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of the Gospels. And this is how he treats the facts that are unacceptable. There is Christ's teaching on Judgment. That is not harmonious with the Quaker idea that evil can never be overcome by severity. What then does the writer say about a fact which is everywhere in the Gospels, and is attested as well as any fact they contain. He says simply that this teaching is inconsistent with the teaching of love and must have been radically influenced by the current apocalyptic beliefs. In other words, we do not have Christ's real teaching but something He said, modified by beliefs in the disciples' minds.

Similarly, in dealing with the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Quakers have no sacraments, and the effort of Mr. GRUBB is to show that Jesus never instituted any permanent rite. But St. Paul definitely gives Christ Himself as his authority for the institution of this particular rite. How does the writer meet this? Simply by saying that this is no doubt Paul's way of affirming his conviction of the soundness of the tradition. There are many instances of a similar treatment of history in Mr. Middleton Murry's 'Life of Christ.' But one is not surprised to find them in an essay in which the author claims that his literary training is a good substitute for theological or critical ability. Mr. Murry, for example, believes that the betrayal of Jesus by Judas was a 'put-up job,' arranged by Jesus and Judas between them! How could one expect a serious treatment of history in a writer capable of this *tour de force*?

The serious aspect of the tendency referred to must be obvious to any reflective person. Truth has two sides, the side of fact or reality and the side

of subjective apprehension of this reality. The reality may be spiritual, like the existence of God, or historical, like the resurrection of Christ. But you cannot divorce the subjective side from the objective without peril. Take the case of the belief in a living Christ, which is the very soul of any Christianity worthy of consideration. You may say that the experience of the ages substantiates the belief. And that may be true, so far. But if you cut away the historical facts which recreate this belief and confirm it, you not only imperil the belief, but you give some reasonable excuse for scepticism to call the belief an illusion without a basis in solid fact.

Moreover, 'experience' can be found to support any and every belief. Romanists will say that experience supports their belief in Transubstantiation, while there are other churchmen who will say that experience supports their belief in the Sacrament as a merely memorial feast. The touchstone of fact is needed to distinguish the morbid, the individualistic, the arbitrary from the substantial and the real. And, therefore, on the ground of loyalty to truth and on the ground of the interests of a genuine Catholic Christianity, it is time that attention was drawn to the manner in which the facts of gospel history are too often treated. It is true that every statement of historical fact in the Gospels is not to be accepted without careful scrutiny. Let us by all means have a scientific examination of the evidence. But the *arbitrary* rejection of historical statements under the influence of preconceived opinions is not scientific, and we should have a truer and saner view of New Testament history if this caution were more generally observed.

The 'Historical Movement' in the Study of Religion.

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THE misconception regarding the historical study of religion which prevails in some quarters had its origin in an interpretation of the words which was not intended by us. Books dealing with non-Biblical religions frequently bear the title 'Uni-

versal History of Religion.' From this fact it was held to be a legitimate assumption that the historical study of the religion of the Bible would seek to explain that religion in connexion with the extra-Biblical religions, and interpret Hebrew and

Christian facts as historically dependent on matters that lie altogether outside of them. Opponents of the historical movement add that to their minds this attitude can only mean such a dragging down of what is Biblical to the level of the non-Biblical as to obliterate all difference between them; and they say that such an attitude can only be due to intentional hostility to revealed religion and the Bible.

Now I think I am entitled to say from my own personal knowledge that the words 'History of Religion,' when they were made the motto of the movement, had a far more comprehensive signification. At the time when this movement began, books with the title 'Universal History of Religion' had not yet influenced theological study. The words were not borrowed by us from the works of other men on extra-Biblical religions. The co-operation of lay scholars—valuable as it afterwards became—was at that time almost non-existent. Least of all were we animated by hostility to the Bible or to Christianity. On the contrary, the thoughts that then filled our minds had arisen within theology itself and had a definitively positive character. When we spoke of the 'History of Religion,' we always meant in the first place the History of the Religion of the Bible. We involuntarily conjoined the two great words 'History' and 'Religion,' which had been the guiding stars of our lives. It was our enthusiasm which coined the expression 'History of Religion' in this sense. Before our eyes, uplifting us and bearing us onward, stood a wondrous picture—the Religion of the Bible in all its glory and dignity. We had come to see that such a phenomenon can be understood only when it is understood in its history, in its growth and becoming. It seemed to us to be a sublime task to understand this religion in its depth and breadth, to trace it through its winding course, to be present at the birth of its deepest thoughts.

The question has often been asked how this historical movement arose, and some strange conjectures have been offered. As a matter of fact, it is nothing but a new wave of the mighty historical current set in motion by our great idealist thinkers and poets, which has affected our entire mental life, and has now long influenced our theological outlook also. Indeed, the foundations of the historical movement in theological study are the same as those laid by our teachers Harnack and Wellhausen, although in some details we may have parted company with these honoured men. But we also find our lofty models in the great historians of our nation. Long ago—if I may be allowed to speak of myself—

before I knew anything about theology, I found in Gustav Freytag, with his affectionate understanding of the inmost nature of our nation, the model for every student of the history of the human mind; and our sole aim was to apply with strict consistency to the study of the Bible the same principles as are followed in all other historical work, and have long been recognized as natural and valid in that field. That we should meet with so much opposition we, in our inexperience, certainly never imagined; but all the greater has been our joy to find the inward affinity between the lines of study recognized by our lay friends, so that historians, philosophers, and philologists have come to our aid as friends and fellow-workers.

Our first encounter was with the school of Wellhausen to which we ourselves had belonged, and whose great and imperishable work I have never been weary of praising. This school had concluded a dubious alliance between the History of Religion and Literary Criticism—an alliance in which, in our opinion, the former was not allowed its full rights. Here also our attitude was obscured by misunderstandings, and I should like to state here emphatically that we do not dream of opposing Literary Criticism in itself. No one who is acquainted with the condition in which the Bible tradition has come down to us can wish to deny that there is a place for scientific criticism. The critical spirit will last as long as Biblical Science itself, even although the positions adopted by individual critics or schools of criticism—ourselves included—subsequently prove to be erroneous. Further, with the method of research followed by the Wellhausen school, which makes literary criticism the basis of constructive historical work, no fault can be found. The student must, of course, first know what the tradition, after it has been purged from its errors, actually says, before he can proceed to delineate the history that lies behind the sources.

Our objections, therefore, are in no way directed against criticism as such, but against the tendency to postulate an over-close relation between Literary Criticism and the History of Religion. The school of Wellhausen was and still is inclined, in its constructive historical work, to be too subservient to the literary documents, overlooking the fact that special precautions must be taken if the actual history is to be successfully reconstructed from the sources, however carefully these may have been sifted. For example, some of the followers of Wellhausen thought they were safe in dating a thought or a conception in the period in which it

appears in our sources ; but in doing so they have given insufficient weight to the fact that these sources were certainly not compiled with the object of providing after ages with a complete picture of the history of the religion. It is quite possible that a thought, an incident, a conception, a turn of speech, a custom, appearing in our documents at a late period, really belongs to a much earlier age.

But we had another point of difference with Wellhausen's school. They were disposed to pay too little heed to what has *not* come down to us in the literature. How much there is in the life and thought of an ancient people, passing from lip to lip, which never or not till quite a late period appears in the literature ! All the rich content of such oral tradition must be included in our total reckoning, if that reckoning is to be accurate. The Wellhausen school follow too closely the principle, *quod non est in actis, non est in mundo*, and place too much weight on the argument *ex silentio*. For example, because the older narratives of Genesis, as we have them, come to us in the versions of the Jahvist and Elohist, they are ascribed to the dates of these writers, whereas there is no doubt whatever that they go back to a much earlier time, and were merely redacted and edited by these writers or schools of writers. It is another instance of the same procedure when scholars ascribe to an individual writer, whose name has by chance come down to us, what was really the product of a much larger circle of men. An element of the national faith, such as the name 'Jahveh Zebaoth,' was said to be a creation of Amos ; the figure of the Satan was a creation of Zechariah ; and the highly developed Individualism of a later age was declared to be, not the final product of a whole history of civilization and religion, but simply a conception of Ezekiel, whereas Ezekiel was only the first to formulate it clearly and dogmatically.

In this connexion there is another thing that should not be left unsaid. The predominant importance attached to Literary Criticism has also pushed into the background all interest in the history of the literature on its æsthetic side. To be sure, Wellhausen himself is entirely guiltless in this matter. That great and versatile scholar all along devoted much attention to the literary forms of the Old Testament writings, and described in masterly fashion the æsthetic qualities of the Jahvist narrative. Indeed, a school of literary history might have been expected to arise under his inspiration. Things have turned out differently, but there is all the greater reason why we should now make up for lost time and do what has been neglected.

In future, therefore, these two lines of study—the History of Religion and Literary History—should work together. Such co-operation will, we hope, infuse fresh life into the study of Literary Criticism.

There are numerous other points to which reference might be made, but I shall mention only one more—the dryness and lack of interest that characterize so many Old Testament commentaries. This peculiar insipidity of our exegesis is perhaps due to the fact that our scholarship is a direct descendant of Rationalism, and that the revolution which took place in theology at the beginning of the nineteenth century affected our science but slightly and left no lasting impression. Even Wellhausen, who is as far as possible from being a Rationalist, did not succeed in changing this type of exegesis, although we gladly acknowledge that there are many exceptions among the works produced by his school. One of the most urgent tasks of theology to-day is to bring about such a reform of Bible exposition as would lay the main emphasis on the understanding of the *religion* and especially of the religious personalities.¹

But our objection to the one-sidedness of literary criticism is only one aspect of our historical movement. There is another aspect which is attracting far more attention to-day and which is usually in men's minds when that movement is mentioned. In order to explain what I mean, I may be allowed to go a little further back.

Our historical work is concerned with a book which has always occupied a unique place in the Christian Church and which our fathers have always looked upon as given by God Himself. This special significance of Holy Scripture is the real and actual basis of all Biblical scholarship. It is just because the theory of inspiration—although in principle long ago destroyed or revolutionized—is still working in men's minds everywhere, that all work on the Bible has an interest that it would not otherwise possess. Bible study lives and moves in this special significance of all that concerns the Bible. Should the time ever come—we believe it never will come—when the Bible ceases to be the foundation of the Christian Church, Bible scholarship would also receive a fatal blow.

But, on the other hand, it is also undeniable, that this position of the Bible has sometimes prevented and sometimes retarded the scientific study of it, and that these dangers have not entirely disappeared even now. From its very beginning down to the

¹ This task has been taken up in recent works. See especially the so-called 'Göttinger Bibel.'

present day, all scientific work on the Bible has been an endeavour to break away from the limits of the Canon of Scripture. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was found that the Revelation of St. John belongs to the Jewish extra-canonical apocalyptic type of literature, and that it is unintelligible apart from that literature. Even our rationalistic predecessors had had their attention called to the numerous parallels to Biblical narratives supplied by classical tradition. Down to thirty years ago it was the universal practice to restrict Biblical scholarship to the contents of the Canon. The 'Apostolic Fathers,' for example, the ancient Christian literature that immediately succeeded the New Testament writings, were not used in the exposition of the New Testament, although they closely resembled the writings contained in that collection. It was only slowly and reluctantly admitted that the two literatures are to a large extent indistinguishable. It was also maintained that the New Testament was to be explained from the Hebrew Canon, leaving out of account the writings that lie between the Old and the New Testament, the so-called Old Testament Apocrypha. The claim that the eschatology of the New Testament should be interpreted, not from Old Testament prophecy but from contemporary, *i.e.*, late Jewish thought—a claim perfectly clear and almost axiomatic to every student of history—aroused indignant surprise. It was at this juncture, when this tendency had long been in vogue, that the representatives of the historical movement came forward, bringing nothing novel or strange, but merely applying well-known principles of historical study to an epoch of ancient history. Here also in principle we are at one with the Wellhausen school. Whereas previous scholarship had entirely omitted all reference to the religions of other peoples, Wellhausen and his disciples, especially Stade, had studied various primitive religions, in particular that of the Arabs. Pursuing the same path and continuing work already begun, the historical movement took up the study of Babylonian, Egyptian, and Persian religion, and it claims to have shown that at some points, important if not numerous, Hebrew and Jewish religion reveals dependence on foreign influence. These questions have turned out to be of special importance for the study of the New Testament. It is now known from the papyri that at the time of the great turning-point in the history of religion, a pronounced Syncretism, *i.e.* a mixture, combining elements of many older religions, was proceeding in the Hellenistic world; and the question has

emerged, whether and to what extent nascent Christianity has drunk out of this stream.

This widening of the horizon took place very slowly, and has only now become generally known. If it cannot be said to have fundamentally changed the attitude of Biblical scholarship, it has at least changed its direction. Just as a man who knows only one language does not really know any language; just as he who studies the history of one state requires to know something of what the life of a state means; so it is our conviction that all religions constitute an essential unit, and that the student of the religion of the Bible must needs know in addition something of Religion as such. As a matter of fact, therefore, Biblical study opens out at this point into the Universal History of Religion. At the same time it must be said emphatically that it was not the effrontery of a few men that led to the taking up of this position; it is inherent in the nature of historical study. If there is to be a real and scientific study of the religion of the Bible—and the interests of the Protestant Church properly understood are deeply concerned that there should be—then there must also be a study of the history of religion in the sense just explained. The numerous risks that attend such a study—and how many faint hearts have raised warning voices over the cradle of this babe?—must not be allowed to frighten us from it. He who seeks the truth always walks on a narrow ledge across the abyss. It has ever been thus and always will be.

The only serious arguments against such an attitude are those which urge that studies of this kind will ultimately destroy the Christian Religion. To the student of history, all religion, including the Christian religion, is a phenomenon of the human mind. But the Christian believes in a Divine revelation. Wherever religion is experienced, it is experienced as an inward communion, a reciprocal converse between God and man, and the religious mind can never surrender this conviction. It would appear, therefore, that a man who tries to deal with history scientifically, and who at the same time feels a deep personal interest in religion and in the Christian Church, must find himself faced by a serious conflict of duties. We are, however, firmly convinced that these two things—the insatiable hunger of the human heart after God and the ineradicable search after Truth—come from one and the same Divine source, and can therefore never contradict each other. *There must be a way out.* But that way out is certainly not the way indicated by a conventional crude Supernaturalism. We are not entitled to select from the course of history

some isolated facts or some entire periods and declare that these and these alone are of God and supernatural. Just as no engineer of our day, who has built with materials of insufficient strength, is entitled to rely on Divine interposition—we should rather call such conduct dishonest—just as no student of natural science, coming upon a phenomenon that he cannot explain, is entitled to take refuge in the supposition that it is due to other than natural causes; so it is simply impossible for an historian to permit fundamental exceptions within the entire course of history. He cannot dissect the history of religion into a part that is revealed and a part that is of man. Were it really the case that sometimes, and no one can say how often, the continuity of Nature is suspended and replaced by something else, there would be an end to all science.

But of course there is a point where the two apparently irreconcilable interests do unite—a point that has long been familiar to every religious mind in all other spheres except Biblical scholarship. In Church History we find the religious and the historical view existing side by side without impinging upon each other in any way. Luther was a gift of God to the German nation. We say that with glad conviction, but we straightway set about discovering how Luther became a reformer. And we do the same with men and events of our own time. We know that we are the offspring of our parents, but we also claim that we and all other creatures have our being from God. We believe in the Holy Ghost who brings us to God, but that does not prevent us from reflecting upon the actual paths by which we have thus been led to Him. And we do the same in practical affairs. We know that the children of a degraded family will in all probability be degraded, but we are conscious of the duty of doing what in us lies to remove them from such conditions, and are sure that he who would limit his efforts in such a case to praying for a miracle would be acting wickedly. We do not expect that God will give the light of the gospel to Darkest Africa without the co-operation of Christendom, and still we render Him praise for every successful missionary effort. Thus the natural human view and the religious view can quite well exist together. Should not the same

hold good for the study of the history of religion? Who will interdict the religious historian when he comes to the climaxes of history, or when he reviews its entire course, from folding his hands in reverent silence and realizing that he is at one with the religious minds of all time? As he thus muses, he will say, Wherever a heart has been uplifted to God, however inadequate the forms, in Israel or anywhere else in the world, God has never been far off: whenever His chosen children have tasted of His grace and seen something of His truth, it was He who gave this to them. His name is worshipped among the nations; as the prophet says: North and South lie in the peace of His hands. Over all is the Spirit of God, here in lesser, there in greater fullness. Sometimes it is as if heaven itself were opened, and the Word, which at other times is like seed scattered abroad, itself becomes flesh. 'The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'

We are sure that the historical movement, by shedding new light on the ancient Scriptures, is truly serving genuine religion. Never do we experience greater joy than when we discover golden treasure where only rubbish has been looked for. There are, it is true, other passages of the Old Testament to which earlier expositors, unable to read them in the light of history, have given meanings derived from later, more developed religion: to these passages our fidelity to truth has compelled us to give a more limited significance.

To our great joy we are receiving an increasing body of testimony from working clergymen, assuring us that they are finding the results of our work serviceable for the edification of their people. It is our hope that the genuine zeal which this movement has produced will carry it further still. As long as such enthusiasm lasts, no foe will be able to hurt it.

When I once more recall the lofty aim which the historical study of religion has in view, and compare with it the poor results we have been able to achieve, my heart is filled with sadness, and in closing I feel constrained to say: 'Do not judge us by what we have done, but by what we have attempted; not by what we have achieved, but by the goal at which we aim.'