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1911.

THE 512TH ORDINARY MEETING OF MEMBERS

WAS HELD IN

ST. MARTIN'S VESTRY HALL, TRAFALGAR SQUARE,
ON THE 6TH FEBRUARY, 1911.

THE REV. CANON GIRDLESTONE IN THE CHAIR.

The Secretary read the Minutes of the preceding Meeting and announced the following elections by the Council :—

MEMBERS.—G. A. King, Esq., M.A. ; Rev. D. M. Panton, Minister of the Gospel.

ASSOCIATES.—G. H. Wedekind, Esq. ; Miss H. Pickersgill-Cunliffe ; F. D. Outram, Esq. ; Wm. H. Poate, Esq. ; Robert Heath, Esq.

The following paper was read :—

THE LAST CENTURY'S WITNESS TO THE BIBLE.

By the Rev. JOHN SHARP, M.A.

Eight facts : I. The existence of Bible Societies : II. Their constituency : III. Bible translations : IV. World-wide demand for this Jewish miscellany : V. The witness hence arising as to its truthfulness regarding Christ : VI. Self-sacrifices for the Book : VII. The witness from archæological, etc., researches : VIII. Unique influence of the Bible on individuals and peoples.

THE usual prospectus of the Victoria Institute states that the primary object of its existence is to investigate questions of Philosophy and Science, more especially those that bear upon truths revealed in "Holy Scripture." The foundation of Science is *facts*. It seems, therefore, a scientific enquiry, and one within the scope of such a Society, whether any external facts support the Bible's claim to be a communication of truths from God to man. For instance, do facts about the Bible differentiate it from all other books to such an extent that it must stand in a category by itself ? Do they postulate for it something more than human authorship ? It will be the aim of this paper to adduce some facts evolved in the last century which seem to have such an evidential value. Each of them will contribute something towards the cumulative force of the group.

In England, the nineteenth century inherited from its immediate predecessors divided opinions as to the divine authority of the Scriptures, and the duty of placing them within men's reach in vernacular versions. In the first half of the sixteenth century the publication of his translation of the New Testament into English cost William Tindale his life. In the second half of that century, as J. R. Green tells us, the people of England *became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible** in English.

The beginning of the seventeenth century saw the ever-memorable issue, just three hundred years ago (1611), of the "Authorised Version" of that English Bible. Before the century's close, John Locke published his *Essay on Human Understanding* (1690). Locke himself called the Bible "God's Word," but his essay provided a foundation upon which the Deists of the next century erected their claim that Reason and a Religion of Nature must take precedence of a problematical Revelation.

The Deists were followed in the second half of the eighteenth century by such sceptical foes of Revelation as Hume (1750), Bolingbroke (1754), Gibbon (1776), Voltaire (*d.* 1778), and Tom Paine (1794). Before the end of the century, the French Revolution (1789) gave the world a lurid sample of what might anywhere be the outcome of an "Age of Reason."

But, even in that eighteenth century, the Bible was at work. "In November, 1729, four young gentlemen of Oxford began to spend some evenings in a week together in reading chiefly the Greek Testament."† Those readings bore spiritual fruit in the "Methodist Revival" which was the forerunner of the thirty million adherents of Methodism now.‡

There arose also, before the eighteenth century closed, in part out of the "Methodist Revival," and in part independently, that evangelical movement within the Church of England, which to some extent revived its spiritual activity. Every good work set on foot by a small band of evangelical clergy was aided by purse, prayer and effort on the part of some earnestly religious laymen of note. Both clergy and laity believed the Bible to be "the Word of God."§ Their united convictions led to certain proceedings out of which some of

* *Short History of the English People*, p. 447.

† *Short History of Methodism*, by John Wesley.

‡ *History of the Evangelical Party*, G. R. Baleline, p. 43.

§ 1 Thess. ii, 13.

those facts about the Bible emerged in the nineteenth century that must now be considered.

I. *The existence of Bible Societies.*

No sooner had the century begun than an unparalleled tribute to the unique claims of the Bible was paid by the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Its sole object was to translate, to multiply and to circulate, at home and abroad, the Holy Scriptures. No precedent for such a concentrated and vast undertaking had ever been set in the case of any other writings accounted sacred. The Bible Society came into existence, too, amid national anxiety and distress. Men's minds were preoccupied and perplexed. On the other side of the Channel, Napoleon had an army and flotilla ready to invade England. Mutineers were to be found in the navy. There were disloyal malcontents among the people. Bread was frightfully dear. Taxation was terribly high.

But notwithstanding all this, there were men in England who had heard God's voice speaking to their hearts with authority and love from the pages of the Bible. Their own happy experience made them distressed for those to whom its pages were, from one cause or another, inaccessible. Enquiries put to 17,000 families had shown that half the working-class population in the town-area of London were destitute of the Scriptures.*

Similarly, within ten parishes in the country-area of Flintshire, there were 1,300 inhabited houses without a Bible. In Wales and in the Highlands there were multitudes unable to obtain the Scriptures in the only language they could read.† And as for the countries abroad, tens of thousands of prisoners of war‡ from them, were within easy reach, and were willing enough to read the New Testament, if it could be had in their tongues. The founders of the Bible Society knew no other book to meet the case. To provide the Holy Scriptures in their vernaculars for people wishful but unable to get them, the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed in 1804. Many Societies have since been established with the same object. Taking them all together, they create a distinction which no other collection of writings shares with the Bible.

* *History of the B. and F. Bible Society*, by W. Canton, vol. i, p. 80.

† *Ib.*, pp. 5-7 91.

‡ *Ib.*, pp. 123, 124.

II. *The Constituency of the Bible Societies.*

It is a remarkable fact that loyalty to one Book has for over a century proved a bond of union between men and women of diverse nationalities, ranks, wealth, learning, politics and religious convictions. When the Rev. John Owen, Chaplain to the Bishop of London (Dr. Porteus), moved the Resolution establishing the British and Foreign Bible Society, he tells us that he did so under an irresistible impulse created by the sight of so many Christians waiving their doctrinal and ritual differences to give themselves with one heart and one soul to the circulation of the Holy Scriptures.* The same unity of spirit has been a marked characteristic of the governing body of that Society, its Committee, for more than a hundred years.

So, too, the Bible-cause has been able to bring together on the same platform in happy unanimity "statesmen of the first rank and talents who" (in the words of Hannah More) "had never met but to oppose each other—orators who had never spoken but to differ."† It has formed a bond of union that has girdled the globe. Witness the world-wide observance of the Centenary Bible Sunday on March 6th, 1904, and the cordial messages which were announced two days later from King Edward VII., from the German Emperor, from the King of Sweden and Norway, from the Queen of Holland, and from Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States.

Twenty years ago, in a speech at the Mansion House, Archbishop Benson said: "This is a day in which Christians who are in earnest have their thoughts turned to the subject of re-union. How is it to begin? The scriptures are a real, sound, true beginning, and in the time to come, if it ever please God to realise to our descendants this great vision, people will, and must, point back to the Bible Society as having caught the first rays of that Day-star." No other book has proved such a basis of union as the Bible proved in the nineteenth century.

The Report of Commission VIII which collected information as to "Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity" for the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of June, 1910, says‡: "There is no sphere of missionary work in which the value of co-operation has been tested and appreciated more than in the

* *History of the B. and F. Bible Society*, by J. Owen, vol. i, p. 44.

† *Christian Morals*, vol. ii, p. 27.

‡ Pp. 53, 56.

translation, publication and distribution of the Word of God; and not least amongst the fruits of this work must be reckoned the friendships which have been formed between men separated ecclesiastically and diverse in nationality, but called to work around the same translation board." And again*: "The Bible Societies have had a similar influence towards unity and joint action upon the Church at home. They are in many places the one agency which brings together practically all sections of the Church on a common platform."

The Bible Societies are, of course, only organisms through which the Bible itself, and (as the effect suggests) Someone behind it, exert this influence. One does not hear of a similar influence on Sunni and Shiah emanating from the Koran, or on Saivite and Vaishnavite from the Veda.

III. *Bible Translations.*

A third unique fact about the Bible, which the last century brought into marked prominence, is its suitability for being translated into every variety of language, and that without losing its captivating power over men. To quote again a few words from Green's *History of the English People*: "No version could transfer to another tongue the peculiar charm of language which gave their value to the authors of Greece and Rome. But the tongue of the Hebrews, the idiom of Hellenistic Greek, lent themselves with a curious felicity to the purposes of translation. As a mere literary monument, the English version of the Bible remains the noblest example of the English tongue."†

When the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed, there was a notion in some quarters that a translation of the Scriptures into Chinese was, from the nature of that language, an impossibility.‡ This supposed impossibility has vanished. Translations of the Bible, not only into Chinese, but even into poor and barbarous languages of all kinds, have already appeared and are in use. Darwin calls the people of Tierra del Fuego "miserable and degraded savages," and their speech "scarcely deserving to be called articulate."§ But the Bible Society has printed two Gospels and the Acts in this Yahgan tongue as they were translated by the late Rev. Thos. Bridges,

* P. 126.

† P. 448.

‡ *History of the B. and F. Bible Society*, by W. Canton, vol. i, p. 299.

§ *Ib.*, pp. 135, 136.

and expressed by him in a somewhat augmented and specialized form of the Roman alphabet.

At a meeting in Oxford, a quarter of a century ago (November 3rd, 1885), the late Sir Monier Monier-Williams, the Professor of Sanskrit, mentioned the Scriptures in 160 languages, which he had seen displayed at an Exhibition in Calcutta, and added: "What must have been the feeling of the proud Hindu and Muhammadan in beholding this strange sight? How vast the difference of their own ideas in regard to their own sacred books! To translate the Veda or the Kuran into other languages they consider simple desecration. It is the sound and intonation of the sacred Sanskrit and of the sacred Arabic which is of primary importance and primary efficacy; the sense is merely secondary. Millions and millions who know nothing of Sanskrit are obliged to hear and repeat the Veda in Sanskrit, and millions who are wholly ignorant of Arabic are obliged to hear and repeat the Kuran in Arabic. Think of what would happen, if no Christian in any part of the world were allowed to hear, read, or repeat his Bible except in Hebrew or Greek!"*

When the nineteenth century commenced, translators in successive generations had provided versions of Holy Scripture in some fifty languages. But it was only a portion of these that was available for practical use through the good offices of certain presses or Societies. By the close of the century, without counting some defunct or no longer needful translations, the late Rev. J. Gordon Watt tabulated 111 languages with a version of the whole canonical Bible, 91 others with a version of the New Testament, and 204 more with a version of at least one book of the Bible in them.† The numbers now grow year by year. And as in the early centuries of the Christian Church, the unique importance of the Scriptures attracted to them many skilful translators, and led to the invention of alphabets to enable their translations to be set down in writing, so in the last century unsparing efforts and large sums of money have been spent in improving earlier versions, that students of the Bible might have access to the most reliable text, and the most exact rendering of it. What the revisers of the English Bible did in one case, many a company of scholars has been doing again and again at the cost of the Bible Societies

* *The Holy Bible and the Sacred Books of the East*, p. 33.

† *Four Hundred Tongues*, by J. Gordon Watt, M.A., p. 11.

in versions all over the world. The one Book that can attract to itself such service is unquestionably different from the rest.

IV. *World-wide demand for this Jewish miscellany.*

We pass on to a fourth fact respecting the Bible which became more conspicuous in the nineteenth century than ever before. People all the world over, in ever-increasing numbers, have been asking for and reading the Holy Scriptures, as they have never agreed in asking for and reading any other book. A little consideration will show how remarkable a fact this is.

A few years back the Rev. Dr. Horton, of Hampstead, published a small volume entitled *The Bible, a Missionary Book*. His aim in it was to show that the Bible from first to last had the whole world in view, and was intended to be the great means for bringing *all* men to "the full, clear knowledge of God."*

And yet the writers of the sixty-six documents which make up this cosmopolitan volume were all (with the possible exception of St. Luke) members by birth of that nation which has kept itself more persistently aloof from the other families of mankind than any other nation in the world has done.† They were all Jews. One never hears of Jews seeking the spiritual good of other nations by translating and circulating among them the divine oracles of which they prided themselves on being the sole possessors. And yet these Jewish writings take account of the whole human family. All men are viewed as coming within the regard and the purposes of one loving God. This feature is patent throughout in Law and History, in Poetry and Prophecy. The first book in the Old Testament records a promise made in universal terms to Abraham, the founder of the Jewish nation, thus:—"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."‡ The first book in the New Testament gives us one of the last sayings which Jesus Christ, a Jew by birth, spoke to Jewish hearers, in these words:—"Go ye and make disciples of all the nations."§

Whence came this breadth of view in so many Jewish authors, differing in character and gifts, rank and circumstances, and living centuries apart? Was it spontaneous in writer after writer, and age after age? In any case, is not this universal outlook wonderfully in harmony with the ever-growing demand for this old Jewish miscellany which is

* P. 30.

† Cf. Acts x, 28.

‡ Gen. xxii, 18.

§ St. Matt. xxviii, 19, R. V.

manifest in all the world? "The circulation of a hundred thousand copies of a popular novel is considered phenomenal."* But in a year the British and Foreign Bible Society by itself can now put into circulation, and that mainly by sales, over six million copies of the Bible or parts thereof. In a century its issues of Scripture exceeded one hundred and eighty-six and a half million copies in three hundred and seventy-eight languages and dialects. Where has there been any parallel to this in respect of any other writings in the world's history?

V. *The witness hence arising as to its truthfulness respecting Christ.*

A fifth noticeable fact is being built up by the multiplying translations and an ever-increasing circulation. It is a witness to the truth of the Bible's claim that Jesus of Nazareth was not a mere Galilean peasant. The Gospels of St. Matthew,† St. Mark,‡ and St. John,§ with some variety of detail, tell the story of Mary of Bethany, who, a few nights before the crucifixion, anointed the body of Jesus with costly ointment. In recognition of her loving sympathy, He uttered the prediction which St. Mark gives us thus:—"Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Nearly 1900 years have since gone by, and this prediction is being fulfilled to the letter more and more widely every year through the circulation of the Scriptures. For instance, out of the 424 languages in which translations of more or less of the Bible have been issued by the British and Foreign Bible Society only in about the odd twenty-four does there not as yet exist one at least of the three Gospels that tell us of Mary's act. Could the author of that promise to her be only a Man? Can the ancient writings that report it be ordinary story-books?

VI. *Self-sacrifice for the Book.*

The nineteenth century furnished very many fresh examples of self-sacrificing devotion to the Bible. A single Bible Society—the British and Foreign—received within that century thirteen millions sterling from lovers of that Book. A large

* *The Witness of the Bible Society*, by the Rev. J. H. Ritson, p. 7.

† Chap. xxvi, 6-13.

‡ Chap. xiv, 3-9.

§ Chap. xii, 1-8.

proportion of this money came in small contributions from those who had little to spare out of their earnings. In some cases the donors were only removed a few steps from heathenism, and even from cannibalism.

“Three hundred miles south of Samoa, green against the blue waters shows the wooded crest of Niué. ‘Savage Island’ it was named by Captain Cook, who found it a hornet’s nest of unapproachable barbarians. With a cheery ‘farewell,’ and a prayer for divine protection, Paulo, the Samoan, and his wife were put ashore in October, 1849. Strangely enough they are not murdered straightway. . . . The fierce men with long wild hair and trappings of many-coloured feathers are held in check by a mysterious fetish—a book which the Samoans carry about with them—to which they speak, which talks to them. At length two noted braves are sent to slay the strangers. They steal up to the palm-thatched house. They see Paulo sitting quietly reading his book. They wait awhile. He still sits reading with a peaceful face; and a great fear and trembling fall upon them; they are powerless. Again they wait; it cannot be done; they speak to him and again return home. The man of the Book prevails.”*

Forty-two years later (1891) at the Mansion House in London, the Rev. W. G. Lawes, the veteran missionary of Niué and New Guinea, reminded his hearers (including the Lord Mayor, the Duke of Connaught, and Dr. Benson, Archbishop of Canterbury) how the 5,000 inhabitants of that very “Savage Island” had sent the Bible Society £1,500 to repay it for Bibles provided for them in their own tongue.†

But gifts of money are not the only form in which the Bible has been served by self-sacrifice such as no other book has been able to command. Twenty-five years ago there was not a Christian among the thirteen millions of Koreans. A year or so ago there were about a hundred thousand baptized Church members. They are very poor, but they are intensely earnest in prayer, in the study of the Scriptures, and in personal labour to disseminate them among their heathen neighbours. During the winter of 1909–10 they purchased from the Bible Society for this purpose 600,000 copies of St. Mark’s Gospel at $\frac{1}{4}d.$ a copy, and they volunteered to leave their homes and visit heathen villages with the books at their own charges, each giving up a definite number of working days for this purpose. At one

* *History of the B. and F. Bible Society*, by W. Canton, vol. iv, pp. 12, 13.

† *Ib.*, p. 198.

gathering, 159 men pledged themselves to give 2,721 days in the aggregate to such work.

How unsparing of labour in trying climates have translators of the Scriptures been! What toil, and risks, and sufferings, sometimes even unto death, do not the Bible-colporteurs undergo with the sole object of placing the Bible within reach of their fellow-men, and inducing them to buy and read its message!

A colporteur in Egypt was advised by a school teacher not to go into a certain part of a village. "Why?" he asked. "Because they will beat you." "I am going there immediately," he replied. He went and was quickly surrounded by a crowd of Moslems. "Why do you come among us, the Faithful?" they asked. "I come," he said, "that you may buy and read these books, and become Christians." "Are you not afraid to speak such words to us?" "No," he said, "not even if you should seek to kill me." "Verily yours is a true religion," they said: "God will give you no small reward for being willing to labour, and to be insulted, and even to die for your faith: come and dine with us." "No," he said, "I must go round the village." In that village he sold 55 books of Scripture!*

Among all the valuable treasures of the library in the Bible House, there are none more touching and sacred than the books enshrined there which bear silent witness to lives surrendered from devotion to the Book that reveals Christ.

VII. *The witness from archaeological, etc., researches.*

The nineteenth century, like some of its predecessors, besides friends, produced some active, able, and even bitter opponents of the Bible. Their lines of attack were varied. On physical and metaphysical—on historical and linguistic—on moral and theological grounds, in turn, any divine element in the Bible was denied. Grouping them under the general title of "destructive critics," it may suffice to sample these adversaries by such names as Strauss (1835) and Bauer (1845) in Germany; Rénan (1863) in France; Theodore Parker (1842) and Colonel Ingersoll (1879) in America; and among others in England, F. W. Newman (1850), some of the writers in *Essays and Reviews* (1860), Mr. Charles Bradlaugh (1862), Bishop Colenso, with his arithmetical puzzles (1862), and the author of *Supernatural Religion* (1874). They showed that the unqualified claims sometimes advanced for the inerrancy of the letter of

* Rev. W. Fisher in *The Churchman*, Sept. 1909, p. 707.

Scripture as it has come down to us were mistaken and untenable. They failed to show that we have not in the Bible such a revelation of God in Christ as rightly draws men to Him.

Moreover, as old impeachments were revived, or new doubts were suggested, a counter-process was in progress which has resulted in many fresh vindications of the Bible's accuracy. From the long-buried inscriptions and clay letter-books of Nineveh and Babylon—from the ancient tombs, and dry rubbish-heaps of Egypt—from excavations in the Holy Land—from old coins and fragments of broken pottery, and in other ways, relics of past ages have been unearthed which have confirmed the correctness of Bible statements. Sceptical critics have been put to discomfiture by excavators and archaeologists. The century has been made memorable by such discoveries as those of the Rosetta Stone (1799; ceded by France to England, 1801), the Moabite Stone (1870), the Tel-el-Amarna cuneiform tablets (1887), and the engraved code of Khammu-rabi (Amraphel). The debatable region in which our imperfect knowledge of facts left room for plausible subjective theories adverse to the Old Testament, has been sensibly curtailed. And as for the New Testament, researches like those of Sir W. M. Ramsay in topography, and those of Professor Deissmann in the Philology of the Greek Bible, suggest the confident expectation that, as our knowledge advances, we shall find that this later portion of the Book also rests on undeniable facts, and is no "cunningly devised fable."*

VIII. *Unique influence of the Bible on individuals and peoples.*

Lastly, let us briefly call to mind some of the many facts that occurred in the last century which illustrate the unique influence of the Bible in changing the lives and characters of individuals, and nations. Striking instances of the first might easily be adduced from our English homeland. The work of foreign Christian Missions, which so marked the century, would furnish many examples of both.

Often the study of the Bible with a view to refuting its teaching has issued in changing an opponent into a friend of the Book. To quote but one example.

In his autobiography the late learned and Reverend Dr. Imad-ud-din tells us how, among other acts of worship in his earnest search after union with God, he used to spend whole nights in reading the Koran. At length, hearing that his old

* II Peter i, 16.

friend, Moulvie Safdar Ali, had abjured Islam and been baptized, with the purpose of winning him back to it, Imad-ud-din obtained the Christian Scriptures and began to read St. Matthew's Gospel. By the time he had finished the seventh chapter, a deep conviction of the truth entered his soul. He continued his study for a year, and then gave up everything to follow Christ.*

Often, again, a conviction of the truth of Holy Scripture has arisen in the hearts of heathen or Muhammadans while they were engaged in linguistically assisting its translators. Of this, too, a single example must suffice.

In the year 1813, the Russian Bible Society was making a translation of the New Testament into Kalmuc. It was hoped that this would also serve for another Mongolian tribe, the Buriats who live in the south-east of Lake Baikal in Siberia. Hence Buddhist Buriats remitted 12,000 roubles (£1,200) to St. Petersburg in subscriptions towards the cost of the books they hoped to obtain. In the end it was found that the differences between the two dialects and scripts made a distinct version and character for each tribe essential. Prince Galitzin asked the Governor of Irkutsk to send him two learned Buriats to assist in preparing the book for their tribe. With the consent of their own Prince and Lama two Buriat nobles proceeded to St. Petersburg and engaged in the translation. As a result, in 1818 they wrote to their Prince that they felt the Bible was "truth which may be relied upon," "the pearl of a devout heart." "We can no longer endure the want of it," they said: "We must abide by this doctrine."†

Space and time are almost gone. But surely the cumulative evidence of these eight varieties of fact out of those which the last century made specially prominent ought to reassure any whose confidence in the Bible as a trustworthy revelation from God may have been shaken by "criticism"? To quote one who was himself to some extent a "critic," the late Rev. Dr. W. Robertson Smith wrote the following:—"To thoughtful minds it has always been a matter of supreme interest to realise what proof of the truth and sufficiency of the Christian religion can be adduced apart from the internal impress of genuineness which it produces on the believing mind."‡

* *History of the Church Missionary Society*, by Dr. Stock. Vol. ii, pp. 561-3.

† *Fifteenth Report of the B. and F. Bible Society*. Appendix, pp. 187, 188.

‡ *Prophets of Israel*, pp. 14, 15.

One who took a leading part in the grand World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh last year writes that the Bible had no place among the topics discussed at the Conference. "There was no need for that. Those present had no fear that hostile criticism could dethrone it." "Its words," he says, "never sounded so tender—so majestic—as when they were slowly and solemnly read in the intervals of prayer. Two thousand men and women bowed themselves from day to day in silent intercession. When the intense stillness was broken by words from the Old Book—calling to penitence—assuring of mercy—telling of love—arming for conflict—inspiring for service, it was felt in each heart that in the Bible 'men spake from GOD.'"

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN said he was speaking for everyone present in thanking Mr. Sharp for his most excellent paper. He thought the paper should be circulated as widely as possible and asked the Secretary what it would cost?

The SECRETARY said he was sure copies could be sold at 3*d.* each. (Reduced afterwards to 2*d.* each.)

Lord BLYTHSWOOD offered to give £5 for this purpose. This was thankfully acknowledged and several orders were handed in.

The CHAIRMAN resumed: This is not a Bible Society meeting, but we wish to take a scientific view of the wonderful phenomena of the Bible and to ascertain the secret of its influence. It was a specially suitable subject for this year when the Tercentenary of the Authorised Version was being celebrated. It had been said that the Book was defunct! Yet it was circulated to-day far more widely than any other book, at the rate of several million copies a year! What are the reasons of the Bible being so translateable? Because it is a record of deeds as well as words. God had shown Himself more by what He had done than by what He had said. The Bible was not a series of theological essays, which would have been far more difficult to translate and far more dull to read. The Book was a record of how He fulfilled His promises and how He revealed His nature in actual life. This was the secret of its

attractiveness and of its translateableness. It was easy to translate into any language that Christ lived and died for man, but not easy to translate the abstract and ethical characteristics of God. The book also was marvellously adapted to the needs of man. In Dr. Wallace's recent book, *The World of Life*, the secret of success and the prolongation of type were shown to be dependent upon adaptability. Adaptation was stamped upon the Bible. So Sir Oliver Lodge in his recent book on Religion and Science pleaded with scientific men to read the Scriptures with a childlike spirit, for they were true to the heart and life of man.

Bishop THORNTON thought the paper very valuable, and the argument for recognising a superhuman element in Scripture, drawn from phenomena in the last century in connection with its translation and circulation, exceedingly strong. It must not, however, be pressed unfairly. True, nothing is known of Societies for circulating the Koran : but whereas till the nineteenth century enthusiasm for the Bible seems to have been somewhat dormant among Christians, the self-sacrificing devotion of Moslems to their sacred book (even though untranslated), and their zeal in requiring its acceptance by subject peoples, had from the first been most extraordinary ; and it would be interesting to know the lecturer's explanation of it, as Divine Inspiration in this case could hardly be inferred.

And was it safe, in recording (very properly) the unifying influence of the Bible on different Protestant bodies, to taunt (in effect) Sunni and Shiah with the failure of their loyalty to the Koran to bring them together ? might they not ask whether the Bible had unified Romanist and Protestant ?

Again, is not the paper hard on the Jews ? On the request, it is said, of a Gentile Prince, who desired it for his public library, the Jews cordially promoted the production of the LXX, improved editions of which were issued later by Gentile proselytes such as Aquila and Theodotion, and others. The proselytising zeal of the Jew (albeit unsatisfactory in result) is noticed in the Gospels ; and the number of Gentile proselytes is believed to have been very large ; while, presumably, the means of recruiting them must have been their introduction to the Law and the Prophets. That the LXX was widely known to Gentile readers is asserted by Christian fathers, seems confirmed by allusions in apostolic letters to Gentile

Churches, and doubtless much facilitated the progress of the Gospel. In view of the above facts, while it is certain our cosmopolitan Bible could never have been produced by Jewish writers save through Divine overruling, it is, perhaps unnecessarily harsh to say "One never hears of Jews seeking the spiritual good of other nations by translating and circulating among them the Divine Oracles."

The argument for recognising a transcendent, Divine power pervading Scripture seems emphasised by the fact, that its scientific accuracy and literary perfection, as a human work, cannot possibly account for its unique influence. It has its deficiencies in these respects. The paper rightly admits that "the unjustified claims sometimes advanced for the inerrancy of the letter of Scripture as it has come down to us" are "mistaken and untenable." A thoroughly human book, it is inexplicable without the assumption of a Divine Inspiration; just as our Blessed Lord was truly man, but none the less God's Son.

(The speaker had not time to develop this, and guard it from misinterpretation, and he was utterly misconceived by some present, as doubting the Incarnation, or the Special Inspiration of the Bible, doctrines which, as those who know him are aware, he has strenuously upheld for fifty years.)

Mr. JOHN SCHWARTZ did not agree with some points in the paper, and considered that the Bible was not all on one level as regards profitableness, and that the morality of some portions was positively injurious.

Mr. EVANS said: I desire to thank the lecturer most warmly for his excellent paper. Recent discoveries made in Assyria, Babylon and Egypt have again and again proved the truth of the historical statements of the Bible. That Abram really came from Babylon, is clearly proved from records in the British Museum, though at one period this was denied. In fact much criticism and suspicion are now withdrawn in view of the proof of the historical truthfulness of the Book; as for instance the Siloam Pool inscription, a cast of which is in the British Museum, which proves the statement that Hezekiah made a pool and a conduit for bringing the water into the city, hidden from the invader, and the further fact that the identity of so many of the kings of the Old Testament has been clearly established by inscriptions now in the British Museum. A previous speaker has referred to what he considers the immorality of parts of

the Old Testament, but in my judgment it stamps and condemns every form of immorality, only referring to it for that purpose. Further, these very books were admired and quoted by Our Lord. On the question of the lack of unity among Christians, where this is the case it is in spite of the Book, not because of it. If the Bible principles were followed there would, indeed, be "peace on earth," labour troubles and every ill would be removed; it is *our* fault, not that of the Author of the Book. Sir William Ramsay says that the more he knows of the Bible lands and times by minute study, the more confident he is that it is the Book of Books and is God's message to men.

The Rev. H. V. HEBERT said: A visitor at the meeting remarked upon the term *Word of God*, which Members speaking from opposite standpoints had alike employed as a synonym for the Bible. I urge in the interests of avoiding misconceptions and misrepresentations on an occasion like the present, which, from the nature of the Institute's primary objects demands accuracy and definiteness of thought and language, that due recognition be given to the following point, as an assertion which I contend cannot be gainsaid, that the expression noticed is nowhere used throughout inspired Scripture to designate the Scriptures collectively, but is a merely human and ecclesiastical phrase for the purpose, fit enough for every day use among persons entertaining in common an attitude of reverence toward Holy Writ, but no sound or legitimate basis for holding or imputing a certain range of high claims, such as would be attributable and warranted only if it occurred at all in course of the volume as its own designation of itself. Just to meet in advance any challenge of my main assertion, and supply an anticipated demand for my alternative to the denied equivalent of the form of speech in question, a single sample may be instanced, namely, that Apostolic pronouncement, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"; where I suggest the true sense and intention of the passage is, not the Bible, but the Gospel.*

* Further, and on the same grounds, I urge proper heed to these kindred expressions: *The word of the Lord*, *The word*, *His word*, *My word*, *Thy word*, and insist that they are not used anywhere in the Bible as terms synonymous with it, or for designation of so much of its constituent books as was extant at the time, but mean invariably the Gospel, God's great and standing and general message to mankind, whenever they do not allude to some particular Divine utterance.

Rev. JOHN TUCKWELL, M.R.A.S., said:—Although not agreeing with all that has been said, I have no desire to complain of the free expression of opinion. The attacks made upon Scripture during the past century on scientific grounds have shown up more clearly than ever the supernatural element in that volume. For instance, the discoveries of science have disclosed the fact that the Creation story in Genesis i. is so extraordinarily exact that it could not have been written without supernatural knowledge. If anyone doubts that statement I am quite prepared to discuss the question, as I have so often done before, at a fit time and place.

Or take the discoveries of Archæology. The last century witnessed the extensive promulgation of what is known as the *Yaweh Elohim Theory* in the supposed composition of the Pentateuch. But the cuneiform tablets containing the story of the Deluge have shown us that the supposed “J” and “E” strata in the Hebrew are found also in the Babylonian and in almost the same order, so that if we dissect the one into these strata we shall have to dissect the other in the same way. But if any man were to apply this theory to the Babylonian story his medical man would be called in to prescribe for him. Let me remind you also of Genesis xiv. Professor Nöldeke in 1869 declared that criticism had for ever disposed of the claim of that chapter to be historical. But the Chedorlaomer Tablets in the British Museum compel every fair-minded critic to restore to it its historic character.

Take again the Evolution Theory. The manner in which that theory has captivated the educated mind is phenomenal, and the Christian faith as represented by Holy Scripture has not escaped its application. But the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testaments are historic—they are records of facts, and a record of facts cannot be produced by an evolutionary process. It has been more and more conclusively proved to the modern mind that there was such a Person as Jesus Christ; that He was born, lived, taught, suffered, died, and rose again. No process of evolution could produce the record of these facts; or it would be fiction and not history. Moreover the Scriptures tell us how God can forgive sin and take the sinner back into fellowship with Himself. Now unless pantheism is true and the mind of God and that of man are one, then God must have communicated this plan of salvation to man, which

really means that it has been a matter of revelation and not of evolution. We have been told that the inspiration of prophets and apostles was similar to the intuitions of the man of genius in science or letters. Even if that were so, which I for one do not admit, yet when the genius of the astronomer Adams led to the discovery of the planet Neptune there was an objective reality which was revealed to him. Similarly, whatever may have been the state of the inspired man's faculties you cannot evade the fact that objective truths were revealed through them.

Thus, Mr. Chairman, I cannot but think that whatever the attacks made upon the Bible in the past or yet to be made upon it in the future, it will ultimately emerge from them all victorious and more assured to the unprejudiced mind than ever as "The word of God which liveth and abideth for ever."

The Rev. J. SHARP, in reply, said that in the few minutes remaining he would not attempt to deal with more than some of the smaller points that had been brought forward. Most of the rest had been disposed of by other speakers, and the general sense of the meeting. He thought that some of his critics had not sufficiently noticed the exact wording of the passages to which they referred.

As regards the Jews, he was not aware of any facts showing that they had translated and circulated their Scriptures to effect *the spiritual good of other nations*. The Septuagint version of the Pentateuch was really produced *for the Jews* in Egypt and Greek-speaking lands. The copy required by Ptolemy was only for his library. Such proselytes as they made were never allowed to consider themselves on the same footing as genuine Hebrews. The versions of Aquila and Theodotion were produced for the purpose of counteracting the appeals made by Christians to the Septuagint in support of the claims of Christ by giving a Greek rendering more closely in accord with strictly Jewish interpretations.

Had their veneration for the Koran been strong enough to draw Sunni and Shiah together in a united society for its multiplication and circulation? That was his point. And similarly with respect to Saivites and Vaishnavites in India. Up to the parting of the ways, through the unfortunate decree of the Council of Trent (1546) in the sixteenth century, the Church of Rome had like the other Churches of Christendom its share in circulating the Scriptures. The great Complutensian Polyglot of Cardinal Ximenes was issued

(1517) with the Pope's approval. And each Annual Report of the Bible Society contained instances of some Roman Catholics who were favourable to its work.

In illustration of his expression of "the inerrancy of the letter of Scripture as it had come down to us," Mr. Sharp gave an example of his meaning from 1 Sam. xiii, 1. The Revised Version prints that verse thus:—"Saul was [*thirty*] years old when he began to reign." In the margin we are told that "the Hebrew text has, *Saul was a year old*. The whole verse is omitted in the unrevised Septuagint, but in a later recension the number thirty is inserted." Such slips in numerals were more easily made by copyists in olden times when figures were denoted merely by letters of the alphabet with a dash attached; and the numeral indicated varied immensely according as the dash stood over or under the letter.

At the close of the meeting, and in conveying to Mr. Sharp the best thanks of the Institute for his most useful paper, the CHAIRMAN referred to the criticisms that had been made, and the pain felt by those who did not admit their force. The Institute allowed its members and associates a free hand, but the Bible would always vindicate itself. It is ours to study it, pray over it, and circulate this wonderful Book.

Professor LANGHORNE ORCHARD writes:—"Besides its marvellous history and the complete harmony subsisting between the Bible and modern science, what specially impresses me is the fact, brought before us on pp. 85 and 86 of this paper, that the Bible is "The Word of Life." It has power to transform the characters and lives of those whose hearts receive and carry out its holy teaching; it renovates the desires and purposes, and strengthens the will unto holiness of thought. There is the manifestation of spiritual vitality—all things become new.

Now science affirms emphatically that the source of life is always that which is itself living. Redi's great doctrine—"Omne vivum ex vivo"—is, says Huxley, victorious "all along the line." Thus science affirms that the Bible is living, that it is "The Word of Life." The testimony of science does not stop here. She associates herself with our late President, Sir G. G. Stokes, in the belief that the cause of all life is Spirit. Thus science tells us that the cause of Eternal life is the Eternal Spirit, that the Cause of the Bible, the one Author speaking through its many writers,

is The Spirit that quickeneth, The Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Dr. THIRTLE has furnished notes of remarks which he desired to make, but time did not permit. I suggest (he writes) that generalities against certain views of Holy Scripture are no contribution to the subject which has actually been brought before the meeting; while statements involving censure of the Church at large—either on points of doctrine or in respect of diligence or negligence in the discharge of her stewardship—are equally beside the mark. As to the insinuation that the Bible contains passages that are morally injurious, it may be classed among statements that are more easily made than sustained by proof. If the Book were really corrupting in any of its tendencies, how can the fact be explained that, throughout the generations, it has been eschewed by the impure, and its circulation has been advanced, as a prayerful duty, exclusively by consecrated followers of Christ?

Surely the literary activity of the last century has some bearing on the subject before us. If anyone tells me that there is a great demand for some book, I immediately conclude that the said demand expresses a judgment in favour of the book. If, again, it appears that many other works have been written in order to explain a book and enforce its teachings, then to me it is beyond dispute that the thought-provoking book is one of special significance and influence. Now the Bible is a book for which there has been a phenomenal demand, and moreover one that has occasioned the writing of a multitude of other works. These statements are beyond question, and they have a distinct bearing upon the subject in hand:—in other words, they bear witness to the Bible, and their testimony is such as cannot be disputed or set aside. I suggest, in sentence-form, some arguments that are easy of substantiation:—

(1) Every copy of the Scriptures in any language, as translated, printed, and published, presupposes a demand on the part of men and women who are ready to purchase and distribute the same. In thus accepting and passing on the Book, these men and women bear witness to their esteem for it, their love for it. Their witness finds expression in money and labour—sometimes the former, sometimes the latter, and again sometimes in both.

(2) Every act of the Church of Christ, which—doubtless in

varying senses—claims to be the custodian of Scripture, bears witness in some degree to the Book. Clergy, ministers, and teachers of all orders give to the Book a supreme place, or at least a place of its own; and in many ways they bear witness to the greatness of the Book, and their conviction as to its truth.

(3) Every edition of the Text of Scripture, in whole or in part, whether of the Hebrew Old Testament or the Greek New Testament—and the work of the last century along this line was of the utmost importance—is a constructive witness to the Book. These works—involving a tremendous amount of labour on the part of scholars, and a great outlay of money on the part of patrons and publishers—would never have been issued but for the certainty of a demand on the part of the Christian public. The demand is an expression of regard for the Book—testimony as to its exceptional character and great spiritual influence.

(4) Every volume produced during the century having for its object the explanation of the Book—grammars, lexicons, concordances, in the languages of the original text, or of the early versions that have a special bearing thereon—make deposition on this subject. In some cases such works represent the labour of many years—undertaken and carried through in order to meet the demand of Christian people for help in the study of the Book; and the meaning of all this also is found in the fact that a large and educated public bears witness to the Book by laying out money and applying the mind to study and research.

(5) What, moreover, is to be said of the output of elementary books prepared for schools, and manuals for colleges; of works of introduction and of systematic commentaries; of volumes of devotion and spiritual meditation, as these are issued in never-ending profusion from the printing press? We must admit that there is a marvellous demand for these books, and that demand expresses a testimony eloquent and persistent—a witness to the Book, its unique character, and its essential relation to the highest concerns of the life of man.

Thus the activities of the Bible Societies, in this country and in other lands—and we may also include the great University Presses, and many publishing houses—as they meet a need for copies of the Book, and stimulate in the hearts of people a desire to know its contents, not only prove the greatness of the Bible, but likewise

demonstrate the existence of that Christian witness which, in turn, promotes the ever extending circulation of the Book.

The Master said, "The Seed is the Word." There are hosts of men and women who believe in the Seed. Their acts show their belief; and their belief eventuates in a practical witness to the Bible. As followers of Christ they hold that the Book is ordained of God to perform a certain spiritual service; and that the world of men needs to come under the influence of the Book. They act out their conviction. Some, as colporteurs, go on daily rounds, in the home-land or abroad; others, as collectors of funds, do their part in another way. As combined, these activities express, in organised form, the witness which is registered in the reports of Bible Societies and missionary agencies. The witness in this case is direct and not indirect; it is of those who know, as distinguished from those who are ignorant and unappreciative of the message of the Bible. And in speaking of this witness I would not for a moment controvert the contention that witness is also borne along other lines, *e.g.*, from the results of archæological research, and the influence of the Book upon the minds of barbarian people, and so forth.

The growth of mission labour in various lands shows with how much greater emphasis the witness of the Christian community throughout the world is borne to-day than was the case a century ago. "The little one has become a thousand." Does anyone ask why all these exertions in the literary world should have for their subject the book which we know as the Holy Bible? The answer is, because in the last century, more than ever before, through mental conviction and spiritual experience, hosts of men and women found this Book to show the way of Salvation as revealed to a needy world in the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.