

# THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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## I.

### ORIGIN AND COMPOSITION OF GENESIS.

#### HISTORY OF THE CRITICISM TO THE RISE OF THE GRAFIAN HYPOTHESIS.

**T**HE first book of the Bible, perhaps equally with the last, deserves the title of Revelation. The revelation of the past alone furnishes the key to that of the future. Genesis is second to no book of the Old Testament in its announcement of great truths. These truths are confessedly fundamental; hence the book itself is fundamental. During the last century and a half critics have been busy with it, as with other books of the Bible. They have started concerning it many questions which perhaps will long await an answer. At the same time, continuous and brilliant discoveries in the sphere of Biblical science are quickening the hope that the fascinating problem of the origin of Genesis in history is approaching a solution.

The true point of view in investigating the subject should be the scientific. By this we do not mean that, for the time, we should lay aside our faith in Christ or denude ourselves of every prepossession. Clearly that would be impossible, were it desirable. We simply mean that we should make an honest, and, as far as the circumstances will permit, a thorough study of the facts involved, and let the facts determine the conclusions reached. This might seem, perhaps, an unnecessary statement or at least a matter best assumed and left unsaid. Under some conditions this would be true; but so many assumptions enter into the critic's work, and the result is such a variety of types of criticism, that it has become customary

## II.

### OBJECTIONS TO APOSTOLIC AUTHORSHIP OR SANCTION AS THE ULTIMATE TEST OF CANONICITY.

IN a former paper the present writer sought to show that apostolic origin or sanction is the *only* valid *test* of the canonicity of a writing.\* In his opening paragraph he called attention to the objections so confidently urged against this position, and intimated a purpose to examine them. Unforeseen and unavoidable delays have prevented the execution of that purpose until the present time.

#### PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.

Before considering particular objections, it will be proper to ask the reader's attention to some propositions, the relevancy and importance of which will be seen as soon as stated, and will become more and more manifest as the discussion proceeds.

I. It will be found that most, if not all, the objections urged grow out of a wrong conception and definition of the term Canon. For instance, if we define the Canon as "a list or catalogue setting forth what books are inspired,"† it will be comparatively easy to fall into the Romish error that ecclesiastical sanction is the ultimate test of canonicity. For, if there be a body authorized to set forth a list or catalogue of inspired books, then there arise two questions only: Where is the body possessed of this authority? and, What books does it include in its list? The inquirer might not find it easy to obtain an answer to the first question. That answered, however, his difficulties would be at an end. The same remark applies, if we adopt the definition of Dr. Gladden. He says: "This word (*i. e.*, Canon) as used in this connection means simply an authoritative list or catalogue. The Canon of the Bible is the determined and official table of contents."‡ If so, we have only to find the party or the Church which has the authority to draw up such a catalogue,

\* *Vide* THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW, April, 1892, p. 246.

† Bishop Lynch: *vide* Thornwell's *Collected Writings*, Vol. iii, p. 754.

‡ *Who Wrote the Bible?* p. 298.

and ascertain what books have received its endorsement, and our quest is over. Again, if by Canon we mean writings enjoying an ecclesiastical standing because "admitted by the rule," meaning by the word "rule" "the abstract or ideal standard embodied only in the life and action of the Church,"\* then we have only to ascertain the *consensus ecclesiæ* in order to determine the Canon. And so, if it be true that "classical and canonical from the historical standpoint are substantially of the same import,"† or in other words that the Canon is simply a collection of writings which are "the best and most trustworthy among current writings of a similar character,"‡ the test of canonicity must be sought in the taste and critical discernment of the individual, or in the general consensus of taste and critical judgment. We cannot pause now for any detailed criticism of these definitions. To us they seem open to very many. Suffice it, for the present, to say that all of them without exception omit the essential idea of the term Canon. That word as it stands related to the core of this controversy means, and can only mean, *a divinely given written rule of faith and practice*. To deny the existence of such a rule is to write ourselves Deists at once; admit its existence, and sooner or later, every discussion in regard to the Canon must grapple with this question: What writings constitute the divinely given rule of faith and life? For, if there be such writings, then whether they have been listed or not, whether their names have been included in the "determined and official table of contents" of any Bible or not, whether they are esteemed by a nice critical taste the best of their kind or not, in a word whatever view men may be pleased to take of them, if there be such writings, they do and from the nature of the case must constitute a Canon, or rule of faith and manners. Not only so, but no other writings, even though enjoying the singular eminence of being listed, or of being reckoned a part of the "determined and official table of contents" of somebody's Bible, or the, if possible, more eminent distinction of having secured the approval of "Modern Criticism" as the best of their kind, are in the least entitled to our reverence as a part of the Canon. Inspiration may be a *sine qua non* to canonicity; but *authoritativeness grounded in divine enactment* is its very essence. Any definition of the word Canon which wholly omits this idea is, for the present discussion at any rate, worthless. And any definition which obscures it is, so far, worse than worthless; it is misleading. If this be true, and we do not see how any one can deny its truth, then every one of the above cited definitions stands con-

\* Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, Art. "Canon."

† *Gospel Criticism and Historical Christianity*, by Orello Cone, D.D., p. 30.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

demned. And, we say, again, that the vice in the definitions will go far to explain the vices in the theories based upon them.

II. The reader's attention is now asked to a second general consideration of great importance. It is this. Let everything be said that can be said against the historical test, and after all it will be found that, in the last analysis, *it is either this test, or none.* A test to be a test must meet two conditions. It must give *certain results*: and it must, no matter by whom applied, yield *uniform results*. A proposed test failing in either of these respects is proved worthless. This unquestionably would be our judgment in reference to litmus paper as a test for acids. If, when applied to some acids, it turned red, but, when applied to others, it remained blue; or if, when applied by certain persons to a given liquid, it turned red, but when applied by others to identically the same liquid it remained blue or turned yellow; its value as a test for acids would be gone. So of any other so-called test. Given the conditions which admit of its application, then if it fails to yield certain and uniform results it is proven a fraud. So of every proposed test of canonicity. Any so-called test which, when fairly applied to a writing, leaves the person applying it in doubt as to whether said writing is or is not a divinely given authoritative rule of faith and life; any so-called test which, when applied to the same writing by different persons, gives different results; any such so-called test as this, we say, is manifestly worthless. Now our contention is that the historical test will meet both these conditions, and that none of the other tests that have been proposed will meet them. Let us see. We will consider first the pretensions of the tests that have been put forward as rivals of the historical test.

Dr. Gladden, writing recently on this subject, has said, "We have seen . . . that no supernatural methods have been used to determine the canonicity of these several books; but that the enlightened reason of the Church has been the arbiter of the whole matter."\* We cannot now pause to inquire whether Dr. Gladden, in his zeal to give a simple solution of a difficult matter, has not dropped into one that verges perilously near to being simply silly. He does not inform us who constitute "the Church" of which he speaks. He seems to take it for granted that it pertains to "the Church," if not to formulate a rule, at least to determine authoritatively for her members what constitutes the divinely given rule of their faith and conduct. His position is essentially Romish in one respect, and worse than that of Rome in another. He makes ecclesiastical sanction the test of canonicity, but removes from that sanction the safeguard which the Papist seeks to throw around it, viz., infallibility. Dr. Gladden and the Romanist agree

\* *Who Wrote the Bible?* p. 322.



that the Church gives us our Bible. They disagree in that the Romanist attaches a definite meaning to the word "Church," while Dr. Gladden does not; and, further, in that the Romanist declares the Church to be under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit, while Dr. Gladden regards her as merely under that of "enlightened reason." If it were a matter solely of personal taste, one might see obvious reasons in favor of the view of Rome. Tempting as this comparison is, however, we must not pursue it further. Our present purpose leads us rather to concern ourselves with the intrinsic nature and merits of Dr. Gladden's own test. It will be observed that he finds his test in the sanction or approval of "the enlightened reason of the Church." The whole drift of his discussion justifies the statement that the process by which the enlightened reason of the Church reaches her decision is something like this: Asserting her sovereignty while in the very act of exposing her impotence, she gathers before her certain writings which are competing for the position of being her guides in matters of faith and practice, and looking into their respective claims and merits as closely and as fairly as she can, she decides to accept certain of them and to reject certain others; having reached her decision, it only remains for her to affix the seal of her sovereign approval to the preferred writings and promulgate her decree to her members. Now plausible as this process is, and we admit that in some respects it is exceedingly plausible, the fact remains that during it all the "enlightened reason of the Church" is not in any proper sense seeking for a divinely given rule, but rather for material out of which she may frame a rule for herself. This is evident from the fact that she is declared to be "arbiter," that is sovereign, in the whole matter. It is further evident because, from what Dr. Gladden says elsewhere, it appears that even after the enlightened reason has admitted a particular book into her Canon, it is still for her to say how far she will regard it as authoritative, and that she does not accord the same authority to any two of them. There can be no doubt about this, for here is what he himself says: "But this discussion has made one or two things plain to the dullest apprehension. The first is that the books of the Bible are not all of equal rank and sacredness. If there is one truth which all the ages, with all their voices, join to declare, it is that the Bible is made up of many different books with very different degrees of sacredness and authority."\* The dullest apprehension, then, must see that we have interpreted Dr. Gladden as he designed and desired himself to be interpreted.

Upon his position, as above indicated, we submit the following strictures. (1) The *approval* of "the enlightened reason," whether

\* *Who Wrote the Bible?* p. 324.

of the Church or of the individual, has nothing whatever to do with a writing's being or not being a divinely given rule of faith and conduct. The question is not, Has this writing received the approval of the so-called enlightened reason? but, Was it set forth by God to be a rule? (2) If by "the enlightened reason of the Church" Dr. Gladden means some mysterious principle of intelligence inherent in the Church as a body corporate, and abiding the same from age to age of her history, his language is transcendental to the extent of conveying no idea whatever to an ordinary mind. Such "reason" we are constrained to regard as a mere literary and logical fiction. The same will be true, if by this imposing phrase he means some mysterious principle of intelligence in the Church, or in any branch of the Church at any period of her history. Indeed it matters little what idea Dr. Gladden was striving to convey by this sonorous phrase; for it is notorious that those who are most agreed in finding their test in this vague and indefinable nonentity which they call "the enlightened reason" are frequently least agreed as to what is the Canon given by their oracle. (3) But it is not necessary for us to tarry longer upon Dr. Gladden's test. He himself has virtually condemned it by confessing that it leads to no certain results. Here is what he says: "What certainty has the Protestant, then, that his Canon is the correct one? He has no absolute certainty. There is no such thing as absolute certainty with respect to historical religious truth."\* This is frank, but discouraging, we should think, for those who make the approval of "the enlightened reason" their ultimate test of Canonicity.

Take another principle recently proposed as a test, namely, "the common consent of the believing children of God."† Let us see whether this will yield any better or more certain results than that just examined. We think not. To begin with, it has a suspiciously *semper, ubique et ab omnibus* sound about it. But who will deny that, if the advocates of this test had come out frankly and said that those books are to be regarded as canonical, and only those, which have been received *semper, ubique et ab omnibus*, they would have proved themselves rather deserving of compassion than worthy of argument, mere conjurers up of the ghosts of theories long since dead and decayed? As a test this is worthless and incapable of application in proportion as it is high-sounding. Could more be said? But more and worse: they do not tell us who are "the believing children of God" of whom their test speaks. They do not tell us how we may ascertain for ourselves who they are. It might be

\* *Who Wrote the Bible?* p. 124.

† *Biblical Study*, p. 110.

hard, if not impossible, to arrive at "common consent" even upon this fundamental point. We venture to say that the very "believing children of God" themselves in their present imperfectly sanctified state would find it absolutely impossible to agree as to who are and who are not to be included in their number. Any test that could be devised to settle this essential point would certainly be regarded by some as too lax and by others as too rigid. But if we cannot ascertain even who are "the believing children of God," how can we arrive at their "common consent?" But further, one cannot refrain from asking himself, What has the consent or dissent of the children of God, any more than of the children of Satan, to do with determining a matter of fact? Can they by common consent make that to be a rule which God has not made a rule, or by common dissent make that not to be a rule which God has given as a rule? Facts remain whatever attitude the believing children of God, either individually or collectively, may assume towards them. It may be said that while "the common consent of the believing children of God" cannot make or unmake facts, it can enable us to determine what the facts are in such a matter as this. If so, we ask, Is this "common consent" infallible, absolutely so? What evidence can be produced from either Scripture or history for such an extravagance? "All Synods and Councils since the apostles' time, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred." Through what organ, then, will this infallible "common consent" utter itself? The Synods and Councils of the visible Church are all of them fallible, and those of the invisible Church have yet to assemble. Those who hold to this test sadly need a Pope. They pose as anti-traditionalists and Christian rationalists. They spurn the tangible traditions of historical bodies of professing Christians to throw themselves upon the unuttered and unutterable *on dit* of an undefined and indefinable, because invisible and mystical, body which they are pleased to invest with infallibility. But the end is not yet. Like the advocates of the "enlightened reason," those who advocate "the common consent of the believing children of God" as the ultimate test of canonicity are reduced to the miserable necessity of admitting the futility of their test. One of them says: "It is true that this evangelical critical test did not solve all questions. It left in doubt several writings which had been regarded as doubtful for centuries."\* But what shall be said of a test which, when fairly applied for centuries, fails to determine for us whether certain writings are or are not what they claim to be, namely, parts of the God-given rule of faith and duty? Nor does it help the matter to be told, "But uncertainty as to these does not

\* *Biblical Study*, p. 110.

weaken the authority of those that are recognized as divine.”\* For our own part, we are by no means sure of this. Whatever affects the trustworthiness of the test itself must equally affect the trustworthiness of the results which are based upon it. But how could the trustworthiness of a test be more completely invalidated than that of this test has been? Here are writings which have been in the hands of the believing children of God for centuries. They have been read and studied, all of their peculiarities have been noted, commented upon and discussed again and again by those of different nationalities, different temperaments and different schools of thought. Surely believers have had time and every facility for deciding whether these writings do or do not approve “themselves to their souls as the very word of God.” And yet we are told that after all these centuries “the believing children of God” are a “hung jury.” It would look as if it were time to discharge them and impanel another. In the case of these “several writings,” then, this test of “the common consent of the believing children of God” confessedly breaks down. But, let it be observed, its facilities for determining the claims of any of the other writings submitted to it were neither greater nor less than for determining the validity of the claims of those in the case of which it failed.

Another test proposed is the character and contents of the writing claiming a place in the Canon. This is all that Dr. Charteris can mean when he says: “The reformers believed Scripture to be higher than the Church. But on what could they rest their acceptance of the Canon of Scripture? How did they know these books to be the Holy Scriptures, the only and ultimate divine revelation? They answered that the authority of Scripture is self-evidencing, that the regenerate man needs no other evidence, and that only the regenerate can appreciate the evidence.”† We shall not now inquire whether Dr. Charteris correctly represents the Reformers, or is entitled to speak in this strain for certain of them only. We shall not inquire whether God has given the Scriptures as a rule to the regenerate only; or, if to the unregenerate as well, how the latter are to ascertain what constitutes the rule. We shall not inquire into the intrinsic probability of the test—whether it is likely that every regenerate man, taking one with another, is equally capable of deciding merely from the contents of a book whether or not God designed it to be a rule of faith and duty for him. We shall not inquire whether the judgment of any one regenerate man, or set of men, would be binding upon others, or only upon himself, or them-

\* *Biblical Study*, p. 110.

† *The New Test. Scriptures: Their Claims, History and Authority*. Croall Lectures, 1882. N. Y., 1883, p. 203, cited in *Biblical Study*, p. 110.



selves. We shall not inquire whether the question of regeneracy is to be settled by each one for himself, or by particular individuals for themselves and others, or by common consent. We shall not inquire whether, if in this case the maxim *quot homines tot sententiæ* should be found to hold, there would be as many rules as men, or a composite rule, or a combination rule, or a contradictory rule, or no rule at all. To raise such queries as these before such a test as this would be heartless, even if it were not needless. Fortunately it is needless. Dr. Charteris himself says: "It follows from this" (*i. e.*, the position outlined above), "that if he do not feel the evidence of their contents, any man may reject books claiming to be Holy Scripture."\* We must pass by certain aspects of what seems to us to be the monstrous proposition here laid down. It would seem to be self-evident that writings given by God to be a rule are, and for all time must continue to be, such irrespective of whether the evidence of their contents is felt or not. It is unproved, and likely to remain so, that the feelings of the regenerate are an indefectible standard of what is according to the will of God. If such were the case, there might be a question as to the need of a written revelation. The law of parsimony would seem to exclude it. But be all this as it may, all must admit that the position here taken by Dr. Charteris is logical, and follows necessarily from what he had said before. If so, that is all that it is necessary to note for present purposes. For there can be no more conclusive or convincing demonstration of the invalidity of this test than to show that it does not yield uniform and certain results. But it will be observed that this is exactly what Dr. Charteris himself anticipates. He recognizes, and history will justify him in so doing, that the very same book will from its contents evidence itself to one regenerate person "to be Holy Scripture," and to another regenerate person will from its contents evidence itself not "to be Holy Scripture." Here then the same test applied to identically the same material by two equally regenerate persons yields diametrically opposite and contradictory results. What of its value?

Let us glance next at what seems to be the doctrine of the Gallican Confession upon the matter in hand. Its language is, "We know these books to be canonical and the sure rule of our faith, not so much by the common accord and consent of the Church, as by the testimony and inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical books." † It is not our purpose to repeat here what we have had occasion to say in another place as to the manifold objections that may be urged against the "testimony and inward persuasion of the Holy

\* *Ibid.*, *ut supra*.

† Art. iv.

Spirit" as an ultimate test of Canonicity. We confine our attention for the present to the single point that this, like the other so-called tests already passed in review, turns out to be no test at all. We need not call attention to the fact that this test has been adduced by some as establishing, and by others as condemning, the claims set up for the writings of Joe Smith, and for the Apocrypha. We leave out of account at present the evidence thus furnished of the futility of this test, and of the rank abuse to which it is exposed in the hands of fanatics. It is all sufficient to call attention to the unquestioned and unquestionable fact that even in the hands of men of sobriety, men whose lives testify to the fact that they are under the guidance of the Spirit, this test yields no uniform results. Otherwise Luther could never have spoken as he did of the books of James and Esther; nor could Dr. Gladden have used the language recited above, which, whatever else may be said about it, is not the language of certainty, the only thing of which Dr. Gladden seems entirely sure being that we cannot be sure what books are properly entitled to a place in the Canon.

Now in contrast to all this we ask the attention of the reader to this obvious fact, viz., that whatever else may be said against the historical test, it cannot be said that when itself tested it turns out to be no test, that it fails to yield certain and uniform results. Given in any case that a particular writing has or has not proceeded from or been sanctioned by an apostle, and our test will always settle the question whether or not it is to be regarded as part of the divinely given rule of faith and life; and it will lead all who accept it to identically the same results. It may be said that there are and will continue to be differences of opinion as to the evidence for and against the apostolic origin or sanction of particular writings. True. But we ask attention to the fact that this objection lies not against the validity of the historical test, but solely against its availability. This objection is one with which we will undoubtedly have to reckon. But let not the reader forget that the question now before us, the only question now before us, is as to the validity, the exclusive validity, of the historical test. This being a point of vital importance, and yet one very easily overlooked and apt as the discussion proceeds to pass out of mind, we must be pardoned for dwelling upon it a little longer. Clearly then there are two closely related but perfectly distinct questions that may be raised in reference to a writing, viz.: What are the characteristics of this writing? and again, What is the religious or legal significance of the writing as possessed of these characteristics? Now it is upon the answer to the last of these questions that the validity of a claim to canonicity must ultimately turn. And it is with the last of the ques-

tions, it alone, that the historical test, or *any other test*, as such, has to do. Clearly, it cannot be the function of the historical test, or of any test, to collect the evidence as to the origin any more than the contents of a writing. Its sole function is to interpret the result, or rather the significance of what *is admitted to be the evidence* as to its origin, as that evidence bears upon the claim of the writing to be a rule. Just here all the other so-called tests failed, thus disclosing their inherent and incurable worthlessness. Presented with a writing—by common consent possessed of certain characteristics—and the simple question being, Have we in this writing a divinely given rule of faith and life?—to this question, even upon the basis of its admitted characteristics, the foregoing tests were unable to give either a certain or a uniform answer. But let it once be admitted that apostolic origin or sanction is the characteristic of a writing, and none of those who hold to the historical test will be found doubting or differing as to whether or not it is a divinely given rule. Now, in view of these facts, we may reasonably claim that, as the case now stands, the historical test is the only one fairly in the field, the only one that promises certain and uniform results. These it will give wherever the evidence in the case will enable us to apply it. The whole matter then resolves itself to this—it is either the historical test, or none. This fact must be borne constantly in mind as we proceed. It creates beforehand a well-nigh overwhelming presumption against the soundness of the objections we will be called to consider.

III. Another preliminary matter. It will be proper to remind the reader of the real and only issue before us in this discussion. We have not undertaken to vindicate the integrity of the Canon as at present constituted. That is unquestionably a most important inquiry. It is one, however, with which we are not at present either directly or indirectly engaged. This, that, or the other book, now regarded as entitled to a place in the Canon, may have no just claim to such distinction. It may be possible for a skillful objector to envelope the origin of this or that book in the most perplexing and painful uncertainty. This is to be regretted. And it will be our aim, in the proper place, to unveil the emptiness of this kind of critical skill. But we forewarn the reader against permitting any statements designed to beget doubts as to whether this or that particular book, at present in the Canon, can be traced to an apostle, to hide from his eyes the real issue. The question now before us is not, Is there evidence that this or that particular book at present in the Canon possesses the characteristics which alone can entitle it to our reverence and obedience as a part of the divinely given rule of faith and life? It is rather this: What is the characteristic in

which, in the last analysis, the authoritativeness of any and every book claiming to be a divinely given rule must ground itself? What is it, in other words, which alone can invest any writing with the unique authority of a divinely given rule? It may indeed be important to ascertain that we have not been deceived in reference to this or that book now regarded as part of the Canon. It is certainly, however, a matter of much more vital importance to be assured that the very idea of a Canon, the very foundation upon which the Canon as a whole, and every part of it worthy the name, rests, is not a delusion. Granted, for the moment only and only for the sake of argument, that we cannot vindicate the apostolic origin of such and such books. Our claim is that apart from the historical test it is impossible to vindicate the existence of any Canon whatever. Our logic is simple, but irrefutable. It is this. The writings supposed to constitute our Canon, or really constituting it, are one and all human productions. Hence they must have had human authors. But the authority of the writings must arise from the fact that their authors were themselves authorized by God to draw up a rule of faith and life for His Church. And finally the apostles are the only persons known to profane or sacred history as persons having a credible claim to have been authorized to draw up such a rule. No concern for the canonicity of this or that particular book should cause us to allow ourselves to be seduced away from a principle which affords us the only possibility of retaining any Canon at all.

Further, we must be permitted to remind the reader that our present concern is not with the question, How may I ground a rational conviction that a given writing possesses authority as a rule of faith and life? There are many valid answers to that question. Ours, however, is a different one. It is, In what does the authoritativeness of this writing claiming my obedience as a rule of faith and life ground itself? Does it ground itself in the fact that the contents of the writing approve themselves to my religious feelings? or to my enlightened reason? or to the enlightened reason of the Church? or in the fact that the writing itself has received the sanction of this or that ecclesiastical body? or in the fact that it is inspired? Or does it in the last analysis ground itself in the fact that the writing in question proceeded from, or was sanctioned by one authorized by God to draw up a rule for me? In a word, the question before us is this: Can any writing rightfully claim our obedience as a rule of belief and practice which cannot trace its origin to some veritable historical person, who can give us satisfactory evidence that he was authorized by God to draw up a rule for us? We hope that the reader will not permit the subtlety of any objection to expel this question from his mind. For sooner or later he will have to reckon



with it, if he is going to retain his faith in the historic origin of Christianity. For history that loses itself in anonymous or fictitious personages is mythical, and writings proceeding from such persons are myths. And herein lies the vital importance of this whole question of the test of canonicity.

OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

We will now proceed to take up and examine the principal objections that have been urged against apostolic origin or sanction as the ultimate test of canonicity. Some of them will be found simply to evince a lack of clear thinking upon the part of those who advance them. Others will turn out to be more formidable in appearance than in reality. It is confidently believed, however, that not one will be discovered that in the least impinges upon the validity of this test, or for that matter seriously reflects upon its practical availability.

I. It has been objected that to adopt the historical test involves a departure from the doctrine laid down upon this subject by the Reformers and Puritans. This need not detain us long. We feel a profound reverence for those who, under God, effected the deliverance of the Church from the bondage of Romish error. They were great thinkers. In reference to many points they showed beyond all question that they had the mind of Christ. To differ from them would always pain us, and cause us to look well to ourselves, lest we might be straying from the path of sound doctrine. Still, we have yet to learn that they claimed to be, or were anything more than fallible men. None of us feels called upon to swear in their words. If our doctrine here is a departure from the position laid down by them, it is simply one departure among many which the Church, in faithfulness to the truth, has felt herself called upon to make. Some of these departures have confessedly been for the better. For all that appears to the contrary, this may be among the number. Certainly Dr. F. L. Patton, speaking to this general issue, was right in saying: "It would not be strange, if in their opposition to the claims of the Church of Rome, they (*i. e.*, the Reformers) went to the opposite extreme and were in danger of falling into the errors of the mystics."\* It will be observed that Dr. Patton does not say that the Reformers did do this, nor do we. It is enough for present purposes to note that they were in danger of erring in the direction of mysticism. Hence their view upon this point must be received with caution. This objection, however, whether well taken or not, is not in itself of sufficient intrinsic importance to detain us longer. We pass therefore to another.

\* *Presbyterian Review*, iv, p. 346.

II. It is said that our position involves a departure from the teachings of the Westminster Confession of Faith. If we are to judge of the weight of this objection by the way in which those who urge it themselves treat the Confession of Faith, surely it cannot be of much force. And yet, notwithstanding the glaring inconsistency of the objectors, we are prepared to admit that their objection, if just, would not be without significance. Now, the reader who has not examined the Confession upon this particular point may be surprised to hear us say that there is not, as we believe, a single word in it which, when properly interpreted, bears upon this subject. Such, nevertheless, is the case. The Confession touches upon the source from which the Scriptures derive their authority as a rule of faith and life. Upon this point it says, and says truly: "The authority of Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God."\* There is no attempt made here to tell us how the claims of writings professing to be the Word of God are to be tested. It is not the *test*, but the *source* of canonicity, which is here passed upon. Rome claimed that the authority of Scriptures, if not derived directly from her, at least depends upon her endorsement or testimony in their behalf. This is the error which the Confession is here combating, and a serious error it is. Over against it the doctrine, manifestly true, is laid down, that the authority of Scripture is not derived from, or dependent upon the official imprimatur of any Church, Romish or other. Had the Confession said that the "testimony" (*i. e.*, the favorable official deliverance) of no Church is in itself a valid test of canonicity, that also would have been true, but just as little to the purpose of the objector as what is actually said. The case, however, would be wholly different had it been said: "No kind or amount of historical evidence coming down through ecclesiastical channels can furnish us with a valid test of canonicity." This it does not say. Nor is there anything to show that those who framed it entertained any such opinion. Further, having defined the source whence the authority of Scripture is derived, the Confession proceeds to indicate whence comes that practical conviction of its authority which insures obedience to it upon the part of man. In doing this they first affirm that while the sanction of the Church affixed to certain writings may secure for them our reverent esteem, and that while the contents of the writings may produce an intellectual conviction that they are the Word of God, "yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority

\* *Confession of Faith*, chap. i, § iv.

thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts." Here again we can cordially assent to what is said, though dissenting from the inferences based upon it. For the careful reader will observe that this statement bears exclusively upon the question, In what does our full persuasion and assurance of the authority of Scripture ground itself? It does not pretend to touch upon the question, In what attributes or characteristics of these as distinguished from other writings does their authoritativeness ground itself? But the test of canonicity is exclusively concerned with the latter question. The case stands thus. The ultimate ground of the authority of Scripture as a rule, when looked at simply in the abstract, will be found to be the divine enactment. The ground of its authority as a rule having a specific concrete form, such as it actually has, namely, that of a written instrument, and so the production of a human author, can only ground itself in the fact that its author, whoever he was, was authorized by God to draw up a rule in this form. The ultimate test in the case of any writing claiming such authority must be that it proceeds from one authorized by God to draw up a rule. The whole case as it stands related to the statement of the Confession now under consideration, becomes plain so soon as we ask: Does the Scripture or any particular book in it become a rule in virtue of the fact that the Holy Spirit testifies to its infallible truth and authority? Or does the Holy Spirit testify to its infallible truth and authority because it proceeded from one whom God authorized and qualified to draw such a rule? The objector affirms the former to be the teaching of the Confession. We affirm that, while not passing upon this precise point, the framers of the Confession must be regarded as holding the latter. The reader with the facts before him may judge between us. If there are other passages in the Confession which bear, or are supposed to bear, adversely upon the matter in hand, it will be time to consider them when they are produced. But evidently, as the case stands, we have nothing to fear from the charge of conflict with the Westminster Standards.

III. It is objected that our test is essentially Romish, in that it unduly exalts tradition, makes the Church the judge of Scripture, and in fact attributes to the Church the right of making the Bible. In this vein it has been said by a somewhat distinguished writer of recent years: "If canonicity be purely a historical question, then the Reformers and the Westminster Confession and the other Reformed creeds were in error when they made it purely a question of inspiration and of the internal divine authority of the Scriptures themselves. To abandon this position is to accept essentially the Roman Catholic position."\* The same writer, describing the

\* Dr. C. A. Briggs, in *Biblical Study*, p. 125.

way in which what he regards as the Reformation doctrine upon this subject was supplanted by what we are constrained to regard as the only sound doctrine, says: "But as the internal conflicts of Protestant Churches began to absorb more and more attention, and the polemic with Rome became less and less vigorous, the polemic against brethren more and more violent, the Reformed system was built by a series of scholastics over against Lutheranism, and Calvinistic orthodoxy over against Arminianism. . . . The authority of the Reformed faith and tradition assumed the place of a Roman faith and tradition, and the Biblical scholarship of Protestant Churches, cut off from the line of Roman tradition, worked its way along the line of Jewish Rabinnical tradition, etc."\* Once more we find this same writer quoting a passage from Reuss' *History of the Canon* for the purpose apparently of exhibiting the shocking consequences of accepting any purely historical test of canonicity. It reads: "Nothing was more foreign to the spirit of Luther and Calvin, and their illustrious fellow-laborers, nothing was more radically contrary to their principles, than to base the authority of the sacred Scriptures upon that of the Church and its tradition, etc."† Now the first and most natural feeling of the intelligent reader upon perusing this language is one of profound and pained surprise; for it displays a lack of discriminating thought such as is sometimes found and easily pardoned in a promising and ambitious Junior in one of our theological halls, but was hardly to have been expected in one who had passed that stage of his theological training; and least of all was it to have been expected or can it be pardoned in the writings of veteran and justly eminent scholars such as these. They cannot be charged with lack of information of a learned kind. We would be the last to charge them with a lack of candor. But they stand before the public convicted, and that, too, out of their own mouths, of such a deplorable confusion of thought, or of such anti-orthodox prejudice, as renders them incapable of appreciating, or unwilling to admit a distinction than which few are more obvious. Such being the case, not only is their conclusion upon this particular point invalidated, but their conclusions upon other kindred and connected points are brought under a just suspicion. Let us see whether this is stating the case too strongly.

The first count in their indictment of those who hold to the historical test is that their position is essentially Romish, in that they, like the Romanists, appeal to tradition. But had the eminent scholar from whom we have quoted, before framing this charge, stopped, even for a moment, to consider the several meanings of the

\* Dr. C. A. Briggs, in *Biblical Study*, p. 112.

† *Biblical Study*, p. 119.



word "tradition," in all probability he would not have framed it at all. He would hardly have been willing to save his credit for candor as a writer, at the sacrifice of his credit for clearness as a thinker. Such, however, is always the pitiable dilemma to which one is reduced who uses words with greater regard for their sound than for their sense. The distinguished scholar from whom it is our misfortune to differ, is far above the suspicion of being capable of disingenuousness. We most cheerfully, therefore, give him credit both here and elsewhere for an occasional incapacity to grasp the relation between the needs of his argument and the words which he employs. He knows as well as any one the difference between "tradition" as a more or less valuable, more or less reliable form of historical evidence, and "tradition" in the Romish sense of a source of authority in ecclesiastical matters coördinate with the Scriptures themselves. He knows that these two meanings of the word are as wide apart as is possible. He knows that August Böckh, "the greatest of the classical philologists of modern Germany," has no reference whatever to "tradition" in the Romish sense, when, writing of non-ecclesiastical literature, he says: "We should in the negative criticism be more circumspect than the ancients. We must always start with the tradition, and try whether the unsuspected, positive testimonies do not admit of being confirmed and completed by combinatory criticism."\* He knows, if he had given himself the trouble of a moment's thought, that those who hold to the historical test of canonicity appeal to tradition, where they appeal to it at all, in the same sense in which the German classical philologist does not hesitate to appeal to it to establish or refute the claims to genuineness of classical writings. This part of his charge, therefore, is not to be regarded as due either to a lack of knowledge or a lack of candor, but doubtless arose simply from a failure to perceive that it was essential to the validity of his argument that he should use the word "tradition" in the sense in which it is uniformly used by those whose position he is assailing.

As to the remaining part of his charge, we cannot express our views more clearly than by repeating what we said several years ago, when writing upon another phase of this same question. Commenting at that time upon the contrast between the position of those who maintain the historical test and that of Rome, we said:†

The two have recently been declared to be identical; but in reality they are wide apart as the poles. There is a sense in which both may be said to appeal to the testimony of the Church, though this language, which is ambiguous and

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\* *Encycl. und Meth. der phil. Wissensch.*, p. 239. Cited by Prof. C. A. Aiken, in *THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW*, October, 1892, p. 691.

† *Presbyterian Quarterly*, January, 1891, p. 374.

misleading, should be avoided. But how different is the nature of the appeal in the two cases. Romanists appeal to the Church in her organized and official capacity. Protestants appeal to the individuals who compose the Church, and appeal to them, not for their official *sanction*, but for *information* upon a simple question of fact. Romanists appeal to the Church as a judge whose decision is final. Protestants appeal to her members as credible witnesses. Romanists appeal to her for an authoritative decision upon a question which they are unable or indisposed to examine for themselves. Protestants appeal to her members for evidence, which they weigh as they would any other evidence. According to the Romish view, the Church collects the evidence, passes upon it, and declares her judgment in the premises, from which judgment there is no appeal. According to the Protestant view, the persons who compose the Church may collect the testimony and perpetuate it from generation to generation, but each individual may and should pass upon it for himself. To fail to see this distinction does not speak well for one's mental acumen. To deny its existence argues "invincible ignorance."

And distinguishing between historical evidence coming to us through ecclesiastical channels, and a consensus of opinion existing among ecclesiastical persons, or a consensus of official decisions proceeding from ecclesiastical courts or councils, we said :\*

Things so different should not be confounded. An opinion is one thing, evidence is another and quite a different thing. The former is the answer to the question, What do you *think*? The latter to the question, What do you *know*? When we ask for the opinion of another with a view to making that a rule of conduct for ourselves, we virtually hold our own judgment in abeyance and act upon that of another. When we ask for evidence, it is with a view to forming an intelligent and independent opinion for ourselves. To turn to ecclesiastical persons or councils for their opinion might look like we stood at their bar and recognized in them some right to impose their opinions upon us. But to collect the evidence furnished by ecclesiastical persons or councils is to seat ourselves upon the judgment seat and call them before our bar to be examined and cross-examined as witnesses. To be controlled by the opinions of ecclesiastical persons or councils, no matter how perfect the unanimity or how great the antiquity of such opinions, might squint towards a surrender of the right of private judgment; but to demand evidence is usually and properly regarded as an assertion of this valued right. I say again, then, that things so different as a mere *consensus of opinion* and *historical evidence* ought not to have been confounded. If one did not feel that the distinction between them was too important to have been intentionally obscured, he would be apt to say that it is too palpable to have been unintentionally obscured. However this may be, the fact is that it has been obscured.

IV. A graver charge than any of those yet considered is that the historical test fairly applied will play havoc with the present Canon of Scripture; that it will entirely exclude a number of books now holding a place in the Canon, and will throw the shadow of a dread uncertainty over many of the rest.

The case is stated thus in *Whither?* † " (1). Dr. A. A. Hodge says :  
' Christ and his apostles endorse as genuine and authentic the canon

\* *Presbyterian Quarterly*, January, 1891, p. 41.

† *Whither?*, p. 83.

of Jewish Scripture as it existed in their time. . . . The Jewish canon thus endorsed by Christ and his apostles is the same as that we now have.' Dr. Hodge rests the canonicity of the books of the Old Testament upon this question of fact. Biblical criticism \* answers it thus: 'Jesus gives His authority to the law, the prophets and the psalms (Luke xxiv. 44), which alone were used in the synagogue in His times; but the psalms only of the Hagiographa are mentioned. There are no sufficient reasons for concluding that by the psalms Jesus meant all the other books besides the law and the prophets. . . . The New Testament carefully abstains from using the writings disputed among the Jews. It does not use at all Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Ezra, Nehemiah; and only incidentally Ezekiel and Chronicles, in the same way as apocryphal books and pseudepigraphical are used.' Dr. Hodge's principle for determining the canon of the Old Testament would rule out several important writings. (2) Dr. A. A. Hodge states: 'We determine what books have a place in this canon or divine rule by an examination of the evidences which show that each of them, severally, was written by the inspired prophet or apostle whose name it bears, or, as in the case of the gospels of Mark and Luke, written under the superintendence and published by the authority of an apostle . . . .' But we cannot prove this for all the writings of the canon." "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. C. A. Briggs) then proceeds to give a list of the books at present holding a recognized place in the Canon whose canonicity will be, if not totally discredited, at least brought into serious doubt, by the application of the principle enunciated by Dr. Hodge. In it are included the Pentateuch, Daniel, Ecclesiastes, the anonymous books of the Old Testament, the four Gospels, the Apocalypse and the Pastoral Epistles. He then adds: "It is evident, if the elder and younger Hodge are correct in their theory of inspiration, that a very large portion of the Bible is in peril from the Higher Criticism." Another writer of even more recent date, referring to the historical test, says: "The test of canonicity here proposed is unfortunately formulated, as it comprises and tries to unite two very different tests. The first test is that of apostolic authorship, the second test is that of 'apostolic sanction' so-called. No one ques-

\* The reader should bear in mind that the answer here attributed to "Biblical criticism" is taken from *Biblical Study*, a book by Dr. C. A. Briggs. From this it appears that Dr. C. A. Briggs, writing in *Whither?* and assailing positions taken by Dr. A. A. Hodge, could desire no more crushing and unanswerable reply to Dr. Hodge than to meet his argument by the triumphant assertion: "But Dr. C. A. Briggs answers it thus." Was it to save appearances that the words "Biblical criticism" were substituted for the words "Dr. C. A. Briggs," or was it a modest attempt on the part of the writer of *Whither?* to give due recognition to the ability and authority of the writer of *Biblical Study?*

tions that apostolic authorship is a valid and complete passport to the Canon, but what proportion of the sixty-six sacred books did the apostles write? None of the Old Testament books, and not all of the New. So a second test has to be introduced, in order to protect these unapostolic writings in the Canon; they received the 'apostolic sanction,' says our author. But this is a very unsatisfactory characteristic. What constitutes 'apostolic sanction?' He does not explain it. It would be desirable to go through the list of Old Testament books and the unapostolic New Testament books and hear from him just how, in each case, the apostles had stood 'sponsor' for the book. But this element, upon which the value of the writer's article depends, is left indefinite and illusive, and the argument remains weak and profitless. Let it now be asked, What is in fact the test unapostolic writings, two-thirds of the Bible, were able to sustain, in virtue of which they gained admission to the Canon? "\* Prof. A. B. Bruce, in his recent work entitled *Apologetics*, takes substantially the same view, as does Dr. Charteris also, of the disastrous results that would follow the adoption of the historical test. But we need not detain the reader with further quotations. We do ask, however, that he will carefully note the precise nature of the issue here raised. It clearly relates to a matter of fact, and a most vital matter of fact. These objectors must mean, unless their language is wholly misleading, that there is not such evidence as would satisfy a competent and candid inquirer that the books at present in the Protestant Canon of the Old Testament received the sanction of the apostles, nor such evidence as would satisfy him that the four Gospels, Hebrews, the Pastoral Epistles and the Apocalypse proceeded from or were sanctioned by the apostles. Now we mean to face this issue as it bears upon the validity of the historical test, but we mean also that those who have raised it shall themselves face it as it bears upon the matter of the historical origin and foundations of the Christian system. For whether intentionally or unintentionally, so far as the result reached is concerned it matters not, they are engaged in an attempt to destroy these foundations. Before proceeding to the main issue, however, it will be proper and important to note the following

*Preliminary Points.*

1. The tone of exaggeration—the term is none too strong—which pervades the language quoted from "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. Briggs) and from the critic of *The Old and New Testament Student* is noticeable. Children who are blowing soap-bubbles have to be guarded against attempting to expand to too imposing dimensions

\* *The Old and New Testament Student*, June, 1892, p. 377.



those frail creations of breath and attenuated aqueous fluid, lest, perchance, they burst on their hands. It seems, however, that these writers have ignored the fact that something similar was entirely possible in their case. They have burst their bubble in making it. The objection which they evidently had in mind to urge against the historical test, with proper skill and due composure in manipulating it, might have been made plausible and not simply ludicrous. It really looks like tearing a passion to tatters to intimate that the historical test will exclude every anonymous book of the Old Testament from the Canon, simply because it is anonymous. To pronounce "apostolic sanction" an "uncertain characteristic," and to intimate that the apostles stood sponsor for none of the Old Testament writings, indicates—well let us simply say a lack of judicial calmness and impartiality, or else a tendency to universal skepticism. The reader is entitled to feel a certain measure of reassurance from the very palpable extravagance of the alarm. Nor will the inference hold that where there is so much dust there must be some fire.

2. Another curious and interesting feature of these extracts is the exceeding jealousy which they display for maintaining the Canon exactly as at present constituted. One is at a loss to understand whether their excessive zeal is due to the fact that these writers love the Canon as at present constituted more, or simply love the historical test less. Certainly, the school with which they affiliate deals with the contents of our present Canon with a very free, some would even say irreverent, hand. One would suppose that this school could, without reluctance, part with quite considerable portions of the Old Testament, at any rate. The conflicting duplicates of the Pentateuch, the unlucky forecasts of the Old Testament prophets, and the unhistorical narrative of Chronicles, for instance, may be interesting enough as specimens of the ancient oriental method of writing history, or as giving a glimpse into the history of the religious development of our race, but regarded as constituent parts of a Canon (*i. e.*, a *rule* of faith and life) they are, to say the least, of questionable value. Unlike the tender-hearted woman who, having gottten rid of her own child, sought to solace herself by getting her hands upon half of the child of her neighbor, they deprecate the mutilation of our present Canon, and yet, if it were turned over whole to them, it does seem as if it would merely furnish so much more to be hashed up to gratify the morbid appetite of an insatiable literary criticism. As the body without the soul is dead, so the Scriptures without canonicity, and canonicity without authoritativeness, are dead also. We would be reluctant, indeed, to believe that the doctrine of a divinely given written rule of faith

and practice, having served its generation by the will of God, is now ready to fall asleep; but if such is in fact the case, then we do insist that it is at least due to this venerable doctrine that we give it a decent burial before Literary Criticism is permitted to cast lots for its apparel.

3. Further, could it be proved that the gloomy forebodings of *Whither?*, and the critic of *The Old and New Testament Student*, as to the results of insisting upon the historical as the only ultimate test of Canonicity, were well grounded—we say could this be proved, as it cannot—we would still regard it as the only wise thing to insist upon this test. For, *in the first place*: the right of the books mentioned by “Biblical criticism” (*i. e.*, Dr. Briggs) to a place in the canon could only be affected when it had been shown that their claims to apostolic origin or sanction were nugatory. But suppose that this could be shown, would any serious result follow from displacing them from their present position in the Canon? None whatever, so far as we can see. We would still have the books themselves. And the books would still have whatever of credibility as histories or discussions in religion or morals, a generous criticism might be pleased to leave them. They would still be books of rare moral and religious worth. In a word, they would still be good books, in fact, excellent, admirable, most edifying books, better on the whole than even the productions of the saintly Baxter and Bunyan. We may safely go further and admit that they would be unique books, and would no doubt, at least for a time, be highly esteemed by most of those who affected to be religiously inclined. Where then would be the difference between the position which they now occupy, and the position which they would occupy if they were excluded from the Canon? Very little, so far as we can see, if the Canon be merely a list of good books that have come down to us from a venerable antiquity, or if it be a set of writings by which we set great store because they satisfy what we suppose to be our religious cravings of one sort or another, or if it be a set of writings which commend themselves to the enlightened reason as being on the whole the best available guide in matters of religion. For all of these things might still be true, and according to the objectors themselves are true of these writings, even though they can make out no claim to apostolic origin or sanction. In a word, even though excluded from the Canon in the sense in which we use the word, they would still be possessed of all the value that the objectors allow to any book in the Old or New Testament Scriptures, even those of unquestioned apostolic origin. The application of the historical test then would at last only bring these particular books down to the low plane

upon which the objectors by their very definition of the word Canon place all the books of Scripture. Thus they are either using a purely *ad hominem* argument, or else they condemn themselves when they urge this objection. But if the objection is designed to be an *ad hominem* argument, it is no less worthless. True, if by the Canon we mean a divinely given rule of faith and life, then the displacing of these books from the Canon would affect *them* most seriously, but it is hard to see how it would affect the real interests of anybody holding to the historical test. The teachings of these several books would then cease to have a normative character and an obligatory force. They would be advisory not obligatory, suggestive and not normative. Suppose, however, that as a matter of fact these books have no normative character to lose, then what injustice would be done them, what loss would any one suffer? by recognizing this fact in a practical way, and separating them from such books as have? None that we can discover. But suppose that these *writings* did not proceed from a *writer authorized and qualified* to draw up a rule for our guidance, or, which amounts to the same thing, suppose that they cannot be traced to such a source,—who would be the loser, if they were separated from the writings known to have proceeded from, or to have been sanctioned, by the divinely commissioned and inspired founders of the Christian Church and expounders of the Christian system, whose writings do constitute a genuine, because an *authoritative* rule? Indeed, if we must admit that the New Testament writings enumerated in *Whither?* proceeded from men who did not make sufficient impression upon those of their own day to leave name or memorial behind, or men of such piety and humility as to hide their personality from the eyes of their contemporaries and posterity behind the name of an apostle or the companion of an apostle, anxious only that the Church might have the benefit of their holy experiences and cogitations, might we not well hesitate before accepting such writings as a rule of faith and life? Certainly, if an apostle does not stand sponsor for these anonymous writings, some credible and competent witness should vouch for them before we can be expected to make them our guides in the affairs of the soul. True, we are told that a no less august witness than the Holy Spirit can be introduced to establish, not their origin, it being the peculiar province and prerogative of “Biblical criticism” (of a certain type) to shroud this in mystery, but to establish their inspiration, and so their authority. But a moment’s thought must convince any one that to summon the Holy Spirit to establish the authority of writings for whose authorship no reputable responsible human witness can be brought, is not only an insult to history, but the very desperation of fanaticism.

For ourselves we do not hesitate to say that, if it can be shown in regard to any book or books of either Testament that they are there without having passed under the eye and received the sanction of an apostle, then the sooner this fact is established, and such book or books extruded from the false position into which some unauthorized person has intruded it, the better.

*In the second place:* there are two considerations which may well calm our fears and lead us to hold on to the historical test despite the dire results which "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. Briggs) and the critic of *The Old and New Testament Student* assure us must follow its application. One of them is this. Even after destructive criticism has done its utmost and its worst, there would still remain from the general wreck of Scripture, as at present constituted, "an indestructible remnant." The peculiar glory of this remnant, in addition to the fact that it had survived the flames of a furnace heated seven times hotter than it is wont to be, would be the fact that their apostolic origin would be so clearly and indisputably established as to be beyond question. This remnant might be small, it might be but an inconsiderable fragment of our present Bible, still we feel safe in saying at this stage in the progress of destructive criticism that there would certainly be such a remnant. Let us for a moment, then, look the worst in the face. The critic of the *Old and New Testament Student* warns us that to insist upon the historical test might result in nothing less serious than the exclusion of the entire Old Testament from the Canon, since upon proper examination it might appear that neither Christ nor His apostles would be found standing sponsor for any of its books. Now, as intimated above, we are bound to regard these views as penned under undue excitement or depression; and certainly it would cost us a grievous pang to part with any book of this venerable and precious collection. Still, if the critic should prove that Christ and His apostles had refused the seal of their official sanction to the Scriptures of the Jewish Church current in their day, then so far as we can see there would be nothing for us to do but to give them up, and bear our great loss and our great sorrow in becoming silence. The servant is not above his Lord. It certainly would not become us to set up, as a rule, writings which our Master in His greater wisdom had been pleased to ignore. But it will be observed that "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. Briggs)—more calm, shall we say more generous, or simply more discreet and more just?—admits that "Jesus gives His authority to the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms."\* This at once alleviates our painful apprehensions. But lest we should indulge premature hopes, let us remember that "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. Briggs) also intimates that Jesus did

\* *Biblical Study*, p. 131.



not give His authority to Ecclesiastes, Canticles, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Ezekiel and Chronicles. Granted then that this deliverance of "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. Briggs) should turn out to be more reliable than some of his other equally oracular utterances, all we could say would still be, If Christ refused to them or withheld from them the stamp of "His authority," we could not accept them as canonical even though "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. Briggs) should assure us that he had the best evidence possible of their inspiration. But, even supposing for a moment that the case were worse, if possible, than it has been pictured to our fears, still we would comfort ourselves with this thought, that should the worst come to the very worst there would in any event be left us as a Canon, as the Gibraltar of our faith and as our glad tidings of great joy, the four impregnable epistles of the great apostle, which, the critics themselves being the judges, are of indisputable genuineness; and in addition to these we would have all the rest of the present constituents of both Testaments for purposes of edification according as they might turn out to be more or less judicious, more or less accurate, more or less reliable, more or less closely connected with and expressive of the sentiments of the only authorized and inspired founders and expounders of the Christian system of whom history gives us any information.

This brings us to the other consideration which ought to lead us to hold to the historical test at all hazards. It is this. Granted—which, however, we do not grant except for the sake of argument—that many writings now in the Canon would be excluded by the application of the historical test, those that abided the test and remained would be a Canon in the true and only relevant sense of that word, *viz.*, a *bona fide* RULE of faith and life. They would be a rule by which to try the findings of the "enlightened reason," by which to correct the aberrations of the religious consciousness, by which to try the spirits which claim to speak within whether they be of God. They would be a rule that would at once deserve and demand, even though it could not command, the unqualified obedience of all without exception to whom it came; a rule by which the findings even of "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. Briggs) might be judged, and to which they would have to conform or be condemned. Some may be satisfied to have supplied to their hand the raw, we might say the crude, material out of which, by a judicious use of reason and the religious consciousness, they can frame for themselves a rule; others may only need to have the means of tracing the religious development of our race from its feeble beginnings in Eden through the nature worship, the national monolatry, the ethic monotheism of the Old Testament, and the better, brighter

things of the New Testament, up to its meridian splendors in the religious consciousness of the better spirits of the nineteenth century ; but speaking for ourselves, we are not ashamed to confess that we need and desire a divinely given written rule in matters of faith and duty. This the historical test gives. This no other test which does not ultimately rest upon the historical will give ; and, as before pointed out, for a very simple reason. The writings which are to constitute the rule being human productions must have had human authors ; their authoritativeness grounds itself and can only ground itself in the fact that these authors had authority to draw up such a rule. But the apostles, and, so far as we know, the apostles alone, were ever vested with such authority.

4. But let the reader examine this objection a little more carefully. He will find that as it stands related to the present discussion it is a curious mixture of several logical fallacies. Mark the reasoning of the objector. He argues that the historical test cannot be valid because there are books at present in the Canon which cannot stand this test. But what does this mean ? Clearly it assumes that every book at present in the Canon is entitled to its place, although incapable of standing the historical test. This, however, can only mean that the claims of every book at present have been tested otherwise than by the historical test, and found valid. And what is this but a roundabout way of asserting that there are other tests of canonicity besides the historical test ? But this, as the reader perceives, is the very point at issue. So that the objector instead of arguing is simply begging the question. Let now the objector withdraw his assumption. Let it still be an open question whether certain books at present in the Canon are really entitled to a place there—and this must always be an open question until these claims are verified in some satisfactory way. Now let the objector show that the historical test is invalid because this or that book cannot be traced to an apostle either as its author or sponsor, or because this or that book can be proved to have been written by some post-apostolic man. Obviously the argument is a *non-sequitur*. Here are sixty-six vessels, all of which are said and believed to contain acid in the fluid with which they are filled. Litmus paper is applied first to one and then to another. In the case of half a dozen or more of the vessels, when the litmus is dipped in, it undergoes absolutely no change whatever. Under these circumstances would it be wise to rush to the conclusion that litmus paper is not a test for acids ? Hardly, in view of the fact that, *in spite of what is said and believed*, these particular vessels may not contain any acid. Establish the fact that the vessels contained an acidulated fluid and you destroy the claims of litmus as a

test for acids. Establish the canonicity of the alleged non-apostolic writings and you destroy the claims of the historical test. But before you can do the former you must establish the claims of some other test for acids, and before you can do the latter you must establish the claims of some other test for canonicity. We conclude, therefore, that the most that can be said for this objection is that it is a striking specimen of the *argumentum ad verecundiam*, a kind of argument more celebrated for its effects than for its logical soundness. The use of it ordinarily indicates a weak cause. It is doubly suspicious in the mouths of those who boast that they are not Traditionalists or Bibliolatrists. We confidently believe, and hope to show, that the fears to which this objection was designed to appeal are groundless. We see no reason to apprehend that a fair application of the historical test would displace from its present position in the Canon a single one of the books, all of which were originally received and have since been retained under the impression that they proceeded from or were sanctioned by the apostles. But it should be distinctly understood that the validity of the historical test does not stand or fall with our ability to prove that every book in the Canon can be connected with the apostles. It rests upon its own proper evidence. It should be clearly perceived and constantly remembered that the function of the historical test is not to resolve doubts as to the origin of a writing, but to interpret for us the significance of its origin when once that has been determined. It settles not the question of origin, but that of authoritativeness. These, though indissolubly connected, are none the less wholly separate and distinct. Suppose we were endeavoring to settle the question of canonicity from the nature of the contents of a writing. It would be necessary, first of all, to determine what was the nature of the contents, otherwise the test could not be applied; and it certainly could not fail and so be invalidated until it had been fairly tried. The reason that this test from the nature of the contents of a writing must be pronounced unsatisfactory, is that when everything has been learned about these contents which we can possibly hope to learn, it is still unable to assure us whether or not the writing is entitled to our submission as a divinely given rule. All that is asked for the historical test is a similar opportunity for a fair trial. Given the conditions under which it can be applied, then, if it fails or leaves us in doubt, its claim to be the ultimate test of canonicity will be overthrown. In other words, given a writing proven to be apostolic, in the sense formerly defined, and let those who hold this test disagree as to whether or not it is vested with divine authority; or given a writing proven to have originated with one whose work was unauthorized by or un-

known to the apostles, and prove further that he was divinely commissioned and qualified to set forth a rule for the faith of the Church, and the historical test will be invalidated. But until then its validity must be regarded as established, even though its application to the Canon as at present constituted should produce the sad results feared by overanxious critics.

5. But further, in order to arrive at a perfectly calm and unbiased conclusion as to the probable effect upon the Canon as now constituted of a rigid application of the historical test, the following not unimportant points should be duly weighed, viz.:

(1) The burden of proof is upon the objector, and the presumption, the grave presumption, is against the soundness of his objection. Why? Because this is not the first time that the question of the proper test of canonicity has been under discussion. The historical test was adopted as early as the second or certainly the third century. Every book at present in the Canon was admitted under this test. Other claimants were excluded under it. All this we proved in our previous paper. It is very easy to charge those of the second and third centuries with a lack of critical insight and of scientific methods, and to sound the praises of modern scholarship. But, after all, this is not very satisfactory, and at times even becomes a little tedious. True, we have heard the boast attributed to "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. C. A. Briggs), how correctly we do not pretend to say, that it (he) could "knock into a cocked hat" the testimony of the second and third centuries to the Canon. If so, it is well for his objection. But let it be remembered, in the meantime, that that is precisely what he must do before those who hold the historical test have anything to fear from this objection. Up to the present date, we have not heard of his actually attempting this feat. Should he in the future make the venture, it may, after all, turn out that his boast was but the expression of a too sanguine temperament, and another may be added to that large company who mourn because they refused to heed a kindly voice from the distant past saying, "Let not him that putteth on the armour boast as he that taketh it off."

(2) In order to prove that the historical investigations, necessarily presupposed as preliminary to the application of the historical test, will have an unsettling effect upon the Canon as now constituted, it will be necessary to do something more than to tell us that this critic denies the genuineness of one book and that critic doubts the Pauline authorship of another. If the purpose be to unsettle public confidence in the authority of Scripture and the historicity of the Christian system, this method is admirably conceived, and is being only too effectively employed. For unfortunately popular con-



fidence in the genuineness of a book may be practically destroyed without in the least affecting its just right to be regarded as genuine. Indeed, these doubts and difficulties may be manipulated so skillfully and circulated so persistently as to make the steadiest head swim and the stoutest heart quail under the feeling that ancient and long trusted foundations are giving away beneath. But just so a man with vertigo from indigestion, or from strong drink, may find the immovable earth itself and the solid frame of nature seemingly swaying under his feet as if in the agonies of dissolution, while all the time *terra firma* was never firmer than at that moment. Fortunately, however, neither the stability of the earth nor the genuineness of Scripture writings, are really affected when men under peculiar physical, moral, spiritual or intellectual conditions lose their centre of gravity. Indeed, if historical questions are to be settled by the doubts of any of those who, upon general principles, might be regarded as the most competent persons to pass upon them, "then has not Christ risen," for we read that on the occasion when He appeared to His disciples on the mountain in Galilee "some doubted." Happily, "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. C. A. Briggs) furnishes us with the evidence that these doubts and denials of eminent critics—no matter how many and learned these critics may be, no matter how plausible their doubts, or how positive their denials, and no matter how they impose upon those who are unlearned and unstable—are, after all, calculated to affect a well-informed and well-balanced mind but little, if at all. At any rate, while in the very act of rehearsing and disseminating these doubts and denials, this distinguished scholar is careful to inform his readers that personally his belief in the genuineness of most, if not all, of the books challenged remains unshaken.

(3) It will be only fair in this connection to utter a caveat against some things which to-day pass for criticism among Biblical scholars. We do not wish to bring a railing accusation, but it may be worth our while to ask whether much that goes by the name of criticism in the Biblical field would not be regarded as hyper-criticism if applied to the classics? We admire Prof. Sanday, and read with great interest his articles on the Gospel of John as they appeared in *The Expositor*. They will do good. And yet what candid reader can deny that they reveal the excessive refinements which are not the glory, but the defect, of most modern criticism? Well may Prof. Salmon say: "If we were to apply to the remains of classical literature the same rigor of scrutiny that is used towards the New Testament, there are but few of them that could stand the test."\* Let no one misunderstand us. What we

\* *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 3.

claim is not that our scrutiny of the claims of Scripture should be characterized by less of rigor, but merely that it should be marked by a little more common sense. For instance, it is safe to say that when the genuineness of the Scripture writings is under consideration, they are entitled, quite as much as the classical writings, to the protection of the following dictum of "August Böckh, the greatest of the philologists of modern Germany: 'We should be in the negative criticism more circumspect than the ancients. We must always start with the tradition, and try whether the unsuspected positive testimonies for the origin of a written work do not admit of being confirmed and completed by combinatory criticism. Where the judgment is in any degree uncertain the principle holds: *Quivis præsumitur liber genuinus, donec demonstretur contrarium.*'"\* There is an unmistakable ring of fairness and common sense about this which should commend it to every sober mind. Now it should be remembered that every book at present in the Canon is there by virtue of a tradition, true or false, connecting it with an apostle either as its author or sponsor. This being the case, the title of no single book is in jeopardy from the application of the historical test so long as it appears that the tradition that is behind it is probably true. Nay more, no book can be displaced under the operation of the historical test, unless it can be shown that the tradition behind it is certainly false—" *Quivis præsumitur liber genuinus, donec demonstretur contrarium,*" says Böckh. But if this dictum determines our judgment as to the genuineness of the history of Velleius Paterculus, why should it not do the same in the case of the Gospel of Matthew? Does some one say, "Because what would satisfy one with reference to so slight a matter as the history of Velleius Paterculus would inevitably fail to do so in the case of Matthew—the issues involved are too great?" This retort is certainly plausible, and at first blush seems fairly overwhelming. But is it so in reality? Why do we accept the genuineness of the history of Velleius Paterculus? Is it because we have all the evidence that we could desire in the premises? Or because the evidence that we have is absolutely indisputable? Or because we are prepared to adopt an opinion which rests on no evidence? Certainly not. Why then? Simply because there are but two possible judgments in the premises—one being that the writing proceeded from Paterculus, the other that it did not—and the probabilities being weighed, and the preponderance of probability being found on the side of the former judgment, there is nothing for the reason to do but to find accordingly, and rest in that judgment until some new evidence is adduced which changes the balance of probabili-

\* See *supra*, p. 41.

ties. This is the rational procedure, and any other would be irrational. But if irrational to decide against the balance of probabilities in the case of Paterculus, would it be any less so to decide against them in the case of Matthew? Would not the greatness of the interests at stake in the latter case instead of diminishing rather augment the irrationality of deciding against the balance of probabilities?

(4) Further, one who was conducting the historical investigations, which are presupposed by the historical test and are a necessary preliminary to its application, would have always to bear in mind that this question of genuineness, in virtue of its connection with that of canonicity, passes out of the sphere of the merely speculative and takes on a predominantly moral aspect. It is not only a moral question, but one which urgently and imperatively calls for a decision, and for a corresponding course of action. Whether I will or not, I must assume a definite attitude towards these books, which come to me claiming to embody a divinely given rule. I must either yield obedience or refuse it. It is evident, therefore, that the following doctrine, laid down by a no less clear-headed and cogent reasoner upon moral evidence than the distinguished Bishop Butler, is eminently worthy of our most careful consideration, viz.: "From these things it follows, that in questions of difficulty, or such as are thought so, where more satisfactory evidence cannot be had, or is not seen; if the result of the examination be, that there appears upon the whole, any even the lowest presumption on the one side, and none on the other, or a greater presumption on the one side, though in the lowest degree greater; this determines the question even in matters of speculation. In matters of practice, it will lay us under an absolute and formal obligation, in point of prudence and of interest, to act upon that presumption or low probability, though it be so low as to leave the mind in very great doubt which is the truth."\* From this it appears that probable evidence of apostolic origin or sanction is all that can be fairly demanded in order to entitle a book to a place in the Canon under the historical test. So that in answer to the somewhat appealing question, "Are we to reject these Gospels because there is uncertainty as to apostolic superintendence and influence?" we would reply, By no manner of means do anything so inconsiderate. For, to borrow again the words of Bishop Butler and adapt them to the matter in hand, surely a man is as really bound in prudence to accept as canonical, writings which upon the whole, according to the best information he can obtain, appear to be of apostolic origin or to have received apostolic sanction, as writ-

\*Butler's *Analogy*, Edition by Howard Malcom, D.D., p. 67.

ings of which he certainly knows this to be true. Absolute certainty of apostolic origin or sanction, however desirable in the case of a writing, is not necessary to ground a claim to a place in the Canon under the historical test. If the balance of probability is in its favor then its claim is established. It will be time to surrender our belief in the genuineness of any of the Biblical books when such a case has been made out against it as Bentley made against the Epistle of Phalaris,\* or Dr. Schaff has made against the Apostles' Creed.† We venture to predict that as soon as such a case is made out against any book of either Testament, the most radical of conservatives will no longer maintain its genuineness. But it will be safe also to predict that when it has been proven in reference to any book that it neither proceeded from nor was endorsed by an apostle, belief in its canonicity will soon fall into "innocuous desuetude." But turning from all these considerations, let us proceed to

*An Examination of the Case as Actually Presented by the Objectors.*

1. And, first looking at the Old Testament, we note: (1) That the application of the historical test does not in the least impair the right of the confessedly anonymous books of this venerable collection to their present place in the Canon. Indeed, it is surprising that this feature of anonymousness should have been dragged by the ears, so to speak, into a debate with which it is not even remotely connected. It always speaks badly for an argument that it has the appearance of having been framed with a studious endeavor to misunderstand the position against which it professes to be aimed. But, manifestly, the question here is not whether these books of the Old Testament are anonymous, pseudonymous, otherwise-anonymous. The only possible question is, Is there or is there not evidence that these books were stamped with the seal of their approval by Christ or His apostles? (2) The inquiry as to whether Moses did or did not write the Pentateuch is in its own place an important one, but it again has absolutely no bearing whatever upon the claims of this part of the Old Testament to a place in the Canon under the historical test. So far as the validity of this test is concerned, so far as the right of the Pentateuch to its place in the Canon under this test is concerned, that ancient writing may have been from Moses, or from J, E, P, D, or as many more originals as the most "hardly bestead and hungry" of critics could desire. It may have been redacted and re-redacted until not even J, E, P, and D could distinguish or disentangle their respective contributions; it may even, like the image of the Ephesian Diana, have fallen down out of heaven; and, still, if it could be shown that Christ or

\* *Biblical Study*, p. 93.

† *Ibid.*, p. 92.



the apostles had affixed to it the seal of their approval, then under the historical test its title to its present place in the Canon would not be jeopardized. (3) Perhaps extracts from two of the latest works on the Canon—those by Dr. Franz Buhl\* and Prof. H. E. Ryle†—may be the most effective way in which to dissipate the vague apprehension which some have expressed that an application of the historical test would at one fell stroke excise from the Canon the entire Old Testament. In reference to these works the critic of *The Old and New Testament Student* writes: “They are both volumes of capital value and importance.”‡ In reference to the book of Prof. Ryle, he says: “One may heartily commend the book as the latest and best treatment of the subject for the general reader.”§ Now Prof. Ryle, while he fixes upon the year 100 A.D. as “the *terminus ad quem* in the gradual formation of the Canon,”|| is careful to add: “It marks, however, only the official conclusion. Practically we may be sure its bounds had long before been decided by popular use.” Again he says: “But there are good grounds for the view that all the books eventually included in the Canon had obtained some sort of recognition before the close of the second century B.C., and before the death of John Hyrcanus II (105 B.C.)”¶ Once more he says: “It is perhaps more to the purpose, in order to arrive at a perfectly fair judgment respecting the ‘silence’ of the New Testament, to have regard not so much to the fact that individual books are not quoted or referred to, as to the fact that the groups of books to which they belong are very definitely recognized. The testimony of the New Testament to the latest written book of the Canon, ‘Daniel,’ is very explicit (Matt. xxiv. 15); and the allusion to the Book of Chronicles, in Matt. xxiii. 35, Luke xi. 51, admits, as has been mentioned before, of a most suitable explanation, when it is regarded as the last book in the completed Hebrew Scriptures. If so, we may suppose the recognition of the others follows naturally, even though they are not directly cited.”\*\* In the same vein Buhl writes: “The result is therefore this, that even the third part of the Old Testament writings, which in the time of Ben Sirach was as yet without firmly determined limits, had its Canon finally closed even before the time of Christ, although we know nothing as to how, or by whom this was accomplished; enough that the Canon and the clear idea of the Canon were there, and formed the basis of a definite dogmatic theory of

\* *Canon and Text of the Old Testament*. By Dr. Franz Buhl. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1892.

† *The Canon of the Old Testament*. By H. E. Ryle, B.D. London: Macmillan & Co., 1892.

‡ *The Old and New Testament Student*, June, 1892, p. 379. § *Ibid.*

|| *The Canon of the Old Testament*, p. 172. ¶ *Ibid.*, p. 173. \*\* *Ibid.*, p. 152.

the sacred writings (compare 9).”\* Again he maintains: “Evidence in favor of the threefold division of the Canon is afforded by the expression ‘the law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms’ (Luke xxiv. 44). But the conclusions drawn from this passage in regard to the extent, and particularly the order or arrangement of the Hagiographa, are worthless, for this reason, that the subject dealt with in this passage is the symbolic and prophetic contents of the Old Testament, in which connection the Psalms occupy a pre-ëminent position among the Hagiographa. But more important than all this is the names under which the Old Testament is referred to. Designations like *γραφαὶ ἁγίαί, ἱερὰ γράμματα, αἱ γραφαὶ* and especially *ἡ γραφή* and, besides, the well-known formulæ of quotations, put a clear and conscious distinction between Holy Scripture and any other sort of literature, and so give ground to the conjecture that the limits, still undetermined in the days of Ben Sirach with reference to the third part of the Canon, had meanwhile become firmly fixed.”† . . . “It must evidently be regarded as purely accidental that Ezra-Nehemiah, as also the minor prophets, Obadiah, Nahum and Zephaniah, have not been quoted in the New Testament. On the other hand, one might associate the absences of quotations from the three books of the Song, Ecclesiastes, and Esther with the partly contemporary discussions over those, referred to in 8. . . . Nevertheless, this may, on closer examination, be found to be a merely fortuitous coincidence, since Christ and the first Christians, for practical reasons arising from the circumstances in which they were placed, did not feel called upon to make use of these writings of peculiar contents, whereas the controversies referred to in 8 were of a purely dogmatic character.”‡

Without committing ourselves to all that is here said, we may safely claim that, at least, two facts are settled, so far as they can be settled by the authority of these two “latest and best” writers on the Canon. One is that the limits and contents of the Canon were definitely fixed in the time of Christ and His apostles. The other is that the Canon as thus fixed was not only known to, but endorsed by Christ and His apostles. From this it appears that neither the Pentateuch, even though proven to be of composite authorship, nor Ecclesiastes, Daniel and Deuteronomy, even though proven to be pseudonymous, nor the confessedly anonymous books of the Old Testament, are in any danger of being displaced from the Canon by the application of the historical test. They have received the stamp of an authority to which even “Biblical criticism” (*i. e.*, Dr. Briggs) feels obliged to defer; for “Biblical criticism” (*i. e.*, Dr. Briggs) assures us that “Jesus gives His authority to the Law, the

\* *Canon and Text of the Old Testament*, p. 27. † *Ibid.*, p. 16. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 17f.

Prophets, and the Psalms." So that, even under the rigor of the historical test, these books would each and all be entitled to their place in the Canon. And over against the ringing *ipse dixit* of "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. C. A. Briggs) that :\* "The New Testament carefully abstains from using the writings disputed among the Jews. It does not use at all Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah"—in the judgment of most persons, it will probably be sufficient to set the dispassionate statements cited above from two eminent Biblical scholars, neither of whom is conservative. And if the critic of *The Old and New Testament Student* still wishes to know, "What constitutes apostolic sanction," and "just how, in each case, the apostles stood 'sponsor'" for the several books of the Old Testament, he can hardly do better than study the passage above quoted from Buhl, whose work the aforesaid critic so highly commends, and, if necessary, supplement this by another cursory reading of the apostolic writings themselves.

2. Let us now inquire how the case stands with the New Testament. The books here whose place in the Canon is supposed to be imperiled by the historical test are the four Gospels, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Pastoral epistles and the Apocalypse. What then has "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. C. A. Briggs) to say as to the genuineness of these books? Of Mark and Luke it says: "It is probable that the gospel of Mark was written under the influence of Peter, and the gospel of Luke under the influence of Paul."† Of John it declares: "It is most probable that the apostle John wrote it, but this is not certain."‡ As to the Pastoral epistles it affirms: "There are many strong reasons against the authorship of the apocalypse by John the apostle, and the Pauline authorship of the pastoral epistles."§ But then it adds: "There are many *stronger reasons* [italics ours], *in my opinion* [italics ours], in favor of the prevalent traditional theories."|| We begin to breathe freely once more. The outlook for the New Testament is not so gloomy after all. Böckh and "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. C. A. Briggs) ratify the titles of three out of the four Gospels to a place in the Canon, and that too under the dreaded historical test. But what of the first Gospel? Here "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. C. A. Briggs) makes the cautious deliverance: "It is not certain that Matthew wrote the present Gospel of Matthew."¶ Granted: still the question comes up, and this after all is the decisive question, under the historical test: Is it certain that Matthew did not write it? If not, it is proper to remember that, if it were a classical writing whose claims to genuineness were in question, its genuineness would be ad-

\* *Biblical Study*, p. 131.

† *Whither?* p. 84.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

|| *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

mitted under the doctrine: "Where the judgment is in any degree uncertain, the principle holds: *Quivis præsumitur liber genuinus, donec demonstretur contrarium.*" It would be hard to require us to abandon the principles of sound historical criticism and of sound common sense simply because the book under consideration happens in this case to be Matthew. It remains to hear what "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. C. A. Briggs) has to say in reference to the Epistle to the Hebrews. It really looks as if this must go; for we are flatly told: "There is no probability that Paul or any other apostle had anything to do with it."\* But even after "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. C. A. Briggs) has uttered its voice, it may not be amiss to hear what certain Biblical critics of no mean repute have to say upon the subject. Prof. Salmon, for instance, expresses himself thus: "On a comparison of the substance and language of the epistle with those of Paul's acknowledged writings, it appears, I think, with certainty that the doctrine of the epistle is altogether Pauline."† He adds: "As for the language, a number of parallelisms are adduced between the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Pauline letters."‡ After mentioning some of these, he declares: "These and other coincidences with Paul are more than can be attributed to accident; if the writer is not Paul, he must have read some of Paul's epistles—in particular those to the Romans and the Corinthians."§ But further, he says: "If one sentence of Tertullian's had not been preserved, we should have no external evidence deserving of consideration for any authorship but Paul's."¶ He sums up his discussion of this point with the words: "On the whole, feeling that the western tradition in favor of the authorship of Barnabas deserves to be regarded as having some historical value, I do not find myself at liberty to reject it merely because, if I had been dependent upon conjecture alone, I should have been tempted to give a different account of the matter. This is the view taken also by Renan (*L'Antechrist*, p. xvii)."¶ Holding these views, it seems scarcely probable that Prof. Salmon would go the length of saying: "There is no probability that Paul or any other apostle had anything to do with" this epistle. Prof. Marcus Dods also is a critic whom many will regard as competent to speak to this point. Here is his language: "In later times, the authorship of this epistle has been much debated. Erasmus advocated the claims of Clement, while Luther suggested that Apollos was the author. In this idea he has been followed by several recent critics (Tholuck, Bleek, Farrar, Hilgenfeld), while by others (Renan, Salmon) Tertullian's ascription of the

\* *Whither*, p. 85.

† *Ibid.*, p. 422.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

† *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 421.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 424.



letter to Barnabas is supposed to be correct. Many, however, still hold the Pauline authorship.”\* And so we might go on, and quote Weiss and others, and none of them would be found to speak in quite the same tone of excited extravagance into which the eminent, though at times too rhetorical and dogmatic, representative of Biblical criticism cited above, is occasionally betrayed. A dispassionate statement in reference to the Epistle to the Hebrews, then, would seem to be that it cannot certainly be decided who wrote it, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Barnabas. But an equally dispassionate conclusion, in view of the time when it was written, the persons to whom it was written, the purpose for which it was written, and the reception actually accorded it, would be that it passed under the eye of an apostle or of the apostles and received their sanction.

Having heard from some eminent Biblical critics in reference to the Epistle to the Hebrews, it may be as well to hear a few words from them also in reference to the other books of the New Testament whose claims to a place in the Canon are said to be endangered by the historical test. Dr. Gladden will not be suspected of being hampered in his critical findings by a too strait-laced orthodoxy. Writing recently, after reviewing the evidence for the genuineness of our four Gospels, he declares: “But the testimony of Papias, to which I have referred, is to my own mind good evidence that these gospels were written by the men who bear their names. In the case of Luke, as we shall presently see, the case is much stronger. And after going over the evidence as carefully as I am able, the theory that the four gospels were written by the men whose names they bear, all of whom were contemporaries of our Lord, and two of whom were his apostles, seems to me, on the whole, the best supported by the whole volume of evidence. The case is not absolutely clear; perhaps it was left somewhat obscure for the purpose of stimulating study. . . . Mr. Norton, a distinguished Unitarian scholar, sums up the evidence as follows: ‘It consists in the indisputable fact that throughout a community consisting of millions of individuals, scattered over Europe, Asia and Africa, the gospels were regarded with the highest reverence, as the works of those to whom they are ascribed, at so early a period that there could be no difficulty in determining whether they were genuine or not, and when every intelligent Christian must have been deeply interested to ascertain the truth.’”† Prof. A. B. Bruce has recently published a book upon *Apologetics*, which, to put it mildly, is not characterized by an ultra-conservatism. In it, speaking of the Synoptic Gospels,

\* *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 180.

† *Who Wrote the Bible?* p. 245.

he says: "In the value thus assigned to the ancient tradition all men of sober unbiased judgment will be disposed to acquiesce. They will read the gospels with the comfortable assurance that for the words of Jesus common to the first and third they have one apostle as voucher, Matthew, and for the deeds of Jesus common to the three, another apostle's authority, that of Peter, of whose preaching, according to Papias, Mark's narrative was a digest."\* We cannot, however, quote at greater length. Suffice it to say that the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel is defended by Bleek,† Sanday,‡ Salmon,§ Dods,|| and Weiss,¶ and that of the Apocalypse, among others, by Salmon,\*\* Dods,†† and Weiss.‡‡ In regard to the Pastoral epistles, Dods affirms: "So far, then, as the early Church can guarantee to us the authenticity of writings ascribed to Paul, the Pastoral epistles are guaranteed."§§ But enough. It has been shown *ex abundanti* that we are in no danger whatever of losing, under the operation of the historical test, a single one of the books enumerated above by "Biblical criticism" (*i. e.*, Dr. C. A. Briggs). The critics, upon whose findings we rely for the correctness of this statement, have arrived at their conclusions neither upon sentimental grounds, nor under the influence of a hyper-orthodox timidity. On the contrary, they have reached them by the most approved methods, and solely upon the grounds of historical criticism.

But we are told that there are other critics who have reached a distinctly different conclusion. Of this latter class, it is alleged that their number is large, their erudition extensive, and their piety ardent. In reference to them the question is raised, Are we to force this large and respectable body of critics to reject the canonicity of these and other books of the Bible by setting up the historical test? We are urged with great solemnity, to try to save them to the Church. Now we freely confess that we would deplore doing anything that would lead any conscientious scholar to turn his back upon the Church—we would deplore this, we say, not only on account of the loss thus arising to the Church, but also on account of the possibly greater loss that might accrue to the retiring critic. But much as we would lament the loss to both Church and critic, we must confess that it does look a little singular, not to say unreasonable, that we should be urged to scuttle the ship in order to keep

\* *Apologetics*, p. 44. † *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 194ff.

‡ *Expositor*, 4th Series, Vol. iv, pp. 321 *sq.*, 461 *sq.*

§ *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 248.

|| *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 53.

¶ *A Manual of Introduction to the New Testament*, Vol. ii, p. 355f.

\*\* *Ut supra*, p. 203.

†† *Ut supra*, p. 244f.

‡‡ *Ut supra*, p. 50.

§§ *Ut supra*, p. 168.

a part of the crew from deserting it. Once scuttle it, and not only will all be forced to abandon it, but we may count ourselves fortunate, if we succeed in making the land at all, "some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship." For let it be borne in mind that, if the objection now under examination be valid at all, it is fatal not only to the historical test, but to the historicity of the Christian system as well; and herein, as before intimated, lies the real gravity of this whole discussion in regard to the test of canonicity. It will be observed that we are called upon to give up the historical test upon the express ground that to insist upon it will be to imperil the claims of Scripture by subjecting them to a strain that they cannot bear. This, it seems to us, can mean only one of two things. It may mean that such is the trend of thought both in scholarly circles and among the people that opinion in reference to the genuineness of Scripture will no longer consent to be shaped by the principles of a sober criticism such as have been outlined above, and such as have led scholars like Weiss, Salmon, Sanday and Dods to accept as genuine the very books whose claims are supposed to be imperilled. If this be the meaning of the protest against the historical test, then we must reluctantly admit that it looks as if, in some quarters at any rate, such were indeed the case. But this, it seems to us, only amounts to saying that there is abroad, in some quarters, a spirit of license which chafes against every restraint, even the most reasonable, as an abridgment of its Christian liberty and an attack upon freedom of thought. The spirit of license and skepticism represented by this objection needs, however, only to progress a little further along the lines upon which it is now moving, and having discredited the historical origin of the writings upon which the Christian system rests, it will next proceed to discard the system which has no more solid foundation than is furnished by anonymous documents of a conjectural date. If, however, the spirit of critical license and skepticism were all, bad as the case would be, we might still hope that the bitter experience of the future would work a cure. We might take comfort in the statement of the venerable Delitzsch,\* embodying apparently the observation of a lifetime, that there is a fashion in exegesis and criticism as well as in dress. But if this protest against the historical test means, as it seems to mean, that the historical evidence is wanting upon which to base a rational belief that the writings of the New Testament, or any considerable part of them, proceeded from or were sanctioned by the apostles, then the outlook for the Christian system is dreary indeed. See what this involves. It involves nothing less than the discrediting of the only witnesses by

\* *Messianic Prophecy*, p. 54, b.

whom we can hope to show that the writings upon which we build our faith had even a remote connection with the founders of the Christian system. Destroy our confidence in the testimony of the second and third centuries to the genuineness of the New Testament writings, and, perforce, you must greatly impair, if not totally destroy, our confidence in their testimony even to the general apostolicity of these writings—we mean their testimony to the fact that these writings give us even in the main a correct tradition of the life of Christ and of apostolic teaching. It involves taking our rule of faith and life from the hands of unknown and irresponsible persons of whose competency and credibility we know and can know nothing, and whose nearness to or remoteness from the events which they profess to record can only be conjectured. We no longer have as the sure foundation for our faith the narratives of those who “from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word,” but merely the lucubrations of some Tom, Dick or Harry who probably lived between the latter part of the first century and the middle or end of the second, and who, for any evidence attainable to the contrary, neither knew the apostles nor were known by them. But enough of an objection which has been shown to be irrelevant and groundless.

V. Another objection urged against the historical test which probably deserves some attention has been stated thus: “This method of determining the canon of Scripture bases its authority upon the authority of its human authors,” \* and in so doing, as is suggested elsewhere, it resolves the basis of our faith into *fides humana*, whereas only *fides divina* furnishes a secure basis. Unquestionably we wish and need a divine warrant as the basis of our faith. And while we do not share in what, to us, seems to be the excessive suspicion of human testimony that appears to characterize those who reject the historical test, and indeed, are rather disposed to the opinion that he who believeth not his brother whom he hath seen, will not believe God whom he hath not seen, yet, as we have just said, we are ready to admit that in such a case as this the divine trustworthiness must be the ultimate foundation of a rational faith. The question, therefore, between ourselves and those who, on this ground, object to the historical test, resolves itself into this: Does the historical test furnish satisfactory evidence that God speaks in the writings which under it are admitted into the Canon? If it does, then the objection now under consideration must be admitted to be pointless. For the dullest must see that under these circumstances, while the proximate source of the authority of these writings may be in their respective human authors, the ultimate

\* *Whither?* p. 83.



source of that authority is in God and in God alone; and that while our faith may have and must have human trustworthiness as its proximate basis, that faith has the divine trustworthiness as its ultimate and immovable foundation. When historical investigation furnishes evidence, then, that a certain writing originated with, or was sanctioned by, an apostle, is this tantamount to furnishing evidence that the teachings embodied in that writing are vested with the authority of God? We answer unhesitatingly, it does. If God purposed to communicate His will to us in writings such as those contained in the Scripture, He could only do it through the agency of human penmen. This is true upon any and every theory of inspiration. Connect a writing, then, with a penman whom God has called, qualified, commissioned and accredited as His agent for the embodying of His will in a written form, and you have proved that the writing is itself an expression of the divine will, and as such vested with the authority of God Himself. The apostles were such penmen. They were commissioned by Christ. By miracles God attested the truth of their claims, and set the seal of His authority upon their teachings. They were entitled to say: "It seems good to us and to the Holy Ghost to lay upon you . . . these burdens." If this does not furnish us with a divine warrant for our faith, then there are many who will feel that it is impossible for even God Himself to furnish us with such a warrant. It is true that there is a long line of merely fallible witnesses between us and the apostles, and that according to the historical test we have to trace the writing back through this line of witnesses to the apostles, and through them, again, to God as its ultimate or real author. This, however, will not affect the case, except for those who, with Walpole, are prepared to say: "As for history, that's a lie." Few will dishonor themselves by taking such a position. Those who do, put themselves beyond the reach of argument. In every case, therefore, in which it is possible to carry a writing back by a line of credible historical witnesses to an apostle, as its author or sponsor, we carry it back to a point where God Himself steps in, as it were, and, by His own testimony to it, furnishes us with the divine warrant that we need as the sure basis of our faith. Not only so, but this is the only way in which we can rationally hope to arrive at such a warrant for our faith. It looks curious indeed that some who can find no ground of canonicity in the apostolic origin of a writing, should find ground for it in the testimony which the Holy Spirit bears in their own hearts to such writing. For Paul says: "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things that I write unto you that they are the commandments of the Lord." From this, *he* would seem to lay

it down as an essential mark of a genuine religious experience that, wherever it exists, there will be found a readiness to receive writings which proceed from him as invested with divine authority. In a word, to assert that apostolic origin or sanction does not furnish *fides divina* as the basis for our confidence in the authoritativeness of a writing is equivalent to repudiating faith in all testimony, both human and divine.

VI. There is just one more objection urged against the historical test which we must notice briefly before we close. To many, when first stated, it will seem more fatal to the exclusive validity of this test than any that has yet been mentioned. It will be found, however, despite its plausibility, to be merely an *ignoratio elenchi*. In substance it comes to this: The historical test is unsuited to the needs and capacities of the great mass of the people of God, and in fact renders them hopelessly dependent upon\* “a mediating priesthood of theologians” for their Bible.

One is at a loss to decide whether the most striking feature about this objection is its rhetoric or its logic. Certainly the former is much more suited to produce astonishment than the latter to produce conviction. Some, unquestionably, will think that the distinguished scholar from whom the objection proceeds would do well to cultivate a somewhat calmer style. True, when one writes under the impulse of strong feeling, it is apt to lend a certain charm to his composition, and yet a writer under such circumstances is always exposed to more or less danger. Sometimes he will unconsciously fall into language which fails to convey his idea, and again into language like this about “a mediating priesthood of theologians,” which the more one studies it the more he is forced to the painful conclusion that it conveys no idea at all. For surely it would overtax the most ingenious mind to find any place for the functions of a mediating priest in connection with the application of the historical test. It is quite true that the testimony of the witnesses of the early centuries has to be mediated to the masses of the people through the labors of learned men, since the masses have neither the time nor the necessary qualifications for personal investigations. But the same is true of most of our knowledge. And we would all regard it as, to say the least, exuberant and somewhat meaningless rhetoric to speak of a mediating priesthood of historians or a mediating priesthood of scientists. Moreover, one’s sensibilities would have to be morbid indeed before he could be greatly distressed or depressed at the thought of his dependence upon Macaulay, Hume and others for information in reference to the exploits of our Anglo-Saxon forebears. This being the case, it will scarcely seem a fatal

\* *Biblical Study*, p. 123.

objection to the historical test that the mass of the people of God can arrive at a knowledge of the historical evidence for the genuineness of the Christian Scriptures only through the kind offices of a host of competent and disinterested Christian scholars. As well object to Versions of the Scripture that they render the people of God dependent upon "a mediating priesthood of" translators, or to the best Greek and Hebrew texts that they render them dependent upon "a mediating priesthood of" text-critics. Let us be calm and serious. Let us leave it to Fifth Monarchy men and Anabaptists to claim to be possessed of an "inner light" which renders them independent of the humbler light offered by history and scholarship. For after all has been said that can be said in reference to the delicacy and difficulty, the intricacy and obscurity of historical investigations in general, or the momentous issues which hang upon the proper decision of the historical investigations presupposed by and a necessary preliminary to the application of the historical test, still the experience of the past and our own observation will assure us that there is less risk to our interests, even the most precious of them, in following the light offered by history and scholarship, humble and imperfect though it may be, than in permitting ourselves to be beguiled by an *ignis fatuus*, even though it be known by so high-sounding a title as "the religious consciousness."

But apart from all this, this objection, as has already been said, is an *ignoratio elenchi*. It assumes that, if apostolic origin or sanction be the ultimate test of canonicity, then, every one who accepts the Scriptures as a rule must be able to trace each separate book back to an apostle as its author or sponsor. This, however, is simply to miss the only really important point in dispute. It is to confound two questions so radically and essentially distinct and different as these: In what may my conviction of the canonicity of this writing rationally ground itself? and, In what must the authoritativeness of this writing, looked at as a divinely given written rule, ground itself? It assumes that the ground of my conviction of the canonicity of a writing and the ground of its canonicity must of necessity be one and the same. But how misleading and illogical is such a notion! Suppose that my conviction of the canonicity, or, which is the same thing, of the authoritativeness of the book, grounds itself, as it may very well do, in the majesty of the style and the heavenliness of the doctrine, does it follow that the authoritativeness of the book, looked at as a written instrument, grounds itself in these things? Clearly not. For, if I be an unlearned man, these qualities of the book will not reveal themselves to me until some one has translated the book for me from Hebrew or Greek; but it is just as truly authoritative in the originals as in the translation,

and before I was in a position to be affected by the majesty of its style and the heavenliness of its doctrine, as after I have come under their spell. Further, suppose my eyes are holden, as the eyes of many unquestionably are, so that I fail to see the majesty of the style or the heavenliness of the doctrine; suppose I hold with some famous German critics that the style of Ephesians is mean, and its language meaningless: is it, therefore, divested of its authority? I trow not. But, if its authoritativeness exists prior to my knowledge of the majesty of the style and the heavenliness of the doctrine; if it remains despite my judgment that the style is inelegant and the doctrine insipid; then it must ground itself in something else than the supposed or the real majesty of the style and heavenliness of the doctrine. In what then does it ground itself? Obviously and only in the fact that the book proceeded from one qualified and commissioned by God to draw up a rule for me. So we say again that while the authoritativeness of a book can only ground itself in the source from which it proceeds, many things may warrant me in a more or less well-grounded conviction that a certain book proceeds from God and is therefore entitled to my obedience. This being the case, we need not stop to prove that those who hold to the historical test not only do not, but need not, hold that only those who have made a personal examination of the historical evidence connecting a writing with the apostles can have a well-grounded conviction of its canonicity. Hence it is obvious that accepting the historical test does not render the people of God dependent upon "a mediating priesthood of theologians," whatever kind of "priesthood" that may be.

If there be other objections to the historical test, they are either utterly insignificant or have escaped our attention. All serious objections, so far as known to us, we have examined with what care and fairness we could. Whether we have succeeded in meeting them, others must judge. One thing, however, we hope we have done; and that is to raise before every thoughtful mind this question: Should a destructive negative criticism succeed in rendering it probable that our present Scriptures did not proceed from those who were "from the beginning eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word," but came rather from unknown and unknowable, or at best purely supposititious individuals, of a purely supposititious date, then how many of us would be able, and for how long a time would any of us be able, to retain unshaken our reverence for Scripture as a divinely given rule, or our confidence in the historicity of these writings, with the historicity of which Christianity, as a system distinguished from all other religions, must stand or fall?