth century, and translated into English his teacher's Introduction to the New Testament, with additional notes of his own, in a series of volumes; and in the third he added a dissertation of his own on the origin and composition of the synoptic gospels. Carpenter remarks:

> Marsh's conception of the processes by which the several Gospels reached their present form through successive stages of elaboration, was in the highest degree intricate; and the methods of literary analysis which he employed were wholly incompatible with traditional methods of interpretation.[128] For a decade before his elevation to episcopal rank, in 1816, Marsh taught as Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, and many of his university lectures on interpretation and criticism were subsequently published. In his 'Lectures on the Interpretation of the Bible' we read that 'the Bible ... must be examined by the same laws of Criticism, which are applied to other writings of antiquity'.[129] Marsh applies this principle particularly to matters of textual criticism, and to the broad problems of interpreting Scripture in the perspective of our age and culture. He conspicuously refrains from calling into question any of the teaching of Scripture itself, and while his own method and that of Michaelis whom he translates and commends assisted in preparing the ground for the repudiation of infallibility, he does not come to such

a position himself. He writes:

> We may be previously assured, when a writer is inspired, that every proposition, which he advances, is in strict conformity with the truth. But we must understand an inspired writer, as well as a common writer, or we shall not know what his propositions are. And the very circumstance, that his propositions must be true, should make us all the more anxious to investigate their meaning. But how shall we investigate their meaning, unless we interpret the words by the rules, which we apply to other writings?[130]

Marsh is anxious to make the new interpretative methods acceptable, and so does not call into question the traditional axiom of infallibility. Nor does he challenge traditional notions of inspiration; he claims merely that they are not incompatible with the need for the proper understanding of what has been inspired.

> If the Sacred Writers were so inspired, that, while their knowledge was suggested to them, the mode of committing that knowledge to writing was left to their own discretion, the words which they employed for their purpose, must evidently be interpreted as their words, and consequently by the rules above described. Nor will the conclusion be different, if the words were inspired. For if the words themselves were dictated by the Holy Spirit, the choice of those words must have been determined by the same rules, as if they had been chosen by the Sacred Writers.[131]

It is also, however, noteworthy, that in two 'preliminary lectures' affixed to the volume, Marsh sets his enquiry into interpretative method in a particular context. He is anxious that Christians should be able to 'give a reason of the hope' that is in them.[132] The educated man should know not only what he believes, but what are the grounds for his belief. He poses the question how a man will respond if asked why is is a Christian and not a 'Mahometan'. If he is a 'learned divine',

> he would enter into those historical and critical arguments of which the unlettered enthusiast has no conception, but by which alone the authenticity of the Gospel history can be established, by which alone the miracles recorded in it can be confirmed, by which alone the claims of Christianity to a divine origin can be proved legitimate.[133]

Marsh thus betrays his eighteenth-century origins, as the old evidential apologetics dominates his thinking. He makes this clear, and admits something of profound importance for the standing of Critical enquiry, in the succeeding paragraph:

> There is no ground then for that distinction between science and religion, that the one is an object of reason, the other

> an object of faith. Religion is an object of both; it is this very circumstance, which distinguishes the unlearned from the learned in divinity; while the former has faith only, the latter has the same faith accompanied by reason. The former believes the miracles and doctrines of Christianity, as being recorded in the New Testament; the latter also believes the miracles and doctrines recorded in the New Testament, and he believes them, because by the help of his reason he knows, what the other does not know, that the record is true.[134]

That is to say, while he readily accepts orthodox doctrines, he maintains that for the educated man belief in Christian truth is parallel with (and rests upon) knowledge of it gained by the understanding. As it happens, Marsh himself finds that what he believes and what he knows with respect to Scripture stand together. But the believer in the traditional, infallible conception of Scripture who sees his belief in this light is making it a hostage to the state of Critical scholarship and the vagaries of his understanding. In a later passage, Marsh indicates that this inference may legitimately be drawn; and prepares the ground for just the kind of argument that Jowett would use half a century later:

> When ... we have acquired due information in respect to any portion of Scripture, for instance, the Five books of Moses, or the Four Gospels, we are then qualified, if not to investigate for ourselves, at least to follow the investigations, which have been made by others, in respect to the authenticity of these books, that is, whether they were written by the authors, to whom they are ascribed. This is the plain question, which we must ask before we go further, Did such a person write such a book, or did he not? It is a mere historical question, which must be determined, partly by external, and partly by internal evidence. But great confusion has taken place on this subject, by intermixing matter, with which it has no necessary connexion. When the fact, that the first of our Four Gospels, for instance, was written by St. Matthew, has been once established by historical and critical arguments, (which historical and critical arguments must be applied precisely as we would apply them to a profane author) it will follow of itself, that the Gospel was inspired, when we come to the subject of inspiration, and shew, that the author, whose work we have already proved it to be, had received the promise of the Holy Spirit. But if we investigate the two subjects at the same time, if we intermix the question of inspiration with the question of authenticity, we shall probably establish neither. In fact, the two questions are so distinct, that we cannot even begin with the one, till we have ended with the other. Before the point has been ascertained, whether this Gospel was written by St. Matthew, or by an imposter in his name, there is no ground even for asking, whether it

> was written by inspiration; for in the latter case it would not be Scripture. It is obvious therefore, that in our inquiries into the authenticity of the sacred writings, the subject of inspiration must be left for future discussion.[135]

We cite this passage at some length because of its significance as a methodological statement of the early Critical approach, and as tying that approach in with evidential apologetics. The presence of, for instance, Matthew's Gospel within the Church's canon is of no special significance for its credibility, at least for the learned man. It must be established 'as we would estimate the credibility of other writers',[136] and the fact of inspiration (with all its implications, admitted by Marsh, for infallibility) is only the last conclusion to be drawn from an extensive examination of each document in the Bible. The inference of infallibility from inspiration, true though it is acknowledged to be, becomes redundant. For 'the truth' of the writings in Scripture 'must be established ... without an appeal to inspiration, or it cannot be established at all'.[137]

The second interpreter of German New Testament scholarship to British readers was Connop Thirlwall, also soon to join the episcopal bench, who in 1825 (anonymously) published a translation of Schleiermacher's Essay on the Gospel of St. Luke, complete with his own introductory essay on the state of New Testament research and its progress since Marsh. Thirlwall did not pursue the radical line implicit in his predecessor's work,[138] but nonetheless, as the editors of his letters remark, 'the publication of this book was an epoch in the history of English theology, and in Thirlwall's own life'.[139]

Thirlwall was another of that small côterie of British scholars who were in contact with German thought and writing. It was during a year's European travel, in 1819, that he had made the acquaintance (in Rome) of Bunsen, beginning a 'close friendship which lasted for half a century'.[140] This contact with a leading and influential German Critical scholar was one of a number of factors calling forth what his biographer has called 'his audacious criticism of orthodox Biblical interpretation'.[141] Perowne and Stokes reckon that Thirwall and Hare were 'probably the only Englishmen thoroughly well-versed in the literature of Germany'

at this time, an acquirement no doubt facilitated for Thirlwall by his extraordinary intellectual gifts - he had been a child prodigy with linguistic abilities of a high order, being fluent in Greek at the age of four, and publishing a volume of essays and poems when only eleven.[142]

The 'introduction' to Schleiermacher's Essay (which in fact occupies one-third of the volume) well captures the contemporary attitude towards German thought. 'It cannot', writes Thirlwall, 'be concealed that German theology in general, and German biblical criticism in particular, labours under an ill name among our divines.'[143] Indeed, 'no one is moresure of an attentive and believing audience than he who undertakes to point out its mischiefs and dangers', and a recent Bampton lecturer (Conybeare, in 1824) is singled out for comment:[144]

> The candour and earnestness displayed by the author increase our regret that his studies had not led him to feel the necessity of acquiring the German language before he undertook that work.... But it would almost seem as if at Oxford the knowledge of German subjected a divine to the same suspicion of heterodoxy which we know was attached some centuries back to the knowledge of Greek.[145]

The writer realises that he must seek to justify his adoption of the German method of approach, and accordingly takes up the objection that it is in contradiction to belief in inspiration. For one thing, he avers,

> it must be admitted, that all the hypotheses we have mentioned are equally decidedly irreconcilable with that doctrine of inspiration once universally prevalent in the Christian church, according to which the Sacred writers were merely passive organs or instruments of the Holy Spirit. This doctrine has however been so long abandoned that it would now be a waste of time to attack it.[146]

In its place has come recognition that while in some parts of Scripture the 'inspiration of suggestion' may have been operative, in others (where the writers were informed of material facts by their natural faculties) a secondary 'inspiration of superintendency', intended 'to secure them from any material error or mistake', was sufficient.[147] However, just as the 'more rigid theory of inspiration' was abandoned 'by the learned' in the face of the discrepant phenomena of the Gospel narratives, so

> these same discrepancies compel us to admit, that the superintending control of the Spirit was not exerted to exempt

the sacred writers altogether from errors and inadvertencies.[148] It is important not to 'exaggerate' the 'importance of historical accuracy'.[149] While the Gospels present 'how pure and bright an image ... of the life and character which it describes', it is 'occasionally broken and obscured, from the very absence of such an inspiration as is commonly ascribed to them'.[150] Only Critical study can ascertain the correct interpretation and decide what impact the fact of inspiration has had. Thirlwall suggests that it is probably best understood in the twofold fashion earlier described, though in such a way as to free all of Scripture (and not merely the portions resulting from the natural abilities of the writers) from the unreal demands that have hitherto been laid upon it. The 'exaggerations' (sc., of infallibility) 'with which it has been loaded', must be discarded![151] The inspiring Spirit does not intervene 'in any temporary, physical or intellectual changes' in the Scripture writers, but its operation lies 'in the continual presence and action of what is most vital and essential in Christianity itself'.

> With this view of our Gospels, we certainly need not be alarmed at the course which may be taken by any investigations instituted to explain their mutual relations.[152]

The field is open to Critical study.

3 'A Blow aimed at the Vitals of Christianity'[153]

The early onset of Criticism was met by scholars of orthodox stamp with vigorous opposition, as they re-stated the traditional doctrine of Scripture in the light of the challenges which had been brought against it. They regarded the Critical approach to Scripture as an attack on the fundamental Christian doctrine, and sought to withstand it in every possible way. We shall give detailed consideration to the later Conservative response below.[154] In the years before the Essays and Reviews controversy a major defence and re-statement of the orthodox doctrine was that of William Lee, later Archbishop of Dublin. His Inspiration of Holy Scripture, its Nature and Proof (1854) is a reasoned and learned exposition of the traditional view, with one eye on the emergent Critical position.

Lee admits, in the preface, that the old 'mechanical' theory has been found wanting. It had, he suggests, the virtue of simplicity, but at the least the results of textual criticism have convinced all who are aware of them that 'the great doctrine of the infallibility of Holy Scripture can no longer rely upon such a principle for its defence'.[155] But the abandonment of a particular defence does not imply the abandonment of the position. Unfortunately, the confusion occasioned by the undoubted significance of textual variation and other linguistic criticism has brought about 'a want of definiteness and an absence of consistency in the language used when speaking of Inspiration', such that many have, unknowingly, 'been betrayed into concessions fatal' to the 'supreme authority' of the Bible.[156] The need is to reconcile the

> unquestionable stamp of humanity impressed upon every page of the Bible with that undoubting belief in its perfection and infallibility which is the Christian's most precious inheritance.[157]

For the Bible comes to us, indubitably, in such a double aspect. It is at once the revelation of God, and that revelation clothed in human language. 'From this point all theories on the subject of Revelation take their rise.'[158] The question is as to the nature of the relation between the two, and Lee makes his own aim clear:

> to establish in the broadest possible extent ... the infallible certainty, the indisputable authority, the perfect and entire truthfulness of all and every the parts [sic] of Holy Scripture.[159]

Lee seeks a <u>via media</u> between the tendency to move to one extreme or the other, not out of concern for compromise, but in order to maintain the duality which is inherent in the concept of revelation in human language. He characterises the contrasting and erroneous extremes. According to some traditionalists, it is the divine 'side' on which all the emphasis must be placed, and the human in consequence is effectively ignored.

> On its principles, the sacred writers, on receiving the Divine impulse, resigned both mind and body to God, who influenced and guided both at His sole pleasure; the human agent contributing, the while, no more than the pen of the scribe: in a word he was the <u>pen</u>, not the <u>penman</u>, of the Spirit.[160]

Such is the 'mechanical' theory, discredited as it is, apart

from its inherent failure to recognise the real humanity of Scripture, by the evidence of stylistic and linguistic variety, and so on. Lee is intent on preserving 'all' that supporters of this view in fact 'desire to maintain', viz infallibility and its implications, yet without the undesirable elements in the theory in respect of the mode of inspiration.[161]

The alternative erroneous theory, 'to which the great majority of modern theories of Inspiration are to be referred', ascribes 'undue prominence to the Human element of the Bible'.[162] Such theories, for they are many, Lee maintains were all 'suggested by the writings of one individual through whom ... the source of every hue and shade of modern scepticism on this question may be ultimately traced': Spinoza.[163] Three types of theory are considered. First, 'those writers who have changed the formula "The Bible is the Word of God," into "The Bible contains the Word of God."'

> Writers of this class, while they generally shrink from absolutely drawing the line between what is and what is not inspired, yet broadly assert as well the possibility as the existence of imperfections in Scripture, whether resulting from limited knowledge, or inadvertence, or defective memory on the part of its authors. Such imperfections are often restricted to what are termed 'unimportant matters'.[164]

Secondly, there are 'the different hypotheses which assume various Degrees of Inspiration; the Divine influence by which the sacred writers were actuated having been universal, but unequally distributed'. He cites Daniel Wilson as an example:

> What the extent of the Inspiration was in each case, we need not, indeed we cannot, determine.... Where nature ended, and Inspiration began, it is not for man to say.[165]

Thirdly, 'Schleiermacher and his followers; the shibboleth of whose school, in brief, is this, "The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life".'

> The idea of Revelation, according to Schleiermacher, is confined to the person of Christ; - the notion of Inspiration he considers to be one of completely subordinate importance in Christianity; the sole power which the Bible 'possesses of conveying a Revelation to us, consisting in its aiding in the awakenment and elevation of our religious consciousness; in its presenting to us a mirror of the history of Christ; in its depicting the religious life of his first followers; and in giving us the letter through which the spirit of truth may be brought home in vital experience to the human heart'.[166]

In contrast to all these concepts of Scripture, Lee expounds his own. He does not accept that the alternative to the 'mechanical' theory must be one of the 'modern theories' outlined above. Rather, 'our task is ... to make our own those portions of the truth which each system may contain'.[167] The analogy of revelation demands that, as 'the end is the conveyance of Divine truth', the truth must be preserved and yet conveyed in a manner that will make it 'possible for man to apprehend it'.

> To attain this object, the same power which gave the message selected the messenger; and the grounds of this selection we can clearly discern to have been the natural capacity and the opportunities, as well as the traits of individual character, which marked each sacred writer. Moses was skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and S. Paul, who had been the pagan scholar in the schools of Tarsus, and the Jewish scholar in the schools of Jerusalem, while by his Jewish learning he could show from the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ, could also appeal to the hearts of his Gentile hearers in the words of their philosophers and poets. No less conducive to the successful communication of Divine truth was the calling into activity the [sic] individual peculiarities of the agents thus chosen. The unbending intellect of Paul; the practical temperament of James; the heart which throbbed alike with zeal and love in the bosom of John, were chosen, in their turn, to convey the message best suited to each; - while the principle which linked together the several parts of the chain of doctrine thus called into being was the one Divine Spirit which selected, and guided, and inspired each writer.[168]

Such is the 'dynamical' theory, and in illustration of the duality it involves Lee cites the doctrine of regeneration. All will allow, he says, that 'Divine Grace is the sole influence which operates at the instant when Regeneration takes place', while 'afterwards it is the joint influence which co-operates with the human powers and will'. So God has created men as individuals and chooses wholly suitable vehicles for His inspiration, such that co-operation will achieve the full result He desires without the need to over-ride the natural faculties of the writer. 'In short, the Divine and Human elements, mutually interpenetrating and combined, form one vital, organic whole.'[169]

Lee then turns to a related question. He chooses to draw a careful distinction between 'revelation' and 'inspiration'. The former indicates a 'communication from God to man' of something not known by the man in question.[170] The latter is concerned with

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'that actuating energy of the Holy Spirit ... guided by which the human agents chosen by God have officially proclaimed His will', whether orally or in writing the Scripture.[171] The result of inspiration, while it may vary much in subject-matter and indeed in spiritual value, is always and equally trustworthy. No part of Scripture is 'one whit more true or more accurate in its details, than the writings of the others'.[172] Revelation and inspiration need not come together - the patriarchs received the former, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles the latter, but neither, apparently, both. Revelation is the work of the Eternal Word, inspiration that of the Holy Spirit.

> Thus the Spirit, in bringing about the writing of Scripture: embraces the entire activity of those whom He inspired, rendering their language the word of God. The entire substance and form of Scripture, whether resulting from Revelation or natural knowledge, are thus blended together into one harmonious whole: direct communications of religious truth, as well as the inferences which the sacred writers deduce therefrom; the lessons to be learned, whether from exhibitions of miraculous power, or from the facts of history; - such matters, together with all the collateral details of Scripture, have been assimilated into one homogeneous organism by the vital energy of the Spirit.[173]

Lee completes his exposition in his initial lecture with a reference to the High-priestly prayer of John 17. It illustrates, he maintains, the divine-human quality of all Scripture. 'When difficulties embarrass the reason, and perplexities entangle the intellect', the believing response is to place trust ever more firmly in the great promises declared in Scripture, summed up in the Johannine assurance: 'Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in Me.'[174]

The argument continues with reference to the church's historic doctrine of inspiration, detailed discussions of the relations of revelation and inspiration, some consideration of the idea of 'Scripture proof', and then an examination of the New Testament use of the Old: 'The quotations from the Old Testament in the New afford an experimentum crucis of every theory of Inspiration.'[175] The final lecture recapitulates the argument and considers three central objections to the position assumed: the assertion that the Scripture contains contradictions, that it contradicts historians outside Scripture, and that it contradicts the findings of scientific

enquiry. On each of these three matters Lee comes into conflict with leading Critical axioms and conclusions. The text selected for this address is Matthew 24:35, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.'

The fundamental position to be maintained over against the new thinking is succinctly expressed:

> that the narrative portion of the Bible, whether contained in the historical books of the Old Testament, or in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, is to be looked upon as stamped with the same infallible truth as the account of Christ's discourses, or what are, strictly speaking, revelations, or doctrinal teaching in general.[176]

Moreover:

> That even the form and language in which its truths are expressed bear the impress of its divine origin no less plainly than those truths themselves may be inferred, with absolute certainty, from the nature of the reasoning employed by our Lord and His Apostles; in which it is invariably assumed that the words of Scripture are no less divine than the doctrine which they convey.[177]

From such a perspective, Lee proceeds to answer the three classes of objection.

> First, 'those founded upon the assertion that the sacred writers contradict each other'.[178] It is suggested that there are four possible approaches to the question of Gospel harmony:
>
> (1.) It was argued by a writer who attracted some notice during the last century, that 'the Resurrection of Christ is not true, because the narratives of the Evangelists do not harmonize.' (2.) He was met with the reply, 'This great doctrine is true because the accounts do coincide.' (3.) A third opinion was interposed: 'It may, after all, be true, although discrepancies actually exist in the statements of the Gospels.' (4.) But there remains yet a fourth mode of regarding the question: 'It is, and must be true, even though I should not succeed in bringing the representations of the Evangelists into harmony; or in solving all the difficulties which an ingenious mind may suggest'. This last proposition is the only just or true philosophical conclusion for those to arrive at, who ascribe, in any true sense of the word, divine authority to the Bible. I repeat that if we fully and entirely believe in the divine origin of Holy Scripture, to assert that its statements do not harmonize is a contradiction in terms.[179]

An illustration is provided from astronomical controversy at the time of the discovery that the motion of Uranus was affected by some cause at that time unknown. 'I will not stop', one

distinguished astronomer had written, 'to consider this idea, that the laws of Gravitation may cease to be rigorous at the great distance of Uranus from the Sun.'[180] Such a fundamental scientific principle will be retained, even when evidence is apparently inexplicable; and further information must be awaited to resolve the issue. So it is with Gospel harmony. Either the discrepancies noted are assumed to be apparent only, or they are assumed to be absolute. If the former, it is 'plain that any hypothetical, or even possible solution, must, in all fairness, be accepted as a sufficient answer'. To reject this principle is to assume 'that there is no single circumstance omitted by the Evangelists which, if known, would harmonize their statements'.[181] In practice, Lee maintains, such a harmonising method is readily employed by secular historians.[182] At all events, he cites Augustine as recommending its adoption in the interpretation of Scripture, to the effect that 'any solution, which affords a possible mode of harmonizing those statements of the sacred writers which present a semblance of opposition, is to be admitted before we can allow the existence of a contradiction'.[183]

Secondly, we have 'the alleged collision between the statements of Scripture and those of profane history'.[184] Lee protests that while, when comparing different secular writers who disagree, 'the most captious critic contents himself with comparing the probabilities on both sides', and, if resolution is impossible, 'he decides without hesitation in favour of that party whose veracity appears the more unexceptionable', where a Biblical author is in apparent conflict with a secular, 'it is taken for granted, without further inquiry, that the sacred narrative is false'. The presumption is in favour of the uninspired writer.[185]

Lee takes up the case of Luke's chronology of the birth of Christ, and its alleged lack of correspondence with secular historical records. He calls to attention two general considerations, which would apply to Luke merely qua historian: do we know all the circumstances?, and, what weight do the rest of Luke's writings suggest we should place on his reliability? Since we have only fragmentary knowledge of the period, and since Luke is elsewhere attested as an historian of 'minute accuracy',[186]

we have (irrespective of our belief in inspiration) 'ample grounds for maintaining' that such 'difficulties ... arise from our ignorance of the whole of the case; and that we have good reason to expect that they eventually will disappear as similar evidence accumulates'.[187]

Thirdly, we have the objection that 'the language of Scripture, when touching upon topics which involve allusions to the results of Science, is expressed so as to betray complete ignorance of those laws of Nature' which 'modern researches have brought to light'.[188] Lee is especially concerned about this matter, because 'the answers usually given to it concede almost everything for which one need care to contend'.[189] It is no adequate reply to allow that Scripture does not intend to teach science, since in that case we still have prima facie contradictions of it where it is incidentally touched upon. All is, however, explained when it is grasped that 'the language of Scripture is necessarily adapted to the common state of man's intellectual development'; it is not any less accurate or trustworthy for that.[190] Such a principle readily accounts for references to the rise and set of the sun, and suchlike. When questions of geology and related matters are raised, the fundamental issue remains: 'The question we must settle, in the first instance, and on its own peculiar evidence, is - Does the Bible come from God?'[191] If the answer given is affirmative, then whatever may be the difficulties in interpretation, 'the face of the world and the words of God' must be 'perfectly harmonious'.[192]

In sum, Lee recognises that it is not possible to remove all the 'difficulties ... which the enemies of Christianity have started'; but, where they remain, the solution is 'to be thankful and to wait'.[193] He continues:

> The supercilious philosophy which refuses Religion this justice, - which scorns 'to conciliate the finger and the tongue of God, His works and His word', - must answer, as best it may, the demand of the Most High: 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare if thou hast understanding.'[194]

The Christian, by contrast, 'recognises' in Scripture 'the record of imperishable Truth'. 'And although philosophers object, or critics cavil, or unbelievers scorn', he 'calmly abides the

issue'.[195] This assault on the inspiration of Scripture, that most fundamental of all doctrines, will in due course go the way of every other such challenge to the faith. 'Unfailing' as the 'Church Herself, are those Divine institutes which are entrusted to Her charge, and which contain Her commission.' [196]

Thus, in the context of a largely positive exposition of the orthodox idea of inspiration, itself possible only because it appeared so early in the debate, William Lee outlines the fundamental traditional approach to the interpretation and defence of Scripture in the light of the new challenges of Criticism. What reverberates through his discussion - apart from the simple though related fact of his unbounded confidence in his position - is the methodological nature of his defence. He will argue this case and that against the Critics, but only by way of illustration. His argument in the closing lecture nowhere depends upon the acceptability of any particular explanation of an alleged contradiction or discrepancy. It all depends, and it depends solely, upon the acceptance of the infallibility of the Bible as axiomatic for the Christian mind. Challenges to infallibility are challenges to the faith; and, for the believer, there can be no question but that this blow aimed at the vitals of the faith must be prevented from striking home.

4 Van Mildert to Farrar

The candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith may be false, I find;
For our Essays-and-Reviews' debate
Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight.

R. Browning, Gold Hair, 1864

Twice in the course of the nineteenth century a Bampton lecturer chose for his subject the interpretation of Scripture: William Van Mildert, in 1814, on Scripture-Interpretation, and Frederic William Farrar, in 1885, on the History of Interpretation. Both men, and both volumes, are to a significant degree representative of their generations. The century opened believing in Van Mildert's Bible, and closed believing in Farrar's.

We have already devoted some time to examining the orthodox attitude to Scripture so widely held in the early part of the century that, as we have noted, even R.D. Hampden, regarded as a liberal thinker and one of the Noetics, could declare as late as 1836 that in the statements of Scripture we have

> facts or realities in opposition to mere theories or definitions or hypotheses, no less because they have been distinctly pointed out to us by the finger of God, than if we had originally discovered them, or could discover them, by the ordinary scope of investigation.[197]

We have further outlined some of the key individuals and works which introduced elements of the Critical method into Britain, and also indicated how in the years prior to Essays and Reviews Conservative thinkers re-asserted their orthodox position to meet the growing apologetic need of the hour. We shall see below in some detail how later Conservatives argued their case before the bar of educated and public opinion. It remains for us to sketch some of the flashpoints of the century's debate, so as to set the discussion in which we are engaged in an historical context.

(i) The 'Essays and Reviews' Debate

It is customary to regard the publication in 1860 of a volume of essays by Anglican clergy and a layman under the modest title of Essays and Reviews as firing the opening salvo in the final assault upon the traditional conception of Scripture. We have surveyed some of the factors which led ultimately to the production of that volume and prepared public and scholarly opinion to receive it. It was one of those highly significant books which, like Darwin's Origin of Species given to the public a year before, by the clamour they arouse and the condemnation they call upon themselves find that their hour has come. Essays and Reviews, indeed, came to the public notice relatively slowly and by means of a critical review - critical in that it suggested that the Essayists had failed to follow the direction of their arguments and abandon Christianity altogether.[198] That early charge of inconsistency was often made, and from both extremes. For, in Samuel Wilberforce's epigram, 'They believe too much not to

believe more, and they disbelieve too much not to disbelieve everything.'[199] In fact not only was the tendency of the mixed opinions the volume contained radical in the context of its day - J.K. Mozley, for instance, notes that 'it did in point of fact involve a wider break with the traditional position in respect of the Bible and theology than any previous volume',[200] - it was radical even by comparison with the Critical consensus that was to succeed the traditional one. As we shall see, its seven authors - 'septem contra Christum', as they were soon dubbed - were not of one mind, and had not indeed collaborated on the volume but merely submitted independent essays to it. But, for instance, the argument of Baden Powell against miracle would have been found little more acceptable by mainstream Anglicans a generation later.

Yet the significance of Essays and Reviews lay in its timing. At the culmination of half a century of the gradual diffusion of the new views, when Coleridge's radical influence had had as long to percolate through the theological mind of the nation, fromwithinAnglicanism itself came so vociferous a demand for freedom of thought. Storr comments:

> What gave to it its main importance was that it was published at a highly opportune moment. For the past thirty or forty years critical methods in England had been gathering force. There had been a consilience of tendencies, all making in the direction of broader theological views. In this volume they came to a head, and found a vigorous and popular expression in the writings of men, many of whom were admittedly among the intellectual leaders of the day.[201]

No longer could the facade of hostile indifference to 'German criticism' be maintained: in the heart of the Establishment there were men who had made it their own.

At the same time, it is important to note that Essays and Reviews and the ensuing controversy were not chiefly concerned with the question of Criticism as such. The titles of the Essays make that clear, with Rowland Williams' survey of 'Bunsen's Biblical Researches' and Jowett's 'On the Interpretation of Scripture' touching closest on Critical issues. Yet, as W.B. Glover remarks, 'the essayists do show themselves in sympathy with the naturalistic approach to Christianity and the Bible which was the orientation

of most of the great higher critics of the century'.[202] Indeed, it was the clarity with which the writers did take up a naturalistic posture which made the volume so notorious and so particularly offensive to many who had some sympathy with Criticism itself. The Essayists were distinctly the disciples of Continental thinking, in marked contrast to the pious supernaturalism that distinguished the later Critical scholars who eventually won the day for Criticism in Britain. We shall briefly survey the Essays.

Reviewing the work of Bunsen, Williams describes the Bible as 'an expression of devout reason, and therefore to be read with reason in freedom', where is found a 'record of the spiritual giants, whose experience generated the religious atmosphere we breathe'.[203] Bunsen's acceptance of the major Critical positions in interpreting the prophets is defended thus:

> If our German had ignored all that the masters of philology have proved on these subjetcs, his countrymen would have raised such a storm of ridicule, at which he must have drowned himself in the Neckar.

'Great then is Baron Bunsen's merit', in accepting Critical scholarship 'while not despairing of Hebrew Prophecy as a witness to the kingdom of God.'[204]

Baden Powell, discussing the 'evidences' of Christianity, develops a powerful argument against the traditional conception of miracle. He is especially opposed to the evidential use of miracles, which he points out can carry weight only in proportion to the belief of those to be convinced. Christians at once wish to argue from miracles and to refuse 'any uncompromising, rigid scrutiny ... on the same grounds on which we should investigate any ordinary narrative of the supernatural', since so to do would be an 'irreverent and profane intrusion'.[205]

> But in proportion as it is so regarded, it must be remembered its strictly historical character is forfeited, or at least tampered with; and those who would shield it from the criticisms to which history and fact are necessarily amenable cannot in consistency be offended at the alternative involved, a more or less mythical interpretation.[206]

Powell is prepared to accept Christian miracles as articles of faith, 'asserted on the authority of inspiration', rather than as arguments for faith; but even then only as 'requiring some

suspension of judgment as to their nature and circumstances, or perhaps as involving more or less of the parabolic or mythic character'.[207] Storr indicates the direction of Powell's argument. He

> did not deny that many of the recorded miracles were real facts; what he said was that none of those facts were real miracles, but only appeared so to persons who were ignorant of the laws of nature. He ... is silent in the essay as to the greater miracles of the Christian religion; but it is clear the he refuses to admit miracle anywhere in the material order.[208]

According to Storr - and, interestingly, according to Connop Thirlwall, who vigorously denounced the Essayists - Powell's was the contribution most alarming in its tendency. Not only do we find here an attempted defence of the anti-supernaturalism which permeated Continental Critical scholarship, at least, and was a chief argument for refusing its claims, but:

> for those who had eyes to see, it involved issues of the profoundest significance both for religion and for philosophy. It called into question the whole character of Christianity as a historical revelation.[209]

C.W. Goodwin's contribution 'On the Mosaic Cosmogony' was almost equally devastating in its assault on the shibboleths of contemporary Biblical interpretation. The one lay (and Cambridge) contributor, he put forward the axiom that:

> the object of a revelation ... must be to teach man things which he is unable and must ever remain unable to find out for himself: but not physical truths, for the discovery of which he has faculties specially provided by his Creator.[210]

In consequence, no attempt is made in Scripture to correct popular assumptions about matters physical, and we should accordingly not look to Scripture for scientific accuracy. But Goodwin goes beyond this. He moves on to call in question what he accepts to be the teaching of Scripture:

> It can scarcely be said that this chapter [sc., Genesis 1] is not intended in part to teach and convey at least some physical truth, and taking its words in their plain sense, it manifestly gives a view of the universe adverse to that of modern science.[211]

To the 'harmonising' mentality that was well-nigh universal in Britain this was anathema. The Essayist argues that the so-called 'harmonies' abroad contradict one another, and not only

one another: 'The plain meaning of the Hebrew record is tampered with, and in general the pith of the whole process lies in divesting the text of all meaning whatever.'[212] The popular assertion that (citing Buckland) 'the object of the account was not to state in what manner, but by whom the world was made' is simply untrue:

> Every one must see that this is an unfounded assertion, inasmuch as the greater part of the narrative consists of a minute and orderly description of the manner in which things were made.[213]

He concludes that we must 'recognise' in the Mosaic cosmogony

> not an authentic utterance of Divine knowledge, but a human utterance, which it has pleased Providence to use in a special way for the education of mankind.[214]

The last and longest Essay in the volume, that of Jowett on the interpretation of Scripture, is discussed in some detail below.[215] It is enough for us here to note that Jowett's plea for the Bible to be interpreted as any other book is interpreted took up the phrase and principle of earlier discussion,[216] and posed the fundamental problem lying at the back of the Critical debate itself. The remaining pieces were relatively unexceptional. Frederick Temple on 'The Education of the World' developed an analogy for the rise of civilisation from the growth of a child. H.B. Wilson, the anonymous editor of the volume, wrote on the National Church - controversially, indeed, in the manner of his Bampton lectures on The Communion of Saints, where he took a broad view of dogma and of comprehensiveness. Finally, Mark Pattison contributed an historical essay on 'Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750', pointing some morals from that somewhat neglected period. Though probably the only one of the Essays still read today for its intrinsic merit, it was one of the least offensive and controversial.

The response of orthodoxy was vigorous, with a flood of pamphlets and substantial volumes issuing from the presses in the ensuing years. Furthermore, legal action was taken against some of the Essayists, which was to help keep the matter in some prominence until the cases were finally resolved (by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, which overturned the condemnation

pronounced by the Court of Arches). One major immediate reply was that of John William Burgon, whose sermons on Inspiration and Interpretation, discussed below,[217] were preached before Oxford University and speedily published with a substantial introduction controverting the Essayists (and, for instance, challenging Jowett - unsuccessfully, it appears - to public debate). Two major collaborative efforts also appeared hurriedly, both bearing episcopal commendation. Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, introduced Replies to 'Essays and Reviews' (1862), and William Thomson, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, the curiously named Aids to Faith (1861).[218] The alarm that is evidenced by the prompt (and weighty) responses was tempered by a confidence which in the early 1860's it was still possible to maintain. The latter bishop concludes his preface with these characteristic sentiments:

> This volume is humbly offered to the Great Head of the Church, as one attempt among many to keep men true to Him in a time of much doubt and trial. Under His protection, His people need not be afraid. The old difficulties and objections are revived; but they will meet in one way or another the old defeat. While the world lasts sceptical books will be written and answered, and the books, perhaps, and the answers alike forgotten. But the Rock of Ages shall stand unchangeable; and men, worn with a sense of sin, shall still find rest 'under the shadow of a great rock in a weary land'.[219]

The quality of the essays in these two hastily-gathered collections was mixed, as indeed to some extent were the positions of the writers, though they generally reflect an unbending orthodoxy. One sample, which penetrates to the heart of the debate in a way that much later discussion of detail does not, must suffice. C.J. Ellicott, a New Testament scholar later to be Thomson's successor as Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol and a leading Conservative controversialist, was given the task in Aids to Faith of responding to Jowett. He writes as follows:

> Thus far we are perfectly in accord with our opponents. We are agreed ... that there is such a thing as inspiration with reference to the Scriptures, and we are further agreed that the Scriptures themselves are the best sources of information on the subject. Here, however, all agreement completely ceases. When we invite our opponents to go with us to the Scriptures to discuss their statements on the subject before us, and to compare the inferences and deductions that either side may make from them, we at once find that they mean a stock-taking of its errors and inaccuracies, of its antagonisms with science and its oppositions to history, - all of

> which they tell us must first be estimated, and with all which ... inspiration ... must be reconcileable and harmonized. In a word, both sides have started from the first on widely different assumptions.[220]

It is, as Ellicott perceives, in the conception of inspiration and its implications for interpretation that there lies the fundamental divide between the old and new methods. And he expresses the consistent theme of the replies to Essays and Reviews with respect to Scripture when he comments:

> the Sacred writers now stand charged with errors of two kinds, - errors of mind and judgment, and errors in matters of fact, but on evidence ... which cannot be regarded either as sufficient or conclusive.[221]

Such sweeping dismissals of the Critical position were not possible for long. In the year following the appearance of Aids to Faith the alarm 'became acute' with the publication of the first of seven parts of Bishop Colenso's The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined.[222] In contrast to the loose references to Criticism and discussions of method which had so offended the readers of Essays and Reviews, Colenso's work provided concrete and exceedingly detailed arguments for dismissing the historical credibility of great tracts of the Old Testament; and that from a bishop, no less, of the Anglican Church, albeit from a missionary province. 'Colenso's words', as Browning wrote two years later, 'have weight.' The bishop approached the study of the Pentateuch as a mathematician, and it was with numerical difficulties that he was especially concerned. But he claimed that his missionary work in Natal, particularly in translating the Bible into the Zulu language, had first directed his attention to the Scriptural incongruities: it was the 'objections and difficulties' of 'intelligent natives' which had provoked his thinking:

> 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.... I contented myself with silencing, by means of the specious explanations, which are given in most commentaries, the ordinary objections against the historical character of the early portions of the Old Testament.[223]

Renewed examination of problems, especially in the light of Essays and Reviews and the ensuing debate, had caused him to conclude

that the historical accuracy of the Old Testament could no longer be maintained. The views actually advanced in his lengthy disquisition are partly culled from German Critics (in whom he was well read); and partly the result of his own, at times rather imaginative, studies.

In the same year, the Bampton lecturer, A.S. Farrar, in his discussion of A Critical History of Free Thought, had occasion to allude to the writers of Essays and Reviews, and set 'the church of Christ' over against them:

> the Church discovers in scripture the statements of the writers concerning the reality and nature and authority of their own inspiration; and considers henceforth that the character of revelation is in its substance removed beyond the limits of critical investigation; and can only admit that an empirical inquiry can be useful in setting the limits to which inspiration extends, and determining the question as to the writings to be accounted the subject of it.[224]

The year 1862 also saw the appearance of the first volume of Stanley's History of the Jewish Church, a work in the moderate Critical school of Ewald. Essays and Reviews had already made it possible for such guarded proclamations of the Critical approach to come before the public without creating the furore which had awaited Milman's even more modest effort thirty years before. Stanley himself explains in the preface to the first edition that those who had heard the substance of the History in its original spoken form were 'chiefly candidates for Holy Orders' at Oxford;[225] itself something significant for the change in clerical attitudes that was soon to come. Stanley protests against the 'Docetism' that 'has at different periods of the Christian Church affected the view entertained of the whole Bible', for 'the Jewish History has suffered from causes similar to those which still, within our own memory, obscured the history of Greece and of Rome'.[226] He has set out, following Ewald, 'the first Biblical scholar in Europe', to remedy the deficiency in English.[227]

But while the door had been opened for mildly Critical work, the forces of reaction were gathering and came to a head in the 'Speaker's Bible', a collaborative work issued from 1874 onwards which had behind it the official weight of the bishops of the Church of England (as well as that of such dignitaries as the

Speaker of the House of Commons, who had initiated the project). Glover remarks that it 'gave the illusion that historical criticism was being effectively answered by the English Conservatives', though in fact it only helped keep England 'insulated' from the general Critical movement for a few more years; until, indeed, the Robertson Smith controversy broke on the English churches.[228] The demand for the 'Speaker's Bible' had been stimulated not by any special confidence in the ability of Conservative scholars to answer the Critical case (though of course there was still such confidence), but by horror at the theological liberalism associated with Essays and Reviews, and the radical nature of the Criticism of Colenso. The consistently Broad Church approach to religion was not an acceptable alternative to orthodoxy, and if Criticism entailed theological liberalism it must be massively condemned. What soon began to alter the position radically was the emergence of men of Critical persuasion who were in other regards untainted by disbelief in the supernatural and similar elements of liberal religion. Criticism was shown to have an acceptable face.

(ii) The Turn of the Tide

The course of the debates that raged between 1860 and the end of the century has been chronicled more than once.[229] It remains for us to sketch the developments which marked the growing success of Criticism, and its final triumph, as the consensus of British scholarly opinion was won to its method and its broad conclusions.

The years before 1860 had seen the preparation of the ground, as a succession of men ahead of their day had quietly or not so quietly sought to infiltrate the Critical view of the Bible into Britain. Increasingly - and especially after the founding in 1846 of T. and T. Clark's Foreign Theological Library, the first of a number of major translation projects - English readers were able to tune in direct to at least some aspects of the Continental debates. In fact the Clark library was concerned to republish Conservative material from Germany, but paradoxically this itself helped to spread Criticism, both because many readers made their

first acquaintance with it in these repudiations of it, and, as Colenso himself perceived, because of the evident weakness of some, at least, of their arguments:

> It is not unlikely that the works of the (so-called) orthodox German writers, HÄVERNICK, KURTZ, HENGSTENBERG, KEIL, &c., which are now being translated, and published in Clark's Theological Library, might before long have effected indirectly a considerable change in the current theology of England, by its being seen how feebly they reply to some of the more striking objections, which occur on a close study of the Pentateuch, - and which many an English reader will often learn first from these very attempts to answer them.[230]

As the years passed and these translations of theology and commentaries were issued (at the rate of four per annum), the Critical questions became assimilated in the British debate about Scripture. By the late 1870's a good deal of German material had been made available, and it was only two years after the confident appearance of the first volumes of the 'Speaker's Bible' that the controversy which was finally to tip the balance in favour of widespread acceptance of Criticism commenced. We examine in some detail below aspects of the case of William Robertson Smith;[231] suffice it to say that it originated in contributions on Biblical questions submitted by this young Old Testament scholar of the Free Church of Scotland to the ninth edition of the great Encyclopaedia Britannica, that storehouse of Victorian learning and information, which gave credence to German Criticism. Opinion, particularly in the orthodox Free Church, was scandalised, and a protracted and ugly series of public controversies which eventually (in 1881) resulted in his dismissal from his Chair in the Church's college in Aberdeen, caught the imagination and held the interest of the religious public and press in Britain and, indeed, throughout the world. There were various aspects to the controversy which served to give comfort to the Critical cause and to commend Criticism to many who had hitherto regarded it merely as a variety of infidelity. For one thing, Robertson Smith was a minister of what was seen as the most self-consciously 'orthodox' of the major denominations. It was barely thirty years since the Disruption had brought this evangelical church into being, and not only was Robertson Smith the son of a Disruption manse, he unashamedly confessed his evangelical commitment both in person and

in doctrine. He was no contributor to Essays and Reviews. He took his stand on the Westminster Confession of Faith, the charter of evangelical Protestantism, and claimed that in his Critical labours he was but pursuing the Reformation principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture. In the course of the numerous debates and the pamphlet war which filled these five years of dispute, Smith lost no opportunity to press his case with vigour and conviction. With an enthusiasm that is only rarely generated, the populace north and south of the border listened with attention. When, finally, despite the best efforts of its theologians and lawyers, the Free Church itself proved unable to find Robertson Smith's Critical view of Scripture to be in contravention of the Confession, the message spread about the world that an orthodox evangelical faith and the acceptance of the most 'advanced' Critical ideas need not be in contradiction. That is not to say that Smith convinced the watching world of his own stance on issues like the historicity of Deuteronomy, any more than that he had convinced most of those who stood by him in Presbytery and Assembly. What he had managed to convince them was that he should have the right to believe them should that be where his conscience and his reason led; that, in other words, Criticism, whatever may be said of this or that conclusion, is legitimate for the Christian scholar. It should not be forbidden.

As a result, as we have already seen in the case of the Criticism of the New Testament (much earlier), continued rejection of the consensus results of Continental Critical scholarship could co-exist with acceptance of the propriety of the essential Critical method. In both cases, the hope was that that method might be laid under tribute by conservative scholars and produce conservative conclusions. In the case of the New Testament, that had indeed happened, and the fancies of Baur and Strauss had been put to flight under the conservative Criticism of the Cambridge School. In the case of the Old Testament, it had not happened, and, by and large, it did not happen. The sight, however, of men of known evangelical piety as its practitioners appeared to give the lie to the customary apologetic rejection

of it as but the latest in German unbelief. Once that barrier had been broken through, acceptance of Critical conclusions on their merits was simply a matter of time. As Glover comments:

> Unquestionably, the most important single factor in forcing upon English evangelicals the realization that higher criticism was consistent with evangelical theology was the trial of Robertson Smith by the Free Church of Scotland.[232]

There were, of course, other factors, and many other individuals, playing their part in bringing about this revolution in theology. Glover notes several particular influences. A.M. Fairbairn had become Principal of the Airedale Congregational College in 1877, and appointed the eager Critic Archibald Duff to the staff the following year.[233] A.B. Davidson, one of the most important influences on Robertson Smith himself, had taught a generation of Scottish Free Church ministers, quietly and unobtrusively, to be open to the new approaches.[234] The Anglican Critic, T.K. Cheyne, in 1880 was converted to a form of evangelicalism, and openly came to accept the supernatural (having hitherto denied it, in the school of the more extreme Continental scholars); yet he maintained the essentials of his Critical position.[235]

One factor of considerable symbolic significance was the death in 1882 of Edward Bouverie Pusey. Pusey had been Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford since 1827, and after a brief flirtation with a more liberal position following a period of study in Germany[236] he had resolutely set his face against the Critical movement. He devoted great labours to Conservative Old Testament scholarship, though his leadership of the Tractarian rump after 1845 proved a major distraction from his defence of the orthodox view of Scripture. Evangelicals commented that he completely failed to exploit his key position at Oxford throughout the century's controversy over Criticism to establish and maintain a Conservative school of Old Testament study. Indeed, it might be argued that a major reason behind the failure of British traditionalists to forge the kind of coherent defence of orthodoxy which (earlier) Hengstenberg in Germany and (later) the Princeton School in the United States succeeded in producing, was the Tractarian controversy and its concentration of the best efforts of the most able Conservatives in the Church of England - Evangelical and High Church -

on a wholly separate debate in which they were divided in their view of Scripture. This certainly meant that the preparation of the Conservative position prior to 1860 was woefully poor; the great Evangelical work on Scripture during that period was Goode's Rule of Faith, a massive defence of orthodox Protestantism against the Romanising influence of Pusey and the Tractarians.[237]

At all events, Tractarianism and the controversy it provoked served to divide the Conservative tendency within the church and thus to weaken it, at a crucial period when the making of common cause could have strengthened the reaction to Criticism and developed it into the kind of response which, as in Princeton, might stay the advance of the new school substantially. As it happened, the death of Pusey in 1882 sounded the knell of Conservatism on Scripture within the High Church party, just as the trial, acquittal and unconvicted deposition of Robertson Smith, coming to a head just a year before, enormously weakened evangelical resistance to Criticism throughout the churches. Other factors mark these opening years of the 'eighties as fateful for the Conservative position. Chadwick notes, for example, that the Annual (Anglican) Church Congress first discussed the question of Criticism at its Reading meeting in 1883; and Glover that 1881 saw the first publication in the (hitherto Conservative) Expositor of a Critical discussion; he suggests that this change in policy of that widely-read organ was of particular significance, since in the coming years 'it did more than any single agency to familiarize the ministry with the views of the critics'.[238]

Pusey was replaced as Regius Professor by S.R. Driver, a moderate and pious churchman who, along with Robertson Smith, is generally held to have had a decisive influence on the course of Old Testament scholarship in Britain, by his cautious and effective advancement of the Critical case, to which he was won over only shortly before his appointment. Elliott-Binns speaks of the 'deeply religious tone of all his writings', which combined with his 'immense fund of knowledge' in his advocacy of a restrained application of the new methods.[239] The publication in 1891 of his Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament marked a milestone in British scholarship, and it remained a textbook

for two generations and more.

Equally significant was the man who replaced Pusey in his other guise, as leader of the High Church party. Charles Gore, Principal of Pusey House and soon to be raised to episcopal rank, not only succeeded Pusey, but dominated the party for the next forty years. He was a dogmatic thinker, but had studied under Jowett, for whom he maintained a profound respect, and his acceptance of tradition was ever tempered by a liberal spirit.[240] Whereas Pusey had always assumed Biblical infallibility as the keystone of Christian belief, Gore later published a popular but scathing denunciation of The Doctrine of the Infallible Book.[241] But that lay in the future. In 1889 there appeared, under Gore's editorship, Lux Mundi. A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation; and while the furore that followed was of a different order to that of thirty years before, to the older generation of High Churchmen, and especially to Liddon (himself to die the following year), Pusey's most ardent disciple and admirer, 'it came as a grievous shock and surprise'; for, as Chadwick remarks, he 'regarded Lux Mundi as the betrayal of everything for which Pusey and the Tractarians stood'.[242] Yet, as Elliott-Binns points out, Liddon at least had shown some percpetion of the way in which the younger High Churchmen were thinking. He had told a correspondent the year before:

> I have feared sometimes that the younger Churchmanship of Oxford was undergoing a silent but very serious change through its eagerness to meet modern difficulties and its facile adoption of new intellectual methods, without fully considering the uses to which they might be put by others.[243]

Liddon's fears were amply justified, for - apart from anything else - the volume gave notice of the formal disengagement of the Anglo-Catholics from the Criticism controversy, and Gore himself, in the most significant of the essays (on 'The Holy Spirit and Inspiration') employed for the first time in Anglican theology a full-blooded Kenotic understanding of the Incarnation in order to account for the crucial sayings of Jesus about the Old Testament which Conservatives, evangelical and otherwise, had taken as delivering a coup de main against the whole Critical enterprise.[244] In particular, Pusey and Liddon had used the argu-

ment, and any denial of it seemed to traditionalists to cut at the root of Christology and therefore of the faith at its most vital point.[245] The fact that Colenso had sketched out a similar defence of his Critical endeavour can only have deepened the trauma.[246]

Individual Conservative scholars continued, of course, to maintain their position, some with considerable scholarship. Their contributions are discussed below.[247] They include such men as C.H.H. Wright, at whose death The Times remarked on his 'monumental learning' (he had published an Irish Grammar as an undergraduate); Henry Wace, whom Mozley describes as 'a man of learning, intellectual ability, and much controversial acuteness';[248] R.B. Girdlestone, an able Biblical scholar who wrote a number of important Conservative works; and Alfred Cave, the Congregationalist Old Testament scholar. The death of Liddon (in 1890) and of other able men who had been born long before 1860 left evangelicals almost alone among scholars and clergy who maintained the Conservative posture; and, as has been indicated, there were many who bore that name who did not. Glover suggests that by 1895 'any Old Testament teacher who repudiated the new criticism was nothing more than an anachronism',[249] an unkind judgement but one which the new consensus of Critical scholars would certainly have shared.

In the field of New Testament a turning-point came too, a little later than in the Old but more suddenly. In a sense, it had come much earlier, with the ascendancy of the Cambridge Trio and their acceptance of Critical method; but with their demise that method found its true consequences in the work of their successors. Men such as Sanday and Swete came to the fore, who, while moderate by the standards of the Continental Critics, ceased to defend the conservative positions which had characterised the Trio. Mozley writes that, for example, Westcott's commentary on John was 'entirely conservative. There is no kind of envisaging of the possibility that the evangelist may not always be giving the ipsissima verba of Christ'.[250] That was soon to change, and change rapidly. The barrier which had for almost half a century stood in the way of the natural flow

of Critical New Testament scholarship had been removed, and the stream could resume its course. Mozley singles out Sanday as of particular importance:

> He was no supporter of the theory of Biblical inerrancy, as his Bampton lectures on Inspiration make clear. But he was cautious, sympathetic to older views.... In particular, till quite late in his life his attitude to the miraculous element in the Gospels was consonant with a conservative rather than with a radical theology. Where he definitely advanced upon the great Cambridge scholars was in his readiness to learn from German scholarship.[251]

The transitional stage which had won British acceptance for New Testament Criticism was at an end: Critical method would no longer guarantee traditional literary and historical conclusions.[252]

In the field of New Testament as in that of Old, Conservative scholars, very largely evangelical, continued to labour, and Handley Moule of Ridley Hall in Cambridge was perhaps their most distinguished representative. It is not easy to assess their contribution to scholarship, since owing to the changing climate and the new Critical consensus they really ceased to contribute to the world of general Biblical scholarship at all, pursuing their own chosen interpretative and apologetic path. But their scholarly achievement should not be disregarded, and Mozley speaks for them all when he says of the Anglicans among them:

> Men like Moule, Dimock, Drury, Girdlestone, and Wace ... were theologians faithful to a tradition which they expounded with ample learning and ability. The Anglican Evangelicals have had a far more distinguished record in theology than is apt to be recognized. But their influence on the general thought of the church suffered from, among other causes, their attitudes on the subject of the Bible and their inattention to the problems arising in connexion with the philosophy of religion. They were far more rigid in the face of the results which were claimed to follow from the methods of Higher Criticism than were those High Churchmen who followed in the steps of Gore and the Lux Mundi school, while they made no effort to construct a Christian philosophy of religion.... It is, of course, possible to hold that in both respects the Evangelical theologians were in the right.[253]

(iii) 'The History of Interpretation'

F.W. Farrar was an example of the new Critical scholar. A pious man of evangelical sympathy, in his Bampton lectures on The History of Interpretation he welcomed Criticism and its

Bible without grudge or regret. Reflecting from the perspective of 1885 he could speak of 'that advance in knowledge which is nothing less than a new revelation of the ways and works of God',[254] and press it into service as an apologetic tool 'robbing of all their force the objections of infidels and freethinkers' to the history and morality of the Bible.[255] The 'clearer conceptions' of modern thought 'have been opened to us by the teaching of the Spirit of God in the domains of History and of science'. 'It is as impossible to interpret the Bible now by the methods of Aqiba or Hilary as it is to interpret Nature by the methods of Pythagoras.'[256] Those who oppose the new approach are 'narrow literalists'; and, with a piece of characteristic triumphalism, Farrar berates them thus:

> Surely such ignorant condemnations show us that the revision of the principles and methods of exegesis is rendered absolutely necessary by the ever-widening knowledge of modern days.[257]

From the theory of 'verbal dictation ... every mistaken method of criticism, and many false views of morals and sociology, have derived their disastrous origin'.

> That theory has never offered any valid proof for the immense demand that it makes on our credulity. It confessedly traverses all the prima facie phenomena of Scripture, and yet it finds no support in the claims of Scripture for itself.[258]

Yet in reality the overthrow of the old and erroneous theory is nothing but an advantage to the believer who reverences Scripture. 'My main wish and object', writes Farrar, 'has been to show the true basis whereon rests the sacredness of Holy Scripture.'[259]

> In the controversies of the nineteenth century the whole Christian world has learnt to see that in the Holy Scriptures there are many unsolved difficulties, many unreconciled antinomies. They saw that the soul could not be sustained in its convictions exclusively by the biblical supernaturalism which had not come unscathed out of the assaults of so many writers from Spinoza down to Baur.[260]

'The rusty armour of scholastic orthodoxy was useless against the cannon of modern warfare.'[261]

By contrast, of a great list of the leading scholars of the day, 'scarcely one ... does not combine the deepest reverence for the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures with an entire rejection of that dogma of mechanical inspiration'.[262] Contrary to what has been claimed, there was 'no conception more subversive

of Scriptural authority' than 'the assertion that in the Bible we must accept everything or nothing'; the 'dogma' of 'the absolute, supernatural, homogeneous infallibility of every word and every letter contained in the Bible'.[263] The previous fifty years, thanks largely to the influence of Coleridge and his disciples, had marked immense progress from the day of that 'indiscriminate anathema of "German theology"' which was the 'Shibboleth of popular orthodoxy'.[264]

> The history which we have been considering is not exclusively a history of darkness and mistake; it is a history also of the triumph of light over darkness, of truth over error, of faith and freedom over tyranny and persecution. It is a history of the dawning light and of the broadening day.[265]

III
'LIKE ANY OTHER BOOK':
the Historical Critical Method

The great question is that of method, everything else follows in due course.
A.S. Peake, The Bible: its Origin, its Significance, and its Abiding Worth, p 381

In 1901, George Adam Smith could write: 'Modern criticism has won its war against the traditional theories. It only remains to fix the amount of the indemnity.'[1] In the generation that had passed since Essays and Reviews, the tables had been turned on the old orthodoxy, and a new, Critical, orthodoxy had taken its place. Its leaders were Non-conformists, Scottish Presbyterians, and members of the Anglican establishment, united to a remarkable degree in their harmony of piety and the new scholarship which had taken the name 'believing Criticism'. So F.W. Farrar, for instance, could write (of a list of the chief Critical scholars) that 'there is scarcely one amongst [them] who does not combine the deepest reverence for the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures' with repudiation of the Conservative doctrine of inspiration.[2] William Robertson Smith, and, in England particularly, S.R. Driver, Pusey's successor in the Chair of Hebrew at Oxford who prepared the first large-scale 'introduction' in English, have been singled out for comment in this respect. So, of Driver, Peake can write: 'it was largely through his labours that what is known as the critical view of the Old Testament became so widely accepted among English scholars.'[3]

In this chapter we shall seek to draw on the works of these men and their colleagues to characterise the Critical method of interpretation, as they conceived it, over against traditional and Conservative models.

1 'Modern Criticism'

The writings of the Critics are replete with descriptions of the task they see as their own: Critical interpretation. They refer to it under many designations. The popular use of the term 'Higher Criticism' to denote the whole Critical enterprise

(with the exception of 'Lower', i.e. textual, criticism), is strictly speaking inaccurate. 'Higher Criticism', writes Driver, 'in the proper sense of the term, is concerned solely with questions relating to the origin and structure of documents.'[4] He would distinguish this from the allied task of historical criticism, by means of which historical reconstruction of the account related in the documents would be attempted.[5]

How may we define Higher Criticism? James Orr, a scholar who to a degree straddled the divide between the Critical and Conservative camps, describes it in these terms:

> Higher Criticism, rightly understood, is simply the careful scrutiny on the principles which it is customary to apply to all literature, of the actual phenomena of the Bible, with a view to deduce from these such conclusions as may be warranted regarding the age, authorship, mode of composition, sources, &c, of the different books.

He instances one of the earliest grounds for Critical analysis:

> The peculiar distribution of the names of God in Genesis, e.g., is a fact to be recognised, whatever account may be given of it, and the collation and sifting of evidence, with a view to the obtaining of a satisfactory explanation, is, so far, a critical process.[6]

Much more may be said of the method employed by the Critics, not least in respect of its failure to be defined (rather than described and exemplified) in their writings; but Orr aptly summarises the object of Criticism as deduction from phenomena in Scripture to conclusions regarding the documents of which it is composed.

The Critic saw himself as the 'interpreter' of Scripture, understood in the narrow sense of the word. He was not concerned, qua Critic, with the application of the text; indeed, he was much concerned that that question should be seen to be distinct from that of exegesis, which was his province. The Magna Carta of Criticism in Britain was Jowett's essay 'On the Interpretation of Scripture', published as a disproportionately long contribution to Essays and Reviews (although written for inclusion in a commentary). Jowett argues powerfully that there is a fundamental analogy between Scripture and the (other) writings of classical antiquity. 'The meaning of classical authors is known with comparative certainty; and the interpretation of

them seems to rest on a scientific basis';[7] yet obscurity and disagreement cloud Scripture, as it is interpreted on different principles. The task of the interpreter, Jowett claims, is:

> to recover the original interpretation , the meaning, that is, of the words as they first struck on the ears or flashed before the eyes of those who heard and read them. He has to transfer himself to another age; to imagine that he is a disciple of Jesus or Paul; to disengage himself from all that follows. The history of Christendom is nothing to him, but only the scene at Galilee or Jerusalem.... All the after-thoughts of theology are nothing to him.... His object is to read Scripture like any other book.[8]

Further, the work of interpretation 'has nothing to do with any opinion respecting its [divine] origin'.[9] The interpreter is to proceed irrespective of his beliefs as to the nature of the Bible. 'The meaning of Scripture is one thing; the inspiration of Scripture is another.'[10] It is thus, and not otherwise, that the distinctive character of Scripture will emerge.[11]

F.W. Farrar, writing thirty years later, echoes Jowett:

> By Exegesis I always mean the explanation of the immediate and primary sense of the sacred writings. When I speak of Scripture interpretation I am using the phrase in its narrower and more limited meaning,

that is, excluding the question of application.[12] The recent history of interpretation has brought about a 'complete transformation of method',[13] whereby a scientific approach to Scripture has become possible. Farrar illustrates this analogy beloved of the Critics[14] with an allusion to the history of science. The forcing of astronomical data into the mould required by the geo-centric model of the universe caused 'infinite confusions and complications'. By the same count,

> the mistake of the Schoolmen and the Post-Reformation dogmatists was analogous to this. They assumed that all Scripture must be absolutely perfect down to its minutest detail.[15]

By contrast, the proper method of Biblical study is to interpret the Bible 'as we interpret any other book'; from Jowett's formula 'fairly apprehended there is no need to shrink'.[16] 'A priori convictions' must be set aside.[17]

So the historical critical method takes as its starting-point the assumption that whatever is divine or eternal or of special value and worth in Scripture will best be seen when

Scripture is studied 'like any other book'.[18] Perhaps the most succinct statement of this position is that quoted by Bennett and Adeney from Illingworth:

> Any criticism of the human element in the Bible, which makes it more truly human, more analogous to the workings of the human spirit otherwhere, tends without question to enhance our sense of its reality and worth.[19]

To this end a variety of analogous literature was adduced, and the Bible approached from the study of church history, the history of the ancient east, classical history, and other relevant fields.[20]

The Critics were also conscious that their new approach to the Bible was in harmony with a fresh attitude to learning in other disciplines, and particularly in the natural sciences.[21] It was claimed that the Critical study of Scripture was but the extension of new principles of learning already (and successfully) applied elsewhere. The optimism and confidence which pervaded so much of the endeavour of the later nineteenth century affected also Critical scholarship. When Adam Smith speaks of wars and indemnities he well captures the triumphalist spirit abroad.[22] A striking illustration is found in the wealth of designations given to the Critical methods, and the manner in which they are contrasted with the methods of the past. Thus, in its 'Prefatory Notice' the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica declares its hand. 'In this conflict' between the new views and the old (in matters of religion and philosophy),

> a work like the Encyclopaedia is not called upon to take any direct part. It has to do with knowledge rather than with opinion, and to deal with all subjects from a critical and historical, rather than a dogmatic, point of view.[23]

The Critics expressed themselves in similar fashion. The fact that it was 'modern' and 'new' served to commend Criticism. A.B. Davidson contrasts the 'critical movement of modern times' and 'traditional opinions'.[24] Cheyne, Kirkpatrick, Adam Smith and others speak of 'modern criticism' as an entity in itself,[25] and Davidson of the 'newest criticism'.[26] More extreme theories are described as 'advanced'.[27] 'Critical progress' results from 'disinterested study'.[28] Furthermore, the whole is 'in accordance with scientific method', and results in 'scientific certainty'.[29] Sanday argues that where the 'traditional' theory and 'the inductive

or critical theory' come into conflict, 'as in other matters of human thought, the more scientific statement is to be accepted'.[30] So Criticism is seen as historical, presuppositionless, scientific and inductive, in contrast to the older, dogmatic, deductive, traditional methods. The past must be broken with, and a whole fresh approach adopted.[31]

In practical application the fundamental distinction between the old methods and the new focussed upon the credence given to traditional understandings of the literary and historical nature of the Biblical documents. The traditional view and the Critical met head-on where either a statement or an implication contained in the documents themselves relating to their authorship, literary integrity, historical milieu, and so on, was found by the Critics to be in contradiction to the conclusions on the same question at which they had arrived independently. Traditionally, the understanding of Scripture as infallible had led scholars to regard such Scriptural statements, like all others, as beyond contradiction. But the new methods required them to be evaluated in the light of the principles of historical criticism, as understood by the Critics. Such statements and implications should henceforward have no more and no less claim upon the credence of the scholar than similar assertions in comparable historical material outside of the Bible.

Some of the Critics accepted that, in principle, reliable indications of the authorship and date of Biblical books might have been revealed to the Biblical writers, or to New Testament writers in particular, or perhaps to Jesus Christ alone. But they denied that, in fact, this had happened.[33] So the traditional understanding of the origin, date, authorship and historical reliability of the books of the Bible, resting, as it was claimed, upon the Bible's self-witness, was laid on one side, and the fresh Critical reconstruction put in its place. The vital element in this reconstruction was the concept of development. Biblical scholarship was not immune to the contemporary absorption with the idea of evolution which so characterised later nineteenth-century thought (and was very much older than Darwin), and the discerning of a line of progress and advance through the Old

Testament was both a major presupposition and a major conclusion of Critical work. One scholar, for instance, writes of Criticism as 'an instrument for disposing the books of the Old Testament in their proper place so that we may correctly perceive how ideas arose and followed one another'.[34]

A.F. Kirkpatrick elaborates these two arguments as 'forces at work in the present day, compelling us to revise many of our traditional ideas with regard to the Old Testament'. He entitles them '(a) the modern methods of examining historical and literary documents; (b) the doctrine of development'.[35]

Under the first heading, Kirkpatrick draws attention to the significance of Wolf's Prolegomena to Homer in revolutionising historical study,[36] and then quotes from Collins' The Study of Ecclesiastical History on the nature of historical method. It is worth reproducing the quotation since it well embodies the historical principles which the Critics sought to apply to the study of scripture.

> Is this a faithful text or is it corrupt? is it really the work of the author to whom it is now ascribed? was he a contemporary witness? if not, when did he live? what were his opportunities of knowing the facts? was he biassed, and, if so, in what direction? did he write with a purpose, and, if so, with what purpose? What can be learned on these points from internal, and what from external, evidence? and do the conclusions agree to which these two respectively lead? Such are the questions which must be asked with respect to each document; and the answers to these questions, so far as they can be ascertained, must henceforward be borne constantly in mind in dealing with the documents concerned.[37]

'We cannot isolate the study of the Bible', Kirkpatrick claims, 'and refuse to submit it to the processes which are freely applied to all literature and all historical documents.' The Critical study of Scripture is the application to Scripture of the same principles of interpretation applied to all other literature. In the course of Critical study it immediately becomes evident that the old assumption 'that inspiration would render such investigations superfluous or profane' cannot be maintained, since the Scriptures give evidence of compilation from sources, pseudonymous authorship, differing degrees of reliability, and all the other literary and historical factors which we expect and which we find in other, secular, sources. This in itself confirms the

appropriateness of the Critical method.

> We must not be alarmed if we find the same phenomena meeting us in our sacred documents which we find in secular writings. In so far as the cases are parallel, they must be dealt with in the same way.[38]

It may well be that the consequence of such study is the overthrow of the traditions of the ancient Jewish people concerning the origins of their own literature. But the final test must be internal evidence, and if it 'contradicts the traditions of an uncritical age, they must give way before it'.[39] It is the 'duty' of Christians to 'examine, frankly and fearlessly, all that can be ascertained with regard to the origin and date of the several books and the genuineness of the text', and all the problems which are thrown up unavoidably by the study of an ancient document. This is required by the presence of the human element in the Divine-human Bible, and it must entail the 'inductive' collection and analysis of data.[40] Kirkpatrick contrasts such an approach with the 'rigid theory' of the traditionalists which attempts to force phenomena into agreement with itself. 'Nothing', he writes, 'can be more fatal' to the study of Scripture than this. Just as our belief that God created the world does not prevent our examining the facts of the natural order by the (inductive) methods of science, so our belief in the inspiration of Scripture must not interfere with our examination of it.[41]

The second heading of Kirkpatrick's exposition of the Critical method is 'the doctrine of development'. He considers it more briefly, though suggesting that:

> Nowhere, perhaps, has this idea of a gradual, orderly development, of continuous evolution, had more influence than in remodelling our concept of the course of Old Testament history and the growth of Old Testament religion.[42]

This cannot be permitted to reduce the story of the Old Testament to one of mere natural progress, though Kirkpatrick is aware of the danger of such a reduction.[43] Rather, though it may be viewed as a 'natural' progression, it is in fact - seen from a Christian perspective - 'an evolution ... and an advance ... under the constraint of a divine discipline and the education of a progressive revelation'.[44]

The idea of development viewed as education is a common one in the Critical writings, and undergirds at the level of theology much of their strictly literary work. It is significant that it was the marriage of a developmental theory and literary analysis that gave birth to the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis, the fundament of all Critical thinking after the 1870's. It was a powerful combination, the two parts of the theory serving to buttress one another.

The general developmental theory stressed the educational character of the work of revelation, and the parallels between the growth of culture and civilisation in the world as a whole, in ancient Israel, and in the developing child. Kirkpatrick writes:

> The child's perception of truth cannot be the same as the youth's, nor the youth's the same as a man's. The mode of education must gradually be changed as he passes from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood. So it was in the education of the chosen race, so it must be in the education of the human race.[45]

The particular advantage of this wide-ranging idea was that at one and the same time it provided a framework for understanding the religion of the Old Testament which, if not actually naturalistic, was nevertheless in key with the suspicion of the supernatural that was the product of an increasingly secular age; and it became a tool for deflecting the growing ethical criticism which was directed against the Old Testament, and, thereby, at Christianity.[46] No longer need the Old Testament be seen as all on the same level. Instead, it becomes possible to 'discriminate more between the parts of the Old Testament', insofar as the value of some parts may be seen simply to show 'the gradualness of Israel's education'.[47] But the development was not merely ethical. It is conceived of as parallel with that of the other nations of the ancient east. Driver writes:

> The Jews were a nation like other nations of antiquity; it is, therefore, probable from analogy, that they passed through similar phases of mental growth and similar stages of culture; their narratives ... may thus ... have included elements akin to those of other nations.[48]

Benjamin Jowett perceptively recognised that to the Critical understanding, the unity of Scripture would depend upon the idea

of development:

> It is a notion of value to the interpreter, for it enables him to grasp the whole and distinguish the parts. It saves him from the necessity of maintaining that the Old Testament is one and the same everywhere; that the books of Moses contain truths or precepts, such as the duty of prayer or the faith in immortality ... which no one has ever seen there. It leaves him room enough to admit all the facts of the case.[49]

By extension, many scholars used the idea of development to take the place of the older concept of Messianic prophecy as the means of linking the testaments and pointing forward to Christ from the Old. Adam Smith, for one, ties the concept together with Christ's attitude to the Old Testament law, and with the conflict in the Old Testament between priest and prophet. Christ and the Apostles have judged much of the institutions, laws and ideals of the Old Testament as 'rudimentary and of transient worth'. Moreover, in this process of development there is to be found the justification for the work of Criticism, which attempts to plot the stages by which 'the primitive revelation of God to men was carried onward and upward to its summit in Christ Himself'.[50]

The Critics did not dispute the traditional claim that the Bible was 'inspired', or that it was in some way closely related to the self-revelation of God.[51] They saw their task as that of determining the nature of inspiration and revelation from the phenomena presented by the documents themselves. The fundamental point at which they differed from the traditionalists was the degree of uniformity with which Scripture was conceived to be inspired and revelatory. This connected with the idea of development. Driver writes of inspiration as:

> a Divine afflatus which ... conferring upon Scripture its remarkable manifoldness and variety, enabled holy men of old to apprehend, and declare in different degrees and in accordance with the needs and circumstances of particular ages or occasions, the mind and purpose of God.... The Bible is like a lantern with many slides, some transparent, others more or less opaque, and the flame burning within does not shine through all with the same pure and clear brilliancy.[52]

Driver, as a cautious exponent of the Critical position, was well aware of its uncertainties. As an historical discipline, he maintained, its conclusions all rested upon degrees of probability, depending on the grounds on which any particular Critical

judgement rested. Where more evidence, or evidence of a more decisive nature, was available, there was room for greater certainty.[53] For instance, in Pentateuchal study, while the 'P' analysis Driver considered 'more than sufficiently established', the 'JE' analysis was frequently unclear or uncertain.[54] Again, where authorship and dates are concerned, sometimes only wide limits may be set, sometimes narrower ones. There may be room also for differences of opinion amongst Critical scholars with respect to the same evidence, 'on account of the different aspects of a passage which most strongly impress different Critics' (for example in parts of Isaiah).[55] Furthermore, grounds may be sufficient to justify a negative conclusion while not suggesting with any probability an alternative. Driver identifies this as the chief cause of disagreement amongst the Critics: 'the endeavour to reach definite conclusions upon the basis either of imperfect data or of indications reasonably susceptible of divergent interpretations'.[56]

Describing his own method in researching for his Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, Driver maintains that while he almost completely avoids discussion of the Conservative alternatives to Critical positions, this should not be taken to suggest his ignorance of them; he has familiarised himself with them, and found them wanting. While it is inevitable that a book such as his will be largely founded upon the work of other scholars, he maintains:

> I never accept the dictum or conclusions of any critic without satisfying hyself, by personal study, that the grounds alleged in its support are adequate.[57]

We are offered in a footnote two of Driver's working principles which, he claims, 'once recognized, will be found to solve nearly all the difficulties which, upon the traditional view of the historical books of the Old Testament, are insuperable'. The first is that there is behind each of the books as we have them a tradition which has been passed down through the years and which has involved various modifications, including the colouring by features of later years and, in particular, by the period when it was finally put into written form. Secondly, we must assume that the ancient Hebrew writers - in common with their

contemporaries in other lands - used some freedom in the composition of speeches put into the mouths of great men. While these might reflect substantially what was said on the occasion,

> often they merely develop at length, in the style and manner of the narrator, what was handed down only as a compendious report, or what was deemed to be consonant with the temper and aim of a given character on a particular occasion.[58]

Yet these principles reflect general considerations. More particularly, the grounds for the Critical position lie in the phenomena presented in the documents 'which, viewed collectively, constitute a cumulative argument incompatible with the unity of authorship of the books in which they are observed.' Most obvious are literary details. Narrative may not be continuous, or not uniform - breaks in thought may intervene, or what appears to be one event may be described twice. Parts of a book may resemble one another, while differing markedly from the surrounding text, in style and phraseology; and these differences may coincide with differences in theology.[59] 'It is on the observation of such differences that the critical study of the Old Testament ultimately rests.' The theories of the Critics have as their object to account for these phenomena.

The methodological question is whether such inference is legitimate. Driver claims that its legitimacy is clear from the Books of Chronicles, the writer of which was a compiler employing essentially the methods of composition the Critics attribute to the authors of the Pentateuch. He excerpts from older books, in particular from the Books of Samuel and Kings, which we are fortunate to have before us.

> It is a reasonable inference that when elsewhere we observe analogous differences of style and representation, we may presume differences of authorship.... The methods of historiography postulated by criticism are shown by the example of the Chronicles to be a vera causa in Hebrew literature. Further, Driver suggests, the Chronicler illustrates the process to which we have referred of composing speeches for historical characters.[60]

Some of the toughest assertions of the rights of Criticism come from the pen of A.S. Peake. He argues that if there is a vital connexion between articles of our religion and events

of the past, Criticism cannot but be invited to examine the coherence and likelihood of our claims.[61] The question of documentary evidence is raised inevitably, since it is required to attest any past event. It must be examined and evaluated, with the scholar seeking the date, authorship, place of origin, and possible sources of the documents in question. But more:

> He must, however, not only investigate the documents in which the story has come down to him; he must examine the intrinsic credibility of the story itself. He may find that, on investigation, it breaks down; or, on the other hand, it may successfully pass through all the tests to which he exposes it.... Such an inquiry has obvious risks. If it be free, and any other type of investigation is worthless, then he must have an open mind with reference to its possible results.[62]

In touching on 'the credibility of the story itself' Peake is more explicit than most of his colleagues in pointing out the direction in which Criticism inevitably tends. In Britain, at least, amongst Critical scholars, there was little of the open disbelief in the supernatural which was so common on the Continent,[63] and which, using this very criterion, found much 'incredible' and therefore unhistorical.[64]

Driver's own conclusion from his study of the Old Testament is that the documents are no more and no less accurate than we might have expected, given the historical conditions under which we believe them to have been composed. In other words, if treated by Critics like any other book, the Bible, in respect of historical and literary questions, is found to be just like any other book.[65]

2 Critical Conclusions

(i) The 'Assured Results'

'There is a large area', writes Driver, 'in which the data are clear, and the critics are agreed, and this area includes many of the most important results which criticism has reached.'[66]

The prominent British Critics, while eschewing the more radical and openly 'rationalistic' conclusions reached by their Continental colleagues, were eager to present a package of 'sober' results which, by their breadth of support from respected judges, could be considered 'assured'. The foundation-stone of this

consensus was Wellhausen's analysis of the Pentateuch, on which reposed a reconstruction of the whole history of Israel. Driver, like so many, accepted it, though 'with certain provisoes'.[67] Adam Smith considered that the widespread area of agreement could not be the result of chance, but must itself be an argument for the truth of the position. He speaks of 'an agreement of opinion so strong, so surely growing, and so widely based on the phenomena of the sacred text itself'.[68]

Before we turn to survey the essential conclusions the Critical school had reached, we may draw attention to a difficulty in the interpretation of Critical writers which stems from a tension in their work that remained unresolved. Despite the fact that it was the fundamental feature of their work, the question of the method of Critical study was one that, for all their descriptions of it, they never defined. At one level the phrase 'like any other book' proved an adequate description of historical criticism as applied to Scripture, but at another it is profoundly inadequate, since the evident supernaturalness of their subject-matter left Critical scholars who claimed to believe in the supernatural on the horns of a dilemma: does Criticism of Scripture 'like any other book' rule out the possibility of the supernatural in Scripture, including, presumably, the very idea of revelation? (as, indeed, some of the Continental Critics maintained); or, conversely, does the acceptance of limited though definite supernatural ideas, e.g., the idea of revelation, some (limited) miracles and some (general) prophecy, not defeat the essential contention of Criticism by admitting the Conservative demand for a special hermeneutic to be practised within the discipline of faith? Broad unanimity as to Critical conclusions (generally a slightly milder carbon copy of the Continental consensus) conceals the absence of an adequate consideration of this crucial problem, to which in different forms we return below.

a. The Pentateuch

Wellhausen had taken as his starting-point the perception that the Prophets, instead of coming after the Law as had always been supposed, in fact preceded it. The Pentateuch, as we have it,

is the product of a post-exilic process of compilation; and to realise that the prophetic writings in fact ante-date it is a vital clue to its interpretation. The principle of development interweaves with literary analysis to establish this hypothesis, with the more primitive prophetic theology and ethics leading on to the complexities codified in the 'Mosaic' Law.

The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua were analysed together (as the one 'Hexateuch') into a number of literary sources, which were known as 'J', 'E', 'D' and 'P', in the shorthand of the scholars. 'D', the work of the Deuteronomist comprises the central section of Deuteronomy. The material is theologically and stylistically distinct from the rest of the Hexateuch. 'P' is also easily separable. Originally known as the work of the 'Second Elohist', after its separation from 'E' (the 'First Elohist'), since both employ the divine name Elohim,

> by more recent writers, on account of the predominance in it of priestly interests, and of the priestly point of view, it is commonly called the priestly narrative, and denoted, for brevity, by the letter P (which is also used to denote its author).[69]

P comprises formal, structured, legal and genealogical material, and was considered to have been the product of a priestly school of writers working during and shortly after the Exile. Some writers refer to it as the 'Priests' Code'. It supplied the framework for our present Hexateuch.

J and E are stylistically and theologically similar, and the distinction between them on the ground of their use of different divine names (J stemming from the use of Jehovah or J(Y)ahweh) did not in every case carry conviction with some of the British Critics. Driver, for instance, expresses caution on the separation of J and E in many places, though he does not doubt the presence of the different documentary sources: 'the indications that the narrative is composite are of a nature which it is not easy to gainsay.'[70]

Thus J and E were seen as independent, though frequently parallel, sources, inserted, together with D, into the framework supplied by P. They dated from perhaps the eighth century BC, while D came to be identified generally with the 'Book of

the Law' found in the Temple in the year 621, during the reign of Josiah. Thus a definite historical structure could be built up. In this briefest of surveys we can go no further, but suffice it to say that on the ground of this general theory many Critics advanced the most detailed refinements, with numerous sub-documents referred to as J^1, J^2, J^3, &c.), and with detailed supposition of the complex rôle played by the Redactors who worked over the documents and combined them at various stages (RJ^1, &c.). It was in that area that considerable differences between the Critics manifested themselves, as the evidence with which they worked was limited and some theories highly speculative. More moderate scholars, such as Driver, were more aware of the inevitability of subjective factors in such detailed interpretations.

More general conclusions were also drawn. The idea of 'inspiration' had of course to be re-assessed.[71] It became necessary to discriminate between different parts of the Old Testament. Moreover, the whole conspectus of the history of Israel had been radically altered:

> The low religious position of the pre-Exile Israelites will be seen to be not the result of a deliberate rebellion against the law of Jehovah, the Levitical laws being at any rate virtually non-existent.[72]

That is to say, although it was little acknowledged and never, systematically, followed through, what began as literary analysis inevitably spilled over into theological revision.[73]

b. The Prophets

Central to the Critical approach to the Prophets was a new understanding of their place in Old Testament religion. The tendency hitherto had been to see their rôle as chiefly that of supernatural foretelling; now prophecy, no longer 'the history of events before they came to pass',[74] became 'far more closely linked with the time and circumstances of its delivery than was formerly thought'.[75] Traditional interest in the fulfilment of prophecy in the later life of the church and the world changed to interest largely confined to the historical Sitz im Leben of the prophets themselves; and, indeed, more to the men than to their sayings. The Messianic hope came increasingly to be

seen not as a future event prophetically etched out in some detail, but rather as the burden and fulfilment of the Old Testament considered as a whole.[76] Kirkpatrick writes:

> fulfilment is related to prophecy rather as a plant with all its beauty of leaf and flower is related to the seed from which it sprang. The inner idea, and not the form in which that idea is conveyed, is the essential part of a prophecy. The form ... is largely human.... The fulfilment ... is the evolution of the essential idea....[77]

As the widespread scepticism in respect of claims to supernatural knowledge influenced even Critics such as Driver who were in principle open to such possibilities, it was inevitable that what appeared to be accurate predictions should be scrutinised minutely. While such men were adamant that the issue of prediction was not decisive in their weighing of evidence, they generally accepted the conclusions of Continental scholars who were openly committed to a rejection of the supernatural. British Critics, though, stressed the other grounds on which such conclusions were founded. So Adam Smith writes:

> The opponents of criticism have often alleged that the conclusion, by which Isaiah xl and following chapters are taken from Isaiah himself and assigned to a prophet on the eve of the Return from Exile, is due to a dogmatic prejudice against the capacity of Isaiah himself to predict events so far beyond his own time.... [On the contrary] what has compelled critics ... has been the historical evidence furnished by the chapters themselves.[78]

This example in fact cites the principal and most controversial Critical conclusion concerning the prophetic books. The conclusions of the Continental Critics, generally opposed to the possibility of predictive prophecy, were adopted holus-bolus, although upon the claimed basis of stylistic and historical considerations.[79]

The other particular focus of controversy was the Book of Daniel, which the Critics placed in the middle of the second century BC instead of the traditional dating in the sixth, again advancing historical and linguistic arguments in support;[80] but once more in company with other scholars whose prime motive was the predictive element in the second half of the book.[81]

c. Other Books

The Critics ranged over the whole of the Old Testament,

dove-tailing the remainder of the literature into their Prophets--Pentateuch schema. We may briefly advert to some of their chief conclusions.

There was a frank admission that the Psalms, for instance, contained much that was less than Christian in sentiment.[82] They, and the wisdom literature, could be assigned an appropriate place in the developmental understanding of Israel's national and religious history. The historical books themselves, sometimes seen as illustrating this development, sometimes as obscuring it in their present form, were subjected to the same literary analysis as the Pentateuch, with particular emphasis on supposed discrepancies and duplications. Driver writes:

> The Books of Judges and Kings, for instance, resemble each other in their mode of composition; in each a series of older narratives has been taken by the compiler and fitted into a framework supplied by himself.... The Books of Samuel are likewise constructed from pre-existing sources.[83]

Historical conclusions drawn from these books indicate that they 'in some cases, include elements which are not, in the sense in which the term is commonly understood, historical'.[84] The Books of Chronicles, in particular, were taken as illustrative of the free handling given to earlier traditions and the method by which the Hebrew compiler went about his work. 'Analogous phenomena', Driver writes, lie behind the composition of the earlier books.[85]

d. Methods of Composition

The analytical methods of the Critics both established,and, in their outworking, presupposed, conclusions with respect to the writing and compiling of the Biblical books. It is worth summarising this feature of the Critical perpsective.

Bennett, for instance, assumes that the Pentateuch, considered as a 'national statute-book', is 'composite, according to universal analogy'.[86] Such a collection must be extended and modified to meet new circumstances. Further, the anonymity of most of the Old Testament books, and the long history of transcription behind them, indicate that to a considerable extent they have been supplemented.

> We think of a book as a piece of personal property. It must therefore be reproduced unaltered; or, if any changes are made, they must be carefully and exactly indicated. No such ideas hampered the editors of Hebrew history or poetry.[87]

Groups of books were treated in this way by Jewish literary schools, such that while the original material may come from similar sources, the 'ideas of successive schools of Hebrew thought' accrete around it. Thus the books 'are like a group of ancient buildings, each of which has been added to and repaired by many subsequent generations'.[88]

The same writer elsewhere compares modern and Old Testament methods of history-writing. Whereas a modern scholar analyses and tests the statements of the ancient authorities, the Biblical writers produce a work more like the footnotes of a modern work, collecting the different traditions without comment and without regard for any possible incompatibility.[89]

It was, of course, a necessary working hypothesis of the Critics that 'the Biblical historians ... were dependent for their materials upon ordinary human sources'.[90] Driver would agree with Bennett that 'the Hebrew historiographer, as we know him, is essentially a compiler, or arranger, of pre-existing documents, he is not an original author'.[91] This is the historian 'as we know him'. The actual authors who had composed the source-documents compiled in this fashion were, however, fully individual; so much so that they may be readily differentiated from one another by their style and their theology, even after suffering redaction at the hands of the composers of the books of the Canon.[92]

(ii) The Implications of Criticism

a. Criticism and Theology

The implications which the Critical view of the Bible was to have for every department of theology were immense, though it is arguable to what degree they stemmed from Criticism as such, and to what extent from the historical spirit that gave rise to it. We shall point only to those chief consequences which the Critics themselves saw and discussed.

It was clearly recognised that some theological matters were directly affected by the Critical developments. The inspira-

tion of Scripture must be re-interpreted;[93] there is a new understanding of the nature of prophecy; the apologetic of the church must be radically altered - both in affirmation, in that the old 'proofs' of prophecy and miracle can no longer stand, and in denial, in that

> we need no longer spend our time and energy in attempting to reconcile every supposed discrepancy. We can recognise most frankly the immoralities and barbarities and imprecations which shock us.[94]

So much inevitably and immediately follows from Criticism, and indeed was to some extent its presupposition. But Driver, for one, was eager to claim that no ground existed for serious concern as to where all this might lead: 'The great theological verities taught in the Old Testament are absolutely untouched by critical investigation.'[95]

That did not, however, mean that things could be unchanged. We are led to a more gradual idea of the revelation of God, generally by natural rather than supernatural means.[96] And this in turn leads to a deepening, a broadening, of our knowledge of God: 'God is surely driving us back ... from the letter to the Spirit; from the word to the speaker.'[97]

Cheyne, an outspoken and sometimes more radical Critic, could see deeper changes afoot and the vital part being played in them by the Critical movement. He speaks of being led 'a few steps further on towards "all the truth"', with Criticism as a 'preparatory discipline' to this end.[98]

> The transformation or reinterpretation of theology for which the church of the future will importunately ask will have for one of its presuppositions a modernized and a critical exegesis.[99]

Peake, writing some years later, recognised the profoundly different theological method which Criticism had bequeathed. The new discipline of 'Biblical Theology' found, where once there had been unity, diversity: 'in place of a single system we have a multitude of individual systems, and these often, it is said, divergent'. One consequence for Peake was a frank recognition that where once the Bible had been thought of as presenting a 'homogeneous system of doctrine', it must now be seen that, even with due allowance made for symbols and types and the principle

of development, this could no longer be said to be true.[100]

> The Critical movement of the nineteenth century was, on any account, one of sowing rather than reaping in theology. Interestingly enough - and much was made of the fact by the Critics - the chief opponents of the new school as the century drew to a close were largely dogmaticians, and the Critics (though, it might be said, by definition), Biblical scholars. If it were possible to harmonise the new insights and the new methods with the old theology, it was not given to them to achieve, or even, except for one or two examples, to attempt it.

b. Criticism and Preaching

In an age of great preachers the question of the practical significance of Criticism could not be wholly avoided, and some of the Critics face it openly. The titles of two of Cheyne's many volumes, The Hallowing of Criticism and Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism, prepare us for his approach to the problem. Here as elsewhere he states uncompromisingly the claims of Criticism, yet he is eager that they should permeate to the roots of the life of the church. He recognises that 'the question becomes an urgent one how this can be done so as not to injure ... the higher, or religious, life'.[101] The Hallowing of Criticism, comprising mainly sermons, is intended to serve as an illustration of how this should be done. The point is that devotional and homiletical use of the Bible will benefit from a devout application of Critical principles.[102]

Adam Smith is another who devotes much attention to this matter. He draws attention to the fact that so many Critics (some, 'as advanced as any on the Continent') are believers in 'evangelical Christianity'.[103] So the dangerous 'rationalism', which is the enemy of preaching, need have no connexion with Criticism per se. Further, only a small portion of the Old Testament is affected by Criticism, in the sense of having doubt cast on its historical veracity; and, even where that is the case, 'the ethical resources are as great, sometimes greater than ever'.[104] Any problems that do result must be weighed against 'relief from difficulties' in historical and ethical matters.[105]

(iii) Criticism and the Supernatural

The development of Critical scholarship in Britain could not avoid being profoundly influenced by its Continental counterpart, much of which was openly naturalistic. Nonetheless, many British Critics disavowed any such presupposition on their part, and saw themselves ranged alongside the supernaturalist Conservatives against a common foe.[106] It must be said that Criticism remained, even in their hands, a scalpel with which supernatural incidents and statements presupposing supernatural knowledge tended to be cut away, except where they could lay strong claim on natural, historical grounds to be considered authentic.[107]

The Conservative charge of 'rationalism' rankled, and Critics who realised its seriousness sought to defend themselves. Peake, for instance, is indignant:

> The modern theory has largely been built up, Dr Orr tells us, on 'the rationalist conviction that a supernatural explanation of facts cannot be admitted'.... [But] my grounds for believing in the truth of the Grafian theory are wholly independent of any rationalistic pre-suppositions whatever.[108]

It could scarcely be denied that so many of the Continental Critics were, to a greater or lesser degree, rationalists. Peake suggests that the simple explanation for this is that hitherto more orthodox Christians have shied away from the task of Criticism, 'so the work was left to those who had no sympathy with some of the fundamental views of evangelical Christianity'.[109] There is, he continues, little reason to believe that, had these men held a more orthodox attitude to the supernatural, their results would have been 'seriously modified'.[110]

Aside from particular questions of prophecy and miracle, the supernatural issue pervades the whole of Old Testament study, and especially affects the view taken of the origin of Old Testament religion. The Critics here attempted a careful balance of view. In treating the Bible 'like any other book' and evaluating it by normal historical criteria it is inevitable that natural, historical causes should be sought for the phenomena it contains. The idea of development, in which the <u>evolution</u> of religion is paramount, works against the traditional conception of supernatural revelation followed by decline, substituting for it a gradual

ascent to ethical monotheism and, through that, to Christianity. Criticism, Kirkpatrick writes:

> leads us to regard God's revelation of Himself as a more gradual process than we had supposed it to be, effected to a large extent by the action of ordinary forces, developed in ways which we should now call natural rather than supernatural.[111]

This statement well displays the ambiguity of the Critics' position. Most of them were determined to uphold the fundamentally revealed nature of Israelite religion, which in that sense remained totally different from the religions of the other nations. Yet they were committed to a method which emphasised similarity, dependence and continuity, and placed a heavy premium on natural explanations as oppsed to supernatural. Thus Driver, too, carefully balances his statement of the position. The religion of Israel, 'though subject in its growth to historical conditions', is not 'to be explained as arising solely out of them'. How then may such a conclusion be established? Upon historical principles, as the natural course of events may be shown to be unable fully to account for Israel's religion.[112]

More specifically, Baden Powell had argued in Essays and Reviews that for miracles to have significance they must be open to the full scrutiny of Criticism, 'on the same grounds on which we should investigate any ordinary narrative of the supernatural'. Failing that, not only will they lose their evidential value, they will begin to lose their historical character, opening the way for a 'more or less mythical interpretation'.[113] Kirkpatrick speaks for his colleagues when he agrees with Powell in setting aside the traditional evidential use of miracles and prophecy. Miracles, instead of being proofs of revelation, are seen as its vehicles; they do not break the natural law, they manifest a 'higher law'. As for prophecy, we have no historical reason to accept, for instance, the predictions of the names of Josiah and Cyrus, as the books in which they occur may be held to post-date, in their final form, the lives of the two men concerned.[114] But these questions are not important. It is in the 'naturalness' that we should see the real, supernatural, significance of, in this case, prophecy:

> Adaption, not less than marvel, is a characteristic of divine working; and it is by studying the ways of God in history

that we come to recognise his footprints.[115]

This statement well illustrates the new ambivalence toward the supernatural. It is, largely though not entirely, something which permeates and utilises the ordinary phenomena of history, and is therefore open to Critical analysis. It has ceased to have as its hallmark a challenge to men based on its flouting of the regularities of the natural order. Openly naturalistic Criticism, though disavowed by the 'believing Critics', has done the church a service. It has, according to Kirkpatrick, 'taught us to look for God's revelation of himself in His ordinary not less than in His extraordinary modes of working'.[116]

3 Criticism in Debate

We turn now to a preliminary examination of the controversy between Critics and Conservatives, as the Critics themselves represented it and engaged in it in their exposition and defence of their position. As we do so, it is important to remember that at this time (generally the later part of the nineteenth century) Criticism had still to establish itself, since although it gained much ground during the late 1870's and the 1880's, there remained a mass of clerical and popular support for the able and influential scholars who steadfastly rejected its chief tenets.

(i) Conservative Objections and the Critical Response

The Critical reception of Conservative opposition varied from circumspection and well-mannered discussion to contempt. Only limited effort was expended to answer it in detail, partly no doube because this would have appeared to grant more credence to Conservative apologetic than the Critics themselves wished. As we have seen, they were confident that history was flowing with them. Only British insularity and obscurantism had so long kept out the tide of enlightened German scholarship. Though battle might rage, victory would be theirs. It is also significant that the major Conservative responses on a technical level, such as the writings of James Orr and James Robertson in Scotland, and those of W.H. Green of Princeton, did not appear until victory

was, so far as the Critics were concerned, already in their hands. It would have been anachronistic, as well as pointless, to have responded at length to these belated challenges.

Other factors too played their part. The upshot was that Critical commentaries, technical works, and more popular discussions tended to be written always with the opposition in mind, but rarely addressed to them directly. Much more were they directed at the uncommitted and those disciples of the Conservatives whose loyalty was dubious. While, then, we do not find full-scale Critical replies to Conservative works, Critical writers continually glance over their shoulders. The significant exception concerns the relation of Christology and Criticism, and here rather fuller attention was paid to the Conservative case.[117]

Driver writes:

> Attempts have, of course, been often made to meet the arguments of the critics; but the facts are too numerous to be disposed of by the methods which their opponents are able to employ. The ablest of these opponents within recent years was Dr. W.H. Green, of Princeton, U.S., who sought to invalidate the analysis altogether.... But when he has finished, all that one feels him to have proved is that a particular critic has failed, or that the criteria are in certain cases ambiguous; the conviction that the narrative is composite remains as before.[118]

The cumulative nature of the Critical arguments, according to Driver, effectively undermines attempts to refute them.[119] Green was the leading American Old Testament scholar, but, in Britain, and by the last years of the century, Peake was right to comment:

> We do well to remember that the opposition does not, as a rule, come from acknowledged experts in the field of Biblical scholarship. Very largely, it comes from dogmatic theologians.[120]

Yet these people (and they were not exclusively dogmaticians; in the early years of the controversy they were the chief Old Testament scholars) put up a series of arguments to which the Critics found it necessary to respond.

First, the Critics were eager to dissociate themselves from extreme or patently subjective views. 'Sober criticism', wrote Kirkpatrick, taking up a favourite phrase of the British Critics, 'is objective',

> it carefully collects facts, arranges them, and endeavours

> to ascertain their meaning.... Speculative criticism is subjective; ... it depends on the intuition of the critic.[121]

Such extreme Criticism had unfortunately brought the whole enterprise into disrepute![122] But it would be unreasonable therefore to write off all Criticism, since in different Critical judgements there lay different degrees of probability. The probability of a conclusion depends upon the grounds on which it rests, and while if they are few or ambiguous Critics will disagree as to their interpretation and the wise man will not commit himself, that does not imply that all Critical conclusions are similarly doubtful.[123] To assert that 'critics are in a state of internecine conflict' as implying that their judgements are all subjective is mistaken.[124]

Conservatives were also ready to suggest the implications of Critical methods and conclusions, in particular the possibility that the New Testament might join the Old under the Critical microscope. Inevitably, the spectre of Tübingen was raised. British Critics, as devout churchmen, were eager to resist this suggestion. Driver maintains that 'by an elementary principle of historical criticism' the New Testament documents, so much more closely contemporary with the events which they relate than the documents of the Old Testament, are immune to the sceptical eye of the Critic.[125] Indeed,

> the circumstances are such as to forbid the supposition that the facts of our Lord's life on which the fundamental truths of Christianity depend can have been the growth of mere tradition, or are anything else than strictly historical.[126]

The suggestion was also made that Criticism was a 'novelty', and therefore not worthy of trust. The Critics responded that, in the degree to which this was true, it was so only because 'the domination of a rigid theory of verbal inspiration' had only recently been broken.[127] But, in any event, already more than two centuries had passed since the inception of Critical Biblical study, 'as long as ... many of the historical and physical sciences', wrote Adam Smith; and in recent years the men and the methods employed in its service had been the equal of those in the other sciences.[128]

The new and burgeoning discipline of archaeology was called

to the Conservative side, and the fact that A.H. Sayce, the most distinguished writer in the field in Britain, came generally to sympathise with the Conservatives the Critics saw as a particular threat. But the failure of most of the 'monuments' to bear directly on the issue one way or another was evidenced by Driver's famous declaration that, if everything in Sayce's Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments were correct, he would have to alter only two statements in his Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, and both not towards, but away from, the Conservative position.[129]

The Conservatives claimed that the literary analysis was chiefly based on the 'subjective' criterion of style; and that where historical errors or contradictions were asserted, patient exegesis could solve the problems. Recognising the inherent weakness of arguments from style alone (in an ancient literature where modern tastes and criteria might have little relevance), the Critics responded by pointing to the co-extensive phenomena of theological emphasis and historical arguments which joined in sustaining the literary analysis. Where Conservatives attempted to explain historical difficulties, the Critics accused them of artificiality and special pleading. Even, they maintained, where a plausible alternative might be offered in a single case, it could take no account of the overall and cumulative significance of the other factors taken together, throughout the book or series of books concerned. This, the Critics claimed, could only be established or denied in detailed works such as commentaries.[130]

The final argument, to which we may advert here briefly, was perhaps the most important of all. It received most attention from the Critics, and we examine it at some length below.[131] Essentially it was the claim that the New Testament, and Jesus Christ in particular, set their authority behind traditional views of the Old Testament books. This powerful argument, which inter-related with controversy about Christology itself, was resented by many Critics; but they recognised that in it lay a formidable challenge. Some denied the Conservatives' interpretation of Jesus' teaching, while accepting their view of His (potential) authority; most accepted the former while indirectly

denying the latter. Some even claimed that the New Testament use of the Old sanctioned rather than forbade the Critical approach; Farrar, for instance, argued that Jesus was 'entirely opposed' to the 'Pharisaic' view of the Old Testament which, he said, the Conservatives wished to perpetuate.[132]

(ii) The Validity of Criticism

Perhaps the strongest commendation of Criticism that could be made to a wary public was that it had no deleterious effects on devotion. Bennett and Adeney urge this argument upon their readers:

> experience shows that ministers and Christians generally hold such positions without losing anything of their fulness of spiritual life.[133]

A popular phrase was 'believing Criticism', distinguishing the British variety from the 'unbelieving' nature of so much Continental thought.[134] The proper, Christian, Critical attitude must be that of devotion.[135] For Criticism as such need have no effect at all upon piety:

> Critical investigations concern really not the fact of revelation, but its mode, or form, or course; upon Christian faith and practice they have no bearing whatsoever.[136]

Such reassurances were needed and welcomed as Driver, Cheyne and the others addressed gatherings of clergy, as well as their students. Indeed, the well-known Christian character of these men was, and was used as, an advertisement for their Critical views. Adam Smith declared:

> In this country at the present day nearly every leader in Old Testament criticism - and remember some are as advanced as any on the Continent - is a believer in evangelical Christianity.[137]

Christian believers were urged to join with the believing Critics against the real foes of 'rationalism' and secularism.[138]

But, it was maintained, if the character of the Critics encouraged confidence in their method, the character of Scripture demanded that such a method be employed. If, the Critics said, it has pleased God to reveal Himself not simply in the processes of history but also in a book which tells of them, that book needs must be studied in the same way as any other history book. The religious

and theological questions raised by the Bible have historical components, and it is an historical method alone which will suffice to examine them in their fulness. The historical character of revelation requires historical criticism.[139]

The Critics also claimed a variety of sources as support for their method, and we may note the chief witnesses called in evidence. Faced with men who repudiated their method as unscriptural, they made the counter-claim that their treatment of the Old Testament followed that found in the New, and indeed on the lips of Jesus Christ. A corollary of this argument invoked the canonisation of the New Testament to show that the church has authority over Scripture. Adam Smith claims that the formation of the canon was 'criticism in the widest sense of the word', and that:

> what the Church this once achieved, the Church may at any time revise. As a matter of fact she has never renounced her liberty to do so.... What was the decision of the Church's criticism at the beginning is not beyond the Church's criticism now.[140]

Secondly, the Reformers were cited. 'Luther and Calvin were the pioneers of modern biblical criticism.'[141] Cheyne develops this line of argument. It is, he claims, of the essence of Protestantism that received teaching should be submitted by the individual Christian to examination, and that examination must be grounded in Scripture. Scripture must not itself be assessed and interpreted in the light of some tradition or other authority.

> A true evangelical [he writes] begins not with the Prayer-book and Articles, but with the Holy Scriptures. And a reforming evangelical should prove his Protestant sincerity by adopting modern historical principles of Bible-criticism.[142]

Thirdly, appeal was made to the fact that the Critical method represented the application to Scripture of just those same historical methods by which all historical documents are scrutinised and assessed. This claim many Conservatives disputed, arguing that the Critical Biblical method was in fact bad historical criticism. But Peake speaks for his colleagues and predecessors when he strenuously asserts that:

> critical method is not something which has been invented to discredit the Bible, but it is the universally accepted method

of inquiry applied to literary or historical problems.[143]

Fourthly, and by extension, it was argued that since, specifically, the Biblical history is ancient history, it should be studied as other ancient history is studied. As we have seen, the revival in classical learning and the critical evaluation of classical sources spilled over into the Biblical field, such that Stanley could write that the problems which have 'obscured the history of Greece and Rome' have obscured also the Jewish history.[144] Most of the Old Testament Critics had behind them a classical education, and it was inevitable that they should see the Biblical documents in the light of the new methods of classical study. With the discovery of mythical and legendary material from the ancient near-east in the closing decades of the century, closer parallels were seen with the Biblical material, and certain conclusions inevitably drawn. The Critics called upon classical and near-eastern sources as witness to the validity of their methods.

(iii) The New Approach to Knowledge

It has already been shown that the Critics described their activity as 'new', 'fresh', 'advanced', and 'modern', allying it implicitly with the progressive and indeed revolutionary intellectual movements of the times. Yet this alliance was explicated too. They spoke of 'the renovating process which is going on in all other regions of thought',[145] 'new modes of thought, more searching methods of literary and historical investigation, fresh discoveries in archaeology';[146] and argued that it was self-evident that Biblical scholarship, as a scholarly discipline, could not 'be isolated from the influence of contemporary methods of study and modes of thought'.[147]

Driver attributes the rise of Critical scholarship to 'the same spirit of scientific study and research which has inspired new life into so many other departments of knowledge'.[148] Consequently, those who refuse to accept the conclusions of this study but who do not deny the legitimacy of 'the ordinary principles by which history is judged and evidence estimated' must be motivated by extrinsic factors. Surely, he argues,

> the history of astronomy, geology, and, more recently, biology, supplies a warning that the conclusions which satisfy the common unbiassed and unsophisticated reason of mankind prevail in the end.[149]

Farrar, in a similar spirit, writes his History of Interpretation[150] as 'a history of the dawning light and of the broadening day'.[151] The exegesis and interpretative methods of former generations were the product of 'the ages of an all but universal ignorance'.[152] Modern methods must therefore be extended to the study of Scripture.[153]

(iv) The Apologetic Value of Criticism

A final argument, or group of arguments, deployed by the Critics to commend their methods, is apologetic in interest. It points to the advantages to be had from no longer having to defend the Bible along the lines of the traditional reading of it, and to the relief at being able to jettison the whole apologetic framework which has become increasingly embarrassing in the trying times of the later nineteenth century. Bruce, for instance, writes:

> The believing critic cannot afford to carry the load of school theology into the conflicts of the nineteenth century, but must 'strip to the symbols' for a conflict with rationalism and materialism.[154]

The hostile criticism of secularists can be met only by abandoning the indefensible traditional idea of the Bible and adopting the new one, 'such as will at once put a new face on their difficulties, scientific, historical, and, above all, moral'.[155] A great effort is required, according to Cheyne, whereby the church might divest itself of all these embarrassments. Otherwise, 'in any serious debate with thoughtful ... men ... the Christian advocate is at a great disadvantage'. Yet not simply for intellectuals is he concerned. Without such a change in direction by the church, 'the prospects of even the simplest historic Christianity among working men as a class seem to me gloomy indeed'.[156] Adam Smith tells how for the same cause 'immense numbers of honest hearts' have 'cast off religion altogether'.[157] The traditionalists' Bible is an albatross around the neck of the church. Men see the Christian faith all of a piece, with:

> the existence and love of God Himself ... bound up with the literal acceptance of the whole Bible ... so that whenever

> their minds awoke to the irreconcileable discrepancies of the Old Testament text, or their consciences to the narrow and violent temper of its customs, they could no longer believe in it,

and the entire edifice of their faith in God would collapse.[158]

Adam Smith and the others saw the fundamental problems raised by Scripture as historical and ethical. The traditional apologetic had endeavoured to harmonise historical difficulties, find purpose and philosophical justification for miracles, and seek to explain the logic of harsh Biblical laws and evil Biblical characters. By contrast, Farrar pronounces:

> If the Scriptures be holy and of divine authority, no deadlier disservice can be inflicted on them than the casuistical defence of conventional apology.[159]

The new apologetic comprises the two prongs of the Critical method: the literary analysis into sources, which would, in principle, explain historical difficulties; and the idea of development, which would resolve ethical problems by relieving the interpreter of having to defend primitive ethical codes and conduct. The resulting apologetic position, in an age particularly interested in historical questions and peculiarly sensitive to moral ones, was undoubtedly strong. At one blow the whole weight of contemporary criticism of the church's Bible could be diverted into disinterested study, in the outcome of which Christians had invested nothing. Peake can conclude:

> It is the writer's conviction that while a position injudiciously selected can be no longer held, the defenders of the Bible have been driven to ground from which they will not easily be dislodged.[160]

The final apologetic advantage which would accrue from Criticism would be the appeal of their open-ended and undogmatic view of the Bible, so much in tune with the spirit of the age, to those outside the faith, and indeed to waverers within. The examination of problems and received ideas without presuppositions and in the light of scientific study would commend itself widely, and especially to the young. The alternative could only be suspicion and unease on the part of healthy minds. In Jowett's epigram, 'Doubt comes in at the window when Inquiry is denied at the door.'[161]

4 Criticism and Inspiration

The Critics were not unaware that their method and its conclusions were fraught with implications for the Christian understanding of the inspiration of the Bible. While in the course of controversy they were at pains to minimise the significance of their theories for the faith as hitherto understood, when they paused to reflect upon their new understanding of the Bible they had readily to admit that it differed essentially from the old. Indeed, throughout the debate they proclaimed the realism and credibility of their method over against the artificial, rigid and ultimately incredible traditional conception. Yet, perhaps largely because the leading Critics were Biblical exegetes and not dogmaticians, only unusually did they sketch out a new view of inspiration that would incorporate the understanding of Scripture to which their Critical investigations had led them. It was left to theologians of the twentieth century - and in the British context the name of P.T. Forsyth stands out - to explore the possibilities of a doctrine that would unite a reverence for the authority of Scripture with the free run of Criticism.

Sanday was one scholar who set his hand to a comparison of old and new conceptions of inspiration. In his Bampton lectures for 1893 he could write from the vantage-point of the end of the major period of controversy, at a time when the gains of Criticism were being consolidated and its triumph was secure. Sanday viewed what had happened during the previous decades much as did the Conservatives: as the succession of one idea of inspiration by another - of the 'Traditional' by the 'Inductive or Critical'.[162] 'The Traditional theory', he wrote, 'needs little description.'

> Fifty years ago it may be said to have been the common belief of Christian men, at least in this country. It may have been held somewhat vaguely and indefinitely, and those who held it might, if pressed upon the subject, have made concessions which would have involved them in perplexities. But speaking broadly, the current view may be said to have been that the Bible as a whole and in all its parts was the Word of God, and as such that it was endowed with all the perfections of that Word.... all parts of it were equally authoritative, and in history as in doctrine it was exempt from error.... Some kinds of error might be admitted, ... but.... they would belong chiefly to the sphere of the text ... [and]

> when once [the true text] had been discovered it could not be otherwise than infallible.[163]

'Substantially' the same view had been held down the years of the church since the Christian Bible came into existence; and, before then, 'the same attributes were ascribed' to the Old Testament.[164]

Sanday acknowledges that:

> It is no doubt a great inversion of method when the Books of the two Testaments are interrogated without any assumption whatever beyond that of a Personal God who might be conceived as capable of putting Himself in communication with men.[165]

But he claims that, despite this 'great inversion of method', a 'real Divine inspiration' may be discerned in the Scriptures. Whereas in the old theory the function of inspiration was to ensure that the whole of Scripture partook fully of the revelatory Word of God, and was therefore infallible, in the new theory inspiration is a quality of the men and their writings present to different degrees, and therefore effecting the revelation of God either more, or less. Thus:

> whereas there are on the one hand books, like the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, which are throughout the work of men strongly inspired and gifted ... there are on the other hand books, like Ecclesiastes, which, though grave and sincere and up to a certain point really religious, have not strength of faith enough to master the problems with which they wrestle; or, again, like the Books of Chronicles, where there is a genuine warmth of religious feeling, but imperfect historical method and defective sense of historical accuracy.... In other words, there are some books in which the Divine element is at the <u>maximum</u> and others in which it is at the <u>minimum</u>.[166]

And Sanday later concludes:

> on the inductive view inspiration is not inherent in the Bible as such, but is present in different books and parts of books in different degrees. More particularly on this view - and here is the point of greatest divergence - it belongs to the Historical Books rather as conveying a religious lesson than as histories, rather as interpreting than as narrating plain matters of fact. The crucial issue is that in this last respect they do not seem to be exempted from possibilities of error.[167]

That is to say, a wedge is driven, in the new view, between the idea of inspiration and that of infallibility. Not only is the former present in different proportions in the different books of Scripture, but even where it is manifestly present it does not obviate the possibility of historical error.

Other Critical writers adopt substantially the same position. Cheyne, for instance, recognises that Criticism must defend itself from the charge, 'Does not modern criticism actually claim to have refuted the fundamental facts of the Bible history?'[168] He argues in response that, while Scripture may contain inaccuracies and unhistorical statements, all that is essential for the Christian (and, conversely, for inspiration), is that the general drift of Biblical history should be reliable, in its portrayal of God's choice of and dealings with Israel, 'interposing at various times to teach, to chastise, and to deliver it! It is not necessary', he adds, 'to prove that all such interpositions are in the strictest sense historical.'[169] Nonetheless, the Critics admit that, for historical investigation to be real, its conclusions must be open; they 'cannot be barred by the dates or narratives of Scripture' (Jowett);[170] we must 'expose the truth of our religion to the perils of historical research' (Peake).[171] And such inquiry, according to Peake,

> has obvious risks. If it be free, and any other type of investigation is worthless, then it must have an open mind with reference to its possible results.[172]

The Critics draw attention to the positive side of Criticism's conclusions. Adam Smith, for example, points to the great amount of Old Testament material which Criticism has established as contemporary, or nearly so, with the events it describes. Here, 'the preacher may be as sure he is dealing with facts as his predecessors of a less critical age'.[173] Yet what of, say, the Patriarchal narratives, where 'it is impossible to be sure of more than that they contain a substratum of actual personal history'? The value of inspiration is undiminished, for we must remember that 'the sacred writers aimed at something higher than the bare reproduction of primitive history'. They read back into the remote past their present experience of God, imaginatively filling out the characters. The resulting narratives are as edifying to the Christian as they would be were they literally true.[174] So while, on the one hand, the Critical scholars shared a confidence that in outline the history to which the Old Testament witnesses is true, the portions which are erroneous nonetheless partake of inspiration and are of theological and spiritual value in the

picture they give of their writers' experience of God. But:

> it cannot be said that the writing of history as practised by the Hebrews required, or that as a matter of fact it shows, signs of supernatural intervention.[175]

Yet in what, precisely, does inspiration consist? The commonest statement made by the Critical writers on the subject is that they cannot, or will not, attempt a definition.[176] They frequently point to the excesses of some earlier writers, whose imaginative theorising was of doubtful value. They are not slow to say what they do not mean by the term, however, and much time is expended upon the traditional theory which they consider discredited. It is frequently described with less kindness (and indeed accuracy) than Sanday employs, and is labelled variously 'deductive', 'a priori', 'mechanical', 'verbal', and 'dictational'. Driver, for instance, characterises it thus:

> The affirmations of Scripture of all kinds, whether of spiritual doctrine or duty, or of physical or historical fact, or of psychological or philosophical principle, are without any error when the ipsissima verba of the original autographs are ascertained and interpreted in their natural and intended sense.[177]

Farrar attacks the Conservative idea virulently, suggesting that it originated in the post-Reformation need for an 'oracle' to take the place of the Pope:

> They made the Holy Scriptures such an oracle, but they made the oracle answer them according to their own idols. They substituted for its interpretation their own ready-made theology. They assumed that the Bible formed a homogeneous, self-interpreting, and verbally-dictated whole, and that the inferences drawn from it by dialectics and compacted into a technical system were as certain and as sacred as itself.... It was based, not on exact principles, but on vague assertions which floated in the air.[178]

'What is required', Driver demands, in place of so mistaken a conception, 'is a theory to which the facts will form no exception and no difficulty.'[179] In his famous essay Jowett had defined inspiration in these terms: 'That idea of Scripture which we gather from the knowledge of it.'[180] But it is a problem to know where to tread beyond such a generalisation, and the failure of the Critics to formulate an effective and cogent alternative to the traditional conception is nowhere better evidenced than in Driver's own attempt to define inspiration, the most formal such attempt that the literature contains. He writes:

> By inspiration, I suppose we may understand a Divine afflatus which, without superseding or suppressing the human faculties, but rather using them as its instruments, and so conferring upon Scripture its remarkable manifoldness and variety, enabled holy men of old to apprehend, and declare in different degrees and in accordance with the needs and circumstances of particular ages or occasions, the mind and purpose of God.[181]

It is hard to see how any Christian, Conservative or Critic, could take exception to so innocuous a statement! But it points up clearly the model of inspiration with which the Critics worked, and it was a prophetic model. Sanday, for instance, explicitly adheres to such an understanding of inspiration proper. It is the fact that the prophets of Israel were 'to a large extent' its historians also that gives significance to the historical books.

> But it did not follow that the same confidence and certainty of affirmation which attended the prophet speaking prophetically, also attended him as a writer of history. As to that we may only judge by a study of the facts. But the methods pursued in the writing of history were wholly different from those by which at some particular moral crisis the prophet became an organ for conveying the Divine Will.[182]

That is to say, the prophetic inspiration is most surely present 'at some moral crisis', and, by analogy, when we meet the prophet as a writer of history, 'it is only when he stops to moralize that his true prophetic character comes out'; but:

> even then he does not write under the special afflatus by which he delivered his message as prophet, but only with the help of reflexion on the principles of Divine action which by intermittent visitations were made known to him or other members of his order.[183]

It is understandable, but fundamentally mistaken, to 'bracket together' the different activities of the prophets (and the other authors of Scripture) as if they were all 'subject to precisely the same laws'. It is only when acting qua prophet, in the situation of moral crisis, that the divine guidance afforded the prophet approaches that level of fulness which the traditionalists have, wrongly, ascribed to all Scripture.

As for the rest of Scripture, a number of criteria are offered but not pursued by different Critics as helps in the distinguishing of different degrees of inspiration. One test is whether things stand 'on the same religious plane',[184] as we examine the 'depth and spirituality' of the writer's thoughts (Driver);[185] we must

'distinguish temporary, imperfect elements' (Kirkpatrick);[186] 'those parts of Scripture are most inspired which have most in them of Christ' (Cheyne).[187] At all events, inspiration is not a quality which affects the way we view and evaluate the text of Scripture, it is something which arises out of that text and makes itself known to us in the Critical study of it. Typically, in rejecting the Conservative argument from theopneustos in II Timothy 3:16, the Critics argue that since the word is a hapax legomenon, it is to be understood and defined solely in terms of the actual phenomenon of Scripture.[188] It adds no more to the discussion of Scripture to quote such a text than it does to say that it is 'inspired', since, in Jowett's abiding phrase, 'inspiration is that idea of Scripture which we gather from the knowledge of it'.[189] What the Critics replaced for the traditionalists' doctrine of inspiration was less an alternative doctrine (since, indeed, if a man does not define a term, it may be asked whether he means anything by it) than the Critical method of study per se.

One practical approach to the problem of how to discriminate within Scripture and how to conceive of the bounds of the work of the Spirit in inspiration was by means of a divine-human duality in the inspired writings. There was much talk of the 'human element' in Scripture, generally identified with what was temporally bound, or erroneous. The Critics candidly acknowledged that the proportion of this element was 'larger than had been supposed';[190] 'much larger ... than we should have anticipated';[191] indeed, 'larger, perhaps, than we are readily willing to admit';[192] to quote Sanday, Peake and Kirkpatrick respectively. Theologically, it is the presence of this 'element' that renders Scripture open to Criticism.[193] Confusion arose over the relation of these elements to one another, for while it was admitted that they were bonded together 'inseparably' (Driver)[194] and 'in indissoluble connexion' (Kirkpatrick),[195] much labour was expended to the end of distinguishing them, with error generally attributed to the human factor. For instance, Driver himself says of 'the difficulties sometimes historical, sometimes moral, which the Old Testament presents' that 'historical criticism shows that they belong to the human element in the Bible'.[196] 'Assiduous and comprehensive study' of Scripture may ascertain

the 'limits of ... operation' of the two elements.[197] The confusion in evidence here apparently stems from a double idea of what the 'divine-human duality' means. Does it refer merely to the revelatory function of Scripture as manifesting the divine through the human, or is it a way of speaking of the erroneous and fallen element of Scripture as 'human' to distinguish it from the perfection of all that is divine? This confusion is another sign of the difficulties experienced by the Critics in seeking to draw together 'believing' and 'Criticism', reverent use of Scripture and stringent historical questioning.

Inter-connected with the question of inspiration was that of revelation. 'The Bible reveals because it is inspired' had been the traditional conception. Critical uncertainty in re-stating a doctrine of inspiration was not mirrored in discussion of revelation, since they were better able here to move the focus of the doctrine away from Scripture itself. The direction in which the move was made is evident even in the form in which Adam Smith posed the great question faced by the Critical scholars: 'Can we still receive the Old Testament as the record of a genuine revelation from God?', he asks.[198] There could be no doubt that the methods and the results of the Critics had thrown into question the revelatory significance of Scripture as a whole.[199] The received notion of revelation - disparaged by some as a corruption of the historic Christian view, though undeniably that of the period immediately prior to the rise of Criticism[200] - could no longer be maintained in the face of the abandonment of the concept of an infallible Bible. It became necessary to come to a more limited idea of the scope of revelation and of its relation to Scripture. The key word employed by the Critics to link revelation and Scripture in this new fashion was the word 'record'. The Bible was the 'record of the Divine education of Israel' (Kirkpatrick),[201] and it contained 'the records of revelation' (Farrar)[202] or 'the record of a Divine Revelation' (Adam Smith).[203] A record, of course, could contain errors, like any other human record; and yet these errors, it was said, were not integral to the revelation itself (as they would have been necessarily, under the old equation of Scripture and revelation), so the pursuit of the Critical

task posed no threat to the revelation of God.

This was the essential element in the attempted reconstruction of the revelatory significance of the Bible. Other elements were related. There was much talk of the scope of revelation, with a consensus seeing its content not as facts of history, or even of doctrine and ethics, but as 'God Himself' brought into direct contact with man in history as the living, gracious and redeeming God.[204] The purpose of revelation is purely ethical and spiritual, and its content does not include (and here all were agreed, including those who did accept the revelation of doctrines) the facts of ancient history any more than those of science.[205] It is in deeds rather than in words that revelation finds its 'most congenial expression'.[206] Criticism is free to do its work without prejudice to revelation, since its concern is never with the 'fact' of revelation, always with the form, or mode, or course, or process.[207] There is an anterior act of self-disclosure, whether in the facts of history or in the prophetic consciousness, in which the Word of God is made known and to which Scripture in all its fallibility bears witness. The essential distinction between the one and the other both safeguards revelation itself from Critical enquiry, and, conversely, leaves Criticism to proceed untrammelled, as its documents always stand at one remove from the self-disclosure of God. They testify to it, but since they do not constitute it they may be freely studied as other human records are studied.

Such a concept of revelation was to form a vital element in most twentieth-century discussion of the subject. By focussing upon it the Critics succeeded to a degree in side-stepping the question of inspiration itself. We have already adverted to their difficulties in re-defining the doctrine of inspiration. We have suggested that in place of a new doctrine of inspiration they actually offered a new method of Scriptural study, since the old methods of study had been prescribed by the old theory of inspiration. In the closing paragraphs of his Bampton lectures on Inspiration, Sanday clearly delineates the nature of the Critical concern for Scripture, and its dilemma. Practically, the 'believing Critics' found themselves, while feeling the weight of Critical

argument, nonetheless believing that the main outlines of Biblical history and doctrine could be maintained and would remain credible. They had no wish to abandon their Christian faith; many, indeed, had abandoned or rejected a Conservative view of Scripture only with much heart-searching and not a little regret. But the old doctrine of inspiration, the erstwhile ground and support of their Christianity, had been swept away. Sanday acknowledges that he and those who think as he does have no 'rigid theory' to put in its place. They continue to use the Bible for religious and theological purposes, even though its history and perhaps more than its history have been called into question. But they will not accept the choice of 'all or nothing' that is posed by the traditionalists. Instead,

> they go back to the documents and look at them again; and they find that, admitting all that can be said as to mistakes both in the Scriptures themselves and in the early estimate of them, yet the former do not touch any of the essential features of Revelation and the latter does not need any great modification to bring it into accordance with the facts.[208]

They retain confidence that, in the Scripture, there are still:

> a number of concrete truths contained in written books on the subject of God and religion. And they are truths because these books are the work of inspired men, so that even through the printed page there speaks the Spirit of God.[209]

And he continues, and concludes, with sentiments that recall those of Coleridge speaking sixty years before:

> Such will cling to their Bible; they will clasp it all the more closely to their breasts, because there breathes there beneath it a genuine human life, the life of men who though illuminated from on high were yet of like passions with themselves. And if they note, how He who is the centre of this illumination, the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world, touched gently, or forbore to touch, some of the simpler features in the faith of His contemporaries, they will remember that it was written, 'Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.'[210]

IV

'ABSOLUTE, - FAULTLESS, - UNERRING, - SUPREME!'[1]
the Thesis of the Conservatives

Historical reactions, as we have by now learned to expect, never go back to the originals; they are syntheses of thesis and antithesis. Old affinities are revived, but in the light of intervening experience.

Basil Willey, More Nineteenth-Century Studies, p 139

The literary production of later nineteenth-century Conservative scholarship was, necessarily, a response to the Critical thought which had made so abrupt an entrance onto the British scene.[2] It is this factor which groups together the different writers we consider in this chapter. They are not, indeed, united otherwise, coming from different denominations and from Tractarian and Evangelical wings of the Church of England.[3] Equally, their motives for upholding and defending their view of the Bible were not all one. For High Churchmen, tradition per se and the views of the early church were vital factors: the church doctrine of Scripture must be upheld. For Evangelicals, the ultimate reason for maintaining the traditional view is that it is intrinsic to Scripture. Despite, however, their variety, most of the argument of these scholars touching on the question of Criticism is indistinguishable. To a considerable degree they joined as co-belligerents against the common foe.

Because the Conservative school developed in reaction to the Critical, its positive no less than its negative features were affected by the course of the debate. We shall, therefore, attempt to expound the Conservative view of Scripture and of Criticism from its necessarily defensive posture.

1 Introduction

The Conservative attitude to the attack of Criticism upon the traditional view of the Bible varied from the sanguine to the fearful.[4] Some, of course, had known for years what was coming. Pusey, for instance, had studied in Germany in his youth.[5] William Thomson, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol,

who edited and introduced one of the immediate replies to Essays and Reviews, did not appear unduly perturbed:

> The old difficulties and objections are revived: but they will meet in one way or another the old defeat. While the world lasts sceptical books will be written and answered, and the books, perhaps, and the answers alike forgotten. But the Rock of Ages shall stand unchangeable.[5]

But C.H. Waller, Principal of the London College of Divinity, recalls how in his student days at Oxford, between 1860 and 1863,

> the Essays and Reviews seemed to question the foundations of everything. The majority of orthodox preachers to whom we listened ... seemed like men recently aroused from a sound slumber by a shower of stones.... Only one man in Oxford appeared to understand the exact position, and how to hold his ground. That man was the Reverend John William Burgon.[6]

Burgon, with his stout defence of the Conservative view published as Inspiration and Interpretation in reply to Essays and Reviews, was looked to by many besides Waller as a rock of stability in an ocean of change.

It is important to realise that, whatever may actually have motivated Conservative scholars, they saw their task as not simply the preservation of a particular view of the Bible. By implication, they believed that more even than that was at issue, because the Bible lay at the heart of Christianity. This conviction, variously expressed, raised the stakes for which they believed they were playing. They could see how in the increasingly secular climate of their day Criticism had found a ready hearing, and they considered its sceptical principles ultimately destructive of the Christian faith. C.J. Ellicott, successor to Thomson in the see of Gloucester and Bristol and a leading Conservative scholar, prefaced his Old Testament Commentary for English Readers with these words:

> its object ... [is] to meet some of the deep needs of the present time, especially of that large, and - as we fear it must be said again -. increasing class of readers, who are conscious that chilling doubts have crept into the soul, and that modern criticism has seemed to them to make it doubtful whether Scripture is what it claims to be.[7]

And elsewhere he asks the question:

> Is it not the height of imprudence to make concessions which inevitably will only prove to be instalments of the ultimate surrender of the supernatural?[8]

A major problem which confronted Conservative apologists was the relative ease with which the traditional view of Scripture could be attacked, and the complexities involved in its defence. They maintained that, while this might appear as a disadvantage to their view, it was actually in the nature of the case easier to be destructive than to counter such criticism.[9] They were not, however, unaware that they faced an uphill struggle.

The suddenness with which the Critical storm broke on Britain was another significant feature of the debate. J.J. Lias could write in 1893 that:

> The slightest indication of a doubt in regard to the absolute infallibility of Scripture ... would, up to a very recent date, have been sufficient to place the doubter in the same category with the most pronounced opponents of the Christian faith.... [Now] we are ... exposed to the full forces of a reaction against what has been termed the 'Bibliolatry' of popular theology in this country.[10]

In fact, within twenty-five or thirty years of the publication of Essays and Reviews in 1860, the battle, as it affected scholarly opinion, had in principle been decided. It was to be rather longer before it percolated down to 'popular theology', to the average minister and teacher,[11] but the academic establishment was won over relatively speedily. Driver's succession of Pusey in the Regius Chair of Hebrew at Oxford in 1882 was symbolic. We should, of course, add that the Critical method has failed to convince, or indeed to reach, multitudes of lay people to this day.[12]

In the following pages we shall examine the Conservative apologetic under four heads: the defence offered against Critical charges, criticism of the Critics themselves, the doctrine of inspiration and its place in Conservative thought, and, finally, some discussion of the problems which the Conservatives recognised their own interpretative method faced.

2 'Lines of Defence'[13]

(i) The Right to Differ

Such was the alacrity with which younger scholars were won over to the new views that, with a few exceptions, Conservatives

found that their positions had been over-run before they could begin adequately to defend themselves. Increasingly, important academic appointments fell to men sympathetic with the Critical school; and the claim that the Critics had made all along, that theirs was the only serious academic option, began to take on verisimilitude. That claim, however, was challenged.

At a conference in Oxford as late as 1902 a distinguished series of scholars joined to defend the Conservative position.[14] One of their number, J.J. Lias, vigorously denounced what he termed the 'hyper-papal dogmatism' of the Critical school:

> The oracle has spoken; the world must submit. There is no inclination to treat those who cannot accept the position of the followers of Wellhausen in a brotherly spirit as men engaged, in common with themselves, in the solution of a difficult and intricate question. No! ... we are told, ex cathedra, that 'scholars are agreed,' and the inference is easy to draw, that those who do not agree are not scholars.... It is the custom to ignore the arguments of those who have attacked the new criticism.[15]

Against this backcloth the claim was repeatedly made by Conservatives that they were not simply an unlearned school with no pretensions to scholarship. C.H.H. Wright, a noted Hebraist who had been Bampton lecturer in 1878,[16] protests:

> we do object ... in reviews to the bias exhibited in favour of modern criticism by men who can have taken no real pains to weigh the arguments on both sides, but who think that the views put forth by critics occupying University chairs must needs be correct.[17]

E.H. Dewart not inaccurately sums up the Conservative contention:

> The critical contest is not, as is often assumed, between 'scholars' ... and unlearned 'traditionalists' who blindly cling to the beliefs of the past ...; but between scholars who have adopted the evolutional theory of the origin of the Old Testament, and equally learned biblical scholars who refuse to accept ... this 'Higher Criticism'.[18]

Since, however, leading academic posts were undeniably occupied by scholars of Critical persuasion, at least in the later 1880's and after, a secondary apologetic theme emerges in Conservative writers to the effect that such men need not be the best judges of the case. Perhaps the most striking examples are in the books of Sir Robert Anderson, Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and a distinguished Q.C., who drew on the analogy

of his courtroom experience to argue the poor judgement of 'expert' witnesses. The Hebraist should keep to his linguistic speciality, and not leave that narrow field to make generalisations about the literary character of the Bible. The expert witness, while accurate when answering questions, if allowed to make deductions from his knowledge to the case was notoriously unreliable. It was given to a jury, impartial laymen, to weigh evidence and pronounce a verdict.[19]

In a similar vein, Alfred Blomfield, prefacing his critique of Driver's Introduction, quotes a correspondent from China:

> The question at issue between the analytical and the 'traditional' account of the origin of the Old Testament Scriptures is not by any means a question which only learned Hebrew scholars can form an opinion upon. One of the most learned students of Chinese the present writer has known of was a man of absolutely no judgment. His collection of facts concerning the Chinese language, literature and cognate subjects was of the utmost value. The inferences he drew from his facts were often ludicrous.[20]

Such apologetic was called forth partly because the Critics laid much stress on their 'superior learning and high attainments in Philology'.[21] Robert Watts, Professor of Theology in the Presbyterian Theological College, Belfast, used a further analogy: 'The work of the linguist in its relation to Criticism is like the work of ... the quarryman to that of the architect.'[22] The teaching of Scripture as to its inspiration is as readily available to 'a believer, with the English Version in his hand' as is the Biblical teaching on any other subject.

Arguments such as these may have an appearance of special pleading, but behind them lies a point of substance well put by Robert Sinker, Librarian of Trinity College, Cambridge:

> [the Critical] arguments do not hinge (save in the very slightest degree) on delicate points of Hebrew scholarship, but are matters which any clear-headed educated man, scholar or not, can fully appreciate.[23]

To an extent the Critics had to acknowledge this, and indeed did so by implication in their persistent efforts to popularise their theories and appeal to the non-specialist directly. The overstatement evident in the final phrases of the quotation from Sinker was unhelpful, whilst the truth of the remainder of it

led to much writing on the part of men who, while not of the stuff of which Regius Professors are made, were competent in Hebrew and had a firm grasp of the positions with which they disagreed. Conservatives were surely justified in attacking the mystique of 'philology' and the 'all scholars agree', ipse dixit, approach to discussion of critical matters. But the initiative lay with their opponents, and as the century drew towards its close, they could see that they were on the losing side. Increasingly, arguments for the right of the 'amateur' against the 'professional' became necessary. One can well imagine that, had the positions been reversed (as to a degree they were earlier in the debate), the Critics would have defended themselves, and the Conservatives attacked, in the opposite rôles.

The debate over who had the right to a hearing tends to point up the almost secondary significance of the arguments themselves on matters of substance, and to draw attention to the absence of fundamental interaction between the two schools on the issues that divided them. This is something to which we shall return.[24]

(ii) Comparative Arguments

Having claimed their right to differ, Conservatives as well as Critics made use of arguments from comparison. They took the form, sometimes, of scholarly appreciations of parallels between the contested Biblical books and other parts of Scripture about which more was definitely known;[25] or they compared them with the literatures of cultures of the ancient near east, contemporary with the Biblical. The redoubtable orientalist A.H. Sayce, who came to espouse a generally Conservative position, made great play with this latter material. He contended that:

> While the Critic in his study at home has been demolishing the truth of the history with his pen, the excavator and the decipherer have been restoring it in the lands of the East.[26]

The methods of the Critics could not be applied to other ancient literatures known to us, and are carried on with the greatest of confidence despite (or perhaps because of) the scantiness of materials and

> the fact that Hebrew is a language not only foreign to [the Critic], but long extinct, and that its vocabulary and grammar

can never be fully known.[27]

From his authoritative position as Professor of Assyriology at Oxford, Sayce produced a series of works in support of the historicity of the Old Testament and against the analytical theories of the Critics.[28]

Conservative scholars disagreed with the Critical claim that the new methods of study merely applied to Scripture the analytical techniques in common use in historical study elsewhere.[29] F.E. Spencer, in his contribution to Lex Mosaica, claims that 'applied to other ancient and modern literatures' the methods of the Biblical Critics 'would result in general historical scepticism'.[30] Blomfield takes up Driver's statement that it

> cannot be doubted that the same conclusions, upon any neutral field of investigation, would have been accepted without hesitation by all concerned with the subject.

This assertion rests 'only on his own ipse dixit', and therefore:

> we may adhere to our view that the principles on which Dr. Driver has treated the 'Literature of the Old Testament' ..., if applied to any other literature, and to history with or evidenced by literature, would make both an unintelligible chaos.[31]

He instances the Book of Common Prayer:

> In this case we have ample materials for forming conclusions which may be trusted as to the origin and date of its various parts. We have ancient liturgies and mediaeval science books; we have the first and second books of Edward VI; the revisions of 1604 and 1661; changes introduced even in our own lifetime. We have, besides a mass of contemporary and illustrative documents: Acts of Parliament, proceedings of convocations and conferences, private letters and biographies.... But imagine the Prayer book to stand, as the old Testament stands, bare and naked of everything outside itself which could account for its origin.... In such a case is it probable, is it even conceivable, that critics ... would come within measurable distance of what we know to be the actual facts? ... is it not certain that any tradition as to the origin of the Prayer book, not obviously absurd and improbable, would be universally held sufficient to outweigh all the cobwebs which the critics might spin out of their own brains?[32]

The Conservatives, therefore, endeavoured to turn the Critical argument from comparison upon its head, both by calling on the 'monuments' for confirmation of the Biblical narrative and by questioning the applicability of the Critical method to other literature and history, ancient and modern. We shall return,

in more detail, to the Conservative approach to the question of 'criticism' as such.[33]

(iii) Criticism and the Nature of Scripture

The Critics considered that the fundamental reason why Conservatives held the positions they did was their mistaken understanding of the nature of the Bible, which necessarily precluded the acceptance of Critical conclusions. Many Conservatives openly admitted this as one element in their position, but they maintained also that the Critical consensus was incoherent even on its own terms. We shall return to this question below,[34] but it is appropriate here to anticipate briefly the chief line of defence marked out by Conservative scholars.

It is a mistake to see such an argument - as many Critics did - as the result of naïve confusion of Biblical authority and the need for human interpretation of that authority. In fact the Conservative thesis was put forward with a good deal of sophistication, and as we have suggested, by men of learning and scholarship. They did not believe themselves to be dismissing established facts in the interests of a sectarian theory, but rather that they were defending the prime, established fact of Christian theology against theories whose origins and whose great exponents were deeply imbued with 'rationalism' and anti-Christian bias. This belief lay behind all Conservative apologetic. Thus Bishop Ryle, the Evangelical leader, cautions:

> Let us beware of giving up any first principle in theology. Let us not give up the great principle of plenary verbal inspiration because of apparent difficulties.... We may rest assured that the difficulties which beset any other theory of inspiration are tenfold greater than any which beset our own.[35]

The reluctance of Critical scholars, which we have noted,[36] to give plain definitions to their new idea of inspiration, added credence to such an argument. For all the historical and other difficulties with which Conservatives were confronted, and which, increasingly, they acknowledged, they knew that the practical and theological difficulties of the Critically reconstructed Bible were enormous.[37] Ryle argues, before concluding in the words we have quoted, that the usefulness of the Bible for devotional, preaching and theological purposes is terribly undermined

by Criticism.'[38] For one thing, it tends 'to destroy a great part of the usefulness of the Bible as a source of comfort and instruction in private reading'.[39] Watts speaks of the principle at stake: 'To serve as a rule of faith and life the Scriptures must be infallible, and to be infallible they must be the word of God, and to be the word of God they must be Divinely inspired.'[40] The Conservatives maintained a view of the functional authority of the Bible, in the life of the church and of the individual believer, which required the Bible to be a certain type of book. The Critical Bible was not such a book, and therefore could not perform the function within the church which hitherto the Bible had fulfilled. The Critical analysis was no mere matter of interpretation; it overthrew the Reformation principle of Biblical authority.[41]

If such an argument appeared as mere special pleading that was out of harmony with the scientific spirit, a further argument was advanced. We look to the Bible, the Conservatives said, for authoritative teaching on every aspect of Christian belief; we should look to the Bible also for teaching about itself. The questions of revelation, inspiration and authority should be posed of the Scriptural writings, and in such texts as II Peter 1:21 and II Timothy 3:16 answers might be found to them. The Biblical writers must be permitted to testify to their own authority. Against the retort that such an argument was irreducibly circular and therefore unacceptable, the Conservative would respond: how else may a final authority in matters of religion be validated? Particular attention was given to the New Testament use of the Old, and, within the New Testament, to the teaching of Jesus Christ. Urquhart, for instances, writes:

> The doctrine of ... inspiration never stood higher than in the days of Jesus. What, then, did He say and do in regard to these views? ... For Christ-loving and Christ-fearing men much depends upon the answer.[42]

George Rawlinson, Camden Professor of Ancient History at Oxford, places the greatest weight upon that answer:

> There remains ... one witness which to all Christians transcends every other, whose lightest word is of vastly greater importance than the very weightiest evidence that can be gathered together from the utterances of mere men - the witness of our Lord

Jesus Christ."[43]

He describes it as a 'really overwhelming argument'."[44] H.E. Fox strongly states the conclusion that almost all Conservatives would have endorsed:

> if He [sc., Jesus Christ] is what He claimed to be, the ultimate revelation of God; if He is what His first followers believed and declared Him to be, Maker and Upholder of all things; if He is what the common creed of Christendom for nineteen centuries has held Him to be, the Saviour and Judge of all men, - then undoubtedly we have in Him an Arbiter whose decision upon all questions of moral and spiritual things, not least in the character of His own and our sacred books, must be final."[45]

The teaching of Jesus Christ, upon examination, proves to agree with the traditional views of His day on 'critical' questions, and therefore renders the Critical method and its conclusions unacceptable.

Needless to say, the proponents of the case did not believe that it would impress thorough-going 'rationalists', to whom the opinions of Jesus Christ were of no religious significance; but they knew that the mainstream of British Criticism was pious and proclaimed its Christian commitment. They noted the 'evident sincerity and reverent tone'[46] of the writings of the believing Critics, and appealed to their piety and their Christian conscience. As it happened they sometimes hit the mark, and Critics who considered it needless to answer the Conservatives on literary and historical questions felt compelled to face the evidence being led from the Son of God.

(iv) Disclaimers

A fourth defence thrown up by Conservative scholars comprised the disclaiming of indefensible beliefs attributed to them. To a certain extent these positions had actually been held by an earlier generation from whom they wished to distance themselves in the light of new evidence and new ways of thinking."[47] But principally they were not abandoning earlier positions so much as detaching themselves from some of the straw men set up by their more vigorous opponents. The dividing line between the two categories is not, of course, quite distinct.

There was no charge more frequently levelled at Conservative

scholars than that of holding a theory of the inspiration of Scripture described as that of 'mechanical dictation'.[48] Conservatives were alleged to neglect the 'human element' in the composition of Scripture, believing the writers to have acted simply as amanuenses of the Divine Spirit. The inspired writings had been dictated, and the individual personality of the human authors had not entered at all into their composition. Critics argued that this view was, upon the reading of Scripture, patently mistaken; and that therefore the conservative thesis was incorrect.

In fact the Conservatives eschewed any such understanding of inspiration, and persistently maintained that they had no 'theory' of inspiration, in the sense of the mode of inspiration, at all. One wrote that he would as soon have a 'theory' of providence and freewill.[49] They were concerned not with the mode employed, but with the result achieved. They recognised that the instrument of inspiration was normally the personality of historical individual writers, but they did not regard the use of such instruments as incompatible with the achievement of an infallible product.[50] In that sense the dictation analogy might be accurately applied: the Scriptures as written were the infallible Word of God, just as if He had dictated them. But that is not a mechanical, but, in the vocabulary of the day, a 'dynamical' conception: it is one which allows, subjectively, full play to the personality and character of the human writer, while, objectively, permitting the sovereign providence of God to determine what it is that the writer produces.

This leads us on to a related issue, the character of Scripture itself. Conservatives were accused of holding to a rigid and unhistorical idea of the Bible which failed to do justice to its evident variety and pluriformity. While that was undoubtedly true of the pre-Critical orthodoxy, the Conservatives endeavoured to share the revived understanding of the historical nature of Scripture, but not to the degree of accepting an essentially diverse character for the different books. On the contrary, in his Bampton lecture for 1864 T.D. Bernard could describe the Bible as 'consisting ... of numerous and various writings, which

taken separately, are visibly occasional, but, taken collectively, are fundamentally systematic'.[51] Scripture requires detailed study in its apparent diversity before its fundamental unity may be perceived. In Ellicott's words:

> half of the misconceptions, and perverse systems of interpretation which have darkened the light of God's Holy Word may be traced up to a neglect ... of the multiform character of Holy Scripture, and of the 'divers portions' and 'divers manners' in which God has vouchsafed to speak through His appointed media to the children of men.[52]

Ellicott does not fight shy of the variety and historicality of the books of Scripture:

> What can be more patent ... than this - that we have in the Old Testament a literature extending over at least 1100 years, and including History, Poetry, Ethics, and Prophecy, each department requiring its own particular form of preparatory study.... Nor can it be less clear, in reference to the New Testament, that though its contents do not extend over more than two generations, and its subject-divisions are obvious and familiar, the forms in which Christian doctrine is presented by the inspired writers have many differing features, and can never be properly appreciated without an independent study of the system consciously or unconsciously adopted by the individual writer.[53]

So the reader who would appreciate the real unity of Scripture must

> cultivate the habit of regarding the Old Testament and the New Testament as each the aggregate of the productions of independent writers, and in passing from the study of one writer to ... another make distinct preparation accordingly.[54]

The Conservatives saw no contradiction between their doctrine of inspiration and what they regarded as a full appreciation of the 'humanity' of the Biblical documents.

A final, and related, disclaimer concerned the integrity of the text and the associated question of the composition of the canon. It was sometimes suggested that the consistent Conservative would believe in the inerrancy, not simply of the autographs of Scripture, but of the textus receptus or some other particular textual tradition, as the God Who infallibly inspired Scripture might be presumed to watch over its transmission. The evident variety of textual traditions, and the historical processes involved in the compiling of the canon, were held to undermine the concept of infallibilism. The Conservatives main-

tained that these were distinct questions and should not be confused. The compiling of the canon, as an historical phenomenon, worried them no more than the compiling of the books themselves: it was the outworking in history of the divine plan to bring about an infallible revelation. As regards the history of the text, Burgon graphically expounds his position:

> You will perhaps be told ... that quite fatal to this view of the question, is the state of the Text of Scripture: that no one can maintain that the words of Scripture are inspired, because no one can tell for certain what the words of Scripture are.... See you not that the state of the text of the Bible has no more to do with the Inspiration of the Bible than the stains on yonder windows have to do with the light of GOD's Sun? Let me illustrate ... by supposing the question raised whether Livy did or did not write the history which goes under his name. You (suppose) are persuaded that he did, - I, that he did not.... what if I were to go on to condemn your opinion as untenable, because of the corrupt state of Livy's text? Would you not reply that I mistook the question entirely: that you were speaking of the authorship of the work, - not about the fate of the copies![65]

3 The Assault on Criticism

The line between intellectual defence and attack is not easy to draw. We move now to consider what one volume of the period calls 'Criticism criticised', the counter-attack of Conservative scholarship on the Critical positions. Three elements may be discerned in this assault: first, one which runs throughout this chapter, the inappropriate nature of the Critical starting-point; then, the implications of the Critical conclusions for the Bible and Christianity; and, finally, the hidden and overt presuppositions of the Critical school.

(i) The Jowett Principle

As we have seen,[56] Benjamin Jowett's contribution to Essays and Reviews, though following on a century of (largely Continental) Criticism, was the first major British discussion of the rights of Criticism, and laid out persuasively the principles at stake in the debate. Burgon, writing shortly after the publication of the controversial volume, goes to the heart of the matter:

> Mr. Jowett's fundamental principle is expressed in the following

> precept: 'Interpret the Scripture like any other book' (p. 377). To this favourite tune ... he invariably reverts.[57]

But, as Burgon proceeds to indicate, there are two separate questions at issue. One of them relates to most of the examples and supporting argument which Jowett adduces, to the effect that certain schools of Biblical interpretation have abused Scripture in support of their own peculiar beliefs. In the sense that the Bible must be studied, in Burgon's words, 'with the same candour, and in the same unprejudiced spirit with which you approach any other famous book of high antiquity', the reader must

> acquaint [himself] at least as industriously with its method, and with its principle; employing and applying either, with at least equal fidelity, in its interpretation.[58]

But, he continues:

> It is clear that the paraphrase above hazarded does not express Mr. Jowett's principle. 'Interpret the Bible like any other book,' means with him something else.... He shows that his meaning is, Interpret the Bible like any other book, FOR it is like any other book.[59]

That is to say, the persuasive case which Jowett makes against the subjective interpretation of the Bible is used to support an interpretative method which, as Burgon sees it, is equally subjective:

> The gist of his observations, in every case, is one and the same, - namely, from à priori considerations to insinuate that the Bible is not essentially unlike any other book.[60]

In Burgon's eyes this is tantamount to a denial of inspiration, for, if the Bible is inspired,

> it differs from every other book in kind, stands among Books as the Incarnate WORD stood among Men - quite alone; notwithstanding that He spoke their language, shared their wants, and accommodated Himself to their manners.[61]

Since the Bible is, therefore, sui generis, it must be interpreted according to itself. Burgon takes up a statement of Jowett: 'Interpret Scripture from itself - like any other book about which we know almost nothing except what is derived from its pages.'[62] But while Jowett evidently means such a method to be qualified by his underlying assumption that the Bible must be understood by analogy with other literature, and that it is when it is thus studied that its distinctiveness will emerge, Burgon takes the quotation as an occasion for developing his

own doctrine of inspiration:

> in order to interpret the Bible, our aim must be to ascertain how the Bible interprets itself.... How then does Scripture interpret Scripture? That is the only question! for the answer to this question must be held to be decisive as to the other question which Mr. Jowett raises.... [is] the Bible to be interpreted as no other book is, or can be interpreted; and for the plain reason, that the inspired writers themselves (our LORD Himself at their head!) interpret it after an altogether extraordinary fashion.[63]

Consequently, our starting-point as interpreters of Scripture should not lie in the fact that, phenomenally, the Bible is a book like any other, but as the church has always viewed it, and as it confronts us, as an unique work, we must begin with its testimony to itself: its writers' use of other parts of Scripture, and especially the use made of the Old Testament by Jesus Christ Himself.

The concern of Burgon and the other Conservatives was not merely that Jowett's principle was inimical to a proper understanding of the Bible, and led to the acceptance of destructive theories, but more that, once applied, the principle would make itself valid: it would remove from the Bible all that was distinctive and unlike other books, and not on objective grounds of history or literature, but simply as an outworking on a presupposition. Approach the Bible as if it were like any other book and, far from finding it (as Jowett had maintained) to be unlike any other, all that is distinctive and unique will be driven away.[64]

We see here once again the emergence of method as the distinguishing mark of the different schools. There is and can be no disagreement between the Oxford scholars as to what the Bible is, since they both work with the same volume before them. Where they differ is that while Burgon insists on giving priority to the ideas of interpretation held by the Biblical writers themselves (about their own work and each other's), Jowett maintains that:

> the nature of inspiration can only be known from the examination of Scripture. There is no other source to which we can turn for information.... To the question, 'What is inspiration?' the first answer therefore is, 'That idea of Scripture which we gather from the knowledge of it.'[65]

That knowledge, of course, can be gained only from a study of the Bible 'like any other book', i.e., by study that is Critical.

(ii) The Implications of Criticism

British Critical writers made free use of their known piety as an argument for the compatibility of their studies with an essentially traditional Christianity.[66] Yet for all that, the sincerity and Christian commitment of their adversaries the Conservatives resolutely pointed out the implications which they believed Criticism to have for the faith, and, in particular, as we shall see below, its connexion with Continental 'rationalism'.[67]

> There is ... something infinitely touching in the anxiety with which men cling to old names after the reality they represent is gone, and shelter themselves under the shadow of a superstructure at the very time that their suicidal hands are hewing down the foundations on which it rests.[68]

Thus Edward Garbett, Bampton lecturer for 1867, gives voice to the Conservative concern. He continues:

> On what ground can [the Christian faith] rest, when the infallible Bible has been confessedly discarded, and with it the infallible Christ?[69]
>
> I believe that of all vain efforts ever made, the effort to retain religion after we have destroyed the doctrines of a distinctive Christianity, and undermined the authority of its credentials, would be one of the most vain.[70]

Three reasons were commonly advanced for this conclusion.

First, briefly, the question of the implications of Criticism for the New Testament. As we have seen, the British Critics generally exuded great optimism that the principles on which they had restructured the Old Testament would leave the New untouched, owing chiefly to the historical proximity of its writings and its events. Conservatives pointed out that the miraculous element, which had done so much (especially in German scholarship) to discredit the traditional view of the Old Testament was even more obviously present in the New.[71] Ellicott argues:

> say what we may, reason as we may choose, we shall never obliterate the conviction that there is such a close and organic connexion between the Old Testament and the New Testament, that whatever applies to the one, in regard of acceptance of the miraculous, is also applicable to the other....

> For the same spirit which has found irreconcileable difficulties with the supernatural element in the Old Testament, will ultimately challenge the evidence on which the Incarnation rests.[72]

Secondly, Conservatives drew attention to the morality the new understanding of the Old Testament imputed to its authors and compilers.[73] Whether or not they were referred to as 'pious frauds', it was evident that many of the Old Testament documents were the work of men who had given the impression that the events they described, or they themselves, or both, were other than they were. This, Conservatives argued, was both highly unlikely, given the moral character of the writings themselves, and, if true, subversive of the religious use of the documents themselves. Thus, on the first point, Lord Arthur Hervey:

> Literary or other fraud seems to me wholly incompatible with the tone of lofty monotheism which breathes through those sacred pages.... you will see that there is no choice, no middle way, between deliberate fiction of the most skilful kind, and a genuine document, being what it pretends to be.[74]

On the second point, Girdlestone expresses himself strongly:

> Should we comfort ourselves with the reflection that if the books are frauds, at any rate they are pious frauds? By no means.... An Honest man cannot sustain his soul on pious frauds. When he strikes out of his New Testament all references to the pious frauds of the Old, and all the theology which hangs upon them, he will find but little left with which to battle against evil and to face the day of death and that which is beyond.[75]

A third argument comes close to the heart of the problem. The discussions of the Critics tended to focus upon the untenable nature of the old ideas of inspiration, and carry the implication that, if they were abandoned, it would remain possible to hold a high view of the authority of the Bible. Conservatives contended that the matter was not so simple. James Orr, a Conservative who made various concessions to Criticism, could write:

> The problem of the Old Testament is simply one of how we are to regard the Bible. It is not merely, as the instinct of the humblest is quick enough to perceive, the dates and authorship of books that are in dispute in these critical theories: it is the whole question of the value of the Bible as an inspired and authoritative record of God's historical revelation to mankind.[76]

Why? Because the tendency of Criticism was 'to empty the Scrip-

tures of all their force and practical efficacy, by denying the historical character of the Biblical narrative'.[77] The issues of date and authorship on which the debate turned bore this inescapable implication.

> The main thing which makes the accurate determination of the date of the Pentateuch important, is the bearing which this has on its worth as a witness to facts,[78]

wrote one scholar. Questions of authorship per se might be unimportant, but if a book laid claim to particular authorship, and if - as is the case with much of the Pentateuch - that authorship were necessary for the book to be historically accurate, authorship could not be detached from credibility.[79] More than that, the whole course of Old Testament history is integrally related to its theology, and that in turn is the foundation for the New Testament.[80] The gravity of the issue at stake was insufficiently realised by many of those who had, unthinkingly, joined the Critical side.[81]

Conservatives, therefore, sounded an alarm: the Critical reconstruction involved far more than at first sight appeared. Issues of date and authorship, apparently technical matters of no theological significance, could not be separated from the wider questions of credibility involved in the historical narratives, and, ultimately, from the basis of New Testament theology and thereby of Christianity as a whole. The traditionalists were severely critical of those scholars who acted and wrote as if the Critical conclusions were of no adverse significance for the faith, concerning only matters of background detail and in contradiction only to an over-rigid theory of inspiration. They feared that the application of Critical principles to the Old Testament was but the first step in a broader assault, from within, upon Christianity as hitherto understood.

(iii) Critical Presuppositions

To a degree the fear of what Criticism ultimately implied stemmed from knowledge of the Critical movement in Continental Europe.[82] Conservatives held that Criticism not only had its historical foundations in 'rationalism' (about which, as a matter of history, there was little disagreement), but that it was

so shot through with the presuppositions of its first exponents as to be inseparable from their view of the world.

It was acknowledged that the British Critics were not, themselves, generally antagonistic to the supernatural element in Scripture, and that they consequently tended to have a higher view of the reliability of the Biblical history than did their Continental colleagues, while sharing their literary theories.[83] The tone in which such scholars as Driver wrote was 'throughout respectful, and even reverent'.[84] He evidences 'what may be called a reserve fund of substantial orthodoxy on the main points of the Christian faith, however inconsistent that position may logically be'.[85]

The Conservative critique of such a position, apart from suggesting its inconsistencies, focussed on both the teachers and the pupils of the scholars concerned. Fox comments:

> Not a few ... of the younger men are already regarding as obscurantist the very teachers from whom they received their first lessons.... The disciple of the new criticism, if not above his master, is often beyond him, having none of the restraints which long-formed habits of mind ... bring with them.[86]

But if the fruit was questionable, the roots could not be denied. Cave well phrased the Conservative feeling:

> in judging the validity of the arguments produced by the Developmental Theorists, the suspicion will enter that the real objection to the Pentateuch taken by these critics is objection to its contents - to its express revelation, its miracle, its many aspects of gracious Divine concern with human affairs....
>
> The Rationalists of the last century everywhere assumed that a historical document which relied upon miracle or prediction was ipso facto untrustworthy: is there not some initial objection to the supernatural at the foundation of modern criticism?[87]

The Critics' claim, of course, was that despite the undoubted bias of many of the Continental originators of Criticism against the supernatural, the theories to which they had been led had a validity of their own, dependent on literary and historical criteria unrelated to the supernatural question. Cave and his colleagues called this into question. He continues:

> Every student of human nature must have observed how readily, in this mysterious and complex world, large numbers of facts

> can always be made to ally themselves on the side of any hypothesis which momentarily commends itself.[88]

A bias against the supernatural would affect the view taken of the whole course of Old Testament religion, since the absence of supernatural revelation would require - and of course be given - an evolutionary framework of natural development to take its place. In turn, every aspect of Old Testament religion would need re-interpretation. Whereas, for the Christian, Lias writes:

> Having previously been convinced that ... revelation was effected by supernatural methods, the fact that miracles and prophecy are presupposed in the pages of Scripture does not create the slightest doubt.[89]

Whilst 'with opponents of the supernatural the opposite is the case'; 'a rooted disbelief in the possibility of miracles is at the bottom of all, or nearly all, of the Continental criticism of Scripture'.[90] For instance, on the question of the unity of Isaiah, Blomfield argues that the division of the book would be a matter of small importance were not the bias of the Critics against the possibility of Isaiah's having predicted the events presupposed in the later chapters so clearly a cornerstone of the Critical theory.[91] Scepticism of the historicity of much of the Biblical narrative was inseparable from scepticism of the miraculous element within it.[92] Conservatives repeatedly drew attention to the implications of disbelief in the miraculous in the Old Testament for the New. Furthermore, the New Testament interpretation of prophecy with regard to the coming and Person of Jesus Christ,[93] and the impressive testimony to miracle associated with Him,[94] pointed up the inconsistency of the partial Critical adoption of the anti-supernaturalism of Continental scholars.

Not simply did the Conservatives argue the incompatibility of bias against the supernatural with the British Critics' acknowledged position; they pursued their assumption that it constituted only a detail of the Continental Criticism which could be laid aside when the conclusions were imported. Orr, for example, argues at length that the anti-supernatural bias inevitably yields a false understanding of the text, and that it renders

conclusions drawn from it futile. In accusing Kuenen of 'a flagrant petitio principii', he asserts:

> to assume beforehand, in an enquiry which turns on this point, that the religion of Israel presents no features but such as are explicable out of natural causes ... is to prejudge the whole question.[95]

Such an approach rendered void the results of the Continental Criticism, so the wholesale adoption of its results by British supernaturalists was indefensible. On the contrary, the Christian approach to Biblical study, far from assuming the unbelieving principles of the age, should take sides over against it.

Wace writes:

> it is a common reproach against us that we enter on the discussion with a special interest in favour of the old faith. Of course we do; and it would be a shame to us if we did not. We have the same interest in believing in the truth of the Christian creed as all men have for believing in the truth of any cause with which the civilization they inherit is indissolubly bound up, for which those whom they love and admire best in the world have shed their blood, and with which the deepest and purest and most elevating of their feelings are united.[96]

The warm welcome accorded by the Critics to the Continental analytical theories, 'elaborated', in James Orr's words, 'in rationalistic workshops', could not be approved.[97] It was a betrayal of the supernatural faith which they claimed to uphold.[98]

4 The Point of Departure: Inspiration

Conservative scholars accused the Critics of defending their theories with literary and historical arguments when in fact their rationale lay in an anti-supernaturalist presupposition. In similar fashion, although more overtly, they themselves debated literary and historical issues while taking their point of departure elsewhere. They started not with the 'phenomena' of the text from which the Critics claimed to begin, but rather with an understanding of the nature of the text: the doctrine of inspiration.[99] If, for the Critics, the most evident fact about the Bible was that it was a book to be studied like any other, for the Conservatives it was that it 'presents such striking differences from any book that the world has ever seen'.[100] In a word, it was inspired; and for that reason, from the Conservative standpoint,

'the authorship of the Bible, and the mode of its production, constitute the great religious question of our day'.[101]

A great deal was written in defence and explication of the doctrine of inspiration, though for all the variety of terms and arguments used, the fundamental understanding of the doctrine varied little amongst those who held the traditional view. As we have noted, the Critics, while confessing their faith in the doctrine, rarely attempted to explain what they took it to mean.[102] To an extent this was true of the Conservatives, but what united them was their agreement on one thing: that it necessarily implied an authenticity and integrity in the canonical books, traditionally described as 'infallibility', which was ipso facto incompatible with the Critical analysis.

The ground had been marked out a generation before in the writings particularly of the Swiss Gaussen, translated into English and widely read.[103] Other writers such as William Lee (1854)[105] and James Bannerman (1865) had entered into discussion of the Critical viewpoint from the traditional position. From the literature of the generation that followed a picture may be built up of their successors' conception of Scripture which is remarkably homogeneous. We turn, first, to the reasons given by the Conservatives for holding to the tradition, and, secondly, to examine some of its implications.

(i) Arguments for Inspiration

There are three principal arguments commonly advanced by Conservatives to substantiate their view of the Bible.[105] To these should perhaps be added a 'religious' argument from the experience of Scripture, which is sometimes employed.[106]

First, we have the argument from Scripture. This is the classical formulation of the doctrine of inspiration which is circular in structure, moving from statements in the Bible to a doctrine about the Bible. The circularity is excused as inevitable in a final religious authority; and as reasonable in this particular case because all our other doctrine is also decided in this fashion.[107] Jowett had claimed that the New Testament contained no support for 'any of the higher or super-

natural views of Inspiration'.[108] This was vehemently denied. Particular passages, such as II Timothy 3:16, appear to make just such a claim.[109] Equally substantial is the indirect evidence provided by the use in the New Testament of passages from the Old.[110] In some instances, 'the whole force of the passage turns on a single word, once even on the use of the singular instead of the plural number'.[111] Further, individual writers frequently evince a confidence and authority which imply a conviction of their own inspiration. Thus:

> The Church discovers in Scripture the statements of the writers concerning the reality and nature and authority of their own inspiration.[112]

As Burgon concludes:

> The Bible is to be interpreted as no other book is, or can be interpreted; and for the plain reason, that the inspired Writers themselves, (our LORD Himself at their head!) interpret it after an altogether extraordinary fashion![113]

Secondly, and relatedly, the Conservatives argued from the view of Scripture attributed to Jesus Christ in the Gospels. Although, as the quotation from Burgon indicates, the two arguments could be fused together, in fact this one was distinct and widely used in the debate with the Critics, chiefly because it had an anchorage outside of the Scriptures themselves (at least in principle) and therefore was not tinged with circularity. It assumed the general reliability of the tradition of the sayings of Jesus in the New Testament, but this was not something questioned (at least in public) by the British Critical scholars, who remained very conservative in matters of New Testament criticism. It assumed also the authority of Jesus' teaching over the belief of the church today, and that in turn derived from a particular, traditional, Christology. Garbett asks:

> in what attitude stands the person of our Lord? Here we touch on topics which cannot be handled without the most profound reverence.... Our Lord distinctly pledged His own authority to the general authenticity of the Mosaic books.[114]

By the same token, His support was invoked for the Conservative stance on question of prophecy:

> if we can trust our records of His words and actions, which is a matter of probable evidence, it is certain that if He appealed to the witness of prophecy in the Old Testament, He did so to the testimony of a supernatural witness. And

> thus the existence of a supernatural element in the predictive prophecy of the Old Testament is assured to us on the authority of Christ."[11]

Clearly, this argument applied directly only to the Old Testament, and indeed within the Old Testament only to certain portions. But it could be extended, by analogy, and it furnished the Conservatives with a powerful apologetic weapon in support not simply of an undefined 'inspiration', but of one including factual trustworthiness, predictive prophecy, and the authenticity of literary traditions.

Thirdly, the argument was used that for the Bible to have authority for faith and practice, it must be completely reliable. As Garbett puts it:

> on what authority are we to distinguish the human portions of the Bible from the Divine? To decide on our own judgment what we shall acknowledge, and then to accept these selected portions as authoritative over the judgment which has itself decided upon them, and given them authority, is plainly contradictory."[12]

J.C. Ryle singles out three separate areas in which the Bible is, logically, useless if it contains errors. It cannot be 'a perfect rule of faith and practice', 'the value of the Bible as a weapon in controversy is greatly damaged, if not entirely taken away', and, in practical terms, this would have the effect of destroying

> the usefulness of the Bible as an instrument for public preaching and instruction.... Once let our hearers get hold of the idea that the writers of the Bible could make mistakes ... and they will care little for any reproofs, or exhortations, or remarks which are based on its words. 'How do you know,' they might ask us, 'that this word, about which you made such ado yesterday, was given by the Holy Ghost...?' For myself I could give no answer."[13]

The point which the Conservatives laboured was that even a generally reliable Bible, if each of its statements awaited the Critical judgement before we could accept them, could not serve as the supreme religious authority."[14] Burgon writes:

> Once admit the principle of fallibility into the inspired Word, and the whole becomes a bruised and rotten reed. If St. Paul a little, why not St. Paul much? If Moses in some places, why not in many?"[15]

From this there followed concern also for the religious use of the Bible. How could it be of comfort and reassurance to the

Christian if he knew that some of it was not to be believed?

> 'Here more, there less,' will not satisfy a parched and weary spirit, athirst for the water of life, and craving the shadow of the great Rock. What security can you offer me, that the promise which has sustained me so long occurs in the 'more,' and not in the 'less?'[120]

Thus briefly we may note the three arguments offered by the Conservatives for their view of inspiration. We shall return to them below.

(ii) What is Inspiration?

In arguing for the inspiration of Scripture, as is evident, the Conservatives were arguing also for a particular view of what inspiration meant - not as to its mode, but as to its effects. They complained that the Critics, who professed their belief in it, 'under a miserable attempt to explain it ... explained [it] away',[121] by saying, with Jowett, that the meaning of inspiration is 'that idea of Scripture which we gather from the knowledge of it'.[122] So we find careful definitions of inspiration in Conservative writers. Ellicott, for instance, confesses his belief that:

> the Holy Ghost was so breathed into the mind of the writer, so illumined his spirit and pervaded his thoughts, that, while nothing that individualized him as a man was taken away, everything that was necessary to enable him to declare Divine Truth in all its fulness was bestowed and superadded.[123]

He adds that, 'as consonant with this', the illumination of the Spirit specifically extended, first, to matters of doctrine, 'that the will and counsels of God should not be a matter of doubt, but of certain knowledge'; secondly, to matters of historical and other fact; and, thirdly, to:

> the choice of expressions, modes of speech, and perhaps occasionally even of words (the individuality of the writer being conserved), that so the subject-matter of revelation might be conveyed in the fittest and most appropriate language.[124]

The substance of the inspired message, Conservatives argued, was ultimately inseparable from its form. Some, with Ellicott, were cautious about committing themselves to the direct inspiration of the selection of every word; a few, such as Lias, were prepared to admit the possibility of the occasional error, in principle.[125] But in practice they worked with an error-less and verbally inspired

model of Scripture. Watts writes that:

> By Verbal Inspiration is meant such an agency of the Holy Spirit as rendered the sacred writers absolutely infallible in the communication of the Divine will to men, determining not only the substance ... but the form also of the message they were commissioned to deliver, and extending not simply to the ideas, ... but reaching the words in which the Revelation was conveyed.[126]

Since the Scriptures consist of words, it was argued, those words must be inspired if inspiration is to lie in Scripture at all: 'the inspiration must be the inspiration of the words, since the words, and the words alone, are written'.[127]

It would, however, be mistaken to conceive of such an end as the goal of inspiration; it is simply the means whereby inspiration achieves its intention of 'the infallible accuracy of the record'.[128] The function of Scripture, and therefore the need that inspiration must meet, is that of revelation: the conveyance of God's word from Himself to men. The vehicle must be reliable and able to transport that message untarnished to its destination. Only a Bible infallibly, verbally inspired could do that.

We have emphasised that Conservative scholars were at pains to disabuse their opponents of the idea that this view of inspiration required a mechanical or 'dictation' conception of the method of inspiration itself. Generally they remained agnostic with respect to the modus operandi of the Holy Spirit, since their concern was with the nature of the finished work. The plethora of 'theories' with which mainly earlier writers had exerted their ingenuity had tended to discredit such speculation.[129] To a degree there was agreement with the Critics that this was an area about which all our questions could not be answered:

> all such terms as 'mechanical' and 'dynamical' inspiration, and all the theories that have grown up round these epithets, - all such distinctions as inspirations of superintendence, inspirations of suggestion, and so forth, - all attempts to draw lines of demarcation between the inspiration of the books ... themselves and the inspiration of the authors ... may be most profitably dismissed from our thoughts.[130]

Yet there were definite parameters within which Conservatives were prepared to be agnostic. They saw the work of inspiration

in the context of the doctrine of providence, indeed as a special case of it. While resisting attempts to 'de-humanise' the writing of the Biblical books, they emphasised the thoroughness with which the humanity of the human authors had been divinely prepared for its task. Garbett, for instance, writes that God

> called [the writers] into existence, gave them their special faculties, ordained their place and circumstances, and then employed them, each to do his special part in that general scheme of a revelation the whole order and purpose of which was known to the mind of God alone. It is further evident that God provided for his chosen instruments a special training, alike intellectual, moral and religious.... In the history of St. Paul this adaptation of the early experience to his particular work subsequently entrusted to him, is remarkable. His early life, his associations, his education, his own religious struggles, his fanatical attachment to the law of his fathers, and the mode of his conversion, bear palpably upon them the signet of an over-ruling Providence.[131]

Not only, though, is providence active in the preparation of the Biblical writers, and their circumstances. In the actual composition of the sacred manuscripts the hand of the Spirit of God is also evident:

> Leaving in all their natural peculiarity the human elements of style and manner of thought and expression, or rather employing them as his fore-intended instruments, the Spirit of God yet so far concurred as to secure that the truth should be accurately conveyed and expressed just as God willed it to be expressed.[132]

(iii) The 'Human Element' and Error

This brings us to a particular problem. The understanding of inspiration we have discussed assumes that the real participation of the human authors of Scripture was possible while the end product of their labours remained without error. By contrast, the Critical assumption was that such a combination was impossible. The 'human element' was conceived as necessarily imperfect, such that it must introduce an element of erroneousness into the Bible.[133] Girdlestone states the position:

> We most of us feel ... that the writers of the Scriptures have been influenced or inspired to utter Divine truth; but after all, ... the words are human, and the idioms, the grammar, the illustrations, the modes of thought are human; so that the truth comes to us through an imperfect medium, and thus ... we must deduct a good deal because of the inadequacy of the instrument through which it is conveyed.[134]

Garbett approaches the matter differently:

> Much discussion has been raised as to the existence of a human element. The term itself has been employed with singular uncertainty and ambiguity of sense, and the belief in a plenary or verbal inspiration has been represented as necessarily involving the denial of its evidence.[135]

To meet this challenge to their position, and to explain their own understanding of the 'human element', Conservatives had recourse to the analogy between the nature of Scripture and the two-natures Christology of Chalcedon. Various heretical positions falling short of Chalcedonian orthodoxy were applied to different views of inspiration which fell short of the traditional![136] Waller writes:

> If the Bible is God's Word, it must have a distinct humanity and a distinct divinity, blended, but not confused, each remaining entire but acting concurrently, and both together present in every line.[137]

What then of error? The sinlessness of Christ parallels the inerrancy of Scripture. Inerrancy is as necessary as sinlessness, not because the divine has over-ridden the human and prevented it from being itself (non posse peccare), but rather because:

> The perfect Divine element is to be maintained on the one side, the perfect human element ... on the other; but the Divine is neither to absorb the human, nor is the human to derogate from the Divine.[138]

Therefore, we must

> maintain both elements, distinct and yet inseparable. The whole of Scripture is Divine, and the whole of Scripture is human; none the less Divine because it is human; none the less human because it is Divine.... The agent of the union is the same in both cases, even God the Holy Ghost.[139]

Yet how are we to imagine this concurrence of God and man? Garbett writes that both elements must be maintained complete, with what is essential on each side retained:

> all, without reserve, necessary to the existence of the authority of God on the one side, and the intelligent instrumentality of man upon the other.[140]

He sees no problem in such assimilation of the two natures.

When scholars use the phrase 'human element',

> necessarily involving ... the mistakes characteristic of secular compositions, their use involves not only ambiguity of language, but a fallacy of thought. Man is as clearly fallible as God is clearly infallible. But to be fallible, or capable of making mistakes, is not the same thing as making

> mistakes; the liability must not be confounded with the act. To be wrong is a separable accident, not an inseparable property of human nature. If it were of the essence of humanity, then man could never be right, but must be universally and invariably wrong; but man is sometimes right, sometimes wrong. Many human narratives are wholly true, a thing may be wholly human, and yet not untrue.... The fact that the Scriptures were written by human instruments does not prove the existence of mistakes in them; all it proves is, that in the absence of any other influence to prevent it, there might be mistakes in them. But this corrective influence is supplied by the Divine element; for to be right is an essential of Divine nature.[141]

The analogy of Christ therefore provided a control for Conservatives on the manner in which the divine and human characters of Scripture could be related, and in particular enabled them to parallel sinlessness and infallibility as alike incompatible with divine nature and compatible with human. A 'human element' posse non peccare was necessitated by the divine element in Incarnation and Scripture, and evidence alleged from the phenomena of the latter could no more be used to overthrow it than could the former be undermined by allegations from the Gospels calling in question the sinlessness of Christ.

(iv) Inspiration and Interpretation

'The duty of the faithful interpreter', writes Ellicott, 'is to set forth the apparent meaning of that which lies before him with all candour, breadth and simplicity; to be severely truthful, and to wait.'[142] The Conservative interpreter of Scripture is concerned first of all with its meaning - with the statements and what they appear to convey - and it is with the exposition of that meaning that his priority must lie. If what he deduces raises questions difficult to answer, his response is to wait. He is not to seek some solution to his difficulty at all costs. If the integrity of Scripture appears to be at issue, it must nonetheless be maintained. In due time, God will reveal what is now unknown. 'He that has sent the dream will, in His own good time, send the interpretation thereof.'[143]

The prior understanding of the reliability of Scripture to which the Conservative's belief in inspiration had led him will prevent the 'faithful interpreter' from pre-empting that

divine interpretation with another from elsewhere. The watchword, set at the head of Ellicott's Commentary, might have been set over all Conservative interpretation:

> that heavenly truth is present in every part and portion ... is the presumption and praejudicium under which the great work of the interpreter has been done throughout this Commentary.[144]

Ellicott realised that such a presupposition played a vital rôle in distinguishing Conservative and Critical study of Scripture:

> by an appeal to Scripture we and our opponents mean something utterly and entirely different. We mean a consideration of what Scripture says about itself: we find that they mean a stock-taking of its own errors and inaccuracies, of its antagonisms with science and its oppositions to history.... In a word, both sides have started from the first on widely different assumptions.[145]

This fact, perceptively discerned, takes us to the heart of the question. It led to the development by the two schools of methods which, although in flagrant contradiction in their conclusions, did not seriously interact with one another, because their premises were equally irreconcileable. The circles barely intersect.[146] For the Conservative, the doctrine of inspiration is not merely a 'great principle', but a 'first principle', of theology; it is therefore not to be given up in the face of 'apparent difficulties'.[147]

Such a conclusion is inevitable upon the assumption that the Bible is 'wholly unlike any other book', and therefore that it 'stands among Books as the Incarnate WORD stood among Men - quite alone'.[148] As a consequence, 'the powers of the mind, as well as the affections of the heart, should be prostrated before the Bible'.[149] That, in turn, implies something rarely touched upon directly, though often visible below the surface, in the Conservative writings. No doubt their respect for and personal friendships with some of the Critical scholars made them hesitant to speak thus, but it followed inseparably from their dire expectations of the effects of Criticism upon the Christian faith that this is no issue merely of academic disagreement. In Ellicott's words, 'the truest test of the reality of our love of God is the feeling of the soul towards the Word which reveals Him'.[150] The burden of this argument is that behind critical and doctrinal

differences, the Conservatives see there to lie an irreducibly religious factor which divides them from their opponents.

Conservatives, therefore, did not feel under any obligation to interpret Scripture with an eye to the questionings of their age, but considered that they were free to do their work from a position of faith. As Lias writes, in his volume on criticism:

> our inquiry proceeds on Christian principles.... [The sceptical] questions do not properly belong to the domain of Christian Biblical Criticism. They come under the head of Christian Evidences.[151]

'Christian Evidences' had provided a groundwork of understanding of Scripture which left the believer free to carry out his work of interpretation upon its basis. The Critics had confounded separate disciplines by pursuing their task from outside of the circle of faith.

In short, Conservatives understood the inspiration of Scripture to imply its freedom from error. They saw this taught in Scripture itself, they considered it required by the nature of the case as the Bible is our final religious authority. Scripture's authority rests upon its infallibility, so for the believer interpretation must be governed by belief in plenary inspiration.

5 Conservatism under Fire

We turn finally to survey some of the problems recognised by the Conservatives as arising out of their doctrine of Biblical inspiration. While they held that the evidence cited by Critics was not sufficient to justify the inferences drawn from it, many were aware of the significance of the data which new methods of study had brought to light, and were eager to re-state the traditional position in such a manner as to pre-empt the major Critical challenges.

(i) 'The Critics' Weapons'[152]

As has already been remarked;[153] it is to a degree misleading to speak of the 'Critical' school as if Conservatives were not 'critics' as well. Conservative scholars were inevitably involved in the process of literary and historical argumentation by virtue

of their opposition to Critical conclusions. The fact that they as a rule came to conclusions in harmony with the traditional positions they did not intend to imply a repudiation of all scholarly assessment as such. There was considerable difference of opinion amongst Conservatives as to whether they felt they were repudiating Critical conclusions merely, or the entire concept of the study of Scripture under the canons of historical criticism. But they agreed in engaging in debate with the Critics on their own terms, and they agreed also that fundamentally they held to the infallibility of the Bible not because it could be Critically established, but because for some prior reason they presupposed it in their Biblical study. In practical terms, therefore, they were in agreement, whatever their estimate of the ultimate significance and validity of historical study. But they expressed their position variously.

Cave, in his Congregational Union Lecture on inspiration, openly espouses an 'inductive' method involving '<u>higher criticism</u> in its two branches, viz., <u>historical criticism</u>, or criticism of the historical contents, and <u>literary criticism</u>, or criticism of the literary phenomena',[154] as the basis of his investigation, since it is only 'upon the proven veracity of the Old Testament that a doctrine of ... Inspiration can be built'.[155] But such criticism is to be distinguished from the methods of the Critics, as it must be 'by the same principles by which all literature is studied',[156] something which, the Conservatives claimed, the methods of the Critics palpably were not.[157] Similarly, James Robertson, while claiming to be 'not opposed to criticism', pleads for 'a criticism of a saner sort' which does not behave as an 'infallible science', but will admit its ignorance and treat the Biblical writers as if they were sensible, intelligent men.[158] Again, Wace introduces <u>Criticism Criticised</u> by declaring that its authors:

> have not ... been animated by the least hostility to criticism, but only by a reasoned opposition to alleged results of criticism, which they regard as indefensible on true critical principles.[159]

James Orr correctly sums up the position:

> no-one who studies the Old Testament in the light of modern

> knowledge can help being, to some extent, a 'Higher Critic', nor is it desirable that he should. The name has unfortunately come to be associated all but exclusively with a method yielding a certain class of results.[160]

Disparaging references to 'Higher Criticism' should be understood in the light of these statements.

Yet at the same time as recognising the validity of (and the need for) a criticism of Scripture unbiassed against the supernatural in Scripture, Conservative scholars did not abandon their prior commitment to inspiration and its implications for Biblical study.[161] Conservative avowals of the rights of a proper criticism must be kept in context as principally apologetic in aim, made in confidence that any legitimate criticism could only support their view of Scripture. The question is inevitably raised to what extent they would recognise the 'legitimacy' of a criticism which could not be reconciled with their view. The concept of a criticism employing the same principles as in the study of other ancient literatures, and yet able to accommodate the Conservative conclusions in respect of the supernatural element in the Bible, may seem hard to envisage, and indeed appear self-contradictory.

In principle, Conservative scholars - especially in the later years of the controversy - were happy to admit the validity of a criticism purged of naturalistic bias. In opposing 'Higher Criticism' root and branch they were in fact concerned with a particular critical school, such that many would have been very happy with a comparable 'criticism' to that of the Cambridge scholars in the field of New Testament.[162] The tension between such openness on the one hand, and their acceptance of infallibility as a dogmatic principle, remained unresolved.

(ii) Historical Problems in Scripture

'It is not pretended', wrote Lord Arthur Hervey, 'that there are no difficulties to be explained, or, maybe, to be left unexplained.'[163] The 'phenomena' which the Critics urged in support of their hypotheses were, to a limited extent, recognised by Conservatives as demanding explanation. There was considerable confidence that little would require, in Hervey's words, 'to be left unexplain-

ed'. Waller speaks for many of his colleagues when he can confess:

> It has been my daily business for two-and-twenty years to teach the facts of Scripture.... I have never yet seen contradiction established between two statements of Scripture.[164]

The word 'established' is, we may surmise, intended to bear a strong meaning, as few denied that apparent contradictions (and other similar difficulties) existed. Yet even in the case of 'historical difficulties in the Pentateuch, which, in the present condition of our knowledge, we have not the means of clearly reconciling',[165] the confidence in Scripture on dogmatic grounds sets all such problems in a context which lessens their significance. Garbett continues:

> there may be such a mass of preponderating and positive evidence on the other side, that, in the relative comparison, these difficulties may bear no more proportion than a single loose stone may bear to the solid mass of masonry that lies cemented to the living rock below, and the grand superstructure that towers above.[166]

That kind of comparison suggests that it was not simply that Conservatives were more given to harmonising and other explanatory methods of coping with prima facie difficulties in the Biblical text. The disjunction between the two methods of interpretation runs deeper. Burgon, once again, gives expression to the tendency of Conservative thought. There is, he writes:

> one great principle, and one only, which needs to be borne in mind for the effectual reconciliation of every discrepancy ... namely, that you should approach them in exactly the same spirit in which you approach any statement of any man of honour of your acquaintance.[167]

That is to say, the whole of the relationship with the speaker (whom Burgon refers to elsewhere as a friend) weighs the reception and evaluation of the evidence for and against what has been said. In such circumstances a story which is prima facie quite improbable will be readily, and sincerely, accepted by those who hold the speaker in great respect. The improbable is not the impossible, and evidence that appears unlikely may be accepted on the reasonable ground that it is inherently more likely to be truthful than that the speaker, known on other grounds to be a 'man of honour', should lie. Testimony in court to a man's character may greatly affect the way in which his evidence is received.[168] In other words, we find in the Conservatives a

strong 'presumption of innocence' in their weighing of evidence of error in the Bible:

> You are requested to observe, - for really you must admit, - that any possible solution of a difficulty, however improbable it may seem, any possible explanation of the story of a competent witness, is enough logically and morally to exempt a man from the imputation of an incorrect statement.[169]

What explanations, then were employed? Fundamentally two: first, that textual error was responsible. Deliberate or accidental mistakes on the part of transcribers might be the cause of 'omissions, repetitions, unauthorised additions, glosses, corruptions, and falsifications of the text'.[170] In particular, the difficult large and sometimes contradictory numbers (of which so much was made by Colenso[171]) could be attributed to this cause.[172] Secondly, what appeared to be in contradiction could be harmonised, on the supposition of a faithful text. Frequently what this would involve would be a minor difference of judgement as to whether, for instance, one author might be conceived to have written two statements apparently at variance. On occasion harmony required a particular reconstruction of historical circumstances, considered by the Critics inherently improbable. Burgon supplies a striking, but non-Biblical, example. He supposes that a court case in Australia turned upon the fact that three separate witnesses each claimed to have seen a particular man outside three different Oxford churches when they heard the church clock strike one o'clock. The judge might, while acknowledging 'substantial agreement and general conformity' between the witnesses, 'have the indecency openly to tax the three men ... with inexactitude in their statements'; whereas, 'you and I know perfectly well that the three clocks in question were, till lately, kept five minutes apart'. Thus, 'recognition of the limited state of our knowledge' of detailed circumstances underlying the Biblical narrative must be allowed full weight in preventing hasty conclusions that would impugn the veracity of the text'.[174]

In brief, then, we see the adumbration of the Conservative approach to prima facie historical difficulties, an approach which permits the upholding of 'plenary' inspiration by harmonistic interpretation. The Conservative confidence, resting on the

doctrine of inspiration, provided a context in which acknowledged 'difficulties' could be held not to imply recognition of error. On the contrary, such was the 'presumption of innocence' that it is hard to see what, if any, evidence would be allowed in practice to unseat the doctrine. The Conservative method is in fundamental conflict with that of the Critics, such that while they engage over the same evidence, their essential differences are to be found within their methods themselves. The various evaluations of evidence are illustrative of this methodological conflict rather than its cause.

(iii) Response to Literary Questions

It should not be concluded that Conservative scholars were untouched by the wave of new learning which bore along their Critical colleagues. The more reflective of their number responded with Edersheim that 'the traditional view errs by excess perhaps as much, though not with such fatal consequences, as the new view by deficiency'.[175] The 'intelligent conservative critic' will make his own deductions from the evidence.[176] Ellicott writes that he espouses the 'rectified Traditional view' of the Old Testament, rectified by the removal of elements unjustified by adequate evidence.[177]

Conservative scholars differed from one another in the extent to which they believed it necessary to make what the Critics inevitably regarded as concessions to their viewpoint. As regards the Pentateuch, the focus of most conflict, many Conservatives readily admitted that the 'pre-critical' view of a generation before had made gratuitous assumptions that were unnecessary to the Conservative view of Scripture. H.E. Clayton makes a balanced statement of the position:

> We ought to be prepared so to modify the traditional view of the Bible as to accept the best results of criticism, historical and literary, and the testimony of modern archaeological discovery, without committing ourselves to positions which must, in the end, lead to the endangering of the truth and authority of Holy Scripture.[178]

Some who saw themselves nonetheless as firmly within the Conservative camp were prepared to make significant admissions. C.H.H. Wright, for instance, while convinced that 'the main outlines of the work

are Mosaic', cannot escape the conclusion that the Pentateuch is nonetheless of 'composite character'.[179] Sinker will allow that:

> what Moses left behind him may have been a collection of separate pieces rather than a codified whole, and the present arrangement may have been the work of a subsequent editor.[180]

Girdlestone acknowledges that 'all students recognize' that the narratives of Genesis have been 'threaded together', though of course some hold that they are contemporary narratives and others that they are very far from contemporary. Similarly, the remainder of the Pentateuch 'most students hold' to be 'something of the nature of a compilation', in which some passages may be post--Mosaic insertions.[181]

At the same time, it should be noted that such admissions are guardedly made. While Hervey will acknowledge that 'who wrote the connecting narrative, who recorded in a book what Moses did and said, we are not told', he is emphatic in what he claims we <u>do</u> know:

> of large portions of the Pentateuch, speeches, songs, laws, prophecies, we are distinctly informed that they were written, or uttered, or both, by Moses.... they bear ... on their face, [that] the records on which the narrative is founded, and which are embedded in it, are contemporary records; they are absolutely true; they may be, they ought to be, implicitly trusted.[182]

What we may conclude is that, with certain exceptions, there was a readiness to disavow the traditional theory that, in this case, Moses was the author of the entire Pentateuch as a literary work, on the ground that this is something which is never claimed, directly or indirectly, in the text. The passage dealing with Moses' own death,[183] and numerous minor glosses ('as at this day', <u>&c.</u>) indicate to the believer in verbal, plenary inspiration that, while upholding the veracity of the account (including its attribution of particular sayings to Moses) he may remain open to evidence of editorial activity in the final text of the book. There was a concern to emphasise that the Conservative commitment was not to traditional views as such, but to such views as they flowed from the statements of Holy Scripture. The Conservative interest in matters of authorship and literary integri-

ty stemmed from the crucial questions of historicity with which they were connected.[184] Where there was no such connexion, and where the text of Scripture made no claims, merely traditional opinions, according to the 'rectified' view, bore no special weight.

(iv) Revelation and Morality

Once more we must advert briefly to a subject on which much more time could be spent.[185] It may be asked what relevance the moral problems of Scripture have to our discussion. Although not a formal element in the Critical analysis, morally embarrassing phenomena were important factors in the undermining of the traditional conception of Scriptural authority in the later nineteenth century, and thus strengthened the hand of those who sought a re-assessment along Critical lines. By the same token, Conservatives who defended the Old Testament from literary and historical criticism as inimical to its authority found themselves faced with the moral problems as well. There is not a strict line of demarcation here, since both Conservative and Critical scholars sought interpretative principles by which to understand Old Testament morality from a Christian standpoint. But it is striking that whereas Critics found it easy to write off apparent barbarism as real barbarism needing no apology, Conservatives felt it needful to defend the revelatory and inspired content of Scripture and to show how it might all be harmonised with the character of God.

A barrage of argument was raised to protect the Old Testament from the charge of immorality.[186] While it tended to follow certain patterns, it was not uniform, as we shall see below. The primary contention, not always stated but always lying behind the Conservative apologia, was that nineteenth-century morality had no claim to absolute status. In Girdlestone's terms, '<u>the Moral Consciousness is put out of place by being made the standard whereby Revelation is to be judged</u>'.[187] The man who refuses to 'believe a thing because it is written in a particular book, instead of believing the book to be true because [he] feel[s] that its contents are good'[188] has things upside down, since:

> if we analyze morality, we find that it means the will of the Author of our being. So that if we have proof that a certain thing is God's will, our conscience tells us it is moral.[189]

At the same time, writers were at pains to deny that merely because something was related in the Bible it had divine approval. On the contrary, many of the narratives:

> tell us plainly and simply what Noah, Lot, Abraham, David, and others, did and leave us to judge of their conduct by the Eternal Rules of righteousness laid down in Scripture.[190]

Such is the case even with a character like David, whom Scripture holds out as one of its heroes. The candour with which he is described testifies to the honesty of the Biblical narrative rather than casting doubt on its authority.[191] For there to be a moral 'problem' in Scripture, it must be exegetically plain what is the divine opinion.

With these two features noted by way of introduction, we may indicate four themes by means of which apologists sought to explain the logic of Old Testament morality.

First, the parts must be seen in the context of the whole. Newman Smyth gives as an example the gargoyles of a great Cathedral: isolate them from their context and misunderstanding of their designer and his purpose will follow.[192] In general terms this idea has its application in some concept of progressive revelation, as we shall see below. But it is important too in particular cases, if something of a statement of the obvious.[193] In addition, a broad context is set for interpretation by the analogy between the dealings of God in Scripture and in nature and history.[194]

Secondly, and as a special case of the above, we have the concept of holiness - the holiness of God, and the derived holiness of His people.[195] This factor provides a framework for Old Testament religion which is uncompromising, yet it is essential for proper understanding of it on its own terms. It places in a fresh light individual acts committed for its defence and preservation.

Thirdly, we have the judgement which Jesus Christ pronounces

on all Old Testament religion, in approving it and yet transcending it as well. The finality of Christ grants us access to an immediate knowledge of God's moral nature and will such as before His coming men did not possess. By this standard all that went before inevitably appears as less than perfect, as the Light of the World throws all around into shadow.[196]

Finally, stemming from these factors, we have a principle of progressive revelation as the interpretative key to Old Testament morality. Conservatives who took up this idea were at pains to claim its distinctiveness from evolutionary views of Old Testament religion, according to which Critics generally understood the development of both religious and ethical concepts. It was not that the religion of the Old Testament had grown and improved of its own accord until finally rising to the heights of Christianity in the New, or that Old Testament religion was even explicable in this fashion. The gradual self-revelation of God, while making known His mind and will only by degrees, had ever to keep faith with His nature and purpose. Nothing that is revealed or commanded, according to the Conservative consensus, can be ultimately wrong (and, therefore, sinful). In practical terms, this (somewhat cloudy) distinction was important, since it led the Conservatives to feel obliged to provide a defence of commands attributed to God and actions said to have His approval throughout Scripture, to whatever degree such a defence might lay under tribute cultural and social contexts. The Conservative could not abdicate this (traditional) apologetic duty, though he could argue the necessity of a step-by-step revelation in harmony with its educational aims, proceeding according to the ability and receptiveness of the subjects. There is 'plainly to be traced a Divine working by which the standard is persistently raised both in the individual and the nation'.[197] Thus in absolute terms the Mosaic law, for instance, might contain much that in the light of Christ is less than perfect, in the sense that it does not furnish us with a blue-print for the coming kingdom. Yet when applied to the society for which it was intended, 'it was perfect'; it instructed one nation how God desired it to live at that particular period.[198]

Various kinds of moral difficulty were found in the Old Testament. We do not have the space to discuss them in detail, especially as, within the broad outlines we have suggested, there were considerable differences of opinion amongst scholars of Conservative persuasion. It may nevertheless be instructive to instance one particular case which attracted a good deal of attention, the account of the killing of Sisera by Jael with a tent-peg.[199] We sample four writers who, as it happens, are found in three different positions. First, Hessey and Garbett, who condemn the deed, and do not believe that Deborah, in commending it, was inspired by God so to do. The fact that her song is included in Scripture bears no particular significance except that inspiration ensures that it accurately reflects what she said on the occasion.

> Judges may be granted to be inspired. But what does this guarantee...? Surely no more than that Jael certainly did the act, and that the sentiments uttered in the Song were certainly uttered.... The exultant words .... must be classed with the infirmities of character which are found in other Scripture personages.[200]

Hervey takes up an intermediate position which is somewhat confused. He notes that Deborah is a prophetess, and that while it might be true that the song is recorded merely as an incident in the history, as Hessey and Garbett aver, he is:

> inclined to believe that the explanation of the difficulty lies more in our ignorance of the exact mode of inspiration.... Deborah's heart may have been mightily moved by the Holy Spirit ... and yet it is conceivable that her own natural estimation of Jael's heroic act may have remained unchanged.[201]

By contrast, Burgon, accepting the inspiration of the song, defends Deborah's commendation of Jael. He begins by setting the context:

> if you choose to consider Jael as one who lured a weary and unsuspecting soldier into her tent, - shewed him hospitality, - and when he was asleep, murdered him in cold blood, you certainly cannot help recoiling from the inspired decision that, 'Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be.' But I take the liberty to say that this is quite the wrong way to read her story. You must begin it from the other end.
>
> GOD pronounces this woman blessed, and distinctly commends her for her deed. From this point you must start; remembering that no action CAN be immoral that GOD praises. The Divine sentence, instead of creating a difficulty, is ...

> exactly the thing which removes it. To weigh the story apart from this ... is like condemning the immorality of an executioner without caring to hear that he is but carrying out the sentence of the lawgiver.[202]

By contrast, the way to see Jael is as she who 'beheld in the slumbering captain at once the enemy of her own afflicted race, - and of GOD's oppressed people, - and above all of GOD Himself'.[203] In the context of her generation and her culture, Jael was faithfully maintaining the morality that God had revealed. The response of a Christian woman of today ought perhaps to be different; but, nevertheless, he concludes:

> I believe that, instead of suspecting the morality of the Bible in this instance, there is hardly an honest Christian among us, but cries out, on the contrary, - 'So let all Thine enemies perish, O LORD! But let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.'[204]

Burgon's approach to this difficult passage serves as a pattern of Conservative reasoning in the moral field, as well, indeed, as in the literary and historical. He chooses to approach the question, in his words, 'from the other end': his over-riding assumption is that God is the Author of the narrative, and since He cannot be mistaken what stands commended must be right.

> There can be no question of insoluble moral problems, since here as in the case of historical difficulties the method is such as will resolve (within the frame of reference of the Conservative interpreter) any given problem that may arise. Where Burgon and the others whom we have cited disagree in their treatment of this narrative is not in this matter of method. Given that it is clear from the text of Scripture that God is said to commend or command what takes place, there can be no question of the morality of the interpreter calling such ascription into question. On the contrary, his starting-point is what is written in the narrative of Scripture. Difficulties moral and historical will be resolved upon the assumption that that narrative is infallible.

V

'CHRISTUS COMPROBATOR':[1]
the Appeal to Christ

Conservatives felt it (at least) doubtful whether a man could be a loyal Christian and believe that Deuteronomy was not written by Moses and Daniel not written by Daniel.

O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church, ii, pp 74,5

We stand awe-struck at the issues of neo-criticism.

H.E. Fox, Our Lord and His Bible, p 89

In the debate about the Old Testament, it had long been recognised by traditionalists that the teaching of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament might be called upon for aid.[2] In the face of the rapid success of the Critical theories in Britain there were few Conservatives who did not make their appeal to Him.[3] We shall set out below their arguments and those of their opponents, to examine the inter-play of factors in this question, acknowledged as of potentially the greatest significance. In brief, Conservatives argued that just as in other matters the recorded teaching of Jesus Christ is accepted as final and infallible, so ought it also to be here. According to the Gospel accounts, He accepted traditional views of the historicity and authorship of the books of the Old Testament; such views therefore form part of the substance of the Christian faith, and are binding upon Christian believers. As a result, the Critical theories are discredited. The Critics, mostly men of piety who held to traditional categories of Christology, saw the force of the argument; but they maintained that though Jesus Christ referred to the Old Testament in these terms, his reference was no part of His 'teaching' as such, and should be assigned to His humanity, His ignorance, the fruit of His 'Kenosis', argumentum ad hominem, or some combination of these and related elements; in short, that though Jesus Christ appeared to adopt traditional beliefs in these matters, those beliefs are not binding upon Christians today.

As might be expected from the nature of the case, this argument was the occasion of some passion. J.E. McFadyen, an able disciple of Adam Smith who was no Conservative, could acknowledge that:

> Nothing has distressed and disappointed the opponents of the critical view of the Old Testament as [sic] its apparent disregard of the testimony of Christ. To them it seems that Christ has plainly and deliberately endorsed their views of the Old Testament, and implicitly condemned in advance the views of the critics.[4]

So they 'bring the Sacred Ark into the battle-field',[5] claiming that 'no man can consistently or logically believe Christ, and yet reject the Pentateuch';[6] an argument they consider 'more forceful and convincing than any or all the rest'.[7] A small minority, indeed, were hesitant about using such an argument.[8] It was widely recognised, though, that its appeal would be broad, particularly outside of the scholarly community, and that it was a simple argument ideally suited to the man without technical knowledge of Old Testament scholarship.[9] Ellicott, having developed 'critical' objections to the new view of the Old Testament, proceeds to his 'appeal to Christ' as a clinching argument.[10]

There was no disputing the preliminary position from which battle was joined. It was agreed on all hands that 'our acceptance of the Old Testament as a divine revelation is based upon the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ'.[11] In the words of a leading Critic, His authority could not be gainsaid, as indicating:

> the conviction that the history of Israel was a divinely ordered history, and the religion of Israel a divinely given revelation, leading up to the coming of Christ, and preparing for it in a wholly different way from the negative preparation which went on silently in the heathen world.[12]

'The authority of our Lord abundantly guarantees the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures.'[13] It is when questions are asked about the meaning and implications of the inspiration to which witness is thus given that unity breaks down. Conservatives eagerly pressed home the appeal to the authority of Christ; Critics did not.

We shall proceed to examine the Conservative argument stage by stage, and then to consider the contrary propositions of the Critics and the Conservative response to them.

Conservatives argued:

(i) that Jesus Christ is infallible in His teaching.

(ii) that Jesus Christ expressed His belief in the traditional ascriptions of authorship of the Old Testament books.

(iii) that Jesus Christ expressed belief in the historicity of the Old Testament narratives.

(iv) that (ii) and (iii) represent the 'teaching' of Jesus Christ.

(v) that, therefore, since this teaching is infallibly true, the Critical theories are in these particulars mistaken.

In response, the Critics urged some combination of the following:

(vi) that Jesus Christ did not express the views attributed to Him in (ii) and (iii).

(vii) that Jesus Christ was not infallible in His teaching.

(viii) that Jesus Christ expressed these views, but that such expression did not constitute 'teaching'.

(ix) that because of (vi), (vii) or (viii), the objection (v) does not stand.

1 The Conservative Argument

(i) That Jesus Christ is Infallible in His Teaching

The infallibility of the teaching of Jesus was seen as simply an implication of His final authority, and Conservatives considered that full authority integral to Christian belief. They were generally prepared to recognise the limitations on Jesus' knowledge necessarily imposed by incarnation, but not that such limitations might impugn the accuracy with which He exercised His teaching ministry. Porter, for instance, writes: 'The human mind of Jesus was always filled with wisdom to the utmost extent of its capacity.'[14] The fact that the capacity of His mind was limited did not affect its ability 'perfectly and infallibly to set forth every truth communicated to it'.[15] 'He spoke with infallible accuracy on every subject on which He spoke at all.'[16]

A number of particular reasons were adduced from the character of the portrait of Jesus painted in the New Testament. First,

as Girdlestone writes:

> He speaks as One Who knew far more than He taught. There was a store of truth held in reserve by Him. On some subjects He only gave glimpses.... He had many things to say which could not be endured at the time (John xvi. 12).[17]

Secondly, there is the style of Jesus' teaching. The Gospels specifically record that, unlike that of the Scribes, it was with full assurance of authority.

> There was nothing tentative, experimental, or hypothetical about His words. He spoke ex cathedrâ.... His yea was yea, and His nay nay. Hence the remarkable expression 'verily' (lit. Amen), so frequently introduced as a single word in the first three Gospels, and in a reiterated form in the fourth.[18]

By the same token, the simple claims of Christ for the authority of His teaching must be weighed: 'Here is One Who claims to be an infallible Teacher, and Who assumes an authority wholly different from that of His contemporaries.'[19] Not only is authority assumed and claimed, but, fourthly, a source is named for both the teaching and the authority with which it is delivered:

> His words come from the same source as His works. They are part of His Mission.... 'My teaching,' He says, 'is not Mine, but His that sent Me' (John vii. 16).... 'I have not spoken of (i.e. from) Myself, but the Father Which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak.... Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak' (xii. 49,50).[20]

Girdlestone concludes:

> It is clear from these passages that the Lord gave what He had received, and only what He had received.... The Lord throws the whole credit and responsibility of His words, as of His deeds, on His Father....
>
> We come to this conclusion, that the Lord's authority and infallibility as a Teacher are to be accounted for simply and solely on the ground of His original and inalienable relationship to His Father.... The indwelling of the Father in the Son, and the overruling presence of the Holy Spirit, would appear to cover the whole domain of Christ's teaching.[21]

To this series of arguments from the teaching and claims of Christ was added argument from His person. At its lowest, in Sinker's words, 'most ... readers, when they come to the ipsissima verba of Christ in the Gospels, feel that they are here on sacred ground'.[22] But there is, of course, more to be said. The apologists of tradition saw in the Critical theories a challenge to the heart of the doctrine of Christ. H.P. Liddon, in what

Chadwick has described as 'the finest Bampton lectures of the century' (The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, delivered in 1866), reflected profoundly upon the implications of Criticism for Christology, and Christology for Criticism. First, in His prophetic office, 'His utterances are infallible'.[23] More particularly, the divinity of Christ implies that 'His infallibility is not a gift, it is an original and necessary endowment of His higher Nature ... to charge Him with error is to deny that He is God'.[24] Indeed,

> So obvious an inference would only be disputed under circumstances ... such as ... those which have perplexed the Church of England during the last few years.... confess His Godhead, and the commonsense of men of the world will concur with the judgment of divines, in bidding you avoid the irrational as well as blasphemous concept of a fallible Deity.[25]

Not only so: if the principle of a Christ Who can err be accepted, 'how can we be sure that when He reveals the character of God, or the precepts of the new life ... He is really trustworthy?'[26] The 'all or nothing' argument which, as we have seen, was widely applied to the authority of Scripture as a whole by Conservatives, was brought to bear in particular upon the authority of Christ. Chadwick has characterised it thus: 'either you must believe all or you will end by not believing. Either you must believe all the Old Testament to be true or you cannot truly believe in Christ.'[27]

In short, it was maintained that the phenomena presented in the Gospel narratives and the Christology of the church unite in proclaiming Jesus Christ an infallible teacher.[28]

(ii) That Jesus expressed His Belief in the Traditional Ascriptions of Authorship of the Old Testament Books

There was an awareness on the part of some of the later Conservative writers of the period that argument from the Gospel narratives to the authenticity of Old Testament books might be accused of circularity. Fox, therefore, begins with 'the common agreement of all Christians' that:

> the four narratives of [Jesus'] life given in the New Testament are a true record of so much of His sayings and doings as they report. The Bishop of Birmingham, himself one of the new critics, ... has stated what perhaps would be the minimum

> allowed by the best English scholars ... 'the witness of the New Testament could be shown to have taken place so early that it might be strictly historical, that it fell within the conditions which they admitted admitted of thoroughly good history.' [29]

H.C.G. Moule expresses himself similarly:

> need I say that this is no argument in a circle? I ask the Bible to witness to the Bible; but I ask the Bible as literature, as history, to witness to the Bible as revelation.... As history, capable of verification, it shows me Jesus Christ ... proving Himself to be profoundly, ultimately, trustworthy. But this Jesus Christ, as presented in the same historical mirror, is seen laying one hand upon the Prophets and another upon the Apostles.[30]

With or without such an explicit appeal to history, Conservative scholars built up from the New Testament a picture of Jesus' attitude to the Old Testament books which is largely in harmony with that of the Jews of His day. In contrast to Sadducees, He evidently accepted all three divisons as Scripture. In contrast to rabbinical speculation, He afforded no support to theories placing Ezra the Scribe in a key position in the writing of the Old Testament. The more sober attributions of authorship, however, were evidently assumed, and from time to time explicated, in His teaching. Thus:

> our Lord exclaims,'Did not Moses give you the Law? and yet none of you keepeth the Law.' (Jn vii. 19) 'The Law ... is unquestionably a proper name, equivalent to the Hebrew Torah, that is, The Pentateuch. Christ's question is equivalent to a direct affirmation that Moses gave the Pentateuch, - that he was its author, in fact.[31]

Cave writes, 'our Lord stated that the Pentateuch was the work of Moses';[32] and Rawlinson:

> it cannot be doubted or denied that our Lord sanctioned and confirmed this entire belief.... He expressed Himself as would one who was convinced that the Pentateuch generally, and its legislative portion in particular, was given to the Jews in a written form by Moses.[33]

Many more such statements could be quoted.[34] It was, for instance, pointed out that in the teaching of Jesus 'the book most often quoted is Deuteronomy', the infamous fraus pia of the Critics,[35] and that Daniel, another focus of special controversy, was also frequently mentioned on the lips of our Lord.[36]

Fox draws attention to the fact that the real importance

of these references, distributed at random amongst the small selection of the teaching of Jesus which has been preserved for us, is the indication they reveal not merely of how He considered this book or that but of His understanding of the authenticity and historical facuality of all that in His day was regarded as Scripture.[37]

The clearest reference which appears in the teaching of Jesus to the authorship of a part of the Old Testament is to be found in Matthew 22:41-46, where Psalm 110 is cited. A great wash of ink flowed across this passage during the last decades of the nineteenth century, as here was - it appeared - not merely an allusion to traditions of authorship, but an argument, from Christ Himself, which required Davidic authorship of this psalm for its conclusion to stand. Fox, for instance, writes:

> It was impossible for our Lord to have used this reasoning ... if He had not believed -
> (a) That David had written the Psalm.
> (b) That he had done so under the direct inspiration of God.... If the new criticism is right ... then the whole of our Lord's argument would fall to the ground.[38]

We see, then, that Conservative scholars claimed support from Jesus Christ for the attributions of authorship which had been traditional in His day and remained so in their own. While argument over authorship might seem trivial, Conservatives consider-it linked closely with the matter of historicity, to which we now turn.[39]

(iii) That Jesus Christ expressed Belief in the Historicity of the Old Testament Narratives

'The Redeemer', writes Dewart, 'repeatedly refers to events and statements, recorded in the Pentateuch and the other books of the Old Testament, as veritable historical facts.'[40] Indeed, 'all the great events in the Pentateuch, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Deuteronomy ... are mentioned by our Lord, and authenticated as facts by Him.'[41] From this it may de deduced that, for Jesus Christ, 'the Old Testament is true history, a correct record', not simply where He makes specific reference to particular events, but, by extension, passim.[42]

Nonetheless, particular references are made, and, as Burgon

states in his own fashion, Jesus and His Apostles

> single out the very narratives which the imbecility of Man was most likely to stumble at, and employ them for such purposes ... that escape from them shall henceforth be altogether hopeless.[43]

Thus, for example, for story of Jonah, on which Critics had poured much scorn, was accorded historicity by Jesus. Ellicott writes:

> To take an extreme case; when our Lord refers, distinctly and explicitly (Matth. xii. 39,40), to 'the sign of the prophet Jonas,' have we any escape from one or two alternatives, either, (a), that in spite of all that has been urged to the contrary, and all the scarcely disguised contempt with which the history of Jonah has been treated by modern criticism ... the narrative is notwithstanding true and typical, and referred to our Lord as such; or (b) that it is fabulous, and that our Lord wittingly made use of a fabulous narrative to illustrate His Resurrection?[44]

A mass of instances was gathered to support this proposition, that Jesus, like His contemporaries, regarded prima facie narratives of incidents in the Old Testament as historical.

> Apparently, without the smallest doubt Jesus Christ cited the narratives and referred to the incidents of the Old Testament just as men quote from the veracious records of their own country.[45]

(iv) That (ii) and (iii) represent the 'Teaching' of Jesus Christ

A problem which we shall discuss in more depth as we consider the Critical response to this argument concerns the status of Jesus' references to matters of authorship and historicity. Conservative writers were at pains to demonstrate that they were integral elements in His teaching, not mere peripheral details of it; they could not be excised without serious loss. At the same time, it was recognised that Jesus did not set out directly to 'teach' a view of these matters, if only for the reason that He and His hearers held them as common currency. Ellicott coins the phrase 'virtual assertions'[46] for 'our inferences as to the teaching of our Lord on the nature and authority of the Old Testament'.[47] He intends, in his discussion that:

> the utmost care will be taken not to claim as virtual assertions what the words, critically examined, may not distinctly evince to be such. But if, on critical investigation, it seems beyond reasonable controversy that a virtual assertion is made, then that assertion, if we have every reason to believe that the words are correctly reported, - whether it relates

> to doctrine, ethics, or to questions relating to the authority or credibility of the Old Testament, - is certainly to be deemed conclusive and incontrovertible.[48]

That is to say, if Jesus' attitude to the Old Testament can be shown to be integral, and not merely incidental, to His teaching, then that attitude is in effect asserted and must be regarded as part of His teaching.

The Conservative contention was that, fairly evaluated, Jesus Christ's beliefs as set forth under (ii) and (iii) could be shown to be of fundamental significance, since the Old Testament formed the authority to which He appealed in His teaching ministry. We must therefore regard them as we regard all other elements in His teaching, and, as Christian believers, accept His validation of tradition.

(v) That, therefore, since this Teaching is Infallibly True, the Critical Theories are in these Particulars Mistaken

Once grant the infallibility of the teaching of Jesus, and the evidence is unavoidable that the Critical approach to questions of historicity and authorship is unacceptable. Not only does He lend support to particular, traditional, views, on individual books and narratives, but in so doing we find Him to adopt an attitude towards Old Testament Scripture as such which is in harmony with that of Conservative scholarship. There remains, indeed, considerable room for 'critical' manœuvre, on such questions as we have above suggested.[49] But on others, there can be no place for doubt or discussion. So, for instance, C.H.H. Wright, one of the most scholarly of British Conservatives, concludes the introduction to his Daniel and Its Critics as follows:

> We lay down our pen ... with the earnest hope that our contribution, such as it is, may help some to believe more firmly in the Divine oracles of the Old Testament, and may stir up others to contend more strenuously for the old faith delivered to the saints; although we may be condemned as not 'up to date' because we decline to admit that the Christianity of the Bible has yet to be created out of the ever-fluctuating opinions of critics who consider themselves wiser in their own departments than the Lord Jesus and His Apostles. We confess to be among those who deny the right of any men in Divine matters to go beyond the teaching of the New Testament. We are quite willing to learn from critics on any questions on which no distinct teaching can be found in the New Testa-

> ment. But in cases where the New Testament utterances are plain and distinct we humbly desire to adhere to its teaching and submit to its authority.[50]

By the same token - and here the argument had its cutting edge - the logical implications of the Critical position for the authority of Jesus Christ were considerable. 'If men will be sceptics', comments Porter, 'let them at least be logical in their scepticism.'[51] 'It is not the Scriptures which are being challenged, it is the authority of the teaching of our Lord Himself.'[52] 'There can be no question that if the authority of the Scriptures to which He appeals is overthrown, His own authority is destroyed with it.'[53]

That follows since, it was argued, the teaching of Jesus is so bound up with the Old Testament Scriptures that any fundamental misapprehension on His part with respect to them must vitiate it. Of the Old Testament history, for instance, Sharr writes that Jesus:

> bases His reasoning upon these assumed facts in such a manner that, if the foundation is not secure, the superstructure ... must fall in ruins. The Old Testament was the constant text-book of His teaching. He pays the utmost deference to its authority. With Him it is the last court of appeal. 'It is written,' was a phrase continually upon His lips.[54]

Furthermore, the correctness of the Critical reconstruction would establish the fallibility of Jesus.

> He and His Apostles have so endorsed the ancient Scriptures as to make themselves responsible for their perfect truthfulness ... and he who questions the authority of these inspired records questions the authority of Christ Himself.... Prove that Christ erred in judgment, that He was ignorant of such questions as the date and authorship and meaning of the sacred writings, and we shall not only be obliged to recast our theories of inspiration, but ... our theology from beginning to end.[55]

2 The Critical Response

The Critics and those who owed them their allegiance felt the potency of this objection. For one thing, the conservative view of the New Testament documents prevalent in Britain at the time lent force to detailed arguments from the text of the Gospels. For another, as we have suggested, the Critical scholars were

almost entirely pious men who in matters other than Criticism differed little from their fellow-churchmen who held to a traditional view of Scripture. The authority of Jesus Christ was profoundly important for them. Further, the powerful popular appeal of this argument was matter of concern to scholars whose efforts were devoted largely to popularising their own method and its conclusions. At a time of rapidly increasing literacy and wide public interest in religious controversy, arguments from 'philology' carried little weight beyond the prestige of expertise. Ranged against them the Critics found, chiefly, arguments from 'the monuments', at the hands of able orientalists such as Sayce, Hommel and Rawlinson,[56] and this argument that appealed for a verdict to Jesus Christ. When Conservatives put 'the awful dilemma, "You must choose between Christ and criticism"', as Kirkpatrick depicted it, every man could follow the argument.[57] Critics lamented that the controversy had taken what Sanday called 'an unfortunate turn',[58] but they had no option but to engage the enemy where he chose to attack.

(vi) That Jesus Christ did not Express the Views attributed to Him in (ii) and (iii)

It would have dealt a fatal blow to the Conservative theory had it been possible to maintain this option, but although, as we shall see, much of the argument was devoted to the question in what sense the traditional views were 'expressed' or 'believed' by Jesus, the Critics did not deny that there was at least an appearance that His teaching implied the view of the Old Testament entertained generally by His contemporaries. McFadyen, for example, writes as follows:

> Now there can be practically no doubt that Christ believed in the historicity of all the incidents to which He alluded, as well as in the Davidic authorship of the Psalms. Doubtless it is abstractly possible to maintain that He really held other views ... but that He accepted and expressed the common view in accommodation to contemporary opinion. But ... it can hardly be maintained that this is the natural impression made by His words.[59]

Some Critics would have been a little more doubtful of the traditional interpretation of Jesus' teaching, but no sustained attempt was made to disprove it.

(vii) That Jesus Christ was not Infallible in His Teaching

It is difficult to draw a clear line between this position and the following, since both seek to maintain the authority of Jesus while distancing from that authority some of His apparent beliefs. The Critics do not openly confront the teaching of Jesus with denial. Their concern is to obviate such a course of action by driving a wedge between what Jesus said about the Old Testament and His divine authority. We shall therefore postpone discussion of this option, which Conservatives tended to see underlying appeals to (viii).

(viii) That Jesus Christ expressed these Views, but that such Expression did not constitute 'Teaching'

Charles Gore gave perhaps the fullest discussion of the Christus Comprobator argument from the Critical standpoint. He openly accepted both that 'wherever our Lord teaches, it is with plenary authority',[60] and that 'our Lord, in His use of the Old Testament, does indeed endorse with the utmost emphasis the Jewish view of their own history'.[61] We shall examine the Critical attempt to resolve the dilemma under four heads, which indicate the principal lines of argument used in support of this proposition, and which are inter-related.

a. Kenosis was Necessary for Incarnation

The idea of Kenosis as the key to understanding the incarnation was extremely popular in later nineteenth-century attempts to come to terms with the manhood of Christ, and it proved a particularly apposite concept in the thinking of many scholars.[62] Although by no means all discussions allude to it directly, the idea lies behind every attempt to counter the Conservative thesis. Cheyne goes so far as to argue from the Critical view of the Old Testament to the importance of Kenosis in understanding the incarnation.[63] More typically, Peake writes that in order for the divine and the human to coexist in Jesus Christ, there must be some surrender on the divine side:

> We must hold fast at all costs the reality of Christ's experience, which ... qualified Him to be our High Priest. It

> was therefore necessary for Him to surrender everything that was incompatible in a truly human life. And this is especially true in the sphere of knowledge.[64]

That is to say, the idea of incarnation involves the idea of a Kenosis of knowledge; omniscience is not possible in a fully human life. So Sanday comments:

> He 'condescended not to know'. It is part of the process of kenosis.... He divested Himself at least of such parts of that [sc., divine] knowledge as enabled Him to take a real humanity on the same footing with that of His fellow men.[65]

We cannot here engage in an extended discussion of the Kenotic theory, but we may illustrate the Conservative response to this particular application of it. In his advocacy of it, Gore, who claims to uphold the infallibility of the teaching of Christ, appeals to the details of the Gospel portrait as indicating His limitations.[66] Conservatives respond to such exegesis by suggesting that the Kenotic Christ, far from deriving from the Gospels,

> implies a character of Christ widely different from what is clearly set forth in the Gospels.... He was 'the light of the world,' 'God manifest in the flesh,' 'the Way, the Truth and the Life.' 'He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.'[67]

We return to this question in the following sections, as the Critical view is pressed home in more detail.

Ellicott maintains that the humanity of Christ is understood by the Kenoticists as in every respect analogous to our humanity, and that this is a basic error:

> As we cannot by intuition arrive at a knowledge of the age, authorship and composition, of these ancient writings ... so also must it have been with Christ; otherwise the humanity He vouchsafed to assume would not have been a true humanity.[68]

On the contrary, the sinlessness of Christ, His baptism by the Holy Spirit, and, pre-eminently, the 'Catholic doctrine' of His person, lead us to a very different position. He appeals to Hooker for support for the view that 'both body and soul of Christ did receive by the influence of the Deity wherewith they were united qualities and powers above nature'.[70] While he does not argue for omniscience, the analogy of Christ's physical powers leads him to reject not only fallibility but 'nescience', in favour of 'an ever present illumination'.[71]

Thus on grounds both exegetical and theological the Conservatives maintained that the application of the idea of Kenosis to the knowledge of the incarnate Christ was inappropriate.[72]

b. The Knowledge of Jesus Christ was Limited

Discussion of the limitation of Jesus' knowledge centred around His celebrated admission of ignorance. 'He expressly declares', writes Gore, 'that of the day and the hour of His second coming, no on knew except the Father.'[73] About this there was little dispute.[74] The problem which arose was how to interpret the significance of this datum for the question at issue. On the one hand, Critics saw it as a straw in the wind, testifying to the fundamental limitations which were set on the knowledge of Christ during His earthly life. Sanday states that while Conservatives 'argue that imperfect knowledge is one thing, erroneous teaching (though it is hardly teaching - only a presupposition in what is taught) is another', the real question is:

> are these distinctions valid? Are they valid enough to be insisted upon so strongly as they must be if the arguments based upon them are to hold good? I greatly doubt it.[75]

The admission of ignorance fits into a pattern, in which the real, practical ignorance of Christ is manifest throughout the Gospel narratives. Thus, Jesus

> expresses surprise at the conduct of His parents, and the unbelief of men ... on other occasions He asks for information and receives it.[76]
>
> He never enlarges our stock of natural knowledge, physical or historical, out of divine omniscience.[77]

Conservative scholars, on the other hand, repudiated the inference so readily drawn from Mark 13:32. Liddon writes:

> it may be pleaded that our Lord, in declaring His ignorance of the day of the last judgement, does positively assign a specified limit to the knowledge actually possessed ... during His ministry.[78]

That is to say, the fact of limitation is established, and, as Liddon suggests, in this case good reason is not hard to find for such ignorance. The question is, though, 'to what does the admission lead? It leads, properly speaking, to nothing beyond itself.'[79] The reason is that, rather than see the statement in the context of other prima facie examples of ignorance, Liddon

has another perspective:

> it is certain that our Lord was constantly giving proofs, during His earthly life, of an altogether superhuman range of knowledge ... emphatically a knowledge of hard matters of fact, not revealed to Him by the senses.[80]

Thus he writes of Mark 13:32:

> if that statement be construed literally, it manifestly describes not the normal condition of His Human Intelligence, but an exceptional restriction.[81]

In any event, contrary to what Sanday avers, the implication of acknowledged ignorance is certainly not error:

> it is not on this account alone that our Lord's Human ignorance of the day of judgment, if admitted, cannot be made the premiss of an argument intended to destroy His authority when He sanctions the Mosaic authorship and historical trustworthiness of the Pentateuch. That argument involves a confusion between limitation of knowledge and liability to error.... Infallibility does not imply omniscience, any more than limited knowledge implies error.... When we say that a [sc., human] teacher is infallible, we do not mean that his knowledge is encyclopaedic, but merely that when he does teach, he is incapable of propounding as truth that which in point of fact is not true.[82]

Furthermore:

> If a human teacher were to decline to speak on a given subject, by saying that he did not know enough about it, this would not be a reason for disbelieving him when he proceeded to speak confidently on a totally distinct subject.... On the contrary, his silence in the one case would be a reason for trusting his statements in the other.[83]

While Conservatives, therefore, were prepared generally to accept the limitation of Jesus' knowledge indicated by Mark 13:32, they would not infer from this text or from others that depict ignorance a conclusion of error. They maintained that a sharp distinction lay between the two. The Critical attempt to understand the humanity of Christ by analogy with our humanity imposed upon Him limitations of which the Gospels did not speak. The Gospel portrait of Christ, with its supernatural flavour (to which we shall return below), led us to expect Him to have knowledge not available to other men.

c. Jesus Christ gained His Knowledge by Natural Means

The next step in the argument concerns another crux of interpretation, Luke 2:52. Barrett declares:

> we are told expressly that as a child He 'grew in wisdom,'

> and there is no reason to doubt that as a man He was also subject to the ordinary laws and conditions of gaining knowledge.[84]

Colenso develops the point:

> 'Jesus increased in wisdom,' as well as in stature. It is not to be supposed that, in His human nature, He was acquainted, more than any educated Jew of the age, with the mysteries of all modern sciences; nor, with St. Luke's expression before us, can it be seriously maintained that, as an infant or young child, He possessed a knowledge surpassing that of the most pious and learned adults of His nation upon the subject of the authorship and the age of the Pentateuch. At what period, then, of His life upon earth, is it to be supposed that He had granted to Him, as the Son of Man, supernaturally, full and accurate information on these points...?[85]

In other words, the idea of a growth or development in 'wisdom' implies that the origin of that wisdom was the same as that of the growth in 'stature' of which the verse also speaks: a natural origin, pertaining to the human rather than the divine nature. Barrett and Colenso do not suggest that the 'spiritual' teaching of Christ may be similarly understood, since it emanates from a different source.

One Conservative, Porter, draws attention to the context of Luke 2:52, and in particular to 2:40, where:

> it is said, 'The child grew and waxed strong in spirit filled with wisdom.' To illustrate this last clause a story is told.... He was ... found in the Temple ... [where His] questions drew upon Him the attention of the whole of that learned assembly, and 'all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and His answers.... And it is just at the close of this narrative that we find it said of Him, 'He increased in wisdom.'[86]

He concludes that 'the human mind of Jesus was always filled with wisdom to the utmost extent of its capacity'.[87]

Liddon, after making a similar comment on the context of the verse, is anxious that we should have the matter in perspective. For one thing, as he has said elsewhere, limitation is not fallibility. Grant that there must have been intellectual development, need this imply intellectual error?[88] There is also a need for a sense of proportion:

> Does ... 'increase in wisdom' ... during Christ's early years, warrant our saying that, in the days of His ministry, our Lord was still ignorant of the real claims and worth of the Jewish Scriptures?[89]

That is the key question, and in defence of their answer to it the Conservatives argued the significance of Christ's supernatural knowledge.

Adolph Saphir, for example, draws attention to what he terms:

> the range of Christ's vision as man upon earth. He saw the depths of Nathanael's heart when Nathanael was under the fig--tree.... He knew that Judas was going to betray Him.... He saw the whole invisible realm of angels and devils.... But more than that, Jesus saw the Father. Jesus said, 'No man knoweth the Father but the Son'.... He it is who says to us, 'The Scripture cannot be broken.'[90]

Whereas some of these might be termed 'religious' experiences or given some psychological explanation, many examples were adduced by Conservative scholars where supernatural knowledge about the physical world was indicated in the teaching of Christ. Thus Leathes lists fifteen pages of 'passages in which our Lord's Supernatural Knowledge is implied'.[91] He presses the point that we must assume that Jesus had ready access to all the information that lies behind His teaching (about God, His mission, the future, and so on), if we are to receive it with any confidence.[92] So Liddon, also, writes:

> it is certain ... that our Lord was constantly giving proofs, during His earthly life, of an altogether superhuman range of knowledge. There was not merely in Him the quick and penetrating discernment of a very holy soul.... It was emphatically a knowledge of hard matters of fact, not revealed to Him by the senses, and beyond reach of sense.[93]

Hessey calls to attention the question, 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?' (John 7:15): the fact of the evident human abilities of Jesus to dispute and debate, and His expertise in matters of exegesis, astonished His contemporaries.[94] At the same time, in matters like the coin in the mouth of the fish, He demonstrated the possession of individual pieces of information which could only have been supernaturally gained.[95]

Hessey concludes:

> If want of supernatural information made Christ ignorant on this matter [sc., the Old Testament], the same want would have made Him ignorant on other matters confessedly less attainable by natural faculties.
>
> But the Gospels show that He was not ignorant on such other matters.
>
> Therefore He could scarcely have been ignorant on this matter, at least for the cause alleged, want of supernatural

information.[96]

The Conservative response, therefore, was to see Jesus' statements about the Old Testament in the context of His broad supernatural knowledge described in the Gospel narratives.

d. Jesus' Knowledge on Critical Questions was Natural, not Spiritual

Here lies the nub of the question. The effect of the Critical argument up to this point was to establish that, while in a certain area of His knowledge and therefore His teaching, Jesus was supernaturally informed and therefore safeguarded from error, that area was not co-extensive with all that He believed or (implicitly or explicitly) stated. It is limited, and outside it the safeguard does not apply; indeed, the requirements of incarnation prevent any such preservation of infallibility. There, the natural 'growth in wisdom', leading to explicit ignorance of such matters as the date of the Second Coming and implied ignorance manifested in questions, expressions of surprise and such events as the prayer in Gethsemane, must govern the acquisition of knowledge. If, in this area, language is used which appears to conflict with modern thinking (e.g., the rising and setting of the sun[97]), no problem need arise either for modern thought or for Christian acceptance of the infallible teaching authority of Jesus. The authority is confined to matters spiritual, and the boundary of the 'spiritual' may be drawn so as to exclude historical and literary questions affecting the Old Testament. Barrett, therefore, writes:

> it is not for a moment doubted ... that in all Christ taught of the spiritual and moral truths contained in the Old Testament, He spoke as the infallible and inspired Prophet: but ... this is no reason for supposing that in these purely literary questions the knowledge of Jesus, as man, was beyond that of His age and country.[98]

> ...the truth about the knowledge of our Lord is ... [that it] is divinely infallible in the whole region of spiritual truth, but humanly limited in all that was outside of the Divine region.[99]

Two grounds are advanced for such a conclusion. First, while it is theoretically possible that Jesus Christ might have explicitly taught literary and historical data as elements in His teaching, He did not in fact do so.[100] Secondly, and relatedly, Gore declares:

> as we scan carefully our Lord's use of the Old Testament books, we are surely struck with the fact that nothing in His use of them depends on questions of authorship or date: He appeals to them in [their] spiritual aspect.[101]

This area in the teaching of Christ may thus be separated from others.

The Conservative response began with the observation that the questions of authorship and historicity are inseparable. The tendency of the Critics to play down the former ignored this fact, despite plain evidence in support of it. While, as Spiers comments, 'the authorship of a book per se may not be vital to its acceptance as Divine revelation', if it 'announces its author'[102] the question is different. For instance, 'if the Pentateuch is not to be believed when it refers again and again to Moses as its author, when is it to be believed?'[103] Such a proportion of the Pentateuch purports to be the work of Moses, or to record his words, or relate events and revelations that took place when he was alone, that a denial of his authorship or at any rate of his historical association with the book in the fashion it claims overthrows its right to be considered historical.

This is true particularly when the prima facie revelation contained in a book is, as in the case of much of the Pentateuch, dependent on certain historical circumstances. Leathes comments:

> if the substantial genuineness of that book was essential to the reality and truth of the revelation it was supposed to contain ... then it is impossible to regard as of no importance any assumption involving a fatal error to its value as a record of Revelation.[104]

Furthermore, it was suggested, the Critical distinction between 'spiritual' and 'natural' matter in the teaching of Jesus is arbitrary, forged simply to meet the requirements of the Critical theories. This follows partly from the fact of the inter-dependence of historical and religious in the Old Testament, and partly from the consequent relations between the two in the teaching of Jesus itself.[105] When once we have allowed that in so fundamental an area He shared merely the errors of His day, what confidence are we left in the remainder of His own teaching? Liddon notes that:

> He made the acceptance of the lower portions of His teaching a preliminary to belief in the higher. 'If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?'[106]

As Spiers puts it, the question is, 'Where are we to stop?'

> May He not have been wrong in all His other teaching? His own personality, His mission, His atonement, His power to forgive sins, His mediatorial office, His Divine lordship, all these are at stake; all may be ascribed to some misconception, the result of His fallibility.[107]

The Critical case, of course, rested on the assumption that the historical and literary details of the Old Testament, so far from standing as an integral element of the teaching of Jesus, were analogous rather with His references to the motion of the heavenly bodies; they were customary and referential, and could, therefore, be detached from the category of the 'spiritual' and placed in that of the 'natural'. The Conservatives challenged this assumption, maintaining that the historicity of the Old Testament 'directly concern[ed] the revelation of God to man'.[108] The teaching of Jesus, and His self-understanding, are so deeply rooted in the Old Testament, that, as Ellicott suggests:

> We may reasonably believe ... that if there were any subject in which importation of knowledge from the divine might be conceived to be certain and clear, it would be in matters connected with the Holy Scripture.[109]

There can be no justification for removing the Old Testament documents, as history and as literature, from the domain of the religious.

Not only so, but, Conservatives claimed, it may be shown that particular questions regarded by the Critics as 'merely' of historical or literary interest are in fact integrally related to the authority of Jesus. The classic instance is Psalm 110, to which reference has already been made.[110] But Conservatives urged three additional considerations which, if substantiated, would have the effect of undermining the entire Critical attempt to use the idea of Kenosis to obviate the 'appeal to Christ'.

First, they drew attention to the narrative of the transfiguration. Not only is this account generally suggestive of supernatural knowledge and experience on the part of Christ as perhaps no other, but it reveals Him enjoying fellowship specifically

with Moses. Rae asks:

> Did the Messiah ... know so little of the history, and of the heart, of the ancient Hebrew leader, as to take for words of Moses, even about Himself, sentiments written, hundreds of years later, by an unknown hand?[111]

Secondly, they argued that not only did Jesus regard the Old Testament as authoritative in the traditional fashion in His recorded dealings with the Jews, but 'our Lord appealed to that revelation as authoritative on such an occasion as his conflict with the Evil One'.[112] The Kenosis-accommodation idea, they maintained, could not account for that.

> In the story of the Temptation ... He appealed to the authority of the divine record, which He assumed His opponent would recognise, and which, in fact, he did.... Three times our Lord quoted from a book [sc., Deuteronomy] which modern critics have done their best to discredit.[113]

Thirdly, and most substantially, they called in evidence the testimony of the risen Christ. 'On the very day', comments Wright, 'that He rose from the dead (Luke xxiv. 44) He bore witness to what He had taught on that point while on earth.'[114] 'Is there any change now in the previous high tone as to the ancient Scriptures?', asks Sinker.[115] 'Will it hold that any form of kenotic theory avails here?'[116] Surely, after the resurrection and only weeks before the same Christ will declare that 'all power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth',[117] 'we can only suppose that any limitations voluntarily accepted during the period of His humiliation were not only withdrawn but were impossible'.[118]

Indeed, Moule argues that not only do we see no retreat on the part of Jesus Christ from His unquestioning acceptance of the Old Testament after the resurrection, but He

> cherishes, I dare to say reveres, their authority, even in details of expression.... nowhere more fully and universally than when He overcame death and came back from the Unseen in the power of endless life.[119]

It is interesting that the Critical scholars do not apparently attempt to answer these particular, and forceful, objections to their position. No doubt they could deny the relevance of the authorship of Deuteronomy in the confrontation with Satan,

and in the other instances cited fall back on the idea of voluntary and conscious suppression of (irrelevant) knowledge on the part of Jesus. But there can be no doubt that the historical reading of these three narratives, and the impression they give of the experience which Jesus Christ had of the supernatural order, serve to undermine the cogency of the Kenosis defence of Criticism.

(ix) That because of (vi), (vii) or (viii), the Objection (v) does not stand

It will be seen that the actual argument of the Critics does not readily crystallise into the use of one or other of the logically possible objections which we have enumerated. This results largely from differences over definition rather than substance. While eager to maintain the infallibility of the 'teaching' of Jesus, the Critics wished so to define His 'teaching' as to exclude all statements bearing on the contentious questions of Old Testament history and literature. An appeal to Kenosis as necessary for the incarnation is generally the warrant for such an interpretation of the Gospel narratives.

Conservatives regarded the Critical recourse to Kenosis as vague and opportunist, arising solely out of the need somehow to square the Critical conclusions with the Gospel records of the teaching of Jesus. Conservative advocacy of the Christus Comprobator argument had its origins before the rise of Criticism in Britain, and they considered that only for extrinsic reasons would it be challenged. It was very considerably strengthened in the context of the later nineteenth century by the prevalent conservative consensus on matters of New Testament scholarship. In particular, its strongest exegetical elements - appeals to Gospel reports of the supernatural knowledge and experiences of Jesus - would have had no standing in the eyes of the more radical scholarship which was soon to be in the ascendant. The failure of the Critics to answer, or indeed feel the weight of, these arguments, and the disappearance of the Christus Comprobator argument from the general theological scene, testify to its dependence on a consensus with respect to the New Testament which was already breaking up.[120]

VI
PATTERNS OF EXEGESIS
A Survey of Biblical Commentaries

All Christians receive the Old and New Testament as sacred writings, but they are not agreed about the meaning which they attribute to them. The book itself remains as at the first; the commentators seem rather to reflect the changing atmosphere of the world or of the Church.

Benjamin Jowett, in Essays and Reviews, p 330

We have seen how Critical scholarship understood and sought to justify its method,[1] and how Conservative scholars responded, endeavouring to defend 'plenary inspiration' in the light of Critical contentions.[2] The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate and extend our exposition of the two positions with reference to their practical implications for Biblical interpretation. We have sampled the extensive literature commenting on the Biblical books in the nineteenth century and the opening years of the twentieth, focussing on commentaries both written in Britain and widely read in this country. At a series of cruces for interpretation we have taken soundings to see how the commentators pursue their work and in so doing reveal some of the assumptions about the Bible which underlie it.[3]

The discussion which follows illustrates the debate in three areas. First, 'Higher Criticism', which has of course been discussed extensively above as the prime question of the Critical debate. Two other categories appear, casting their own light on the differences between the two schools in related questions, those of miracle and morality.[4]

1 Higher Criticism

Three sample passages have been selected: the narrative of creation in Genesis 1-3, the revelation of the Divine Name in Exodus 6, and the story of the crossing of the Jordan in Joshua 4.

(i) The Creation (Genesis 1-3)

Commentaries written before the middle of the nineteenth century may generally be designated 'pre-Critical', since their authors wrote at a time when, although Critical theories were not unknown in Britain, they were not seriously regarded within the churches. In consequence, Scott (1825, ninth, revised, edition) and Mant and D'Oyly (1830), do not discuss at any length the (early) Critical interpretation of the chapters. But they were aware of at least some of the problematic phenomena that were to lead later British interpreters to Critical conclusions. So, for instance, Scott comments on 1:28:

> It appears from this v., that both the man and the woman were created on the sixth day, and that the subsequent account is only a more circumstantial recapitulation of the interesting event.

And Mant and D'Oyly remark on the relations of the accounts in chapters 1 and 2:

> Moses, having given a short account of the orderly production of all things from the meanest to the noblest, explains more largely in this chapter some things, which in the foregoing, were delivered briefly.[5]

There is no consideration of the possibility that such phenomena might be interpreted otherwise than in the context of a unified narrative.

Of the Critical commentators, Dods (1889) does not trouble to argue for the literary division of the chapters as such. He introduces the matter as proof that 'the compiler of this book ... did not aim at scientific accuracy', since:

> in these first two chapters of his book he lays side by side two accounts of man's creation which no ingenuity can reconcile. These two accounts, glaringly incompatible in details ... warn the reader that the writer's aim is rather to convey certain ideas regarding man's spiritual history and his connection with God, than to describe the process of creation.[6]

Driver is a good deal more detailed, as might be expected from the nature of his commentary; but, though he writes as late as 1904, he argues his case:

> as soon as the book is studied with sufficient attention, phaenomena disclose themselves, which shew that it is composed of distinct documents or sources, which have been welded together by a later compiler (or 'redactor') into a continuous whole. These phaenomena are very numerous.... Thus i.1-ii.4a

> and ii.4b-25 contain a double narrative of the origin of man upon the earth.... the order of creation is different, the phraseology and literary style are different, and the representation, especially the representation of the Deity, is different.[7]

Similarly, Skinner, after noting that 'the Book of Genesis has always been the strategic position of Pentateuchal literary criticism', asserts that:

> One has but to read consecutively the first three chapters of Genesis, and observe how the sudden change in the divine name coincides with a new vocabulary, representation and spiritual atmosphere, in order to see how paltry all ... artificial explanations are in comparison with the hypothesis that the names are distinctive of different documents.[8]

By the time that Ryle writes his (more popular) Cambridge Bible volume (1914) the matter may be considered beyond argument. Throughout we have marginal indications of the document(s) being followed in any given verse, and we are boldly informed that 'the Book of Genesis contains two Cosmogonies'.[9] There is, evidently, no longer any disagreement:

> After a century and a half of minute and laborious research, scholars are now agreed that the books of the Pentateuch and of Joshua present us with a compilation of four distinct documents.[10]

The Conservative Jamieson presents a contrasting position, descended from that of Scott, and Mant and D'Oyly. A 'sound criticism', he maintains,

> leads to a different conclusion - viz., that the narrative contained in [chapter 2] is additional and supplementary - an appendix to the preceding account of creation, subjoined to furnish some details respecting the formation of the first pair and their primeval abode.[11]

Unlike his predecessors, Jamieson offers some debate with the Critical position on literary grounds. He instances the nature of Genesis 2, in which 'no regard [is paid] ... to the element of time' (which would be required in a true cosmogony);[12] 'a methodical and consecutive history of creation was not entailed in this chapter'.[13] Further,

> the title [toledoth] ... denotes not the origin, but the historical development, of man. Accordingly, he is spoken of as the man, previously mentioned as having been created.[14]

At the same time, the possible use of sources cannot be ruled out:

> Whatever relation we consider the second section as bearing

> to the first, - whether we view them as originally composed by the sacred historian, or derived from separate and independent records already existing ... they were blended by him, under the direction of the Spirit of inspiration, into one connected and consistent whole.[15]

Similarly, Payne Smith in Ellicott[16] dismisses the idea that the so-called second creation account could be a cosmogony. Rather, it is 'an account of the fall of man, with only such introductory matter regarding the creation as was necessary for making the history complete'.[17] So, the alleged discrepancy in the order of creation of man and the animals may be resolved:

> Much anxious speculation has arisen from the mistaken idea that the order here is chronological, and that the animals were created subsequently to man.... The real point of the narrative is the insight it gives us into Adam's intellectual condition, his study of the animal creation, and the nature of the employment in which he spent his time.[18]

In the 'Speaker's Commentary', E.H. Browne acknowledges that (seen in a certain perspective) there 'appear to be' two versions of the creation account, and indeed of other narratives in Genesis, which are 'disentangled' by some scholars chiefly by the key of the different divine names. However, he maintains, it can be shown:

> First, that the Book of Genesis is not an ill-digested collection of fragmentary documents, but a carefully arranged narrative with entire unity of purpose and plan.
> Secondly, that the use of the names of God is neither arbitrary nor accidental, but consistent throughout with the Mosaic authorship, and the general scope of the history.[19]

Finally, we turn to the discussion in the Pulpit Commentary, by Thomas Whitelaw. In substance this is his method and his position:

> For a reply to those 'insoluble contradictions,' which, though 'too obvious to be overlooked or denied,' are mostly, if not solely, due to a false exegesis and a misapprehension of the guiding purpose of the writer, see the Exposition following, which ... simply shows that, when naturally and literally interpreted, the narrative is free from those internal antagonisms which a microscopic criticism imagines it has detected in it.[20]

From this perspective, the second chapter is a 'monograph on man', which:

> supplies a more detailed account of his creation than is given in the narrative of the six days' work, and by depicting man's

> settlement in Eden as a place of trial, prepares the way for the subsequent recital of his seduction and sin, and of his consequent expulsion from the garden.[21]

We see, therefore, a sharp distinction between the treatment which Genesis 1-3 as a literary unit receives from commentators of the two different schools. Both sides write confidently as they interpret the phenomena of the text from their contrasting viewpoints.

(ii) The Revelation of the Divine Name (Exodus 6:2,3)

Mant and D'Oyly, while not in debate with Critical scholars, cannot avoid passing comment on the prima facie problem posed by this text. In the Revised Version the verses read:

> And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am JEHOVAH: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty (mg. Heb. El Shaddai), but by my name JEHOVAH I was not known to them.

Mant and D'Oyly comment:

> He tells them, that He, who had formerly represented Himself to Abraham, and their forefathers, under the name of El-Shaddai, that is, the all-sufficient God ... and under that of Jehovah ... would now demonstrate Himself to be what the latter name imported, the unchangeable and faithful God....
>
> He was not yet known to them by His name JEHOVAH, which imports a God, constant to His word, and 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.'[22]

In marked contrast, Bennett in the Century Bible gives the following note:

> Sources, &c. We have here a second revelation of the name Yahweh, parallel to iii.15. The latter being referred to E, this will belong to the other source, which avoids Yahweh in Genesis, namely to P, a view confirmed by the reference to El Shaddai, which is found in P in Genesis.[23]

The discussion in Driver's Cambridge Bible volume is almost identical.[24] McNeile, in the Westminster, puts the matter more discursively:

> A signal instance of the gradual way in which God leads his people into a fuller understanding of His Word is afforded by the fact that it is only in the last 150 years that the attention of students has been arrested by these verses. How is it that though God here says that up to this point His name Yahweh has not been known to them, and yet in the book of Genesis the patriarchs appear to know it well and use it freely? The question cannot be answered except by the recognition that varying traditions have been incorporated

from different sources.[25]

The Conservative response is once again to follow the direction laid down in interpretation prior to the rise of Criticism. So Browne, in the 'Speaker's Commentary', paraphrases:

> 'I manifested myself to the patriarchs in the character of El-Shaddai, the Omnipotent God, unable to fulfil that which I had promised; but as to my name (i.e., my character and attributes of) JEHOVAH I was not made manifest to them.[26]

It is admitted that difficulties face such interpretations. George Rawlinson, who also wrote on Exodus in Ellicott, concludes in the Pulpit that 'the explanation of this passage is by no means easy'. The simple fact that we do meet the name Jehovah/Yahweh in the Genesis narrative of the patriarchs leads us to conclude that 'the apparent meaning of the present passage cannot ... be its true meaning', since 'no writer would contradict himself'. Rawlinson falls back on the foundation of the Conservative position, which is to pursue exegesis on the assumption of an infallible Bible. The Critical writers entirely agreed with Rawlinson's premiss that 'no writer would contradict himself'; it was, indeed, perhaps the most significant of their own working principles. But whereas they drew the conclusion that more than one writer must be involved, Rawlinson sought another:

> Perhaps the true sense is, 'I was known to them as a Being of might and power, not as mere absolute ... existence.' This meaning of the word, though its etymological and original meaning, may have been unknown to the patriarchs, who were not etymologists. It was first distinctly declared to Moses at Sinai (ch. iii. 14,15).[27]

In the case of Exodus, the writer in the Expositor's Bible is found on the side of the Conservatives. G.A. Chadwick urges a number of exegetical arguments against the commonly-held view of the Critics. For one thing, it is not only in the patriarchal narratives that the name Jehovah occurs; thus in Genesis 4:26 we read that men began to call upon the name of the LORD, i.e., Jehovah; and even Moses' mother's name is a compound of that of God. To the 'sceptic' who would attribute these references and others to separate sources, Chadwick replies that this argument

> cannot be made available for the purposes of scepticism, since the sceptical theory demands a belief in successive redactions

> of the work in which an error so gross could not have escaped detection.

The 'true explanation' is that 'this Name was now, for the first time, to be realised as a sustaining power'.[28]

The only commentator to offer a significantly different interpretation to those we have discussed is Jamieson. After making the usual criticisms of the Critical view, he suggests that the statement should be taken interrogatively: 'by my name Jehovah was I not known to them?'[29]

Once more we note a division between commentators who are prepared to use phenomena in the text to allot the material to (contradictory) sources, and those who oppose such a method and claim that a harmonistic interpretation of all such phenomena is not only possible, but intrinsically preferable.

(iii) The Crossing of the Jordan (Joshua 4:1-9)

For a concise exposition of the Critical interpretation of this narrative, we turn to George Adam Smith, who calls it in evidence as an illustration of the composite nature of Joshua. Throughout the book, he claims, 'there are visible two different accounts of the conquest of Western Palestine by the Israelites'. He emphasises that the accounts may be distinguished not on simply stylistic grounds but by reference to the 'differences of fact' between them. That is important, since in this book linguistic analysis alone is frequently unable to disentangle the Jahwist and Elohist documents. The story of the Crossing is composite:

> as told in Joshua iii and iv, there are two accounts of the monument set up to commemorate the passage. One of them builds it at Gilgal on the west bank in stones taken from the river-bed ... by the people [note: iv,1-8,20]; the latter builds it in the bed of the river with 12 stones set there by Joshua.[30]

Similar, though sometimes more complex, analyses are found in the other Critical commentaries. So Holmes, in his textual commentary, writes:

> in spite of the fact that we have only two narratives J and E ... to deal with in this chapter, there are three accounts of the events connected with the memorial stones,

and proceeds to disentangle the remnants of the third narrative.[31]

A third possibility is noted also by Cooke in the Cambridge Bible: 'two versions can be distinguished, and to these ... a third has been added'.[32] It is interesting to note that Cooke's volume, first published in 1917, 'revised' (according to the publishers) that of G.F. Maclear, of 1880. Maclear does not accept the Critical approach. In fact, he mentions it only to dismiss it, and in commenting on this passage does not refer to it:

> Another set of stones is here intended than that just mentioned. The latter were set up by Joshua at the direct command of God to mark the spot where they passed the night; the former Joshua set up, apparently, without the Divine suggestion, to mark the spot where the feet of the priests rested.[33]

The Conservatives, with Maclear, are unanimous in rejecting the suggestion that the account of the setting up of the cairns resolves into two rival accounts (or three!). Two separate cairns were erected. So Waller, in Ellicott's commentary, writes: 'It would seem that we are to understand two cairns to have been set up, one on either side of the river, to mark the place where the Israelites crossed.'[34] In such an interpretation there is rich symbolism. 'Every tribe was represented by a stone on either side Jordan. The two cairns represented a complete Israel in the wilderness, and a complete Israel in the promised land.'[35] Blaikie, in the Expositor's Bible, does not discuss the general Critical interpretation, but does dismiss the suggestion that an interpolation is responsible for suggesting a double monument. Rather,

> it would appear, from chap. iv.9, that two sets of stones were set up, Joshua, following the spirit of the Divine direction, having caused a second set to be erected in the middle of the river.[36]

Similarly, Jamieson.[37]

Lias, in the Pulpit Commentary, poses the interpretative problem thus:

> it may be asked whether it is more probable that this passage [sc., 4:9] is an insertion from another, and an irreconcileable account (Meyer, Knobel), or that it is a later gloss (Rosenmüller, Maurer, &c.), or that two monuments of so mighty and memorable a miracle should have been set up, one at the place where the priests stood, and the other where the Israelites rested.[38]

In the 'Speaker's Commentary', Espin is uncertain whether the cairn 'in the midst of' the river was 'near, or perhaps on, the

eastern brink'. But this is the real issue:

> the opinion ... which sees it [sc., 4:9] as a fragment of a totally different version of the transaction carelessly incorporated by the historian, will recommend itself only to those who accept the general principles of the critics.[39]

That is to say, the fundamental question is not how sense may be made of the data provided by this passage of the text, it is the question of sympathy (or lack of it) with the Critical approach as such. That will determine how these verses, and others like them, are interpreted.

We see, then, how in these three examples Critics and Conservatives are driven by their fundamental approaches to divide in the interpretation of particular passages. Conservatives, sometimes explicitly, worked with an expectation of harmony and unity. Critical scholars worked with the expectation that in historical and literary matters the Bible would display the same indications of development and disagreement as other human writings of ancient date. Both schools, in examining the individual passages of which Scripture is made up, found what they sought. Commentators lined up on either side of the divide between the two approaches.

We turn now to a brief consideration of some other, related, questions.

2 Miracle

(i) The Red Sea Crossing (Exodus 14)

The traditional interpretation of the passage of the Red Sea by Israel under Moses was strictly miraculous, invoking supernatural intervention in the affairs of nature. Mant and D'Oyly write: 'This passage is told us by Scripture to be a miraculous one; and if so, we have nothing to do with natural causes.'[40] Scott, similarly, defends the traditional reading as involving 'two mighty walls, and a spacious road between', in turn depending upon supernatural action. He comments:

> At the stretching forth of Moses' hand, and the waving of his rod, the Lord caused a strong east wind to blow: but even this was only the signal of his power, by which he divided the waters.[41]

The Critical approach, by contrast, seeks first to separate different and mutually incompatible documents, and then to suggest a non-supernatural original event, the narrative of which has been later embellished. So Bennett, in the Century Bible, writes:

> In these verses we have two different views. In verse 21a, by J, a strong east wind drives back the water and leaves a dry passage, i.e. the whole bed of a shallow arm of the Sea is left bare.

There is a likely natural explanation: 'probably the returning tide was checked for a time'. The P account in v. 22, however, tells that 'a narrow passage is left dry and the water is heaped up high on each side like a wall'.[42] McNeile, in the Westminster volume, writes as follows:

> P adopts the haggadic interpretation of the incident, involving a portent, or 'miracle' in the popular acceptation of the term. God is represented as working in a manner opposed to the normal course of nature. This diverges from the earlier account, which records an event more consonant with God's usual method of action.[43]

Driver goes so far as to accept the essential historical tradition behind the narrative, which, he claims, 'can be questioned only by an extreme and baseless scepticism'.

> A strong wind drives back the waters in such a way as to permit the Israelites to pass through ... another wind, suddenly arising in an opposite direction, causes the water to return and close upon the pursuing foe.

However:

> the story of the great deliverance, as it was handed down from generation to generation in the mouths of the people, was variously embellished by the unconscious play of the imagination. And so in the later writers the occurrence is attributed far more to the direct supernatural power of God.[44]

The approach of the Critical scholars is therefore to accept, tacitly at least, some historical basis for the story which is non-miraculous, in the sense of miracle as involving intervention in the continuum of cause and effect in the world by a supernatural power. They also accept, however, that the Biblical testimony to that event is not wholly faithful to that tradition, but includes *prima facie* miraculous claims which do not rest upon an historical basis. A miracle may be described in the text, but a miracle (in the strict sense we have defined) did not occur.

The five Conservative commentaries we consider here are

divided on the question of the supernatural character of the event. George Rawlinson, in Ellicott, writes in the following confused terms:

> Whether the whole effect was purely natural, or whether (as in so many other cases) God used the force of nature so far as it could go, and further supernaturally increased its force, we are not told, and may form what opinion we please.[45]

Arguing for a 'natural' interpretation are the 'Speaker's' and Pulpit Commentaries. In the former we read, in comment on the phrase 'a strong east wind':

> It is thus distinctly stated that the agency by which the objective was effected was natural. It is clear that Moses takes for granted that a strong east wind blowing through the night ... would make the passage quite possible.[46]

Rawlinson, this time writing in the Pulpit, clearly defends the non-miraculous reading:

> The action of a strong east wind, by driving the water of the lakes northward, may have easily produced the effect described in the text. A simultaneous ebb of the lower gulf would have further facilitated the passage.[47]

He is, however, aware that the terms of the description, in v. 22 at least (which the Critics distinguish as emanating from P) suggest to many interpreters a different reading. But he writes:

> The waters were a wall - i.e., a protection, a defence. Pharoah could not attack on either flank.... The metaphor has been by some understood literally.... We must ask ourselves, - is there not an economy and a restraint in the exertion by God even of miraculous power?

That is to say, if natural causes, providentially employed, were sufficient to achieve the desired end, why invoke a cause above nature?

Chadwick, in the Expositor's Bible, on the other hand, concludes that 'the narrative certainly means to describe a miraculous interference',[48] and Jamieson argues as follows:

> Suppose a mere ebb tide, caused by the wind raising the water to a great height on one side, still as there was not only 'dry land,' but according to the tenor of the sacred narrative, a wall on the right hand and on the left, it would have been impossible, on the hypothesis of such a natural cause, to rear the wall on the other. The idea of Divine interposition, therefore, is imperative.[49]

'Assuming the veracity of Moses', the strictly miraculous charac-

ter of the event is inescapable.[50]

The Conservatives, therefore, were divided in their reading of the Red Sea crossing. What unites them is their refusal to distinguish between statements in the text as arising from different and contradictory sources; they are obliged to make sense of all the statements in one coherent view of the event. They are not averse to suggesting that a metaphorical meaning lies behind elements in the narrative, where this will aid such an interpretation. As elsewhere, we see that an over-riding consideration is that the 'veracity of Moses' - the infallibility of the account as Scripture presents it to us - must be upheld. It is possible to find natural or supernatural explanations, though the Conservatives do show a distinct preference for avoiding the supernatural, if that is possible; a position in contrast to that of the 'pre-Critical' scholars.

(ii) Balaam's Ass (Numbers 22)

Traditional interpretation of this remarkable story accepted its claims without difficulty. Scott reminds his readers that man's power of speech is itself the gift of God, and indeed a gift not fully understood: 'we need not therefore be surprised that the Lord has made use of the mouth of the "ass to rebuke the madness of the prophet".'[51] Moreover, Satan spoke through a serpent to Eve; here we have a clear parallel. The suggestion of some that the whole event might be a vision merely is 'in direct opposition to the words of the sacred historian'. Mant and D'Oyly suggest (citing 'Bp. Newton') that we do not need to expect the ass to have understood the message it mouthed; it probably delivered it like a parrot. If people wonder how this might be achieved, 'an adequate cause is assigned for this wonderful effect, for it is expressly said, that "the Lord opened the mouth of the ass"'.[52]

The contrast with the treatment of the Critical commentaries could not be more striking. Elliott-Binns, in the Westminster series, refers to examples of speaking animals in 'many ancient stories',[53] and McNeile writes: 'the naïve anthropomorphic conception of Jehovah involved in this narrative belongs to a very

early age of folklore.'[54] His conclusion is that, while the story may have some historical basis, the speaking ass is a 'fabulous' element which has attached itself to it, and:

> with the modern knowledge, to which God has led us, of the gradual nature of His self-revelation to Israel ... we are not under the necessity either of believing that the ass actually spoke, or of explaining away the miracle in some rationalising manner, e.g. by supposing that Balaam had a vision.

Rather, 'the permanent spiritual value of the story lies in its representation of the striving of conscience'.[55] Gray, in the International Critical Commentary, also writes of 'folklore', and sees the narrative in the context of other, similar, ancient stories: 'the marvel has occasioned considerable trouble to some commentators, who have regarded the narrative as historical, but have been unwilling to admit that the ass actually spoke.' Such attempts to explain the incident as a vision have no exegetical basis. Correctly interpreted, it is certainly the account of a 'miraculous occurrence', and those who assume its historical character have no option but to adopt such a reading.[56]

R.A. Watson, in the Expositor's Bible, offers an uncertain lead, recording simply a number of opinions held on the passage. The narrative is 'confessedly difficult', and while 'to some ... [it] may present no serious difficulties',

> others again are not so easily satisfied that the occasion called for miracles like those which appear on the surface of the history. It seems to them of no great moment whether Balaam went or did not go to Moab.... These readers accordingly find a parabolical or pictorial explanation of the incidents.[57]

One infers that Watson comes to some such conclusion himself.

Conservative writers are divided in their reading of the passage. Thus, while Winterbotham in the Pulpit discusses and dismisses the suggestion that the ass-like cries of the beast were interpreted by Balaam as if they were intelligible speech,[58] Espin and Thrupp in the 'Speaker's Commentary' adopt this theory on the ground that 'the marvel does not seem to have attracted' the attention of Balaam's servants:

> God may have brought it about that sounds uttered by the creature after its kind became, to the prophet's intelligence, as though it addressed him in rational speech.

The traditional view is 'irreconcileable with Balaam's behaviour',

since he displays no sign of astonishment as surely he would have had the ass 'uttered with his mouth articulate words of human speech'.[59]

Jamieson, and Elliott (in Ellicott), both adhere to the literal reading, on the chief ground that this is 'what the narrative itself suggests', since there is 'no intimation given that its respective portions are to be differently interpreted'; and that is 'the real question at issue'.[60] Jamieson follows Mant and D'Oyly in using the analogy of parrot-speech to describe the event, to which he believes Scripture commits the believing reader; it is not necessary to assume the ass granted rational powers of thought.[61]

Despite this variety of opinion, certain conclusions emerge. Conservative writers are united in their determination to avoid any interpretation of the text that would call its historicity in question. Indeed, it is in order to preserve a credible reading that one commentary abandons the miraculous element and opts for a vision in its place. Critical writers, on the other hand, have no qualms about consigning the event to the realm of ancient folklore; but at the same time they acknowledge that as the narrative stands it tells of a speaking ass, and gives no support to efforts at disposing of the miracle.

(iii) Joshua's Long Day and the Dial of Ahaz (Joshua 10:12-14 and II Kings 20:9-11; cp Isaiah 38:6,7)

We discuss these narratives together, since their subject-matter is closely related: the interference, as traditional interpreters had seen it, with the normal course of the sun's travel across the heavens - in the interests, in the case of Joshua, of victory in battle; and in the case of Hezekiah, of the provision of a 'sign'. The Hezekiah story is related also, with some differences, in the Isaiah passage.

First, the traditional reading. Both Scott, and Mant and D'Oyly, come down on the side of what we might term the astronomical interpretation of these passages. Not that they were unaware of the controversial significance of what they wrote for 'modern astronomy', according to which, in Scott's words,

'it would have been improper that he [sc., Joshua] should speak, or that the miracle should be recorded'. But, in the face of 'difficulties' with this reading:

> the fact, as far as we are concerned about it, is authenticated by the divine testimony; and the manner, in which it was accomplished, lies entirely out of our province, because beyond our discovery and comprehension. 'Is any thing too hard for the LORD?' This question forms a sufficient answer to ten thousand difficulties.[62]

Similarly, Mant and D'Oyly quote from Watson:

> I think it idle, if not impious, to undertake to explain how the miracle was performed; but one who is not able to explain the mode of doing a thing, argues ill if he thence infers that the thing was not done. The machine of the universe is in the hand of God: He can stop the motion of any part, or of the whole, with less trouble, and less danger of injuring it, than any of us can stop a watch.[63]

Nevertheless, both commentaries spend time defending the credibility of the account, both by reference to ancient stories that might allude to the event, and, in Scott's case, by emphasising the significance of the victory gained via the miracle and the testimony of Joshua's control of the sun in nations of idolaters who worship the host of heaven.

Scott's discussion of the Dial of Ahaz is similar. He is not concerned, he says, 'to determine, how God produced this effect: if he saw good, he was able to cause a temporary change in the motion of the earth and heavenly bodies',[64] and 'some think the same effect was produced in other places'.[65] While there may be some dispute as to whether the miracle was necessarily astronomical in character as portrayed in II Kings, in the Isaiah account 'it is expressly said, that "the sun returned," and not merely that "the shadow went backwards"'.[66]

As in the case of the Red Sea narrative, the Critical scholars here employ their tools of literary and historical criticism in their evaluation of the miracle. Two commentaries give us the flavour of the Critical approach. First, Bennett in the Polychrome Bible. He writes that the quotation in vv. 11 and 12 of Joshua 10 is 'poetic and figurative';

> it seems, however, to have been misunderstood and taken literally by subsequent editors. It means simply: May God grant us victory before the sun sets.... there is no reason to suppose

> that a miracle happened.[67]

The problem is that 'the narrator', commenting in prose on the poetic fragment, has misunderstood it. Cooke writes:

> He interprets Joshua's adjuration as a prayer, which Jehovah answered by causing the sun and moon literally to stand still for Israel's benefit....[68]
>
> The figurative language of poetry came to be understood as describing literal fact.[69]

As is often the case, the Critical writers do not discuss the credibility of the reported miracle or its nature. Their allegation of error in the Biblical writer's understanding of the original record with which he works serves to separate the text of Scripture from the actual (and non-miraculous) event. The 'miracle' in this case is nothing more than an accretion of tradition.

Barnes' approach, in the Cambridge Bible, to the Hezekiah story, is similar. He implies that a development in tradition between the form of the story in II Kings and that in Isaiah has heightened the miraculous element:

> It is to be noted ... that in Kings it is the shadow, not the sun itself, which returns, whereas in Isa. xxxviii.8 it is said that the sun returned. This difference is important.[70]

Farrar, in the Expositor's Bible, is willing to grant some historical foundation for the narrative, with

> one of these remarkable but rare effects of refraction - or, as some have conjectured, of a solar eclipse ... which ... seemed to take the advancing shadow ten steps back.[71]

He is convinced that it was a natural occurrence, and that the 'miracle' lay in its opportune timing. He actually suggests that Isaiah saw the phenomenon developing before putting his offer to the king![72] But both he and Barnes are prepared to acknowledge that the account has a basis in history.

Of the Conservatives, Espin in the 'Speaker's Commentary' would agree with the Critics that the writer of the prose account in Joshua 'seems to have understood the words of the ancient song literally, and believed than an astronomical miracle really took place'.[73] But, while rejecting the common objections to such a marvel on physical grounds since

> the agent here concerned is omnipotent and omniscient, and could, of course, as well arrest the regular consequences of such a suspension of nature's ordinary working as He could

> suspend that working itself,[74]

he is concerned that there is no clear reference to such an interpretation either elsewhere in Scripture, or in other literature: 'for reasons like these, many commentators have explained the miracle as merely an optical one.'[75] He concludes, however, with some apparent reluctance, that the Scriptural comment in prose on the poetic quotation commits us to belief in a literal miracle of astronomical import.

C.H. Waller, in Ellicott, defends the astronomical view against those who opt for a less miraculous position. He counters the appeal to silence in the contemporary records of other peoples with the question: 'Where are the contemporary records that are silent?' Moreover, this miracle does not stand alone: 'the history of the chosen people in the Holy Scriptures is a series of miracles.' While the account does not forbid the purely 'optical' interpretation, the question its acceptance would raise is, 'Why did Joshua bid the moon stand still as well?'[76] Furthermore:

> And there was no day like that before it or after it. - These words are meaningless, unless the writer intended to convey the idea that there was really a great miracle.[77]

Maclear, in the older edition of the Cambridge Bible, refuses to speculate beyond the evident meaning of the text:

> God hearkened to the voice of Joshua.... the day was miraculously protracted till the end was gained.... How or in what way this protraction of the light was brought about we are not told.[78]

Other writers dwell on the obscurity of the language and its poetic form, with both Lias and Plummer in the Pulpit refusing to commit themselves to a definite interpretation on these grounds.[79] Jamieson, also claiming the poetic form in justification, concludes that:

> the light of the sun and the moon was supernaturally prolonged by the same laws of refraction and reflection that ordinarily cause the sun to appear above the horizon when it is in reality below it.[80]

On the Hezekiah miracle, Conservative opinion is similarly mixed. Ball, in Ellicott, comments on the II Kings passage that 'the sign is evidently regarded by the historian as something

directly involving the Divine agency, i.e., a miracle',[81] but the miracle, according to Plumptre in the same commentary, was limited: 'the most probable explanation of the fact recorded is that it was the effect of a supernatural, but exceedingly circumscribed, refraction.'[82] Jamieson writes similarly:

> The only right conclusion appears to be, that the retrogression of the sun's shadow on the dial was miraculous, accomplished by the omnipotent power of God, but the phenomenon was temporary, local, confined to the notice ... only of Hezekiah and his court.[83]

In a similar attempt to limit the miracle Rawlinson concludes, in one place, that 'refraction' was the 'most probable cause',[84] and in another that 'the true cause' was a solar eclipse.[85]

What may we conclude from these examples? The principal feature that stands out is the preparedness of Critical scholars to use literary analysis to move behind the text towards events that have originated the tradition. In the case of these miraculous narratives, this enables them to peel away layers of later accretion and discover credible events that may have lain behind the later miracle-stories. That avenue is not, however, open to the Conservatives, though Espin, for example, seems tempted by the prospect it offers. While defending what they take to be the meaning of the text as according with reality, they resist the suggestion that later writers have misunderstood earlier, and so heightened the miraculous element in the narratives. They do, however, resort to other explanations that have the result of 'limiting' the miraculous element by preventing its coming into conflict with scientific thinking, but they can do this only by seeking to read out of the text interpretations which sit more happily with the modern world-view. The need to find a credible interpretation is evident in many of the writers. In the most striking instance we have discussed - the third - we find Waller alone in maintaining, first, with the Critics, that the text as it stands tells of an astronomical miracle; and, secondly, with the Conservatives, that whatever the text states actually took place: he alone defends the old position of the pre-Critical scholars.

3 Morality

As we have suggested, the moral problems of the Old Testament were a major factor in the impetus for a new view of the Bible and revelation that swept through British Christian thought during the middle and later decades of the nineteenth century. We confine our attention once more to a few selected examples, as we observe the treatment a number of texts receive at the hands of scholars of differing persuasion.

(i) The Destruction of the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 7:1-5, cp 20:16-18)

The question of how to justify some of the more offensive incidents in the Old Testament had of course been raised before the rise of Critical scholarship. So both the 'pre-Critical' commentaries we examine face the problem in their interpretation of this passage. Scott does so at the greater length, endeavouring to display the coherence of the Biblical view of such action as that described. The nations of Palestine

> had now filled up the measure of their iniquities. Israel was therefore commissioned to execute divine vengeance and they were not only justified in all they did; but they actually offended, and were themselves punished, for not more entirely extirpating them.[86]

While there would have been no excuse for such action on the grounds of conquest alone, the moral grounding for their deed was provided in its sanction by God and in the iniquity of the peoples He chose to dispossess and destroy.[87]

Scott refers the reader to his fuller discussion of the question under Numbers 31:2, where he draws on the argument from the analogy of God's dealings in nature. If, he writes:

> the Lord, instead of punishing sinners by earthquakes, pestilence, or famines, is pleased expressly to command any person or people to avenge his cause, this command justifies, nay sanctifies war, massacre, or devastation. None can at present show such commission; but the Israelites could; for the publick miracles wrought among them, and for their benefit, were as the broad seal of heaven ratifying this commission.... It is therefore absurd to censure Moses, Joshua and Israel, for the dreadful slaughter made by them. God himself passed sentence of condemnation, and employed them merely as executioners.... Death in every case ... is the wages of sin, and all diseases fulfil the counsels of God: why then may he

> not employ the sword of a warrior ... in depriving sinners of their forfeited life?[88]

This robust defence of the commands of God and the actions of His people recorded in Deuteronomy and elsewhere stands in marked contrast to Critical discussion of these texts. The chief Critical response is silence on moral issues. Exceptionally, Driver makes some remarks in mitigation about the Deuteronomy 20 passage, which is concerned with the treatment of conquered cities in time of war. 'Measured by modern standards', he writes, 'it may be deemed severe.' The devastation, however, is said to come only to cities which refuse to come to terms; and, more broadly:

> it is lenient as compared with the barbarities often practised in ancient warfare upon a conquered people; the law implies no sanction or excuse for atrocities ... the torture of prisoners, and other cruelties, perpetrated ... by the Assyrians.[89]

Such an assessment, while providing some excuse for the apparent severity of the Deuteronomy practice, serves also to condemn it. Driver joins other Critics in passing no comment on the yet more difficult passage in Deuteronomy 7 that deals with the ban on the Canaanites. Adam Smith, for example, has no comment to make on the moral questions of either chapter.[90]

In marked contrast, Conservative commentators enter sometimes lengthy discussions of such matters. Harper, for instance, in the Expositor's Bible, draws on the same line of argument as Scott in comparing the natural 'ruthlessness' of God with His commands in Scripture:

> vice and sin are every day bringing men and women and innocent children to death, and to suffering worse than death.... and when the Divine command was laid upon the Israelites to do, more speedily ... what Canaanite vices were already doing, there can be no difficulty except in so far as the effect upon the Israelites is concerned.[91]

Much stress is laid on the over-riding need that Israel should be kept pure from foreign, and therefore idolatrous, influence.[92] The command to destroy and the need for isolation were not

> the end in itself.... The object of giving the people a land of their own, and supremacy among the surrounding nations, was to enable them to prepare the way for Christianity.[93]

The combination of that objective and the fact of the gross idolatry

of the Canaanites together justified the deed.[94] As Clemance writes in the Pulpit Commentary: 'if Israel had no Divine command to this effect, no one would pretend to justify this part of their policy. If they did, it needed no justification.'[95] Here lies both the nub of the problem, and the key to its solution, in Conservative eyes. The behaviour of Israel was a problem for them in a way it was not for the Critical scholars because their doctrine of Scripture committed them to accepting the veracity of the Divine commands recorded in the text. In carrying out such commands Israel was but obeying the will of God. That is to say, the problem for them was not that of, in relative fashion, demonstrating the reasonableness of Israel's behaviour; it was the problem of justifying God's commands.

The Conservative could, however, use this very fact to resolve the questions arising out of Israel's actions. The will of God, as the source of all morality, justified any action taken in obedience to it. The fact that God commanded or approved a deed meant that it was good.[96] The infallibility of Scripture, guaranteeing as it did the accuracy of the reported speech of God, provided the key to the moral difficulties of Scripture.

(ii) The Killing of Sisera by Jael (Judges 4:18-21, cp 5:24)

The traditionally robust attitude to Old Testament morality is particularly evident in the treatment of this story by the earlier commentators. While Scott warns his readers that Jael's conduct 'is not recorded for our imitation in ordinary circumstances',[97] he attributes her action to 'a divine impulse [by which she was] ... led to consider him [sc., Sisera] as the determined enemy of the Lord and of his people'.[98] In moral terms, 'the divine mandate superseded all other obligations'.[99] Mant and D'Oyly, who comment in very similar terms, point out that without 'some extraordinary over-ruling impulse' such deeds as that of Jael and that of Ehud 'would be pronounced censurable for their treachery, however prompted by commendable motives'.[100]

Interestingly, Critical writers do tend to comment on the morality of this passage, unlike that of the preceding. There

are exceptions, however. Thatcher in the Century Bible confines his comment on the narrative to this pithy pair of remarks: 'Women generally drive in the tent-pins when camp is pitched. In the Song (v. 26f) Sisera is killed as he stands.'[101] Such studied detachment implies that the writer feels no compunction to justify the deed reported. F.W. Farrar, one of the few writers of Critical persuasion in Ellicott, attacks the idea of Jael's receiving 'a Divine intimation of what she had to do' as a defence of 'an act of assassination peculiarly terrible and peculiarly treacherous'. The description of the act in chapter 4 is accompanied by this comment:

> the silence as to any condemnation of the worst and darkest features of it by no means necessarily excludes the idea of the most complete disapproval.[102]

When, with the next chapter, Farrar arrives at Deborah's glowing approval of the deed, he is more explicit: 'the morals of that early age were not sufficiently enlightened to understand that treachery and assassination are never justifiable.'[103]

Other commentators are happier about seeing the morality of the deed in the context of the times, though all who record comment condemn it by the standards of their own day. Watson acknowledges that Sisera was 'a coward, a tyrant, and an enemy of God', but though Deborah may have approved the deed we need not.[104] Cooke accepts that 'Jael here receives enthusiastic praise for what strikes us as nothing less than a treacherous murder'. But he adds: 'According to the standards of the time ... it would not appear in this light at all, and such are the standards by which we must judge the morality of the deed.'[105]

The most vigorous attack on the traditional interpretation comes from G.F. Moore in the International Critical Commentary. The 'great searchings of heart among the apologists who have felt it necessary to judge it by the standard of absolute ethics, and justify it to that forum' in fact involve 'morasses of casuistry' and, in any event, 'an unhistorical idea of religion and revelation'. It is simply impossible 'to justify the deed by the standards of Christian morality' without lowering those standards 'to the level of the deed'.[106]

We have already had occasion to discuss a Conservative approach to this passage,[107] but we may briefly survey some commentaries. Jamieson takes a distinctive line, in roundly condemning Jael for her deed and pointing out that in chapter 4 there is no indication of any divine commendation or approval for it. The praise which Jael does receive from Deborah in the following chapter may be considered as follows:

> the eulogy must be considered as pronounced, not on the moral character of the woman and her deed, but on the public benefits which in the overruling providence of God would flow from it.[108]

If such an explanation appears rather contrived, it is interesting as illustrating the degree to which Jamieson feels himself bound by the Song of Deborah in a way that Critical scholars who share his abhorrence at the killing do not.

Hervey shares Jamieson's unease with the deed itself, though to a lesser degree, since the contemporary values were different from those of the New Testament.

> It is impossible for us to view Jael's act in the same light as her contemporaries did, on account of its treachery and cruelty: but we can admire her faith in the God of Israel, her love for the people of God, and her marvellous courage and strength of mind in carrying out her purpose.[109]

A more traditional defence of the deed is found in homily in the Pulpit Commentary, by A.F. Muir, who gives 'several grounds, on any or all of which the deed may be defended'. They are, that values were different then, such that:

> a thing may be comparatively or relatively right which is not absolutely so.... 2. ... that the obligation to tell the truth depends upon the existence of a normal and friendly relation between men; the permission to kill carrying with it that of dissimulation.... 3. Because Jael followed as a mere instrument the impulse of the Absolute.[110]

Muir's second reason is particularly interesting, reflecting an attempt to revise the morals of his own day in the light of those demonstrated in the text of Scripture.

In summary, while Critical scholars, when they comment, universally condemn Jael for what had traditionally been approved, some Conservatives join them in attempting to avoid taking her brief. Others in varying degrees feel obliged to make some comment in justification of either the Song of Deborah, or the

deed as well. The point at which Conservatives are divided is whether the text of Scripture unequivocally indicates that what Jael accomplished was within the will of God; Deborah's standing as a prophetess gives an uncertain status to her pronouncement on the blessedness of Jael.

(iii) Psalm 137

This final example may be discussed briefly. Scott takes a dispassionate view of the psalm, while defending its implications. The destruction of Edom and of Babylon, he points out, has been foretold, and the psalm is therefore:

> a prayer of the church for deliverance, in the predicted manner, with the extermination of her implacable enemies, root and branch, ... and a declaration that the persons employed in executing this vengeance on Babylon, and effecting this deliverance of his people, would be peculiarly favoured ... by Providence; though the work should be accompanied with the retaliation of those cruelties, which had been committed upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem.[111]

The Critics almost wholly refrain from commenting on the moral problems that arise out of the psalm.[112] Briggs and Briggs, in the International Critical Commentary, confine their comment to a note that such a destruction of infants was ancient practice in defence against blood revenge. Cheyne writes that 'the poet opens a window into his own heart. Two sentiments glow there with equal intensity - love for Israel and vindictive hatred for Israel's and Jehovah's foes'.[113] All of these writers evidently wish to distance themselves from the sentiments expressed by the psalmist. A similar tack is taken by Aglen in Ellicott:

> Commentators have in turn tried to disguise and justify the expression of passion. Happily the Bible allows us to see men as they were without taking their rules of feeling and conduct as ours.[114]

Other writers, however, are prepared to defend the psalmist. Maclaren, while acknowledging that his desire is 'not in accordance with Christian morality', says that 'it has been most unfairly judged':

> It is a desire for retribution, heavy as the count of crimes which demands it is heavy.... The most repellent part of the imprecation ... has its harshness somewhat softened by the fact that it is the echo of Isaiah's prophecy concerning

> Babylon (Isa. xiii. 16-18), and still further by the consideration that the purpose of the apparently barbarous cruelty was to make an end of a 'seed of evil-doers' whose continuance meant misery for wide lands.[115]

Maclaren goes on to allude to the need for commentators to visualise the position of the psalmist in Babylon. As Conway remarks in a homily in the Pulpit Commentary, all warfare involves just such atrocities as these: 'even with all the alleviations and mitigations of modern and more Christian days, war does the very things which in these pss many think so wrong'.[116] The destruction of evil is inevitably involved in the establishment and defence of good.[117]

The problem which divided Conservative scholarship in this case was that there is not in the psalms so clear a relation between what is expressed and what is putatively authoritative. Some Conservatives feel it legitimate to regard the psalmists' statements (like those of Deborah) as their own merely, while others feel obliged by their doctrine of Scripture to take up the mantle of the apologist on their behalf. Critical writers, by contrast, do not regard the statements we have considered as of any special significance in themselves, and therefore they may be left without comment.

The doctrine of plenary inspiration, with its corollary of infallibilism, led Conservative scholars to feel they must accept the moral pronouncements and defend the moral deeds which according to the writers of Scripture had the approval of God. In some cases, such as those where legal regulation had been provided for the conduct of war, there could be no doubt as to where the approval of God lay. In others, there was doubt, and there was therefore disagreement as to the cases in which the assumption of infallibility involved Conservative scholars in apology. For the Critics, such problems did not arise, as moral embarrassments, whether in act or law, could be assigned to primitive religious and ethical development, and discussed no further. In the context of commentary, many Critics do not consider it necessary even to say that.

VII
WILLIAM ROBERTSON SMITH, an Evangelical Critic

I am accused of holding a view of the Pentateuchal legislation at variance with the language of the Pentateuch itself.

William Robertson Smith, Answer to the Form of Libel, p 51

Have my countrymen's heads become turnips when they think that they can hold the premisses of German unbelief and draw the conclusions of Scottish Evangelical Orthodoxy?

Thomas Carlyle, attr. J. Macleod, Scottish Theology, p 310

William Robertson Smith[1] provides an illuminating focus for a study such as this. For one thing, the cause célèbre of the ecclesiastical case attracted more attention in Britain than any other similar controversy. Again, unlike the Essays and Reviews debate of two decades earlier, the issue under discussion was plainly Scripture and the question of Criticism. Further, it has with reason been suggested that the Robertson Smith affair and the enormous publicity which it generated had a decisive effect in popularising the Critical position not merely in Scotland, but in England and the United States as well.[2] Robertson Smith is widely seen as the most creative and significant Critical scholar that Britain produced in the nineteenth century; yet he was also a minister, and initially a professor, of the Free Church of Scotland, an evangelical and self-consciously 'orthodox' denomination. For these reasons, among others, his significance is considerable.

If any scholar could combine Criticism with evangelical religion, it was Robertson Smith. He espoused Critical positions which were, in the vocabulary of the day, 'advanced'; yet his defence turned on his repeated assertion that he still adhered to the faith of his fathers, as expressed in the Westminster Confession. He found no conflict between the two.

Our interest in Robertson Smith is limited to this facet of his life and of the 'case' that dominated so much of it.

We begin by sketching his career and explaining briefly the complex course of the procedures taken against him in the courts of the Free Church. Emphasis will fall on matters germane to our subject, in particular, the influences on the young Robertson Smith that affected his theological development, and the question of the authority of Scripture, as it emerged as the central question in the ecclesiastical legal process.[3]

1 The Background

As has been suggested above,[4] it was not until after the third quarter of the nineteenth century that the Critical movement met a sympathetic hearing in Britain. Glover, in his survey of the English scene, writes as truly of Scotland when he states:

> Historical criticism did not get a foothold in England until after 1880. Before that time the reaction of the English to foreign criticism was almost wholly negative.... In 1880 Alfred Cave, writing against Robertson Smith's criticism of the Pentateuch, could appeal to the overwhelming consensus of Biblical scholarship in favour of the traditional Mosaic authorship; ninety-nine per cent of the Biblical scholars of England, Scotland and America, he averred, supported tradition on this point.... Cave was unquestionably correct. In 1880 it was still possible for orthodox Bible scholars in England to consider historical criticism as the contemporary form taken by infidelity in Germany, and confidently to predict the scholarly victory of tradition.[5]

The years of the Robertson Smith controversy therefore preceded - by perhaps a decade - the turning-point in general attitudes to Criticism. So the development of Robertson Smith's distinctive approach to the Critical question must be sought a considerable period before such views were widely held in Britain. As Glover and others have argued, the massive publicity given to the presentation of Smith's convictions before the courts of the Free Church of Scotland contributed significantly to the swing in educated public opinion. As to the origin of Smith's views themselves, the account of his early life and his theological study gives us indications that it is difficult to misread.

On November 8th, 1846, almost exactly a year after his father had left his post as headmaster of an Aberdeen school and been ordained to the new Free Church united parish of Keig and Tough, in the farmhouse that served as a manse was born William Robertson

Smith. He spent his childhood there and in the new manse which succeeded it, and was educated very largely at the hands of his talented father. His biographers record many anecdotes of the precocity and weakness of constitution that alike laid the foundations of his later life. His gifted family was evidently much given to disputation, and William revelled in the questioning of received ideas and the parrying of arguments. 'Nothing pleased him more', his father later wrote, 'than a lively conversation on any subject of interest.'[6] It was to be this combination of lively, questioning intellect and love of debate that would become his undoing before the courts of the Free Church. In the child, of course, curiosity and a penchant for reasoning combined to provide formidable intellectual ability, but it went hand in hand with a pugnacity that, his biographers record, on one occasion led to blows with another boy over the correct pronunciation of the name of a classical author![7] A similar spirit, in which intellectual ability and pride were intertwined, is evident in the tale which follows of academic ambition as, first, prizes, and then appointments, are eagerly sought and generally triumphantly secured. His admiring biographers seem unaware of the persistence with which this less than attractive theme emerges from their portrait.[8]

At the age of fifteen Robertson Smith proceeded, with his younger brother (who was only thirteen), to Aberdeen University; with a bursary, and first place in the competition. Both boys embarked on an immediately distinguished academic career, more than justifying their father's hopes for them. In fact both William's brother George and their elder sister who had gone with them to study in Aberdeen were to die before he completed his course. George - who promised to be at least his brother's academic equal - died in the spring of 1866, and his death postponed William's first visit to Germany, planned for that summer, and prepared for with considerable linguistic study.

The autumn saw the beginning of his divinity course at New College, Edinburgh, as he began to train for the ministry of the Free Church. Black and Chrystal, commenting on the transition from Aberdeen to Edinburgh, write of the earlier period

as one of:

> concentration and strenuous self-discipline, during which he was accumulating intellectual capital and spending hardly anything of what he gathered. In the years which [follow] ... he certainly spared himself as little as he had ever done before, and his progress in mere learning was proportionate. But the leading themes of the history of his theological Lehrjahre are the rapid expansion of his personality under the stimulus of wider experience and the concurrent reactions of his intellect on its inherited traditions as they were re-presented to him by his new teachers and in his new studies.[9]

The 'habit of free inquiry ... and ... turn for criticism formidable even in its beginnings' with which the young Robertson Smith had left Keig had been little applied in the Aberdeen years. One professor had even commented on his lack of originality. But in Edinburgh things were to change.[10] His letters home indicate that he is 'beginning to concern himself quasi-professionally with theology and to reflect systematically on the things of faith'.[11] It is also during these years that the earliest extant theological essays of Robertson Smith date, and they provide fascinating insights into the theological development that took place before, in 1870, he was appointed fresh from his theological studies to the Chair of Hebrew in the Free Church College at Aberdeen. A number of references will be made below to these literary first-fruits, as although they are not mature products of his intellect, they do indicate - particularly as they concern theological method - the bent in which his mind was early set in his theological study, and the influence which the thinkers whose acquaintance he made during his visits to German universities had already achieved.

Black and Chrystal agree with Nelson and other writers in focussing considerable interest on the German visits and the contacts they produced, but also refer to the less tangible influence of one in particular of Robertson Smith's teachers at New College, A.B. Davidson. There is broad agreement that Davidson was largely responsible for preparing the ground for the reception of Critical scholarship in Scotland, although his own position was a moderate one and he persistently refused to be drawn into public controversy over the matter. In the introduction to his commentary on the Book of Job, first published as early as

1862, in language strikingly similar to that of Jowett in Essays and Reviews two years before, Davidson had laid the groundwork of his approach:

> The book of Scripture, so far as interpretation and general formal criticism are concerned, must be handled very much as other books are handled.... the intellectual treatment and examination of them during the process of ascertaining their meaning.... must be mainly the same as the treatment we give to other books.[12]

The emphasised words ensure the fundamental ambiguity of the statement, rendering it capable of two quite diverse readings. But it is clear from elsewhere that Davidson was essentially in agreement with the Critical approach, and although in print he would not over-commit himself, his classes evidently persuaded a generation of Free Church candidates of the acceptability of the new methods (though not the more extreme conclusions) of the new learning.

Apologists for Criticism and its opponents have alike commented on the strategic rôle which Davidson played. Black and Chrystal speak of him reverently 'whose teaching brought the first light into the dark age in Biblical Criticism and Biblical Theology in Scotland';[13] and John Macleod acidly remarks:

> Davidson's teaching, and even more than his positive teaching, his hints and suggestions, became the source of an alien infusion in Old Testament studies in Scotland.[14]

What is more debatable is the suggestion with which Macleod immediately continues: 'Robertson Smith caught the infection and spread the plague'.[15] As we have noted, Robertson Smith's intention to visit Germany antedated his attendance at New College. While the theological and critical opinions with which his German visits and reading would have familiarised him were no doubt in harmony with the 'hints and suggestions' of his Old Testament Professor, it would be mistaken to pinpoint the latter as the sole 'infecting agent'. At the same time, as Black and Chrystal conclude:

> The Higher Criticism was still in leading strings and hedged about with forms and fears, but at least it existed, and through the teaching of Davidson it at once passed, such as it was, into the mind of Smith.[16]

During his New College studies, Robertson Smith spent two

summers in Germany. In 1867 he went to Bonn, a year later than planned, and was much impressed by the more moderate of the theologians and scholars whom he met. He writes, for instance, of Kampenhausen, that:

> he is a very sincere and I believe pious man; in fact, it is quite absurd to regard the heterodox Germans as infidels. Of course I do not mean that such men as Strauss are not infidels. But Kampenhausen, though in regard to some points very heterodox (e.g. he goes about as far as Colenso in the Pentateuch question), is on other points, I may say, strictly orthodox. So far as I can see, he holds quite orthodox views on the person, miracles, etc., of Christ, and lays special weight on the testimonium Spiritus Sancti.[17]

It emerges from this and other passages in the considerable correspondence which he maintained that Smith had come into close contact with certain of the German forerunners of the school of 'believing Criticism' of which he was soon to be a distinguished representative in Britain. In fact, by deliberately avoiding the 'more illustrious Tübingen or Heidelberg faculties', so as to prevent 'exposing himself to the most rationalistic teaching in Germany',[19] he made contact with men far more likely to influence his own thinking; in Nelson's phrase, to 'open his eyes to new vistas'.[20] Apparently, the friendships which he struck with certain of the Germans, and their evident piety, drew Smith strongly in the direction of their espousal of Critical scholarship.

That the summer of 1867 was a crucial period in Robertson Smith's intellectual history is testified by T.K. Cheyne, later his friend and fellow-Critic, who first met him during this visit to Germany. Cheyne later wrote that that summer 'was definitely a turning-point in Smith's life as a student and thinker'.[21] Nelson comments:

> It was after his return from Germany that the first clear indications of a tendency to deviate from the prevailing canons of orthodoxy became evident.[22]

Interestingly, after one of his meetings with Kampenhausen he had written to his father:

> I found him rationalistic, as we should say, that is, he holds that a passage of S.S. can contain no more for us than for the author, and that its full meaning is to be obtained by placing ourselves at the author's standpoint. At the same time, though this view leads him to admit that there may be historical errors in the Bible, and to refer Daniel to the

> period of the Maccabees, etc., he is not a rationalist according to the Germans, who reserve that name for those why deny supernatural inspiration and prophecy altogether. The middle position of K. I do not fully understand and may not have done justice to. Certainly the language in which he spoke of the Messianic Psalms to-day seemed very much orthodox.[23]

It is clear that at this date Smith had not adopted the position - so close to that of Kampenhausen - that would very soon be his own; he did not even quite understand it. He had been for the first time exposed to such a combination of piety and historical criticism, and while he still regarded Kampenhausen as 'rationalistic, as we should say', the different use of the word with which he was now faced and the wholly different understanding of the theological scene forced upon him a re-assessment of his own position.

It was not simply Kampenhausen with whom Smith came into contact. He also heard, at Bonn, Köhler (of whom he wrote, 'he is orthodox'[24]) and Lange ('among the most orthodox of the Middle School'[25]). The school to which all these men adhered was that of the Vermittlungstheologie, which 'was attempting to find an intermediate position between liberalism and orthodoxy'.[26] Lichtenberger writes:

> Between the New Lutheranism which would take the Church back to the standpoint of the confessions and orthodoxy of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth century and the Radicalism which tends to break with historical Christianity together with the supernatural facts and doctrines on which it rests, there has arisen an intermediate tendency which.... attaches itself directly to Schleiermacher....
>
> What the School of Conciliation proposes, is to explain history by the light of the religious consciousness, and the religious consciousness by the light of history. It finds in this relation the nodus of all the difficulties, and the point at which parties usually divide in theory as well as in practice. It is thus, for example, that the School applies itself to show that if supranaturalism and rationalism exclude each other by their false elements, they may be united by their true elements. Thus the former is right in viewing revelation as a manifestation or special impulse of God, and carrying back to it the origin and development of the religious life in humanity. Again, the second is right in supposing that this awakening and development of the religious life have taken place according to rational laws, that is to say, under those conditions which were made for man here below....
>
> Recognising in the person of Christ a character that is normative for the religious consciousness, it extends this character in a certain measure to the testimony which Scripture

gives us of the person of Jesus Christ, as well as the history of the divine revelations. Without admitting either the infallibility of the canon or the plenary inspiration of the text, and while reserving the right to submit both to the test of historical criticism, the School of Conciliation does not the less proclaim the authority of the Bible in matters of religion. The essential point is to define it correctly. 'To submit to authority,' as Marheineke has said, 'is not unworthy of a free intelligence; but what it ought to reserve to itself, is the right to recognise its necessity.'[27]

The principal thinker of the Vermittlungstheologie school was Richard Rothe, and he was to have a 'decisive effect' on Robertson Smith, as the latter acknowledged later in life.[28] When asked to list books and authors which had influenced him, he began 'A.B. Davidson, Rothe (Zur Dogmatik)....'[29] The strength of his indebtedness appears when we consider Smith's essay, 'Christianity and the Supernatural', delivered at the New College Theological Society in January of 1869; the first substantial piece of theological writing considered worthy of preservation by Black and Chrystal. Smith wrote to his father frankly describing the piece as 'very much a rendering of Rothe's ideas from an English starting-point and in English forms of thought'.[30] That Smith should set forth Rothe's ideas as his own but some eighteen months after his first visit to Germany is the more remarkable when we consider the comment he had made before the trip, in explanation of his decision not to visit Heidelberg. At Heidelberg, Rothe was 'at present the most notable man on the Rational side', and Smith felt 'some hesitation in exposing himself to the most rationalistic teaching in Germany'.[31] Evidently it was Rothe's combination of piety (for which he had a reputation) and learning that formed a particular attraction for Robertson Smith. Lichtenberger writes that he was both 'the most original thinker since Schleiermacher' and 'one of the humblest Christians ... of his age'.[32]

The most significant aspect of Rothe's thought for Smith's theological development was his attitude to the Bible; as he himself said in the introduction to Zur Dogmatik: 'My mode of regarding Holy Scripture runs counter to modern orthodoxy.' Significant concessions must be made to the new approach, since 'that which is past can never be called back to life, after history

has buried it'.[33] Lichtenberger writes that:

> Specially noteworthy are [Rothe's] theory of revelation, and his succinct and luminous polemic against the infallibility of the Bible. Rothe insists on a careful distinction being made between Revelation itself and the Bible, which is only the documentary record of it. For a long time theology started from the idea that Revelation consisted in the supernatural communication of a religious doctrine, and identified it with the Bible. This has given rise to a multitude of errors and misunderstandings regarding the use which it is proper to make of the Scriptures, the nature of the authority which may on good ground be attributed to them, and the character of their inspiration. The distinction between Revelation and the Bible is one of the most important conquests of modern theology.[34]

It is therefore no surprise when Robertson Smith, whom Black and Chrystal describe as Rothe's 'disciple', displays both 'a confident affirmation of the fact of a supernatural Revelation', and 'a refusal to assign a special supernatural character to the records in which the fact of that revelation is conveyed'.[35] Nelson writes that on his return from Germany for the new academic year Smith 'embarked on an intensive study of German theological, philosophical, and Biblical literature',[36] including in particular the writings of Kant.[37] This reading:

> would equip him for the task of mediating to the British people the revolutionary findings of the continental Biblical critics. No less revolutionary was the doctrine of revelation by which Smith was to legitimize the critical method. He brought back from Germany the conviction that one could confidently assert the reality of a supernatural revelation in history while denying that the records through which knowledge of the history is conveyed were themselves supernatural or infallible.[38]

The essay on 'Christianity and the Supernatural' enshrined these new convictions. Two chief controversial positions emerge from it, and together they set a pattern for Robertson Smith's thought in the years ahead. First, Smith displays an antipathy to traditional forms of apologetic which has a very modern ring about it. Christian convictions are not hypotheses to be tested and argued for. The 'beliefs' that Christians hold are not 'beliefs' in the sense that they hold them 'till further facts turn up pro, or con' and replace them with beliefs more in tune with the evidence. Such is the procedure in the world of science; but, asks Smith:

> whence the moral warmth that mingles with our discussion of Christianity? Why are we eagerly apologetic in behalf of an hypothesis? What interest can we have to maintain this hypothesis more than any other which will suit the facts equally well? I am sure no Christian would feel a hypothetical Christianity was worth having. And the reason is plain. For the essence of personal Christianity lies in love to a personal Saviour. That such a Saviour really lives and really loves me must be more than a hypothesis if I am really to love Him.[39]

A preferable analogy is with the 'beliefs' which we hold on the testimony of a friend:

> If a man doubts the veracity of my friend, whose pure and guileless character he has had every means of learning, I am bound to resent the insult. A truth that I believe on a friend's testimony becomes morally sacred to me. Here and here only do we find the type of the feeling with which the Christian regards divine truth.

The fundamental problem is that 'history, that merely balances probabilities, is never certain'.[40] Smith's solution is to deny to critical history the last word:

> No criticism can take away from us our personal fellowship with God in Christ - no criticism can withdraw from the Bible its living power as the medium wherein we are brought face to face with Christ; for <u>a personal faith lies too deep to be touched by criticism.</u> All historical certainty rests ultimately on personal belief, and no attack on the Gospel history can have such a weight as is at all comparable to the Christian's conviction of the reality of the historical Christ.[41]

This understanding of faith as ultimately reducible to personal trust is congruent with the second theme of the essay, that revelation is properly seen in personalistic terms. Whereas 'the traditional dogmatic draws only a formal distinction between revelation and the Bible, and often inter-changes these conceptions', no longer is this either possible or desirable. The Bible 'is not revelation but the record of divine revelation', and that not in the formal sense of recording revealed statements but as 'the record of those historical facts in which God has revealed himself to man'. Robertson Smith freely admits that 'of course on this view we can no longer speak of revelation as a revelation of truths'. What then is the content of revelation? 'The knowledge given in revelation is not the knowledge of facts, but the knowledge of a Person. What God reveals is simply <u>HIMSELF</u>.'[42]

Although some interpreters have, with Nelson, seen this essay as constituting a 'frank denial of the doctrine of an infallible Bible';[43] nowhere does Smith explicitly own such a position. But time and again infallibility is played down and claimed to be unimportant. So 'the complete proof of the normative authority of the Bible' arises irrespective of 'any inquiry' into its infallibility;[44] such a (personalistic) view is 'far more true to Christian experience than that which seeks in Scripture primarily a body of infallible truth';[45] our faith must rest 'not on the Bible as an infallible book, but on the historic manifestation of God in Christ';[46] we may be sure that the Bible 'gives all that is required' while 'we may or may not be able to satisfy ourselves of the infallibility of Scripture'.[47] In the light of Smith's later eager espousal of 'infallibility' before the courts of the Free Church this less guarded language is interesting. In any event, the implications of the paper were not lost on some of its hearers. Four weeks later a motion lay before the Theological Society 'to tie down all members of the Society to absolute acceptance of the statements of S.S.', proposed evidently with Smith and two others in mind, who were 'accused of habitual contempt of Scripture'. It is a significant and revealing comment on the theological opinions of Smith's contemporaries that it was only with difficulty that a seconder was found for the motion, and that it received no other support. In a college which numbered Bannerman and Davidson amongst its teachers, it is evident in whose direction the wind was blowing.[48]

The summer of 1869 witnessed a further semester in Germany, this time in Göttingen. Black and Chrystal write that the lectures of Ritschl were 'the most important experience of the summer';[49] and Robertson Smith himself described them in glowing terms: 'I have never heard anything so interesting on a theological subject as Ritschl's lectures', he wrote.[50] He started then a lasting admiration for and friendship with the man, later listing him along with Davidson and Rothe as a decisive influence upon him,[51] and, at the height of the controversy in Scotland, referring to him as the 'father' of the 'Aberdeen heresy'.[52] We shall not here attempt a survey of his theological system, as it suffices

to remark that in his influence on Robertson Smith he differed little from Rothe; but we may note that while vigorously repudiating the traditional doctrine of Scripture, he maintained a high concern for its authority and its relevance to Christian theology.[53]

In the autumn of the same year, the new and fixed form of Robertson Smith's theological opinions was evidenced in a further paper delivered to the Theological Society. He declaimed:

> how vain it is to try to meet the new currents of thought from the old point of view in which the attitude of the theologising subject is one of mere receptivity over against Scripture.... the only way to escape the wave of violent unbelief which has already swept over the German Churches is frankly to recognise the need for progress in our theological conceptions.[54]

It is very clear that as his theological studies drew to a close Robertson Smith had marked out a definite position for himself. It evidently depended largely on the German influences to which his visits and his reading had opened him. His candid adoption of Rothe's ideas holus-bolus and his determination to re-think orthodoxy in the light of the new streams of critical and theological thought brought him inevitably into a position of potential conflict with the self-conscious orthodoxy of the church in which he had been brought up. But the conflict was delayed, and when Smith delivered the paper we have quoted above on November 8th, 1869, he had already decided to allow his name to go forward for the vacant Chair of Hebrew at the Free Church College in Aberdeen. He received, in the manner of his time, many testimonials and considerable public support from inside the church as well as out, and was elected by the General Assembly of May, 1870, with a substantial majority over his nearest competitor. His father could remark in a letter that 'it is marvellous how much satisfaction Willie's election has given to the <u>whole</u> Church'.[55]

The attendance at the Theological Society meeting the previous November had, it appears, been poor, owing to the inclemency of the weather; 'and yet', remark Black and Chrystal:

> it is perhaps surprising that Smith's plea for a progressive theology did not startle and alarm at least some of his hearers. What he had to say was, in some of its aspects, revolutionary. All theology, he insisted, must advance and develop according to the new experiences of the new generation; but

> the progress he advocated was 'impossible as long as the absolute truth of the existing confessional dogmatic is maintained'.[56]

By contrast, maintained Smith, 'the real restorers of believing theology' were 'followers mainly of Schleiermacher'.[57] In that same seminal paper he went on to prophesy that: 'We are at this moment surrounded by indications that the movement which has passed over Germany is about to pass, mutatis mutandis, over us.'[58] Soon he was to play a central rôle in fulfilling his own prophecy.

We have so far been following the progress of Robertson Smith's thought in relation to theological questions in general, rather than to the critical issues which were to become of such importance. It is evident that Smith's growing and enthusiastic engagement with the Vermittlungstheologie and the related ideas of Ritschl had thoroughly prepared him for the adoption of the fruits of Critical scholarship, which during the 1870's were finally set in the classic form of the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis. As his attention was turned professionally toward the study of the Old Testament and away from the many interests that had hitherto had a claim to part of his energies, Smith began to assimilate the latest in Continental Biblical scholarship. There is no evidence that in 1870 he had already come to a particular view on critical questions. Indeed, after a study of the MS remains of Smith's lectures during the first half of the 1870's, Nelson can conclude that 'despite Smith's frequent rhetoric on the theory and method of historical criticism he had surprisingly little to say about many of the concrete problems'.[59] Insofar as they are touched upon, the tendency is toward relatively conservative positions in the earlier years, particularly toward that of Ewald over against the more 'advanced' Critics. Nelson illustrates the change which evidently took place during those years. The lectures on prophecy delivered in 1870-71 include the following remark:

> These considerations not only serve to show that Moses was a real person (not now denied) but are part of the many proofs that the subsequent history is only intelligible on the supposition that his work is such as the Torah describes to us.[60]

In 1876 the subject returned and the notes were revised. In the later recension this sentence is deleted.[61] A transition

had taken place, for which the ground had been laid before 1870; but it was not accomplished until afterwards. Nelson comments:

> What distinguishes Smith in 1870 from many of his colleagues was his willingness to seriously entertain [sic] critical theories. By virtue of the theological orientation he had experienced under the influence of Kant, Rothe and Ritschl he was free to treat the Bible as a fallible witness to revelation. But only gradually did Smith become convinced of the correctness of a particular critical analysis accounting for the history behind this record.[62]

Whenever this took place, by the year 1875 Robertson Smith had submitted a number of articles to the Encyclopaedia Britannica at the invitation of the editor, Professor Baynes of St Andrew's, on theological subjects. The position of Baynes and the Encyclopaedia was made clear in the brief preface to the first volume. After referring to the current struggle between old and new ideas in the areas of philosophy and religion, Baynes proclaims:

> In this conflict a work like the Encyclopaedia is not called upon to take any direct part. It has to do with knowledge rather than opinion, and to deal with all subjects from a critical and historical rather than a dogmatic point of view.... Its main duty is to give an accurate account of the facts and an impartial summary of results in every department of inquiry and research.

Robertson Smith contributed a number of pieces to volume two, and others, including one on the subject 'Bible', to volume three. He accepted the formula we have quoted as the basis on which to work. On December 7th, 1875, the third volume was published.

We shall sketch here the outline of the proceedings which stemmed from the publication of the article 'Bible' and which filled the next five years of Robertson Smith's life. In the spring and summer months of 1876 a series of reviews of the third volume of Britannica appeared, including several critical of this article. The matter was raised in the Free Church with the College Committee, which administered the affairs of the church's divinity colleges on behalf of the Assembly, and the Committee proceeded to invite Smith to an informal discussion (with Candlish and Rainy) to avoid the need for formal measures. Meanwhile, a pamphlet - the first of many - had appeared, attacking Smith's views expressed in the article, and Smith replied in the press with a stinging rebuke to his critics. In August the matter

was raised at the Commission of Assembly, and considerable agitation followed. The College Committee eventually reported in these terms:

> On a survey of the whole case, the Committee do not find sufficient ground to support a process for heresy. The article defends some positions as to the history of the Biblical books, which in point of fact have frequently been associated with a denial of inspiration, having formed part of theories which explain the history of the Bible on the footing of excluding Divine influence.... the Committee ... cannot profess to be surprised that the article, from what it contained and what it omitted, awakened anxiety or created suspicion with reference to Professor Smith's views on the inspiration of Scripture. But ... they are glad to be assured by Professor Smith that his faith in Deuteronomy, as part of the inspired record of revelation, rests on grounds apart from his critical conclusions, viz. 'on the witness of our Lord and the testimonium Spiritus Sancti.'
>
> The question remains, no doubt, whether Professor Smith has maintained critical opinions which, in their own nature, subvert the doctrine he professes. It is in this connection that those views of Professor Smith come into consideration, of which his theory of Deuteronomy is the leading instance. The Committee have freely stated their view of that theory, that it appears liable to objection, and is fitted to create apprehension. The objection to it is, that it ascribes to the author of the book the use of a device, or as Professor Smith prefers to term it, a literary form, which to many thoughtful minds, familiar with the subject in all its aspects, appears unworthy and inadmissible in connection with the Divine Inspiration and Divine Authority of such a book as Deuteronomy. The apprehension felt in connection with it is, that the theory of an inspired and non-deceptive personation will not generally command assent; and then the admission that the statements of the book regarding Moses are not true in the obvious sense, will operate, it may be feared, in the way of unsettling belief. Notwithstanding, the Committee are not prepared to say that Professor Smith's views infer a denial on his part, either directly or constructively, of the doctrine that, in the books of the Old and New Testaments, the revelation of God and the declaration of His will are committed 'wholly unto writing,' and that 'they are all given by inspiration of God to be the only rule of faith and life.' The Committee lay stress on this, because the doctrine now referred to is not only the technical ground in the Confession which must regulate ecclesiastical procedure, but is really the essential and fundamental truth which it is vital to maintain.... They cannot withhold the expression of their opinion that the article, in opposition to Professor Smith's avowed intention, is of a dangerous and unsettling tendency.[63]

The Commission of March 7th, 1877 referred the matter to the Presbytery of Aberdeen, under whose immediate jurisdiction Robertson Smith stood; and after questioning him the Presbytery referred

the matter back to the Assembly. At the meeting of the Assembly Smith indicated that he would be pressing the Presbytery to reduce the charges against him to the form of a libel, and to suspend him from his teaching duties until the matter was resolved. He thereby committed his opponents to formal proceedings. In due course Aberdeen Presbytery formed a committee to frame a libel against him, and in February 1878 it was duly presented.

We shall not here attempt to explain the complexities of the legal processes of the nineteenth-century Free Church, reflecting as they did the archaic practices of the contemporary criminal law. Suffice it to say that the libel was founded on the doctrine of the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith. It was maintained that to deny, to tend to deny, or to adopt a neutral attitude towards, this doctrine, 'are severally offences, especially in a Professor of Divinity'.[64] These offences were alleged to have been committed in eight particulars, denominated primo, secundo, tertio, &c., and passages in which the writings of Robertson Smith were said to have expressed such erroneous opinions were appended. Smith responded to this document with his 64-page pamphlet the Answer to the Form of Libel.

Aberdeen Presbytery duly debated the matter during February and March of the year. Under the first general charge of contradicting the Confession, Smith secured the rejection of each particular. He objected to the charge of 'tendency' as such on the ground that it was unconstitutional; but the Presbytery confirmed its validity by a majority of one. On appeal to the Synod of Aberdeen this verdict was reversed, but the Synod eventually passed an appeal against that decision and against the Presbytery verdicts on the particular of the first general charge up to the Assembly. The third general charge, that of 'neutrality', was dismissed. Robertson Smith had meanwhile been preparing a further pamphlet to defend himself from the second, 'tendency', charge; he proceeded to publish it in May as the Additional Answer to the Libel.

The General Assembly met in May and sustained the appeal

on secundo under the first general charge, which alleged that Smith's views on Deuteronomy denied the Confessional doctrine. Appeals on the other charges were either dismissed or withdrawn, except for that on the relevancy of the second general charge, of 'tendency', which was effectively upheld, although in a re-drafted form which was duly referred back to Presbytery. In September Aberdeen Presbytery found itself considering the matter again. It dismissed all eight particulars under 'tendency', and decided to refer the Assembly decision on Deuteronomy under the first general charge to the Assembly once more, since there was uncertainty as to what action would be appropriate. The Synod referred the ensuing appeals on the particulars under 'tendency' up to Assembly.

Accordingly, the Assembly of May, 1878, considered the matter once more. Discussion of the 'tendency' charges was set aside in the interest of the much more important secundo of the first. The upshot was the passing of a motion by a majority of one (320 to 321) to serve the libel on Robertson Smith:

> The General Assembly instruct the Presbytery of Aberdeen to meet, and take immediate steps for having the libel, as regards the second particular of the first alternative charge, served in due form upon Professor Smith; they also instruct the Presbytery, in the event of their finding the libel sustained, either by the admission of Professor Smith, or by adequate proof, to suspend him from his functions, professorial, ministerial and judicial, till the next meeting of Assembly, reserving final judgment in the case till the meeting of Assembly; and the Assembly now appoint a Committee to adjust the libel in this view, excluding from it all parts that are not now applicable, and to report at a future diet of this Assembly.[65]

The third and final draft of the libel, approved by the Assembly before it rose, charged that Robertson Smith had expressed the opinion that:

> the book of inspired Scripture called Deuteronomy, which is professedly an historical record, does not possess that character, but was made to assume it by a writer of a much later age, who therein, in the name of God, presented, in dramatic form, instructions and laws as proceeding from the mouth of Moses, though these never were and never could have been uttered by him, - an opinion which contradicts or is opposed to the doctrine of the immediate inspiration, infallible truth, and Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures as set forth in the Scriptures themselves, and in the Confession of Faith as aforesaid.[66]

In fact the Presbytery, unsympathetic to the course of action being pursued, responded by referring the case back to the Assembly yet again, the Synod concurring in their decision.

In May of 1880 a compromise measure was put to the General Assembly. The libel would be abandoned, and Smith, retaining his ministerial status, be removed from his Chair on the ground that he no longer commanded the confidence of the Church. This motion had the support of those who had been leading both the prosecution and the defence. In the event, and greatly to their surprise, a small majority emerged against this alliance and for a more liberal conclusion to the case, with Smith simply 'admonished' by the Moderator for being 'blameworthy' in the 'unguarded and imcomplete statements' he had made in the past, and urged to ensure that 'by your future line the confidence which the Church has expressed shall be found to have been fulfilled'. Robertson Smith contritely responded that he had learned a 'weighty lesson', and added that 'I hope that by His grace I shall not fail to learn by it'.[67] It was to be only three weeks before the whole question was re-opened.

On the very day that the Assembly rose (June 1st, 1880), Smith's article on 'Animal Worship and Animal Tribes among the Arabs and in the Old Testament' appeared in the Journal of Philology; and seven days later his piece on 'Hebrew Language and Literature' was published in the eleventh volume of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. By the 15th of the month a memorial and petition to the College Committee had been laid before the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and at the meeting of Presbytery on the 30th it was decided that, instead of being sent to the College Committee, a more effective destination for the petition would be the Commission of Assembly itself. The Commission met in August, and appointed a Committee to report back to its October meeting, at which Smith himself would be 'cited to appear for his own interest'. As a result of the decision of the later diet he was once more suspended from his Chair for the coming academic year. The Assembly of May, 1881, finally brought the whole protracted litigation to an end. Robertson Smith was dismissed from his post. The chief ground of his dismissal was that his

article on 'Hebrew Language and Literature' contained 'statements which are fitted to throw grave doubt on the historical truth and divine inspiration of several books of Scripture', and that the manner in which he dealt with the subject showed 'a singular and culpable lack of sympathy with the reasonable anxieties of the Church as to the bearing of critical speculations on the integrity and authority of Scripture'. So, without once more entering into the question either of the correctness of Smith's views, or of whether they actually denied the Confessional doctrine, the Assembly adjudged it expedient that Robertson Smith should no longer teach its students since he no longer retained its confidence.[68]

A host of interesting questions arises out of the case. Opinion was and is divided as to the wisdom of the action taken by the church, and its moral and theological justification. Henderson speaks of 'that discreditable day in 1881 when a majority of the Free Church deemed it expedient that one man should die for the people',[69] and there have been many who have agreed. It is possible, on the other hand, to agree with the theological concerns of those who pressed the action against Smith, and yet to deplore some of the methods by which he was ultimately forced out of his post. At the same time, it is common for those who sympathise with Smith's fundamental position to regret the temper in which he dealt with his critics and some of the language with which he conducted his campaign. These are not, however, our concerns. Nor, specifically, is the impact which the case had on the reading religious public, who followed it so avidly, though there is broad agreement, as we have indicated, that 'the case became a great educator to the Free Church', and to other churches;[70] and that, as Henderson puts it, for better or worse 'Robertson Smith ... lit a candle in the Church that will not soon be put out'.[71] The 'earliest full-scale discussion' of 'the conflict between historical criticism and orthodox theology' was also one of the most, if not the most, influential.[72]

The later career of this remarkably gifted man may be briefly told. Black and Chrystal recount how in the years of the case he was considered, formally or informally, for chairs of Mathemat-

ics (Glasgow) and Logic (Aberdeen), as well as more than one in a field more closely related to his current scholarly work (at Harvard and Johns Hopkins). There had also been discussion about involving him full-time in the work of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and it was on this task that he eventually settled, becoming editor in succession to Baynes. But the focus of his academic life soon removed from Scotland to Cambridge, and from the Old Testament to the comparative studies marked out by his essay on 'Animal Worship and Animal Tribes'. He was appointed first Lord Almoner's Reader in Arabic, then University Librarian, and finally - and briefly - to the Sir Thomas Adams Chair of Arabic. The perspective in which he came increasingly to view the study of the Old Testament is evident from the content, and indeed the title, of the Burnett Lectures which he was invited to give in Aberdeen, and which proved to be his last and major work: The Religion of the Semites.

2 The Doctrine of Holy Scripture

We have already discussed in some detail the prevailing theological climate in the middle of the nineteenth century with respect to the doctrine of Scripture.[73] To set Smith's views in their immediate context, let us instance the position of his teacher James Bannerman, a representative of the orthodoxy of the fathers of the Free Church. His major work, Inspiration: the Infallible Truth and Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, was published in the year before Smith left Aberdeen University for New College. It has been described as 'a classic statement of the views of Scripture that prevailed in Scotland at the time';[74] and it represents a position which one authority has presented as holding the field 'almost without question' until as late as 1875.[75] Its thesis is evident from the opening sentences of Bannerman's preface:

> At a time like the present, when we are so frequently taught that the Bible cannot be believed in the same way that words spoken by God are to be believed, the following treatise, as an attempt to vindicate the ancient and catholic faith of the Church of Christ on the subject, can require no introduction or apology.
>
> The doctrine of the infallibility of the one record which

> we have of a supernatural revelation from Heaven, is so vitally connected with the grounds of a Christian's faith, and affects, in a manner so fundamental, the certainty of all that we believe and hope with reference to God, that the importance of it can hardly be over-estimated, viewed whether in its theological or practical bearings. Beyond even its strictly doctrinal and religious aspects, the controversy about the inspiration of the Bible opens up the inquiry as to whether or not we have any objective standard of truth for man ...; and this, in turn, leads directly to the questions both of the supernatural character and of the historical veracity of the Scripture volume.[76]

Bannerman sets out in very considerable detail his position over against that of those with whom he takes issue. He distinguishes himself from the most common (and most orthodox) alternative:

> Both admit that, in a miraculous manner unknown to us, the revelation from God was conveyed to the mind of the prophet originally in a form of absolute purity and infallible truth.
>
> The point at which the divergence between the two views begins is after the revelation was made by God, and made perfectly, and when it came to be recorded by man. According to the views of the advocates of plenary inspiration, the same supernatural power which guarded the revelation ... from all incompleteness and mistake, also presided over the act by which he [sc., the writer] recorded it in the Bible; so that the result of this second step in the process, no less than of the first, was miraculously guarded from error, and the product was a record marked by infallible truth and divine authority.[77]
>
> With those who deny inspiration, on the other hand, it is held that the miracle ceased when the revelation was once made, and that the recorder of it was left to his own natural powers of memory, and judgment, and expression.... The degree of accuracy and of exemption from error which belongs to this record as an exhibition or transcription of God's mind, is confined within the limits assigned in ordinary cases.[78]

Specifically with regard to the question of revelation, Bannerman suggests a twofold definition as 'the substance of the immemorial and all but universal doctrine':

> In the first place, they [sc., the Scriptures] contain a communication of truth from God supernaturally given to man; and in the second place, they contain that truth supernaturally transferred to human language, and therefore free from all mixture or addition of error. These two propositions.... express also the whole substance of truth in connection with this matter which the Scriptures themselves affirm, when they plainly assert their own claims to the belief and obedience of man, but by their silence scrupulously avoid any declaration as to the process of inspiration, or the modus agendi of the divine power in controlling the mind and pen of the Scripture writers; and they embody or imply the whole of what we mean by the assertion that the Scriptures of the Old

> and New Testament are all, and are alone, the inspired word of God.[79]
>
> ... a supernatural communication of truth from God, and a supernatural transference of that truth to human language, are the two elements, the presence of both of which makes up, and the absence of any one of which destroys, the true idea of inspired Scripture.[80]

'Revelation' may thus be defined as 'the presentation of objective truth to a man in a supernatural manner by God', or as 'the objective truth so presented'.[81] It follows logically that revelation is 'co-extensive with Scripture';[82] and, in consequence, that it is:

> in no way restricted to any particular class of fact or truths, to the exclusion of others, but equally embracing all, of whatsoever character they may be, that are recorded in the Bible. Looking exclusively to the language and statements of Scripture itself, there is ... no ground whatever for assigning the name and character of revelation to any one of its facts and truths, which there is not for assigning to them all; and conversely, there is no ground whatever for excluding any of its facts and truths from the category of a revelation, which there is not for excluding them all.[83]

Put in another way, Bannerman observes that an 'eclectic principle'

> of choosing and rejecting from the statements of Scripture what seems to [the interpreter] best, can hardly be applied ... with safety ... because there is no method of determining to what extent it may or may not be carried.... The advocates of the theory do not pretend to furnish a key to the difficulty of separating between them [sc., truth and error] and yet a separation must be made, when undeniably we have the presence of both in one record, and when we are forced by what is due to God's truth to decide between it and man's imperfection. The difference cannot be less than unspeakably important between a volume, all whose statements are vouched by the truth and guarded by the authority of God, and thus entirely separated from human error and imperfection, and another volume in which errors of memory and judgment, of opinion and expression, mingle with a message from Heaven to an indefinite extent, and when there is no principle or criterion supplied by which to discriminate between them.
>
> The same observations, though in a less degree, are applicable to every scheme of inspiration short of the plenary one.... The difference between what is infallible and what is not, is not diminished by the consideration, that what is fallible may be less frequently and less extensively chargeable with error according to one theory, than according to another. In none of them is there any principle or criterion to be found, by which it is possible to draw the line between what is divine and what is not.[84]

That, then, is the context in which the Robertson Smith controversy was set. As Nelson comments:

> No legitimate ground was afforded on which to formulate objections based on supposed historical inaccuracies, apparent contradictions in the text, or on the difficulty and mystery of revealed truths.... Not only was the criticism of the inspired record beyond the ken of man, but.... Bannerman thus denied the cardinal tenet of historical criticism; that Scripture is to be analyzed by the same methods as any other ancient literature.[85]

We turn now to examine Robertson Smith's doctrine of Holy Scripture, assessing first his conception of method in Biblical study.

(i) The Critical Method

We may note several particular emphases in Robertson Smith's approach to the interpretation of Scripture. Together, they build up a picture of his understanding of Critical study in which a scholar from his own theological tradition might properly engage.

a. Theological Questions and Literary Questions

First, there is a distinction to be drawn between what are properly theological, and what are properly literary, questions. This distinction lies at the heart of Smith's defence against the charge of heresy, and we find him citing it during the first debates before Aberdeen Presbytery. Of the offending article in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, he states:

> I wrote with a distinct understanding that I was dealing solely with the literary question, and that there would be another article, the name of which I think is to be 'Holy Scriptures', in which the dogmatical position in regard to the Bible was to be treated.... The two questions are distinct.[86]

The literary question refers to the mere form of the revelation; the theological, to its substance. In illustration he cites the example of a mould made to contain pure silver. The silver remains pure, whatever the imperfections of the mould itself. Such a conception is distinct from that of the Bible as the pure Word of God admixed with the impure word of man, in any proportions:

> if the Bible only contained the Word of God mixed with man's word like silver in the leaden ore, then no one could use Scripture for his own religious life who did not possess the requisite scholarship, as in the other case the man could not get silver without having a smelting furnace.[87]

The question, therefore, is of 'imperfections of form as distinct from the substance', which 'was all divine, and that in such a sense that it appeals as a divine and infallible guide to the

simple Christian'.[88]

On another occasion Smith states that his writings:

> are neutral to the doctrine of inspiration only in the innocent sense in which a Hebrew Grammar is so. The doctrine is not mentioned by me because it does not bear on the subject before me.[89]

In respect of the article 'Bible' it is, he maintains, undeniable that he has set out his intention with clarity:

> The present article seeks to give a general account of the historical and literary conditions under which the unique literature of the Old and New Testaments sprang up.[90]

In a sense, however, such an assertion could only beg the question put by those with whom he disagreed.

Later in the case, in his Open Letter to Dr. Spence (Clerk to Aberdeen Presbytery), he once more sets forth his position:

> I ... do not believe that anything is gained by mixing up religious questions with philological and literary investigation into the text of the Bible. The Bible must be looked at from all sides, and the two points of view are mutually complementary. Each helps the other, but each has its own right and its own method.[91]

This appears on the surface to represent a simple and straightforward distinction which, while allowing full play to the investigative powers of the scholar, maintains intact the faith of the church. In fact, the matter is by no means thus simple. In the writings of Robertson Smith himself we have evidence of the inconsistency and lack of resolution which the practical outworking of such a principle brings in its train. For example, in The Old Testament in the Jewish Church, Smith says at one point that the Bible has 'absolute value' and that this value derives from the fact that 'the inspired writers were so led by the Spirit that they perfectly understood, and perfectly recorded, every word which God spoke to their hearts'.[92] This is a very strong statement for Smith to make, since it appears to contradict the principle we have just outlined by positing, first, a vital connexion between the human form and the divine substance of Scripture; and, secondly, by suggesting that the 'absolute value' of the Bible is a result of (and is therefore dependent upon) such a connexion. It is true that this may simply evidence a looseness of speech on Smith's part; but such a looseness

itself points to a lack of structure in his thought. Time and again he asserts the 'religious' value of the Bible to its reader; and here, for once, he suggests that that value may depend on a connexion for which his overall view has no place. Some pages later an analogy is introduced which, while different in emphasis, is also itself confusing. He suggests that the authority of the Bible lies in the fact that in it we have the record of a conversation of God and man. It is a normative record: 'In the Bible, God and man meet together, and hold such converse as is the abiding pattern and rule of all religious experience.' Smith considers that in this simple fact lies the key to all those puzzles about the divine and human sides of the Bible; and he proceeds to set it over against the 'mediaeval' intellectualist concept of revelation, which he attributes to his opponents.[93] 'The first condition to a sound understanding of Scripture is to give full recognition to the human side', since 'we can no more understand the Divine Word without taking [its human writers] into account than we can understand a human conversation without taking account of both interlocutors.' But then we meet this (italicised) statement: 'the whole business of scholarly exegesis lies with the human side.'[94] It is the other interlocutor Who is now absent, and the essential question is raised: what access does Criticism give us to the 'divine' aspect of Scripture, which Robertson Smith, for one, eagerly avowed to exist?

At all events, in principle Smith would have us study the literary phenomena of the Bible 'like other ancient books'.[95] It is the same method that is employed in all scholarly appreciation of ancient documents:

> Historical criticism may be defined without reference to the Bible, for it is applicable ... to every ancient literature and every ancient history. The critical study of ancient documents means nothing else than the careful sifting of their origin and meaning in the light of history.[96]

It is necessary because:

> Ancient books coming down to us from a period many centuries before the invention of printing have necessarily undergone many vicissitudes.... [The critic] must review doubtful titles, purge out interpolations, expose forgeries....
>
> In a word, it is the business of the critic to trace back

> the steps by which any ancient book has been transmitted to us, to find out where it came from and who wrote it, to examine the occasion of its composition and search out every link that connects it with the history of the ancient world and with the personal life of the author.[97]

But, at the same time, Robertson Smith declares:

> Of this I am sure at the outset, that the Bible does speak to the heart of man with words that can only come from God, and that no historical research can deprive me of this conviction, or make less precious the divine utterances that speak straight to the heart.[98]

In such a manner Smith seeks to hold the Critical scholarship in one hand and the piety of Westminster orthodoxy in the other. As we have briefly instanced, on those occasions when the relations between the two sides of Scripture are touched upon, the result is imprecise and ambiguous. Nevertheless, for Smith the disjunction between them was sufficient to enable him to take up increasingly radical Critical positions while maintaining the piety in which he had been brought up.[99] He could vehemently assert:

> I ask it to be observed ... that I uphold the canonicity and inspiration of Deuteronomy as strenuously as my most determined opponent can do.... I am willing to have my views on Deuteronomy tested by even the strictest doctrine of plenary inspiration, and I am confident that they are able to stand the test.[100]

What his opponents sought to show was that 'in consistency with' his Critical conclusions about the origin of Deuteronomy Smith '<u>ought to reject</u> its inspiration'.[101] That was the problem.

b. <u>Criticism arises from the Text of Scripture</u>

Robertson Smith argued that for anyone sufficiently informed of the facts of Scripture and of the problems they raised for the traditional understanding of it, there could be no alternative to Criticism. In his early essay on 'The Work of a Theological Society', he had made it clear that he considered the traditional attitude to Scripture inadequate:

> how vain it is to try to meet the new currents of thought from the old point of view in which the attitude of the theologising subject is one of mere receptivity over against Scripture. The constant appeal to Scripture proof in the sense of the old dogmatic, combined with an apologetic activity in justification of the conception of Scripture on which this system of proofs rests, cannot yet dispose of doubts which are based on the perception of the real inadequacy of very much in the present attitude of the conservative theology. And thus the only way to escape the wave of violent unbelief

> which has already swept over the German Churches is frankly to recognise the need for progress in our theological conceptions.[102]

Smith is not unaware that 'every view of this kind is liable to be accused at first sight of being rationalistic',[103] but that does not deter him. He is confident, as he states nine years later at the height of the heresy proceedings, that:

> my opinions proceed on a legitimate endeavour to deal with difficulties of which traditional views as to the literary history of the Bible give no adequate account.... I see insuperable difficulties in the way of supposing that all the Pentateuchal laws are of Mosaic date, and that Deuteronomy gives a literal transcription, written down by Moses himself, of the last speech of the lawgiver.[104]

It is from the evidence of the sacred text itself that the Critical reconstruction arises:

> I think that a full view of the critical evidence would convince most men, as it has convinced me, that there are greater dangers to faith in inflexible adherence to traditional views as a necessary part of orthodoxy, than in the frank admission that the Pentateuchal legislation is not in all its parts directly Mosaic.[105]

At the same time, Smith acknowledges, to the average reader the matter may not be so obvious:

> the fact is that the difficulties of the critical theory lie on the surface, while the difficulties of the current view are apparent in their full force only when the Pentateuch is read with minute attention.[106]

Robertson Smith's employment of such arguments was with a view, first, to countering the suspicion that his position was simply a result of the adoption of rationalistic presuppositions; and, secondly, to suggesting that since his arguments actually had their root in the Bible, they were 'Biblical' arguments and therefore not a challenge to the authority of the Bible but an indirect outworking of it. So, in the Additional Answer we read:

> I am anxious to bring out two features in criticism which entitle it to a respectful hearing and to toleration in the Church. I ask the reader to observe in the first place that the critics build their opinions on a sedulous search of Scripture, and on examination of the minutest points in the Old Testament record; which is surely more honouring to the Word of God than indolent acquiescence in traditional views. Not one of the arguments which I have adduced is of rationalistic complexion, or in any way touches the supernatural character of the history of revelation and the sacredness of the record.

> The facts on which criticism builds are Scripture facts, of which the Church is bound to take account. The critical view strives to be the Biblical view, and it is not less Biblical because it is not content with what lies on the surface of the record, but seeks to penetrate the inner structure of the Old Testament.[107]

'My whole appeal', he declares in an echo of Chillingworth's famous phrase, 'is to the Bible and the Bible alone.'[108]

Smith claims therefore the right for his arguments to be met Biblically, that is, on their exegetical merits. The libel, he suggests, is intended to 'suppress' his views without actually disputing them as interpretations of the text of Scripture.[109] The attempts which <u>have</u> been made to explain his evidence in an alternative fashion he describes as 'isolated and arbitrary'.[110] 'No one', he asserts,

> will rejoice more than myself if further study shall offer a better solution to the difficulties that are found in the Old Testament, and set in still clearer light the truth and harmony of the supernatural Revelation.[111]

We may perhaps comment that what Smith sought was not the dismissal of his interpretation to the satisfaction of the (great majority of the) church, or indeed of the consensus of English-speaking Old Testament scholars, since such a repudiation already existed in the orthodox apologetic. He sought a rebuttal which would satisfy him, which is another matter. Moreover, his demand to be met 'Biblically' was indeed met, although not in the fashion in which he desired. The whole ground of the heresy proceedings taken against him was the attribution in Scripture of portions of the book of Deuteronomy to Moses. The fact that he differently interpreted these statements (as literary devices) was from the church's point of view beside the point. That Smith sought a response entirely on his own terms, and failed to receive it, and that the Conservatives within the church answered him very largely on their own terms, serves to highlight the distance that lay between the two opposing views, and how little common ground they shared.

Thus, for example, when Robertson Smith claims that 'the old method of explaining difficulties and reconciling apparent contradictions would no longer be tolerated in dealing with other

books'[112] he evades the issue on two counts. His opponents could and did claim that in this judgement he was mistaken; that the Critical method applied to Scripture was something other than historical criticism merely. But more fundamentally, they could and did claim that the question at the back of the debate was precisely whether the Bible ought to be studied by canons appropriate to other literature. As we have seen, Bannerman, for one, explicitly denied what Smith here presupposes. His contention that the Critical results:

> are broad and intelligible, and possess that evidence of historical consistency on which the results of special scholarship are habitually accepted by the mass of intelligent men in other branches of historical inquiry,[113]

is not merely an expression of personal opinion (with which the mass of competent scholars in Britain and America would have disagreed); it is a conclusion dependent upon the assumption that Christian Old Testament scholarship is strictly analogous with 'other branches of historical inquiry'. We tread here near the heart of the debate.

c. The Freedom of Scholarship

The freedom of scholars to arrive at Critical conclusions should they be the direction in which they find the evidence to lead was argued for by means of a double appeal to the Reformation principles of Biblical interpretation and to 'science'.

In the first place, Smith adopts the customary 'scientific' terminology for the Critical enterprise. He describes it as 'progressive Biblical Science' and 'modern Biblical Science',[114] and he observes that, increasingly:

> thoughtful and earnest students of the Bible will continue to examine the history of revelation for themselves, and will not be satisfied with conclusions that do not commend themselves to the scientific as well as to the religious consciousness.[115]

Without any reserve he can maintain:

> the popularisation of science in all its branches, which is so characteristic of our age, has accustomed men to examine the foundations of current belief, and to acquiesce in no results that have been reached or are defended by methods which science condemns. Historical science, in particular, has made vast strides.... The records of our religion are historical documents, and they claim the same treatment which

> has been so fruitfully applied to the other sources of ancient history.[116]

A consequence of the 'scientific' character of Critical enquiry is the confidence with which Critical conclusions may be held. In an obiter dictum in his latest work, The Religion of the Semites, he describes Kuenen and Wellhausen as 'the men whose acumen and research have carried this inquiry to a point where nothing of vital importance for the historical study of the Old Testament religion still remains uncertain'.[117]

In the second place, hand in glove with the scientific nature of Critical scholarship is the theological appropriateness of such a method. 'I rest my defence', Smith writes:

> not merely on the technical grounds that they [sc.,'critical opinions'] do not transgress the limits of doctrine defined in our Standards, but on the higher ground that they are conceived in the Spirit of true Protestantism which ... allows no human authority to limit the freedom of hermeneutical research or to determine beforehand what conclusions shall be drawn from the study of the sacred text.[118]

This argument, appealing as it does to the strongly Protestant character of Presbyterianism, is often to be found on Robertson Smith's lips. For example, in the Answer to the Form of Libel he states that the key to the meaning of Scripture 'must be sought in no ecclesiastical tradition or a priori theory'.[119] He endeavours to found this argument historically in the Reformation:

> the ... conception of the essential nature of the Christian faith, to which the Reformation awoke, contained within it, at least implicitly, the necessary principles of all true Criticism and Exegesis.[120]

Thus, 'the principle of a historical treatment of Scripture is at bottom ... the principle of the whole Reformation exegesis'.[121] We find this statement in his (1870) paper on history and the Bible, and he proceeds to argue from it that the Reformation churches have been true to themselves and their evangelical faith to the degree to which the principle of historical interpretation has been observed. It is interesting to note that this is a further instance in which some rapprochement between the Critical and the religious reading of Scripture is attempted. He writes that we:

> must regulate all our exegesis and all our criticism by the great principle that we are to seek in the Bible, not a body

> of abstract religious truth, but the living personal history of God's gracious dealings with men.[122]

This statement is both intriguing and confusing. It is not clear the significance which Smith intends to attach to the word 'regulate', or how one might perform the task in the way he indicates (especially with reference to 'all' our criticism). What is clear is that Smith here acknowledges in much the same way as do his opponents a principle prior to 'exegesis and ... criticism' which is to 'regulate' it. It is a religious principle, and while it is distinctive from the principles which for the Conservatives performed the same function, its status and its justification are parallel with theirs.[123] A limit, however ill-defined, is placed upon the free course of Criticism. Thus we are given a rare glimpse behind the claims of objectivity and neutrality that pepper the Critics' descriptions of their studies.

The heritage of the Reformation, however, was not in accordance with its 'first promise', according to Robertson Smith.[124] 'Methods of interpretation really inconsistent with Protestant principles crept back in detail.' And, in consequence, the seventeenth century saw the 'original living conception of God's Word' begin 'to grow stiff and cold'.[125] Matters will be set to rights only when men see that 'the right conception of God's Word permits, nay, demands, the freest study of the sacred record by all the methods of historical and literary criticism'.[126]

Smith, therefore, calls together scientific method (with all its prestige) and the sola Scriptura principle (with its fundamental theological significance) as allies in his fight for the freedom of Biblical scholarship. 'I have acted', he pleaded, 'on the conviction that loyalty to the Bible, in a Protestant sense, is inseparable from loyalty to the approved laws of scholarly research.'[127]

d: The Nature of History

As we have seen,[128] the development of a sense of the coherence of historical events and the organic nature of history as a whole were of fundamental significance in setting the stage for the nineteenth-century development of Biblical Criticism. Robertson

Smith was deeply interested in the significance of the new idea of history for his study of Scripture.

We may consider this theme in his writings under two aspects. The first is apologetic. It is very interesting that his early essay on 'Christianity and the Supernatural', written while a student at New College, has as its object the integration of the 'supernatural' (including, specifically, the incarnation) and the organic idea of history, which might at first blush seem to contradict it. Thus, the rôle of 'inspiration' is to bring the 'objective datum' of revelation 'into real union with man's consciousness. This done, the revelation is already a power in the world; an historical fact not to be got rid of.'[129] Similarly, the fragment on 'Prophecy and Personality', preserved by Black and Chrystal from his early years, argues as follows:

> While it is true that history and prophecy alike are in all their parts the work of God, it is equally true that both in all their parts are products of human personality. Some ... may object to this statement as evacuating prophecy of its properly supernatural character. But ... just as history, in spite of the supernatural factor that has always been present in it, and still is present in the working of the divine Spirit in believers, - as history is notwithstanding in all its parts the product of human personality; so it is with prophecy also. The prophet in becoming a prophet never for one instant ceased to be a man. Not one element of his personality was destroyed or suspended; the prophetic inspiration added something, but took nothing away.... many who claim to have risen above a mere mechanical theory of prophecy yet seem to think that what the Spirit presented to the prophet was a ready-made thought or complete visionary picture of a purely objective kind which he was then able to lay hold of, embody in words, and utter. Now this view seems to me not so much false as meaningless.[130]

Smith goes on to develop, on the basis of contemporary psychology, a complex argument, the burden of which is that, for a prophet actually to apprehend the message he has been given, it cannot simply have been received by him objectively, but must rather have been produced (by the Spirit of God) out of the natural elements already present to his mind. That is:

> there was no double process, a divine word and a running accompaniment of suggested human reverie; on the contrary, so much stimulus was given as kept the associations in the right course and produced precisely the required effect, <u>without suspending any natural law</u>. This clearly was only possible when the <u>prophet's mind</u> was in natural harmony with the revelation.[131]

Thus:

> The apparent objectivity of any revelation does not prove that it was given objectively to the prophet, but only that his involuntary mental energy built it up from subjective elements.... This revelation is built up from its subjective elements by a natural process of association determined in its direction, partly by the material it is working on, but in great measure by the habitual character of the prophet and his emotional state at the time. In this respect the prophetic vision and Divine word do not differ from an ordinary dream or reverie.[132]

We quote these somewhat convoluted passages to show the adumbration of a theory of the relation of natural and supernatural which had already formed in Robertson Smith's mind in his years as a student. He was clearly impressed by the need for an organic understanding of the psychology of the prophet, and the beginnings of a similar conception of the relation of revelation and history as a whole are evident in the essay on 'Christianity and the Supernatural'. So in the interests of apologia the young Robertson Smith sought to integrate the supernaturalism of Christian orthodoxy with the spreading naturalism of nineteenth-century thought, and to do so by defining the former in terms that come close to a particular way of understanding the latter. Supernatural prophecy in itself is no different from natural prophecy; but it may be legitimately understood as altogether different in its significance, from the perspective of faith.

Secondly, we may consider the more explicit but in some ways less reflective statements of the later scholar. The obvious starting-point is the first major published theological essay he wrote, his review article 'On the Question of Prophecy in the Critical Schools of the Continent', published in the April 1870 issue of the British Quarterly Review, the first of a number of similar surveys he was to undertake for that periodical. It includes the bold and explicit statement: 'The fundamental principle of the historical criticism lies in the conception of the organic unity of all history.'[133] This axiom is justified by the reflection that history is 'the life and life-work of mankind continually unfolding in one great plan'.[134] There is thus an 'inner kernel of true life' to which Critical scholarship can and must penetrate, and which in itself is 'the last criterion

of historical authenticity'. In consequence, 'a tradition that violates the continuity of historical evolution and stands in no necessary relation to the conditions of the preceding and following age must be untrue'.[135] Robertson Smith introduces these statements as descriptive of the Critical School he is discussing, but proceeds to identify himself with them, with the caveat (which remains undefined) that he does so to the extent that they do not directly conflict with the idea of a revealed religion. So, in the following year, he can write of 'the gradual development of God's saving purpose from age to age', and chastise the Reformers and their successors for the 'tendency' to 'ignore the historical character of Revelation'.[136]

By contrast, taking seriously the historical nature of the Christian religion involves believers in historical study. In his preface to the Old Testament in the Jewish Church Smith points to the 'great value of historical criticism ... that it makes the Old Testament more real to us'. It is required because 'Christianity can never separate itself from its historical basis on the Religion of Israel'.[137] Yet to accept this is not to abandon, but to uphold, the Providential interpretation of history. 'It was no blind chance, and no mere human wisdom, that shaped the growth of Israel's religion.'[138] 'The living God is as present in the critical construction of the history as in that to which tradition has wedded us.'[139]

The end result of Robertson Smith's espousal of the principle of the organic unity of history, sacred and profane, is found in his volume of lectures The Religion of the Semites. As a result of historical research, 'the growth of Old Testament religion can now be followed from stage to stage', such that:

> it is now not only possible, but most necessary for further progress, to make a fair comparison between Hebrew religion in its various stages and the religions of the races with which the Hebrews were cognate by natural descent, and with which they were historically in constant touch.[140]

But Smith proceeds immediately to correct himself:

> Our subject ... is not the history of the several religions that have a Semitic origin, but Semitic religion as a whole in its common features and general type.[141]

of development:

> It is a notion of value to the interpreter, for it enables him to grasp the whole and distinguish the parts. It saves him from the necessity of maintaining that the Old Testament is one and the same everywhere; that the books of Moses contain truths or precepts, such as the duty of prayer or the faith in immortality ... which no one has ever seen there. It leaves him room enough to admit all the facts of the case.[49]

By extension, many scholars used the idea of development to take the place of the older concept of Messianic prophecy as the means of linking the testaments and pointing forward to Christ from the Old. Adam Smith, for one, ties the concept together with Christ's attitude to the Old Testament law, and with the conflict in the Old Testament between priest and prophet. Christ and the Apostles have judged much of the institutions, laws and ideals of the Old Testament as 'rudimentary and of transient worth'. Moreover, in this process of development there is to be found the justification for the work of Criticism, which attempts to plot the stages by which 'the primitive revelation of God to men was carried onward and upward to its summit in Christ Himself'.[50]

The Critics did not dispute the traditional claim that the Bible was 'inspired', or that it was in some way closely related to the self-revelation of God.[51] They saw their task as that of determining the nature of inspiration and revelation from the phenomena presented by the documents themselves. The fundamental point at which they differed from the traditionalists was the degree of uniformity with which Scripture was conceived to be inspired and revelatory. This connected with the idea of development. Driver writes of inspiration as:

> a Divine afflatus which ... conferring upon Scripture its remarkable manifoldness and variety, enabled holy men of old to apprehend, and declare in different degrees and in accordance with the needs and circumstances of particular ages or occasions, the mind and purpose of God.... The Bible is like a lantern with many slides, some transparent, others more or less opaque, and the flame burning within does not shine through all with the same pure and clear brilliancy.[52]

Driver, as a cautious exponent of the Critical position, was well aware of its uncertainties. As an historical discipline, he maintained, its conclusions all rested upon degrees of probability, depending on the grounds on which any particular Critical

'The ancient religion of the Semitic peoples' in its essential organic unity has a 'direct and important bearing' on the origin of Biblical religion.[142] For example:

> when we wish thoroughly to study the New Testament doctrine of sacrifice, we are carried back step by step till we reach a point where we have to ask what sacrifice meant, not to the old Hebrews alone, but to the whole circle of nations of which they formed a part.[143]

But Smith goes further than this. 'I take it for granted', he writes, that:

> when we go back to the most ancient religious conceptions and usages of the Hebrews, we shall find them to be the common property of the group of kindred peoples, and not the exclusive possession of the tribes of Israel.[144]

He illustrates his meaning and reveals the implication of this line of thought by calling attention to this observation:

> In the history of old Israel before the captivity nothing comes out more clearly than that the mass of the people found the greatest difficulty in keeping their national religion distinct from that of the surrounding nations. Those who had no grasp of spiritual principles, and knew the religion of Jehovah only as an affair of inherited usages, were not conscious of any great difference between themselves and their heathen neighbours.... The whole history of Israel is unintelligible if we suppose that the heathenism against which the prophets contended was a thing altogether alien to the religious traditions of the Hebrews. In principle there was all the difference in the world between the faith of Isaiah and that of the idolater. But the difference in principle, which seems so clear to us, was not clear to the average Judaean, and the reason of this was that it was obscured by the great similarity in many important points of religious tradition and ritual practice.... what I may call the natural basis of Israel's worship was very closely akin to that of the neighbouring cults.[145]

While claiming that such a conclusion readily emerges from a reading of the Old Testament narrative, Robertson Smith substantiates it by appeal to the fundamental organic principle:

> Nations sprung from a common stock will have a common inheritance of traditional belief and usage in things sacred as well as profane, and thus the evidence that the Hebrews and their neighbours had a large common stock of religious traditions falls in with the evidence which we have from other sources, that in point of race the people of Israel were nearly akin to the heathen nations of Syria and Arabia.[146]

We see then in Smith's latest writing the outworking of a theme explored in his earliest: that the religious understanding

of the Biblical history as supernatural and revelatory is distinct from the historical understanding of it as organically and naturally related to that of the surrounding peoples. We may very differently assess the significance and meaning of the different religions; but there is a continuity between Biblical and non-Biblical religion such that we may speak of 'the religion' of 'the Semites' as an entity incorporating and explaining both. The supernaturalness and uniqueness of revealed religion is something evident to the believer, but to the man not gifted with spiritual insight - to the 'average Judaean' - the 'natural basis of Israel's worship' appears in such full continuity with the natural religion of the other, heathen, Semites, as to be virtually indistinguishable from it.

e. Criticism and the Confession

Robertson Smith maintains that he does not deny the Westminster Confession of Faith. The claims of his critics that his Old Testament scholarship is incompatible with the Confession are not valid.[147] The separation of 'form' and 'substance' prevented the Critical method from affecting the latter, which was 'all divine' and could remain 'a divine and infallible guide to the simple Christian', Criticism notwithstanding.[148] In his first published Answer to the libel Smith claims that while, positively, he wishes to defend Criticism as in the 'Spirit of true Protestantism', it is also the case that, negatively, 'the critical opinions embodied in my writings ... do not transgress the limits of doctrine defined in our Standards'.[149] As we have noted above, Smith nowhere attempts a comprehensive definition of how 'form' and 'substance' may be distinguished in the Bible. He resists the common notion that only parts of Scripture are inspired in the full sense, and therefore infallible; but we are not given a systematic account of the content of the 'infallibility' that remains in a Bible that, as he frequently avers, is as literature and history much like any other human product. At all events, the notion of 'infallibility' is, as we have seen, not important to him. From the way in which at least one reference in his essay on the Supernatural is introduced, it would be possible to conclude that he is dissociating himself from the concept:

'We may or may not be able to satisfy ourselves of the infallibility of Scripture, but we can never doubt that Scripture gives all that is required to attain a true image of our Lord.'[150] It is evident that such early statements as this are significantly and candidly less 'orthodox' than statements on the same subject made during the years of the ecclesiastical process; in this example, it might be said that he is here implicitly repudiating the traditional meaning of the term (as applying to the 'substance' and also the 'form' of Scripture) while later he defends his adhesion to a revised meaning that is suited to his Critical position. At all events, as we shall see below, when dealing with the question of Deuteronomy Smith attempts a *via media* between the Conservative rejection of the Critical hypothesis and the open-ended acceptance of the *fraus pia* view, the consensus of Critical thought at the time. He readily repudiates the latter as inadmissible in explaining the origin of a canonical book.

We may note, therefore, that two related stratagems are adopted, consciously or not, in order to reconcile the Critical method and conclusions with the Westminster Confession's doctrine of Scripture. The idea of infallibility is re-defined, somewhat nebulously, by means of the form/substance disjunction; and Critical hypotheses are re-habilitated by the excision of their more unpalatable elements. As we shall see in the discussion of the Deuteronomy controversy below, both these factors were found particularly relevant in Smith's defence before the courts of the Free Church.

f. Infallibility and Convention

Partly in response to the problem we have just discussed, Robertson Smith openly admits that:

> The great difficulty which is felt about this [*sc.*, Critical] view is, of course, that under it certain things in the Pentateuch can no longer be taken as plain literal statements of fact, but receive a figurative or conventional sense.[151]

Smith erects, in defence of his view of Deuteronomy, an elaborate defence which depends on a certain understanding of literary conventions during ancient times, and, in particular, at the date of first publication of the book in question. If, he urges,

a statement in Scripture which by our standards we would regard as untrue or misleading were to be properly understood by its original readers as merely conventional, then we may have no a priori objection to the inclusion of such a statement within our canonical corpus as an 'infallible' statement. We cannot therefore properly object, a priori, to a method of study which yields such a conclusion. It remains an open question whether such 'conventions' as Smith suggests were actually understood by the first readers of such books as Deuteronomy, assuming them to be pseudonymous. But he confidently asserts that Critical methods have themselves laid bare the ancient situation. Thus, in the 'Bible' article, he writes:

> And now a single word on the way in which these various elements, mirroring so many sides of the national life, and dating from so various ages, came to be fused into a single history, and yet retained so much of their own identity. The Semitic genius does not at all lie in the direction of organic structure. In architecture, in poetry, in history, the Hebrew adds part to part instead of developing a single notion.... This process was facilitated by the habit of anonymous writing, and the accompanying lack of all notion of anything like copyright. If a man copied a book it was his to add [sic] and modify as he pleased, and he was not in the least bound to distinguish the old from the new.[152]

Such an understanding of ancient literary practices undermined the traditional reading of the entire Old Testament, and opened the door for a fresh assessment of questions such as those of authorship and literary integrity without, at the same time. apparently overthrowing confidence in the veracity and divine inspiration of the Scripture concerned.

We note then the emphases which emerge in Robertson Smith's discussion of method in Biblical study. His fundamental premise is that theological and literary questions are distinct and capable of separation; there is no doctrine at issue in the free pursuit of scholarship. Moreover, Criticism arises in response to study of the text, study that is both scientific and in line with the principles of the Reformation. Its conclusions are not incompatible with the Westminster Confession, for they do not call into question what Scripture is actually saying, when it is understood according to the literary conventions of ancient times.

(ii) The Nature of the Bible

a. The 'Answer to the Form of Libel'

Robertson Smith's first literary response to the debate about his orthodoxy was the Answer to the Form of Libel set before the Presbytery of Aberdeen in 1878. It includes full discussion of the question of Scripture, indeed the fullest such discussion of Smith's understanding of the subject that was to appear from his pen. We therefore turn to it as our guide to his doctrine of Scripture.

Smith begins by attempting to show that the Westminster Confession and the Reformers concurred in 'studious abstinence from all attempts to define the process by which the Bible came to be what it is'.[153]

> This unanimous doctrine of the Reformed Churches is so constructed as to make the authority of the Bible altogether independent of questions that may be raised as to the human agencies by which the book came into its present form.[154]

A number of reasons are advanced. For one thing, Smith emphasises that in II Timothy 3:16 theopneustos refers not to the writers of Scripture but to Scripture itself: it is the Bible that is inspired, not 'the writers in actu scribendi'. Such, he maintains, is the united testimony of the Confessions. On the contrary, inspiration is ascribed to the Scriptures because, first, 'in the Scriptures the revelation of God and of His will first preached through the Spirit by the apostles and prophets is now reduced to writing', and, secondly, because of the witness of the Spirit in our hearts which 'assures us that in these Scriptures ... God still speaks to us'.[155] The Westminster Confession says no more than that 'it pleased the Lord, having revealed himself and declared his will to the Church, "afterwards to commit the same wholly unto writing"'.[156] In consequence, Smith can declare his own faith in Scripture in these terms:

> If I am asked why I receive the Scripture as the Word of God, and as the only perfect rule of faith and life, I answer with all the fathers of the Protestant church, 'Because the Bible is the only record of the redeeming love of God, because in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us, in Him, His will for our salvation. And this record I know to be true by the witness of His Spirit

> in my heart, whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul.'[157]

He therefore finds that he can adhere wholeheartedly to belief in the inspiration of Scripture.

Smith then turns to 'the other predicates of Scripture adduced in the libel, viz., infallible truth and divine authority'.[158] He maintains that because of the emphasis of the Confession on the witness of the Spirit as the ground of the Christian's belief in both authority and infallibility, 'the infallible truth and divine authority of Scripture are distinct, not only in degree, but in kind, from the general veracity of the Bible, as a credible account of the historical origins of our religion'. The latter:

> is to be proved by the ordinary methods of historical evidence, and is not matter of divine faith depending on a special action of the Spirit in our hearts, but may by a due use of natural means be reached by any candid thinker.[159]

It is the <u>significance</u> of 'the Bible story', which 'rises above the analogy of ordinary history' and is thus outside the scope of historical investigation, that the Spirit guarantees:

> 'the knowledge of God and of His will which is necessary to salvation'. It is only to this knowledge that the witness of the Spirit extends, and therefore, the infallible truth and divine authority of Scripture, of which according to the Confession we have no other proof than the witness of the Spirit, means simply infallible truth and divine authority as a record of God's saving revelation of Himself and His will.[160]

Robertson Smith proceeds to adduce five supporting considerations.

First, in the Confession 'nothing is said of the Scriptures, except so far as they are the record of spiritual truths', and since 'it is as the record in which this revelation is wholly committed unto writing ... that the Bible is called the Word of God', 'it is only in this relation' that:

> the Confession can fairly be held to declare the Bible to be of infallible truth and divine authority, and not in relation to any expression that may be found in Scripture, which touches neither faith nor life, and does not affect the record of God and His revelation.[161]

Secondly, he seeks to distinguish between the Bible and the Word of God. Smith accepts the traditional proposition that 'Scripture <u>is</u> the Word of God', but refuses to allow the

copula the full force of identification. Some of the confessions 'distinguish between the Word of God, as it was first spoken by Revelation, and the Scriptures in which that Word was afterwards recorded'. Calvin and other writers employ the word 'contain', to point up a similar distinction. Robertson Smith is concerned to maintain that the idea that the Bible merely 'contains' the Word, in the sense that it contains other things too, is false. 'What is not part of God's Word, is no part of Scripture.'[162] At the same time, 'we must distinguish between the record and the Divine communication of God's heart and will which the record conveys'.[163]

> And so the conclusion that Scripture is of infallible truth and Divine authority will be more correctly expressed by saying that Scripture records or conveys to us the infallible and authoritative Word of God.[164]

Thirdly, the objection that this 'leaves an opening for doubt whether the Scripture is a correct and adequate record'[165] is answered by the fact that the Spirit 'accompanies the Word as it is brought to us in Scripture' and 'testifies directly to the infallible truth of the Divine Word, the spiritual doctrine, the revelation of God Himself, which is the substance of the record'.[166]

Fourthly, and reaching to the heart of the matter, Smith contends that:

> This argument is irrefragable, and a sure ground of faith to any one who keeps clearly in view the fundamental Reformation position that the Word of God is nothing else than the personal manifestation to us for salvation of God and His will.

Which is indeed correct, provided the premise on which it is based is accepted also:

> So long as we go to Scripture, only to find in it God and His redeeming love, mirrored before the eye of faith, we may rest assured that we shall find living, self-evidencing, infallible truth in every part of it, and that we shall find nothing else.[167]

Thus:

> since Scripture has no other end than to convey to us a message, which, when accompanied by the inner witness of the Spirit, manifests itself as the infallible Word of God, we may for practical purposes say that Scripture is the infallible Word

> of God. Scripture is, essentially, what it is its business to convey. But we cannot invert the proposition and say that infallibility, which belongs to the divine substance of the Word, extends also to the outward form of the record, or that the self-evidencing power of the Word as a rule of faith and life extends to expressions in Scripture which are indifferent to faith and life.[168]

Fifthly and finally, Smith evidences the fact that in its teaching on 'faith' the Confession, having stated broadly that 'by this faith a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word', instances only 'spiritual' features in illustration:

> The Word consists of God's commands, threatenings, and promises, addressed to our faith, and above all of the gospel offer of Christ to us. These and none other are the things which faith receives as infallibly true, and the Confession nowhere recognises an infallibility which is apprehended otherwise than by faith.[169]

He concludes:

> It is, therefore, wholly illegitimate to refer to the Confession as settling any question as to the human form of the Bible, or as to possible human imperfections in the Scriptures in matters that are not of faith.... The whole case against me rests on the assumption that the doctrine of the infallibility and authority of Scripture has another sense and a wider range than that assigned to it in the preceding pages; and that it is capable of being pressed to preclude enquiry, by ordinary exegetical and historical methods, into questions which have nothing to do with faith and life.[170]

Robertson Smith then turns to speak in defence of the impugned Encyclopaedia Britannica articles. While 'heartily' agreeing with the Confession, 'in the sense ... stated':

> I have held myself at liberty to discuss all literary questions about the books of Scripture on the usual principles of literary evidence, and to adopt such conclusions as the evidence justifies.... These conclusions in no way conflict with the supernatural truths which Scripture presents for our faith on spiritual evidence; but they do conflict with inferences which are sometimes drawn from the Confessional doctrine of Scripture by pressing the mere words of the Standards beyond the limits which the whole scope of the doctrine must fairly be held to prescribe. In other words my views ... are inconsistent with the ascription to certain Biblical books of a formal infallibility.[171]

The counter-assertion would imply that 'we cannot stop short' of admitting that the Bible 'contains no error or inaccuracy of even the most trivial kind'. Smith offers a number of cases

in which Calvin admits the apparent presence of error in the text of Scripture, and suggests that the orthodox assumption that such errors are those of copyists rather than the original authors 'is merely an hypothesis devised to support a certain theory of the inspiration of the writers'.[172] On the contrary, we should face the fact that:

> God has not deemed it unworthy ... that in the Bible which we read His infallible and self-evidencing Word is presented to us in a vehicle which contains some marks of human imperfection, some verbal and historical errors.[173]

Smith then turns to a lengthy discussion of the propriety of the Critical method. 'It is plain', he asserts, 'that the only honest and reverent way of dealing with the letter of Scripture is to allow it to speak for itself.' The phenomenon of the Bible teaches us two things: if it is to carry a 'trustworthy' record of God's revelation, then it must:

> be such that we can feel sure that it tells us all we need to know of God and His will, and that it tells us this with unvarying and infallible truth, not mingling God's message with doctrines of man.

On the other hand:

> Everything more than this is a question of the letter, and not of the Spirit, a question of the human agency employed, and not of the Divine truth conveyed. We are all agreed that the agency was not merely mechanical, that the original organs of revelation, and the subsequent writers of the record were not mere machines, but exercised a certain human freedom and spontaneity. They wrote each his own style, they argued each after his own habit of thought, and so forth.[174]

In consequence, 'the Bible is a part of human literature as well as the record of divine revelation', and it is a Christian right and duty to subject it to analysis in the same fashion in which other literary works are studied:

> I rest my general defence on the contention that what I have written as to the origin, composition, meaning, and transmission of the books of the Bible does not go beyond the limits of this legitimate and necessary research.[175]

Four considerations are urged in support.

First, as he has already averred, the fundamental 'orthodox Protestant doctrine of Scripture' is maintained. His Critical investigations may have omitted much of a doctrinal nature, but such a limitation was demanded by the nature of the approach

he had taken to the question. His article was:

> confined to the discussion of literary questions, which, lying outside of the region of spiritual evidence, can be exhausted by ordinary means of investigation, and do not affect the place of the Bible, in the proof of the doctrine of the Church, or in the praxis of personal religion.[176]

Secondly, Smith discusses the detailed intentions of the articles in relation to the criticisms levelled at them in the libel. Among other matters he takes up the comments made at his use of literary criteria to decide whether Job and the Song of Solomon are to be read literally or figuratively. He asserts, 'I endeavour to ascertain the literary principles by which the authors were guided'.[177] Contrary to the general assumption that ancient authors worked by much the same criteria as modern, Smith contends that their standards were actually significantly different. Such phenomena as artificial speeches were acknowledged literary devices in the best historians. 'But', he continues, 'according to the libel nothing like this can occur in the Bible history.'[178] On the specific question of the Pentateuch, he writes:

> Carrying out the right of enquiry into the literary construction and true meaning of Biblical books, I am constrained to admit that some of the Pentateuchal laws are not Mosaic, and the ascription of them to him cannot be taken literally.[179]

An historical development is evident in the law codes preserved in the Pentateuch, and it is explained on the supposition of an original core of Mosaic legislation constantly added to, 'under adequate prophetic authority'.[180] Therefore, 'the ascription of a law to Moses could no longer be taken literally, but could only indicate that the law was as much to be observed as if it came from Moses.'

> There is no deceit implied in the use of an artificial literary form proceeding on a principle well understood, and so it is a pure question of literary and historical evidence whether the Hebrews did at one time recognise and use such a principle.[181]

Robertson Smith is convinced that 'in my criticism I have used no rationalistic assumptions',[182] and it is therefore incumbent on his opponents to challenge his literary conclusions on literary grounds. He adds a note in the matter of errors of fact:

> I have written on the assumption that it must be determined by observation of the facts, and not on <u>à priori</u> considerations,

> whether a Biblical author has sometimes made a slip in matters of fact - whether, for example, the Chronicler has misunderstood the phrase 'ships of Tarshish,' which he found in the book of Kings, and whether he has sometimes taken it for granted, without evidence, that a usage of his own time applies to an earlier period. If such questions cannot be settled on the merits, there is no such thing as a science of history.

But; as if to sweeten the pill, he continues:

> on all such points I avoid hasty conclusions, and am unwilling to go beyond an admission that in some cases the evidence points to a possible, or at most a probable, error.[183]

Thirdly, Smith maintains that, far from constituting an assault on the supernatural in Scripture, Criticism as he practises it upholds it, since the Old Testament would be inexplicable without the acknowledgement of 'the supernatural hand of a revealing God'.[184] The presence of 'mistakes' in books like Chronicles does not nullify the usefulness of the books. On the contrary, the recognition of error and interpolation and the discernment of literary structure and purpose enable the books to be properly understood. The result of Criticism

> is not that these books [sc., Deuteronomy and Chronicles] are fraudulent and historically worthless, but that it is possible by fair enquiry to gain a view of their true method, and meaning, which disposes of the objections that have been brought against them, and enables us to draw from them fresh instruction.[185]

Fourthly, a division is suggested between two uses of the Bible. On the one hand, we have 'the Bible as a collection of historical records, adequate when properly used to give a consistent view of the course of God's revelation to his ancient people'.[186] In this rôle, 'it may be left to scholars to vindicate by historical arguments the truth of the supernatural story of the Old Testament.' On the other hand:

> to the ordinary believer the Bible is precious as the practical rule of faith and life in which God still speaks directly to his heart.... the simple Christian turns to his Bible, assured that he can receive every message which it brings to his soul as a message from God Himself.[187]

'No criticism', maintains Smith, 'is dangerous which leaves this use of Scripture secure.' And such is his Criticism, since 'the value of the book' for the faith of the believer:

> does not depend on the question whether these things [sc., the speeches in Deuteronomy] are spoken by Moses literally or

> in a parable. All that he needs to know is that they are God's teaching to his people of old.... That is the whole concern of faith.[188]

Robertson Smith concludes his discussion of the doctrine of Holy Scripture by repudiating the suggestion that a man who approaches the Bible Critically cannot also do so devotionally. He suggests that the Reformers, particularly Luther, were able to take up attitudes analogous to those of modern Criticism, while of course standing under the Word of God in their spiritual apprehension of it. 'How then', he asks, 'can it be affirmed that there is a repugnancy between critical tendencies and simple faith?'[189]

The Answer to the Form of Libel is a fascinating document, not least for the power and ability with which it is argued, but also for the way in which it strives to avoid savouring of the contemporary Continental theology to which Smith, as we have seen, was so manifestly indebted. There are no references here to Ritschl and Rothe! A supreme effort is made to ensure that the issues are confined, almost entirely, to discussion of the propriety of the historical study of Scripture; and that the broader question of the nature of revelation and of its relation to Scripture, which as we have suggested was chronologically and no doubt also logically prior in Smith's own acceptance of the Critical positions, is almost wholly ignored.

b. Revelation

We have already briefly referred to Smith's early essay on 'Christianity and the Supernatural' in our discussion of his early life and studies. Since it indicates the harvest his eager mind had reaped during his German visits as a student, and since undoubtedly such early, formative experiences profoundly affected the later and mature thinker, we can turn back now in more detail to the position then espoused on the central question of revelation and its relation to the Bible. In particular, we find emerging a theme often taken up in his later writings, and one that has underlain most theological discussion in the century that separates Robertson Smith from our own day: that of the disjunction between the personal and the propositional

in revelation and faith.

Robertson Smith understands that 'the older orthodoxy held that the foundation of our Christianity is "a knowledge of the religious object communicated to men from without in the form of doctrine"',[190] and he regards this conception as necessarily undergirding, and indeed demanding, the old idea of the Bible:

> Such an authoritative statement of saving truth the Protestant churches could seek in Scripture only, and hence the belief in the authority and infallibility of the Bible was necessarily conceived as the indispensable foundation of all other religious convictions.[191]

He goes on to relate this position to the evidential apologetics of the earlier nineteenth century, and in so doing to attempt to discredit it. In a later essay he was to describe it as:

> the purely magical conception of Scripture which prevailed in the old Catholic Church - the one-sided theory that regarded the Word of God solely as a supernatural communication of 'intelligible' truths.[192]

As a result of this understanding, 'the traditional dogmatic draws only a formal distinction between revelation and the Bible, and often interchanges these conceptions.'[193] Such a position is impossible from 'the modern standpoint',[194] and, by contrast, we must move in the direction of the German scholars which, in their land, 'favourable to theological progress', is 'regarded as an established fact'.[195] On this view, 'the Bible is not revelation but the record of divine revelation - the record of those historical facts in which God has revealed himself to man'.[196] Smith is not slow to draw the inference that 'of course on this view we can no longer speak of revelation as a revelation of truths'. It is not a propositional revelation: it is to be conceived in purely personalistic terms.

> The knowledge given in revelation is not the knowledge of facts but the knowledge of a Person. What God reveals is simply HIMSELF - His own character and His disposition towards men. Thus the death of our Lord is not a fact of revelation. The Apostles believed it on the evidence of their senses; we believe it on their testimony accredited to us by their known character.[197]

Thus, in a candid and concise declaration of the revolutionary attitude to Scripture, Robertson Smith follows, as he declares, 'somewhat closely the epoch-making work of Rothe', through whom

his 'first clear insight into the subject was gained'.[198]

Even at this early stage, Smith is not blind to the implications of his new approach for the Biblical text. He recognises that 'so long ... as revelation is treated as a revelation of doctrines', the necessarily 'infallible communication of truth' by God 'may be distinguished, but cannot be separated from' the provision for the equally infallible recording and transmission of what has been revealed. Otherwise, the exercise would be senseless, 'valueless' for:

> the process of revelation is itself incomplete till the fleeting word is fixed in the abiding letter, for only then does the truth gain complete objectivity.

But 'on our view the state of things is quite different'.[199] There is, indeed, the need for the recording of the events of revelation in writing, in order that its effects might not be limited to the first generation, so that we today might also have 'such a lively version of the events of revelation as to feel ourselves to be under the personal influence of the divine manifestation', and to serve as 'the medium to bring us into personal contact with Christ'. That is why the human authors of Scripture were 'in great part' in direct contact with 'the divine manifestation'. Within them a process which Robertson Smith (confusingly) terms 'inspiration' took place, rendering them 'the authentic expositors of revelation'; it is necessary because 'if they did not understand it rightly, revelation fell dead upon the world'.[200] 'Thus arises at once - without any theory of inspiration in actu scribendi - the complete proof of the normative authority of the Bible.'[201] He concludes:

> That this view of the function of the Bible is far more true to Christian experience than that which seeks in Scripture primarily a body of infallible truth seems undeniable.[202]

In consequence, the 'record' - the Bible itself - becomes of less significance than the revelation whose record it is: the 'basis of our Christianity' is not:

> the record of revelation, but the historical facts of revelation themselves. Not on the Bible as an infallible book, but on the historic manifestation of God in Christ must our faith rest. And when this is understood we shall no longer be constantly uneasy at the progress of criticism in Scripture.[203]

At this point there emerges a jump in Robertson Smith's thinking which is characteristic of more modern writers of similar persuasion. It might be reasonable to conclude from what has been said so far that because the Bible is an historical document, as a book it is simply an historical document; and that since its only religious significance lies in its conveying records of the experience of revelation in past generations, the significance of those reported revelations must depend upon our (critical) estimate of the trustworthiness of the reports. But Smith does not move in that direction. He will not allow that faith must be left at the mercy of historical research, although the historical content of the Bible must ever remain there:

> No criticism can take from us our personal fellowship with God in Christ - no criticism can withdraw from the Bible its living power as the medium wherein we are brought face to face with Christ; for a personal faith lies too deep to be touched by criticism.

And why is this?

> All historical certainty rests ultimately on personal belief and no attack on the Gospel history can have such a personal weight as is at all comparable to the Christian's conviction of the reality of the historical Christ. And if this be so, criticism may aid us in gaining more and more clear knowledge, but cannot destroy personal faith.[204]

This is a most interesting argument, for two particular reasons. First, Smith is arguing much as the Conservatives argue, only while he sets his pale around the 'Gospel history' alone, they set theirs around the whole of Scripture. We call to mind Dean Burgon's analogy of something told us on the word of a friend whose honesty we will not question: we will believe it to be true, and defend it, however implausible it may seem; and, logically, any possible explanation will be more likely than that our friend has misled us.[205] Burgon grounds his faith in the infallibility of the Bible in the experience of Scripture which the church has had and in which he has shared. Smith, similarly, grounds his acceptance of the 'Gospel history' in the reverence which he has for Christ in his own spiritual experience. Secondly, it is interesting that Smith sets up a defence of the New Testament record against Criticism (as we have seen Driver do, though in his case on 'critical' grounds, elsewhere[209].

It was possible, as we have noted, for British scholars to do this because of the high prestige of the Cambridge scholars in their repudiation of extreme German New Testament Criticism. The New Testament had been made to seem on the grounds of Criticism itself to be immune to historical scepticism. It was therefore possible for Smith, with other scholars, to believe that what Criticism had done to the Old Testament could never be done to the New. The essence of Christian faith - 'the reality of the historical Christ' - is preserved by that faith from all possible attacks.[207]

From the early date of this essay on the Supernatural onwards, Robertson Smith continually alludes to a disjunction between the personal and the propositional in revelation. Thus, in the second paper given at the New College Theological Society which Black and Chrystal reproduce, he is found contending that:

> so long as revelation was treated not as a revelation of God's person but as a communication of doctrine, so long as doctrine was regarded as even in a secondary sense the object of faith, the great principle which was always acknowledged at starting could hardly fail to get imprisoned under the rubrics De Analogia Fidei or De Fundamentalibus.[208]

There is a dichotomy between 'an intellectual assent' and 'an experimental conviction'.[209] Such an understanding lies behind a definition of revelation:

> The true idea of revelation is such an activity of God among and towards men as shall enable men to apprehend God in His holiness, justice and redemptive love, just by the same kind of experience as enables us to know our fellow men. It is the record of such a revelation that lies before us in Holy Scripture.[210]

The idea of Biblical 'infallibility' which Smith maintained during the trial was correlated to such a view of revelation. He 'held that the doctrine of the infallible truth of the Scriptures meant that in it [sic] we can find a complete and perfect guide for the soul's salvation'.[211] Faith as 'an intellectual trust to the prima veritas' is contrasted with 'personal trust on God in Christ'.[212] We are to seek in the Bible 'not a body of abstract religious truth, but the living, personal history of God's gracious dealings with men'.[213] This, Smith asserts, is the Reformation understanding; at least, it is that of Luther, whereby:

> the Word of God is conceived ... no longer the abstract imparting of intellectual truth, but the personal message of God's love in Christ.... Thus the whole truths of revelation are at once brought down from the unreal world of intelligibilia into the sphere of true and personal human life.[214]

A closely related question on which Smith touches on several occasions is that of the nature and function of theology itself. There is a need for 'progress in our theological conceptions', since no longer may theology be regarded as 'a system of deductions from fixed axioms or a mere compend of Scripture statement'. A new conception would allow 'recognition of a positive activity of the theologising subject dialectically evolving the contents of an internal consciousness'.[215] To this end:

> Theology has done its work when it has given scientific expression to all that is bound up in the consciousness of redemption and the life that flows therefrom. And therefore the theology of a living Church must not start from the mere outward form and vehicle of Christianity, be that form never so divine, but from the true substance of Christianity which the Church knows that she has already grasped.[216]

The traditional evidential basis of theology, and the whole structure of natural theology, are inadequate:

> The sure proof that natural theology is not the scientific basis of revealed theology lies in the fact, which the history of the Deist controversy made abundantly plain, that natural theology, as a knowledge of God true as far as it goes, is, apart from Christianity, an absolute fiction.[217]

True Christianity is, by contrast:

> so absolutely a thing of the heart that it has to construct for itself even the elements of a knowledge of God. The subjective consciousness of union with God in Christ is absolutely the first thing in true Christianity, and it is from this consciousness outwards that the Christian develops for himself a true notion of God and a true notion of man.
>
> ... the doctrines of theology are the product of faith, and the knowledge of the subject and object of faith which are evolved by dialectical necessity from the assurance of the primitive act itself.[218]

It is the religious life which lies behind the Bible that is the subject of revelation and of our theologising:

> Accordingly, the first business of the Reformed theologian is not to crystallise Bible truths into doctrines, but to follow, in all its phases, the manifold inner history of the religious life which the Bible unfolds....[219]
>
> In the Bible, God andman meet together, and hold such converse as is the abiding pattern and rule of all religious experience.[220]

We see, then, that over against the orthodoxy of Bannerman and earlier writers, Robertson Smith develops a distinctive attitude, largely based on the German model, towards that nexus of ideas which comprises revelation, the Bible, faith and theology. Religion becomes a matter of the heart and not of the intellect, with personal faith and personal revelation contrasted to propositional understandings of both. Smith's doctrine of Scripture is inseparable from these related conceptions of the doctrines with which it connects.

c. The Case of Deuteronomy

As we saw in the opening section of this chapter, much of the debate in the ecclesiastical proceedings against Robertson Smith centred on the book of Deuteronomy. We turn now to examine his understanding of the book and his defence of his position.

'The great difficulty', Smith frankly admits, with respect to his view of Deuteronomy, is that 'under it certain things in the Pentateuch can no longer be taken as plain literal statements of fact.' Nonetheless, his opponents had, to some degree, accepted that:

> in the abstract ... under peculiar literary conditions, a Pentateuch such as the critics suppose, might have been written as part of the record of revelation, possessing the characters of Divine Scripture laid down in our Confession. But it seems to be argued that it is practically incredible that this abstract possibility represents actual facts; that if the Pentateuch is not the work of Moses it is far simpler to suppose it to be a forgery in his name, deliberately written to deceive the people, and unworthy of a place in Scripture.[221]

Smith's contention was that, what some had been prepared to accept for the sake of argument, had in fact happened. 'The issue', he writes, 'depends on a single plain principle which every one can understand, and no one will dispute.'[222] The principle is that 'in committing His Revelation to writing'[223] God has employed various literary forms which have been current at particular times and in particular cultures, They include poetry, history and parable as well as lesser forms. There is no a priori reason why He should not employ any such device or form should He so choose, and Christians have no right to rule out the possibility of this form or that, unless they can establish their

position from the text of Scripture. 'The Spirit of God', proclaims Smith, 'is not straitened, and has not disdained to employ any way of writing, any form of literary art, that could be legitimately used in ordinary human composition.'[224] The entire debate turned on the concept of 'legitimacy', since Smith was himself ready to condemn the attribution to Scripture of what he regarded as illegitimate forms: 'it is impossible to believe that the Spirit of inspiration could sanction a way of writing which would be blameworthy in an uninspired author'. As it happened, the current Critical theory with regard to Deuteronomy held widely by Continental scholars was customarily linked with just such an 'illegitimate' literary form and purpose - the passing off as Mosaic of a non-Mosaic book simpliciter. Smith sets his face against such a view:

> if any one were to affirm of Deuteronomy that it was written with ... a purpose of deceit, it would be quite fair to say that his opinion is inconsistent with belief that the book is inspired.[225]

By contrast:

> my opinion about the book is the very opposite of what they [sc., his opponents] make it, and altogether excludes the idea of fraud or deceit on the part of the sacred writers.[226]

The (amended) libel stated that Smith taught:

> that the book of Deuteronomy, which is professedly an historical document, does not possess that character, but was made to assume it by a writer of a much later age, who therein, in the name of God, presented in dramatic form instructions and laws as proceeding from the mouth of Moses, though these never were and never could have been uttered by him.[227]

In other words, 'the book is a literary fraud'.[228]

Robertson Smith's response is robust. He fully and freely admits that 'there is no question that if the book is a fraud, designed to deceive the reader, it cannot be a part of inspired Scripture'. According to the libel, his own understanding of the origin of Deuteronomy is that it is such a fraud; but is is not. He vigorously repudiates the notion as a misreading of his writings.[229] The arguments he presents are as follows.

First, Deuteronomy as a whole does not claim to be the work of Moses. In much of it he is spoken of in the third person. When we are told in 31:9, 24, that Moses wrote down

the law he had delivered to the people, Smith asks: 'but how much does that imply?'[230] The fact that from time to time in the Pentateuch we hear specifically that Moses wrote down this or that implies that he did not write down other things. A better conclusion is that Deuteronomy was written 'after the Israelites entered Canaan, and with the use of materials left by Moses'.[231] Such a reconstruction, 'at all events ... involves nothing fraudulent, inasmuch as the book nowhere claims to be written by Moses'.[232] In any case, the libel does not charge Smith with denying Mosaic authorship itself. Moreover, the remarks of his which the libel cites relate not to Deuteronomy as a whole but only to the legal section of the book 'as it once existed apart from the history', as a 'separate publication'; and it is this distinct volume which he identifies with 'the written law-book that guided Josiah in his reformations'.[233] The libel and its authors 'represent me as making an attack on the historical character of a professedly historical document'; whereas Smith does 'not in the least deny that the historical part of Deuteronomy is good history; but the part with which my article deals is not history but a law-book'.[234] That is to say, he considers that the 'legal' part of Deuteronomy (the central section of the book which is cast in the form of Moses' discourses on the Plains of Moab) may be legitimately separated from its historical introduction and epilogue and given a separate literary form and history. While the remainder of the book is 'professedly' historical, this section, once detached, ceases so to be. The location of the legal material in the speeches of Moses, once no longer connected to the strictly historical matter of the book, may be seen simply as a literary convention.

Secondly, Robertson Smith claims:

> the first readers were quite aware that they had before them a new edition of the law. They could tell this by comparing it with the older law-books which had served their fathers; and the editor himself, who was plainly no mean man among the prophets of his day, was doubtless quite well known. And so it was his duty, which he performed so singly and with such self-denial that his very name has been lost, not to lay stress on his own work and the novelties it contained, but to make the people feel that Moses though 'dead yet spake'.[235]

Granted such assumptions, the first readers of the book would

have been aware that 'the speeches are speeches in the natural sense' in which a speech in such a context was 'understood by ancient readers'.

> This is the fair way of testing whether a book is honest and truthful in purpose. A book professes to be what it is not if it is constructed to produce a false impression on the mind of the public directly addressed by it.[236]

So while 'the supposition that Deuteronomy contains a fraud ... is as abhorrent to me as it can possibly be to the authors of the libel', what 'at first sight may seem to be strictly historical, appears on closer examination not to be so, and not to have been so meant by the author'.[237]

To be more precise, what Smith appears to be arguing - though he does not state it in these terms - is that Deuteronomy is cast in a literary form which was intended to give its first readers and all readers the appearance of historicity, while the first readers would have been aware (and were intended by the author to be aware) that this appearance was a matter of convention and not of reality. It therefore neither deceived nor was intended to deceive those for whom it was initially written; so we may with historical scholarship and equanimity recover their actual interpretation and make it our own.

In particular, with respect to the 'legal' section of the book, Smith sets out his convictions: it is 'essentially an expansion of Mosaic ideas', being based on the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 24:7); it contains also material which, 'on the evidence of history', is 'later than Moses'; 'the new matter is to be viewed as a development of the old legislation under prophetic authority to meet the new needs of a later age'; and:

> the laws, restated and developed in Deuteronomy, are thrown into the form of a speech delivered by Moses in the land of Moab. It is not improbable that in choosing this form the author was guided by an historical tradition that Moses did rehearse the law to the people before he went up to Pisgah.

Because the author knew that 'the people could be better taught by picture and parable than by argument', he taught them that the new law was a 'legitimate development' of the Mosaic 'by putting in the <u>form</u> of words uttered by Moses, what was strictly an application of the <u>spirit</u> of the Mosaic teaching'.[238] For

this reason, even though Smith's theory shares with that of Kuenen and others that 'Deuteronomy is a prophetic legislation belonging to the period of prophetic activity in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.', his real position is 'radically different from theirs', which involves the idea of 'the book as a fraud palmed off upon Josiah by the priests'.[239]

Robertson Smith is aware of some of the weaknesses of his position. He admits that Criticism has no knowledge of 'the editorial process by which' the Deuteronomic law-code became part of the longer work which we call the Pentateuch'. It is, he admits,

> conceivable that the last editor ... may already have lost the knowledge that the Deuteronomic law was not actually written by Moses. He perhaps regarded all the laws as literally from Moses, and traces of this opinion may appear in his editorial work. But even if this should prove to be the case ... it is at most an error in name and date, not touching any interest of faith.[240]

That is to say, Smith acknowledges that the text of the Pentateuch as we have it may indicate that its final redactor believed, and indeed stated, that the disputed 'kernel' of Deuteronomy was authentically Mosaic. But such an error, not involving an original deliberate fraud, does not raise any problem for Smith's understanding of inspiration.

3 Concluding Considerations

Without entering into a broad discussion of the merits of every aspect of Robertson Smith's position, we may conclude by indicating some chief features that stand out in their significance.

For one thing, a basic question is raised by a comparison of his actual treatment of Deuteronomy with his theoretical statements about inspiration and Criticism. How does a law-code relate to his conception of revelation as wholly personal? More important, how does legal revision at the hands of a prophetic community (and in the name of Moses) relate to his idea of 'inspiration' as that which enables a witness of revelation to recognise and apprehend it? Moreover, is not his concern

to separate the divine and the human, the substance and the form, what is theological and what is literary, in Scripture at variance with his reiterated refusal to accept anything 'fraudulent' in the authorship of the Biblical books? Indeed, in seeking to distinguish his own Deuteronomic theory from that of Kuenen we may ask whether Robertson Smith does not set up an arbitrary criterion in the concept of an 'honest' literary form. For example, might not literary 'fraud' as such be acceptable in certain circles? And even if one accepts that 'fraud' which is not intended to deceive is a different entity, the question which arises is: who is not deceived? All of the 'first generation' of readers? Or only, say, the priests who would enforce the new law? A logical problem arises when it is asked whether knowledge that the Mosaic form was merely conventional would not have effectively undermined the reason for the adoption of that form. According to the narrative of Josiah, with which Smith joins the Continental Critics in linking the origin of the book in its present form, the appearance of age and Mosaicity would appear to have been a major factor in determining the effectiveness of the 'new' law. Yet such influence would presumably be classed as improper by Smith.

His earlier refusal to posit any connexion between the work of the Spirit and the work of the authors of the Biblical books ('in actu scribendi') represents a more consistent position. The exceedingly hypothetical reconstruction on which his own theory of Deuteronomy depended (including the well-known but self-effacing editor) serves as an example of the problem of allowing the vagaries of historical study to hold the authority of Scripture hostage, in just the fashion which he declares time after time to be improper. The degree to which conservative elements were injected into his discussion of this particular book in the context of the Free Church controversy is unclear. It is clear that earlier and later discussions of method were altogether broader in their implications.

Robertson Smith's Conservative opponents called to their assistance all manner of arguments in their attempt to show the error of his position. Substantially, they were applications

of general Conservative contentions such as we have outlined above. In particular, Smith was accused of 'rationalism', and his desire to hold the essential methods of the Continental scholars while denying premises and conclusions which they saw as integral to those methods aroused widespread accusations of special pleading and lack of candour. Conservatives believed that, for instance, Smith's theory of Deuteronomy would inevitably resolve itself into Kuenen's.

They argued also that, even in the form in which he owned it, his doctrine of Scripture was irreconcileable with the Westminster Confession. The two sides differed fundamentally in their reading of the Confession, though interestingly this question did not emerge in the context of the controversy as it might have. It can scarcely be denied that Smith's desire to confine 'infallibility' to a narrow area of 'spiritual' matters was a modern one which would hardly have been recognised by the Westminster divines.[241] It is significant that he made no attempt to garner support from any theologians of the seventeenth century, frequently speaking of the post-Reformation tradition as the cause of the rise of the 'orthodoxy' which he found pitted against him in nineteenth-century Scotland. His appeal was to the Reformers themselves, and, in particular, to Luther.[242] The practical difficulty facing Smith's opponents was that the Confession was framed before anyone within Protestantism had entertained serious doubts as to the factual accuracy of Scripture. The orthodox of Smith's day, in grounding their reading of the Confession upon the doctrine of inspiration as interpreted by Gaussen and Bannerman, were to a degree inevitably unhistorical, as the Confession was not written with historical criticism and its challenges in mind. These and other Conservative writers, as we have seen, sought to orientate the traditional concept of the Bible in the face of nascent Critical study. The argument whether they or Smith were more faithful to the Confession, or indeed whether they or it were faithful to the Reformers, is larger and more complex than we can consider. What is clear is that Robertson Smith succeeded in maintaining the 'infallibility' of Scripture only by attenuating its sense to such

a degree as to empty it of the distinctive meaning with which the theological tradition in which he stood has customarily associated it. The tensions and ambiguities which flow through his writings on the doctrine of Scripture reveal a man who sought to hold together what were inherently divergent ways of understanding revelation, and faith, and the Bible. Whether or not later thinkers who attempted a similar task have succeeded, a question-mark must remain against Robertson Smith's attempt.

VIII

CONCLUSION

An Anatomy of Controversy

If there is sufficient evidence, on other grounds, to show that the Scripture, in which this doctrine is received, is a Revelation from God, the doctrine itself must be unconditionally received, not as reasonable, nor as unreasonable, but as scriptural.

H.L. Mansel, The Limits of Religious Thought, p 118

But what is Spinoza actually proving? In fact, nothing more than that it is not humanly possible that Moses wrote the Pentateuch.... This is not denied by the opponents. They actually admit it by assertions that God verbally inspired Scripture.... Philological and historical critique cannot undermine the principle of verbal inspiration, nor, for the same reason, the teaching that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch, by way of direct argument; for on the assumption that Scripture is revealed, it is more apposite to assume an unfathomable mystery than the corruption of the text, as the reason for obscurity of a particular passage. Given the interest in revelation, interpretations that seem to the 'objective,' 'unprejudiced' reader arbitrary and far-fetched, are preferable to doubt of revelation with all its unforeseeable consequences for life. The importance of philological and historical critique therefore consists only in displacing the core of the argument to the remote, if necessary, consequences.

L. Strauss, Spinoza's Critique of Religion, p 143

1 The Critical Controversy

We have sought in the preceding chapters to expound and to illustrate the contrasting positions taken up in the controversy about 'Higher Criticism' that occupied British Biblical scholars from the publication of Essays and Reviews in 1860 until the last years of the nineteenth century. Our discussion has been set in the context of the previous half-century during which the methods and results of the Continental Critics had begun to seep into the conservative theology of Britain. By surveying the chief writings of the period, we have endeavoured to set forth the distinctive and opposing stances of the contenders in the debate - those who generally favoured the methods of the new criticism, whom we in line with contemporary (nineteenth--century) usage have dubbed the 'Critics', and those who did not, whom we have termed 'Conservatives'. By examining and citing the chief writings of the period that discuss the Bible it has been our intention to justify this overall division of

the protagonists into two camps. That is not to say that we believe each of the contending schools to have been homogeneous in composition, either in its theology as a whole or even in respect to its idea of Scripture. As we have made clear, the 'schools' were constituted by and confined to opinion on this matter of Criticism. Moreover, there was pluriformity even on this question. Some Critics were more 'advanced' than others; some Conservatives more deeply (or more volubly) committed to inerrancy as a presupposition of Biblical scholarship. Yet we would maintain that, with such appropriate qualifications, at the level of method the scholars were essentially divided, and that for all the variety of actual opinion the existence of two and only two centres of gravity in the interpretative method of Biblical scholars in later-nineteenth-century Britain is plain to see. It remains for us to attempt some analysis of the fundamental positions taken up. Before we do so, we shall survey and draw together the material that has so far been discussed.

Our study commenced with a brief discussion of Spinoza and his interpretative method. As has been pointed out, the debates of the nineteenth century were to some degree influenced, both directly and indirectly, by his work. Spinoza's interpretative method, as laid down in the Tractatus, is in its rudiments the method of the nineteenth-century Critics. Their debate with tradition and its advocates was an extended variation on Spinoza's with the traditionalists of his day, such as van Blyenbergh. Spinoza vigorously rejected dogmatic statements about the nature of the Bible, which, he maintained, caused it to be misinterpreted. A nascent historical criticism led him to insist on the 'history' of any Scriptural statement as determinative of its meaning. To van Blyenbergh, should the natural reason appear to run counter to Scripture, it must remain under Scripture's authority and be presumed mistaken; but Spinoza's trust in his own intelligence is absolute, and indeed the presupposition of discussion even of revelation. In consequence, Spinoza can find, e.g., contradictions in the teaching of different prophets, which he takes as reason for rejecting

their authority in the areas in question. Only where what Scripture teaches is taught universally and clearly (in Spinoza's estimation) may it be held to be binding. According to the traditional view, by contrast, Scripture is ex hypothesi infallible, and in consequence cannot contradict itself on any subject on which it touches. Its authority is unlimited. Interestingly, not only does Spinoza pre-empt the essentially 'critical' nature of the new methods of the nineteenth century, he even suggests a revision of the doctrine of Scripture to take account of them. The 'Word of God' may no more be identified with the Bible, which merely records its authors' perception of revelation. The authority of revelation is therefore independent of the accuracy of the Bible.[1]

Spinoza must, of course, be distinguished from the British Critics, since he was more radical than they. His repudiation of Biblical doctrine as well as Biblical history and literary traditions sets him apart from the via media which characterised Critical scholarship in this country. But at the level of principle, Spinoza's demand for presuppositionless Biblical study and his claim to practise it, and his insistence on the freedom of the critical reason, point up the fundamental direction of the nineteenth-century Critics, although they sought and found more moderate and more acceptable conclusions for their study.

The British Critics, like Spinoza, were the inheritors of some two millennia of Jewish and Christian tradition which might be styled ex hypothesi infallibilism. Hardly any had dissented from that tradition. We have seen how in the earlier part of the nineteenth century scholars as diverse as William Van Mildert, G.S. Faber, William Lee and, in the 1860's, James Bannerman, had given voice to that consensus doctrine, against the backcloth of an increasing flow of Critical thought penetrating British Biblical scholarship from Continental sources. If it were possible, the influx of new and unsettling thinking served only to buttress and make yet more rigid the received tradition. The trickle of fresh influences via men such as Marsh and Thirlwall, and the ultimately enormous impact of Coler-

idge's repudiation of infallibilism, had no widespread effect on the understanding of the Bible until the fateful publication in 1860 of Essays and Reviews set a torch to what proved to be dry timber. The Essayists and Reviewers, however, were not only Critical in their understanding of Scripture, they were liberal and widely recognised as unorthodox in their theology as a whole, and the readiness with which they could be dubbed septem contra Christum ensured the rejection for the time being of their Critical approach to Scripture (such that even Thirlwall joined in the condemnation of the volume by the entire bench of bishops). It was to be the 'believing Criticism' of fifteen and twenty years later, which sought to combine the repudiation of infallibilism with piety and the willing acceptance of (often evangelical) Protestantism, that began to undermine the Conservative apologetic which had customarily linked Criticism with unbelief. But Essays and Reviews - and, more particularly, the apologetic material which it called forth - had familiarised the clergy and the reading public with the currents of Continental thought, and ultimately produced a soil in which pious Criticism could take root. The Robertson Smith affair, which came to a climax twenty-one years later in the blaze of half a decade of publicity, seemed to set the seal of the evangelical Free Church of Scotland upon 'devout Criticism'; and in 1889 the Principal of Pusey House added the blessing of the new generation of High Churchmen to the match.

But what, precisely, was the Critical method? It is not easy to say. Everyone spoke of it, scholars increasingly argued for it and, in diminishing numbers, denounced it. We have epitomised it in Jowett's famous phrase 'like any other book', as the study of Scripture according to the canons of general literary and historical interpretation. But two questions immediately arise. First, what are those canons? Are they capable of definition, or merely of the description and example with which much of the foregoing discussion has been taken up? Secondly, and more important to our study, did the Critics really seek to study Scripture in precisely the same manner in which profane literature and history were studied? Even if we may

assume, in answer to our first question, that for all its difficulty of definition a concept of historical criticism had truly evolved in general scholarship, our second question may not be so readily answered.[2] That is evident from the literature, which is singularly lacking in extended methodological discussions of how the tools of secular critical history may be made to apply to the Christian revelation. What discussion there is we find to be couched in vague generalities. While most scholars acknowledge that, in practice, the 'any other book' principle requires some qualification, nowhere do we find a sustained attempt to tease out precisely what qualifications would enable critical history to make sense of the revelation of God with its undeniably supernatural relations. Had the Cambridge School not succeeded in building a hedge about the New Testament, so successfully indeed that Driver and Robertson Smith and the others all recognised it as part of the Critical landscape, the 'believing Critics' might have had to face this question more abruptly. As it happened, when the hedge was finally torn down, the first generation of Critics had passed away, and for the new generation the tradition of Criticism had so established itself as to have removed this fundamental question from active consideration.

One of the few scholars who devoted some attention to the problematical relation of Criticism and the supernatural and revelatory character of Scripture was Robertson Smith. It is unfortunate that much of his consideration of it is found in early writings which were published only posthumously, but as has emerged from our discussion[3] throughout his life he adverted to the question. Recognised as the most able of all the Critical scholars of his generation, Robertson Smith was also the product of evangelical religion. In him if nowhere else the problematic of secular critical history meeting sacred Scripture must have been acute. His attempted resolution, which he claimed left evangelical faith untouched while giving free rein to Criticism, may best be described as dualistic. As our examination of it makes clear, for all Smith's protestations he did not present an integrated conception of his faith and Critical scholarship;

he simply insisted that he could, and did, accept them both. The implications of some of his statements about Criticism, and the qualifications which nonetheless accompanied his acceptance of it, point up the degree to which his method of interpreting Scripture remained unresolved. Let us examine these factors.

First, the implications of his acceptance of Criticism. Smith acknowledges that the 'fundamental principle of the historical criticism lies in the conception of the organic unity of all history'.[4] That is to say, for Criticism 'the last criterion of historical authenticity' is 'the continuity of historical evolution'; and a tradition that 'violates' it and 'stands in no necessary relation to the conditions of the preceding and following age must be untrue'. Yet in such a principle we have the outworking of the a priori rejection of revelation and the supernatural that characterised the more extreme of the Continental Critics. Smith admits that the application of that principle must go hand in hand with belief in revelation, but he does not explain how such a harmony may be achieved. He merely asserts that there need be no conflict. Yet for the 'rationalists' who pressed the principle to its outcome, it squeezed the concept of revelation out of the Old Testament altogether. Throughout Smith's writings, and those of the other British Critics, there are bold, unqualified acceptances of such principles - the same principles as those adopted by the Continental Critics - adopted apparently in the confidence that they may be consistently applied by the man of faith to yield more acceptable fruit.

On the other hand, Smith like the other pious Critics introduces occasional and unsystematised qualifications into his acceptance of Criticism, which are in strange contradiction to the statements of principle. For instance, he maintains that 'all our exegesis and all our criticism' must be 'regulated' by 'the great principle that we are to seek in the Bible ... the living history of God's gracious dealings with men'.[5] More specifically, to 'the average Judaean' the religion of Israel and that of the nations round about were indistinguishable;

yet 'in principle there was all the difference in the world' between the two.[6] That is, while the natural development of Semitic religion, of which Israelite religion was a part, may appear all-of-a-piece, to the believer the different significance of Israel's history and religion is apparent and dramatic. But, most striking of all, Smith affirms that his Christian faith is independent of Criticism: 'no criticism can take from us our fellowship with God in Christ ... for a personal faith lies too deep to be touched by criticism'. And why?

> All historical certainty rests ultimately on personal belief and no attack on the Gospel history can have such a personal weight as is at all comparable to the Christian's conviction of the reality of the historical Christ.[7]

The essentials of the Gospel history are preserved from Critical attack by the Christian's faith in Christ.

So Robertson Smith, in common with his colleagues, while accepting in principle an unrestricted historical criticism, acknowledges the fundamental problem of its relation to Christianity by qualifying it in practice. This has the effect of enabling him, practically, to maintain that no insoluble problem confronts the Christian who accepts a thorough-going Critical method, while avoiding the theoretical issue of the nature of Criticism thus qualified. It is manifestly no longer the <u>precise</u> method employed in the study of 'any other book', since it has come, to some degree at least, under the tutelage of faith. Neither Robertson Smith nor his colleagues discuss this essential question. They leave the relation of critical, historical study and the unique, supernatural, revelatory nature of Scripture unresolved. In place of developing an integrated conception of Critical study in the context of faith, they are satisfied to practise a dualistic compromise.

The response of those who adhered to the traditional view of Scripture was to endeavour to re-assert it in the face of the Critical method and conclusions.[8] At first, Criticism could be largely dismissed as the fruit of German 'infidelity'. But as, gradually, the younger generation of British scholars were won over, something more than dismissal became necessary.

The Conservatives were forced to move from treating the matter, in the context of positive exposition of their concept of the nature of Scripture (such as the work of William Lee), as an objection requiring response, to coming to grips with Critical writings and debating before the eyes of the church which was the more faithful and the more credible way of treating the Bible. They mirrored the Critics themselves in their combination of a concern for method and a failure to pursue that concern to its logical issue. What united them was their commitment to the truthfulness of all that the Bible stated, a truthfulness extending to the history as well as the religious and spiritual matter of the books. They had - and generally admitted they had - come to this conclusion upon dogmatic grounds, but they sought nonetheless to engage the Critics on issues of Higher Criticism in such a fashion that they inevitably took on the appearance of 'critics' themselves. It is plain that, while initially they took up critical issues ad hominem, seeking to turn the Critics' guns upon themselves, increasingly they came to admit in practice that the Critical arguments demanded answers on their merits. What began as apologetics was gradually transformed, for many, into hermeneutics, and the dogmatic arguments and warrants for infallibilism were gently abandoned in favour of vigorous critical arguments for a conservative stance on particular issues. This metamorphosis went undetected until, by the end of the century, the remaining Conservatives found themselves marooned in a new consensus in which appeal to dogmatic considerations had no longer any avail in the world of Old Testament scholarship, and in which the arguments for individual conservative positions no longer carried any weight.

One particular argument, to which we have devoted some attention, remained, for a while, an exception. As we have pointed out, it was the one substantial argument of the Conservatives which, even in the opening decades of the twentieth century, Critics felt they must answer, however briefly. This argument was the appeal to Christ.[9] Resting as it did upon the testimony of the Gospel records to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, it had an influence on the pious proponents

of Criticism much greater than the other arguments of a dogmatic nature. In particular, it was grounded in the conservative consensus prevailing in New Testament scholarship in Britain, and had the effect of seeking to append conservative opinions on questions of Old Testament scholarship to conservative views of the New Testament. When these latter views were swept away - as they were abruptly with the passing of the Cambridge Trio - the Christus Comprobator argument, although still in theory tenable, was immensely weakened. For while it was still possible to press the case for a Christology in which Jesus could not have erred, the more radical Gospel criticism had overthrown the traditional picture of Jesus as the kind of man Who was likely to have had access to supernatural knowledge. That is to say, a more sceptical approach to narratives such as those of the temptation, the transfiguration and the resurrection at once destroyed the image of a Christ Who might be expected to speak reliably about the authorship of Psalm 110. That, more than its effect in undermining faith in the reliability of particular sayings attributed to Jesus, led the developments in New Testament criticism to put the appeal to Christ out of court.

Yet perhaps the tenacity of the argument even before that happened owed as much to the Critical desire to win over clergy and lay opinion as it did to the seriousness with which Critical scholars themselves felt its force. Briefly stated, the argument of Ellicott and the others who pressed it into service was to appeal to the authority of Christ by calling upon the testimony of the Gospels both to Christ's general acceptance of the infallibility of the Old Testament, and, in particular, to His expression of agreement with the traditional ideas of authorship of such disputed books as Daniel, the later part of Isaiah, and Deuteronomy. The Critics had largely to admit the exegetical basis of the argument (since Jesus largely shared the views of His contemporary Jews in this matter), and to challenge it at the point where it employed that evidence as relevant for Christian opinion today. The mild Kenotic theory which Gore expounded in Lux Mundi was basic to the Critical defence, though it was

in essence nothing new. Colenso had used a similar argument a quarter of a century earlier, and the classic statement of the Conservative Christology and its implications was that of Liddon's 1866 Bampton lectures.

Alongside the appeal to Christ lay dogmatic argument from Scripture as a whole, though it featured little in the semi-popular literature of the debate because it could so readily be accused of vicious circularity. Conservatives used such texts as II Timothy 3:16 to suggest that just as the Bible taught 'doctrines' of redemption, the last things, God, the church, and so on, so it taught also a 'doctrine' of Scripture, which - like the others - must be accepted as normative and therefore logically prior to any use of the natural reason in considering theological questions. Many Critics found that they could agree with this argument thus far, the question at issue being the scope of the authority or trustworthiness which might be presumed to follow from the divine inspiration. For some, such as Robertson Smith, the use of a word as strong as 'infallibility' could not be ruled out, since it might be variously construed. But for the Conservative, both the historical nature of Biblical religion and such examples as the use of the Old Testament Scriptures at the hands of New Testament writers - and the clinching appeal to Christ - argued that the effects of inspiration extended to infallibility, and that the scope of the infallibility could not be delimited.

The ramifications of the debate were, indeed, considerable. Conservatives appealed not only to Christ and to dogma: they appealed to 'the monuments', and were fortunate to have men like Rawlinson at their side and the learned and influential Sayce not far away; they pointed up the implications of Criticism for preaching, theology, and the whole life of the church; they claimed that their infallibilism was the only true church doctrine of Scripture and had been the presupposition of eighteen centuries of Christianity. But much of their energy was, increasingly, spent in the hand-to-hand fighting of exegesis and technical argument. They found themselves, as has been pointed out, in the ambiguous position of both rejecting 'criticism' as such

(and hence the disapprobatory use of the term itself) and employing historical and literary arguments of their own in their defence. For all their demands for a 'new' and 'better' and 'truer' criticism, their use of 'the Critics' weapons' both evidenced and further advanced the growing credibility of the Critical case. Their demand for the employment of a special hermeneutic in the interpretation of Scripture required the existence of a special community in which assent could be given to its method and its conclusions. But later nineteenth-century British Christianity was not such a community. The Conservatives themselves were divided between Evangelicals and High Churchmen, and as the 1880's passed constituted only one element within even these groupings. It was increasingly felt that interpretative devices that harmonised discrepancies and moralised upon barbarities might be credible still to the pious and the traditional, but they were patently not so to the increasingly secular and increasingly educated and independent-minded late-Victorian public, the young in particular.

Nevertheless, the point of departure for both Critics and Conservatives, and the uniting factor in their respective diversities, was methodological. They were divided in their starting-point and their method of approach to Biblical study, and although they devoted much energy to argument about their conclusions, their respective interpretative approaches profoundly influenced their results. We have suggested above that two figures, neither of them in fact Old Testament scholars, best represent and set forth the two contrary methods of study practised by the two schools: Benjamin Jowett and John William Burgon.[10] Jowett's famous essay 'On the Interpretation of Scripture' in Essays and Reviews was a declaration of academic freedom from all tradition and all dogma in the study of Scripture. The only significance of the doctrine of inspiration would emerge from the unfettered study of the Bible 'as any other book'. Burgon's Oxford University Sermons, published as Inspiration and Interpretation, took the form of a vigorous and almost immediate rejoinder. For him, the Bible must be studied 'as no other book', since both the teaching of Scripture itself

and the dogma of the church grant us a presupposition in favour of the infallibility of all that Scripture contains. Burgon is perhaps best remembered as the opponent, later in life, of Westcott and Hort's textual criticism; but his notion of infallibility had room for textual variation, and rested on the 'autographa' at the start of the textual tradition. These originals (and, for practical purposes, our copies of them) are inspired, and, in consequence, without error. The only proper study of them will assume that fact as given before it moves to examine them in detail.

So whereas, for Jowett, an apparent moral error or historical inaccuracy is to be taken prima facie, for Burgon it is impossible that any such appearances should accord with reality. Harmony and moral explanation are not so much possible as logically necessary, whether or not the interpreter may hazard them credibly, because, ex hypothesi, the documents with which he deals do not err. As we have seen in our discussion, leading Conservative scholars acknowledged this difference in method while devoting their best efforts to ad hominem refutation of their opponents. The Critics concentrated upon arguing for their interpretation of the data from the text, leaving the presuppositional issue to resolve itself.

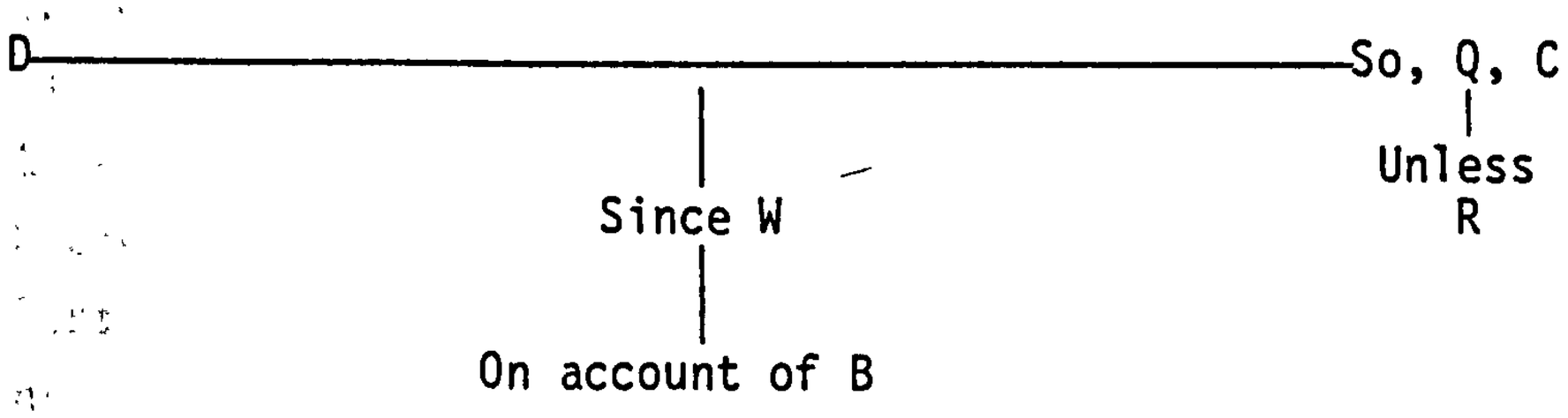
The methodological cleavage is particularly evident in practice in the Biblical commentaries of the two schools, as we have noted.[11] Conservatives, rightly or wrongly, expected that historical harmony would be possible; and what they expected, they found. Critics, on the other hand, expected to find the balance of accuracy and error that is present in all ancient literature; and they found that. In the matter of miracle, the Conservatives, being committed to believing what they concluded the text to state, tended to under-emphasise the prima facie miraculous, while the Critics were (for instance) happy with the idea that the final redactor of Joshua believed in the 'astronomical' reading of the Long Day narrative. On difficult moral questions, Critical commentaries generally avoid making comment: they feel no obligation to justify the behaviour or instruction of the entire Old Testament. Conservatives, on the other hand,

do indeed feel such an obligation, allowing only minor concessions to notions of progressive revelation. They take pains to indicate how what may appear barbarous acts and commands, if attributed by the Biblical writer to the will of God, may be seen as compatible with the nature of God as understood by Christians. In an Appendix we examine comment upon the early chapters of Genesis, and we note how the Conservative imperative of belief in the text tends to lead to interpretation of, in particular, Genesis 1 and the flood narrative, as readily compatible with current scientific thinking, with a general admission that Genesis 1 does not impinge upon scientific matters and a unanimous verdict among Conservatives (after Scott) that the flood was geographically limited in extent. By contrast, Critics such as Driver and Skinner, with no commitment to believing their interpretation of the text, accept the prima facie reading of Genesis 1 as teaching about how the world was made, and of Genesis 6-8 as telling of a flood universal in extent and incompatible with the scientific consensus. It is evident, therefore, that in the later nineteenth century the necessity for Conservatives to accept as true whatever Scripture was conceived as stating permitted the factor of credibility to affect their exegesis significantly. Critics, on the other hand, could happily reject what they found Scripture to say as inaccurate, and so tended to be more candid, and more literal, in their interpretation.

We see, then, that the conflict of Conservative Biblical interpretation with Higher Criticism was principally a conflict of method. With some diffuseness and ambiguity on both sides, the Critics sought to allow that critical history which had proved so successful in reconstructing the classical histories to re-structure also the Biblical, and to interpret it to the mind of nineteenth-century scholarship; whereas Conservative scholars considered this method essentially inappropriate, and therefore its results mistaken, since the canon of Scripture is an unique volume, the work of divine inspiration, and consequently attested as an infallible record of all it contains. We turn now to some further analysis of this divergence in approach.

2 The Arguments about Criticism

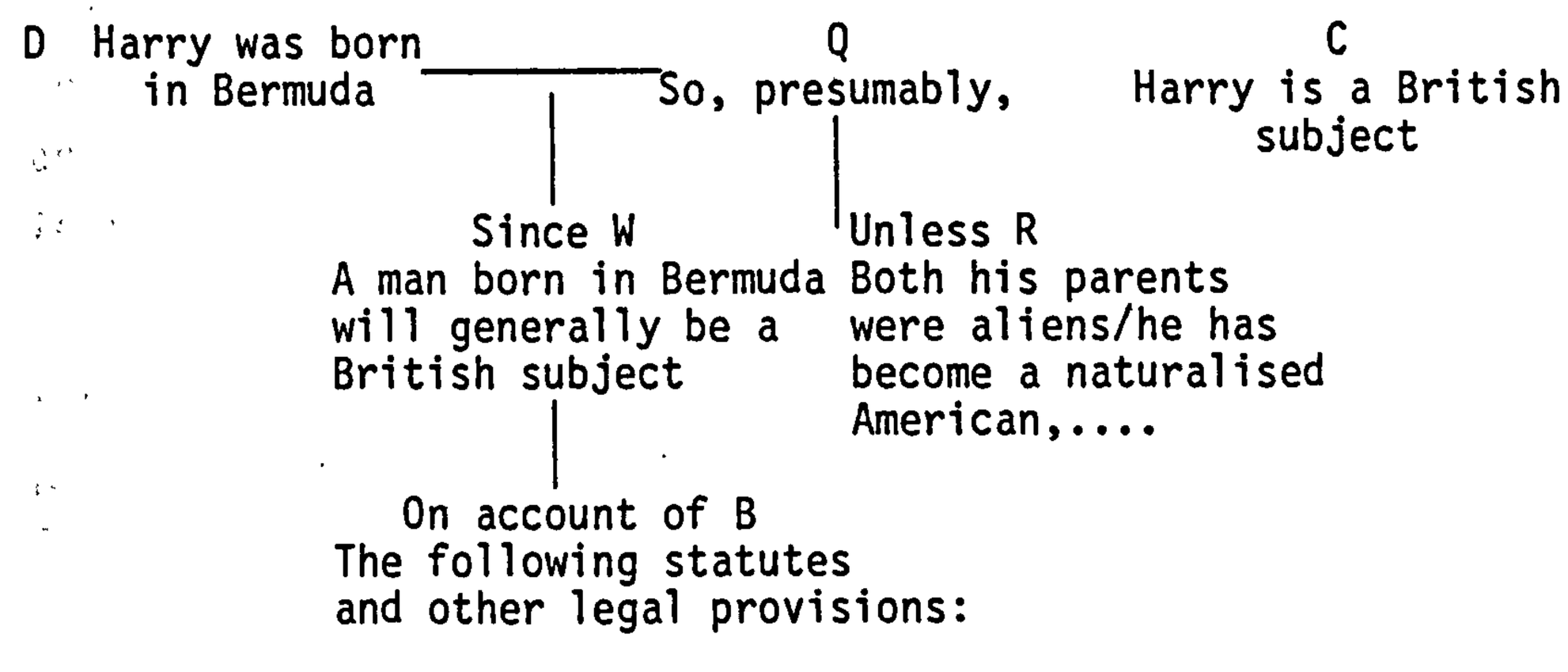
Stephen Toulmin, in his study of The Nature of Argument, has developed what he terms a 'candid' way of laying out arguments that reveals the manner in which they are actually employed, especially in jurisprudence and analogous disciplines, to establish and defend a position in the face of contrary opinion. His analysis has the advantage over conventional syllogisms that it does justice to the complex fashion in which arguments are used - that is, the different rôles which they may be called upon to play in building up a case. This analysis is of some relevance to our subject, since the complex character of the cases which Critics and Conservatives try to make for their rival positions closely resembles the pleadings of counsel, in a way it does not the mathematical analogies of the syllogism. Toulmin's method has itself been taken up by a number of others, notably D.H. Kelsey in his Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology,[12] where an attempt is made to analyse the different ways in which theologians make their appeal to Scripture to justify their theological proposals. Toulmin explains the function of the 'candid' analysis in these terms: 'to make clear the functions of the different propositions invoked in the course of an argument, and the relevance of the different sorts of criticism which can be directed against it.'[13] In symbolic terms, the analysis is as follows:



where D represents the Data from which the argument begins, W the Warrant which immediately justifies the move from D to the Claim, B the Backing to the Warrant, and C the Claim, with Q standing for a Qualifier that there is a possible condition of Rebuttal (R) which the argument takes into account. A standard example is given, reproduced overleaf. Kelsey indicates the different functions played by the terms thus:

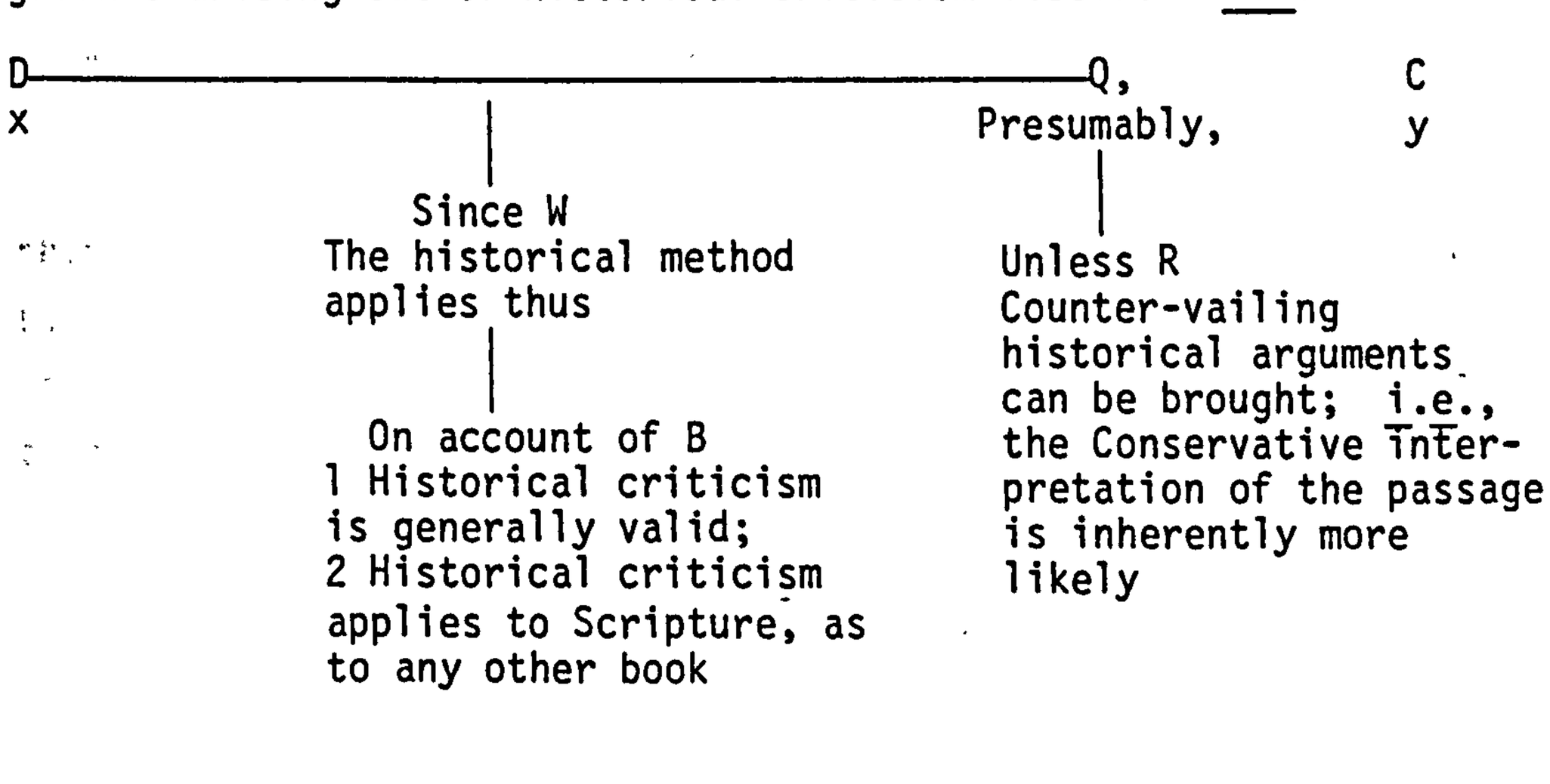
> in the course of an argument in support of a claim, the claim (C) is authorized in several different senses of the term.

'Data,' 'Warrant' (with its appropriate 'Qualifier'), 'Condition of rebuttal,' and 'Backing' each designates a different role that some expression or expressions play in an argument. Each is brought into play when the claim (C) is challenged in some way or other, in order to 'authorize' C in face of the challenge. D are produced to authorize the claim in the face of the challenge, 'What do you have to go on?' W is produced to authorize the claim in the face of the challenge, 'How did you get to C from D?' Evidence that conditions of rebuttal (R) have been excluded are produced to authorize the claim in the face of the challenge that the warrant is inapplicable to this move from these data to this conclusion. B is produced to authorize the conclusion in the face of the challenge to the truth of W. When an argument is fully and explicitly laid out candidly, all of these different kinds of 'authorizing' are pointed up.[14]



By means of this analysis we may compare the contrary methods adopted by Conservative and Critical scholars.

The characteristic Critical argument begins with the text of Scripture. It moves, assuming first that the methods of historical critical scholarship are generally valid, and, secondly, that they are applicable to Scripture, to conclusions that, because of the nature of the method, are only to a greater or lesser degree probable, but which may be challenged only upon grounds arising out of historical criticism itself. Viz:



Where x represents some phenomena culled from the text of Scripture, such as apparent contradictions and discrepancies in the narrative of the Jordan crossing (Joshua 4:1-9), and y the inference drawn from them that the narrative is composite in a particular fashion.

Of course, such an analysis grossly simplifies the complexities of scholarly debate; but we suggest that it nonetheless does justice to the anatomy of the Critical argument: though it could be expressed differently, that would not affect the result of our discussion. The methods of historical criticism are applied to the text of Scripture, on the assumption that the Bible must be studied like other books. Conclusions are qualified, but only as historically necessary. Only a contrary argument itself resting on the framework of critical history as understood by the Critics will challenge the claim that C follows from D.

The contrast with the Conservative position becomes clear when we lay out a typical Conservative argument similarly. Viz:

D——————————————————Q, C

x | y x

Since W
What the Bible says is true

|

On account of B
1 It is the canon of the church;
2 It is inspired, the Word of God, &c.;
3 Jesus held this view of the Old Testament

Presumably,

|

Unless R
Compelling historical arguments can be shown to the contrary

Where x represents the Biblical narrative, such as that of the Jordan crossing, and y the inference that - notwithstanding what may be considered apparent discrepancies - this account gives a unified and accurate report of something which took place as described.

A number of points emerge from this analysis. For one thing, Conservative scholarship was, to some degree, prepared to acknowledge the validity of historical argument, but not as the warrant for its reading of the text. It consigned it to a possible condition of rebuttal. This theme is to be found,

explicitly or not, in most of the Conservatives we have examined. There is a preparedness, in principle, to come to terms with Critical argument; Critical points should be met and considered on their merits. But any historical or literary disputation lives in uneasy tension with the dogmatic position on the basis of which conservative stances on critical questions are adopted. That is to say, discussion of the arguments of the Critics is taken up with apologetic intent, not as interpretation per se. There is therefore an ambivalence in Conservative scholarship which reveals itself in the argument laid out above: the warrant called in justification of the move from data to claim is dogmatic in nature, while there are acknowledged to be historical--critical possible conditions of rebuttal. In any given scholar, or any given work, the degree to which these last are admitted purely ad hominem is not easy to determine. Earlier writers particularly, confident still of the triumph of the traditional view, have no serious intention to revise it and no expectation that evidence might be produced which would force them so to do. Later Conservatives are sometimes more sanguine of the likely outcome of the debate, and many keenly appreciate the need to maintain the credibility of their dogmatic position in the face of Criticism.

Increasingly, scholars of traditional leaning who were anxious to maintain the confidence of lay opinion came to adopt historical rather than dogmatic warrants for their positions, and to attempt thereby the defence of conservative views on particular questions. In the field of New Testament, this course had early been taken by the Cambridge Trio who maintained an exceedingly conservative stance while repudiating dogmatic warrants and employing historical critical arguments which they claimed stood on their merits. In the field of Old Testament it was later and more cautiously (and without the success scored, in the short term at least, by the Cambridge men) that the principle of criticism was taken on board with the fervent hope that the substance of Critical results would soon be overthrown. As it happened, so soon as scholars began to 'answer' the Critics accepting the validity of arguments from historical criticism

they discovered that they had opened their dogmatic position to Critical rebuttal; and they began to abandon it. As Van A. Harvey comments, in order to 'enter the lists of the debate and to attempt to vindicate the truth of the sacred narrative':

> it was necessary to pay a costly price: it was necessary to accept the general canons and criteria of just those one desired to refute. One had, so to speak, to step onto the ground that the critics occupied. This was fatal to the traditionalist's cause, because he could no longer appeal to the eye of faith or to any special warrants. The arguments had to stand or fall on their own merits.[15]

It cannot be denied that such was the long-term fruit of the Conservative apologetic. But on the other hand, from the point of view of their opponents, the Conservative scholars appeared all along to be unreasonably rejecting unanswerable arguments. It was only in the long term that, for those individuals who finally changed their minds and for the scholarly consensus as a whole, the possibility of rebuttal of the dogmatic stance was realised. The question arises to what degree Conservatives were open to evidence that went against their case, and to what degree their resistance to the construction placed upon the evidence was irrational and obscurantist.

The key question concerns the status of the conditions of rebuttal admitted by the Conservatives. We have suggested that, from the start of the traditionalists' conflict with Criticism, the admission was made by serious Conservative writers that the dogmatic principle of infallibility was held side by side with confidence that attacks upon it could be refuted on their merits and that such refutation did not require recourse to dogma. Implicit in that admission was the possibility - in the later debate readily allowed - that, since the (offensive) Critical conclusions depended upon 'rationalistic' principles, a neutral 'criticism', stripped of 'rationalism', could give rise to conclusions that were not open to dogmatic challenge. Some later scholars therefore chose to abandon what they regarded as the least defensible Conservative positions, since they felt the weight of some of the elements in the case against traditionalism. This was the means whereby those scholars who left one camp for the other eased themselves out of the traditional concept

of infallibility.

Two further points require to be made. First, increasingly as the post-1860 conflict progressed scholars who were desirous of maintaining their 'orthodoxy' in other ways (in their piety, their belief in the supernatural and the incarnation, and so on) began to take a course of compromise which enabled them to change over to Critical presuppositions in their reading of the Bible. Robertson Smith is the prime example, notable for his attempt to defend the concept of 'infallibility' by confining it to matters religious, such that no historical criticism could rebut it. But the same process of evacuating the traditional position of particular elements was evident in the Conservative camp, as our discussion of Biblical commentaries makes plain. At point after point, Conservative exegesis was shifted away from the more exposed positions traditionally adopted - in, for example, the reading of the Genesis creation and flood narratives, the stories of miracles, and so on. Conservatives began to feel the weight of the modern view of the Bible with which Criticism was bound up. This process prepared the ground for the eventual abandonment of the traditional position by all but a small minority.

Secondly, and of more significance, we may suggest that the failure of the Conservatives to interpret Scripture as the Critics interpreted it was not as irrational and obscurantist as it may appear, particularly to those who find themselves in full agreement with the Critics. Neither is it true to say that the Conservatives were intellectually dishonest, in seeking to defend their dogmatic position.[16] We may once more illustrate their method by means of the Toulmin analysis. The significant feature within it lies behind the condition of rebuttal. For the key to the confidence and stability of Conservatism lay in the manner in which Conservative scholars evaluated prima facie rebuttals arising out of historical and literary criticism.

Their tacit acceptance of the possibility that compelling historical arguments might destroy their dogma could co-exist

with confidence in that dogma (and not come, with the Critics, under the ban of historical probabilism), because they weighed each and every Critical challenge against its implications for their total conception of the authority of the Bible and their religious use of it, and, consequently, their faith as a whole. Every challenge to infallibilism they regarded as potentially undermining the ground of all Christian truth; and, in consequence, while logically it could possibly be a valid challenge, practically it was impossible that they should find it so to be. The example which we have cited of Dean Burgon presents perhaps the most explicit case of this type of argumentation which the debate produced.[17] All Conservative scholars did not have the perception to grasp this point of method, though their practice accorded with it. Burgon's argument is that every statement of Scripture must be weighed as the statement of a trusted friend. When a statement is found that is difficult to believe (e.g., one on which historical criticism has cast doubt), the course of action the believer must take is to ask his friend two questions: is he in earnest?, and is he certain?; and if the answer to both questions is affirmative, what hangs in the balance is no longer the believer's acceptance of an unlikely story, but his trust in his friend. Either he will believe the explanation which his friend offers, or he will not. Any logically possible explanation is more likely than that his friend should lie. If he disbelieves it, it is not an isolated matter of disbelief, it is the end of his friendship. That is not to say that he will never countenance a challenge to what his friend says, but it explains how the possibility of such a challenge may co-exist with the most complete trust in the veracity of the friend's statements. Every challenge is weighed, on its merits indeed, but the merits in this case include the background of the whole friendship; in particular, the experienced fact of the friend's veracity. Error in Scripture can be logically possible, but practically impossible. For a Conservative such as Burgon, the infallibility of Scripture is wholly inter-connected with the nature of the Christian religion. In respect of dogma, he believes that the whole structure of Christian truth hangs upon the reliabil-

ity of every statement of Scripture; and, in respect of practice, that the authority of each ethical injunction rests upon the authority of every one. Because Scripture is the rule of his faith and his life, any challenge to any part of it is a challenge to the whole of his Christian conviction. He finds the concept of error to be both religiously and intellectually threatening at a fundamental level. So while he will admit that error is formally possible - 'people's friends do lie, so my friend might' - it is, practically, impossible: 'it is inconceivable that my friend should lie'. To put it another way, for Burgon a challenge to the infallibility of Scripture is formally identical with a challenge to any other of his fundamental religious beliefs. It is possible that such a challenge might rest upon good grounds. It is possible, moreover, that such a challenge (justified or not) might be found convincing. But it will not be dispassionately assessed, because from the standpoint of faith it is a challenge to faith. It has implications for faith as presently conceived which constitute its acceptance no mere matter of an excess of positive over negative evidence. A challenge to faith must be weighty enough to overthrow faith as a whole, as it has hitherto been conceived.[18]

Burgon's candid statement of the question was not, indeed, typical, though it was by no means unique. Others did not articulate what they were doing in such terms, though their practice of the principle is evident. As a popular statement of the principles of the Conservative defence of Scripture, Burgon's was unsurpassed. But three years before, preceding by two years the bursting of the Essays and Reviews shell on the theology of England, H.L. Mansel had given powerful intellectual formulation to the principle in his classic defence of the traditional position, The Limits of Religious Thought, the Bampton lectures for 1858.

It is not appropriate, neither is it necessary, to embark here upon a full discussion of Mansel's thought, its context and its influence. It is set against the background of Sir William Hamilton's philosophy of the conditioned, and indeed represents Mansel's attempt to work through in theology Hamilton's

philosophical principles. Though intended as a major work of apologetic for the traditional position, one chief effect of Mansel's thesis was to prepare the ground for the incipient agnosticism of the following decades.[19] But insofar as Mansel's essential argument is relevant to our discussion, we may regard it as explicating one of the fundamentals of Conservative thought.

Mansel set out to develop the notion that of itself the reason of man is not sufficient to attain to 'a knowledge of the Infinite', that is, God, such that revelation is necessary for any and all religious knowledge. Moreover, revelation does not mediate direct knowledge of God, but indirect:

> In Revelation, as in Natural Religion, God is represented under finite conceptions, adapted to finite minds.... It is true that in Revelation, no less than in the exercise of our natural faculties, there is indirectly indicated the existence of a higher and more absolute truth, which, as it cannot be grasped by any effort of human thought, cannot be made the vehicle of any valid philosophical criticism.[20]

That is to say, there are no higher grounds available on which the revelation of God in Scripture may be criticised, even although Scripture itself does not reveal God 'as He is in His Absolute Nature'.[21] That would be impossible. The knowledge of God mediated in Scripture is:

> regulative, but not speculative; for a speculative representation of God can only be gained by a direct intuition of the infinite; and a direct intuition of the infinite is unattainable by human consciousness.[22]

In elaboration, Mansel makes an important distinction. It is an 'irrational error' to expect matters pertaining to God to be capable of being fully understood by man:[23]

> Where there is ground for believing that certain attributes may coexist in some manner inconceivable by us, the belief may indeed be called reasonable, as resting on sufficient grounds; but the object in which we believe is not an object of reason, but of faith.[24]

Thus:

> the fact that the Infinite is ... universally incomprehensible, at once removes the corresponding object from that class of logical contradictions which we regard as impossible in fact as well as inconceivable in thought. To detect such contradictions it is necessary that we should have a distinct conception of both the repugnant members. Where no such conception exists, the object may be above reason, but it is not opposed to it: we may be warranted in believing

> the fact of its existence, though we may be unable to comprehend the mode.[25]

Mansel proceeds to apply this principle to Scripture, as is evident from the text cited at the head of the first lecture: 'Ye shall not add unto the word, which I shall command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it.' (Deuteronomy 4:2) He immediately advances to the crux of the argument:

> Many a man who rejects isolated portions of Christian doctrine, on the ground that they are repugnant to his reason, would hesitate to avow broadly and unconditionally that reason is the supreme arbiter of all religious truth; though at the same time he would find it hard to point out any particular in which the position of reason, in relation to the truths which he still retains, differs from that which it occupies in relation to those which he rejects.[26]

The man who claims that his reason prevents his acceptance of any one element of revealed religion, or who accepts elements of it on the ground that they are reasonable, has unleashed a method which may lead to 'the overthrow of Christianity itself', for the exaltation of man's reason in principle overthrows all revelation.[27]

Rationalism, if it retains any portion of revealed truth

> as such, does so, not in consequence, but in defiance of, its fundamental principle. It does so by virtually declaring that it will follow reason up to a certain point, and no further; though the conclusions which lie beyond that point are guaranteed by precisely the same evidence as those which fall short of it.[28]

By contrast, the 'right use of Reason in religious questions ... is not to be found in the contents of that religion, but in its evidences'.[29] Once the evidences are established and accepted as sufficient, the religion and its revelation must be accepted as a whole. Contrary allegations then take on a distinctive character:

> the objections urged against a religion are not like the weights in a scale, which retain their full value, even when outweighed by the other side: - on the contrary, they become absolutely worthless, as soon as we are convinced that there is superior evidence to prove that the religion is true.... In a matter of which we are so ignorant and so liable to be deceived, the objection which fails to prove everything proves nothing: from him that hath not, is taken away even that which he seemeth to have. And on the other hand, an objection which really proves anything proves everything. If the teaching of Christ is in any one thing not the teaching of God, it is in all things the teaching of man: its doctrines

> are subject to all the imperfections inseparable from man's sinfulness and ignorance....[30]
>
> Many who would shrink with horror from the idea of rejecting Christ altogether, will yet speak and act as if they were at liberty to set up for themselves an eclectic Christianity.[31]

The ground of acceptance of Christian religion in its every detail is that it is contained in the Bible, and what the Bible says, in turn, in every detail, 'must be unconditionally received, not as reasonable, nor as unreasonable, but as scriptural'.[32]

Once convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, therefore, the believer must accept it all. It is not reasonable, but, on the contrary, essentially irrational, to seek an 'eclectic Christianity', for so to do is to overthrow the authority of revelation and substitute for it the believing subject, an incompetent authority. Difficulties within the revelation must be approached in faith, with the recognition that the whole religion - and the whole authority of Christ - is at stake in every one of them.

We may express this analytically as follows:

D — The Bible says x

Since W — The Bible is infallible

On account of B (the dogmatic warrants)

Presumably, Q — Unless R — Compelling historical arguments can be shown to the contrary, when considered in this context: that any given argument must be weighed against its implications for the authority of the Bible as a whole for the Christian religion

C — x is true

Or, more precisely, thus:

D — The Bible says y, y being for some reason unlikely

Since W — it is always more likely that we should misinterpret Scripture than that Scripture should be wrong

On account of B (overleaf)

Presumably, Q — Unless R — The evidence should so overwhelm us as to cause us to abandon our faith in revelation

C — y is true nevertheless

B

All our knowledge of God comes from Scripture and from Scripture alone, so a challenge to the veracity of any part of Scripture is a challenge to the authority of the whole, setting in jeopardy every other element of the revelation

What to the outsider may appear as the essential weakness of this position - that any one error in Scripture, once established, will throw the believer's faith as a whole into question - appears to the Conservative insider as simply a logical outworking of his first principle of the authority of Scripture. For an error to be established, it must be established to his satisfaction, and he views Scripture as incapable of erring. He considers, in the words of Ebeling, that the Bible is 'a special historia sacra or scriptura sacra in the ontological sense as a self-evident intellectual presupposition influencing his method of research'.[33] It worries him that one proven error could disprove his faith no more than it worried the Ptolemaic astronomer or the Darwinian biologist that one observation could destroy their systems. For like any sophisticated intellectual system, the theory of infallibility is well able to deal with seeming contrary evidence without setting aside its 'self-evident intellectual presupposition'. It emerges from this that the change from infallibilism to Criticism, like that of the Copernican and Darwinian revolutions, was no simple set of logical steps arising out of new discovery. It was an intellectual earthquake, both for the individuals who experienced it and for the community, and it changed the face of the world that they studied.[34]

We see, then, how Mansel undergirds the Conservative defence of Scripture by expounding a concept of the rôle of revelation and its status which was in essence assumed by all who took up arms to defend infallibility in his generation and the one which followed. The possibility of rebuttal, increasingly admitted by the Conservatives as the debate progressed, on the grounds of historical criticism, was held side by side the conviction, on dogmatic grounds, that every challenge to inerrancy must either carry sufficient weight to overthrow the whole prin-

ciple of Biblical authority, or it must fail. An argument, therefore, which to a Critic appeared unanswerable, could be given an answer which, to the Critic, appeared wholly implausible; but, to the Conservative, such an answer was necessarily more plausible than that the whole traditional system of understanding Scripture as authority should collapse.

Edward Garbett, for example, was a Conservative Biblical scholar who could perceive that the issue was not one of weighing arguments on either side of a given critical question; but that it involved his whole religious commitment. That, in turn, explained to him why the conflict of method which underlay debate about Higher Criticism could not ultimately be resolved by such a debate about the merits of the case:

> Let it be assumed that an unfriendly criticism has succeeded in establishing all the positions for which it demands credit.... What then? Are the arguments by which the authority of the Christian revelation is attested on the affirmative side thereby disproved?.... Not a proposition of them has been overthrown.... we should have two wholly independent lines of argument, so distinct from each other, that they do not even come into contact on any one material point, each of them ... equally cogent and unanswerable, and yet resulting in diametrically opposite conclusions.[35]

The controversy between the Conservative scholars and the Higher Critics in nineteenth-century Britain was not the simple argument it appeared to be, an argument between die-hard tradition and enlightenment over the Conservative refusal to face the facts which the Critics had brought to light. Behind the tussles over loan-words in Daniel and the direction in which the 'monuments' pointed lay a conflict of method, between the priority of dogma and the premise of infallibility on the one hand, and the priority of critical history and the premise of contemporary standards of interpretation on the other. In the context of the later nineteenth century the controversy appeared to resolve, with the widespread abandonment of the traditional position. But the victorious Critics had failed adequately to consider the nature of the method they were putting in the stead of the traditional and the implications with which it was laden. The resurgence in the mid-twentieth century of the lineal descendants

of Burgon, Mansel, Ellicott and the other infallibilists raises once again the question whether the victors were in the right.

APPENDIX A
INTERPRETING GENESIS IN THE LIGHT OF SCIENCE

> The current interpretation of the Divine record ... will naturally, and indeed must necessarily, accommodate itself to the actual state of scientific knowledge and opinion at the time.
>
> R.S. Candlish, Genesis, i, p 18[1]

The intention of this appendix is strictly limited. It is not to re-tell the story of the controversies which raged in the area of science and religion in the nineteenth century, a complex and much-discussed question.[2] Nor is it to assess as a whole the Christian response to the new developments in science, or even that response in relation to exegesis and the interpretation of particular texts of Scripture.[3] Such an investigation would, in length, be out of proportion to its relevance to our subject. But it would be a fallacy to suppose that we could consider the rise of Critical scholarship in isolation from the parallel developments in natural science, which themselves profoundly influenced Biblical interpretation. The new learning, rightly or wrongly, was considered all of a piece, as we have suggested above.[4] Moreover, the doctrine of plenary inspiration, defended by the Conservatives, was threatened by developments in natural science (as many claimed[5]). Unless the conclusions of the scientists could be harmonised with the teaching of Scripture, inspiration, as conceived by the Conservatives, must be discarded. A too-ready tendency to discover interpretations to fit the current state of scientific theory would leave exegesis in disrepute, especially in the shifting sands of early nineteenth-century geology. On the other hand, if Scripture could not be harmonised, it must be left high and dry.

Our purpose is to examine the interpretations offered of several crucial passages in a number of standard commentaries during the century. Commentators, of course, do not always oblige the reader with answers to his questions; and sometimes, while they treat the text in a prima facie literal fashion,

expounding its apparent significance to its original author and readers, they do not indicate whether they consider that significance to remain the same, or, if it does, whether they accept it.

First, let us consider the context of scientific thought in which the commentators worked.

1 The Scientific Background

The scientific background to this discussion comprises the most productive period in the history of the descriptive sciences, which, in Gillispie's words, were 'just then emerging from the chrysalis of "natural history"'.[6] Geology, in particular, was during the first decades of the century set upon its modern footing.[7] While at the close of the eighteenth century most scientists tended still to be involved in several different fields of study,[8] by the mid-nineteenth the quantity and complexity of the data available had increased so much as to place all but a limited field of expertise beyond most men.[9]

As the century began, the principal event on the geological horizon was the flood of Noah. It was considered to account for the fossil beds which had long puzzled scientists, especially for the presence of the remains of sea-creatures at high altitudes:

> There was no question about the historical reality of the flood. When the history of the earth began to be considered geologically, it was simply assumed that a universal deluge must have wrought vast changes and that it had been a primary agent in forming the present surface of the globe.[10]

Ideas of the history of the earth were underpinned by the 'Biblical' chronology which assigned a date of some 4,000 BC to the creation. While generally the Genesis account of that event was taken as a true account, some saw the creation of different species as separated by long periods, with a 'comparatively recent beginning' reserved for mankind; while others took the narrative more literally.[11]

The end of the eighteenth century saw the conflict between two competing schools of geology, Neptunism and Vulcanism, as

they were known, which regarded the action of water and that of heat, respectively, as chiefly responsible for the form in which we now find the surface of the globe. The Neptunists held that all rocks were precipitated from water, which had five times enveloped the globe in a series of inundations, the most recent of which was identified with the Biblical deluge. The Vulcanists, on the other hand, saw in the action of heat below the surface of the earth the principal agent in the formation of rocks. The position in which the earth presently finds itself, they held, is the outcome of numerous minute and gradual changes over a great period of time.[12]

After some twenty years during which Neptunism, with its appealing Biblical connexion, was popular, James Hutton and the Vulcanists gradually pressed home their case against what they considered a needlessly speculative theory. By the 1820's they had consolidated their position, when in 1823 William Buckland's Reliquiae Diluvianae fired 'the opening gun in the catastrophist controversy of the next two decades'.[13] Drawing on the researches of the great French comparative anatomist and geologist Georges Cuvier, Buckland attempted a synthesis of the undeniable superior features of Hutton's Vulcanism with other elements which had more in common with the old Neptunism to form a new theory: 'catastrophism'.[14] Cuvier, in his famous Discours sur les Révolutions de la Surface du Globe...[15] found room for several sudden catastrophic floods in the history of the earth:

> Life in those times was often disturbed by these frightful events. Numberless living things were victims of such catastophies; some, inhabitants of the dry land, were engulfed in deluges; others, living at the heart of the seas, were left stranded when the ocean floor was suddenly raised up again.[16]

It was maintained that the absence of human fossils indicated that man had been created between the last great catastrophe and the one preceding. Such a construction, of course, harmonised readily with Scripture. Buckland wrote:

> If there is any circumstance thoroughly established in geology, it is, that the crust of our globe has been subjected to a great and sudden revolution, the epoch of which cannot be dated much further than five or six thousand years ago; that this revolution had buried all the countries which were before inhabited by men ... that the small number of individuals of men and other animals that escaped ... have since

> propagated ... and consequently, that the human race has only resumed a progressive state of improvement since that epoch.[17]

Buckland's synthesis so caught the popular and the scientific mood that Gillispie can conclude:

> In the 1820's the popular conception of geology was practically synonymous with the doctrine of catastrophes.... Almost all of Buckland's professional colleagues in the 1820's, including Lyell, regarded themselves as his pupils.[18]

A major factor in this popularity must have been the consonance that appeared to lie between catastrophist geology and Scripture. Buckland himself made no secret of his own espousal of such a conclusion. The objective of Vindiciae Geologiae, his inaugural lecture as Reader in Geology at Oxford, is:

> to shew that the study of geology has a tendency to confirm the evidences of natural religion; and that the facts developed by it are consistent with the accounts of the creation and deluge recorded in the Mosaic writings.[19]

Not only so. He goes so far as to aver that:

> the grand fact of an universal deluge at no very remote period is proved on grounds so decisive and incontrovertible, that, had we never heard of such an event from Scripture, or any other authority, Geology of itself must have called in the assistance of some such catastrophe.[20]

The catatrophist system met its first and ultimately final challenge in the publication, in 1830, of the first volume of Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology, the manifesto of unformitarianism.[21] Lyell had become disenchanted with the Buckland synthesis because, as Gillispie records, 'if Buckland feared that without cataclysms there was no God, Lyell was as fundamentally apprehensive lest, without uniformity, there be no science'.[22] Drawing on the researches of one or two minor critics of catastrophism, Lyell maintained that:

> all former changes of the organic and inorganic creation are referrible to one uninterrupted succession of physical events, governed by the laws now in operation.[23]

For Lyell this was as much an assumption as a conclusion, but, he argued, without such an assumption the pursuit of geology as a science would be simply impossible.[24]

Lyell was aware that, as Gillispie has it, 'the flood was his chief enemy',[25] and while generally avoiding the subject

was 'led with great reluctance'[26] to question whether the general assumptions which linked it with the catastrophic theory were valid. In the Genesis account, he claimed, 'there are no terms employed which indicate the impetuous rushing of the waters, either as they rose or when they retreated',[27] so his denial that a flood could be posited as a primary geological agent was not a denial of the possibility of a flood as such. In any event, the question whether the Biblical flood was global or merely local had, he pointed out, long been debated.[28]

Yet not only did Lyell fail to press home his assumption of uniformity to its logical issue, the origin of the organic world; he was a vigorous critic of the evolutionary ideas current at the time. This was an implication of his view of the history of the world, since he maintained that it was not possible to construct a line of (crustal) development. 'He flatly denied that geology could show any over-all development of the surface of the earth in any particular direction from any knowable original state.'[29] It is not therefore surprising that along with this denial we find a 'full-length refutation' of 'the theories of Humphry Davy and of Lamarck as to "the successive development of animal and vegetable life, and their progressive advancement to a more perfect state"'.[30] Little wonder that Lyell had the greatest difficulty in assimilating Darwin's theory a generation later. 'It cost me a struggle', he wrote, 'to renounce my old creed.'[31] Yet in laying the foundations of modern historical geology his method supplied an ingredient essential to the next major development in the history of natural science, which though today it is better known than uniformitarian geology in fact depended upon it and was largely indebted to it.[32]

Evolution was no new idea in 1859 when Darwin's Origin of Species was published. Quite apart from the speculative notions of classical times, a scientific theory of evolution had been argued by Lamarck, and while it had been generally rejected it had left the idea in the public mind. More recently, in 1844 Robert Chambers had published anonymously The Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation, which created something of a sensation with its espousal of Lamarckian evolution and

its application of the principle behind it 'from astronomy to psychology'.[33] Though there was widespread agreement that the Vestiges had grave deficiencies as a scientific work, it provoked a vigorous response.

> The controversial hue and cry set up on appearance of the Vestiges reached a far wider audience than the one which had followed the relatively temperate discussion of uniformitarianism.[34]

The 'hue and cry' brought to public attention what otherwise might not have been widely read, and at the same time prepared the ground for Darwin's very different presentation of an evolutionary case.[35] In addition, the 1850's saw the publication of a number of essays and the Principles of Psychology by Herbert Spencer, which also took up the evolution of Lamarck and further prepared the public mind for what was to come.[36]

Darwin's achievement was not to suggest evolution but to provide a credible mechanism by which it could work and a mass of evidence in illustration of that mechanism. He focussed principally on the 'struggle for life' which must ensue from the over-population, relative to food supplies, which Malthus had predicted. This is evident from the full title of his book: On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life. Variations of value to some individuals will occur, and enable such individuals to survive their fellows in the 'struggle' and pass on their characteristics to their offspring. The best adapted animals will also tend to have the most offspring. So a 'natural' selection will take place; the fittest (i.e., the most suited) will survive, the less fit become extinct. Darwin assigned two causes to 'variation' - the small chance differences which emerge (genetically) from one generation to the next, and the inheritance of the 'acquired' characteristics of parents. In the Origin Darwin did not extend his theory to the origin of man; that awaited his Descent of Man of 1871, and divided him from Wallace and many other supporters who, for one reason or another, insisted that man could not be fully accounted for by the same explanation.

The opposition to Darwin, in the years that followed 1859,

was very considerable, as the scientific establishment remained committed to the fixity of species as taught by Linnaeus and Cuvier. And it was principally from this establishment that criticism came, not from the church as such. Of course, many leading scientists were clergymen, but, as James Moore has clearly shown, it was largely qua scientists that they took issue with Darwin. The notion that 'religion' and 'science' were at odds over Darwin is such an over-simplification as to be mistaken. Theologians and scientists were variously distributed in the debates, and while there were certainly some theologians who opposed Darwin on theological grounds they were exceptional among the serious writers involved, such that even Charles Hodge, whom James Moore regards as the most significant theologian who opposed evolution, employs in his book What is Darwinism? chiefly scientific rather than theological or Biblical arguments. Moore writes:

> There was not a polarisation of 'science' and 'religion' as the idea of opposing armies implies, but a large number of learned men, some scientists, some theologians, some indistinguishable, and almost all of them very religious, who experienced various differences among themselves. There [were] deep divisions among men of science, the majority of whom were at first hostile to Darwin's theory, and a corresponding and derivative division among Christians who were scientifically untrained, with a large proportion of leading theologians quite prepared to come to terms peacefully with Darwin.... the military metaphor perverts historical understanding.[37]

We turn now from this cursory survey of the scientific background to an examination of the impact of scientific thinking on Biblical exegesis. We are not concerned principally with tracing the impact of particular theories on particular commentators, though from time to time such influence is apparent, but rather with the response of exegetes to the challenge presented to the Biblical view of origins by the general scientific view of their day. A selection has been made of commentaries on the book of Genesis, and we shall compare the treatment which three key passages receive at the hands of the commentators before drawing some tentative conclusions. The major part of this discussion is concerned with Genesis 1, since it is here that commentators were most prepared to engage in dialogue with

the theories of science. We look also at Genesis 2-3, and 6-8.

2 The Interpretation of Genesis

(i) Genesis 1

Our starting-point is the commentary of Thomas Scott. The ninth, revised, edition was published in 1825, bringing this originally late-eighteenth-century work within the purview of the nineteenth century. Scott accepts the chronology of Usher and uses it as a basis for his exegesis. He follows through the stages of the hexaemeron, with brief comments that add little to the text. So, on 1:1, 'this visible world was formed in six days. - The chaotick mass seems to have been first instantaneously created out of nothing, and then gradually reduced to order and beauty'. And, facing one of the obvious interpretative problems, he proffers no solution:

> Before the formation of the sun, moon and stars, there was, in some way which we cannot explain or understand, a regular succession of light and darkness ... which thus measured out 'the first day'.

It is notable that he makes no effort to reconcile his exegesis with current scientific ideas, or even to raise the question of their compatibility. He leaves us in no doubt as to the conviction that underlies his use of Scripture:

> By 'the divine inspiration of the Scriptures,' the author would be understood to mean, such a complete and immediate communication, by the Holy Spirit, to the minds of the sacred writers, of those things which could not have been otherwise known; and such an effectual superintendency, as to those particulars, concerning which they might otherwise obtain information, as sufficed absolutely to preserve them from every degree of error in all things, which could in the least affect any of the doctrines or precepts contained in their writings, or mislead any person, who considered them as a divine and infallible standard of truth and duty.[38]

Therefore, 'seeing ... that the Bible may be unanswerably proved to be the word of God, we should reason from it, as from self-evident principles, or demonstrated truths'.[39] And, in consequence:

> If we believe the Scriptures to have been written by 'inspiration from God' ... we must be convinced, that it is the height of arrogance for us, short-sighted, erring creatures of yesterday, to speak of any doctrine contained in them as false or doubtful, because it is not coincident with our reasonings or conceptions.

> Surely ... we are more likely to be mistaken, than that the only wise God should attest what is not exactly true![40]

Thomas Scott's assumptions about the nature of Scripture are, as we have already seen, typical of the consensus of his day.

In 1843 Robert Candlish published his Contributions towards the Exposition of the Book of Genesis.[41] He too desired that judgement should be suspended on matters of uncertainty, but also strongly maintained that 'the object of this inspired cosmogony ... is not scientific but religious'.[42] Instead of becoming entangled in detailed discussion:

> let the student of Scripture give himself to the exposition of the narrative in its moral and spiritual application, without prematurely committing himself, or it, to the particular details or principles of any scientific school.[43]

Candlish follows his own advice, but only to a degree. The 'essential facts' of the narrative are three-fold: the 'recent date' of man's arrival on the earth; the 'previous preparation' of the earth for him; and the 'gradual nature of the work and the distinction and succession of days during its progress'. 'These', he concludes, not only 'are not', but 'cannot be, impugned by any scientific discoveries.' But having counselled avoidance of 'schools' Candlish goes on to speculate that a 'gap' between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, allowed for in Scripture, might achieve harmony with science. He ventures to admit (in the face, presumably, of the evidence of palaeontology) that such a theory does not require the absence of continuity between animal life during and after the 'gap' period.[44]

We move now to 1868, the year of first publication of the Critical, Experimental and Practical Commentary of Jamieson, Faussett and Brown, of which Robert Jamieson wrote the volume on the Pentateuch. This six-volume work was, like Scott's, written from a distinctly Conservative view of Scripture.

So, introducing his discussion of Genesis 1, Jamieson writes:

> we are informed by revelation, not only of the fact that the world was created, but also of the steps by which that magnificent fabric was successively advanced.... Through whatever channels [Moses] obtained the account he has given ... we know in all he has recorded ... he was directed by the Infallible Spirit of God.... his history ... both in the general strain and the minuter details of it, corresponds with the actual phenomena of nature.[45]

His intention, according to Jamieson, is religious;[46] and it has been a failure to grasp this which has led to an apparent conflict with 'the wonderful disclosures which Geology has made',[47] such as that its 'data' are 'totally incompatible with [the world's] being a recent creation, coeval with the human race'.[48] But, far from such conclusions conflicting with the Mosaic account:

> the more closely and thoroughly they are investigated, [they] will be found to prove the truth, and give strong confirmation of the statements contained in the Mosaic account of Creation.[49]

Jamieson then makes a classic pronouncement of commentators and other reconcilers of his school. He states:

> Moses, writing under the influence of Divine inspiration, seems to have been led ... to employ language which contains a latent expansive meaning, the full import of which time only can evolve, and which, rightly interpreted, would be capable of adjustment with all the researches and discussions which the progress of scientific light might shed.[50]

In other words, while disavowing the traditional manner in which the Mosaic statements were held to teach, or imply, a scientific picture, Jamieson re-asserts his confidence that Genesis 1 <u>does</u> have a scientific reference. What he takes away with one hand, he endeavours to replace with the other. The 'latent expansive meaning' may be appropriately related to a scientific model of origins, but not the traditional one. Such a presupposition underlies most later nineteenth-century Conservative exegesis of Genesis. As an example of Jamieson's application of his principle, on 1:6-8 he comments:

> The expansion by heat of a dark and turbid atmosphere would produce the effect, that while the larger and heavier mass of the vast deep which covered the surface of the earth would remain below, the more volatile portion of the waters would fly off, into the upper regions, and thus 'divide the waters from the waters'.

Again, on 1:14-19: '<u>Let there be lights....</u> ... The atmosphere being completely purified, the heavenly bodies were now unveiled in all their glory.' Despite the claim that these verses describe the <u>actual</u> creation of the lights, which Jamieson acknowledges, we may note, to be 'certainly ... correct ... if the grammatical construction alone is looked at', '"made" must be interpreted as "constituted," "appointed," "ordained," these lights to their proper use in the heavens'.

It might appear from what we have quoted that the harmony underlying Jamieson's exegesis is one in which each of the days of the hexaemeron is taken as an age in the history of the earth. Indeed, he gives that theory a lengthy and favourable discussion at the close of his comments on this section.[51] But without warning, and with no further discussion, he concludes that 'since the terms of the fourth commandment ... appears [sic] so plainly to support the literality of the days', we must 'adhere to the old traditionary opinion, which takes the days of creation in a literal sense'.[52] This reading is, however, to be combined with the less traditional 'chasm of indefinite ages' between 1:1 and 1:2, the so-called 'gap' mooted by Thomas Chalmers,[53] rendering Genesis 1 an account of re-creation and re-ordering with the exception of the first verse. We may remark that Jamieson, for all his talk of the 'wonders of Geology', is decidedly behind the times. He sees the re-creation as necessary because 'the last and greatest geological catastrophe occurred immediately prior to the human period, and must have induced that state of things described'.[54] As we have seen, Lyell's Principles of Geology first appeared no less than thirty-eight years before Jamieson's commentary.

We move to the 'Speaker's Commentary' of 1871, so-called because it started life as the idea of the Speaker of the house of Commons, who encouraged the Archbishop of Canterbury to convene a clerical committee to supervise the work. It was, in effect, an official Church of England production. The author of the Genesis commentary is reluctant to commit himself on controversial questions.[55] 'In our present state of knowledge', we read, '... a patient suspension of judgment seems our wisest attitude.' Or, again:

> In the present condition of geological science, and with the great obscurity of the record of creation in this chapter, it may be wise not to attempt an accurate comparison of the one with the other.[56]

Yet by the 1870's such vacillation on questions of geology could hardly be maintained.

In any event, the commentary does flirt with one or two possible harmonies. The theory that the six days represent

periods of revelation rather than creation is 'an ingenious conjecture', referred to Kurtz and Hugh Miller for its origin.[57] On the other hand:

> Countless ages may have elapsed between what is recorded in v.1, and what is stated in v.2.... The word And ... though necessarily implying transition, does by no means necessarily imply close connection.[58]

The extension of the 'days' into longer periods is also a possibility, on the supposition that while 'the English version would seem to confine it to natural days ... the original will allow much greater latitude'.[59] But the fundamental position to note is that, despite some differences, there is 'a general correspondence of sacred history with modern science', and this is 'surely more striking and important than any apparent difference in details'.[60] In other words, here again we find a determination that, whatever the problems there is an accurate scientific reference in the Genesis account, a 'correspondence' which is a testimony to the inspiration of the narrative.

The commentary edited by Bishop Ellicott immediately became a standard Conservative work. R. Payne Smith, responsible for Genesis, stands in principle by the side of those who disclaim the relevance of Scripture in matters of physical science.

> If Galileo cleared away many a mistaken gloss put upon Scripture to make it accord with the Ptolemean solar system, so have the astronomers and geologists of the present day enabled us at last to see something of the grandeur and majesty of the Biblical account of creation.[61]

As to whether we are 'to accept evolution as the best exposition of the manner in which God wrought',[62] Payne Smith's position is that 'the theologian has nothing to do with such questions', for 'every scientific hypothesis must be proved or disproved on the ground of science alone'.[63]

Nevertheless, in spite of these strong words, when it comes to the commentary proper, Payne Smith is also among the harmonisers. Thus:

> Light is not itself a substance, but a condition or state of matter; and this primeval light was probably electric, arising from the condensation and friction of the elements as they began to arrange themselves in order.... due to ... the law of gravitation.... If on the first day electricity and magnetism were generated ... we have in them the two

> most powerful and active energies of the present and of all time.[64]

And, commenting on 1:5: 'Before this distinction of night and day was possible, there must have been outside the earth, not as yet the sun, but a bright phosphorescent mass, such as now enwraps that luminary.' The days were 'aeons', periods of 'indefinite duration, as the Bible itself teaches us', since in Genesis 2:4 we have only one day ascribed to the creative week. At the same time, Payne Smith finds it possible to describe Kurtz's theory of six visions as 'very probable', implying a desire to espouse the two chief harmonistic expedients at once. In all events, 'the agreement of the Mosaic record with geology is so striking that there is no real difficulty in believing it to be inspired'.[65]

The Pulpit Commentary, another Conservative work, plumps for the 'vision theory' as well. Thomas Whitelaw rejects Chalmers' 'gap' on exegetical grounds. He applauds the achievements of geology: '<u>Geological science</u> ... contributes its quota to the constantly accumulating evidence in support of the Mosaic narrative.'[66] For various exegetical and scientific reasons, it is necessary, Whitelaw declares, that the 'days' be periods of 'prolonged duration';[67] so like Payne Smith he appears to ride two horses at once. If the days are taken as ages, it would seem rather to remove the rationale for reading them as periods of revelation.

At the same time, Whitelaw does not accept evolution. He expounds 'after his kind' to indicate:

> that the different species of plants were already fixed. The modern dogma of the evolution of species by development would thus be declared to be <u>unbiblical</u>, as it has not yet been <u>proved</u> to be scientific. The utmost that can be claimed as established is that 'species,' <u>qua</u> species, have the power of variation along the line of certain characteristics ... but not that any absolutely new species has ever been developed with power indefinitely to multiply its kind.[68]

Despite paying lip-service to the 'religious' intentions of the author, like Payne Smith, Whitelaw is determined to find scientific information in the narrative. Commenting on 1:16, he acknowledges: 'How the work of this day was effected does not fall within the writer's scope to declare, the precise object

of revelation being to teach not astronomy ... but religion.'

But he cannot restrain himself:

> We may imagine that the cosmical light of day one, which had up to this point continued either encompassing our globe like a luminous atmosphere, or existing at a distance from it ... now ... gradually broken up doubtless through the shrinkage of the earth's mass ... and slowly drawn off toward, and finally concentrated, as a photosphere round the sun, which was thereby constituted chief luminary.

The commentator calls in evidence a writer described as 'pre-Newtonian', and does allow that his reconstruction may be 'hypothetical'!

We turn now to Critical commentaries. The Expositor's Bible volume on Genesis was published in 1888, the work of Marcus Dods. He is convinced that 'it is not the object of these writers to impart physical instruction', so:

> If anyone is in search of accurate information regarding the age of this earth, or its relation to the sun, moon and stars, or regarding the order in which plants and animals have appeared upon it, he is referred to recent text-books.[69]

The lack of concern of the Genesis writer for such matters Dods illustrates by citing the Critical understanding of the literary features of the chapters, which show that the author 'lays side by side two accounts of man's creation which no ingenuity can reconcile'.[70] The account must therefore be read as 'moral or spiritual'.[71] In any event, it is simply 'irreconcileable with the teachings of science', and:

> All attempts to force its statements into ... accord are futile and mischievous.... [and] to be condemned because they do violence to Scripture, foster a style of interpretation by which the text is forced to say whatever the interpreter desires, and prevent us from recognising the real nature of these sacred writings.[72]

Thus: 'If, for example, the word 'day' in these chapters does not mean a period of twenty-four hours, the interpretation of Scripture is hopeless.'[73] As to what the passage does teach, Dods suggests two principal truths, viz, that 'at the root and origin of all this vast material universe ... there abides a living, conscious spirit, who wills and knows and fashions all things',[74] and that 'man was the chief work of God'.[75]

Here, then, we have a distinctively different approach,

which has paved the way for most modern interpretation of Genesis. The attempt to harmonise with science is abandoned, indeed it is criticised as improper in intention and incoherent in execution. In its place, a 'moral' and 'spiritual' meaning is sought which does not trespass upon the territory of the scientists. As Alfred Loisy write, of another matter, 'religion no longer conflicts with science, because it no longer encounters it'.[76]

A similar approach is taken by H.E. Ryle in his exposition, The Early Narratives of Genesis, published in 1892. He states his position unambiguously:

> The old position is no longer tenable.[77]
>
> We have no right to assume that, in things distinct from the spiritual and moral life, the letter of Scripture is endowed with omniscience.[78]
>
> The Hebrew cosmogony.... is not, upon any literal interpretation, scientifically accurate.[79]

In consequence, harmonising exegesis cannot succeed. Moreover:

> It is a mistaken notion of reverence to endeavour to extract accurate science from the Book of Genesis by means of a process of exposition which we should not think of applying to the primitive traditions of other races.[80]

For example:

> It is ... only a non-natural interpretation, which considers the 'days' of Gen. i., in spite of the mention of 'evening' and 'morning', to be vast periods of time.... [or to assume that] Gen. i.14-16 describes not the formation of the heavenly bodies ... but the first manifestation of their orbs through the mists that had before hidden them from the earth.[81]

By contrast, the 'only candid line of exegesis' is to adopt a 'genuinely literal interpretation'.[82]

In his later Cambridge Bible volume (1914) Ryle suggests the reason scholars refuse so to be 'candid': 'The assumption that the inspired record must be literally accurate has led to much misinterpretation of Scripture as well as to great mental confusion and religious distress.'[83] In fact, 'judged by the standards of modern knowledge, the Cosmogonies of Genesis are wholly defective'.[84]

We turn now to the two most distinctively Critical and scholarly of the commentaries, the Westminster Commentary of S.R. Driver (1904), and the International Critical Commentary

of John Skinner published six years later. Driver is a vigorous critic of the harmonising school. He deploys a particularly potent argument against the 'day-age' theory, which he sees as the principal attempt at reconciliation. He begins by asserting the fundamental inconsistency of Genesis 1 with astronomy and geology, if 'by "day" is meant a period of 24 hours'.[85] Yet he will grant, for the sake of argument, that a figurative usage, whereby each 'day' represents an 'age', is intended. In that case, however, at several key points, the order of the creation is seriously mistaken. In Genesis vegetation is created two 'days' before animal life; in geology they are regarded as appearing simultaneously. In Genesis fish and birds appear together; in geology the birds appear long after both fish and also animals, who in Genesis appear on the following day. Therefore, the figurative reading of 'age' for 'day' is of no avail: there is contradiction in any case.

Driver gives two common ways out of this dilemma: the 'gap' between 1:1 and 1:2, and the 'vision' theory. Of the former he writes, inter alia:

> the existence of the earth, together with the whole flora and fauna of the geological periods, prior to the creation of light and the formation of the sun is scientifically incredible.[86]

Genesis 1 reads as a cosmogony. Of the vision theory, two observations are made: the narrative does not purport to be that of visions, but of the facts themselves; and, secondly:

> if the past was expressly revealed in the form of a vision, is it likely that the picture as a whole would be so widely different from the reality as it unquestionably is?[87]

Finally, the problem with such convoluted harmonies as those of eminent scientists like Dana and Dawson is that they require such unnatural interpretations of the text of Genesis. This, avers Driver, 'is the best proof that' the two are 'irreconcilable'.[88] Such harmonies are achieved by 'imposing upon the words of Genesis meanings which it is simply impossible that they can ever have been intended to convey'.[89] He concludes:

> Read without prejudice or bias, the narrative of Gen.i. creates an impression at variance with the facts revealed by science: the efforts at reconciliation which have been reviewed are but different modes of obliterating its characteristic features,

> and of reading into it a view which it does not express.... understood in the natural sense of the words - and we have no right to impose any other sense upon them - it does not accord with the teachings of science.... it is impossible not to feel that, had [the writer] been acquainted with [the earth's] actual past, he would, while still using language equally simple, equally popular, equally dignified, have expressed himself in different terms, and presented a different picture of the entire process.[90]

By 1910, when Skinner writes his volume, he can consider that 'the old controversies as to the compatibility of the earlier chapters' of Genesis 'with the conclusions of modern science are no longer ... a living issue'.[91] Enquirers are referred to Driver for further discussion.

> It us not difficult to show that Genesis relates incredibilities which no reasonable appeal to miracle will suffice to remove.... its statements are at variance with the scientific knowledge of our time; and no person of educated intelligence accepts them in their plain natural sense.[92]

Again:

> It is a world unknown to science whose origin is here described, - the world of antique imagination.... That the writer believed this to be the true view of the universe, and that the narrative expresses his conception of how it actually came into being, we have, indeed, no reason to doubt.[93]

The attempt to make 'day' mean something longer is 'exegetically indefensible',[94] and 'destroys the analogy on which the sanction of the Sabbath rests'.[95] 'The Heb. mind had ... no difficulty in thinking of the existence of light before the heavenly bodies.'[96] 'The whole conception is as unscientific (in the modern sense) as it could be.... Its religious significance, however, is very great.'[97]

Finally, we may refer to the volume by W.H. Bennett in the Century Bible.[98] He summarises the development that has taken place:

> It was formerly the custom, in discussing the opening chapters of Genesis, to compare their statements with the results of scientific research. One writer would assert that the views of 'science falsely so-called' must be rejected because they did not square with Scripture; another would ... maintain that the preference must be given to science, while a third would perform miracles of exegesis in order to show that the language of Genesis was consistent with modern astronomy and geology. Now, however.... Most theologians recognise that Revelation did not intend to communicate information as to science. The Holy Spirit no more corrected ... science than ...

spelling.[99]

(ii) Genesis 2 and 3

We cover these references more speedily, partly since there is much less said in the commentaries that is relevant to our purpose, and partly because we have already discussed the fundamental lines of approach which the commentaries adopt in their exegesis of the early part of Genesis.

Scott follows earlier commentators in not considering the question of the historicity of the Eden narrative: it is assumed, as it had not been seriously challenged when he wrote.

Jamieson, like many others, will not accept the theory of evolution, and he calls in evidence men of the eminence of Murchison, Agassiz and Owen currently (1868) opposing Darwinism.[100] He too adopts a literal reading, like some others taking pains to discuss the identity of the four rivers and other topographical features. Considerably more attention is given to this issue than to the problem of evolution.

The 'Speaker's Commentary' also tilts at evolution:

> we may remark ... [that] the records beneath the earth's surface give no support to the hypothesis that every species grew out of some species less perfect before it. There is no unbroken chain of continuity.[101]

But the writer, aware no doubt of the flux of scientific opinion in the midst of which he writes, prepares another position on which, if necessary, he may fall back:

> Even if the other parts of the Darwinian hypothesis were demonstrable ... even if it could be made probable that man is only an improved ape, no physiological reason can touch the question, whether God did not ... breath into him 'a living soul'.... This at least would have constituted Adam a new creature, and the fountainhead of a new race.[102]

Similarly, after expressing preference for a literal reading of the narrative of the fall, the writer floats the possibility that 'the history of the Fall is a true story though veiled under allegorical imagery'.[103]

Payne Smith, in Ellicott, interprets the Eden narrative literally, and includes, for instance, an excursus on the length of man's stay in the Garden. The geographical details also

interest him:

> there can be no doubt that an eastern district of Asia is meant, and that the details at the time the narrative was written were sufficient to indicate with sufficient clearness where and what the region was.[104]

However, in the midst of such literalism, there is awareness of the controversy in which the passage is swathed. We read:

> such questions ... as whether it were a real serpent or Satan ... whether it spoke with a real voice, and whether the narrative describes a literal occurrence or is allegorical, are better left unanswered.... the ... reverent course is to draw from the narrative the lessons it was evidently intended to teach us, and not to enter upon too curious speculation.[105]

Whitelaw, in the Pulpit Commentary, also discusses at some length the question of the rivers, and accepts the historical tenor of the whole narrative; commenting, for instance, on 2:20, that 'speech and language both spring full-formed, though not completely matured, from the primus homo of the Bible'. The New Testament implies the 'literality' of the serpent.[106] In fact, over against the whole tendency toward allegorical interpretation, he maintains: 'History is often a parable of truth.'[107]

By contrast, Dods in the Expositor's Bible writes: 'we at once perceive that it is not with the outer husk of the story we are to concern ourselves, but with the kernel'.[108] In other words, it is in allegorical interpretation that a true understanding of the passage lies. Dods does not discuss the question of historicity as such at all. Ryle's approach is similar: 'so far as [man's] physical origin is touched upon, the narrative is expressed in the simple terms of prehistoric legend.'[109] Neither Dods nor Ryle considers the evolutionary origin of man worthy of discussion. It is assumed.

Driver emphasises the origin of the narrative in the legendary traditions of Israel's neighbours.

> As ch.i. gives no scientific account of the process of creation, so ch.ii.4b-iii.24 contains no scientific solution to the problems of anthropology. But the narrative expresses a variety of ethical and theological truths respecting human nature in a figurative or allegorical dress, the details not being true in a literal sense, but being profoundly true in a symbolical sense.[110]

In such a judgement Skinner would concur. 'A mythical background

everywhere appears', he writes.[111] Of the account of the creation of the woman, he observes, 'the naïveté of the conception is extraordinary';[112] and Ryle: 'the description in these verses is remarkable for its delicacy and beauty. Nothing could be more clear than that we are dealing with the poetry of symbolism, not with a record of literal fact.'[113] That is the Cambridge Bible's sole comment on the historicity of these chapters.

(iii) Genesis 6-8

Even Thomas Scott was not unaware of some of the difficulties and objections that arose in consideration of the flood narrative. Thus:

> Learned men have shewn, that these dimensions [sc., of the ark] were far more than were necessary to contain all the animals to be preserved, and sufficient provision for them.[114]
>
> There must have been a very extraordinary miracle wrought, perhaps by the ministration of angels, in bringing two of each species to Noah, and rendering them submissive to him, and peaceable with each other.[115]

Further, and of some interest since Scott wrote at a time when orthodox geology could without difficulty accommodate a universal flood:

> Every attempt to explain the manner, in which the earth was overflowed, too much resembles the presumption of those who enquired 'How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?' It is no more incredible that God should drown the world than that he should raise the dead.[116]

The geographical universality of the flood Scott considers established by the reference in the narrative to the covering of 'all the high hills', and further supported by 'traces of the deluge' and traditions the world over.[117]

Particularly interesting is the case of Robert Candlish, whose exposition of Genesis ran through a number of editions and whose evident change of view is no doubt representative of that of Biblical interpreters of his generation generally. In 1843 he wrote:

> The light of recent science has finally put to shame the various crude and presumptuous cavils with which a poor and shallow scepticism was accustomed to assail this tremendous narrative; and on all hands it will be admitted that the Apostle Peter, referring to the inspired account of the Creation, has given the true explanation of the immediate cause and

> manner of the flood.... The earth, as arranged at the period to which the first chapter of Genesis relates, arose out of the waters.... Convulsions from beneath, and incessant rain from above, conspired to bring back the waters, so that again they stood above the hills.... None escaped....[118]

In the 1853 edition, the statement stands virtually unchanged, though its tendentious opening sentence, presumably a reference to the popularity of Buckland's catastrophism, is by then somewhat of an anachronism. By the edition of 1868 Candlish has allowed caution to take the upper hand. The entire discussion is omitted, except for this (revised) introduction: 'I pass over the catastrophe itself, without discussing the various questions which have been raised concerning it.'[119]

Jamieson, writing in the same year (1868), labours evidently under the weight of geological opinion not conducive to the traditional view, though he still finds support in the geology of an earlier day, with its 'many an inundation or cataclysm from the influence of secondary causes in the earth, when it was peopled by races without souls'.[120] But he recognises that a universal flood is indefensible in the current state of scientific opinion, and adjusts his exegesis accordingly. The 'high hills' are those of Armenia,[121] and when we read that 'all flesh' died:

> we ... understand the phrases ... to be universal only with respect to the objects comprehended in the Divine denunciation, viz., the godless race of antediluvian men ... together with the inferior animals enlisted in their service or residing in their neighbourhood.[122]

Jamieson admits that the language used could equally be employed of a geographically universal flood, but:

> considerations suggested by the various branches of science compel us to view the language of Moses as ... restricted in this narrative, and to believe, even though neither Noah nor Moses may have entertained any other thought than that the whole world was wholly submerged, that this destructive flood covered but ... the region inhabited by man.[123]

He propounds the explanation of the sinking of a great area of the earth's surface to allow in the sea-waters and to contain them and an extraordinary rainfall. The geosyncline gradually rises up once more to resume its normal appearance, and the waters drain back into the sea. He cites, with approval, the suggestion of Pye Smith and Hugh Miller that a suitable spot might be the area around the Caspian Sea.[124]

The 'Speaker's Commentary' sets out a very similar argument in favour of geographical limitation, dwelling both on the geological difficulties of the universal theory, and on the fact that: 'if only the inhabited world was inundated, and all its inhabitants destroyed, the effect would have been the same to Noah, and would, most likely, have been described in the same words.'[125]

Payne Smith, in Ellicott, also argues for a limited flood:

> 'Every thing that is in the earth shall die'. - That this by no means involves the theory of an universal deluge has been shown with admirable cogency by Professor Tayler Lewis.... His view is that the writer described with perfect truthfulness that of which he was either an eyewitness, or of which he had received the knowledge by tradition.[126]

The problems of collecting the animals and caring for them, together with other 'internal' arguments, indicate limitation on the number of species collected and taken into the ark. But Payne Smith admits that, though local and limited, the flood was catastrophic in origin; how else could the ark have been driven up as high as Ararat?[127] The details of the text, and the fact that a great body of water was required for a brief period, indicate a 'natural convulsion', or 'some vast displacement of water',[128] whereby, perhaps, 'the waters of the equator were carried towards the poles'.[129]

Whitelaw, in the Pulpit Commentary, is more cautious, but arrives at a similar conclusion. He writes that 'it is at least doubtful whether the Deluge was universal or only partial and local'.[130] The terms employed would naturally have been used by a spectator to describe a local as well as a truly global inundation.[131] He admits that:

> unquestionably ...[that] a global flood was the writer's meaning would never have been challenged had it not been for certain difficulties of a scientific nature.... But these difficulties having arisen in men's minds led to a closer and more careful investigation of the scriptural narrative,[132]

which in turn showed the possibility of this new reading. Whitelaw gives a summary of the difficulties, geological and zoological, in the path of the traditional interpretation. He concludes:

> while Scripture does not ... forbid the idea of a partial

> Deluge, science appears to require it, and, without ascribing to all the scientific objections that are urged ... that importance which their authors assign to them, it may be safely affirmed that there is considerable reason for believing that the mabbul which swept away the antediluvian men was confined to the region which they inhabited.[133]

Interestingly, Dods, in the Expositor's Bible, adopts the position that 'there is every reason to believe that this catastrophe was co-extensive with the human population of the world'.[134] He accepts the force of the worldwide traditions of a flood to this effect, and suggests the plain of the Tigris and Euphrates as the most likely area. There are scientific and Scriptural objections to the global reading.

Ryle, whilst allowing some historical basis for the story and suggesting 'some terrible but local cataclysm' as the responsible agent,[135] is in fact much more sceptical about the narrative itself. To the ancients, 'the whole world was the valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris'.[136] But,

> the language relating the catastrophe is that of an ancient legend describing a prehistoric event.... allowance must be made, both for the exaggeration of poetic description and for the influence of oral tradition.[137]

So his conclusion is a little more grudging than might at first sight appear. In his later Cambridge Bible volume he still maintains that some historical basis exists for the story:

> there is nothing improbable in the view that the Hebrew Narrative records a tradition of a vast and overwhelming Deluge in Mesopotamia, the memory of which is also contained in the inscriptions of Babylon.[138]

A more sweeping conclusion is, predictably, forthcoming from Driver:

> the rise ... of a science of geology has shewn that the occurrence of a universal deluge, since the appearance of man upon the earth, is beyond the range of physical possibility.[139]

Not only so. For a number of reasons, Driver suggests that even a local inundation, on the grand scale envisaged by the commentators we have discussed, would be impossible:

> it is clear from viii.4,5 that the writer (P) pictured an immense depth of water upon the earth; and even if only Palestine, and the mountains (not the highest) in Armenia, were submerged, it must have risen to at least 3,000 ft., and water standing 3,000 ft. above the sea in Palestine or

> Armenia implies 3,000 ft. of water in every other part of the globe.[140]

Further, the antiquity of civilisations in various parts of the world takes us back long before the apparent date of Noah in the Biblical account. A purely local, minor, inundation which would not suffer from these problems (and which Ryle, for instance, is speaking about), would of course be possible:

> but an inundation such as this does not satisfy the terms of the narrative of Genesis.... We are forced, consequently, to the conclusion that the Flood, as described by the Biblical writers, is unhistorical.[141]

Skinner adds little to this. He allows that possibly the origin of (some of) the various flood traditions lies in 'the vague reminiscence of some memorable devastating flood in the Euphrates valley',[142] in most distant times. But he will not allow a direct connexion between this event and the Noah story. It must have been so long ago that for 'the tradition' to have been preserved 'for so long a time among savage peoples without the aid of writing is incredible'.[143]

3 Conclusions

What conclusions may we draw from this survey? As regards the flood, it is noteworthy that every single commentator, with the exception of Scott,[144] argues against the traditional idea of a global flood; some evidently from a sceptical attitude to Biblical history as such, but also those, like Jamieson and Payne Smith, who espouse a high doctrine of Scripture and seek to defend their view of Scripture (and hence the credibility of the narrative) in their interpretation. As they all make clear, it has become necessary, in the light of developments in the science of geology, in particular (with the demise first of the Neptunists and then of catastrophism), to consider the Biblical narrative afresh in the light of the new consensus. Conservative writers are committed to defending as factual what they exegete from the text. As Whitelaw candidly confesses, they have revised their interpretation of Scripture to conform with what they regard as a credible reading. They use to that end exegetical and other arguments, but their conclusion is

uniform: a real, historical, deluge, anthropologically total, but geographically limited.

On the other hand, the Critical writers come to generally different conclusions, with a distinct and different centre of gravity. Driver and Skinner view the narrative as an example of a worldwide folk-lore tradition requiring explanation. They reject the normative reading of the Biblical account (which implies the dependence of the other accounts upon it), and they explode the harmonistic efforts of nearly all the other commentators by revealing how they prove on examination to be either scientifically as implausible as the old view which they replaced, or exegetically impossible, or both. The narrative clearly requires literal treatment, and when it receives it is found to be incompatible with historical geology, zoology, and the rest.

Interpretation of the Eden narrative is not so controversial as might be expected. Some writers come down for and some against evolution, but there is surprisingly little interest in the question on either side, with only rare suggestions that the narrative either may or may not be harmonised with Darwin. There is rather more interest in the topography of Eden. All the commentaries focus on the 'message' of the passage found in its symbolism, whether or not they believe the symbols to be also facts of history. It is interesting that the 'Speaker's Commentary', published with the authority of the Bishops of the Church of England, prepares a line of retreat from its initial opposition to evolution should the evidence for Darwinism be found insurmountable. One wonders how widespread such reservations were among the theological opponents of Darwin, and, if they were indeed widespread, how much they contributed to the collapse of the traditional position. It is clear, at all events, that the supposed clerical and theological opposition to evolution was by no means either as widespread or as emphatic as is often suggested, at least as evidenced by Biblical commentary.

Our principal subject has, however, been Genesis 1, and here we find that the conclusion drawn tentatively in discussion of the flood narrative is readily established. Conservative commentaries (all apart from Scott, which is in any case the

product of an earlier generation) either lean towards or openly espouse a non-literal reading of the chapter.[145] There is a tendency to disclaim scientific significance for the statements of Scripture, and it would appear that some such disclaimer had become a pre-requisite of scholarly comment on Genesis in the years after Lyell and Darwin. Yet in spite of that, the tendency is also for writers to smuggle in, so to speak, all manner of 'scientific' references in the manner of Jamieson's 'latent expansive meaning',[146] whereby meanings thought to be in harmony with current scientific thinking are read out of the text. None of the Conservatives we have examined completely breaks with this type of interpretation and treats the meaning of the text as purely 'religious'. With the abandonment of the old, literal, 'scientific' meaning, a new and non-literal one is set in its place.

By contrast, the Critical commentators openly acknowledge that the narrative in fact conflicts with the scientific view. Driver writes:

> Read without prejudice or bias, the narrative of Gen.i. creates an impression at variance with the facts revealed by science: the efforts at reconciliation which have been reviewed are but different modes of obliterating its characteristic features, and of reading into it a view which it does not express.[147]

Ryle sums up the Critical position when he writes that the 'only candid line of exegesis' is to adopt a 'genuinely literal interpretation'.[148] Without such a principle, Dods concludes, 'the interpretation of Scripture is hopeless'.[149] The problem is that the Conservative writers presuppose that the narrative must be accurate, and they have therefore been led into exegetically indefensible positions in order to construe the text in a fashion in which this may be maintained. Ryle observes: 'The assumption that the inspired records must be literally accurate has led to much misinterpretation of Scripture.'[150]

We may illustrate this facet of the discussion with reference to essays by two of the most popular writers of the day, Henry Drummond and T.H. Huxley. Drummond, despite his evangelical religion, was not a Conservative in his view of Scripture. He is highly critical of the Conservative response to the new

scientific developments. Theologians, he writes, have adopted:

> the policy which is always followed in similar circumstances - compromise and adjustment. Thus intervened the interregnum of the reconcilers, De Luc, Kurtz, Pye-Smith, Hugh Miller, Chalmers, and a hundred others.... But the failure of the new method was a foregone conclusion, and those who sailed on this shallow sea one by one ran aground.[151]

Such attempts at 'compromise and adjustment' were overtaken by the rise of Biblical Criticism, as a result of which:

> the sacred writings are now regarded by theology from a wholly changed standpoint. Now from this standpoint the problem of the reconciliation of Genesis with geology simply disappears.... The question is, in fact, as irrelevant as that of the senior wrangler who asked what Milton's Paradise Lost was meant to prove.[152]

That is to say, the Critical approach to Scripture has released exegetes from the requirement that their interpretation of Scripture be defensible as a description of reality, by focussing on other qualities as distinctive of the Christian view of these passages.

T.H. Huxley's essay, 'The Lights of the Church and the Light of Science',[153] is addressed to the following problem:

> The books of ecclesiastical authority declare that certain events happened in a certain fashion; the books of scientific authority say they did not. As it seems that this unquestionable truth has not yet penetrated among many of those who speak and write on these subjects, it may be useful to give an illustration.[154]

Huxley instances the account of the flood in Genesis 6-8, and discusses the narrative and its interpretation at some length. He has been unable, 'notwithstanding diligent search',[155] to find a defender of the (geographical) universality of the flood. By contrast, exegetes have taken the road of the 'Speaker's Bible', 'published under high Anglican authority', whose 'judicial and judicious deliverance, the skilful wording of which may adorn, but does not hide, the completeness of the surrender of the old teaching';[156] he takes as his point of departure.

> Many fully admit (and, indeed, nothing can be plainer) that the Pentateuchal narrator means to convey that, as a matter of fact, the whole earth known to him was inundated; nor is it less evident that, unless all mankind, with the exception of Noah and his family, were actually destroyed, the references to the Flood in the New Testament are unintelligible.[157]

A number of fundamental objections to the 'limited flood' option

are urged, much as Driver and Skinner, as we have seen, criticised that possibility in later years. Huxley's conclusion is that:

> the last state of the would-be reconcilers of the story of the Deluge with fact is worse than the first.[158]
>
> The position they have taken up is hopelessly untenable. It is raked alike by the old-fashioned artillery of the churches and by the fatal weapons of precision with which the enfants perdus of the advancing forces of science are armed. They must surrender, or fall back into a more sheltered position.[159]

This vigorous criticism of the middle ground between, on the one hand, literal interpretation and acceptance (the old view), and, on the other, literal interpretation and rejection (the new), places the nineteenth-century debates in a firm perspective. Drummond's essay suggests how it is that the Critical school of interpreters found it possible to move to a position not dissimilar to Huxley's, as they accepted a (generally) literal reading of Genesis and frankly acknowledge that, from a scientific standpoint, it is in error in what it states.

We see here, therefore, as in the debates about Criticism and its results, the Conservative interpretation of Scripture, right or wrong, is governed by the way in which Scripture is seen. It is seen as reliable and trustworthy, as a result of its inspiration. In consequence, its teaching, on whatever subject, must be accepted upon its authority. But, for that consequence to be acceptable in the apologetic context in which the Conservatives wrote, the teaching of Scripture must be credible. It is impossible that Scripture should teach something contrary to the consensus of modern scientific thought. The interpretation of the Genesis narratives, therefore, must be such as will reconcile with science, however implausible may seem the exegesis required in the eyes of those who do not see the Bible as infallible - to Critical scholars, and to unbelievers. Little wonder that Huxley, his diligent search notwithstanding, could not find a defender of a global flood. That is not to say that Conservatives consciously sought to impose their interpretations upon Scripture; far from it. But the fact that for them it was inconceivable that Scripture could speak contrary to the fundamental direction of scientific thinking inevitably determined their interpretation of crucial passages. Their position had been well expressed, at an earlier stage in the controversy, by Arch-

deacon Pratt in his influential Scripture and Science not at Variance, published in 1858:

> The Book of Nature and the Word of God emanate from the same infallible Author, and therefore cannot be at variance. But man is a fallible interpreter; and by mistaking one or both of these Divine records, he forces them too often into unnatural conflict.[160]
>
> NO NEW DISCOVERIES, HOWEVER STARTLING, NEED DISTURB OUR BELIEF IN THE PLENARY INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE, OR DAMPEN OUR ZEAL IN THE PURSUIT OF SCIENCE. Let us hold firm our grasp upon this truth, that the Scriptures are the infallible Word of God, true in every statement they contain.[161]
>
> Whatever happens, let our persuasion always be avowed, that Scripture cannot err.[162]

APPENDIX B

THOMAS KUHN AND THE STRUCTURE OF SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS

Some illumination is shed upon aspects of the nineteenth-century controversy over Higher Criticism and the Bible by a brief consideration of the influential work of Thomas Kuhn on the history of science. Kuhn develops a model of scientific change which coincides in a number of significant features with the theological change discussed in this study. Clearly a full discussion either of the validity of Kuhn's thesis in its own field, or of its applicability and, if so, the degree of its applicability, in ours, is not possible here. Equally clearly, there are fundamental differences between change in science and change in theology in, for example, the finality claimed for the propositions advanced by scientists and by theologians. But, as we have suggested above,[1] there is also much common ground, particularly in the area of major, revolutionary, change and its mechanism. We shall summarise the main elements in Kuhn's thesis that relate to our own, and then proceed to some brief comment.

Writing of the famous turning-points in the history of science associated with the names of men such as Copernicus and Newton, Kuhn states:

> Each of them necessitated the community's rejection of one time-honoured scientific theory in favour of another incompatible with it. Each produced a consequent shift in the problems available for scientific scrutiny and in the standards by which the profession determined what should count as an admissible problem or as a legitimate problem-solution. And each transformed the scientific imagination in ways that we shall ultimately need to describe as a transformation of the world within which scientific work was done. Such changes, together with the controversies that almost always accompany them, are the defining characteristics of scientific revolutions.[2]

Kuhn argues that the scientific community develops paradigms, or overall models, by which to interpret the evidence that is available to it. A change in such a fundamental conception does not and cannot come about by the 'confirmation or falsification procedure made familiar by our usual image of science'.[3]

Historically, 'competition between segments of the scientific community' is the sole process which 'actually results in the rejection of one previously accepted theory or in the adoption of another'.[4] A paradigm gains its controlling status because it is more successful than its competitors 'in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute'. Kuhn points out that to achieve this status it does not need to solve all the problems or indeed to solve any one completely. 'The success of a paradigm ... is at the start largely a promise of success discoverable in selected and still incomplete examples.'[5] The task of 'normal science' - the practice of which is the occupation of scientists in between revolutions - is to make good this promise by 'increasing the extent of the match between these facts and the paradigm's predictions, and by further articulation of the paradigm itself'. This enterprise 'seems an attempt to force nature into the preformed and relatively inflexible box that the paradigm supplies'. And Kuhn notes that 'no part of the aim of normal science is to call forth new sorts of phenomena; indeed, those that will not fit the box are often not seen at all'.[6]

Attention is then focussed, more particularly, upon rivalry between two conflicting paradigms. The essential methodological point is this:

> When paradigms enter, as they must, into a debate about paradigm choice, their role is necessarily circular. Each group uses its own paradigm to argue in that paradigm's defense.
>
> The resulting circularity does not, of course, make the arguments wrong or even ineffectual. The man who premises a paradigm when arguing in its defense can nonetheless provide a clear exhibition of what scientific practice will be like for those who adopt the new view of nature. That exhibition can be immensely persuasive, often compellingly so. Yet, whatever its force, the status of the circular argument is only that of persuasion. It cannot be made logically or even probabilistically compelling for those who refuse to step inside the circle. The premises and values shared by the two parties to a debate over paradigms are not sufficiently extensive for that. As in political revolutions, so in paradigm choice - there is no higher standard than the assent of the relevant community.[7]

He continues:

> To the extent, as significant as it is incomplete, that two scientific schools disagree about what is a problem and what

> a solution, they will inevitably talk through each other when debating the relative merits of their respective paradigms. In the partially circular arguments that regularly result, each paradigm will be shown to satisfy more or less the criteria dictated by its opponents. There are other reasons, too, for the incompleteness of logical contact that consistently characterizes paradigm debates. For example, since no paradigm ever solves all the problems it defines and since no two paradigms leave all the same problems unsolved, paradigm debates always involve the question: Which problems is it more significant to have solved?[8]

There is an irreducible degree of circularity in paradigm debates.

'Neither side will grant all the non-empirical assumptions that the other needs in order to make its case.' 'Neither may hope to prove his case.... the proponents of competing paradigms must fail to make complete contact with each other's viewpoints.'[9]

> Collectively these reasons have been described as the incommensurability of the pre- and post-revolutionary normal-scientific traditions. In the first place, the proponents of competing paradigms will often disagree about the list of problems that any candidate for paradigm must resolve. Their standards or their definitions of science are not all the same.[10]

This is the case to such a degree that:

> the proponents of competing paradigms practice in their trades in different worlds. One contains constrained bodies that fall slowly, the other pendulums that repeat their motion again and again. In one, solutions are compounds, in the other mixtures. One is embedded in a flat, the other in a curved, matrix of space. Practicing in different worlds, the two groups of scientists see different things when they look from the same point in the same direction. Again, that is not to say that they can see anything they please. Both are looking at the world, and what they look at has not changed. But in some areas they see different things, and they see them in different relations one to the other. That is why.... before they can hope to communicate fully, one group or the other must experience the conversion that we have been calling a paradigm shift. Just because it is a transition between incommensurables, the transition between competing paradigms cannot be made a step at a time, forced by logic and neutral experience. Like the gestalt switch, it must occur all at once (though not necessarily in an instant) or not at all.[11]

Finally, Kuhn asks the question, 'How, then, are scientists brought to make this transposition?', and he replies: 'Part of the answer is that they are very often not.'[12] It is largely the new generation, raised up and trained not under the ancien régime but with both paradigms displayed before them, who take

up the new way of seeing things. 'These facts', Kuhn concludes, 'have most often been taken to indicate that scientists ... cannot admit their errors, even when confronted with strict proofs.'

> I would argue, however, that in these matters neither proof nor error is at issue. The transfer of allegiance from paradigm to paradigm is a conversion experience that cannot be forced.... The source of resistance is the assurance that the older paradigm will ultimately solve all its problems.[13]

Kuhn's thesis has been widely discussed since it was first propounded twenty years ago. Some philosophers of science have received it with enthusiasm, while others have repudiated it, and others again desired to be selective in their reponse. It is neither our intention nor our desire here to defend Kuhn. Nor is that required, for the elements we would present as analogous to the debate about Higher Criticism illumine that debate irrespective of their relevance to scientific change in general.

Some criticisms of Kuhn are found, and his own position defended andclarified, in a volume which itself gives testimony to the weight with which Kuhn's professional colleagues received The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, volume iv of the Proceedings of the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science held at London in 1965, is devoted to a discussion of Kuhn.[14] His opening paper has as its burden a major factor in his thesis, that 'the criteria with which scientists determine the validity of an articulation or an application of existing theory are not by themselves sufficient to determine the choice between competing theories'.[15] J. Watkins, another contributor, draws an interesting parallel between the operation of 'normal science' and theology, giving an example which is relevant to our discussion. 'Consider a theological scholar', he writes, 'working on an apparent inconsistency between two Biblical passages. Theological doctrine assures him that the Bible, properly understood, contains no inconsistencies. His task is to provide a gloss' which will provide 'a convincing reconciliation' of the passages. Such a procedure would seem to be 'essentially analogous' to Kuhn's concept of the functioning of 'normal science'. 'There are

grounds', Watkins adds, 'for supposing that he would not repudiate the analogy.'[16] Stephen Toulmin, offering a critique of Kuhn, argues that his absolute distinction between 'normal' and 'revolutionary' science is unjustified, since it is an exaggeration of the (real) discontinuities in scientific history. He concludes, judiciously:

> Accordingly, one may concede that the development of scientific thought does involve important conceptual discontinuities, and that the conceptual systems which displace one another within a scientific tradition may often be based on quite different, and even incongruous principles and axioms; but we must beware of going all the way with Kuhn's original 'revolutionary' hypothesis.[17]

Against such accusations of exaggeration and rhetoric, Kuhn re-states his position. 'In a debate over choice of theory, neither party has access to an argument which resembles a proof in logic or formal mathematics.' There cannot, therefore, be a step-by-step logical movement from the old theory to its replacement.[18]

The suggestion which we would make is that the controversy over Higher Criticism was, mutatis mutandis, the theological equivalent of a paradigm debate. The conversion of individuals and the scholarly community from the Conservative, dogmatic conception of the nature of Scripture to the Critical, historical one involved the equivalent of a 'paradigm shift' for the churchmen concerned. All the necessary circularity and argument at cross-purposes to which Kuhn draws attention was present, in a form appropriate to theological debate, in the discussions of the nineteenth century about the Bible; indeed, such an understanding of the nature of the changes taking place goes far to explain the manner in which they happened. The debate was concerned with the nature of, and, relatedly, the appropriate method of interpreting, the Bible. This was the fundamental question in theology. How it was resolved connected with every other key theological question, immediately affecting revelation, faith, morality, the supernatural, and Christology, as we have seen. At point after point the Kuhnian analysis of revolutionary change may be paralleled with the change which came over nine-

teenth-century Biblical interpretation. We have only to refer once again to one passage we have cited to illustrate the truth of such a generalisation. Speaking of the scientists on two sides of a paradigm debate, Kuhn could equally well be speaking of theologians and Biblical scholars when he writes that they practise in 'different worlds':

> the two groups of scientists see different things when they look from the same point in the same direction.... that is not to say that they can see anything they please. Both are looking at the world, and what they look at has not changed. But in some areas they see different things, and they see them in different relations one to another. That is why.... before they can hope to communicate fully, one group or the other must experience the conversion that we have been calling a paradigm shift. Just because it is a transition between incommensurables, the transition between competing paradigms cannot be made a step at a time, forced by logic and neutral experience. Like the gestalt switch, it must occur all at once (though not necessarily in an instant) or not at all.[19]

The 'normal theology' that had been practised prior to the rise of Criticism had as its paradigm the presupposition of infallibilism. The new 'normal' theological tradition that took its place had set in the stead of infallibilism with its associated theory of plenary inspiration historical criticism with its dual theories of literary analysis and the developmental understanding of history.

Whether or not - or, more accurately, to whatever degree - Kuhn's revolutionary understanding of scientific change is ultimately accepted, it has ready application to the controversy over Criticism which convulsed nineteenth-century Britain. In the particulars which we have cited, and in others, it sheds valuable light on the process of change which we have examined. At the lowest level there is, as we have suggested, a prima facie analogy to be drawn between the Critical revolution and the Copernican. Kuhn's more particular analysis, whether or not it is accepted in its entirety, is suggestive of a more detailed parallel between revolutionary changes in science and this particular revolution in Biblical theology and scholarship.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 On our use of the terms 'critical' and 'conservative', v. infra, cap. III, n.5. Too much should not be read into our employment of other epithets, such as 'orthodox', 'traditional', 'modern', 'new', and so on. Their use is not intended to imply more than the distinction of one opinion from another. In the mid-nineteenth century the Conservative view of Scripture was both traditional and orthodox. By so describing it we do not intend to suggest that it was the historic Christian view. That is another question.

2 According to T.A. Roberts, this represents 'the most pressing problem in the field of Christian apologetic'. History and Christian Apologetic, p 174. Van A. Harvey sees the theologies of the twentieth century as 'a series of salvage operations ... attempts to reconcile the ethic of critical historical inquiry with the apparent demands of Christian faith'. Historian and the Believer, p 246. 'Historical criticism', as James Barr has recently written, 'continues to present difficult problems for the church and theology of today.' 'Introduction' to Stuhlmacher, Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture, p 9.

3 Most recently, e.g., Stuhlmacher, op. cit., and Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture.

4 'Rationalism' here and below is generally used, as it was widely in the nineteenth century debates about criticism, to indicate the a priori refusal of some (largely Continental) scholars to accept explanations of particular events, especially miracles, or principles, such as that of revelation, which require a prima facie supernatural component. Naturally, the label was also affixed to many who denied being 'rationalists' by those who were suspicious of the tendency of their thought, particularly of British Critics who followed the conclusions but denied the premises of avowed rationalists on the Continent. British rationalists who were proud to wear the epithet made no claim to be Christians in the conventional sense. V. A.W. Benn, History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century, and J. McCabe, comp., Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalists.

5 Driver, Critical Study, p 21. Emphasis ours.

6 V. Kuhn, The Copernican Revolution. Kuhn has developed the concept of a 'scientific revolution' in a manner which, although controversial, throws considerable light on the revolution in thinking about the Bible. We discuss this briefly in an Appendix, infra, pp 319-324.

7 Liddon, Divinity of our Lord, p 479.

I THE LEGACY OF BENEDICT DE SPINOZA

1 Cp Basil Willey, More Nineteenth-Century Studies, p 118: 'Spinoza counted for much in the lives of many nineteenth century freethinkers and liberals. It was very fortifying to know that this mighty thinker and great saint had already, two hundred years before, "demythologized" religion as fully as any Victorian progressive could desire.'

2 V. J. Steinmann, Richard Simon et les Origines de l'Exégèse Bibliques.

3 In his Conjectures.

4 The Holy Bible, vol. i.

5 V., e.g., the quotation at the head of this chapter; Storr, Development of English Theology, p 46; and Craigie, 'The Influence of Spinoza in the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament', in Evangelical Quarterly, L (1978), pp 23ff. E.g., p 25: 'in the question of method per se, it is probably true to say that Spinoza was the founder of higher criticism or scientific method; he had his predecessors, of course, but the rigour with which he propounded the method of criticism does not seem to have any close parallel.' Craigie, following H.-J. Kraus, suggests that a line may be drawn back from the mainstream of nineteenth-century Criticism through the immensely influential writings of Eichhorn to Herder, who, Craigie maintains, was crucially influenced by Spinoza in his study of the Old Testament (pp 26,7). Frei, in his major discussion of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century hermeneutics, writes of Spinoza's Tractatus as 'brilliant and prophetic', and says that Spinoza 'sets forth most of the important principles of an interpretation at once rationalistic and historical-critical', Biblical Narrative, p 42. According to Thrane, he is 'the first great pioneer of Higher Criticism', Rise of Higher Criticism, p 49.

6 V. infra, cap. VIII, pp 236-289.

7 Strauss, Spinoza's Critique of Religion, p 35.

8 Ibid., pp 37-52.

9 Ibid., p 104. Emphasis original.

10 Infra, pp 76f.

11 Spinoza, Tractatus, VII, p 98; pagination here and below in the edition cited in the bibliography.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., VII, p 99.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., VII, p 100.

18 Ibid., VII, p 101.

19 Ibid., VII, pp 101-3.

20 Ibid., VII, p 104.

21 Ibid. Emphasis ours.

22 Ibid., VII, p 103.

23 Strauss, op. cit., p 113 (Ep. 20).

24 Strauss, ibid. He adds the comment: 'In this sense the critique of revealed religion is not the achievement, but the very basis of free science.' Frei writes: 'the nature and standards of truth and true virtue, he tells us, are not to be deduced from scripture', op. cit., p 42.

25 Cp Strauss, op. cit., pp 114ff.

26 Spinoza, op. cit., II, p 40.

27 Ibid. Emphasis ours.

28 Ibid., VI, p 83.

29 Ibid., VI, p 84.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., VI, p 91.

33 Ibid., VI, p 92.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., VI, pp 92,3.

36 Ibid., VI, p 93.

37 Strauss, op. cit., p 115. The assumption, that there is an evident uniformity in matters of practice, is a large one. It would probably be simpler to argue, in Spinoza's fashion, for 'contradictions' in that area than in the other.

38 Ibid., p 116. Cp Spinoza, op. cit., Preface, p 8: 'the authority of the prophets has weight only in matters of morality, and ... their speculative doctrines affect us little.'

39 Ibid., VIII, p 120.

40 Ibid., VIII, IX, passim.

41 Ibid., XI, pp 138f.

42 Ibid., X, pp 146f.

43 Ibid., X, pp 150f.

44 Ibid., IX, pp 139ff.

45 Ibid., XI, passim.

46 Ibid., XIII.

47 Ibid., XII, p 165.

48 Ibid., Preface, p 9.

49 Ibid., pp 9,10.

50 Ibid., p 8.

51 Ibid.

52 Craigie comments that: 'Although the objection may seem a reasonable one, in a sense it misses the mark, for the truth of Scripture (within Christianity) is affirmed on a broad basis through its canonization and on an individual basis by the "Spirit which beareth witness in my heart that these things

are true".' Art. cit., p 29.

53 Strauss, op. cit., p 124.

54 Strauss writes: 'above all, the critique based on Scripture assumes that the meaning of the Scriptures, by reason of which orthodoxy may be refuted, is the literal meaning, that is, the meaning which is accessible in equal measure to the devout reader and to the unbeliever. This assumption is a petitio principii in the face of any opponent who asserts that genuine interpretation of the Scriptures is possible only on the basis of faith.' Op. cit., p 123.

II THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY FERMENT

1 G.S. Faber, Horae Mosaicae, Bampton lectures, 1801; pp 10,11.

2 V. Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, for the standard discussion.

3 Glover, Evangelical Nonconformists, p 9, writes: 'England and Scotland really constituted a single religious public of remarkable homogeneity. Particularly in regard to higher criticism denominational and party lines meant little or nothing; even the Anglo-Catholics are not distinguishable as a group from the general body of English religious opinion on critical issues.'

4 From the 'Last Will and Testament of the Revd John Bampton, Canon of Salisbury', reproduced at the front of each volume of printed lectures.

5 Hunt, Religious Thought, p 41.

6 Ibid., p 292.

7 It has also been significant that almost every year a set of lectures has been published. Bampton secured this brilliantly by insisting that 'the Preacher shall not be paid, nor be entitled to the revenue, before they are printed'!

8 Hunt, op. cit., p 39.

9 Locke, 'Letter to Rev. R. King, Aug. 25th. 1703', Works (1801 ed.), vol. x, p 304. Cited Carpenter, The Bible in the Nineteenth Century, p 7.

10 Abbey and Overton, The English Church in the Eighteenth Century, vol. i, p 560. Cited Carpenter, ibid., n.

11 Reardon, Coleridge to Gore, p 83.

12 Storr, English Theology, p 177.

13 Van Mildert, Scripture-Interpretation, p 2.

14 Ibid., p 9.

15 Ibid., p 10.

16 Ibid., p 11.

17 Ibid., p 20.

18 Ibid., p 21.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., p 22.

22 Ibid. Emphasis ours.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., p 27.

25 Ibid., p 33.

26 Ibid., p 36.

27 Ibid., p 37.

28 Ibid., p 39.

29 Ibid., p 40.

30 Ibid., p 44.

31 Ibid., p 45. He adds: 'A suspicion of some wrong bent in the mind ought indeed always to be entertained, when we are conscious of a secret wish to set aside any doctrine, apparently forming a part of that system which, in its general character, we acknowledge to proceed from God.' (pp 45,6)

32 Ibid., p 49.

33 Ibid., p 51.

34 Ibid., p 52.

35 Ibid., p 57.

36 Ibid., p 58.

37 Ibid., p 60.

38 Ibid., p 61. Emphases original. It is striking to read how an early nineteenth-century High Churchman speaks about Rome. Somewhat later he adds the comment: 'From infallibility, therefore, in interpreting God's word, it is but a short step to infallibility in proposing new Articles of Faith, and new modes of worship. And how readily the one pretence may succeed to the other, the practice of the Romish Church has but too evidently proved.' (pp 66,7)

39 Ibid., p 77.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., p 78.

42 Ibid., p 79.

43 Ibid., p 80.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., p 84. We should, perhaps, point out that such a 'limitation' does leave the reason with a vital task, including, as Van Mildert says, deciding whether Scripture does indeed have Divine authority. But, for those whom reason has led to accept such an authority, it is another matter to permit the reason to 'overrule the written Word'. For those within the community of faith the question of the veracity of Scripture may be seen as a matter of apologetics 'merely'. Of course, at the end of the day it is upon such questions that the truth or falsity of the religion as a whole depend.

47 Ibid., p 85.

48 Ibid., p 86.

49 Ibid., pp 86,7.

50 Ibid., p 88.

51 Ibid., p 92.

52 Ibid., p 95.

53 Ibid., p 122.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., p 160.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., pp 160,1.

58 Ibid., p 177.

59 Ibid., p 178.

60 Ibid., p 179.

61 Ibid., p 190.

62 Faber, op. cit., pp 10,11.

63 Morgan and Hohlfeld, German Literature in British Magazines, 1750-1860, p 49. On the broader question, v., e.g., Elliott-Binns, Religion, pp 132ff.

64 Liddon, Life of Pusey, i, p 72.

65 Morgan and Hohlfeld, op. cit., p 73.

66 Elliott-Binns, English Theology, p 14. Cp Storr, Development of English Theology, p 4: 'The key to the situation sc., before 1860 is not difficult to find. English theology was isolated. On the Continent, and particularly in Germany, an intellectual revolution had already taken place, but the majority of English theologians were utterly ignorant of what had happened abroad, and, what is far worse, did not care to know.'

67 Carpenter, op. cit., p 20.

68 Farrar, Interpretation, p 422.

69 Pfleiderer, Development of Theology, p 372. Curiously, Perowne and Stokes in their edited Letters of Connop Thirlwall suggest that in 1825 Thirlwall and Hare 'were probably the only Englishmen thoroughly well-versed in the literature of Germany'. (p 54)

70 Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies, p 40.

71 The present writer recalls a professorial aside recommending the reading of the Confessions as still the best 'antidote to Fundamentalism'.

72 Willey, ibid.

73 Coleridge, Confessions, Letter I, p 295.

74 Ibid., Letter II, p 296.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid., p 299.

77 Ibid., Letter III, p 305.

78 Ibid., p 307.

79 Ibid., p 308.

80 Ibid., Letter IV, p 308.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid., p 309.

83 Ibid., p 310.

84 Ibid., p 311.

85 Ibid. Emphasis ours.

86 Ibid., p 315.

87 Ibid., p 313. The coinage is Coleridge's, according to Willey, op. cit., p 39.

88 Coleridge, op. cit., Letter IV, p 316.

89 Ibid., Letter V, p 321.

90 Ibid., Letter VI, p 331.

91 Willey, op. cit., p 64. Arnold had learned German so as to be able to read Niebuhr's History of Rome in 1825, and two years later he made friends with Bunsen. 'The influence of these teachers was apparent in the Essay', Carpenter, op. cit., p 23.

92 Stanley, Life, ii, p 344; cited Willey, ibid.

93 Stanley, op. cit., ii p 351; cited Willey, op. cit., p 65.

94 Stanley, op. cit., i p 231; cited Carpenter, op. cit., p 23.

95 Arnold, Essay, p xxi.

96 Ibid., p xxii.

97 Ibid., p xxiii.

98 Ibid., p xxiv.

99 Ibid., p xxv.

100 Ibid., p lii.

101 Ibid., p liii.

102 Ibid., p lviii.

103 Ibid.

104 Willey, op. cit., pp 67,8.

105 V., e.g., Swanston, Ideas of Order, p 2.

106 Hampden, Scholastic Philosophy, p 356.

107 Ibid., pp 370,1.

108 Willey, More Nineteenth Century Studies, p 139.

109 V. infra, pp 76f.

110 Storr gives an illuminating portrait of the historical method: 'Among the new influences which were to shape the thought of the nineteenth century, the foremost place must be given to the historical method.... It seeks to understand the subject under investigation by tracing out its history.... Its outlook is organic. The hiatus, the sharp interval, it cannot tolerate. Its thought is of continuity, living connection, slow transformation of one stage of a process into the next. It wishes to discover in the field of history the connection of cause and effect.... The historical method, then, refuses to treat any event in isolation to other events.... Existence forms one whole, and the ideal for knowledge presents itself as the ideal of a system in which all the parts shall be so related as to form a unity. For example, the history of any single nation must be studied in relation to the history of all other nations, and thus is born the thought of universal history. The development is of humanity as a whole.... This conception of the unity of mankind began to come into prominence in the latter half of the eighteenth century; and with it arose the problem of showing how all the manifold varieties of human culture and civilisation were correlated expressions of one underlying and growing spirit of humanity.' English Theology, pp 115,6. Storr later adds this comment: 'The historical method, as an instrument of strict scientific research, can come to no terms with

the belief in an irregular or occasional supernatural activity.' (p 119) That remark and the following are somewhat tendentious, but they convey with precision the flavour of much German historical scholarship and the tendency of its British counterpart during the period under discussion: 'The conception of evolution ... was immensely reinforced when, after the publication of the Origin of Species, historical method made the study of history scientific; and the sciences themselves, learning from the method, applied the thought of evolution to their own past history. Scientific and historical investigation, informed by the common conception of development, followed parallel paths. The intellectual record of the nineteenth century is one of the growing sovereignty of the idea of evolution.' (p 120)

111 Storr, ibid., p 119.

112 Sell, 'The Rise and Reception of Modern Biblical Criticism', in Evangelical Quarterly, LII (1980), p 136. Perowne and Stokes, for instance, would concur in this judgement: 'This translation played an important part in opening a new method of historical study to English scholars.' Op. cit., p 90.

113 Gooch, History and Historians, p 310.

114 Ibid., pp 311,12.

115 Carpenter, op. cit., p 20.

116 Pfleiderer, op. cit., p 372.

117 Milman, History of the Jews, Preface, 1829 ed., vol. iii, repr. in 1863 ed., vol. i, p xxxvii.

118 Ibid., Preface, 1863 ed., vol. i, p iv.

119 Ibid., p xi.

120 Pfleiderer, op. cit., p 394.

121 V. infra, p 99.

122 V. Harris, The Tübingen School.

123 Westcott, Study of the Gospels, Preface to first edition, emphasis ours. The first edition bore a different title; significantly, Elements of the Gospel Harmony.

124 Elliott-Binns, Religion, p 142.

125 Pfleiderer, op. cit., p 393.

126 Ibid., p 387. Not surprisingly, it 'gave grave offence to certain classes of his countrymen', Preface to 3rd ed., 1894, p v.

127 Willey, More Nineteenth Century Studies, p 140. The commentary was part of a projected joint effort with Stanley, patterned on a scheme of Arnold's. Jowett wrote the famous essay, 'On the Interpretation of Scripture', for inclusion in the 1859 edition, but did not have it completed in time. V. Preface to 1894 ed., p vi.

128 Carpenter, op. cit., p 14.

129 Marsh, Lectures on the Criticism and Interpretation of the Bible, p 266.

130 Ibid., p 314.

131 Ibid., pp 321,2.

132 Ibid., p 11.

133 Ibid., p 12.

134 Ibid.

135 Ibid., pp 31,2.

136 Ibid., p 33.

137 Ibid.

138 Mark Pattison commented: 'That investigation, introduced by a bishop and professor of divinity, has scarcely yet attained a footing in the English church; but it is excluded not from a conviction of its barrenness, but from a fear that it might prove too fertile in results.' Essays and Reviews, p 262; cited Carpenter, op. cit., p 15.

139 Perowne and Stokes, op. cit., p 54.

140 Ibid., p 23.

141 J.C. Thirlwall, Connop Thirlwall, p viii.

142 Gooch, op. cit., p 310.

143 Thirlwall, Introduction to ET of Schleiermacher, Essay on St. Luke, p viii.

144 Ibid., pp viii,ix.

145 Ibid, p ixn.

146 Ibid., p xi.

147 Ibid., p xii.

148 Ibid., p xv.

149 Ibid., p xvii.

150 Ibid., p xviii.

151 Ibid., pp xviii,xix.

152 Ibid., p xix.

153 Faber, op. cit., p viii.

154 V. infra., cap. IV, pp 115-156. Interestingly, Pusey deliberately set out on his career of Old Testament scholarship in order to counter Criticism. He later wrote that, at the age of 22, he had had to read an 'infidel book in order to help a friend who was in difficulties'. That, he discloses, 'was my first real experience of the deadly breath of infidel thought upon my soul. I never forget how utterly I shrank from it. It decided me to devote my life to the Old Testament, as I saw that that was the point of attack in our defences which would most easily be breached.' Cited in Liddon, Life of Pusey, i, p 49.

155 Lee, Inspiration, pp iii,iv.

156 Ibid., p iv.

157 Ibid.

158 Ibid., p 18.

159 Ibid., p 19.

160 Ibid., p 21.

161 Ibid., p 19.

162 Ibid.

163 Ibid., p 441.

164 Ibid., p 20.

165 Ibid., citing Wilson, Evidence of Christianity, 1828, i, p 506.

166 Ibid., p 21, citing Morell, Philosophy of Religion, pp 143,4.

167 Ibid., p 23.

168 Ibid., p 24.

169 Ibid., p 26.

170 Ibid., p 27.

171 Ibid., p 28. That this is a somewhat curious distinction need hardly be indicated. All of the material in Scripture is not susceptible of its analysis.

172 Ibid., p 29.

173 Ibid., p 33.

174 Ibid., p 36.

175 Ibid., p xiii.

176 Ibid., p 366.

177 Ibid.

178 Ibid., p 372.

179 Ibid., p 376.

180 Ibid., p 377.

181 Ibid., p 378.

182 Ibid., p 382.

183 Ibid., p 384.

184 Ibid., p 390.

185 Ibid., pp 390,1.

186 Ibid., p 396. To establish this would of course be the life-work of Sir William Ramsay in the last decades of the century.

187 Ibid., pp 397,8.

188 Ibid., p 399.

189 Ibid., pp 398,9.

190 Ibid., p 402.

191 Ibid., p 408.

192 Ibid., p 409.

193 Ibid., p 412, citing Westcott, after Origen.

194 Ibid., citing Whewell and Job 38:4.

195 Ibid., p 413.

196 Ibid.

197 Hampden, op. cit., p xlviii.

198 F. Harrison, 'Neo-Christianity', in Westminster Review, October, 1860.

199 Cited by Willey, More Nineteenth Century Studies, p 170.

200 Mozley, Some Tendencies, p 11. He adds, needlessly, the qualification 'that had come from within the Church of England'; 'that had come from within mainstream Christianity' would have been adequate. Of course, the fact that it did come from within the Establishment rendered its effect more serious, and its offence the greater. For a full discussion of the course of the debate encompassing Essays and Reviews and the Colenso case, v. Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii, pp 75-97.

201 Storr, op. cit., p 448.

202 Glover, op. cit., p 48.

203 Essays and Reviews, pp 60,1.

204 Ibid., p 70

205 Ibid., p 110.

206 Ibid., p 111.

207 Ibid., p 142.

208 Storr, op. cit., p 441.

209 Ibid., pp 442,3.

210 Essays and Reviews, p 208.

211 Ibid., pp 208,9.

212 Ibid., p 211.

213 Ibid., p 231.

214 Ibid., p 253.

215 Infra, pp 76,7.

216 V., e.g., supra, cap. I, pp 7-17.

217 Infra, pp 127-130.

218 Storr and others are scathing in their treatment of most of the essays in these volumes, but he in particular over-reaches himself in the following statement: 'Wilberforce's preface to Replies deserves notice, if for no other reason than because in it he frankly confesses that he has never read the essays, which he then proceeds to denounce in violent and intemperate language.' Not so; it is Storr who has not read what he denounces! What Wilberforce confesses is that he has not had time to read 'any of the following Essays' (emphasis ours), an admission indeed, but of a different order.

219 Thomson, ed., Aids to Faith, p iv.

220 Ibid., p 404.

221 Ibid., p 414.

222 Elliott-Binns, English Thought, p 136.

223 Colenso, The Pentateuch, i, p vi.

224 Farrar, Free Thought, pp 475,6.

225 Stanley, Jewish Church, i, p 219 (1906 ed.).

226 Ibid., p 20.

227 Ibid., p 24.

228 Glover, op. cit., p 57.

229 Storr and Elliott-Binns, among others, cover the ground well in their various volumes, and Glover, while concentrating on English Nonconformity, elucidates much of the developing pattern and the factors behind the final acceptance of Criticism. The scholarly Old Testament debate is reviewed by R.J. Thompson, Moses and the Law; and the New by S. Neill, The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1961.

230 Colenso, op. cit., p xxii.

231 Infra, cap. VII, pp 204-262.

232 Glover, op. cit., p 110.

233 Ibid., p 111.

234 Ibid., p 112. V. infra, pp 207,8.

235 Ibid., p 113.

236 Which resulted in his book, An Historical Enquiry into the Probable Causes of the Rationalistic Character lately Predominant in the Theology of Germany...., 1828.

237 In his bibliography, Toon lists 128 significant works written against the Tractarians published between 1835 and 1855; Evangelical Theology, loc. cit.

238 Chadwick, op. cit., ii, p 58; Glover, op. cit., p 115.

239 Elliott-Binns; English Thought, p 141.

240 Elliott-Binns, English Theology, p 63.

241 Mozley writes of Pusey: 'He may not have committed himself in so many words to the doctrine of the verbal inerrancy of Holy Scripture, but his outlook was consonant with that doctrine and hardly with any other. Under his leadership the High Church party was as resolutely opposed as were the Evangelicals to the first appearances of what came to be known as the Higher Criticism.' Op. cit., p 11.

242 Elliott-Binns, op. cit., p 65; Chadwick, op. cit., ii, p 101. On the course of the controversy which followed, v. Chadwick, pp 97-106.

243 Elliott-Binns, ibid.; ironically to Scott Holland, who contributed the opening essay to Lux Mundi; in Life of H. Scott Holland, p 112.

244 V. infra, cap. V, for a discussion of the argument and context of Gore's essay; pp 157-178.

245 E.g., Pusey, Lectures on Daniel, pp 6ff.

246 Colenso, op. cit., pp xxxif.

247 V. infra, cap. IV, pp 115-156.

248 Mozley, op. cit., p 20.

249 Glover, op. cit., p 213.

250 Mozley, op. cit., p 15.

251 Ibid., p 21.

252 So Glover writes: 'In accepting the Cambridge defence against Strauss and Baur, the evangelicals accepted higher criticism in principle, without being fully aware of what they had done. They were also encouraged by the success

of conservative New Testament criticism and disposed to believe that a thorough critical study of the Old Testament would likewise substantiate the main outlines of the traditional view of the Bible.' (p 284)

253 Mozley, op. cit., pp 26,7.

254 Farrar, Interpretation, p ix.

255 Ibid., p x.

256 Ibid.

257 Ibid., p xviii.

258 Ibid., p xx.

259 Ibid., p xxvi.

260 Ibid., p 418.

261 Ibid., p 417.

262 Ibid., p 420.

263 Ibid., p 421.

264 Ibid., p 422.

265 Ibid., p 424. Farrar continues to make what was perhaps the most bitter denunciation of the Conservative view uttered by a scholar during the whole controversy; and it is well to remember that, in 1885, though the tide was turning, scholars such as Ellicott, Wace, Wright and Liddon were among his readers: 'By no theory that [Jesus] uttered did He sanction that mechanical theory of inspiration which "is at variance with the whole form and fashion of the Bible, and is destructive of all that is holiest in man and highest and religion." (Westcott.) When He lived on earth a system of interpretation had already attained to its full proportions, to which His own was entirely opposed.... That system was the Rabbinic, the Pharisaic, the method of the Scribes, - a system servile, secondhand, traditional, superstitious, self-interested, denunciative, fantastic - and its main features have been continued by direct affiliation through the Christian centuries down to our own.' (p 434)

1 Adam Smith, Modern Criticism, p 72.

2 Farrar, Interpretation, p 420. Bennett and Adeney note that 'in the Old Testament, the critical position is, speaking roughly, that identified in this country with Professors Cheyne, Driver, Ryle, G.A. Smith, etc.; and generally assumed by the writers on Old Testament subjects in Dr. Hastings' Bible Dictionary.' Biblical Introduction, p v. On Robertson Smith, v. infra, cap. VII.

3 Cited in MacHaffie, op. cit., p 132; cp Sanday, Oracles, p ix.

4 Driver, Critical Study, p 40. The term was evidently used first in this sense and of the Bible by Eichhorn at the close of the eighteenth century, in the Preface to his Einleitung in das Alte Testament (1787); Carpenter, The Bible, p 3; Peake, The Bible, p 76.

5 This distinction may be held to be somewhat pedantic, first, in the light of the close connexion between these two modes of study; and, secondly and more significantly, because of the widespread contrary usage of the period. (Thus Cave, Inspiration, p 21.) It was also very properly pointed out that 'no one who studies the Old Testament in the light of modern knowledge can help being, to some extent, a "Higher Critic".' 'The name', writes Orr, 'has unfortunately come to be associated all but exclusively with a method yielding a certain class of results.' (Problem, p 9.) And Peake writes: 'If a man seeks by scientific scholarship and reasoned argument to prove that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, he is practising Higher Criticism just as much as the man who seeks, by the same methods, to disprove its Mosaic authorship; the only difference is that one is bad and the other is sound Higher Criticism.' (The Bible, p 78.) Yet, once again, the usage of the period was otherwise, with scholars espousing the new views speaking of themselves and being spoken of by others as 'critics', in distinction from those who did not. And for all that both groups used similar methods of argument, an essential difference lay between them, viz that while the 'critics' used their scholarly methods of analysis as the primary way of understanding Scripture, their opponents adopted them chiefly ad hominem. To use Peake's example, the 'critic' believed that Moses did not write the Pentateuch on the grounds of his scholarly, critical, arguments, whereas his opponent believed that Moses did write the Pentateuch on dogmatic grounds, but defended his position using scholarly, critical arguments. This is something we explore infra, cap. VIII, pp 263-289. The customary use of 'critic' has much to commend its retention, suitably qualified, and we use it here without prejudice to the acknowledged scholarly ability of many who were not 'critics' (or, for that matter, to the possibility that presuppositions played their part in the 'critical' conclusions). Accordingly, in the discussion which follows 'Critical' and its cognates with a higher case initial 'C' will be used of scholars who espoused the new methods of study and the substance of the conclusions of the German critics, in contrast to Conservative scholars who did not. Where these words occur with lower case 'c', they are used in their strict sense.

6 Orr, op. cit., p 9.

7 Essays and Reviews, p 334.

8 Ibid., p 338.

9 Ibid., p 350.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., p 375: 'When interpreted like any other book, by the same rules of evidence and the same canons of criticism, the Bible will remain unlike any other book.'

12 Farrar, op. cit., p vii.

13 Ibid., p x.

14 Infra, pp 103,4.

15 Farrar, op. cit., pp xxiv,xxv.

16 Ibid., p xxvi. Jowett's famous phrase was taken up, sometimes verbatim, sometimes allusively, by many of the Critical writers; one modern author terms it the 'cardinal tenet of historical criticism' (Nelson, Robertson Smith, p 41). Inevitably it was understood in different senses, as we may infer from Farrar's qualification 'fairly apprehended' quoted in the text. Kirkpatrick (Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 3) stands out in that he repudiates this description of the Critical method. Because, he writes, the Old Testament was given to the church by Christ and His Apostles, 'we cannot ... treat it as any other book: it is sacred ground; reverence is demanded of us as we approach it.' But, he continues, differentiating himself from the Conservatives, 'it is no true reverence which would exempt it from the fullest examination by all legitimate methods of criticism.' Jowett himself, in asserting of the interpreter that 'his object is to read Scripture like any other book' (Essays and Reviews, p 338) because 'no other science of Hermeneutics is possible but an inductive one' (p 378), sees this as the legitimate means of discovering how indeed the Bible is different from other books. 'When interpreted like any other book, by the same rules of evidence and the same canons of criticism, the Bible will still remain unlike any other book' (p 375). Peake is emphatic: the Bible is to be studied 'just like' any other book (Guide, p 8); we must come to it 'with no prepossessions'. The remarkable qualities which do lie in the Bible will emerge of their own accord upon such scrutiny. (The Bible, p 28) Sanday refers simply to 'the maxim that the Bible must be studied "like any other book"', questioning whether this implies that the Bible must be like any other book. Cheyne points out the sense in which he regards the conclusions of Biblical study as having revealed the unlikeness of the Scriptures. 'The Israelitish history and literature are a history and literature like any other, save that the hand of Providence may to us be plainer in the history than elsewhere and the literature may reveal a religious genius which by us can only be ascribed to the Holy, the Divine Spirit.' (Hallowing, pp 183,4) It is interesting that this is a guarded conclusion, comparative rather than superlative in tone. Cp also Stanley, Jewish Church, i, p 21. The phrase would seem to have originated with Semler, 'Abhandlung von Freier Untersuchung des Canon', in Texte zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte, 5, Guetersloh, 1967, pp 13,14; Maier, Historical-Critical Method, p 11.

17 Farrar, op. cit., p 4. Cp Peake, Guide, p 113: 'The sole object of exegesis is to discover the actual meaning of the words of Scripture.... The single aim of the interpreter is to put himself at his author's point of view, and discover what he himself meant by his words.'

18 Jowett's phrase.

19 Cited in Bennett and Adeney, Biblical Introduction, from Illingworth's Personality, p 186.

20 Infra, pp 99,100.

21 Infra, pp 103,4.

22 Supra, p 75.

23 Britannica, i, p viii. V. infra, cap. VII, for further discussion of the Encyclopaedia and its succeeding editor, William Robertson Smith.

24 Briggs, Biblical Study, p iv; emphasis ours.

25 E.g., Cheyne, Job and Solomon, p 2; Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 5; Adam Smith, Modern Criticism,

26 Davidson, Theology, p 28.

27 Adam Smith, Preaching, p 33.

28 Cheyne, Psalter, pp xiii, xvi.

29 Peake, Guide, pp 12,13, cp p 8; Critical Introduction, p ix; The Bible, p viii.

30 Sanday, Inspiration, p 391. Cp Adam Smith, Modern Criticism, p 46, where Old Testament Criticism is spoken of, as elsewhere, as a 'science'.

31 Peake states this strongly. 'We can come to [the Bible] with no prepossessions, but simply with an open mind. We cannot let ourselves be intimidated by an appeal to tradition or authority, confident that we stand in a far more favourable position for knowing the truth than those who have handed on to us the guesses of an uncritical past. We can only bow to the argument of facts.' (Guide, pp 8,9)

32 Thus, for example, Bennett and Adeney, Biblical Introduction, p 6.

33 V. infra, cap. V, for a full discussion.

34 So Davidson, Theology, p 5: 'Thus Criticism establishes development.' But on p 29: 'two principles are assumed as undeniable.... (2) It is not only a language that has a history, but also the thought of the nation.' Here the development of religious ideas is assumed. This raises a major question. That developmental thinking deeply influenced the course of nineteenth-century Biblical scholarship is not in dispute, though its extent and the degree to which it determined the fruits of Criticism is uncertain and a matter of disagreement. The evolutionary Zeitgeist undoubtedly had a very considerable influence on the way in which scholars interpreted the origin and history of Old Testament history and ideas.

35 'The Claims of Criticism upon the Clergy and Laity', in Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 18.

36 Ibid., p 19. Cp Peake, The Bible, p 89.

37 Ibid., p 20. Cp Peake, op. cit., pp 89,90: 'critical scholarship is not something which has been invented to discredit the Bible, but it is the universally accepted mode of inquiry applied to literary or historical problems. Modern scholarship, as it stands face to face with a piece of literature, cannot be satisfied till it has submitted the tradition about it to a searching examination.... The first links are all-important; if they are missing, the unbroken chain of later links counts for little or nothing.... The character of the witnesses must be taken into account; and this includes their opportunities for knowledge, the soundness of their judgement, their fidelity as transmitters of what they had received. Further, the scholar must try ... to feel his way back from the tradition to its earliest form to still earlier forms.... By the side of this external evidence must be set the internal evidence....'

38 Ibid., p 21.

39 Ibid., p 25.

40 Kirkpatrick, Divine Library, p viii.

41 Ibid., p ix.

42 Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 29.

43 Ibid., p 29; p 30: 'it is doubtless easy to exaggerate the application of the principle of development.'

44 Ibid., p 30. Cp Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p xii.

45 Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p 95.

46 Kirkpatrick writes: 'we can recognize most frankly that the immoralities and barbarities and imprecations which shock us belong to a lower stage of religious history.' Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 13. V. infra, pp 197-203.

47 Cheyne, Job and Solomon, p 7.

48 Driver, Critical Study, p 36.

49 Essays and Reviews, p 387. Farrar, op. cit., p 385, goes so far as to describe 'the correct and fruitful concept of the progressiveness of revelation' as 'the ruling principle of theological inquiry'.

50 Adam Smith, Modern Criticism, p 21. On the question of Old Testament preparation for the coming of Christ, v. Kirkpatrick, Prophets, p 10.

51 So Driver writes of 'accepting, as a matter of course, the view that the Old Testament is a record of God's revelation of Himself to man'. (Critical Study, p 35) For inspiration, v. infra, pp 106-114.

52 Driver, Introduction, p 54.

53 Ibid., p xi. Driver was eager, however, to point out that this fact could not rightly be used - as Conservatives attempted to use it - to discredit Criticism, by pointing to the uncertainties of some Critical conclusions or the doubts of some Critical scholars with respect to certain of their fellows' theories.

54 Ibid., p xii.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., p xiii.

58 Ibid., p xvii.

59 Driver, Critical Study, pp 5,6. The Critics made much of the cumulative strength of their arguments. Later in this essay Driver reverts to it: 'The strength of the critical position lies in the cumulative argument by which it is supported. It is upon a combination of resemblances and differences that the literary analysis of the sources depends.... The cumulative character of the argument is not usually perceived by advocates of the traditional view.' (p 27)

60 Ibid., p 7.

61 Peake, Christianity, p 140: 'Once we have laid stress upon historical events as vital to our position, we cannot warn the critic off. Where history is, the critic has the right to come.'

62 Ibid., p 141.

63 Infra, pp 95-97.

64 This raises the question whether historical criticism, understood as the subjection of Scripture to the criteria of authenticity and interpretation to which all other literature is subject, can ever deal adequately with the supernatural element.

65 Driver, Introduction, p xvii.

66 Ibid., p xii.

67 Driver, Critical Study, p 28.

68 Adam Smith, Modern Criticism, p 40.

69 Driver, Genesis, p iv.

70 Ibid., p xii.

71 E.g., Cheyne, Job and Solomon, p 7: 'As a result of what has been gained, our idea of inspiration will become broader, deeper, and more true to the facts.' V. infra, pp 106-114.

72 Ibid., p 6.

73 Infra, pp 92-94.

74 Butler, cited in Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 44.

75 Kirkpatrick, in ibid., p 11.

76 E.g., Kirkpatrick, Prophets, Lecture 1. On the question of the supernatural in prophecy, v. infra, pp 95-97.

77 Kirkpatrick, Prophets, pp 16,17.

78 Adam Smith, Modern Criticism, p 53. Cp Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p 22. Adam Smith's influential volumes on Isaiah argued and popularised the new standpoint in Britain. Like others on the Continent, he went further. Cheyne writes that 'Mr. G.A. Smith, in vol. ii of Isaiah (just published) in the 'Expositor's Bible', is the only English scholar who has as yet conceded the principle of the separability of Is. xl.-lxvi. into parts of distinct origin.' (Psalter, p xix.)

79 Cp Williams' welcome in his essay 'Bunsen's Biblical Researches' in Essays and Reviews: 'In Germany, there has been a pathway streaming with light, from Eichhorn to Ewald, aided by the poetical penetration of Herder and the philological researches of Gesenius, throughout which the value of the moral element in prophecy has been raised and that of the directly predictive element, whether secular or Messianic, has been lowered.' (p 67)

80 Farrar, Daniel, p 113; writes: 'The objections to the authenticity and genuineness of Daniel do not arise, as is falsely asserted, from any a-priori objection to admit to the full the reality either of miracles or of prediction.'

81 It was recognised by some Critics that the criteria could be dangerously subjective in their application. Thus Davidson writes: 'the effect of [some] ... criticism is to cut up the writings, particularly the prophecies, into a multitude of fragments, and to introduce the greatest uncertainty into exegesis.' (Theology, p 30)

82 Driver, Sermons, p 152.

83 Driver, Introduction, p 4.

84 Driver, Critical Study, p 16.

85 Ibid.

86 Bennett, Primer, p 5.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid., p 7.

89 Bennett, in Bennett and Adeney, Biblical Introduction, p 18. It will be obvious that there are two different strands of thought emerging in Bennett's thinking here, illustrating the subjectivity of such theorising. After the passage in the Biblical Introduction discussed in the text, he writes: 'yet from time to time, Israelite scholars were inspired to attempt a further and more spiritual treatment of the annals of the chosen people.' The difficulty is that throughout the interpretation of the Old Testament documents Critics are forced to appeal to a mixture of rigid submission to tradition and freedom in the use of it.

90 Driver, Sermons, p 5; cp p 136.

91 Driver, Introduction, p 3; cp Davidson, op. cit., pp 29,30, where the term 'Scripturalists' is coined for these men.

92 We may add that the Critics were unanimous in treating the traditions of authorship preserved in Judaism and the Christian church as 'the guesses of an uncritical past' (Peake, Guide, p 9). Some, indeed, go further: 'there is nothing to show either that Jewish views as to date and authorship were based on any careful and thorough investigations, or even that their statements are intended to ascribe literary authorship to the persons whose names they use as titles of books.' (Bennett, in Bennett and Adeney, Biblical Introduction, p 9) In this attempt to spike the Conservative guns, the idea of pseudonymity was often stressed (e.g., in Bruce's Preface to Briggs, op. cit.). It was essential to the Critical case to undermine the ancient authorship traditions, whether directly as above, or by means of arguments from internal evidence which they considered of superior value (e.g., Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, pp 6,21; Kirkpatrick, Prophets, p 21). Here again virtue is claimed for necessity: 'The poetical books are seen now in fact to have a much wider significance than they would have had, if they had been, as largely as tradition asserts, the work of David and Solomon alone.' (Higher Criticism, p 45)

93 V. infra, pp 106-114.

94 Kirkpatrick, in Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 13; v. infra, pp 103,4.

95 Driver, in ibid., p 52.

96 Kirkpatrick, in ibid., p 11.

97 Ibid., p 13.

98 Cheyne, Job and Solomon, p 2.

99 Cheyne, Hallowing, p 207.

100 Peake, The Bible, pp 9,10. This is somewhat to caricature the traditional conception of the Bible, in which diversity was recognised, though to a lesser degree than the Critics maintained. The real question is as to the degree of 'divergence' within Scripture, and, implicitly, whether there is present real incommensurability between the Biblical 'theologies'.

101 Cheyne, Hallowing, p ix; cp, pp 183ff.

102 Cp Peake, Guide, p 3.

103 Adam Smith, Preaching, p 33.

104 Ibid., p 36.

105 Adam Smith, Modern Criticism, pp 78-80 and passim.

106 Peake, The Bible, pp 180ff.

107 V. infra, pp 187-196.

108 Peake, op. cit., pp 96,7.

109 Ibid., p 94.

110 Ibid., p 95.

111 Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 11; emphasis ours.

112 Driver, Sermons, pp 137,8.

113 Essays and Reviews, p 111.

114 Kirkpatrick, Prophets, pp 9,10.

115 Ibid., p xi.

116 Ibid., p 8.

117 Infra, cap. V, pp 157-178.

118 Driver, Critical Study, p 21.

119 Ibid., p 27.

120 Peake, op. cit., p 155.

121 Kirkpatrick in Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 9; cp Prophets, p 8.

122 Davidson, op. cit., p 30.

123 Driver, Introduction, p xi.

124 Ibid., p xii.

125 Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 52.

126 Driver, op. cit., p xvii.

127 Kirkpatrick, in Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 25.

128 Adam Smith, Modern Criticism, p 32.

129 Cited in Peake, op. cit., p 177.

130 E.g., Adam Smith, Modern Criticism, pp 47ff.

131 Infra, cap. V, pp 157-178.

132 Farrar, Interpretation, p 434. Cp Sanday, Inspiration, p 413: 'the procedure of Christ and His Apostles with reference to the Law was more revolutionary than anything that is involved in our accepting the lessons of Criticism.'

133 Bennett and Adeney, Biblical Introduction, p 11.

134 E.g., Bruce in Briggs, op. cit., p iv.

135 Cheyne, Devout Study, p 143 and passim.

136 Driver, Critical Study, p 38.

137 Adam Smith, Preaching, p 33. This important book carries his inaugural address on induction to the Chair of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis at the Free Church College, Glasgow, in 1892.

138 Peake, op. cit., p 180.

139 E.g., Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, pp 59,60; Peake, op. cit., p x. Elsewhere Peake puts the matter simply: 'If revelation is mediated through history, we must understand the history in order that we may know the revelation.' (p 108)

140 Adam Smith, Modern Criticism, p 6.

141 Bennett and Adeney, Biblical Introduction, p 10.

142 Cheyne, Psalter, p xxvii.

143 Peake, op. cit., p 89; cp p 110.

144 Stanley, Jewish Church, i, p 20. Cp Bruce in Briggs, op. cit., p vii; Bennett, Primer, pp 5-7.

145 Cheyne, Job and Solomon, p 2.

146 Kirkpatrick, in Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 4.

147 Ibid., p 17; cp p 20.

148 Driver, in ibid., p 39.

149 Driver, Introduction, p xiv.

150 Bampton lectures, 1885.

151 Farrar, op. cit., p 424. Cp Cheyne's declaration, 'Thank God for the sunshine!' (Hallowing, p 184)

152 Ibid., p 429.

153 All the Critics saw their work in this light. Adam Smith, for instance, parallels the achievements of Criticism and those of the 'other' sciences, Modern Criticism, p 32. Peake speaks of the characteristic desire of 'the intellectual temper of our age' to return to sources, Guide, p 1. Sanday goes so far as to say that 'criticism is only the process by which theological knowledge is brought into line with other knowledge', Inspiration, p 116.

154 In his Preface to Briggs, op. cit. He writes, approvingly, of Briggs' opinion.

155 Cheyne, Hallowing, p 191.

156 Ibid., p 192.

157 Adam Smith, op. cit., p 26.

158 Ibid.

159 Farrar, op. cit., p 6; cp Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, pp 59,60.

160 Peake, The Bible, p vii; cp p 447.

161 Essays and Reviews, p 373.

162 Sanday, op. cit., p 391.

163 Ibid., pp 392,3.

164 Ibid., p 393.

165 Ibid., pp 393,4.

166 Ibid., p 398.

167 Ibid., p 400.

168 Cheyne, Job and Solomon, p 2.

169 Ibid.

170 Jowett, in Essays and Reviews, p 350.

171 Peake, Christianity, p 139.

172 Ibid., p 141.

173 Adam Smith, op. cit., p 77.

174 Ibid., pp 108,9.

175 Sanday, op. cit., p 401.

176 V., e.g., Essays and Reviews, p 345; Farrar, op. cit., p xxi; Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 32.

177 Driver, Sermons, p 145; cp Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, pp 20, 26; Farrar, op. cit., pp xixff; Peake, The Bible, p 380; Sanday, Oracles, pp 34ff; Adam Smith, op. cit., p 26.

178 Farrar, op. cit., p 371.

179 Driver, Critical Study, p 37; cp Sermons, p 153.

180 Essays and Reviews, p 347; cp Peake, op. cit., pp 28, 101; Goodwin, Doctrines, p 94.

181 Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 54.

182 Sanday, Inspiration, p 400.

183 Ibid., p 401.

184 Driver, Sermons, p 153.

185 Ibid., p 6.

186 Kirkpatrick, in Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 54.

187 Cheyne, Devout Study, p 142.

188 Cp Driver, Sermons, pp 143ff; Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, pp 48ff; Goodwin, Doctrines, pp 96ff.

189 Jowett, in Essays and Reviews, p 350.

190 Sanday, Oracles, p 16.

191 Peake, op. cit., p ix.

192 Kirkpatrick, Divine Library, p ix.

193 Ibid.

194 Driver, op. cit., p 136.

195 Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p 90.

196 Driver, in Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 60; cp Peake, op. cit., p 380.

197 Driver, Introduction, p xvii.

198 Adam Smith, op. cit., p 2.

199 Thus Peake, e.g., op. cit., p viii: Criticism 'has transformed the concept of revelation', &c.

200 Cp, e.g., Adam Smith, op. cit., where he speaks of 'some modern theories which regard Revelation as the communication by supernatural means of many kinds of truth'; emphasis ours.

201 Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p xii.

202 Farrar, op. cit., p 429.

203 Adam Smith, op. cit., p viii.

204 Peake, op. cit., pp viii,ix; cp Driver, Critical Study, p 35; Adam Smith, op. cit., p 113.

205 E.g., Driver and Kirkpatrick, Higher Criticism, p 64.

206 Peake, op. cit., p viii.

207 E.g., Driver, op. cit., p 38.

208 Sanday, op. cit., pp 429,30.

209 Ibid., p 430.

210 Ibid., pp 430,31.

IV 'ABSOLUTE, - FAULTLESS, - UNERRING, - SUPREME!'

1 Burgon, Inspiration and Interpretation, p 89.

2 The publication of Essays and Reviews in 1860 marked the first wide circulation of the German theories in Britain. V. supra, pp 57-65.

3 We have not taken account of developments in the Roman Catholic Church, which were distinct though related to the wider debate. For some discussion, v. J.T. Burtchaell, Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration since 1810; though Burtchaell is expressly interested in new developments rather in reaction to them. A good example of the latter is to be found in W. Smith, The Book of Moses, or the Pentateuch in its Authorship, Credibility and Civilisation, volume i, London, 1868 (no further volumes appeared). Smith's work is reissued and discussed in Archbishop Smith and the Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch...., Edinburgh, 1913², compiled by B(S.T.).

4 Carpenter, The Bible, p 17.

5 Thomson, ed., Aids, p iv.

6 Waller, Inspiration, pp 7,8.

7 Ellicott, ed., Old Testament Commentary, i, p vii.

8 Ellicott, Christus, p 33. Cp C.H.H. Wright, Daniel and its Critics, p xii, where he describes Criticism as 'the storm of scepticism which tends to sweep away everything distinctive in Christianity'; J. Douglas, in Wace, ed., Criticism Criticised, p 88: 'It is not simply that Higher Criticism subverts the God-given principle of authority, as endorsed by the entire Church of the Reformation....'

9 E.g., Girdlestone, Scepticism, p 2: 'all evil requires a remedy of incomparably superior dimensions ... as a wound that is made in a moment is an inconvenience for a month ... so a suspicion may be planted in the mind in a few minutes which may not be rooted out without the greatest exertions, and although one man may open the flood-gates of scepticism, a hundred cannot close them.'

10 Lias, Principles, p 31. He adds that 'the decision of the court of Appeal in the celebrated Essays and Reviews case in 1858 [sic] affirmed for the first time the compatibility of the more liberal sentiment contained in that volume with the formularies of the Church of England'.

11 This is the subject of Barbara MacHaffie's study, The People and the Book. A Study of the popularisation of Biblical Criticism in Britain, 1860-1914, Edinburgh University unpublished PhD dissertation, 1977.

12 And this despite the deliberate attempts at popularisation, ibid. The more recent story in the scholarly world has also not been as one might have predicted, as the years after the Second World War witnessed a revival of the Conservative view of Scripture, both in Britain and the United States, as well as elsewhere. For a somewhat jaundiced account, v. Barr, Fundamentalism.

13 Quoted from the title of the book by D.S. Margoliouth, Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford, Lines of Defence of the Biblical Revelation (1900).

14 The conference proceedings were published as Criticism Criticised, ed. Wace.

15 Ibid., pp 50,1.

16 The 1878 Bampton lecture was entitled, Zachariah and His Prophecies considered in Relation to Modern Criticism....

17 Daniel and its Critics, pp xi,xii. Cp Spencer, Moses, pp 4,5: 'much to be

deprecated ... is the intellectual terrorism which is sometimes put in the forefront of the resistless advance of the "critical" army. "Almost every younger scholar of note" [is on the side of the Critics] ... we are told by Mr. Robertson Smith. The inference is immediate, but it is not consoling in the interests of truth....

'And the word "critical" itself is open to the same objection.... "This is the ipse dixit of the critical scholarship," we are often told....'

18 The Bible, pp iii,iv.

19 Sir Robert Anderson's best-known work was Daniel in the Critics' Den.

20 The Old Testament, pp 3,4.

21 Watts, Faith and Inspiration, p xi.

22 Ibid., pp xii,xiii. This argument anticipates our discussion infra, pp 135-45.

23 Essays and Studies, p 28.

24 V. infra, cap. VIII, pp 263-289.

25 Cp Girdlestone, Deuterographs, passim. This interesting volume comprises a compilation of parallel passages in the Old Testament, particularly in Chronicles and Samuel and Kings, in an endeavour to demonstrate the basis of known literary procedures that should underlie theorising as to the procedures involved in the other historical books. Among his conclusions are that his examination 'confirms the judgment of former days, that the Hebrew writers were chroniclers rather than inventors. We find nothing in the comparison ... leading to the hypothesis that the prophetic writers indulged in flights of imagination while professedly composing history ... the prose narratives which have come down to us are to a large extent based on semi-official and contemporary documents. The writers were responsible to God and to man. To attribute to them anything which savours of fraudulent invention, whether of law, history, or prophecy, is equally unfair and uncritical.' (pp xxvii, xxviii)

26 V. French, ed., Lex Mosaica, p 7.

27 Ibid., p 5.

28 E.g. Archaeology and Criticism (s.a.), Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments (1884), The Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments (1894), The Early History of the Hebrews (1897), Monument Facts and Higher Critical Fancies (1904). Archaeological discovery was frequently called to the aid of the Conservatives, and the fact that the last decades of the nineteenth century saw important finds and decipherments kept the question before the public eye. So, e.g., Ellicott can write (Old Testament Commentary, i, p ix): 'recent historical research ... has shown that in numerous details the holy narrative is now proved to be in strict accordance with independent secular history; and in showing this, it suggests the important consideration that if Scriptural statements are thus to be relied on in one portion of the narrative, there is also at least a presumption of a very high order that they deserve to be believed and relied upon in the other.'

29 V. supra, pp 102,3.

30 Lex Mosaica, p 493.

31 Blomfield, The Old Testament, pp 6,7.

32 Ibid., pp 117-119. Some years later, A.H. Finn was to apply 'critical' procedures to Driver's Introduction, with amusing results but serious intent (The Unity of the Pentateuch).

33 Infra, pp 145-156.

34 Infra, pp 135-145, and cap. VIII, pp 263-289.

35 Prefacing Waller, op. cit., p 46. Cp Fox, Our Lord and His Bible, p 13: 'If ... we should find that the conclusions to which any theory has brought us are in conflict with indisputable facts ... though we may not always be able to see exactly where we went wrong, we withdraw at once from the danger into which we were being drawn.'

36 Supra, pp 106-114.

37 V. infra, pp 130-132.

38 In Waller, op. cit., pp 34,5.

39 Ibid., p 35; Ryle's emphasis.

40 Watts, Faith and Inspiration, p 90.

41 E.g., Cave, Standpoints, pp 4,5; Douglas in Wace, Criticism Criticised, p 88.

42 Urquhart, Inspiration and Accuracy, pp 73,4. This is the subject of the following chapter.

43 Lex Mosaica, p 44.

44 Ibid., p 45.

45 Fox, op. cit., pp 21,2.

46 Ibid., p 16.

47 V. infra, pp 145-156.

48 E.g., Hervey, Inspiration, p 59. Precisely the same charge is made of, and rebutted by, Conservative Evangelicals today. V. J.I. Packer, 'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God, pp 178-181, and particularly his reference to nineteenth-century literature on p 179.

49 Burgon, op. cit., p 115.

50 A few Conservative writers actually did use the word 'dictation' to describe the process of inspiration, as indeed did Calvin, but not in the sense of a mechanical process: the interest of the analogy is not in the method but in the result. So when Gaussen suggests that God has 'dictated' the pages of the Bible to 'the priests, kings, warriors, shepherds, publicans, fishermen, scribes and tent-makers', He was all the while 'associating with it, in a mysterious manner, and according to his own wisdom, their affections and their faculties'. Elsewhere Gaussen speaks of 'the words' as 'always those of men, because they are written by men', and while it is 'God who speaks, who relates, ordains and reveals', He does so 'by their instrumentality, and ... employs, in various degrees, their personality' (Theopneustia, p 25). Gaussen also explicitly rejects any interest in the mode of inspiration itself: 'If ... it be demanded of us, how this theopneustic work was accomplished in these men of God, we should answer that we know it not ... and that it is in this ignorance, and in faith of a like character, that we receive the doctrine of regeneration ... we are bound to resign ourselves to perpetual ignorance of all means.' (Ibid., p 26) We give these quotations because Gaussen, though a Swiss and writing a generation before the debate we are presently considering, had considerable influence, and was seen to represent the more unyielding end of the Conservative spectrum. Yet he was no advocate of 'mechanical' dictation, and neither was the equally rigorous Burgon (e.g., op. cit., p 77).

51 Bernard, Progress of Doctrine, p xiii.

52 Ellicott, Foundations, pp 47,8.

53 Ibid., pp 48,9.

54 Ibid., pp 49,50.

55 Burgon, op. cit., pp 118,9; cp p 77.

56. Supra, pp 57-65.

57 Burgon, op. cit., p cxl.

58 Ibid., p cxli.

59 Ibid., p cxlii.

60 Ibid., p cl.

61 Ibid. Burgon pursues the point logically: 'To suggest ... that the Bible is to be interpreted like any other book, on the plea that it is like any other book, is to build upon a false foundation. His syllogism is the following:-

If the Bible is a book like any other Book, the Bible is to be interpreted like any other book.
The Bible is a book like any other book.
Therefore, - .

But it has been shewn that the learned Professor's minor premiss is false.' (p clxii)

62 Essays and Reviews, p 382; cited Burgon, op. cit., p clxii.

63 Ibid., p clxiii.

64 Cp Essays and Reviews, p 375. Ellicott, writing the reply to Jowett in Aids to Faith, one of the composite volumes issued in responseto the Essays, asks, 'What ... can really be more strange than to lay down the rule that we are to interpret the Scripture like any other book, when, in the merest rough and outside view, the Scripture presents such striking differences from any book that the world has ever seen?' (p 391) Cp Dewart, The Bible, p 189.

65 Essays and Reviews, p 347.

66 V. supra, p 75.

67 Infra, pp 132-135.

68 Garbett, Pentateuch, p 18.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., p 11. Cp Hervey, Chronicles, p 15: 'It is not too much to say that no danger of an equally threatening character and subversive tendency has appeared in the Church during the many centuries of her existence.'

71 On the Continent, of course, the Tübingen School of F.C. Baur and D.F. Strauss' Das Leben Jesu (1835), had exploited this fact.

72 Ellicott, Christus, pp 30,1.

73 Ironically, an argument appealing to the same ethical consensus as that of the Critics who attacked the morality of many of the Old Testament stories. V. supra, pp 104,5.

74 Hervey, op. cit., pp 107,8. Cp, e.g., Blomfield, op. cit., p 6.

75 Girdlestone, Foundations, p x.

76 Orr, Problem, p 6.

77 Rawlinson, Evidences, p v.

78 Warington, Pentateuch, p 7.

79 Spiers, Pentateuch, p 5.

80 Garbett, op. cit., p 12.

81 Blomfield, The Old Testament, p 6. Cp, 'It is the substance of the books themselves that is being attacked, as being spurious; legendary, unhistorical, valueless - late and untrustworthy accounts of things that never happened, or misrepresentations of things that actually happened.... many who have some acquaintance with the general tendency of modern "scientific criticism" do not seem to realize the gravity of the questions at issue. And so excellent men go on writing good little books, or delivering sermons or lectures, in which they talk about the untenableness of "verbal inspiration," and about "recognizing the human element" in Holy Scripture, and about not being disturbed or alarmed when mistakes in chronology, exaggeration of numbers, or errors in fact, are discovered in the Old Testament: and all the while they cannot, or will not, see that it is not about the inspiration of the books, but about their veracity and credibility, that the real conflict is being waged. It is not the human element, but a very different thing, the mythical, fabulous, unhistorical element ... we are told we must recognize fully.' (Ibid., pp 5,6) Cp Wace, The Old Testament, p 14; Robertson, Early Religion, pp xiiff.

82 Cp Blomfield, op. cit., pp 29ff: 'Wellhausen, and the critic most associated with his name, Kuenen, make no pretence or profession of being Christians. They ... in the last century would have been called Deists!; Orr, op. cit, pp 10f.

83 Ibid., p 28.

84 Ibid., p 43. Cp Garbett; op. cit., pp 10,11; Orr, op. cit., pp 8ff.

85 Ibid., p 46. Cp Fox, op. cit., p 16.

86 Fox, op. cit., p 17.

87 Cave, Standpoints, p 47.

88 Ibid. He adds: 'Hengstenberg made a collection of incidental declarations, in which opponents of the [Mosaic] Theory betrayed or confessed that their pièce de résistance was an initial disaffection towards the supernatural: might not that collection be startlingly completed to date?' W.H. Green, the American Hebraist, commented: 'No more perilous enterprise was ever attempted by men held in honour in the Church than the wholesale commendation of the results of unbelieving criticism ... as though they were the incontestable product of the highest scholarship', cited by Dewart, op. cit., p 200. Cp French, ed., Lex Mosaica, p 186: 'The key to ... [the Critical] speculations is a denial of the supernatural in any form.... The documents of the Old Testament must be manipulated to harmonize with the theory.' Ibid., p 356: 'The leading critics ... are thoroughly pronounced rationalists. Professor Briggs, recognising this, says: "We should not allow ourselves to be influenced by the circumstance that many of the scholars who have been engaged in these researches have been rationalistic or semi-rationalistic in their religious opinions." (The Higher Criticism, &c., p 67)' Cp also Leathes, Prophecy, p x; Orr, op. cit., pp 4ff, 16,17; Wace, The Gospel, pp 11,12.

89 Lias, op. cit., p 212.

90 Ibid., p 213.

91 Blomfield, op. cit., p 95.

92 Ellicott, Old Testament Commentary, i, p viii. Cp Girdlestone, Foundations, p v.

93 Girdlestone, op. cit., pp ixf.

94 Hervey, Inspiration, pp 63ff.

95 Orr, op. cit., p 13. This is the principal thesis of the book.

96 Wace, The Gospel, p 9.

97 Orr, op. cit., p 17.

98 Cp Sinker, Higher Criticism, pp 10ff; Spencer, Moses, pp 3ff; Wright, op. cit., pp xivf; Prophecies, pp 54f; Ellicott, Christus, pp 15ff; &c.

99 It is a truism that men actually come to and hold opinions on grounds that may be wholly different from those they advance in their defence, often quite without their realising the fact. This is not something that necessarily casts discredit upon either the men, unless they intend deceit, or their arguments, unless it can be shown that neither set of grounds is valid. In this case the Conservatives claimed that, except for the anti-supernatural prejudices of the Continental scholars, they would never have come to the conclusions of Criticism. Many Conservatives were conscious, in differing degrees, that their use of 'critical' arguments was ad hominem, and that their reasons for holding to their position were actually dogamtic or religious. We return to this question infra, cap. VIII, pp 263-289.

100 Ellicott, in Thomson, ed. op. cit., p 391.

101 Garbett, Divine Plan, p 1.

102 V. supra, pp 106-114. Needless to say, the man who refuses to define a word he uses is liable to be accused of not saying anything.

103 Principally, Theopneustia, ET 1841; 'It is Written': or, Every Word and Expression contained in the Scriptures proved to be of God, 1847, is substantially a re-issue of the earlier work. Gaussen also produced a massive scholarly volume on The Canon of the Holy Scriptures, ET 1862,3.

104 Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, is discussed in detail, supra, pp 48-56.

105 Not all, of course, argued in the same way; but most fell back on these standard justifications of the traditional view.

106 E.g., Hervey, Inspiration, p 29.

107 Ellicott, in Thomson, ed., Aids, p 404.

108 Essays and Reviews, p 345.

109 E.g., Garbett, God's Word, pp 71, 110.

110 E.g., Waller, op. cit., p 10. These have 'been placed under a Divine microscope by the teaching of our Saviour and His Apostles', and should be taken as 'samples of the texture of the whole'.

111 Ryle, in Waller, op. cit., p 33.

112 Farrar, Free Thought, pp 475,6.

113 Burgon, op. cit., p clxiii.

114 Garbett, Pentateuch, p 15. Cp Waller, op. cit., pp 97ff; Girdlestone, English Bible, p 21.

115 Leathes, op. cit., p xii. Cp Burgon, op. cit., p clxv: 'We are presented

... in the New Testament Scriptures with the august spectacle of the Ancient of Days holding the entire volume of the Old Testament Scriptures in His Hands and interpreting it of Himself'; Fox, op. cit., passim. For a full discussion, v. infra, cap. V, pp 157-178.

116 Garbett, op. cit., p 19. Cp God's Word, p 150, where Garbett writes that the Scriptures must have 'full and plenary authority over the human intellect and conscience;'; Watts, op. cit., p 90.

117 Ryle, in Waller, op. cit., pp 31,4,5.

118 Cp Cave, op. cit., p 5.

119 Burgon, op. cit., p 74.

120 Ibid., pp 74,5; cp pp 126, 132,3.

121 Ibid., p 7.

122 Essays and Reviews, p 347.

123 Aids to Faith, p 411.

124 Ibid., p 412. Cp Foundations, p 57.

125 Lias, op. cit., p 212.

126 Watts, op. cit., pp 97,8.

127 Garbett, God's Word, p 140. Cp Burgon, op. cit., p 75: 'if ... I am asked whether I believe the words of the Bible to be inspired, - I answer, To be sure, I do, - every one of them: and every syllable likewise. Do not you? - where, - (and if it be a fair question) - Where do you, in your wisdom, stop? The book, you allow, is inspired. How about the chapters? How about the verses? Do you stop at the verses, and not go on to the words?'

128 Garbett, The Bible, p 7.

129 So Burgon, op. cit., p 74: '"Theories of Inspiration" ... are the growth of an unbelieving age.'

130 Ellicott, in Thomson, Aids, p 404.

131 Garbett, God's Word, pp 131,2.

132 Ibid., p 138. Elsewhere (p 242), he speaks of a process involving three stages: 'First [God] endowed the man with those particular gifts, and chose him to be his instrument. Secondly, he guided his mind in the selection of what he should say, and of the revelation of the material of his writing, where ... necessary, through the defect of human knowledge. Thirdly, he acted in and on the intellect and heart of the writer in the act of committing the words to writing ... securing the truthfulness of the thing written, and moulding the language into the form accordant to his own will.'

133 V. supra, e.g., p 107.

134 Girdlestone, English Bible, p 24.

135 Garbett, op. cit., p 114.

136 E.g., Waller, op. cit., p 11.

137 Ibid. Cp Burgon, op. cit., pp 4,5.

138 Garbett, op. cit., p 115.

139 Ibid., p 117. Garbett continues: 'the personal Word we believe was "conceived by the Holy Ghost," - here was the Divine side of the one Person; and that

he was "born of the Virgin Mary," - here was the human side. In regard to the written Word, "holy men of old wrote," - here is the human side; "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," - here is the Divine.'

140 Ibid., p 141.

141 Ibid., pp 141,2. He concludes: 'what is not essential to the agency of man may therefore be omitted, without affecting the true human element. What is essential to the agency of God must be maintained, or else the perfection of the Divine element is lost.' Cp p 217.

142 Ellicott, Old Testament Commentary, i, p viii.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid., p x. Cp Foundations, pp 57ff; Lias, op. cit., p 212.

145 Ellicott, in Thomson, ed., Aids, p 404.

146 Garbett writes: 'Let it be assumed that an unfriendly criticism has succeeded in establishing all the positions for which it demands credit.... What then? Are the arguments by which the authority of the Christian revelation is attested on the affirmative side thereby disproved? ... Not a proposition of them has bee overthrown.... we should have two wholly independent lines of argument, so distinct from each other, that they do not even come into contact on any one material point, each of them ... equally cogent and unanswerable, and yet resulting in diametrically opposite conclusions.' Divine Plan, pp 7,8. Such a speculation comes close to the heart of the debate, v. infra, cap. VIII, pp 263-289.

147 Ryle, in Waller, op. cit., p 46. He suggests that the alternative 'theories' of inspiration necessitated by the Critical position are beset by difficulties 'ten-fold greater than any which beset our own'. Cp Cave, op. cit., p 1: 'The great intellectual struggles of the modern world are essentially BATTLES OVER STANDPOINTS'; Hervey, Inspiration, pp 27ff.

148 Burgon, op. cit., p cl.

149 Ibid., p 122.

150 Ellicott, Foundations, p 56. Cp Hervey, op. cit., pp 48f. Burgon cites C.P. Eden: 'I suppose all thoughtful persons will allow that intellectual licentiousness is the danger of this our intellectual age. For speculation indulges our pride. Faith is an inglorious thing; anyone can believe, a cottager just as well as a philosopher: but not all can speculate.'

151 Lias, op. cit.,p 211.

152 Girdlestone, Foundations, p x.

153 V. supra, p 339, n 5.

154 Cave, Inspiration, p 21.

155 Ibid., p 25.

156 Cave, Standpoints, p 11; cp Girdlestone, Foundations, p iii.

157 V. supra, pp 120-122.

158 Robertson, op. cit., p x.

159 Wace, ed., Criticism Criticised, p vi.

160 Orr, op. cit., p 9.

161 So when, e.g., C.H.H. Wright avows, at the head of his Bampton lectures on

Zechariah (1878), that he was 'fully prepared to have altogether abandoned the traditional view as to the authorship of the Second part of the book of Zechariah, had the arguments against its integrity appeared to me to demand such a course', the Critics must have smiled, however ingenuously in this case the comment was intended. We return to this central question in our concluding discussion, infra, cap. VIII,pp 263-289.

162 Cp Lias, op. cit., pp 212ff.

163 Hervey, Chronicles, p 108; cp Ellicott, Old Testament Commentary, i, pp viiiff; Blomfield, op. cit., p 115.

164 Waller, op. cit., pp 12,13. He adds: 'Some may possibly receive what I say here with a smile of contempt.' Cp French, ed., Lex Mosaica, p 187.

165 Garbett, Pentateuch, p 26.

166 Ibid. This may read as hyperbole, but as Garbett considers an erroneous Pentateuch to imply that 'the whole of Christianity will have sprung out of a falsehood', it is perhaps not so intended.

167 Burgon, op. cit., p 63. He is actually speaking of the four Gospels, but that does not affect the significance of what he says.

168 Burgon adds: 'Now, these principles are fully admitted in daily life. If your friend comes to you with ever so improbable a tale, the last thing which enters into your mind is to disbelieve him. Is he in earnest? Yes, on his honour. Is he sure he is not mistaken? That very doubt of yours requires an apology: but your friend says, - "I am as sure as I am of my own existence." ... "It must be so then," you exclaim, "though I cannot understand it".... [sic] I only wish that men would be as fair to the Evangelists as they are to their friends!' (Ibid., p 64)

169 Ibid.

170 Blomfield, op. cit., p 94; cp Hervey, Inspiration, p 76; Ellicott, Old Testament Commentary, i, p x; Edersheim, Prophecy and History, p 231; Girdlestone, Deuterographs, p xxvii.

171 V. supra, pp 63,4.

172 A problem which was evidently not recognised by the Conservatives is that it is not easy to say where 'lower' (textual) criticism ends and 'higher', (literary and historical) criticism begins. Blomfield appears to stray beyond the fence unknowingly when he suggests that 'the compiler has sometimes embodied in his work narratives the details of which are inconsistent with each other'. (Op. cit., p 94)

173 Burgon, op. cit., pp 64,5.

174 Ellicott, op. cit., p x.

175 Edersheim, op. cit., p 231.

176 Sinker, Higher Criticism, p 12.

177 Ellicott, Christus, p 46.

178 Clayton, in Wace, ed., Criticism Criticised, p 21.

179 Wright, Introduction, p 83. He goes on to attack the idea of 'historical infallibility', p 84, but it is apparent that his position became more Conservative in later years. Thus in his Introduction he queries the use of the argument from Jesus' view of the Old Testament (p 76, 1890), but in Daniel and its Critics he enthusiastically employs it (p viii, et al., 1906).

180 Sinker, Higher Criticism, p 17.

181 Girdlestone, Deuterographs, pp xxvi,xxvii. Cp Edersheim, op. cit., p 231.

182 Hervey, in French, ed., Lex Mosaica, pp xxxv,xxxvi.

183 Cp Sinker, op. cit., p 18.

184 For a survey of the 'rectified Traditional' position, v. Ellicott, op. cit., pp 46-51.

185 V. infra, pp 197-203.

186 Cp Smyth, Morality; Hessey, Moral Difficulties; passim.

187 Girdlestone, Scepticism, p 48.

188 Ibid., p 49.

189 Ibid., p 52.

190 Hervey, Inspiration, p 65.

191 Ibid., p 66.

192 Smyth, op. cit., pp 12-14.

193 Cp Burgon's discussion of Jael, infra, pp 155,6.

194 Cp Hessey, op. cit., i, p 158.

195 Smyth, op. cit., pp 24,5.

196 Cp ibid., pp 59,60.

197 Ellicott, Old Testament Commentary, i, p ix. Cp Blomfield, op. cit., p 94; Smyth, op. cit., pp 48-57.

198 Smyth, op. cit., p 50. We discuss this matter further and illustrate it below, v. infra, pp 197-203. It is not pretended that this brief description of the Conservative position does justice to it, or indeed that the position was coherent. In the examples which follow, here and in a later chapter, further light is shed on the question.

199 Judges 5. It is interesting that this incident occasioned many moralists more concern than the destruction of the Canaanites by Israel, an event explicitly commanded and commended by God, in the narrative. Burgon says of Jael, 'I have heard stronger things said against her than against any of the other Worthies of old time who are mentioned with distinct approbation in the Book of Life.' (Op. cit., p 223)

200 Hessey, op. cit., i, p 48. Cp Garbett, God's Word, p 135: 'The historical sketch does not contain a syllable expressive of approbation of Jael's act on the part of the Divine Author of the Scriptures.'

201 Hervey, op. cit., p 70.

202 Burgon, op. cit., p 223.

203 Ibid., p 226.

204 Ibid., p 230.

V 'CHRISTUS COMPROBATOR'

1 The title of a book by C.J. Ellicott, subtitled: or, the Testimony of Christ to the Old Testament.

2 E.g., Paley, Evidences, Pt iii, ch. iii.

3 V. n 8, infra.

4 McFadyen, Old Testament Criticism, p 196. The passion was not all on one side. Cheyne writes of Ellicott's Christus Comprobator, 'I cannot help respectfully protesting against the title of this work.' (Founders, p 256)

5 Colenso, Pentateuch, i, p xxx.

6 Porter, Pentateuch, p v.

7 Sharr, Inspiration, p 81. Cp Waller, Inspiration, p 97: 'The question of the infallibility and perfection of Scripture turns ... on its relation to our Lord. This is the heart of the question.'

8 V., e.g., p 357, n 179, for one who changed his mind. An example of a learned, but nonetheless definite, use of the argument is that of Watson's Hulsean lectures for 1882, in which an excursus of thirteen pages (pp 25-37) is devoted to 'The Witness of the New Testament to the Old' in this regard. The case must not be 'pressed unduly', but 'the infallibility of the New Testament on matters of doctrine being supposed, we have in it a means of verifying conclusions arrived at on critical principles' (p 25). Watson finally concludes that while on many matters the phraseology of the New Testament is not decisive, 'some critical questions are decided for us by the New Testament dicta. The decisions are always in favour of the traditional, and always opposed to the critical theory. They embrace matters of great importance; notably the Mosaic character of the Pentateuch and the Law; the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy (by implication at least); and the general historic truth of the early narrative.' After this judicious circumscribing of the extent to which the Christus Comprobator argument may be applied, Watson ends with this deduction: 'It may be remarked, however, that, if Moses wrote Deuteronomy, and if the Law is essentially his, the whole critical theory falls to the ground.' (p 37)

9 E.g., Blomfield, The Old Testament, p 109; Fox, Our Lord, p 12.

10 Ellicott, Christus, p 89. We may note that there was disagreement about the strength of the exegetical evidence in support of this argument. One writer claimed 'not less than 70' references, another 'more than 400' (Fox, op. cit., p 27; Ellicott, op. cit., p 91).

11 Anderson, Christianised Rationalism, p 50.

12 Kirkpatrick, Divine Library, p viii.

13 Barrett, The Bible, p 35. We should add that the teaching of Jesus does not, of course, include discussion of 'inspiration' as such. The point is that Critics and Conservatives alike deduced from Jesus' use of the Old Testament and His references to its authority that He accepted its 'inspiration'. Their debate was over what this implied.

14 Porter, op. cit., p 23.

15 Ibid., p 24.

16 Ibid., p 25.

17 Girdlestone, Doctor Doctorum, p 99.

18 Ibid., p 100. Cp Ullmann, Sinlessness, pp 186,7: 'That Jesus was fully conscious of possessing such infallible knowledge of things religious and moral, is obvious from the very manner of His teaching.... its most distinctive mark ... is, its absolute elevation above all doubt and hesitation.'

19 Girdlestone, op. cit., pp 100,1.

20 Ibid., p 101.

21 Ibid., pp 102,3. Cp Fox, op. cit., p 65.

22 Sinker, Higher Criticism, p 169.

23 Liddon, Divinity, p 461; cp Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii, p 75. Chadwick writes: 'Pusey had summoned him to his vocation, to dam the speculation on the Bible.' The result was 'the best defence of conservative Victorian religion.' (Ibid.)

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., p 462. Ullmannargues in a similar fashion from the sinlessness of Jesus to His infallibility: 'the very existence of sinless perfection presupposes an infallibility of knowledge in things religious and moral, and therefore a freedom from all error.' (Op. cit., p 185)

26 Liddon, op. cit., p 480.

27 Chadwick, op. cit., ii, p 75. V. supra, pp 138,9, and infra, pp 281-9.

28 It is important to distinguish this argument for infallibility from the argument for omniscience. The former would of course follow from the latter, but it does not depend upon it. Few Conservatives argued for the omniscience of the Incarnate Christ. One who did was G. Rawlinson, in French, ed., op. cit., pp 50ff, where he quotes the Bishop of Oxford to the same effect. But there was a general recognition that the idea of omniscience will no more fit the Christ of the Gospels than that of fallibility. The ground on which Rawlinson argues is that of Christ's supernatural knowledge, an important factor to which we shall return, infra, pp 168-178.

29 Fox, op. cit., pp 24-26. University Sermon cited, preached at Oxford November 13th, 1904, reported in The Times November 14th.

30 Moule, Veni Creator, p 52.

31 Porter, op. cit., p 54.

32 Cave, Standpoints, p 27.

33 Rawlinson, in French, ed., op. cit., p 45.

34 E.g. Girdlestone , Foundations, p ix; Hervey, Chronicles, p 13.

35 Fox, op. cit., p 27.

36 E.g., Boyce, Higher Criticism, pp 294,5. This is one of the most thorough of the Conservative works and runs to almost 500 pages. The author calls on the testimony of Jesus Christ to each disputed question as he surveys the literary and historical problems.

37 Fox, op. cit., p 27.

38 Ibid., p 47. Cp, e.g., Blomfield, op. cit., p 109; Dewart, The Bible, pp 162,3.

39 Cp Garbett, Pentateuch, p 11. It was also closely connected with the question of prophecy and prediction. So Blomfield writes that 'the assignment of Isaiah xl.-lxvi., to a pseudo-Isaiah' would not 'be in itself a point of much importance, were it not clear that the bias which has influenced the

rationalistic critics is the determination that Isaiah must not be allowed to have predicted anything which happened long after his own time.' (Op. cit., p 95)

40 Dewart, op. cit., p 162. Cp Garbett, op. cit., p 14.

41 Porter, op. cit., p 61.

42 Cave, op. cit., citing Osgood.

43 Burgon, Inspiration, p 233.

44 Ellicott, Lectures, p 3n. Cp Fox, op. cit., pp 36,7.

45 Fox, op. cit., p 31.

46 Ellicott, Christus, p 93.

47 Ibid., p 91.

48 Ibid., p 93.

49 Supra, pp 145-147.

50 Wright, Daniel and its Critics, p xxxviii. Cp Fox, op. cit., p 63.

51 Porter, op. cit., p 14.

52 Sinker, op. cit., p 169.

53 Leathes, op. cit., p 265.

54 Sharr, op. cit., p 87.

55 Ibid., pp 89,90.

56 A remarkably effective campaign, as has been shown by Barbara MacHaffie, The People and the Book.

57 Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p 9.

58 Sanday, Oracles, p 102. Cp supra, p 359, n 4.

59 McFadyen, op. cit., p 209. It could also be claimed that the New Testament reports of Jesus teaching are inaccurate. 'Some allowance should be made for this', writes Sanday, 'but not I think much allowance.' (Inspiration, p 407)

60 Gore, Incarnation, p 197. Cp Barrett, op. cit., p 134: 'there is no doubt in the mind of any Christian as to the absolute authority of our Lord as a Teacher.'

61 Gore, Lux Mundi, p 263.

62 A.M. Ramsey writes: 'There were first the kenotic theories to which the adjectives "classic", "extreme", "full-blooded" are appropriate. These were theories advanced by Lutheran theologians such as Thomasius (Christi Person und Werk, 1835-55), and Godet (Gospel of S. John, English trans.), that at the Incarnation the divine Logos "depotentiated" himself by abandoning divine attributes altogether. It is hard to see how this conception is not pure mythology, or how Deity's attributes can be separated from Deity; or how, if the attributes are so abandoned, Deity is revealed in the Incarnation. More impression was made by a rather different theory of Dörner (Doctrine of the Person of Christ, English trans., 1861) that the Incarnation was a gradual process whereby the Deity was restrained and the Humanity grew in the one Christ - a theory in which it is not hard to recognize Hegelian influence. In England the only theologian to present a theory resembling the continental kenoticists was A.M. Fairbairn, the Congregational divine, who used a distinction between "physical" and "ethical" attributes of Deity

(Christ in Modern Theology, pp 470-478). None of these theories endured, in face of the obvious criticisms of them. They were indeed no more than a remote background to the far more cautious and less speculative use of the kenotic principle in English theology.' (From Gore to Temple, pp 32,3)

63 Cheyne, Job and Solomon, pp 6,7.

64 Peake, The Bible, p 103.

65 Sanday, op. cit., p 111.

66 Gore, op. cit., p 159.

67 Dewart, op. cit., p 168.

68 Ellicott, op. cit., pp 98,9.

69 Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity, v.54,7.

70 Ellicott, op. cit., p 107. Cp Wright, op. cit., pp xiiiff; Hessey, Moral Difficulties, p 167: 'Unless it can be shown that it [sc., Infinite Wisdom] ... is necessarily impaired or suspended by the fact of an Incarnation of the Deity, the argument for its continuance and potential operation ... is unassailable.'

71 Ellicott, op. cit., p 108. Rawlinson (in French, ed., op. cit., p 46) is one of the very few who argues for the omniscience of Christ.

72 Further, there was also of course much hostility to the idea of kenosis as such. So Spiers writes, Pentateuch, p 195: 'If He divested Himself of Divine attributes, then He was no longer Divine, and the Incarnation is a delusion.'

73 Gore, op. cit., p 149.

74 Rawlinson, who, as we have mentioned above (n 71) argues for omniscience, suggests that the text may be interpreted as 'that the Son has not this knowledge except in so far as the Father has revealed it to Him.' French, ed., op. cit., p 49.

75 Sanday, op. cit., p 110.

76 Gore, op. cit., p 147.

77 Ibid., p 150.

78 Liddon, op. cit., p 466.

79 Ibid., p 472.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid., p 474.

82 Ibid., pp 475,6.

83 Ibid., p 477n. Cp Leathes, op. cit., p 265; Girdlestone, Doctor, p 118: 'It confirms our conviction that the Lord only uttered what He knew to be true'; Fox, op. cit., p 72.

84 Barrett, op. cit., p 141.

85 Colenso, op. cit., p xxxi. The same question could, of course, be put of Christ's reception of His 'Divine' knowledge.

86 Porter, op. cit., pp 19-21.

87 Ibid., p 23.

88 Cp Fox, op. cit., pp 68,9: 'to assert that ... His knowledge at any stage of His growth was erroneous because it was incomplete would be as unreasonable as to assert that His body was deformed because it was not fully developed, or that the favour of God which He enjoyed was at any period a qualified favour.'

89 Liddon, op. cit., p 466.

90 Saphir, Unity, p 54.

91 Leathes, op. cit., pp 244-259.

92 Ibid., p 260.

93 Liddon, op. cit., pp 472,3.

94 Hessey, op. cit., p 151. Cp Rawlinson in French, ed., op. cit., pp 51ff.

95 Ibid., p 158.

96 Ibid., p 150. Cp Ellicott, Christus, p 103.

97 A much-quoted example, e.g., Barrett, op. cit., pp 136,7: 'are we to suppose that these words of our Lord effectually bar any investigation into the motions of the heavenly bodies, and authoritatively prove that it is the sun that moves around the earth...? If you say "No: Christ does not mean us to understand this from His words; He was only using the phrase ... in its popular and ordinary meaning; He leaves astronomers free to determine astronomical truth;" do you not see that you are introducing at once a limitation to the prophetic office of Christ ... that when He speaks on [this subject] He is speaking as any other ordinary Jew would speak about such matters.' Cp Gore, op. cit., p 265; Colenso, op. cit., p xxxi.

98 Barrett, op. cit., p 142.

99 Ibid., p 144.

100 E.g., Bennett and Adeney, Biblical Introduction, p 6: 'Our Lord might have made statements as to the date and authorship of the Jewish Scriptures part of His message to the world. But neither Christ nor the inspired writers declare that such matters are part of the Revelation made by Him.' Cp Gore, op. cit., pp 264,5.

101 Gore, op. cit., p xxvi.

102 Spiers, op. cit., p 4.

103 Ibid., p 5.

104 Leathes, op. cit., p 260.

105 Cp Liddon, op. cit., p 479.

106 Ibid. John 3:12.

107 Spiers, op. cit., p 193. Cp Garbett, Pentateuch, p 18: 'On this slippery precipice there is no standing-place at which you can stop short.' Leathes, op. cit., pp 243,4: 'If He was mistaken in one point, He may have been mistaken in any; and, if so, is there any in which we can implicitly trust Him?'

108 Dewart, op. cit., p 167.

109 Ellicott, op. cit., p 112.

110 Supra, p 163.

111 Rae, Holy Writ, pp 150,1.

112 Leathes, op. cit., p 260.

113 Fox, op. cit., pp 39,40: He adds: 'is it credible that neither our Lord ... nor Satan ... each with superhuman powers of perception, should have known ... about it? ... or will some ambitious professor shortly propound a further theory of the voluntary surrender of knowledge by Satan as well as by Christ?' (pp 41,2)

114 Wright, op. cit., p xiv.

115 Sinker, op. cit., p 171.

116 Ibid., p 172.

117 Ibid.

118 Leathes, op. cit., p 237. Cp Sinker, in French, op. cit., pp 475,6; Fox, op. cit., p 83.

119 Moule, op. cit., p 55. Cp Anderson, op. cit., p 50.

120 For modern re-statements of the argument, v. Wenham, Christ and the Bible; Our Lord's View of the Old Testament; and France, Jesus and the Old Testament. One of the last serious considerations of it by one who rejected its conclusions was Storr's essay, 'The Bible and its Value', in Liberal Evangelicalism, pp 96ff. He regards it as raising a 'grave problem', but after asking 'was it part of his mission to settle literary problems?' (pp 96,7), concludes that 'He condescended not to know' (p 99).

1 V. supra, cap. III, pp 75-114.

2 V. supra, capp. IV, V, pp 115-156, 157-178.

3 It will be noted that many of the Conservative commentaries cited were published earlier than the Critical. This should not be allowed to obscure the fact (which has determined the structure of our discussion) that Conservative writers were contesting the ground with Critical positions some time before the Critics enshrined their conclusions in commentaries. Those conclusions remained very largely unchanged.

4 A fourth category - that of the interpretation of Genesis in the light of scientific thinking - is discussed in an appendix, infra, pp 290-318.

5 Mant and D'Oyly, sub chapter 2. Farrar describes theirs as 'the popular commentary' of their day. (Interpretation, p 421)

6 Dods, Genesis, p 2.

7 Driver, Genesis, p iii.

8 Skinner, Genesis, p xxxvi.

9 Ryle, Genesis, p 42.

10 Ibid., p xix.

11 Jamieson, in Jamieson, Faussett and Brown, A Critical, Experimental and Practical Commentary on the Holy Bible, i, sub Genesis 2:5.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., sub 2:19.

14 Ibid., sub 2:5.

15 Ibid., sub 2:6.

16 C.J. Ellicott, ed., An Old Testament Commentary for English Readers, i.

17 Ibid., pp 176,7.

18 Ibid., sub 2:19.

19 E.H. Browne, Genesis, in Cook, ed., The Holy Bible, p 22.

20 T. Whitelaw, Genesis, in Spence and Exell, edd., The Pulpit Commentary, p 39.

21 Ibid., p 40. Whitelaw follows with a detailed discussion of 'critical' issues.

22 Mant and D'Oyly, op. cit., sub 6:3.

23 Bennett, Exodus, sub 6:2-12.

24 Driver, Exodus, sub 6:3.

25 McNeile, Exodus, sub 6:3.

26 Browne, Genesis, p 26. He refers the reader to this introductory discussion in the text of the Exodus commentary. Cp Rawlinson in Ellicott, ed., op. cit. ad loc.

27 Rawlinson, in Spence and Exell, edd., op. cit., sub Exodus 6:3.

28 Chadwick, Exodus, p 99.

29 Jamieson, in Jamieson, Faussett and Brown, edd., sub Exodus 6:3.

30 Adam Smith, Modern Criticism, p 48.

31 Holmes, Joshua, p 24.

32 Cooke, Joshua, Cambridge Bible, p 26.

33 Maclear, Joshua, Cambridge Bible, sub 4:9.

34 Waller, in Ellicott, ed., op. cit., sub Joshua 4:3-9. He takes the phrase 'in the midst of' to mean 'half way along' rather than 'half way across'.

35 Ibid., sub 4:8,9.

36 Blaikie, Joshua, p 111.

37 Jamieson, op. cit., sub 4:9.

38 Spence and Exell, edd., op. cit., sub Joshua 4:9.

39 Espin, in Cook, ed., op. cit., sub Joshua 4:9.

40 Mant and D'Oyly, op. cit., sub 14:22.

41 Scott, op. cit., sub Exodus 14:21-23.

42 Bennett, Exodus, Century Bible, sub 14:21,2.

43 McNeile, Exodus, Westminster Commentaries, sub 14:22.

44 Driver, Exodus, Cambridge Bible, pp 123,4.

45 Rawlinson, in Ellicott, ed., op. cit., sub 14:21.

46 Cook, ed. op. cit., sub Exodus 14:21.

47 Rawlinson, in Spence and Exell, edd. op. cit., sub Exodus 14:21.

48 Chadwick, Exodus, Expositor's Bible, p 208.

49 Jamieson, op. cit., sub Exodus 14:21.

50 Ibid., sub 14:30.

51 Scott, op. cit., sub Numbers 22:28.

52 Mant and D'Oyly, op. cit., sub Numbers 22:28.

53 Elliott-Binns, Numbers, sub 22:28.

54 McNeile, Numbers, Cambridge Bible, sub 22:24.

55 Ibid., sub 22:28.

56 Gray, Numbers, sub 22:28.

57 Watson, Numbers, pp 281,2. How one may 'find' a 'pictorial explanation' of an 'incident' is not made clear.

58 Winterbotham, in Spence and Exell, edd., op. cit., sub Numbers 22:28.

59 Espin and Thrupp, sub Numbers 22:28. It is not made clear why this reconstruction should not excite every bit as much surprise in Balaam as the one they dismiss.

60 Elliott, in Ellicott, ed., op. cit., sub Numbers 22:28.

61 Jamieson, op. cit., sub Numbers 22:28.

62 Scott, op. cit., sub Joshua 10:12-14.

63 Mant and D'Oyly, op. cit., sub Joshua 10:12.

64 Scott, op. cit., sub II Kings 20:9-11.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid., sub Isaiah 38:8.

67 Bennett, Joshua, Polychrome Bible, p 72.

68 Cooke, Joshua, Cambridge Bible, sub 10:13,14.

69 Ibid., sub 10:14.

70 Barnes, II Kings, Cambridge Bible, sub 20:8. He follows this with the extraordinary statement: 'affecting the sun itself would have affected and perhaps destroyed our whole Universe.' Apart from grossly exaggerating the cosmological significance of the sun, Barnes ignores the fact that for a theist, ex hypothesi, if the miracle had been 'astronomical' the Creator Who effected it could of course have made all necessary adjustments without difficulty.

71 Farrar, II Kings, Expositor's Bible, p 310.

72 Ibid.

73 Espin, in Cook, ed., op. cit., sub Joshua 10:12-15.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 Waller, in Ellicott, ed., op. cit., sub Joshua 10:12.

77 Ibid., sub 10:14.

78 Maclear, op. cit., sub 10:13.

79 Spence and Exell, edd., op. cit., p xxii and sub 10:13.

80 Jamieson, op. cit., sub Joshua 10:13.

81 Ball, in Ellicott, ed., op. cit., sub II Kings 20:11.

82 Plumptre, in ibid., sub Isaiah 38:7.

83 Jamieson, Faussett and Brown, edd. op. cit., sub II Kings 20:11.

84 Spence and Exell, edd., op. cit., sub II Kings 20:11.

85 Cook, ed., op. cit., sub II Kings 20:9.

86 V. supra, pp 152-156.

87 Scott, op. cit., sub Deuteronomy 7:1-14.

88 Ibid., sub Numbers 31:2.

89 Driver, Deuteronomy, International Critical Commentary, sub 20:12-14.

90 Adam Smith, Deuteronomy, ad loc.

91 Harper, Deuteronomy, Expositor's Bible, p 176. This argument has its classical expression in Butler's Analogy of Religion.

92 Cp Espin and Thrupp, in Cook, ed., op. cit., sub Deuteronomy 7:1-11.

93 Waller, in Ellicott, ed., op. cit., sub Deuteronomy 7:2.

94 Cp Jamieson, op. cit., sub Deuteronomy 7:2.

95 In Spence and Exell, edd., op. cit., Deuteronomy, p 138 (homily).

96 V. supra, pp 155,6.

97 Scott, op. cit., sub Judges 4:21.

98 Ibid., sub 4:18,19.

99 Ibid., sub 4:21.

100 Mant and D'Oyly, op. cit., sub Judges 4:21.

101 Thatcher, Judges, Century Bible, sub 4:21.

102 Ellicott, ed., op. cit., sub Judges 4:21.

103 Ibid., sub 5:24.

104 Watson, Judges, Expositor's Bible, pp 102,3.

105 Cooke, Judges, Cambridge Bible, sub 5:24.

106 Moore, Judges, International Critical Commentary, sub 4:23,24.

107 V. supra, pp 155,6.

108 Jamieson, op. cit., sub Judges 4:21.

109 Hervey, in Spence and Exell, edd. op. cit., sub Judges 4:21.

110 Spence and Exell, edd. op. cit., Judges, p 50. After '2' the original italicises these remarks.

111 Scott, op. cit., sub Psalm 137:7-9.

112 E.g., Davies, Century Bible, ad loc.; Barnes, Psalms, Westminster Commentaries, ii, p 630.

113 Cheyne, Psalms, p 345.

114 Ellicott, ed., op. cit., sub Psalm 137:8.

115 Maclaren, Psalms, Expositor's Bible, iii, p 374.

116 Spence and Exell, edd., op. cit., Psalms, p 229.

117 Maclaren, op. cit., ibid.

VII WILLIAM ROBERTSON SMITH

1 In the following notes, Robertson Smith is the author where none other is indicated. 'Black and Chrystal' refers to their Life of Robertson Smith; 'Essays', to their edited Lectures and Essays.

2 Cp Glover, Evangelical Nonconformists, p 125: 'The fact that a formal ecclesiastical trial failed to show him unorthodox in a single point despite the fervour of the prosecution was an unmistakable demonstration to the whole English-speaking world that evangelical orthodoxy and the freest possible historical criticism were thoroughly compatible.' V. Loetscher, The Broadening Church, on the position in the United States, and the Briggs case.

3 Our chief source in this opening section is the valuable biography of Black and Chrystal, published in 1912, which is centred on a detailed account of the case and events surrounding it. Also of value is the recent Life and Thought of R.R. Nelson, which makes use of the Robertson Smith papers in the University Library, Cambridge.

4 Supra, pp 65-72.

5 Glover, op. cit., p 36. Cave cited in the British and Foreign Evangelical Review, 1880, p 597.

6 Cited, Black and Chrystal, pp 18,19. Reference will be given to Black and Chrystal only in the case of quotations. The work is well arranged and provided with a thorough index.

7 Ibid., p 21.

8 It does not, however, pass unremarked. E.g., 'The early letters from Edinburgh show the same sharp-set spirit of competition as marks the Aberdeen correspondence', and include 'a running account of his struggle with a fellow-student for the first place in Professor Davidson's class'. (Ibid., p 78)

9 Ibid., p 65.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., p 68.

12 Cited by Black and Chrystal, p 77. Emphasis ours.

13 Ibid., p 76.

14 Macleod, Scottish Theology, p 288.

15 Ibid.

16 Black and Chrystal, p 78.

17 Letter, July 10th, 1867; cited Black and Chrystal, p 88.

18 Nelson, Life and Thought, p 44.

19 Black and Chrystal, p 85, apparently citing Robertson Smith.

20 Nelson, op. cit., p 45.

21 The Christian Commonwealth, 1912, p 579; cited Nelson, op. cit., p 45n.

22 Nelson, op. cit., p 45.

23 Letter, May 28th, 1867; cited Black and Chrystal, pp 86,7.

24 Ibid., p 87.

25 Letter, May 20th, 1867; cited Black and Chrystal, p 88.

26 Nelson, op. cit., p 45.

27 Lichtenberger, German Theology, pp 467-470; cp pp 467-541.

28 Nelson, op. cit., p 45.

29 Cited Black and Chrystal, p 534.

30 Letter; cited ibid., p 103. Robertson Smith admits as much in the paper itself: 'I shall follow somewhat closely the epoch-making work of Rothe. That I should do is indeed inevitable, for it was from Rothe that my first insight into the subject was gained.' (Essays, pp 124,5)

31 Cited Black and Chrystal, p 85.

32 Lichtenberger, op. cit., p 492.

33 Rothe, Zur Dogmatik, p iv; cited Nelson, op. cit., p 45.

34 Lichtenberger, op. cit., p 513.

35 Black and Chrystal, p 103n.

36 Nelson, op. cit., p 46.

37 Ibid., p 47.

38 Ibid.

39 Essays, p 111. Robertson Smith's implication that scientific disputes are not tinged with 'moral warmth' is evidence that this dichotomy is false. Although only more recently have philosophers and sociologists become more fully aware of the influence of factors other than 'evidence' in disputes over scientific theories, Smith's own experience in his controversies over mathematical philosophy at precisely the period he wrote the essay we are discussing should have shown this to him. Cp Black and Chrystal, pp 108,9, et al.

40 Essays, p 112.

41 Ibid., p 134. Our emphasis.

42 Ibid., p 123.

43 Nelson, op. cit., p 51.

44 Essays, pp 132,3.

45 Ibid., p 133.

46 Ibid., p 134.

47 Ibid.

48 Letter, cited Black and Chrystal, p 103. It is also an interesting comment on Smith that he describes the proposer as a 'very ignorant man' and dismisses his seconder as 'a Highlander'.

49 Black and Chrystal, p 111.

50 Letter, cited ibid., p 112.

51 Black and Chrystal, p 531.

52 Ibid., p 247; Nelson, op. cit., p 137. The word used is Urvater, 'only--begetter'.

53 V. Lichtenberger, op. cit., pp 576-584.

54 Essays, pp 150,1.

55 Letter to his wife, cited Black and Chrystal, p 122.

56 Ibid., p 118.

57 Essays, p 148.

58 Ibid., p 149.

59 Nelson, op. cit., pp 100,101.

60 'The Prophetic Work of Moses and the Name JHWH', (1870-71), Smith MSS, cited Nelson, op. cit., pp 101,2.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Cited Black and Chrystal, pp 208,9. We quote this at length because of its clear statement of the feelings of unease which set the case in motion. As Black and Chrystal point out, the Report is a compromise document and represents the middle ground of opinion. Dissents were recorded, to right and left of it.

64 Libel, cited Black and Chrystal, p 242.

65 Cited Black and Chrystal, p 321.

66 Cited ibid., p 324.

67 Cited ibid., pp 359,60. The leaders on both sides of the case who had supported the deposition motion were of course exposed from right and left. Black and Chrystal write that 'the humiliation of the middle party was complete. They had sold their birthright and had been cheated out of the mess of pottage.' (p 361)

68 Ibid., p 425.

69 Henderson, Religious Controversies, p 222. Cp Black and Chrystal's adulatory description of Smith as 'the stone which the builders had rejected', p 452.

70 Henderson, op. cit., p 215.

71 Ibid., p 222.

72 Nelson, op. cit., p 117.

73 Supra, pp 48-56.

74 Nelson, op. cit., p 39.

75 Cited, ibid.

76 Bannerman, Inspiration, p 1.

77 Ibid., p 98.

78 Ibid., p 99.

79 Ibid., pp 149,150.

80 Ibid., pp 150,1. Bannerman stresses that the former element should be termed 'revelation', and the latter, 'inspiration'; they should be seen as distinct operations of the Spirit of God. It has been suggested that by making this distinction, Bannerman opened the way for the abandonment of the doctrine of infallibility. That may be the case; for our purposes what is relevant is that Bannerman himself was a rigorous adherent to infallibilism.

81 Ibid., p 158.

82 Ibid., pp 174-201.

83 Ibid., p 178. Bannerman admits 'a very narrow exception': where we read words attributed to God Himself, in the first person. It is unclear why he does not consider this would be covered by his principle. For if the Bible is not revelation, how do we know that these are the very words of God? Interestingly, Coleridge made a similar distinction, in his case according unquestioning assent to the divine quotations.

84 Ibid., pp 102,3.

85 Nelson, op. cit., pp 40,1. Bannerman denies what we have termed the 'Jowett principle' (v. supra, pp 127-130) explicitly and at length; v. pp 561-588.

86 Libel, p 59.

87 Ibid., p 61. Two brief comments may be in order. First, it is interesting to note Robertson Smith's confidence in the power of scholarship to separate even the Word of God from the word of man, as if as a matter of course. Secondly, it is evident that he conceives of the principal and vital use of Scripture as being for a man's 'own religious life'.

88 Ibid., p 68.

89 Answer to the Form of Libel, p 14.

90 Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th ed., iii, p 634.

91 Letter ... to Rev. Dr. Spence, p 5.

92 The Old Testament, p 9. Our emphasis.

93 Ibid., pp 18,19. A clear example of Smith's indebtedness to Schleiermacher.

94 Ibid., pp 19,20.

95 Ibid., p 4.

96 Ibid., p 23.

97 Ibid., pp 24,5.

98 Ibid., p 28. Cp Coleridge's famous statement, cited supra, p 71.

99 On the former question, The Religion of the Semites, his most original and influential work, treated of Israelite religion as in principle undifferentiated from that of the other Semitic peoples. Cheyne, in his introduction to the second edition of The Prophets of Israel, suggests that had Smith lived to revise the volume his position would have tended in a more radical direction, such that 'he would have as much surprised lay-readers by his revised views on the Prophets as Kuenen must have surprised them by his changed views on the Hexateuch'. Kuenen had moved from 'being a "moderate"' to the position of an '"extreme" critic, according to what was the English theological standard during the seventies.' We have no reason to doubt Cheyne's judgement of his friend.

100 Answer to the Amended Libel, pp 3,4.

101 Ibid., p 3.

102 Essays, pp.150,1.

103 Ibid., p 151.

104 Additional Answer, p 9.

105 Ibid., p 10.

106 Ibid., p 15. This is one of the many occasions on which Robertson Smith appears to insult the intelligence of those with whom he disagrees. He is not always so subtle about it. V. the reference to 'indolence' in the following quotation.

107 Ibid., pp 83,4.

108 Answer to the Amended Libel, p 10.

109 E.g., Answer to the Form of Libel, p 10.

110 Ibid., p 12.

111 Ibid., p 13.

112 The Old Testament, p viii.

113 Ibid., p 217.

114 Ibid., p v.

115 Prophets of Israel, p 1.

116 Ibid., pp 1,li.

117 Religion of the Semites, p vii.

118 Answer to the Form of Libel, p 63.

119 Ibid.

120 'What History teaches us to seek in the Bible', in Essays, p 207.

121 Ibid., p 229.

122 Ibid.

123 The Conservative would of course claim that Smith draws a false dichotomy between 'abstract religious truth' and the 'personal history of God's dealings'.

124 'The Poetry of the Old Testament', in Essays, p 401.

125 Ibid., p 402. This is presumably an allusion to the Westminster Confession of Faith, the flowering of seventeenth-century orthodoxy; and it is an extraordinary statement for Smith to make in the midst of the case against him, in 1877. There is no evidence that it was taken up by the prosecution.

126 Ibid., p 403.

127 Answer to the Form of Libel, p 64.

128 Supra, cap. II, pp 18-74.

129 Essays, p 131.

130 Ibid., pp 97,8. The same (final) comment could surely be made about Smith's alternative! It is self-contradictory to attempt to reduce prophecy to the level of the purely human and at the same time to claim to retain its supernaturalness, in the sense in which that term has traditionally been employed.

131 Ibid., pp 102,3; emphasis original.

132 Ibid., p 105; emphasis original.

133 Ibid., p 164.

134 Ibid. Cp Prophets of Israel, p 4: 'The universal rule that every permanent spiritual and moral relation must grow by slow degrees, and obey a principle of internal development.'

135 Ibid., p 165.

136 'The Place of the Old Testament in Religious Instruction', in Essays, p 286.

137 The Old Testament, p vii.

139 Ibid., pp viii,ix.

140 Semites, p vii.

141 Ibid.

142 Ibid., p 2.

143 Ibid., p 3.

144 Ibid., pp 3,4.

145 Ibid., p 4.

146 Ibid., p 5.

147 Libel, p 63.

148 Ibid.

149 Answer to the Form of Libel, p 63.

150 Essays, p 134.

151 Additional Answer, p 13.

152 Britannica, iii, p 638.

153 Answer to the Form of Libel, p 20.

154 Ibid., p 21.

155 Ibid., p 20; emphasis original.

156 Ibid.

157 Ibid., p 21.

158 Ibid., p 22.

159 Ibid.

160 Ibid., p 23.

161 Ibid.

162 Ibid., p 24n.

163 Ibid.

164 Ibid., p 24.

165 Ibid., pp 24,5.

166 Ibid., p 25.

167 Ibid.

168 Ibid., p 26.

169 Ibid., pp 26,7; emphasis original.

170 Ibid., p 27.

171 Ibid., pp 27,8.

172 Ibid., p 28.

173 Ibid., p 30. Cp p 58: 'it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Chronicler did make some errors, either by misunderstanding the older books or by drawing mistaken inferences from their statements.'

174 Ibid., p 30.

175 Ibid., p 31.

176 Ibid., pp 32,3.

177 Ibid., p 34.

178 Ibid.

179 Ibid., p 35.

180 Ibid., p 36.

181 Ibid.

182 Ibid., p 37.

183 Ibid., p 38. He also adds at this point: 'many of my judges cannot be supposed to be quite familiar with the way in which scientific method is applied by scholars to the study of ancient books.... The criticism which I use, and the conclusions to which I arrive are in their main outlines ... common to me with almost every Hebrew scholar in Europe.... no man is entitled to condemn me simply because he does not understand how I can be right.' (Ibid., pp 38,9)

184 Ibid., p 41.

185 Ibid.

186 Ibid.

187 Ibid., pp 41,2.

188 Ibid., p 42.

189 Ibid., p 44.

190 Essays, p 117.

191 Ibid., p 118.

192 'The Poetry of the Old Testament', (1877), ibid., p 400. Cp 'What History teaches us to seek in the Bible', (1870), in ibid., p 229: 'we are to seek in the Bible not a body of abstract religious truth, but the living personal history of God's gracious dealings with men'; Answer to the Form of Libel, p 56: 'the Bible is no mere system of spiritual truths, but essentially a narrative of the gradual process of revelation and redemption'.

193 Essays, p 122.

194 Ibid., p 123.

195 Ibid., p 117.

196 Ibid., p 123.

197 Ibid. Emphasis original.

198 Ibid., pp 124,5.

199 Ibid., p 131.

200 Ibid., p 132.

201 Ibid., p 133.

202 Ibid.

203 Ibid., p 134.

204 Ibid.

205 V. supra, pp 148,9.

206 V. supra, p 99.

207 Glover, op. cit., pp 64, 69, goes so far as to suggest that the Cambridge Trio were one of the major factors in the spread of Criticism in Britain, since they fostered a secret hope that in due course Old Testament Criticism would be set on a more conservative course.

208 'The Work of a Theological Society', in Essays, p 152.

209 Ibid., p 153.

210 Ibid., p 158.

211 Libel, p 26.

212 'What History teaches us to seek in the Bible', (1870), in Essays, p 222.

213 Ibid., p 229.

214 'The Poetry of the Old Testament', (1877), in Essays, p 401.

215 'The Work of a Theological Society', in Essays, 151.

216 Ibid., p 155. The 'mere outward form and vehicle ....be that form never so divine', is apparently the Bible.

217 Ibid., p 156. He also remarks on the relation of evidential apologetics to the rise and power of Moderatism, ibid.

218 Ibid., p 157.

219 The Old Testament, p 16.

220 Ibid., p 18.

221 Additional Answer, pp 13,14.

222 Answer to the Amended Libel, p 4.

223 An uncharacteristically orthodox phrase.

224 Ibid., p 4. Emphasis ours.

225 Ibid., pp 4,5.

226 Ibid., p 5.

227 Cited, ibid., p 5.

228 Ibid.

229 Ibid., pp 5,6.

230 Ibid., p 6.

231 Ibid., p 7.

232 Ibid. He adds, in another phrase that sounds more orthodox than consistent with his expressed position, that 'the value of the book depends not on its author, but on the materials that were laid to his hand, and the guidance of inspiration which directed him in the use of them'.

233 Ibid., p 9.

234 Ibid.

235 Ibid., p 24.

236 Ibid., p 33.

237 Answer to the Form of Libel, p 52.

238 Ibid., p 53.

239 Ibid., p 54.

240 Ibid., p 56. Emphasis ours.

241 This scarcely requires illustration. The use of the Genesis narratives as the framework for natural science until the early nineteenth century, for example, demonstrates the implications which 'infallibility' was traditionally assumed to have.

242 Luther is listed high among the writers who have influenced him. Black and Chrystal cite him as follows, p 334: 'Luther certainly; Calvin, I suppose, has an influence.'

1 V. supra, pp 4-9.

2 V. the quotation from Collins' Ecclesiastical History, cited supra, p 79.

3 Supra, cap. VII, pp 204-262.

4 V. supra, p 257.

5 V. supra, p 254.

6 V. supra, p 258.

7 V. supra, p 271.

8 Supra, cap. IV, pp 115-156.

9 Supra, cap. V, pp 157-178.

10 V. supra, pp 127-130.

11 Supra, cap. VI, pp 179-203, and Appendix A, pp 290-318.

12 Also, e.g., in Harvey, Historian and the Believer, pp 49ff.

13 Toulmin, Uses of Argument, p 9.

14 Kelsey, Uses of Scripture, pp 128,9.

15 Harvey, op. cit., pp 105,6.

16 It is against this widespread assumption that, for instance, Mozley reacts: 'Men like Moule, Dimock, Drury, Girdlestone and Wace ... were theologians faithful to a tradition which they expounded with ample learning and ability. The Anglican Evangelicals have had a far more distinguished record in theology than is apt to be recognized.' (Some Tendencies, p 26)

17 V. supra, pp 149, 155,6.

18 This matter has, of course, been much discussed, and was perhaps most powerfully put by Flew in his question 'What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or the existence of, God?' (New Essays, p 99) 'It often seems', he earlier remarks, 'to people who are not religious as if there was no conceivable event or series of events the occurrence of which would be admitted by sophisticated religious people to be a sufficient reason for conceding "there wasn't a God after all" or 'God does not really love us then"' (p 98). Flew's intention is to argue that since religious assertions are unfalsifiable in any conceivable set of circumstances, they are not really 'assertions' at all.

It is neither appropriate nor necessary for us to discuss this fundamental question at any length, since we are not trying to justify religious belief in general, but rather to show the place of the Conservative view of Scripture in Conservative religion, and the way in which Conservatives saw defence of infallibilism as analogous with defence of other elements of the Faith. But it is illuminating to refer to Basil Mitchell's answer to Flew, since it sheds its own light on the dynamic of Christian apologetic in the face of difficult evidence. Mitchell writes: 'The theologian surely would not deny that the fact of pain counts against the assertion that God loves men. This very incompatibility generates the most intractable of theological problems - the problem of evil. So the theologian does recognize the fact of pain as counting against the Christian doctrine. But it is true that he will not allow it - or anything - to count decisively against it; for he is committed by his faith to trust in God. His attitude is not that of the detached observer, but of the believer.' (p 103) Mitchell then sets up an analogy

which, interestingly, has much in common with Burgon's analogy of the Bible and his friend. In an occupied country a member of the resistance meets a stranger who tells him and convinces him that he is actually in command of the resistance forces. 'The partisan is utterly convinced at that meeting of the Stranger's sincerity and constancy and undertakes to trust him.' After that there is never again a private meeting, and the stranger is seen sometimes helping the partisans and sometimes helping the occupying power. 'Sometimes his friends, in exasperation, say "Well, what would he have to do for you to admit that you were wrong and that he is not on our side?"' Mitchell continues: 'The partisan of the parable does not allow anything to count decisively against the proposition, "The Stranger is on our side". This is because he has committed himself to trust the Stranger. But he of course recognizes that the Stranger's ambiguous behaviour does count against what he believes about him. It is precisely this situation which constitutes the trial of his faith.' The question is how long, and in the face of what evidence, he can uphold this position, 'without its becoming just silly' (p 104). It is of the nature of faith that it cannot be merely provisional, while, on the other hand, it cannot be merely a 'vacuous formula ... to which experience makes no difference'. 'Do I want to say that the partisan's belief about the Stranger is, in any sense, an explanation? I think I do. It explains and makes sense of the Stranger's behaviour: it helps to explain also the resistance movement in the context of which he appears. In each case it differs from the interpretation which the others put upon the same facts' (p 105). There is an irreducible circularity in the position of the religious man, and whatever may be the conditions of faslification of his beliefs (and in practical terms they must exist, since people do change and abandon religious beliefs), Mitchell comments that one cannot say 'in advance' what they will be. In terms of his parable, 'It will depend on the nature of the impression created by the Stranger in the first place. It will depend, too, on the manner in which he takes the Stranger's behaviour. If he blandly dismisses it as of no consequence, as having no bearing upon his belief, it will be assumed that he is thoughtless or insane.... In that case he would be like the religious man who says blandly of a terrible disaster "It is God's will". No, he will only be regarded as sane and reasonable in his belief, if he experiences in himself the full force of the conflict.' (pp 104,5) (Emphasis ours.)

19 B.V. Lightman, Henry Longueville Mansel and the Genesis of Victorian Agnosticism, unpublished PhD dissertation, Brandeis University, 1978.

20 Mansel, Limits, pp xvi,xvii.

21 Ibid., p xxiii.

22 Ibid., p xxvi.

23 Ibid., p xxxi.

24 Ibid., p xxxiii.

25 Ibid., p xxxiv.

26 Ibid., p 1.

27 Ibid., p 8.

28 Ibid., pp 10,11.

29 Ibid., p 152.

30 Ibid., p 161.

31 Ibid., p 162.

32 Ibid., p 118.

33 Ebeling, Word and Faith, p 47.

34 We elaborate this analogy in Appendix B, infra, pp 319-324.

35 Garbett, Divine Plan, pp 7,8.

APPENDIX A

1 1868 edition.

2 V., on Darwin and the debates, Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution; on the controversies over geology prior to Darwin, Gillispie, Genesis and Geology; and on Darwin and the aftermath, particularly the theological aspect, Moore, The Post-Darwinian Controversies. These last two are quite the best surveys available. More specialised treatments include Haber, The Age of the World: Moses to Darwin, dealing in particular with the idea of time, and Greene, The Death of Adam, concerned almost wholly with the scientific background to modern anthropology. Other works are, of course, numerous. Gillispie has a valuable bibliographical essay, and Moore an extensive Bibliography (58pp).

3 Something which has not, apparently, much interested the historians of the period. Moore and Gillispie, for instance, are mostly concerned with questions of design, providence, divine immanence, and the like. So Gillispie writes: 'I do not ... regard ... tenderness towards the Bible as the basis of the difficulty between science and Protestant Christianity. Indeed, during the seven decades between the birth of modern geology and the publication of On the Origin of Species the difficulty as reflected in scientific literature appears to be one of religion (in a crude sense) in science rather than one of religion versus science. The most embarrassing obstacles faced by the new sciences were cast up by the curious providential materialism of the scientists themselves.' (Genesis and Geology, pp viii,ix)

4 Supra, pp 103,4.

5 V. Greene, Darwin and the Modern World View, chapter 1: 'Darwin and the Bible'. Greene quotes one writer to the effect that scientific developments so prepared the ground for the advent of the Critical controversy that, had they not taken place, Critical scholarship would never have broken out of a small enclave in a 'Fundamentalist' consensus. This is rather tendentious, though the inter-relation of the two should not be underestimated. The Critics themselves, in constantly terming their work 'scientific', evidently wished to reap where their colleagues in natural science had sown.

6 Gillispie, op. cit., p xi.

7 Ibid., p 42.

8 Ibid., p 21: 'With some few exceptions ... those who were interested in science still took all of natural philosophy for their province.'

9 Such that when P.H. Gosse, the distinguished marine biologist, published his Omphalos in 1857, its subtitle already revealed it as something of an oddity: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot.

10 Gillispie, op. cit., p 42. Cp W.T. Gordon, in Dingle, ed., A Century of Science, 1851-1951, pp 98ff.

11 Gillispie, op. cit., p 43.

12 Ibid., pp 41-72.

13 Ibid., p 88. Significantly, this lengthy monograph is dedicated to Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham, at whose instigation it was begun. Reliquiae, p iii.

14 Gillispie, op. cit., pp 98-120.

15 First published in 1812 in the Preface to his great work, the Recherches sur les Ossemens Fossiles,

16 Recherches, i, pp 8,9; trans. and cited Gillispie, op. cit., p 100.

17 Buckland, Essay on the Theory of the Earth, pp 171,2; cited Gillispie, op. cit., p 101.

18 Gillispie, op. cit., pp 102,3.

19 Buckland, Vindiciae Geologiae; or, the Connexion of Geology with Religion Explained, Dedication.

20 Ibid., p 23. He goes on to suggest that the theory of a 'gap' between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 will explain the strata not laid down in the Deluge, citing Sumner's Records of Creation, ii, p 356, in evidence.

21 The use of these terms to describe the opposing factions apparently originated with Whewell; v. Cannon, 'The Uniformitarian-Catastrophist Debate', in Isis, 51 (1960), p 38. Cannon does not, however, document this assertion.

22 Gillispie, op. cit., p 121.

23 Lyell, Principles of Geology, i, p 144. He would not allow ever for variation in the intensity of the forces at work. Cp Cannon, op. cit.,

24 Cp Page, Advanced Text-Book of Geology, 1856, p 268: 'Without this uniformity in the great operations of nature, the history of the PAST would be an uncertainty and a delusion.'

25 Gillispie, op. cit., p 128.

26 Principles, iii, p 272.

27 Ibid., p 271.

28 Ibid.

29 Cannon, op. cit., p 38.

30 Ibid.

31 Cited ibid., p 39.

32 Conversely, it is interesting that in the Preface to his Elements of Geology, 1838, Lyell acknowledges with gratitude the kindness of his 'friend', 'Mr. Darwin', for permitting him to see his journal of the Beagle voyage prior to publication. Elements, p vii.

33 Moore, Post-Darwinian Controversies, p 143.

34 Gillispie, op. cit., p 150.

35 Moore, op. cit., p 143.

36 V. ibid., pp 153-173.

37 Ibid., p 99.

38 Scott, p b5. The Commentary is without pagination, so we give here and below the printer's marks.

39 Ibid., pp d7,8.

40 Ibid., p d8.

41 Reissued in second edition, 1844; vol. ii, 1852; vol. iii, 1867; 1868 revised two-vol. edition entitled The Book of Genesis Expounded. We quote here from the 1868 edition, which in this passage preserves the text of 1843 virtually unchanged.

42 Candlish, Genesis, i, p 18.

43 Ibid., p 19.

44 Ibid.

45 Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Commentary, i, p xlvi.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., p xlvii.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., p xlviii.

51 Ibid., pp 10ff.

52 Ibid.

53 Chalmers, Natural Theology, i, p 251, Works, i, p 256; cited Pratt, Scripture and Science, pp 28, 31.

54 Jamieson, ibid.

55 Cook, ed., The Holy Bible, Genesis, p 30.

56 Ibid., 'Note ... on the Days of Creation', sub chapter 1.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., sub 1:2.

59 Ibid., 'Note ... on the Days of Creation', sub chapter 1.

60 Ibid.

61 Ellicott, ed., Old Testament Commentary, i, p 4.

62 Ibid., p 7.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., sub 1:3.

65 Ibid., p 5.

66 Spence and Exell, edd., The Pulpit Commentary, sub Genesis 1:2 (Exposition).

67 Ibid., sub 1:5 (Exposition).

68 Ibid., sub 1:11 (Exposition).

69 Dods, Genesis, p 1.

70 Ibid., p 2.

71 Ibid., p 3.

72 Ibid., p 4.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid., p 10.

75 Ibid., p 11.

76 Loisy, Gospel and the Church, p 6.

77 Ryle, Early Narratives of Genesis, p viii.

78 Ibid., p 6.

79 Ibid., p 7.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid., p 9.

82 Ibid., p 9; cp p 23.

83 Ryle, Genesis, sub 1:5; emphasis ours.

84 Ibid., Note, 'The Cosmogonies of Science and Religion', p 46.

85 Driver, Genesis, Westminster Commentaries, p 20.

86 Ibid., p 22.

87 Ibid., p 23.

88 Ibid., p 24.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid., p 26.

91 Skinner, Genesis, Internationaml Critical Commentary, p VIII.

92 Ibid., p vi.

93 Ibid., sub 1:1-2:3.

94 Ibid., p 5.

95 Ibid., sub 1:5.

96 Ibid., sub 1:4.

97 Ibid., sub 1:14-19.

98 S.a.

99 Bennett, Genesis, p 72.

100 Jamieson, op. cit., sub 2:1-3.

101 'Note...', sub chapter 2.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid., 'Note...', sub chapter 3.

104 Payne Smith, op. cit., sub 2:8.

105 Ibid., sub 3:1.

106 Whitelaw, in Spence and Exell, edd., op. cit., sub 3:1.

107 Ibid., sub 3:1-7.

108 Dods, op. cit., p 15.

109 Ryle, Narratives, p 10.

110 Driver, op. cit., pp 53,4.

111 Skinner, op. cit., sub 2:4b-3:24.

112 Ibid., sub 2:18-25,

113 Ryle, Genesis, sub 2:21,2.

114 Scott, op. cit., sub 6:14-16.

115 Ibid., sub 7:2,3.

116 Ibid., sub 7:10-12.

117 Ibid., sub 7:17-19.

118 Candlish, op. cit., i, p 188, 1843 ed.

119 Ibid., i, p 134, 1868 ed.

120 Jamieson, op. cit., sub 6:17.

121 Ibid., sub 7:17-20.

122 Ibid., sub 7:17-20.

123 Ibid., sub 7:24.

124 Ibid.

125 'Note....', sub chapter 8.

126 Payne Smith, op. cit., sub 6:17.

127 Ibid., sub 7:11.

128 Ibid.

129 Ibid., sub 7:20.

130 Whitelaw, in Spence and Exell, edd. op. cit., sub 6:15 (Exposition).

131 Ibid., sub 7:17-19 (Exposition).

132 Ibid., sub 7:19 (Homiletics).

133 Ibid.

134 Dods, op. cit., p 55.

135 Ryle, Narratives, p 113.

136 Ibid., p 113.

137 Ibid.

138 Ryle, Genesis, p xxxix.

139 Driver, op. cit., p 99.

140 Ibid., p 101.

141 Ibid.

142 Skinner, op. cit., p 181.

143 Ibid., p 175.

144 Possibly also with the exception of the early editions of Candlish, though it is not entirely clear whether they indicate a global flood.

145 For a useful survey of the interpretative options open to mid-nineteenth--century reconcilers of Genesis and science, v. Gosse, Omphalos, chapter 1. Before presenting his own (rather distinctive) solution, Gosse damns the other reconcilers with faint praise: 'I am not blaming, far less despising, the efforts that have been made for harmonizing the teachings of Scripture and science. I heartily sympathise with them. What else could good men do?' (pp 28,9)

146 Jamieson, op. cit., p xlviii.

147 Driver, op. cit., p 26.

148 Ryle, Narratives, p 9; cp p 33.

149 Dods, op. cit., p 4.

150 Ryle, Genesis, sub 1:5.

151 Drummond, 'Mr. Gladstone and Genesis', in Nineteenth Century, XIX (1886), pp 208f.

152 Ibid., p 209.

153 In Nineteenth Century, XXVIII (1890), pp 5ff.

154 Ibid., pp 10,11.

155 Ibid.,p 13.

156 Ibid.

157 Ibid., p 14.

158 Ibid., p 16.

159 To be fair to Huxley (and to the Conservatives, indeed) one should add that he does not leave the matter there. He goes on to suggest that the process of sloughing off disagreeable and embarrassing beliefs will continue, until, in a parody of the 1859 Bampton lecture, he concludes: 'The whole world of history has been revolutionized and the mythology which embarrassed earnest Christians has vanished as an evil mist, the lifting of which has only more fully revealed the lineaments of Infallible Truth. No longer in contact with fact of any kind, Faith stands now and for ever proudly inaccessible to the attacks of the Infidel.' (p 22)

For an earlier discussion of the creation account in a similar vein to Huxley's of the flood narrative, v. C.A. Goodwin, 'The Mosaic Cosmogony', in Essays and Reviews: 'The plain meaning of the Hebrew record is unscrupulously tampered with, and in general the pith of the whole process lies in divesting the text of all meaning whatever.... Believing, as we do, that if the value of the Bible as a book of religious instruction is to be maintained, it must not be by striving to prove it scientifically exact, at the expense of every sound principle of interpretation, and in defiance of common sense.' (p 211)

160 Pratt, Scripture and Science not at Variance, p 5.

161 Ibid., p 95.

162 Ibid., p 97.

APPENDIX B

1 V. supra, pp 4,5.

2 Kuhn, Scientific Revolutions, p 6.

3 Ibid., p 8.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p 23.

6 Ibid., p 24.

7 Ibid., p 93.

8 Ibid., pp 108,9.

9 Ibid., p 147.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., p 149.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p 150.

14 Ed. Lakatos and Musgrave: Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge.

15 Kuhn, 'Logic of Discovery or Psychology of Research?', in ibid., p 19.

16 Watkins, 'Against "Normal Science"', in ibid., p 33.

17 Toulmin, 'Does the Distinction between Normal and Revolutionary Science hold water?', in ibid., p 44.

18 Kuhn, 'Reflections on my Critics', in ibid., p 261.

19 Kuhn, Scientific Revolutions, p 149.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Bibliographical material is grouped under two heads: first, primary sources; and secondly, secondary and modern works. Neither of these is intended to be an exhaustive listing, since a vast quantity of material has been produced as a result of the controversy we have considered. A number of comments require to be made concerning the principles of selection applied. All works cited in the text or notes are listed here; in the case of works available in various editions, that edition to whose pagination reference has been made is specified in parentheses after the date of first publication, if it is a later edition. Other works consulted but not cited are also listed, as are some significant though only indirectly relevant volumes (such as Astruc's Conjectures) and a small number of primary sources which it has not been possible to locate. In the case of several productive and important figures (such as Sayce, Ellicott, and Robertson Smith) a representative (though not exhaustive) listing has been attempted. Throughout, sparing use has been made of the almost unlimited periodical literature. The concentration of the study on the controversy in Britain has limited selection very largely to works published in this country. Finally, essays and commentaries of significance included in collections are listed separately, with reference made to the entry for the larger volume.

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