

highly magnified so long as it is a true catholic, Apostolic Christian priesthood—not an obsolete Judaizing, sacerdotalizing priesthood. It is the high and glorious office of the Christian priest to be the ordained representative of God to man and of man to God; but, except in this sense of setting forth to men the Sacrifice of the Saviour, once for all offered and incapable of repetition, and of offering the prayers and praises and gifts of men to God, he is not a priest. Even in this limited sense his prophetic takes precedence of his priestly office. This was the Divine order in New Testament times; it is the order of the Church of England to-day; and any attempt to overthrow this order, however unconscious—yea, well-intentioned the action of the overthrowers may be, is nothing less than to unchristianize the Church and to Judaize the Gospel.



## Historical Records and Inspiration.

BY THE REV. C. F. RUSSELL, M.A.,

*Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge.*

**I**N a recent article<sup>1</sup> in the *CHURCHMAN* the opinion was asserted that the “essentials of Evangelicalism” do not involve any one particular attitude towards the modern criticism of the Bible. While this doctrine is as intelligible as it is acceptable to many persons, there are others who deny its soundness altogether. Quite recently circumstances have combined to force this divergence of opinion into prominence. At the Islington Clerical Meeting last January two papers were read in which the opposite position was maintained, and it was urged, in effect, that “Higher Critic” and “Evangelical” were contradictory terms. The representative character of the Islington meeting in relation to the Evangelical school of thought in the Church of England is generally recognized; and consequently

<sup>1</sup> “The Essentials of Evangelicalism,” by the Rev. F. S. Guy Warman, in the *CHURCHMAN* for October, 1910, pp. 750-758. See especially p. 751.

it was felt by many persons that it would be a disaster if such statements were allowed to go forth unchallenged. A short letter of protest was therefore sent to the *Record* newspaper, and at once the flood-gates of controversy were opened. A voluminous correspondence ensued, which was read, probably, by many readers of this article. The present writer has no intention of repeating here what was said in the *Record* by various correspondents to show the reasonableness of Biblical criticism. But consideration of the matter, and conversations on more than one occasion, have convinced him that on one particular point of the dispute there is much confusion of thought—and that not on one side only; and he desires in this paper to dispel the misconception which is responsible for it. Even though the dispute will not thereby be terminated, it is at least possible that it may be conducted with a clearer understanding of the opposing views, and of that in which the opposition really consists.

One of the two Islington papers referred to was read by the Rev. W. T. Pilter, and the greater part of it consisted in an examination of certain points in the Graf-Wellhausen reconstruction of Old Testament history. The reader of the paper arrived at the conclusion that the reconstruction was false, and there is no need whatever to depreciate the importance of the evidence which he adduced to prove his case; indeed, for the sake of avoiding side-issues, we will assume throughout this paper that the proof was complete. But Mr. Pilter was not satisfied with doing this; he regarded his refutation of this particular critical theory as relevant to the assertion that the Higher Criticism was itself untrue in idea. The fact that he did so, combined with the fact that a large number in his audience evidently agreed with him, shows that no sufficient distinction is drawn between the method of criticism and its more or less widely accepted conclusions. As a matter of fact, it is an entire mistake to suppose that those who thankfully welcome, as from God, the fuller light which modern criticism has shed upon the Bible are thereby pledged to admit all those

results in which some would think Higher Criticism to consist. However widely a particular reconstruction of Scriptural history may be accepted by critics, they would all agree that it was not in that reconstruction that criticism consisted, nor by it that the true worth of their work should be judged; rather, they would say that what they valued most in the new learning was the attitude which it adopted towards the problem of the Bible, and the method of investigation it employed; and they would maintain that this attitude and this method must be clearly differentiated from the particular results reached by particular men.

Perhaps the answer will be made that this may very well be true, and if so, all that is necessary is to change the Islington notation. It is all a question of words. Let us understand Mr. Pilter as condemning certain conclusions of the Higher Critics, and not the Higher Criticism itself, and then we shall at last be agreed.

But if this reply is given, it is an unreflecting one. The dispute is not, in fact, one about words merely. If it were so, it would have been discovered long ago, and this article would not have been written. The instinctive conviction of both sides in the controversy that something more than words is involved is not a mistaken one; and we shall find, if we look a little deeper, that the disagreement is still as profound as before. Those who would seek to win agreement by a concession of this kind would thereby unwittingly betray the cause of many of their conservative friends.

If we would trace the divergence to its source, we must go right back to a fundamental difference of belief as to the meaning of inspiration. But before we consider even this difference, let us acknowledge the common element in the belief which we all alike share. All Christians are agreed that we have in the Bible the writings of men who were "moved by the Holy Ghost"; and that in consequence it teaches us, with Divine authority, the truth about God and man, about salvation and sin. But they differ among themselves in this—that while some believe the effect of inspiration to be manifested by moral and

spiritual insight into the deep things of God, others believe that the effect extended to the details of the utterance in such a way that statements of physical and spiritual matters are equally attested by the Holy Spirit.

In opposition to this latter view, the Christian critic sees the inspiration of the sacred writers in the fact that, taught by God, they perceived the true meaning of man's life in relation to the unseen. To them the material world revealed, not concealed, the spiritual; they saw God Himself active in history and in the ordinary life of men, where other people saw no more than chance and natural force and human action; they read the verdict of His approval or disapproval in earthly success or disaster, whether individual or national. They knew that His righteousness must ultimately triumph over all its foes, and so they could denounce sin with magnificent courage, and foretell its punishment with absolute confidence. Thus they delivered the message of God to their time, and to all time; and, whether they were speaking words of exhortation or reproof, or were interpreting the significance of historical events, they were taught, moved, inspired by the Divine Spirit of Truth.

It should be added that the Christian critic does not expect to find all these marks of inspiration present in every Biblical writing in the same degree, and hence it offers no difficulty to him to find that there are places from which some are absent. He believes that man's knowledge of God has been gradually increased under the guidance of His Spirit, and has passed through stages of greater or less imperfection. Indeed, who will say that our knowledge is perfect even now? Do we not still "see in a mirror, darkly"? When, therefore, to take an example, he reads in the song of the children of Israel, after the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, such words as "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods?" and finds the Israelites ascribing a real existence to heathen deities, and only a national authority to Jehovah, he is at no pains to explain away the obvious meaning of the passage, or discover for it some non-natural interpretation.

Now, it is plain that such a view as this, which sees the evidence of the Holy Spirit's influence in profound religious and moral insight, will regard the historical details of the narrative as vouched for only by the ordinary care and intelligence of the writer. But—and here we come to a point which is seldom grasped by the opponents of Biblical criticism—this is not to say that the narrative is necessarily unhistorical! Apparently Mr. Pilter regards the Higher Critics as bound, by their first principles, to assert that Biblical history is untrue; otherwise he could scarcely have thought it worth while to prove its truthfulness *as a means of demonstrating that their first principles are wrong*. What he said would have been both relevant and convincing if there were no such thing as historical accuracy apart from inspiration; as the case stands, it was neither. We do not necessarily call in question the truthfulness of Bede or Professor Gwatkin when we deny that their statements of fact have Divine authority. This is, indeed, a distinction of the greatest importance. The principle of criticism is not that the Scriptural history is untrue, but only that its truth must be considered apart, and is not to be regarded as guaranteed by the fact that it was employed to convey teaching from the mind of God. We may gladly admit that the initial presumption is entirely in favour of the trustworthiness in detail of all godly and sensible men, whether now or in the past, and no light considerations will induce us to give up our belief in it; and yet we shall maintain that inspiration and historical infallibility are unconnected.

May we not illustrate this view by the case of a Christian preacher in our own day? Let us suppose that he emphasizes a spiritual lesson by an incident from past or present history. To fix ideas, let us imagine that he is urging the duty of living in constant watchfulness for the coming of Christ, and that he illustrates his message by considering the case of a railway accident. Shall we not believe that he is guided by the Holy Ghost? And shall we cease to think so the next day, because we read in the morning paper that the number of persons killed

was one less than he had said? Will reverence compel us to say that "the Holy Spirit could not have taught through lies"? And even if lapse of memory, and not insufficient knowledge, was the cause of our friend's mistake, shall we be the less indulgent? Is there not a danger lest we should be "guilty of an eternal sin"?

Moreover, if it be claimed that the cases are different, in that this man is not inspired in the way that the Biblical writers were, we cannot admit the evasion. For we might assume, for argument's sake, that the action of the Holy Ghost was of an altogether different kind in the two cases, and yet it would remain true that both these "worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as He will." If we cannot believe that He could teach men of old apart from infallible statements of fact, then neither must we believe it of the present. Now, as much as then, we should be compelled to ask, "Can the Spirit of Truth use an untruthful man to convey His message?"

Another more brief illustration will apply to the modern view of the early chapters of Genesis, which sees in them the sanctification of early myths which gave an account of the origin of the world, and man, and sin. It is said by certain people that the religious value of the narrative would be lost to them if they came to think that not everything had actually happened in the way described. Yet has no one, for example, ever enforced the need of purity of heart in those who would attain to the vision of God by the story of Sir Galahad and the Holy Grail? And is that illustration of no value except to those who imagine that it is true?

To sum up what has been said so far, the critics do not start from the assumption that the Bible is necessarily unhistorical. They only maintain that the opposite theory is false which would have us believe that it is necessarily correct in every detail, simply because it is inspired. It may be thus correct, or it may not; and whichever it is, its inspiration is not thereby affected. They claim that the value of the historical record

should be examined and appraised by the methods of ordinary historical research.

As soon as this is understood, it will be perceived what a strange waste of time, from the point of view of Mr. Pilter's main purpose, was his proof that the Biblical history was correct. Of course, from another point of view, when regarded by itself, it was both interesting and valuable; for to test the ancient records by the light of archæological discovery is one part, and a very important part, of the historical method. But how is it possible that an inquiry into the matter, just because its result is to establish the historicity of the narrative, should be thought to refute the Higher Criticism, of which, as we have seen, the fundamental principle is that such inquiry is necessary?

It may be said, moreover, that from the conservative point of view such a method of procedure is an extraordinary tactical blunder. So long as it was maintained that the complete trustworthiness of the Scriptures was involved in their inspiration, so that no further test was required, the position was at least secure, for it had ruled science and history out of court. But when Mr. Pilter continues to maintain that trustworthiness, while yet he regards the evidence of archæology as admissible, he has departed from that impregnable position, and taken up a new one which is fraught with extreme danger. Henceforth it is needful that he should always be able to prove that modern research substantiates the Biblical story; and as soon as a single discrepancy is proved, his position is untenable. To put the matter otherwise, Mr. Pilter has made his case depend on his ability to prove a universal negative by means of an examination of particular instances, and any such attempt is foredoomed to failure; in the opinion of those people who cannot shut their eyes to the existence of contradictions—not merely of difficulties—in the Bible, even the time for making the attempt is past.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It may be worth while to point out the futility of attempting to get rid of all such contradictions by assuming that they are due to textual errors, so that if only the true text could in all cases be reached, no contradictions would remain. It is, of course, obvious that some contradictions are to be accounted for in this way; *but when this is put forward as a means of defending*

If, however, we need not concern ourselves further with this tactical error in the conservative defence, we are bound to emphasize what has been said above—that in his attack on the Higher Criticism Mr. Pilter completely fails. For the Higher Criticism does not consist in certain results, but in certain principles and methods; it does not affirm that the Bible is untrue, but only that its historical value is a legitimate subject for investigation. We may even turn the tables on Mr. Pilter, and tell him that the valuable part of his paper is that in which he is himself a Higher Critic. It is true that his conclusions differ widely from those of the Graf-Wellhausen school; and with this school he has a just quarrel, but it is not because they are critics. He agrees with them in the reasonableness of investigation; he agrees with them, for the most part, even in the evidence which he admits; he differs from them only in his estimate of the worth of the several parts of the evidence.

Now, there is really an immense difference between the position of a man who, after applying such a critical examination to the Scriptures, arrives at the conclusion that they are accurate historically, and that of one who adheres to the older view. For that older view was not simply that the Bible *is* true, but—what is quite different—that the Bible *must be* true; while the principles of criticism deny, not the former assertion, but only the latter; they contradict, not “*is*,” but “*must be*.” And hence it is a most foolish misstatement that is often made by the opponents of critical methods when they tell us that the tendency of the latest research is to establish again the old con-

---

*the entire inerrancy of Scripture, it proves too much.* For what is the value to us of an inerrant text which we no longer possess? How can we be sure that we have such a text, even where there is no contradiction to rouse our suspicions? It is plain that such a position is logically open to precisely the same attack as that which Mr. Pilter brought against the Higher Criticism: “It needs an expert to tell us how much of the Old Testament is authentic and reliable!”

For desperateness, such a position is a serious rival to that to which many modern defenders of papal infallibility have been driven. As it is undeniable that Popes have differed in the past, we are asked to believe that the Pope is infallible only when he speaks *ex cathedra*; but further inquiry elicits the information that it is quite impossible to tell in any given instance whether he is speaking *ex cathedra* or not!

servative position, and that a complete return to it is, indeed, only a question of time. Such a statement is utterly untrue. It fails absolutely to comprehend the facts. For, assuming it to be the case that modern scholars are more inclined than they once were to pronounce judgment in favour of the historical veracity of the Bible, it is still a "judgment" which they pronounce, and is based upon the examination of evidence. The old belief, that such an examination is unnecessary because the Bible "must be" true in detail, has disappeared for ever from the presuppositions of scholars. So that, even if we admit that the most extreme critical conclusions are being given up, yet this only allows us to say that the results of modern criticism are tending to coincide with beliefs which were formerly held on quite other grounds. This is as unlike a simple re-establishment of the old theory of inspiration as it can well be; for we have already pointed out more than once that it is in the method of working, and not in the conclusions reached, that the essence of the new learning consists. If only we would attend to principles, and not rely upon a mere superficial scrutiny of the conclusions to which they occasionally lead, we should perceive that the position of Dr. Orr or Mr. Harold Wiener is much less widely separated from that of Wellhausen or Professor Driver than it is from that of the Evangelicals of the early nineteenth century. Is not Mr. Piltner himself a witness to prove that this is so? For he disposes of the late date of the Priestly Code—how? By asserting that his view of inspiration compels him to ascribe its authorship to Moses? No; by seeking to show that an impartial investigation of the evidence does not lead to the conclusion of a late date after all.

We must return, finally, to what has been said at the beginning of this paper, and justify our assertion that all this is not mere verbal quibbling. Perhaps we shall still be told: "Very well; in the way that you understand the matter, we are all Higher Critics; and our quarrel is not with the Higher Criticism itself, but with the conclusions of particular exponents of it. We still regard these as inconsistent with Christian belief. And so what practical difference does it all make?"

We answer that the practical difference is enormous. It necessitates, indeed, a thorough reconsideration of their attitude by those who have been hitherto opposing the Higher Criticism ; for their opposition has been dictated ultimately by their conviction that faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is jeopardized by the acceptance of critical results which do not consist with the absolute trustworthiness of the Old Testament records. But the truth is—and to prove it has been the one object of this paper—that in so far as any man's belief in Christ has anything at all to say on this question, it is with the principle of criticism that it is concerned. That is to say, such faith is inconsistent with the criticism of Cheyne and Driver precisely to the same degree as, and no more than, it is inconsistent with the criticism which is called conservative. If a truly Christian faith requires such a belief in inspiration as insures the infallibility of the Old Testament in every detail, then it cannot find room even for the criticism which establishes the historicity of the narrative ; for such criticism, equally with the most extreme kind, starts from the principle that historical investigation may be legitimately applied to the Scriptures. And, on the other hand, if the Christian faith is compatible with such investigation at all, it cannot be less so when the results are "liberal." It is not the conclusion, but the method, which is crucial. Mr. Piltner is quite within his rights when he denounces the Graf-Wellhausen theory as unsound, or unscientific, or biassed in its admission and treatment of evidence. But the one thing which he may not do is this : he may not call it un-Christian. It can no more be un-Christian than can any other mistaken result, of lawful scientific inquiry, as, for example, the early belief in the material nature of heat, or as to the real character of the teaching of Nestorius.

A whole-hearted faith in Christ can have nothing to say in regard to the results of the Higher Criticism as such ; and, rightly viewed, it is not, after all, opposed to the historical method. Those to whom the meaning of inspiration is similar to that outlined above cannot but think that it is not only more reason-

able, but also more reverent, than the mechanical theory which is opposed to it ; and it has the further advantage of being in harmony with all that we know of the action of the Holy Spirit in our own time and in our own experience. The faith of such persons is no whit less real and true than that of the older Evangelicals in the holiness and love of the Father, in the Incarnation of the Divine Son and the Atonement wrought by Him, in the personality and the power of the Holy Ghost, the Life-Giver. They perceive in the Bible—and all the more clearly because they are friendly to modern criticism—the supreme message from God to mankind ; and they learn—and what comfort the lesson brings to them in these later days !—that He has sanctified the ordinary life of men and of nations to be the means of leading them ever onwards in the knowledge of His purposes, and of His love, and of Himself.



## The Religious Philosophy of William James.

BY THE REV. ALBERT WAY, M.A.,  
*Pusey House, Oxford.*

### I.

THE first of these two articles will be an attempt to give an account to the readers of the *CHURCHMAN* of the well-known American thinker who died some months ago—Professor William James, of Harvard. In the second we shall ask ourselves how far his method and conclusions are compatible with the religion which we believe.

He was a popular philosopher in the best sense of the word, a man who felt keenly the interest and importance of the deeper problems of life, and did his best to kindle the same interest in ordinary educated people by writing about philosophic subjects in a breezy, untechnical style. As he wrote he would have in his mind's eye before him an audience of typical American students of both sexes—keenly alert citizens of the modern