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THE

"SLING AND THE STONE."

VOL. X.

REVELATION TESTED ON MORAL GROUNDS.
THE BIBLE AND MODERN CRITICISM.
ON THE BOOK ENTITLED *LUX MUNDI*.
THE VOICE OF GOD.

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PREFACE.

THIS book is an endeavour to set forth a truth which is in direct opposition to a wide-spread and venerable falsehood; viz., that the Bible or the Church, or both of them together, are a supernatural statement of God's word and will, and by implication that they contain no error, nothing to mislead. The terms in common use, revelation, inspiration, Divine authority, mean nothing unless they involve the duty of our absolute unquestioning submission to Bible and Church as to God Himself. No sane person would for an instant hesitate in feeling, as well as confessing openly, that whatever God says must be true and should be believed; that whatever God enjoins must be right and should be obeyed.

So far we are all agreed. Dispute only arises when our fellow-men allege that the Bible or the

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Church is the Word and the Will of God. For that enormous assumption we have not God's word, but only man's. Consequently it becomes our duty to sift to the uttermost the grounds of that claim to the Divine origin of the Bible and the Church. From the moment we look into the contents of either, we discern mistakes, errors, and contradictions such as are inevitable to human authorship, and cannot by any possibility be imputed to God.

For present purposes no rival revelations are in the field; and it is enough to point out that the Bible and the Church both teach falsehoods more or less pernicious to morals and religion, although they may and do contain much which is true and precious and not by any means to be discarded or despised. It is a mistake to suppose that in casting out error we are at all compelled to cast away what is good and true. Many people hold on to the Bible and to the Church as Divine Revelation, through sheer dread of losing the truths which they contain.

But even if it were so, if the consequences of discovery of error in Bible and Church were to be injurious to one or more individuals, that cannot affect the question of *fact*. Do the Bible and Church contain errors, or do they not?

Believers in God will be believers in the supreme

value of truth, and they will be quite assured that in following truth and making truth supreme they can never do anything but good both to their fellow-men and to themselves.

The purpose of this book is two-fold. First, to show that, however excellent and useful the Bible and the Church may be, they are human products and not Divine, they are full of errors and not infallible. They mislead and are not safe or trustworthy guides in matters of faith or morals.

I have shown in these pages that God is deprived and dishonoured by some things in the Bible, especially by those parts of it which have been selected by the Christian Church as the foundation for its distinctive dogmas. I have so proved my case that no one henceforth will venture to defend the Bible and the Church as a Divine Revelation on *rational* grounds. That is, the Bible and the Church can only be so accepted by those who will forswear the use of their common sense, and turn a deaf ear to the dictates of conscience and love within them.

The ground I have traversed has hitherto been little trodden by professed teachers of religion. Master minds have done grand work in historical research and criticism—work impossible to overestimate. Few have ever come into close quarters,