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THE VALUE OF THE PATRISTIC WRITINGS FOR THE CRITICISM AND EXEGESIS OF THE BIBLE.

III.—EXEGESIS (*concluded*).

THE greater Fathers have all their distinctive characteristics. Thus, for instance, it has been said that of the three leading figures in the Latin Church "Ambrose is the character; Jerome the talent; Augustine the genius," [1] reminding us of Goethe's well-known saying—

> Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
> Ein Character sich in dem Strom der Welt.

Jerome's quiet cell at Bethlehem and the stormy position of Ambrose at Milan certainly correspond to these conditions. The term "genius" applied to Augustine will not of course be supposed to exclude "character," or even "talent." Augustine was a born ruler of men as much as Ambrose was; he possessed ability, equal perhaps in its way, though differently directed, to that of Jerome; but he possessed yet a third quality which seemed to throw these into shade. His sensitive emotional nature, rendering him highly susceptible to the most varied impressions, and at the same time the quick and daring imagination, which is often seen to go along with fine organizations of this kind, combined to give to his writings that peculiar stamp which is known as "genius."

Nor is it difficult to indicate, with reference to the particular subject before us, the special direction which the different mental constitution of the most eminent patristic commentators led them to take. In this limited field, too, the individualities are clearly marked.

[1] Ebert, *Geschichte der christlichlateinischen Literatur*, p. 203.

Taking the five great contemporaries, "if Chrysostom is the type of the homilist, and Theodoret of the annotator," [1] Theodore of Mopsuestia is primarily and peculiarly, the exegete; and in like manner if Jerome is *par excellence* the learned commentator, Augustine would have an equally undisputed title to be called the doctrinal commentator. As a commentator Augustine has many weaknesses. In all the vast range of his writings there is probably no one department in which the result is as a whole so marred by imperfections. And yet even here his excellence comes out, and he is able to contribute what no other commentator has contributed in equal degree.

Let us work out this proposition a little more fully. And first we must needs pursue the ungracious task of pointing out some of the faults which detract from the value of Augustine's commentaries. We have had occasion to speak of the defects of preceding writers. We have seen how the work of Origen and his followers was spoilt by allegorizing and the ignoring of the difference between the Old and New Testaments. We have seen how the Antiochene school, though avoiding to a greater or less extent this error, yet fell into the prevalent superstition in regard to the Septuagint, and approached the Old Testament especially with very inadequate philological preparation. Every one of these defects Augustine shared. He abounds in allegories. He is constantly finding New Testament doctrines in Old Testament texts. His knowledge of the Greek of the New Testament was very defective, while of Hebrew he not only knew nothing, but preferred the Septuagint Version of the Hebrew books to the original.

[1] Swete, *Theod. Episc. Mops. in Epist. B. Pauli Comm.* vol. i. p. lxxviii.

At the end of the last paper allusion was made to the controversy between Augustine and Jerome about the passage in the Epistle to the Galatians relating the rebuke of St. Peter by St. Paul at Antioch. We saw there how Augustine set an example of honest and straightforward interpretation where, from the very beginning of Christian commenting, the temptation to explain away the obvious meaning of the narrative had proved too strong. Into these tortuous paths both Clement of Alexandria and Origen had entered, and in the steps of the latter the greatest of succeeding commentators had followed. Both Chrysostom and Jerome had strongly maintained the view put forward by him, and even Theodore of Mopsuestia, though apparently leaning to the natural interpretation, only stated it as an alternative with the other. Augustine deserves every credit for the moral clearsightedness with which he refused to accept the current explanation, and for his independence in resisting so great a weight of authority; but if we turn to another side of the same controversy, his position was as weak as on this it was unassailable.

The same letter which conveyed Augustine's remonstrances to Jerome over his unworthy view of the behaviour of the two Apostles at Antioch, also contained another remonstrance directed against Jerome's immortal work, the Vulgate. Augustine was as much the inferior of Jerome in scholarship and the scholarly instinct as he was superior to him in depth of Christian character. He was not free from the timidity which has always stood in the way of the thoroughgoing revision—however abundantly justified in itself—either of the current forms of the Sacred Text or of a much

used and cherished Version. He took his stand upon the universal acceptance which the Septuagint enjoyed. He himself gave credence to the legends which surrounded its origin.[1] Even the story of the seventy-two cells in which the translators were confined and yet produced a coincident result, finds favour with him, though it is brusquely rejected by Jerome. He was naturally reluctant to see the accepted Latin Version, made from a text which he thus believed to be divinely inspired, superseded by another, even though it was made not at second-hand, but directly from the original. He foresaw great evils from its introduction. He feared that it would cause a breach between the Eastern and Western Churches if they used a different Bible. Already the new Version had begun to cause excitement and commotion. An African bishop who had read from it the passage Jonah iv. 6, in which *hedera*, "ivy" had been substituted for the familiar "gourd," had been interrupted by such clamours that after consulting with a Jew he had been obliged to admit the error, and withdrew the obnoxious word.[2] For his own part Augustine wished to see a revision of the old Latin Version by comparison with the Septuagint, but further than this he was not prepared to go.

A glimpse like this into the difficulties with which Jerome had to contend, and the recollection that he was opposed not only by Augustine, but also by Theodore of Mopsuestia, the most critical spirit of his time,

[1] Trench, *St. Augustine on the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 18.

[2] Zöckler, *Hieronymus*, p. 271. In the rendering *hedera* Jerome had followed the Greek Versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, all of which had κισσός, apparently in imitation of the Hebrew word *Kîkaion*. Modern commentators identify the plant in question with the "palmcrist.

increases our respect for his great achievement and removes any lingering wonder at the concessions to popular prejudice which have left their marks upon it. Let us only hope that the similar revision which the English-speaking branch of the Church has undertaken may meet with a more calm and reasonable judgment at the outset as well as with a like ultimate success.

The principles of Scriptural interpretation which Augustine followed are laid down in a treatise specially devoted to this subject. There is much in this that is still not without value. The spiritual qualifications of the interpreter are well defined.[1] And the range of general knowledge required cannot be said to be too restricted. Here at least the study of Hebrew and Greek is enjoined, though only, as it would seem, to decide between the Latin Versions where they differed. But beside these linguistic attainments, which hardly have the first place, there is a long catalogue of other things which the Biblical interpreter ought to know. He must be acquainted with the properties of plants and animals, in order to understand what the Scripture says about them. He should have some knowledge of music, so as to be aware of the difference between a harp and a psaltery. He must study history, chronology, rhetoric, and the like. The works of profane writers are not to be ignored, so far as they are free from superstition.

And yet, even here, sound as these remarks are in the abstract, it is clear that Augustine's theoretical

[1] *De Doct. Christ.* ii. 7, 9–11. Still more striking and profoundly true, though paradoxical, are the following: "Dicet mihi homo, Intelligam ut credam. Ego ei respondeam, Immo crede ut intelligas. Intellectus enim merces est fidei." And again: "Credat in Christum ut possit intelligere Christum" (quoted by Trench, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 11).

standpoint was higher than his practice. He gives good advice, but the examples by which he illustrates it are often futile enough. Thus natural history teaches that the serpent offers its body rather than its head to a blow. This is supposed to throw a light upon the precept to be "wise as serpents," as if it meant that the Christian was to give his body to the persecutors rather than deny his head which is Christ.[1] Again, music will explain the hidden meaning of the number "forty and six years" that the temple was building, in its relation to the Lord's body; it will also give a clue to the origin of fables such as that of the nine Muses.[2] A comparison of sacred and profane history will shew that the forty-six years cannot refer, as some imagined, to the age at which the Lord suffered, but rather to the mystical configuration of his human body.[3] Or, again, when the Platonists assert that Christian teaching is borrowed from Plato, Gentile history proves that Plato was in Egypt at the same time as Jeremiah, and learnt the truth from him.[4]

Augustine did not go so far as Origen, nor even quite so far as Jerome, in resolving history entirely into allegory. He was not prepared to give up the literal sense of a narrative altogether, unless it could be shewn to be distinctly opposed to sound doctrine. His greater breadth of view and moral insight led him to defend the literal accuracy of the narrative of David and Bathsheba which Jerome was prepared to sacrifice; and in words at least he lays it down that the historical foundations of every narrative must be

[1] *De Doct. Christ.* ii. 16. 24. [2] Ibid. ii. 16. 26. 17. 27. [3] Ibid. ii. 28. 42.
[4] Ibid. § 43. The value of Augustine's chronology is seen in the fact that the propnet Jeremiah was dead nearly a century and a half before Plato was born!

accepted as true, otherwise the spiritual meaning deduced from it will be built upon air.[1] But, in practice, this does not prevent him from carrying allegory to the most extravagant lengths. We have just seen some examples of his method, and they might be multiplied indefinitely. The whole history of the Jewish kings is quite as much a prophecy of things future as a record of things past.[2] That beautiful nature-psalm, the 104th, is reduced to a dry skeleton of "figures and mysteries." Even the anointing of the feet of Jesus at Bethany must needs be explained away. "No sober person can believe that our Lord really had his feet anointed by a woman with precious ointment, as luxurious and wicked men are wont to do at feasts—the like of which we detest."[3]

But the reader ceases to wonder at anything when he has before him the "Rules" of the dominant exegesis which Augustine quotes with thorough approval.[4] These "Rules" had been drawn up by a certain Tichonius, formerly a Donatist, who had afterwards, as Augustine says, written most conclusively against the Donatists. His Rules are seven in number. The first rule is entitled, "Of the Lord and His Body." The meaning of this rule is that the same sentence may refer at once to Christ and the Church without any change of person. For instance, the faithful "are Abraham's seed" (Gal. iii. 29), though Abraham has but one seed, viz., Christ. Tichonius' second rule is "Of the Lord's Bipartite Body"—a title which Augustine somewhat criticises, and which he explains as referring to the mixture of good and bad of the Church; as, for instance, where it is said in the Song of Songs,

[1] Trench, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 51.
[2] *De Doct. Christ.* iii. 12. 18.
[3] Ibid. p. 55.
[4] Ibid. iii. 30–37.

"I am black, but comely as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon." The mention of Kedar shews that the descendants of Ishmael are meant who shall not be heirs with the son of the free woman. The third rule has for its subject "The Promises and the Law," which Augustine himself considers to be not so much a rule as a weighty theological problem. The fourth rule deals with "Species and Genus," or, in other words, "whole and part." According to this rule, single cities or states, such as Jerusalem, Tyre, Judæa, Egypt, may stand for the whole nation or aggregate of nations of which they form a part; and, again, single individuals, like Solomon, may stand for Christ and the Church. The fifth rule is "Of Times." These are partly reckoned by synecdoche, parts of days being reckoned as whole days, *e.g.*, where the same event is said in one Gospel to have taken place "after six days" (*i.e.*, six whole days), and in another, "after eight days," adding to the six whole days the end of one and beginning of another. Partly the rule relates to the peculiar properties of numbers 7, 10, 70, and so on. His sixth rule Tichonius called "Recapitulation." By this rule events which might seem to be related out of order might really bear reference to some previous narrative, of which they formed a recapitulation. For instance, where it is said that "the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and here he put the man whom he had formed; and out of the ground the Lord made to grow every tree," &c., this last statement should have really in order of time preceded the last but one. It is, however, merely a recapitulatory reference to the first of the three propositions, describing how the garden was planted. The seventh rule is entitled, "Of the Devil and his Body." This is

the antithesis of the first rule. The devil is (in a sense) the head of the wicked, and they (in a sense) form his body, just as Christ is the head of the Church and the Church is his body; and the same care must be used in discriminating the expressions which refer to the one or the other.

It is only fair to say that these rules are stated by Augustine in a form considerably more reasonable than they seem to have borne in the original.[1] The element of truth and sense in them is brought into the foreground, and the more absurd extravagances are left comparatively out of sight. But still they can hardly be considered to promise very much for the sound interpretation of Scripture; nor, as as we have seen, did Augustine's superior ability exempt him to any large extent from the radically vicious methods of his time.

The directions in which Augustine's exegesis has produced results of really permanent value are mainly two—in the department of apologetics and in that of doctrine; or, in other words, of doctrine on its negative side, where it is necessary to clear up misconceptions and to ward off attacks; and of doctrine on its positive side, where exegesis helps to construct and fill in the details of Christian teaching.

It cannot be said that Augustine was impartial in the sense in which impartiality is so loudly demanded at the present day. His practice was certainly not that of many critics who call themselves, and are called by others, impartial. If the *primâ facie* view of a passage seemed adverse to the truth of Scripture and of Christianity, he was very far from assuming eagerly and at once that this *primâ facie* view must necessarily be right. He went, it must be confessed, to the oppo-

[1] See the examples given in Merx, *Eine Rede vom Auslegen*, &c., pp. 61–64.

site extreme. The facile instrument of allegory always lay within his reach, and if any real difficulty arose, the temptation was great to have recourse to it. He asserts in so many words that whatever in Holy Writ cannot properly be referred to moral rectitude or orthodoxy of doctrine may be understood to be figurative or allegorical [1]—obviously a dangerous principle, and one that has led Augustine, as it has led others of the Fathers, very much astray. But there was a safeguard in Augustine's case which made the principle less pernicious than it proved to others, and might have been to him. His vast range of spiritual experience and unequalled penetration of spiritual insight supplied him with the solution for many a difficulty which otherwise might have seemed insoluble. Augustine is indeed a conspicuous example of the true function which difficulties fill in the Divine economy. Their object seems to be to drive man back upon himself, to make him search at the foundations of things, and so gradually lead him to deeper views of truth than those which he finds in vogue about him. Augustine himself brings out this well. "Was the doctrine of the Trinity," he asks, "handled at all completely before the Arians began to bark against it? Was the treatment of penitents handled completely before the Novatians began to raise opposition? In like manner the question of baptism was not handled completely until the re-baptizers outside the Church began their contradictions." [2]

The difficulties that Augustine does most to meet are the *moral* difficulties. In spite of his allegorizing, he seems to have grasped the idea to which allegory is so apt to be fatal—of the progressiveness of revela-

[1] *De Doct. Christ.* iii. 10. 14. [2] Quoted by Trench, p. 41.

tion. He rebukes the censorious strictness of those who would judge the actions of the patriarchs by their own petty standard: "As if on a day when business is publicly stopped in the afternoon, one were angered at not being allowed to keep open shop, because he had been in the forenoon; or when in one house he observeth some servant take a thing in his hand, which the butler is not allowed to meddle with; or something permitted out of doors which is forbidden in the dining-room; and should be angry that in one house and one family the same thing is not allowed everywhere and to all. Even such are they, who are fretted to hear something to have been lawful for righteous men formerly, which now is not; or that God, for certain temporal respects, commanded them one thing and these another, obeying both the same righteousness: whereas they see, in one man, and one day, and one house, different things to be fit for different members, and a thing formerly lawful, after a certain time not so; in one corner permitted or commended, but in another rightly forbidden and punished. Is justice, therefore, various or mutable? No; but the times over which it presides flow not evenly, because they are times."[1] This thoroughly sound and most important principle Augustine largely applies to the questions raised in regard to the Old Testament. It is on this ground that he defends such practices as polygamy, circumcision, the distinction in meats, the law of retaliation. By this principle he explains the apparent discrepancy between the character ascribed to God in the Old Testament and that ascribed to Him in the New. In a similar way he accounts for the severity exercised against the Canaanites — it was really a righteous

[1] *Confessions*, iii. 7. 13 (quoted by Trench, as above).

punishment for flagrant sin, a punishment not in itself excessive because it only hastened the hour of mortality, and not greater than the sin deserved. The true spirit in which it was intended that such a punishment should be inflicted was one of pure justice, not of vindictiveness or hate; and if the individual Israelite allowed such feelings to enter in, just so far he forgot and disobeyed his commission.[1]

In like manner Augustine dealt with the private sins of the patriarchs and kings of Israel. He rarely sought to diminish the significance of the sin itself, or to allegorize it away. He kept to the literal sense of the narrative, though at the same time he very rightly repelled the exaggerated construction that his Manichæan opponents were in the habit of placing upon such acts, treating them as if they represented an habitual and inveterate bent of character. Acts which were in themselves more or less isolated were not taken in their proper perspective along with the rest of the lives of which they formed a part, but were magnified so as to fill the whole canvas. Noah became a drunkard for his one recorded sin, and Moses a murderer for the single slaughter of the Egyptian. Augustine remarks that acts like these are mentioned sometimes with express condemnation, sometimes without comment, but in no case with praise; the intention of Scripture being, where the judgment of God is given, to instruct our ignorance, where it is not given to rouse the slothful mind and make it either recollect that which it has already learnt, or seek for that which it does not know.[2]

On all this side of things Augustine shews a deep practical wisdom—not merely the ready intelligence of

[1] Trench, p. 74. [2] See the quotation in Trench, p. 76.

a Chrysostom, or the acumen of Theodore, but a true σοφία of a profounder kind than theirs—which goes out beyond the limits of the age in which he lived, and makes him a model and pattern for all time. Nor is it otherwise in the field of doctrine. Here, too, Augustine had an advantage over his fellows. With most of them the doctrinal system was a result of speculation undisturbed by great spiritual crises. With him it was the final outcome of a series of mental struggles. Like Jacob, he had wrestled with God and prevailed. The very changes of his youth had all contributed something. As a Pagan, as a Manichee, as a Neoplatonist, he had tasted of a wide experience which was not without value for him as a Christian teacher. The richness and sensitiveness of his own nature had made him reap all that was to be reaped from these successive phases of conviction. He more distinctly than any other of the Fathers of whom we have spoken had gone through the pangs of a heart-rending "conversion." And of the knowledge which this gave he made a full use. He knew in a real and vivid sense what was meant by the state of sin and the state of grace. What to others were ideas and abstractions repeated and passed from mouth to mouth for him were concrete things, the very names of which awoke a thrill throughout his whole being. He had tested and proved that of which others only spoke with a partial and onesided experience. Where they could unlock a door here and a door there, he possessed the master-key to the Scriptures, so far, at least, as their moral and spiritual side was concerned. Hence we find that he has not seldom thrown more light upon obscure passages than others who approached

them with a better technical training and sounder principles of exegesis.

According as the one or the other of these two sides has been put most prominently forward, the estimate of Augustine as a commentator has been comparatively lower or higher. Thus Bishop Lightfoot[1] gives a warning that "spiritual insight, though a far diviner gift than the critical faculty, will not supply its place. In this faculty Augustine was wanting, and owing to this defect, as a continuous expositor he is disappointing. With great thoughts here and there, his commentary on the Galatians is inferior as a whole to several of the patristic expositions." On the other hand, Archbishop Trench, in speaking of a particular passage, the meaning of which had been correctly given by Origen, Chrysostom, and Ambrose, while it is missed by Augustine, rightly describes these writers as "men every one of them less penetrated with the spirit of St. Paul than he was."[2] And in the same sense Dr. Westcott says of him, "Augustine, in his 'Lectures on St. John,' is strongest where Chrysostom is weakest. His ignorance of Greek constantly betrays him into the adoption of a false sense of the words, but his genius no less frequently enables him to enter with the fullest insight into the thought of a passage which may escape the verbal interpreter."[3]

A single example must suffice for the present,[4] and this example shall be taken from the comments upon a chapter which has already been employed—and is well qualified to be employed—as a test of interpretative

[1] *Galatians*, p. 229. [2] *Serm. on the Mount*, p. 85.

[3] *Speaker's Commentary*, *N. T.*, vol. ii. p. xcv.

[4] A very full examination of Augustine's characteristics as a commentator will be found in the work of Archbishop Trench, frequently quoted above.

penetration, St. John vi.[1] Augustine more than any other ancient commentator has made his way through the outer crust of sign and symbol and grasped the full spiritual meaning of that profound chapter. "*This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.* This, then, is to eat, *not that meat which perisheth, but, that which remaineth unto eternal life.* Why make ready the teeth and belly? Believe and thou hast eaten. [The famous *Crede et manducasti*, which contains the key to the whole passage.] . . . The Jews murmured and said, *Is not this Jesus, son of Joseph, of whom we know father and mother? How then saith he I came down from heaven?* These men were far from the Bread of heaven, and knew not how to hunger after it. The jaws of the heart they list not to stir; with ears open they were deaf; they saw and stood blind. For that Bread requireth hungering of the inner man, of which He saith in another place, *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.* Now that Christ is unto us righteousness, the Apostle Paul declareth. And, therefore, whoso hungereth after this Bread, let him hunger after righteousness; only it must be that righteousness which cometh down from heaven, the righteousness which God giveth, not that which man maketh for himself. . . . *No man cometh unto me unless the Father which sent me draw him.* 'If he is drawn,' saith one, 'he cometh against his will.' If he cometh against his will, neither doth he believe; if he believeth not, neither doth he come. For we run not to Christ by putting one foot before the other (*ambulando*), but by believing; neither by motion of

[1] Here, as elsewhere, the translation is that of the Oxford *Library of the Fathers*, with some slight alteration.

the body, but by will of the heart do we draw nigh to Him. Consequently that woman which touched the hem of his garment did more touch Him than the throng which pressed Him. . . . What is *touched* but believed? . . . Hence is it also, if thou give good heed, that He saith in this place, *No man cometh unto me, save whom the Father shall draw.* Do not imagine that thou art drawn against thy will: the mind is drawn also by love. . . . There is a pleasure of the heart, to which sweet is that Bread of heaven. Moreover, if the poet had leave to say, *Trahit sua quemque voluptas* —'Each has his dear delight which draws him on'— not necessity but pleasure; not obligation but delight; how much more strongly ought we to say that man is *drawn* to Christ when he delights in truth, delights in blessedness, delights in righteousness, delights in everlasting life, all which Christ is? . . . Give me one that loves, and he feels what I say. Give me one that longs, one that hungers; give me one that is on pilgrimage in this wilderness, and doth thirst and pant after the fountain of his eternal home; give me such an one, and he knows what I would say. But if I speak to one who is cold, he knows not what I speak. Such were they who murmured among themselves. . . . If then these things, which among delights and pleasures of earth are revealed to those that love them, do draw them, since it is true, *Trahit sua quemque voluptas,* doth not Christ revealed by the Father draw? What doth the soul more eagerly desire than truth? For what ought it to have an eager appetite, wherefore to wish that there may be a healthy palate within to judge what is true, but that it may eat and drink wisdom, righteousness, truth, eternity? . . . *Your fathers,* He saith, *ate manna in the wilderness, and died.* . . . *Your*

fathers in this, that ye are like them. For, my brethren, so far as it regards this visible and corporeal death, do not we die who eat the Bread that cometh down from heaven? They died just as we must die, in regard, as I said, of the visible and carnal death of this body. But as it regards that death from which the Lord deterreth us, the death by which their fathers died, Moses too ate manna, Aaron ate manna, Phineas ate manna, many ate there who pleased the Lord, and died not. Why? Because that visible food they spiritually understood, spiritually hungered after, spiritually tasted, that they might spiritually be filled. For we too at this day do receive visible food; but the Sacrament is one, the virtue of the Sacrament another." [1]

Beyond Augustine we need not go. With his death in 430 A.D. the creative period of patristic exegesis was virtually closed. The materials accumulated during these first four centuries satisfied the wants of those which followed. A period of secondary commentaries set in. Compilations, excerpts, "catenæ," took the place of original and independent work. In the West especially the knowledge of Greek as well as of Hebrew began rapidly to die out. Augustine and Jerome supplied an inexhaustible quarry from which succeeding writers were content to draw. All that was added was a few more idle allegories and not very recondite practical applications. In the East the one figure of real importance is Photius; yet even he contributed in the way of exegesis little that was new, and he, properly speaking, lies outside the patristic age. The last of the Greek Fathers was John Damascene, the predecessor of Photius by rather more than a century, who died at some time not very long after A.D. 754.

[1] *In Joh. Evang. Tract.* xxv., xxvi.

This later period lay wholly under the shadow of the allegorical method. In this, as in other ways, it shews a retrogression from that which had gone before. In the fourth century A.D. the allegorists were engaged in a hard struggle, and the greatest among their number had something much more than allegory to recommend them. By the end of the fifth century they were victorious all along the line, and in the middle of the sixth century their leading opponents were visited with solemn ecclesiastical censure. It is true that this censure was directed in the first instance rather against their dogmatic opinions than their principles of exegesis; but the two things hung too closely together. Theodore and Theodoret still found a place in "catenæ," but their principles received no development, and their practical influence was almost confined to the Nestorian sect.

In this fact a mind that is intent upon the philosophy of history will have a problem set before it. One who believes in the "survival of the fittest" among ideas as well as in the world of animate being, or (what is the same thing) in the providential guidance of the course of human thought by nearer and nearer approximations to the truth—may well think it strange that in this instance at least the less fit of two conflicting theories should seem to have survived, while the more fit sank apparently out of sight and did not reappear in any strength until after the lapse of nearly a thousand years. This, however, is not, of course, an isolated phenomenon. In more ways than one the same period presented a real retrogression. The fallacy lies in forgetting that the "survival of the fittest" means not that which is fittest *absolutely*—in itself and apart from all surrounding conditions—but that which is fittest in relation to the particular set of conditions in which

it is placed. All these conditions are present to the Divine Mind though they cannot be to ours. And hence it has often happened that there have been apparent periods of retrogression and decay, the true function of which has been to lay the seeds of a wider and riper growth. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," is a principle of most extended application. Decay is itself the means as well as the accompaniment of renovation.

So when we look a little more attentively at the question before us, reasons for the Divine disposition of things come into view, which perhaps do not lie quite upon the surface. There is a spiritual truth and there is a scientific truth, which in the ideal and perfect state will be combined, but which in a period of transition may be found not only separated but even opposed, and the triumph of the one may mean a serious and fatal loss to the other. This was very much the position of things in the century which followed the Council of Nicæa. The system of Augustine contained an immense wealth of spiritual truth—truth adapted to the highest and finest capacities of man. The system of Theodore of Mopsuestia contained potentialities at least of science. But there is nothing to shew that the two were capable of amalgamation, or that there was any prospect of their development in union. And apart from any *a priori* estimate of the comparative value of the two forms of truth, it was evident enough from a mere consideration of the historical conditions which must go to the wall. The world was not yet prepared for science. We have seen that with Theodore himself the truths that he

apprehended were rather happy intuitions, flashes of insight, than the regularly obtained results of logical method. The same is the case with the other fragments of scientific principle which might be detected here and there in other writers of the day. There was no firm and solid scientific foundation on which each succeeding builder might lay his contribution of wood or stone. And if this was so with the leading minds, what was to be expected of the masses? The barbarian hordes who poured their new blood and virile energy into the veins of decrepit Greece and Rome, were little qualified even to appreciate what had been done, much less to carry on the work that was still to do. The first thing needful for them was a moral training similar to that which the Israelites had received of old. For this, Augustine was a much better teacher than Theodore of Mopsuestia. The self-reliant Pelagianizing rationalist was not the man to humble the haughty chieftains of the North into contrite submission to Almighty Power, or to bring home to their hardy followers the sinfulness and misery of sin. The Great Artificer adapts his instruments to the work that He has in hand. He lays down one and takes up another as seemeth best in his sight; and however incomplete may be the particular stage of his operation that we chance to see, yet doubtless in view of its ultimate end it is nothing else than "very good."

A time has come in the revolution of the ages when Theodore of Mopsuestia as well as Augustine has a function to perform. The elements of truth that his writings contain are sure of recognition. The defects by which they are accompanied have been in a great degree made good, while the laws of a progressive

development are more clearly ascertained. The scientific study of the Bible has made great advance in recent years, and is likely to make still more as the extravagances of tentative and temporary hypotheses are stripped away. Only it should be remembered that the better the prospect of developing this side of the great aggregate which we call Truth, the more important is it that the other and complementary side should not be neglected. Ultimately we may be quite sure that the conclusions of the intellect and of the emotions must be capable of reconciliation. If at any time they seem to be in conflict, that alone is sufficient proof that the final stage has not yet been reached; the rest for the sole of the foot has not yet been found, and the inquirer must be content to go forward and still forward, deeper and still deeper, until a more satisfactory synthesis can be obtained. Probably never has the outlook been on the whole more hopeful than it is now. In spite of divergences—great and glaring—to the right hand and to the left, there seems to be still more of an equilibrium between the chief moving forces than at any previous time. Both are real; both are active; both are pressing on sanguinely to the goal. And there is at the same time a tendency in them to approximate, a friendliness and a desire for union, such as it seems true to say that there has never been before. The end may still be very far distant, but the scattered groups of seekers seem to be at least gradually working their way into those converging roads that lead towards it. If nothing else is gained this alone will be a great gain, if we can only bring ourselves to see that the roads must and do converge.

W. SANDAY.