

their corrections will be most sincerely welcomed; but yet when anyone writes he must express his own opinions. My efforts have been confined to an examination of the internal evidence of the Gospel narratives, and my criticisms are rather those of a nautical assessor than of a judge. Persons living solely in the atmosphere of grammars, lexicons, commentaries, and the apparatus of textual criticism may be excused for their want of technical information about boats and nets. With the classical use of these words this article does not deal, nor yet with the external influence that Greek literature may have had on the mind of the fourth evangelist; the subject would far exceed the limits of a single article, and would only be remotely connected with the object it has in view.

J. E. GREEN.

ART. IV.—ABRAHAM, MOSES, AND CHRIST.¹

THERE are many religions in the world. Most of them have some elements of truth in them. It would be strange if they had not. As systems of belief and practice they differ much from one another. The religion of the Bible, though one of these, differs from all the rest more widely and radically than any other. It is obvious that all these religions, though with some truth in them, might be false. But if one is true, it follows logically that all must be false so far as they differ from it.

The religion of the Bible claims to be the one true religion, and it rests that claim upon the fact that it has been divinely revealed. It has not been thought out by man. It is not the result of any evolutionary process of human reasoning, or experience, or the remembrance of ancient myths and traditions, but has been made known to man from the beginning by the One, True, Living God.

This great truth lies at the root of our Christian Faith, which perishes if that root is destroyed.

It will help us to realize this if we consider how much our Christianity rests upon our belief in the recorded history of three great personalities who stand out conspicuously upon the page of history—Abraham, Moses, and Christ.

Some of our modern critics have got rid of Abraham as anything like a real historical person; a University Professor has now disposed of Moses; and "What think ye of Christ?"

¹ A paper written for the Winchester Clerical Association by the Rev. Canon Huntingford, D.C.L.

has received more than one not very satisfactory answer. That is why I have chosen Abraham, Moses, and Christ for our subject this evening. Let us consider the case of Abraham first.

For the biography and religion of Abraham we go to the Book of Genesis. But few of us realize how distinct the Book of Genesis is from the rest of the Old Testament. It is separated from the rest of the Pentateuch by a period of about four hundred years. As a portion of the revealed religion it stands by itself. It has nothing to do with the law of Moses, but looks onward to Christ. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." And as Genesis looks onward to Christ, so Christ and His Apostles overleap all the rest of the Old Testament, and refer their hearers to Abraham as the great example of the true religion of the Gospel—a filial, trustful religion, the religion of "faith which worketh by love."

Now, if we take the Book of Genesis as it stands—and we must remember that Christ has set His seal even on the introductory chapters—if we look upon the book as real history, we see that Abraham was not the founder of the true religion, but a reformer. It is a mistake to think that Terah was not a worshipper of the true God because it is recorded that he worshipped idols. You might just as well say that Romanists do not believe in Christ because they worship the Virgin and the Saints, and their idolatrous images. Laban, we know, believed in the true God, for he referred to Him as the God of his father Terah, and yet Rachel carried off some of his little idols, which he called his gods. This mixture of true and false worship has, in fact, been a practice in all ages, from that of Abraham to that of Leo XIII.

Abraham, then, was a reformer; and he was specially called to be a reformer and prophet, a friend of God, and a great example of living faith, of the filial, trustful, and fruitful religion to be finally established by Christ.

Is it conceivable, then, that Genesis, standing out so conspicuously distinct from Mosaism, could have been invented by any of the disciples of the Mosaic Law? It matters not by whom it was written, for the seals of Moses and Christ have been set upon it. And Christ and the prophets refer to it as pre-Mosaic.

If we take the Bible, then, as it stands, and accept it as a Divine Revelation, it is clear that Abraham was not the founder of the true religion, but a divinely-chosen reformer. A law with sanctions was given to Adam at the beginning, and was broken. And his descendants were early divided into the sons of God, or true worshippers, and the children of

men. Thus, a knowledge of the Living God was not lost in the days of Abraham, for as before Enoch and Noah had "walked with God," so in Abraham's day Melchizedech was a "priest of God most High" (Gen. xiv. 18).

But Abraham was not only a divinely-appointed prophet and reformer; he was also chosen to be the founder of a nation specially selected and separated from all other nations to hand down the knowledge and laws of the living God, until the Eternal Son should be incarnate as the second Adam and Saviour of the whole human race. For this purpose God made a covenant with Abraham, gave him the sign of circumcision, and promised that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed.

Before leaving Abraham, let me quote the words of Max Müller about him:

"How is the fact to be explained that the three great religions of the world in which the unity of the Deity forms the keynote are of Semitic origin? Mohammedism, no doubt, is a Semitic religion; and its very core is monotheism. But did Mohammed invent monotheism? Did he invent even a new name of God? Not at all. And how is it with Christianity? Did Christ come to preach faith in a new God? Did He or His disciples invent a new name of God? No. Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil, and the God whom He preached was the God of Abraham. And who is the God of Jeremiah, of Elijah, and of Moses? We answer again, the God of Abraham."

Thus, the faith in the one living God, which seemed to require the admission of a monotheistic instinct, grafted in every member of the Semitic family, is traced back to one man, to him in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed. And if, from our earliest childhood, we have looked upon Abraham, the friend of God, with love and veneration, his venerable figure will assume still more majestic proportions when we see in him the life-spring of that faith which was to unite all the nations of the earth, and the author of that blessing which was to come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. And if we are asked how this one Abraham passed through the denial of all other gods to the knowledge of the one God, we are content to answer that it was by a special Divine revelation granted to that one man and handed down by him to Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans.

Our second great personality is Moses. What are we to think of him and his law?

As regards the moral law, summed up in the Ten Commandments, the religion of Moses was the religion of Abraham, of the prophets, and of Christ—a pure, spiritual, filial, trustful,

and fruitful religion. Moses was a divinely-called and inspired prophet, but also a legislator. And his civil and ceremonial laws were intended to isolate the chosen people, to preserve them from idolatry, and to prepare the way for Christ.

That the God of Moses was the God of Abraham is clear from the narrative of his call by One who called Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. But the work assigned to Him was very different from that of Abraham. He was to deliver Israel from Egypt, and to form them into a nation under God as their King.

As the subjects of a theocracy they required a code of civil laws. But as Jehovah was not only their King, but their God, they required instruction also in the forms and ritual of His outward worship. This was given them in the ceremonial law. The Mosaic Law, therefore, embraces three elements differing widely from one another, though not given always in separate codes—the moral, ceremonial, and civil laws.

There is a tendency in all religions to attach more importance to outward forms than to the religion of the heart.

The divine institutions of Moses form no exception to this tendency. All through their strange and varied history the Israelites were at one time relapsing into idolatry, and at another into formalism. And so it was the work of divinely-called prophets, from Elijah to Malachi, to call them back to the heart-worship of the God of Abraham.

We know how it ended. The exile in Babylon cured them in a measure of idolatry, but resulted in that which we call Judaism, a system regarded by some modern critics as an advance towards a better state of things, but which ended, nevertheless, in the crucifixion of Jesus, and called from Him the sad retrospect of the history of His people: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matt. xxiii. 37).

It has often been considered remarkable that Moses tells us nothing about another life. It would be more remarkable if he did. He had to legislate for this life. He had to found a temporal theocracy, to establish laws for the temporal government of a theocratic nation. To have said anything about rewards or punishment in a future life would have been as much out of place in his system as it would be in the civil or penal codes of a Christian nation. Our Legislature frames laws for the civil government of the English people. We have also a penal code, and he who sins against this is punished without any reference to another life. The man convicted of

murder is condemned to death. As individual Christians we urge him to repent, and we often pray for him in our churches, but not at all with the idea of saving him from the temporal punishment of his sins. We pray for his soul, but we kill his body. The penal code of Moses is framed on this principle, but it is better than ours. It punishes with death such sins as adultery, seduction, and blasphemy, which our laws leave almost wholly unpunished.

We must remember also that the civil and ceremonial laws of Moses were not only temporal, offering temporal rewards and punishments, but also temporary, intended to last only for a time until Christ should come to fulfil all its types and figures and to confirm and renew the covenant of Abraham and his spiritual, filial, and trustful religion, the religion of "faith which worketh by love"; a religion no longer national, but Catholic as at the first, the religion of every nation under heaven, the religion by accepting and acting on which all the families of the earth should be blessed.

The work of Moses, then, was completed when St. John, the last and greatest of the prophets, baptized Jesus in Jordan and proclaimed Him to be the promised seed of the woman, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, and thus "the law and the prophets were until John."

And all through the history of the chosen people it was the work of divinely-chosen and inspired prophets to protest against the superstition and formalism of Israel and to keep alive in the hearts of the faithful the religion of Abraham, the friend of God—the spiritual, filial, trustful, and fruitful religion of him "who staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and was fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Rom. iv. 20).

And then in the fulness of time Christ came, the greatest Personality which has ever appeared in the world. And so, "What think ye of Christ?" is now the question of questions which we are all required to answer.

The answer of the modern Jews is that He was the best Jew who ever lived. The answer of all is that He was the best man who ever lived, and that His teaching and example, had they been followed, would have done more than those of any other man to heal the political and social evils of the whole human race.

What is our answer as faithful Christians? We may give it in the words of the Apostle: "Whom say ye that I am? . . . And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matt. xvi. 16).

And now let us consider how the teachings of Christ and

His Apostles rest upon a belief in the historical truthfulness of the Old Testament, upon a belief in what is written of Abraham and Moses.

Christ is "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. i. 1). That the departed saints are living is proved, says our Lord, by the words of God to Moses: "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him" (Luke xx. 37).

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (John viii. 56-58).

Whatever may be said or thought about the Kenosis, it was after He was risen from the dead and was conversing with the two disciples that our Lord, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 27).

He Himself observed the ceremonial laws of Moses, and directed others to do the same. To the cleansed leper He said: "Go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded (Mark i. 44).

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John iii. 14, 15).

In fact, He rests His claim to be the Christ on the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures. To the unbelieving Jews He says: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me" (John v. 39). What an evident proof that the Old Testament saints looked for eternal life! though it is a modern fancy to deny this, a matter of which Article VII. says that they who teach it "are not to be heard." He refers the unbelieving Jews to Moses: "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me" (John v. 45, 46).

And thus these three personalities—Abraham, Moses, and Christ—are so knit together as to form as it were a threefold cord to hold fast the anchor of our hope in the stormy ocean of a doubting and unbelieving world.

We shall be wise in these days to consider well the evidences of the truthfulness and inspiration of the Bible, remembering

that it is a collection of more than sixty Scriptures written during a period of about fifteen hundred years by men differing very greatly in rank, character, and attainment.

From Genesis to the Apocalypse they teach the one true religion—belief in the One, True, and Living God, and His holy law, the law of purity, righteousness, and truth—thus differing widely from every other religion of the world.

What but Divine inspiration can reasonably account for this? This unity of teaching is itself one of the greatest of miracles. Whether any of these writers were J. E., D., or P. matters very little, so long as they do not teach us to believe in any other than the One, Living, and True God. Personally, though I have long looked for it, I have never found any solid proof that the persons represented by these letters ever existed. I am inclined often to say, "Moses and the prophets I know, and Christ I know, but who are ye?"

I do not wish to speak slightingly of the higher critics. Their work has in many respects been very useful. But though I have long studied their arguments, I can rarely accept their conclusions. Many of them appear to me to go to their imagination for premisses, and from these draw very often illogical conclusions. But the more sober modern critics have done a good work in sweeping away a vast mass of rubbish which had gathered round the interpretation of the Bible, the accumulation of many ages of ignorance and superstition. The critics whose conclusions we shall be wise not to accept at secondhand from the writers of periodicals, are those negative critics who are doing their best to undermine the faith of believers in the historical truthfulness of the Bible without even attempting to give them anything in its place. We will not allow them to rob us of our faith in Abraham, the father of the faithful, in the Divine inspiration of Moses, or our belief in the miraculous conception of Christ, His atonement for our sins on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and His second coming to judge the world and to establish that kingdom which "shall have no end."

