Moberly still holds that all God's punishment is remedial. Now, if we were perfectly penitent, we should be accepted. If we were perfectly penitent, we should not need an Atonement. We should by our Penitence make the Atonement ourselves. But we cannot be perfectly penitent. So Christ is needed as our Atonement. He becomes our Atonement by becoming perfectly penitent for our sin.

Dr. Rashdall calls this a surprising doctrine. He wonders how a sinner whose penitence is imperfect can be forgiven his sin. He wonders how he can be forgiven because some one else is penitent. He wonders how One who knew no sin can be said to be penitent at all. Dr. Moberly seems to answer that it all comes from the solidarity of the human race. 'Are we not after all,' he asks, 'much more of one piece than we are willing to recognize?' All humanity, he says, is found in Christ. Each individual may be imperfectly impenitent, but humanity is perfectly penitent in the perfect penitence of Christ, and receives the perfect pardon.

Dr. Rashdall calls it a surprising doctrine still. And he is not less surprised at it that he knows it is not new. He believes that Dr. Moberly has found it mainly in M'Leod Campbell. It has also been held by the Lutheran Theologian Häring in a form closely resembling Dr. Moberly's. But that only makes it the more surprising that Dr. Moberly holds it now. For he surely knows that in the form in which Häring held it Ritschl so answered it as to put an end, one had imagined, to its existence. Dr. Rashdall gives the reference to the English translation of Ritschl's *Justification and Reconciliation* by Mackintosh and Macaulay, the 553rd page.

With which Dr. Rashdall takes leave of Dr. Moberly's theory of the Atonement. He has found the theory wanting. He has found the book which contains it wanting also. For two great contradictions run throughout it. The one is a confusion between an effect on the character of the sinner and an obliteration of the sin or guilt which takes place independently of any such effect. The other is a confusion between the retributive view of punishment and the disciplinary.

Dr. Moberly has not discovered a doctrine of the Atonement. He thought he had. But then his mind is 'incapable of appreciating the fact that the gulf between fundamentally opposite and inconsistent modes of thought cannot be bridged over by a dexterous turn of phrase.'

The Historical Character of the Old Testament Narratives.

By R. Somervell, M.A., Assistant Master and Bursar of Harrow School.

In order to judge fairly of the character of any literary work, we must begin by asking what sort of work it purports to be. We must not condemn a Waverley novel because it is not accurate from the point of view of the historian, nor judge a popular sermon as if it were a treatise on theology.

If we neglect this elementary canon of criticism, we shall inevitably blunder. We shall condemn works, which, judged from the standpoint of their own purport and object, we ought to praise. Scott was a great romancer, though he was not a historian. Savonarola and Spurgeon both knew how to speak to the hearts and consciences of men, —of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come,—though neither of them made any permanent contribution to theology by their sermons.

Such a mistake is, of course, far more serious

when it is made in regard to the books that compose the Old Testament.

And just such a mistake was for long made by the Church, in regarding their references to the physical world as a revelation of scientific truth. For example, up to the beginning of the sixteenth century, it was believed, almost universally, that the earth stood still in the centre of the universe, and that the sun and the starry heavens moved round it. Texts of Scripture, not a few, were quoted in support of this theory, and it had been raised to the rank of a theological dogma by St. Thomas Aquinas and other doctors of the Church.

Kopernik—whom we know better by his Latin name Copernicus—first stated the truth about the earth's motion in his book published in 1543, but died within a few hours of its publication. His work, however, was immediately condemned by the Church of Rome, and the faithful were ordered not to read it, under pain of damnation.

An answer to Kopernik was prepared by Fromundus. Fromundus declares that 'sacred Scripture itself fights against the Copernicans.' To prove that the sun revolves about the earth, he cites the passage in the Psalms which speaks of the sun 'which cometh forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber.' To prove that the earth stands still, he quotes the passage from Ecclesiastes, 'the earth standeth fast for ever.' To show the utter futility of the Copernican ideas, he indulges in scientific reasoning, as he understands it, declaring that if the hated theory were true, 'the wind would constantly blow from the east; we should with great difficulty hear sound against such a wind'; that 'buildings and the earth itself would fly off with such a rapid motion'; and greatest weapon of all, he works up, by the use of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, a demonstration from theology and science combined, that the earth must stand in the centre and that the sun must revolve about it.[1]

Nor were the Protestants behind hand in declaring that the Bible was opposed to Copernicus. Luther said, 'People gave ear to an upstart astrologer, who strove to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmanent, the sun and the moon. . . . This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy. But sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still and not the earth.'

'Melanchthon, mild as he was, was not behind Luther in condemning Kopernik. In his Latin treatise on the *Elements of Physical Science* he says: "The eyes are witnesses that the heavens revolve in the space of twenty-four hours. But certain men, either from the love of novelty or to make a display of ingenuity, have concluded that the earth moves; and they maintain that neither the eighth sphere nor the sun revolves. . . . Now, it is a want of honesty and decency to assert such notions publicly, and the example is pernicious. It is the part of a good mind to accept the truth as revealed by God, and to acquiesce in it." Melanchthon then cites passages from the Psalms and from Ecclesiastes which he declares assert positively and clearly that the earth stands fast and that the sun moves round it, and adds eight other proofs of his proposition that "the earth can be nowhere, if not in the centre of the universe."'[2]

It being thus agreed on all hands that God had revealed in the Bible that the earth is immovable in the centre of the universe, and that the sun moves round it, it was not long before Giordano Bruno was burnt alive for reasserting the teaching of Kopernik.

'Within ten years after the martyrdom of Bruno, after a world of trouble and persecutions, the truth of the doctrine of Kopernik was established by the telescope of Galileo. Herein was fulfilled one of the most touching of prophecies. Years before, the enemies of Kopernik had said to him, "If your doctrine were true, Venus would show phases like the moon." Kopernik answered, "You are right; I know not what to say; but God is good, and will in time find an answer to this objection." The God-given answer came when the rude telescope of Galileo showed the phases of Venus.'

In the same way, even in our day, the conclusions of geologists and biologists were condemned as godless by many excellent men, on the ground that they did not tally with statements in the Bible.

This condition of things is passing, or has passed, away. We have learnt to admit that many of the expressions upon which a scientific meaning was fixed are of the nature not of science but of poetry, and to recognize that the inspiration under which the authors of the Bible wrote did not preserve them from scientific error.

While to those who still object, 'Is not the Bible then true?' we point out that the inquiry

[1] White's *Warfare of Religion and Science*, p. 29.

[2] White, p. 30.

involves the well-known logical 'fallacy of many questions'—the so combining two or three questions into one that no true answer can be given to it.

There are various kinds of truth, truth of natural science, truth of history, moral and religious truth; and the Bible, we say, was not given to teach us natural science.

It is well to recognize not only how complete and revolutionary is this change of view, but also how much the Bible and the Church have gained by it. To realize this will give us courage to face another problem which is indeed the special subject of the following pages.

Many who have abandoned the claim of the Old Testament to be a guide in matters of physical science, still uphold the claim of its narratives to be received as history.

Now in accordance with the principle of which I reminded you at the outset—that we must judge books, not by arbitrary canons of criticism, but by the aim and intention of their writers,—it is important to notice that the classification of books like Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles as 'historical' was quite unknown to the compilers of the sacred canon. In the Jewish Bible the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings belong to the prophets, and the book of Chronicles to the hagiographa or writings.

This fact, familiar enough no doubt to all of us, is very important. That the narratives of the Old Testament are not classed as history, suggests a doubt as to whether the writers or the compilers of the canon had any conception of history at all answering to our own; whether our careful classification of authorities, our distinction between legend and tradition and verified fact, are not processes and conceptions essentially modern, and foreign to the minds of the authors with whom we are dealing; whether as prophets they may not have written for edification, without caring or pausing to criticize their authorities, or to distinguish facts from legends and traditions. And if this be so, we are doing them a grave injustice and running the risk of missing the real importance of their work, if we approach it as history in the modern sense.

The question is one that admits of being brought to the test of facts. We are agreed, I take it, that the inspiration under which our authors wrote did not preserve them from errors in physics. Did it enable them to distinguish history from legend, or preserve them from historical errors?

To accumulate a mass of evidence upon this point would occupy too much time; nor indeed is it necessary. Let me, however, remind you of some examples, familiar enough no doubt in themselves, but from which perhaps we have never drawn the definite conclusion to which they point.

Few things strike one as more accurate and careful than the references in the Book of Kings to the length of each reign, and the year of the contemporary king of Judah or Israel in which each king began to rule. But when we examine these chronological references we find that between the accession of Rehoboam and the fall of Samaria, 255 years are assigned to the kings of Judah and 241 to those of Israel. Some writers assume periods of interregnum in the northern kingdom to account for the missing years. Others assume that in Judah father and son sometimes reigned together, and that fourteen years are thus counted twice over. But in any case, the writers who made and perpetuated the confusion were not thinking primarily of writing history.

Again, when the Chronicler tells us that 333,300 armed men came to Hebron to offer David the crown, and that this was only the nucleus of a larger body who went with him to find the ark, we are driven to conclude that he was not preserved from a serious numerical error in this instance.

Again, we have in not a few cases two stories told to account in different ways for the same fact. The names of Bethel and Beersheba have thus a double origin, and the proverb, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' is connected with two very different events. Of the first appearance of David we have two accounts, in one of which he comes upon the scene as 'a mighty man of valour, a man of war,' and cunning in playing; and in the subsequent chapter, as a youth, too young to be sent to the war, and unknown by sight to Saul.

Of Saul's own rise to the position of king we have at least two accounts, in one of which the initiative is taken by Samuel, acting under divine guidance, while in the other the people agitate for a king, and incur the divine displeasure by doing so.

We now explain these contradictions, and I have no doubt rightly explain them, by saying that they are narratives of entirely distinct origin, preserved in older writings, and pieced together by a compiler. But both cannot be history, and the compilers who placed them side by side must have

had some object in view very different from that of a historian. And I think we can hardly escape the inference that the Bible is no more inspired history than it is inspired natural science.

When we are striving to reconcile the contradictory dates and statements of Jewish writers, we are sometimes tempted to wish that they had left us a mass of imperishable contemporary records like the Assyrian tablets. But we should make a poor exchange indeed if we were to barter the spiritual insight of these prophetic writers for a chronicle, however accurate, of mere events.

The early history of all peoples is full of matter of a legendary character, concerning which we may indeed ask, What kernel of historic fact does it enshrine? But we may much more profitably inquire, 'What light does it throw upon the ethical and religious ideas of those who wrote and received it?'

It is from this point of view, and not from the point of view of the mere political historian, that we should approach the narratives of the Old Testament. The Old Testament is primarily a record of the revelation of God. It is in the picture it presents of the growth of truer and loftier conceptions of the divine nature that its value consists. And thus to receive and to understand it is not only to abandon the attempt to regard it as inspired history; it is equally to part company with the attempt to escape from the difficulties of the record by rationalistic explanations. And this surely is a very great gain. Let me dwell upon this point for a moment.

Elijah, the story tells us, was fed by ravens. Rationalistic criticism, finding this incredible, points out that with the alteration of a single vowel in the Hebrew, we may read for ravens 'Arabs,' and thus maintains the accuracy of the historian by throwing blame on the carelessness of a scribe or interpreter. The more fruitful view appears to be to admit that the story is not history at all, but a legend bearing witness to the popular belief in the Divine Providence that guarded the life of the man of God; just as our own story of Alfred and the cakes, though we are forced to reject it as history, bears witness to the universal faith in the simplicity and humility of that great king.

So of the pillar of fire and cloud which appeared at the crossing of the Red Sea. Rationalistic criticism has resolved this into a dust cloud, raised by the wind and illuminated by the moon to the Israelites. But this, besides destroying all the poetry of the story, supplies no explanation of the cloud that abode upon the completed Tabernacle.

And now I would ask whether we ought not to try, with much care and tenderness and reverence to lead the minds of those we teach to this truer view of the Old Testament narratives. If it be asked, Is it worth while disturbing a simple faith in the old stories?—I would answer, It is worth while, because we can offer a higher faith in its place. And we have to consider not only those who accept as matter of fact whatever is in the Bible, simply because it is there, but the far larger number who quietly disbelieve, and, quite illogically perhaps, but not less certainly, feel a sort of uncertainty thrown over the whole Bible, over the claims of religion, even over morals, by the fact that they do not and cannot accept what it puts before them as sacred history.

I have been told that at a recent conference on Old Testament teaching, after much had been said about Assyrian inscriptions, geographical research, and higher criticism, an outspoken man got up and said, 'What I want to know is what am I to say about Balaam's ass?' As there is nothing like a concrete example for removing obscurity, I will try to answer this question, and I think I should do so as follows:—

Good men take, and have taken, very different views of this story.

Some accept it as history, and believe that the ass spoke, by a miracle—a divine interference with the ordinary course of nature. It seems probable that the writer who incorporated the story in his narrative so believed.

Others think that though the ass did not, and could not speak, Balaam fancied it did, and remained under the delusion, which he communicated to his friends. Others suppose him to have dreamt the incident, and that his dream was gradually transformed, by constant inaccurate repetition, into a statement of fact.

For my own part I think it is better to take the story as it stands, as a story, not as history. We find similar stories of marvels in the early records of all races—in Homer and Livy and Herodotus, and in our own English Chronicle. We reject such stories as history, but we do not on that account throw them aside as worthless. They are

indeed often of the highest value. We ask what they mean, what they show us of the thoughts and views of life, and man and God, that were held by those who believed and preserved them. In this way we learn a great deal about the Greeks and Romans, for example, that a mere record of facts would not have told us.

Now if the Old Testament were given us as a Book of authentic history, we could not treat its stories in this way. But it is given us as a Book of religion, a record of the gradual revelation of God to the Jewish people. Thus it serves a far higher purpose than a mere history. And instead of spending time in trying to prove that an ass might speak, or that a dream of such an event might be converted into a story, we should ask what this old legend taught those who handed it down to us, and what we ourselves may learn from it. And here the lesson is the same, the moral and religious value of the story is the same, whether we regard it as a fact or a parable—that when man refuses to listen to the voice of God, he sinks below the brutes.

And whatever view we take of the story, let us always remember that our attitude towards such stories is not a question of religion at all. To accept the story as history brings us no nearer to God. To take it as a legend cannot separate us from the love of Christ.

Something like this I think I should try to say, indeed have often said, when face to face with the question, Is this true?—meaning, Is it true in the historical sense? With a subject so large it would be easy to say more, and in particular to safeguard what has been put—perhaps too briefly—from misapprehension. But enough has been said, I think, to make clear my main point; that we should lead men to see that the Old Testament being primarily a Book neither of natural science nor of history, we are not required to accept its statements as historical in the ordinary sense.

Learned men will still try through the mists of the past to interpret and reconstruct the history, and perhaps with increasing success. But for the Christian Church the value of the Old Testament lies in its witness to a progressive revelation. Let us frankly admit that the literature that enshrines it has a large element of legend blended with its narrative portions. Let us neither demand belief in marvels, unsupported by contemporary evidence, nor try to mend matters by rationalistic interpretations, but ask, What is the meaning and value of the material before us from the point of view of religion?

I will conclude with some words of the wise and saintly John M'Leod Campbell:—

'It seems to me also that the character of our time makes us to need, and should encourage us to ask, more intellectual light, in order that we may be fully furnished for commending the grace of God to men, and may not, as we may often unconsciously do, put stumbling-blocks in the way of minds by words without knowledge . . . As we pray morally and spiritually that God may search us and try us, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting; so also is it right for us to pray for deliverance from such misconceptions of truth as may be intellectually a shortcoming in reference to our high calling as children of the light and of the day, and God's witnesses. Nor will any man be straitened in such prayer, whose peace really flows from the knowledge that God is love, and who can invite God to search out what evil may be in him beyond his own consciousness, *because* he knows the freeness of the grace of God, and that "herein God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." God "raised Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory that our faith and hope may be in God." He whose faith and hope are *in God* rests not on the assumption of perfection in his conceptions of truth, any more than on the measure of his progress in the higher teaching which he is receiving in the school of Christ. He knows God, and peacefully waits for any modification of his thoughts of the Divine Counsels which increased light may bring. I often feel that there is infinite comfort in the knowledge that "the Comforter" is "the Spirit of Truth"; for this implies that the more we know of the truth of things the more will our comfort abound. In the faith that God is love, we can be patient and peaceful in darkness; while in that faith we are also prepared to find all additions to our light additions to our joy in the Lord.'