



SUNDAY READING

SERMON.

The Story of the Bible.

In a recent sermon preached by Rev. J. B. Remensnyder, of St. James' Lutheran church, New York, the following interesting statements were made:

The Bible, we know, begins with Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Who wrote these five books, commonly called the Pentateuch? They embrace an account of the creation in a chapter—the sublimest ever penned. They reveal God as a personal Being, creating and ruling the universe in love. They give the history of the old world for 2,500 years, until within 1,500 years of Christ. Now as this Pentateuch is the very corner stone of the christian church, that which contains the germ out of which all the other scriptures were developed, if we can prove that this book is historically reliable, it will really settle the whole general question.

Do we know anything then about the authorship of these five books? The higher critics have a ready answer for this question. They tell us that we know nothing about them. The only thing they are sure about is that they could not have been written by any one living at the time. They generally ascribe to them a post-exilic origin, i. e., a date after the exile in Babylon, which occurred seven or eight hundred years later. All that they are willing to admit is that they embody traditions of the Mosaic legislation, which traditions have been patched together by a score or more of unknown and irresponsible authors, who have done their work so awkwardly that all our higher critics have to do is to sit in his study and tell us just where the redactor E. began and just where he left off, and the redactor J. began, who presently contradicts his predecessor, as he happens to live perhaps some five hundred years or so later, and is of course unfamiliar with the language and customs of the time which he undertakes to narrate. It is the result of a mere mental critical process; not the least tradition of such redactors has reached us from past ages. So much for the reckless, irreverent and puerile methods of the critics, who lay such arrogant claims to a monopoly of scholarship.

Now over against these utterly baseless guesses, we answer that we have clear and satisfactory historical evidence that Moses wrote Genesis and the other books, closing with Deuteronomy. This evidence appears first in the books themselves. In Exodus 17th chapter, God commands Moses: "Write this for a memorial in a book." And, in the closing part of Deuteronomy, we read: "And it came to pass when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, he commanded the Levites, saying: 'Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.'"

Now, when we see that Moses wrote the Pentateuch of God's command, and put it in the then most sacred sanctuary, the ark, with the solemn charge that it be preserved, and when we read in our text that the chief reason for which the Jews were called was that there should "be committed unto them the oracles of God," that is, that they should be the providential keepers of God's revelation to mankind, will you believe that the Jews permitted these original books to have been lost, and allowed a number of wretched counterfeits to be palmed off in their places, without ever uttering a protest at the time, or give us a hint of the fraud? But that contrary to what they did, most reverently preserve these books their subsequent history shows. Joshua, Moses' successor, still has and refers to them. David, 500 years later, has them, and continually quotes from them as "the law of Moses." And 500 years later, still, after the captivity, after the Jews have them, as we read in Nehemiah (viii., 1), "And all the people spoke unto Ezra, the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel."

And that 500 years later in Christ's time these five books—the Pentateuch—were still in existence, as shown by such passages as this in Luke xxiv., 27: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself." Moreover, Christ expressly affirms the Mosaic authorship of these books, thus: "For had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me, for if we believe not his writings, how shall we believe his words?" (John v., 46-47.) And from this date we know that we have these books unchanged.

Besides the internal evidence of these books, their linguistic usages, and their references to customs and manners, such as embalming dead bodies, men carrying baskets on their heads, the child's cradle made of bullrushes, irrigation from the Nile, etc., all point to Egyptian times, and Moses was trained at the Egyptian court. The evidence is abundant, then, that the Pentateuch is historical, and that its author is Moses. On far less evidence we receive as authentic the works of such Greek writers as Herodotus and Thucydides. And why, then, shall there be any doubt here?

Any the same line of reasoning can be offered to the whole of the christian church canon. When one who was manifestly a prophet or inspired personage uttered his message it was, without the concurrent consent of the Jewish church, incorporated in the sacred canon. And when, with Malachi, the prophetic line ceased, Ezra, the high priest, arranged and completed the Old Testament books a century and a half later, about two hundred and eighty years before Christ, its Greek King Ptolemy had a Greek translation made for his Greek-speaking Jewish subjects at Alexandria. This was called the Septuagint, and it

agrees in number of books and contents with the Hebrew. (The Septuagint was only translated by degrees, and the apocryphal books were added as in our English version, viz., not as a canonical.) Our Lord and the Apostles used this version.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, who was present at the destruction of Jerusalem seventy years after Christ, gives a catalogue of the books in the Old Testament, the same as we have now, and says: "Of these given are the books of Moses, comprehending both the laws and the tradition respecting the origin of man down to his death—this time comprehends a space of nearly three thousand years. These we justly consider divine compositions. The faith with which we receive our Scriptures is manifest; for, though so long a period has elapsed, no one has dared to add to, detract from, or alter them in any respect."

Just a century later, or 170 A. D., Melito, a learned biblical commentator, the Bishop of Sardis, in Asia, made a journey of research through Palestine for the very purpose of determining definitely the sacred books universally received by the Jews as their original Hebrew scriptures, and he finds the list to be identical with our thirty-nine old testament books. Eusebius, the church historian, who lived in the third century, and whose works are extant, gives the same list. From that date on there is, and can be, no dispute.

Now, as to the history of the new testament. All of the books, i. e., gospels, epistles, were in possession of the church before the death of the Apostle John, and we thus can trace their history step by step. Thus the apostolic fathers, i. e., contemporaries of the apostles—three of whom, Barnabas, Clement and Herman, are mentioned in the new testament—have left writings which make express reference to new testament scripture.

The different gospels and epistles or apostolic letters at this time existed separately in the keeping of the individual churches to which they were addressed. And Tertullian, who lived about the year 200, tells us that in his day, by visiting the apostolic churches, as those of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Roma, etc., you could see still extant the very autographs or originals of these holy writings.

And to show how carefully they would compare the written with the traditional gospel in those primitive times, I cannot refrain from giving this beautiful incident of Irenaeus. He says of his hearing Polycarp, who had personally known the Apostles: "I can recall the very place where I was yet a child—Polycarp used to sit and teach; his frequent references to St. John and to others who had seen our Lord; how he used to repeat from memory their discourses, which he had heard from them, concerning our Lord, and how, being instructed himself by those who were eye-witnesses of the word, there was in all that he said a strict agreement with the scriptures."

The earliest notice that we have of a collection into one book, or canon, of these individual writings is where St. Peter, iii., 16, speaks of "all the epistles of Paul," as though they were gathered into one. About the year 170 we have the first regular catalogue of them in the Muratori fragment, which puts our four gospels out at the head in their present order. At the same time the Syriac version gives the collected books substantially the same. So that, thus, we have our present New Testament in the half of the second century, while some of the contemporaries of John were yet living. Says Tischendorf, the great biblical scholar: "It is then a well established fact that already between 150 and 200 not only were the gospels translated into Latin and Syriac, but also that their number was defined to be four only," most writers calling them the four-fold gospel.

Tertullian, about 200, first calls the whole collection "The New Testament." About 230, Origen, the most learned of the primitive fathers, enumerates in his extensive commentaries, all our New Testament writings and quotes from every one of them. Thus we have an unbroken chain of evidence down to the third century. In the year 315 Eusebius, of Caesarea, gives a catalogue in which he enumerates all our present books.

And finally, in the same century, at the third council of Carthage, the great Augustine being present, after the most thorough sifting and comparison of all the historical evidence by holy and learned men, who had every means of knowing, the canon of the New Testament was adopted as it is now and has been universally accepted since.

But another very important question remains. Have not, says a doubting critic, the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts been long since lost, and how, then, do you know that what you have are the same original scriptures? Yes, the original manuscripts have all, in the course of ages, of fires, of accidents, of wars and persecutions, been lost. Yet here again we have abundant historical evidence to know that our scriptures are the originals, for several reasons. First, we have very old manuscripts. The oldest in the world called the Sinaitic, dates back to 331. It is supposed to have been made by the order of the Emperor Constantine, and is now in St. Petersburg.

Doubtless when this copy was made it was taken directly from the originals then in existence. It is written entirely in capitals. Several other manuscripts as the Vatican's at Rome and the Alexandrian in the British museum, are nearly as old. Now, no manuscript of the Greek authors Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides exists older than the tenth century yet no one ever thinks of disputing their genuineness; why then shall we doubt the accuracy of these splendid venerable manuscripts?

There are two versions—that is, translations—of the original manuscripts into other languages. A number of these exist from the earliest times: The Latin version, made for Latin-speaking christians about the year 150; the Syriac (or Peshito, that is simple) made for the Syrian christians in the second century; the Egyptian made in the third, the Ethiopic in the fourth and the Vulgate, in Latin, made in the year 383 by the great biblical scholar

Jerome, the current version in Europe until Luther's time, or for more than a thousand years. Now, all these versions so closely agree that they are an overwhelming corroboration of the fact that we have the original text. A great biblical scholar says that in the great majority of the alleged errors and discrepancies the difference is no greater than in spelling honor with or without the u.

A third proof comes from quotations. In every christian writer, dating from the first century down, our biblical books are cited. The apostolic fathers, who lived in the first century, intertwine their pages with them. Tertullian's citations make thirty folio pages. Says Lardner: "There are more and larger quotations of the New Testament in this one christian author than of all the works of Cicero, by the writers of all characters, for several ages." But Origen far transcends him, quoting at least two-thirds of the entire New Testament. So that it is computed that if the New Testament were lost it could be reproduced entire from these early authors. But the chief point is that these quotations all agree with and corroborate our present scriptures.

And the fourth proof is the wonderful fidelity of the copyists. Our text tells us that the distinction of the Jews was that "to them were committed the oracles of God." And deeply did they feel and conscientiously did they discharge this obligation. Josephus tells us that the copyists had to be "not only priests, but persons of the greatest learning, and honest life." And so exact was their precision that, says a noted critic, "such was the Jewish devotion to the very letter of the word, as to note every peculiarity of consonants, vowels, accents, the commencement and close of verses and divisions, as well as any unusual marks found in the manuscripts. They marked with all care these points, but never altered the text. Even where the mistakes were evident and trivial, a letter slightly out of place or upside down, or a variation in the spelling of a word, they did not presume to change the text." Still, as mankind is fallible, if with all this care, one copyist would make a mistake in a letter or word, a thousand copyists would not all chance to make that very mistake.

Consequently, by comparing them, and taking the concurrence of the great majority, the true word can almost infallibly be ascertained. This is the comparative method by which scholars search out the original text. And taking these four several proofs and methods together, we believe that such accuracy can be attained, that if the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, as written by their inspired authors, could be found today, there would be very few and trifling discrepancies between them and our received Bible text.

As the results of this inquiry into the story or history of the Bible as a book, we now note several conclusions.

One is the genuineness and authenticity of our sacred scriptures. They were written not by impostors who lived in other lands, and in times a thousand years afterward, but by the authors whose names they bear. And they have come down to us in the essential form in which they were originally written. This genuineness of the scriptures is a vital point.

We note again that the church is the guardian of the Bible. The scriptures were originally given to the church. In our text we are told that the chief "advantage" of the Jews was this: "That unto them were committed the oracles of God." That is, that God specially called them to be the depositaries of revelations. They were to be the custodians of the holy records. They were to preserve and to transmit to mankind the Holy Scriptures. For this purpose religion was made their chief business. To this end they had their special tribe—the Levites—set apart: the high priest; a sanhedrin, or ecclesiastical court; their lawyers, skilled in the law, and their "scribes"—that is, trained writers and copyists of the law.

Just so with the New Testament. It was no individual acts, but the collective church, which adopted the books and authorized the canon. And this was only done after the most searching critical inquiry.

The different churches at Rome, Ephesus, Corinth, etc., who had apostolic writings brought for the original autographs and compared them. And only after the sifting and discussion of long years, when a general verdict was reached by those living so near the times as to have all the requisite historical evidence before them, did a general ecclesiastical council authoritatively set forth the books composing the New Testament.

Finally we learn what a wonderful story is that of the Bible. As a book, its history is without a parallel. It is the oldest of books. It contains a journal of events which transpired centuries before the building of the Pyramids. The books of Job existed before tradition makes Cadmus to have carried letters into Greece. Dozens of the books of Scripture were completed a hundred years before the first public library was founded at Athens, and the last of the prophets, had ended his message before Socrates, Plato and Aristotle had propounded their philosophies. When the elements of society were but forming in the womb of the far-distant past, the Bible was there.

About the year 175 B. C., Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian conqueror of Palestine, ordered that the sacred books of the Jews be burnt, and the most horrible tortures were threatened any one in whose keeping a copy would be found. So, again, in the long series of christian persecutions under the Roman emperors, the penalty of death was visited upon any who would not bring out the scriptures from their hiding place.

And Eusebius tells us that under the persecution by Diocletian, about three hundred years after Christ, he saw great heaps of scriptures burning in the public market place at Alexandria. But not only was the Bible not destroyed, but the very means employed against it contributed to widen its influence and to insure its perpetuity. Thus when Syrians, Greeks and Romans would conquer and disperse into far countries its Jewish guardians, the only result would be a Syriac, Greek or Latin version, which would open up new worlds for the bible to conquer and give it a new vehicle of language by which to convey its glad tidings of revelation.

And so this wonderful volume, unimpaired by all the accidents and mutations of time, has come down to our day, and, although now compelled to pass through a fire of critical and skeptical hostility, hotter than every past ordeal, it is successfully

vindicated its place as "the most uncorrupt and authentic of histories, the most august and controlling of records and the most universal, venerable and potent of books."

FRAGMENTS OF THOUGHT.

Morality without religion is only a kind of dead reckoning—an endeavor to find our place on a cloudy sea by measuring the distance we have to run, but without any observation of the heavenly bodies. —Longfellow.

God takes a thousand times more pains with us than the artist with his picture, by many touches of sorrow, and by colors of circumstance, to bring man into the form which is the highest and noblest in His sight, if only we receive His gifts and myrrh in the right spirit. —John Taylor.

For all of which we boast to-day—for liberties, for free institutions, for learning, for art, for kinder hearts and more humane government, we are indebted to the enthusiastic souls whose dream has been to realize the kingdom of God among men. Our modern world could not have been but for the unbroken line of living hearts that have kept this faith alive in the world. —W. S. Smart.

Life is made up, not of great sacrifices or duties, but of little things, in which smiles and kindness, and small obligations given habitually, and what preserve the heart and secure comfort. —Sir H. Davy.

When the Sun goes below the horizon he is not set; the heavens glow for a full hour after his departure. And when a great and good man sets, the sky of this world is luminous long after he is out of sight. Such a man cannot die out of this world. When he goes he leaves behind much of himself. Being dead he speaks. —H. W. Beecher.

Notice.

TENDERS will be received up to the Tenth day of February next, at 12 o'clock, noon, for the purchase of the

Stock of Dry Goods belonging to the Estate of Turner & Finlay.

An inventory can be seen at the store, No. 12 King Street, St. John.

Tenders must state whether for cash or on time, and if on time the security offered.

The highest or only tender not necessarily accepted.

St. John, N. B., 23rd January, 1892.

SAMUEL C. PORTER, JAMES T. GILCHRIST, Trustees of Turner & Finlay.

Feb. 8th.

Notice of Dissolution

THE undersigned hereby give notice and certify that a certain limited Partnership under the laws of the Province of New Brunswick, conducted under the firm name of "W. C. PITFIELD & Co.," for the buying and selling at wholesale of dry goods and other merchandise, and generally a wholesale dry goods and general jobbing and commission business, which by the certificate of Limited Partnership registered in the office of the Registrar of Deeds of the City and County of Saint John in the said Province, was to commence the Twenty-eighth day of December, A. D. 1889, did terminate and is dissolved the said First day of January, A. D. 1892.

(Signed) WARD C. PITFIELD, S. HAYWARD.

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAINT JOHN, to wit:

Be it remembered that WARD C. PITFIELD and SAMUEL HAYWARD, parties to and the signers of the annexed notice and certificate, personally came and appeared at the City of Saint John, in the City and County of Saint John and Province of New Brunswick, before me, J. E. BARNES, one of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace in and for the said City and County of Saint John, and acknowledged the said WARD C. PITFIELD that he signed the said notice and certificate, and the said SAMUEL HAYWARD that he signed the same.

Given under my hand at the said City of Saint John this Twenty-first day of December, A. D. 1891.

(Signed) J. E. BARNES, J. P. City and County of Saint John.

Partnership Notice.

THE undersigned, desirous of forming a Limited Partnership under the Laws of the Province of New Brunswick, hereby certify:

1. That the name of the firm under which such partnership is to be conducted is "W. C. PITFIELD & Co."

2. That the general nature of the business intended to be transacted by such partnership is the buying and selling at wholesale of dry goods and other merchandise, and generally a wholesale dry goods and general jobbing and commission business.

3. That the names of all the general and special partners interested in said partnership are as follows:

WARD C. PITFIELD, who resides at the City of Saint John in the City and County of Saint John and Province of New Brunswick, is the general partner, and SAMUEL HAYWARD, who resides at the Parish of Hampton in the County of Kings and Province of New Brunswick, is the special partner.

4. That the said SAMUEL HAYWARD has contributed the sum of forty thousand dollars as capital to common stock.

5. That the period at which the said partnership is to commence is the Second day of January, A. D. 1892, and the period at which the said partnership is to terminate is the Second day of January, A. D. 1896.

Dated this Thirty-first day of December, A. D. 1891.

(Signed) WARD C. PITFIELD, S. HAYWARD.

PROVINCE OF NEW BRUNSWICK.

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAINT JOHN, SS.

Be it remembered that on this Thirty-first day of December, A. D. 1891, at the City of Saint John and Province of New Brunswick, before me, JAMES A. BELLEYA, a Notary Public in and for the said Province, by lawful authority duly commissioned and sworn, residing and practising in the said City of Saint John, personally came and appeared, WARD C. PITFIELD and SAMUEL HAYWARD, parties to and the signers of the annexed certificate, and in the said certificate mentioned and severally acknowledged, the said WARD C. PITFIELD that he signed the said certificate, and the said SAMUEL HAYWARD that he signed the said certificate.

In witness whereof, I the said Notary have hereunto set my hand and Notarial Seal at the said City and County of Saint John, the said

Thirty-first day of December, A. D. 1891.

(Signed) JAMES A. BELLEYA, Notary Public.

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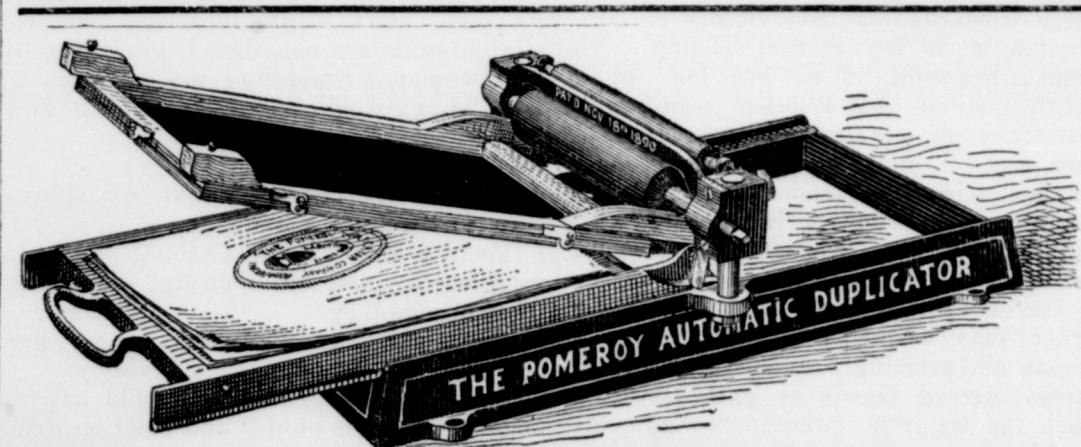
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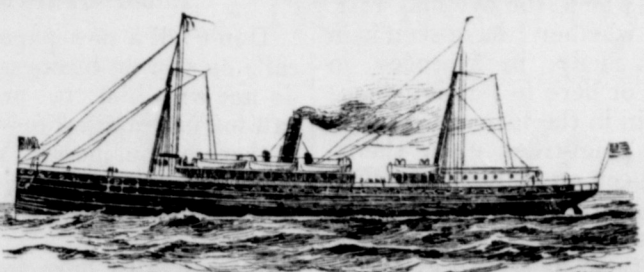
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