

IN EXTENUATION OF PIOUS FRAUD.

COMMENTS ON REV. A. KAMPMEIER'S ARTICLE.

A PROTEST.

BY C. B. WILMER.

IN the January number of your magazine I read the following sentences in Mr. Kampmeier's article on "Pious Fraud": "It is well known that the New Testament writings are filled to the brim with the most unhistorical and unnatural twistings of passages of the Old Testament to suit any idea that is to be expressed. This rabbinical art, which is to us nothing but pure sophistry, was not even disdained by Jesus. The saying of God to Moses, 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,' is cited by him as a proof for personal immortality, although any one knows that nothing of the kind is implied in that passage."

It is a little difficult to know how to answer a man who has told you in advance that if you differ with him you are either a fool or a rascal, and an ignoramus to boot, but may I venture to protest against the dogmatism of this way of dismissing the whole subject of the fulfilment of prophecy, as treated in the New Testament, and this cool assumption that there is no possible way of explaining the words of Christ about the incident of Moses at the Burning Bush, except by casting a slur upon either the intelligence or the moral character of One who has for two thousand years been steadily growing in the opinion of mankind, and has been by many of earth's greatest men, all theories of divinity aside, regarded as the very flower of humanity. Shall Jesus be excepted from the common law of fairness that before we condemn an utterance of one otherwise regarded as sane and honest, we ought to see if some other explanation be not possible than the one which reduces the whole to insanity or fraud?

So far as the fulfilment of prophecy is concerned I desire to say just a word. There is a way of regarding this subject which may or may not be the true one, but which at least ought not to be left out of consideration entirely. As I read the New Testament, the idea of fulfilment may be illustrated by the bud's becoming the full blown rose. Certain ideas and principles are imbedded in the religion and history of Israel as the bud is enclosed in the green leaves of the calyx. These principles, expanded and given their fullest, deepest spiritual application, make the Kingdom of God *par excellence*, otherwise known as Christianity. Take the one idea of redemption. As deliverance from trouble, it manifestly admits of degrees of meaning, according to the trouble from which there is deliverance. It means one thing when the children of Israel are brought out of Egypt; it means a wider and greater thing when they are brought back from exile; it means still another when Jesus Himself is delivered from sin and death, and when mankind, through Him, are set free to live the sinless and eternal life. Starting with the idea that God can and will deliver from trouble those who trust in Him, the fulfilment of that idea comes when the trouble is greatest. This is not twisting and turning words out of their natural significance to suit any idea, at the arbitrary good pleasure of the writer. I repeat, that this explanation may conceivably not be true, and I suppose it does not commend itself to Mr. Kampmeier, but I submit that it ought to be taken into consideration and writers of the New Testament given the benefit of the doubt before they are condemned as frauds. If interpretation of a great picture or a great literature is a matter of insight, is it not just possible that the New Testament writers saw more deeply into the meaning of the New Testament than some of their modern critics?

Above all is this possible with regard to Jesus, the world's acknowledged finest spiritual genius. It is true, I believe, that to use the testimony of Jesus as to such questions as the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, is inadmissible. Literary questions, as such, did not come within the lines of work He laid down for Himself; but the matter is quite otherwise with regard to the spiritual contents of a passage of the Old Testament. It seems clear that Jesus thought that there was more truth in the Old Testament than appeared on the surface, a view which is not inherently absurd or dishonest, and which some of the Old Testament writers themselves seem to have held. The author of the 119th Psalm wrote, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," and we read in the Gospel of St. Luke, that after Jesus had shown the two dis-

ciples going to Emmaus how the Prophets' teaching necessitated His own triumph over death, they said one to another, "Did not our heart burn within us. . . .while he *opened* unto us the scriptures?"

And so far as the passage is concerned which is the object of Mr. Kampmeier's special attack, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob," even if I had not an opinion of my own upon it, I confess that I would be willing to trust Jesus as the interpreter of the hidden depths of those words more than I would any human being that I have ever heard of in either ancient or modern times. And I am willing to go even further and say that there is contained in those words a profounder view of immortality than is anywhere else to be found.

A charge which Jesus brings against his critics on this occasion is that they erred in not knowing the Scriptures. It is plain that Jesus did not mean they erred in not knowing those words were in the Bible, but that they erred in not understanding them. May I venture on an interpretation of Jesus's meaning? It will be noticed that Jesus did not rely entirely upon what the words say, but He added a statement of His own, viz., that "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." At the risk of being reduced to the unenviable state of a pious fraud myself, I beg to hazard the opinion that the thought in Jesus's mind is, that the true foundation of immortality is the capacity of man to be in fellowship with the eternal God. God being the God of Abraham, or the God of anybody else, implies, without any suspicion of a pious fraud, the capacity of fellowship. On that fellowship as an actual fact in this present life, the religion of Moses was founded; and the subsequent experience of Israel, continuing to live in fellowship with God, was but the development into explicit consciousness of what was implicit in such fellowship from the beginning, although not perceived, viz., eternal life. What was developed in Greece as a speculative belief, was developed in Israel as an experience, flowering in the Resurrection of Jesus and the eternal life of others.

I might expand this thought *ad libitum*, showing how it is the only view of the future life that is at all in harmony with the evolutionary philosophy, and showing its value as putting us on the right track when we wish to get at the relation of belief in eternal life to the life that now is, but I forbear. I merely wished to challenge the summary method employed by Mr. Kampmeier to dispose, off-hand, of a great question, and to enter my protest against what I must regard as a perfectly gratuitous reflection upon the character or else upon the intelligence of Christ.

THE USE OF PSEUDONYMS IN THE BIBLE.

BY JOSEPH C. ALLEN.

The article in the January number on "Pious Fraud" interested me very much. But while agreeing to some extent with my brother Kampmeier, nevertheless I feel that he has overstated the case.

The practice of one man's writing a book in another's name was quite common in Israel, and probably rose in part from the fact that authorship was not so distinct and definable usually as it generally is with us. A writer would borrow very freely and extensively from previous writers, without giving them credit, or making any distinction between their words and his own. Sometimes he would add something of his own to what some one else had written previously, and incorporate this new portion in his own copy of the work. The followers of a sage or prophet would write down his words—sometimes after his death, and put forth the book in the name of him whose sayings it records. Sometimes such a work would contain some passages that were really original with the man that wrote the book, but which he deemed true to the thought of the sage or prophet with whose sayings they were incorporated.

It was in these circumstances natural that men should be careless in the matter of ascribing a book to an author. And as a disciple often incorporated his own words with those of his teacher, so he might at times write in the name of his teacher, without intending to deceive. This was no more dishonest, than it is for a factory to run on and turn out goods in its founder's name after he has passed away.

But while the practice itself was not dishonest, it tended to dull the conscience in regard to literary ethics. A writer, from endeavoring to expound the thought and also imitate the style of his master, might sometimes resort to little tricks that would make what he wrote seem to be his master's own words. This was not strictly honest, but the writer in such cases probably did not as a rule realize the dishonesty of his course. Here we have exactly the case of the Second Epistle of Peter. The writer felt that he was writing Peter's thoughts, and repeating Peter's testimony; and so he believed he had a right to use Peter's name. And to make the book seem more like Simon Peter's, he refers in the first person to an experience that the apostle was at least believed to have undergone. The writer then hardly thought of doing anything dishonest. Had he invented some fictitious incident of Peter, that would have been worse. Had

he taught, in Peter's name, doctrines that he knew were not believed by Peter, that would have been worse still. Or if he had put into Peter's mouth predictions of things that happened after the apostle's death, that might properly be called a pious fraud.

Here we may fitly speak of the Book of Daniel. The writer of this book does put into the mouth of Daniel predictions of things that came to pass since the death of that hero. This is dishonest. But the aim of the book is not to advance the interests of any sect or party, or support one side of a controversy, or establish any system of dogmas. It seeks to comfort the faithful Israelites in the time of the infamous Antiochus Epiphanes, and present to them the writer's faith that the day of their deliverance and of the blessed Messianic age was at hand. The author of the book is evidently convinced that this salvation is soon to come. The times are so bad, he thinks, that the God of Israel must intervene. The tyrants that oppress Israel are destroying one another, and this is a sign that tyranny must soon cease. This is the main argument of the book, and if Daniel were left out of it, the reasoning would be cogent to the contemporaries of its writer. But the putting of this argument into the mouth of Daniel lent the fictitious weight to it of fulfilled prophecy. So then, while the book is in the main a sincere argument from the course of history, there is in it an element of fraud. Of course to later generations, the argument from history lost all cogency, while that from prophecy remained until it was discovered that the prophecy was spurious. The writer however is not to be judged by that outcome, for he wrote for his own generation and not for posterity.

Mr. Kampmeier speaks of Num. xxiv. 24 as a fraudulent prophecy. I think he will agree with me, that if there was fraud here, none of the writers of the long documents (P, E, J, etc.) that compose the Hexateuch was concerned in it, nor were the redactors that pieced these separate writings into one work parties to it. Num. xxiv. 20-24 is an appendix to the story of Balaam. It was written by some poet that is not only unknown to us, but was unknown to those who incorporated this fragment into the book. There can be little doubt, that when these verses were put into the Book of Numbers as part of the story of Balaam, the redactor believed that the prophecy was genuine. So if there was any fraud, it concerned no one but the author of these verses, who probably did not originate any other passage in the whole Hexateuch. It is unjust then, to pick out such a passage as this, and present it as an evidence that the book in which it appears is fraudulent. Probably even its writer did

not intend to commit a fraud, any more than Shakespeare intended to falsify when he put a prophecy into the mouth of Mark Antony in the murder scene of Julius Cæsar (iii. ii. near the close). Such literary devices are not even to-day considered dishonest on the part of a poet, and I do not know why they should be fraud in old Judea.

As to the Book of Deuteronomy, I agree with Mr. Kampmeier, that it was a pious fraud. But we should remember that this fraud was committed in a somewhat primitive and crude age. If we should try the book by modern standards, we should have to condemn it severely for the fraudulent manner in which it was brought forth. But moral standards are expected to advance with progress of a race, and it is therefore over-severe to judge the Book of Deuteronomy by our modern conceptions of honesty. Even Plato, in his Republic, proposed inventing a myth in the interest of public order and virtue.

Now a few words with regard to the Fourth Gospel. If its writer was a disciple of John, and believed that his work embodied Johannine tradition, there was in this some excuse for his making it appear to be the writing of that apostle. And if he thought the spiritual content of Jesus's teachings was more important than their form, this was a good excuse for his turning all of them into his own style of language, and blending them with his own comments. Before we denounce the author of this Gospel as a trickster, let us observe how honest he is in admitting facts that presented difficulties against the faith of the early Christians, or handles for the attacks of their foes. He uncovers things that Matthew and Luke seek to hide. Against the legend of birth from a virgin, he twice calls Jesus "the son of Joseph" (i. 45, vi. 42). Against the story that he was born in Bethlehem, he again and again speaks of him as from Nazareth, and represents the Jews as prejudiced against him because he was not born in this very Bethlehem (vii. 42). He also repudiates the notion that Jesus was descended from David, and shows us clearly how that fiction arose (*ibid.*). He reminds us that the brothers of Jesus did not believe in him (vii. 5), and that he was called insane (x. 20) or demonized (vii. 20, viii. 48, 49, 52, x. 20, 21). It was hardly necessary, from a politic standpoint, to be so frank on these matters. It was late enough when the Fourth Gospel was written, for many legends to have risen about Jesus. It was late enough then, to falsify the facts with impunity. But the author of the Fourth Gospel brings up damaging facts that he might with perfect honor have passed over in silence. Surely he is no trickster then; and if he chose to express

his faith in Jesus in the form of historical fiction, he had a perfect moral right to do so.

It is well known that the Gospel According to Mark is distinguished for this same frankness that we find in that According to John. In Matthew and Luke there is some distortion of facts, but hardly any evidence of intentional falsifying.

Of course the New Testament writers had a peculiar way of reading the Old Testament so as to interpret into it many predictions that were not intended by their authors. There is, however, no reason to think that they were dishonest in this. And when Jesus quoted from Exodus the saying, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," he of course interpreted the passage erroneously. But why should we think he was dishonest? The method of exegesis he used was that of the scribes in his day, and it was natural that he should think it a true method.

It must be conceded, that there are some instances of pious fraud in this collection of religious writings that we call the Bible. But the instances in it of honest error are vastly more numerous. On the whole, I believe that the Hebrew writers were truthful men. But we should not judge them by modern standards, when literary authorship is a more definite fact, when literary criticism demands greater care to interpret a writer in his own exact sense, and when science has caused us to be more precise in our statements than was considered necessary in the past.

EDITORIAL COMMENT.

The protests of our correspondents, Rev. Joseph C. Allen and Mr. C. B. Wilmer, are quite in order, for we are very well aware of the onesidedness of Mr. Kampmeier's statements; but in spite of that, his article on "Pious Fraud" deserves the full consideration not only of the laity, but especially of his brethren of the cloth. Mr. Kampmeier, himself a theologian, expresses in it his own indignation at certain features of our religious institutions which demand a connivance with traditional misstatements. He does not stand alone, and it would be a blessing if the Church as such would publicly acknowledge the fact, and so relieve the consciences of its representatives in the pulpit. The history of Judaism and Christianity is filled with what is commonly called "pious fraud." We will only mention the discovery of the so-called law book in the temple, which purports to be an ancient document of the time of Moses,

while it can only have been compiled shortly previous to the time of its discovery. Prof. C. H. Cornill with reference to this event does not use the expression "pious fraud" but expresses himself guardedly by saying: "The time now appeared ripe for a bold stroke."* There is no doubt that in our days we would call this falsification of document a forgery, which is not made better by the fact that thereby monotheism was enabled to triumph over the traditional paganism; and that the priests of Jerusalem henceforth determined the further religious development of Judea. The young king was a tool in the hands of the high priest, Hilkiah, and as a reward for his obedience he is praised in the Bible, but his confidence in Yahveh has been very little rewarded, for the policy which he pursued sealed the end of Judea's independence forever. Josiah fell a victim to his own blind confidence in the priests who to him represented God's will, and the Bible explains his misfortunes as visitations of the sins of his predecessors, especially King Manasseh.

Mr. Allen's explanations of the circumstances in which the canonical Scriptures were written are quite correct, but they are mere excuses, no exculpation,—especially if we consider that in those days there were authors in Greece and Asia Minor whose literary conscience was in perfect agreement with ours of to-day. It appears then that authors of inspired books, inasmuch as their style betrays crudity of education, did not move in the best circles and breathed an atmosphere of second rate reputation. "The writer, then, hardly thought of doing anything dishonest," says Mr. Allen, and we grant it but can we excuse ourselves when we continue to look up to these authors as the examples of piety and Christian virtue?

Mr. Allen claims (and so do many theologians and higher critics as well) that the canonical books neither served a party purpose nor were they written for any other sinister end. He says, for instance, that the book of Daniel did not "advance the interests of any sect or party, or support one side of a controversy or establish any system of dogmas." He thinks that it sought merely to comfort the pious in times of tribulation. I grant the latter, but would hesitate to accept the former. Upon a close inspection of the books that pretend to have been written by an older authority, there will be few which do not serve a special purpose, support a definite interpretation, or advance the cause of some party in a controversy.

As to the fulfilment of prophecy we must again recognize the fact that the prophetic predictions rarely came true. In the sense in which they were spoken and also understood, most of them have

* *The Prophets of Israel*, page 8r. Chicago: The Open Court Pub. Co.

remained unfortunate to the present day. They are fulfilled only if we are allowed to twist them so as to agree with historical facts, and we can not blame Jewish rabbis if they fail to recognize their fulfilment as interpreted by Christianity.

Yet conceding all that has been said by the higher critics, we can very well take the position of Mr. Wilmer that the New Testament is a fulfilment of the Old in the sense that the fruit is a fulfilment of the promise of the flower, and in this sense Christian piety can feel itself safe. But the same can be said about any historical event, and so there is after all no supernatural element nor fulfilment of prophecy as it is commonly understood. Therefore, whatever course we pursue we find that the old interpretation of Christian doctrines has been abandoned. The more critically this is done and the more liberally the right of interpretation is granted to every member of the Church, especially also to our clergymen, the better it will be for the future development of Christianity, the Church, the churches, and all representatives of Christianity. The problem of honesty in the pulpit is a question which has troubled more than one clergyman, and we see in the Rev. A. Kampmeier's "Pious Fraud" a confession which he has made concerning his own life, and we can very well feel that after the publication of his article he thinks *Dixi et salvavi animam meam*.

Our readers may remember the article on "The Praise of Hypocrisy," written by Prof. G. T. Knight, an orthodox professor employed at a prominent Protestant college of good standing.* The details of the problem which force the issue of recognizing errors in our canonical Scriptures are at present not much heeded by the laity, but are still current in ecclesiastical circles, and we hope to be able to present in the near future a series of articles on this subject written by Franklin N. Jewett, who not being a clergyman himself propounds them as "Questions from the Pew" which for his own conscience's sake he desires to be answered.

In giving publicity to some results of higher criticism as it has percolated even to the laity, we do not mean to cause any unrest to the churches or the leaders of critical investigation, but we wish them to bethink themselves and to come to the conclusion that the bottom-rock of religion lies in eternal truths and not in historical facts. The sooner the representatives of the Church learn to distinguish between the essential and the accidental, the better it will be for the cause of religion.

* The essay has been expanded and is published in book form under the same title by The Open Court Publishing Company.