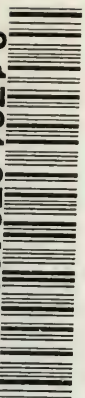


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THE BIBLE IN
SCOTS LITERATURE

Works by the Rev. Professor
JAMES MOFFATT, D.D., D.Litt., M.A. (Oxon.)

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THE BIBLE IN SCOTS LITERATURE.

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THE BIBLE IN SCOTS LITERATURE

BY

JAMES MOFFATT

D.D., D.LITT., HON. M.A. (OXON.)

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LIMITED LONDON



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TO
‘THE CELESTIALS’
A COLLEGE FELLOWSHIP OF SCOTS
YONDER AND HERE

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INTRODUCTION

I

§ 1

By **Scots Literature**, without allowing myself to deviate into any vain attempt to define exactly what constitutes 'literature,' I mean verse and prose written by Scotsmen in their own language. Latin books I rule out, although they were sometimes real contributions to literature as well as to the life of the nation. This involves the exclusion of prose like Adamnan's biography of St. Columba and the early lives of Scottish saints. It also means that we shall not make any direct use of later historical prose such as the works of Fordun, Bower, Hector Boece, and John Major, to say nothing of verse like the poetical pieces of George Buchanan.¹

But even when the work of Scots as Latinists is put aside, the term **Scots** needs to be defined. The vernacular varied, and so did the name for it, even when it remained the same. When we open the vernacular literature of our country, indeed, we light upon what seems to be a paradox. We discover men like Barbour and Wyntoun calling their language 'English.' Barbour's poem appeared before the *Canterbury Tales*, and its 'English' is not more difficult than Chaucer's for a modern reader; it is certainly not a whit less 'English.' The explanation is that in those days 'Scots' meant the form of

¹ His *Jephthes* and *Baptistes* may be tasted by the Latinless in translations by the Rev. A. Brown or by Dr. Gordon Mitchell.

4 THE BIBLE IN SCOTS LITERATURE

Celtic which was afterwards called Gaelic; down to the eleventh century it had been the court language, but now it was viewed as the tongue of the native barbarians, while 'English' had become the literary and educated language of the court, and indeed of Fifeshire and the country south of the Forth, a language which, to all intents and purposes, was the same as 'the dialect spoken and written in northern England down to the Humber.'¹ Then came a change of terminology, due to the stress of the political struggle for independence. We find that Gawain Douglas, for example, prides himself on writing 'Scottis,' not the 'sudroun' English. That is, while the language really remains the same, while the southern English does not differ radically from the northern English which the Scots use, they call the latter by their own national name, for patriotic reasons. 'Scots' is now a name to be proud of, whereas the tongue of the wild tribes or 'broken men' to the north and west, upon whom more cultured districts like the Lothians looked down, is dubbed rather contemptuously 'Ersche' (Irish). Hence we can understand how at the end of the fifteenth century one of the charges hurled more or less humorously at Dunbar was that he preferred 'English' to 'Ersche' unpatriotically. 'Ersche' was the good old language of Scotland. Why did Dunbar avoid it and decry it?

Thou luvis nane Erische, elf [you puny creature], I undirstand,
But it sould be all trew Scottismennis leid [tongue];
It was the gud langage of this land,
And Scota it causit to multiply and spreid.

So Kennedy, the Ayrshireman, argued. But Dunbar was unmoved by any old-fashioned cry like this on behalf of 'Ersche.' What he and his contemporaries,

¹ Professor G. Gregory Smith, *Specimens of Middle Scots*, p. xii.

who wrote in the Lowland or north English dialect, thought about Gaelic and the Gaels may be guessed from the closing stanzas of his weird, wild poem on *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*, where the fiend in hell calls for a Highland display. This exhibition is furnished by a Highlander called McFadyen, who performs so vigorously that his war-cry rouses the Ersche-men, *i.e.* the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, who are numerous in hell.

Full loud in Ersche begowth [they began] to clatter,
And rowp [croak] like revin and ruke [ravens and rooks] :
The Devil so devit [deafened] was with their yell,
That in the deepest pit of hell
He smorit [smothered] them with smoke.

So did the educated in 1507 regard Highland music and the Highland language—mere wild ‘Ersche’ ! ‘English’ came to mean ‘Scots,’ but ‘Ersche’ remained the sobriquet for Gaelic. Or, to put it otherwise, ‘Scots’ now denoted the English or national tongue instead of the vernacular Gaelic spoken by the wild men north and west. National pride had appropriated the term ‘Scots,’ which originally and hitherto had meant the tongue of the irreconcilable Gaels, now a mere minority upon the fringes of the realm. Thus it came about that the Spanish ambassador, in 1498, could write in a despatch that ‘the Scottish language of James IV. is as different from English as Aragonese from Castilian [*i.e.* a mere difference of dialect]. The king also speaks the language of the savages who live in some parts of Scotland and on the islands, which is as different from Scottish as Biscayan is from Castilian.’ The ambassador adds—and this is significant for our present purpose—‘he is well read in the Bible and in some other devout books.’ This court-English was also spoken along the north-east coast, where ‘before 1124 the

communities of Aberdeen, Banff, Elgin, Nairn and Inverness had formed themselves into a miniature Hanseatic league, on which David I. conferred sundry privileges. The inland country behind these communities remained for long in the hands of a Gaelic-speaking people.’¹ And indeed Gaelic lingered in some districts of the south and west. Sir Thomas Craig, for example, writing about 1605, says that he remembered the time when Gaelic was spoken in Stirlingshire and Dumbartonshire, although nowadays, he is thankful to say, it is rarely heard except in the Orkneys and Argyllshire, any chief in the Highlands or islands speaking or at least understanding English (*De Unione Regnorum Britannicæ*, ch. v.).

§ 2

Literature written in this **Gaelic** or Celtic tongue I must also leave out. I do not know Gaelic, and it is unsatisfactory to quote at second-hand, through the medium of translations. Strictly speaking, such verse is Scots; it has more title to the name than the poems, say, of Campbell or of Thomson. But I exclude it with all the less compunction, as I understand that it would not yield very much for our present purpose. Down to 1745 there were only about half a dozen books printed in Gaelic, and these were religious books. The first Gaelic New Testament was not issued till 1767, and the Old Testament was not completed till 1801. Till the sixteenth century, indeed, the thin contents of ‘The Book of Deer’ are our main extant specimen of Scots Gaelic. In the so-called ‘Book of the Dean of Lismore’ Gaelic verses from the sixteenth century are collected,

¹ Dr. P. Giles in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. ii., p. 100. Hence Barbour of Aberdeen writes in ‘English’ not in Gaelic.

no doubt, but, apart altogether from the scantiness of the crop prior to the re-formation of the Church, the conditions of life precluded any biblical interest or even knowledge as a rule; scrimmages of the clans and raids of the Vikings offer a poor soil for the flowers we are seeking; even when the soil is Christian, a text would be as unexpected as hyssop among the heather. It is significant to find the terms in which Dugald Buchanan, the Gaelic poet of the eighteenth century, deplores this rampant paganism of the past:

A people careless, profane, and prayerless,
Were like the beasts in the dewy dale:
No Bible reading, no praise or pleading—
Such was the custom among the Gael.¹

Buchanan's estimate may be more pious than accurate. But, so far as the primitive Celtic literature of Scotland is concerned, I understand that there are comparatively few biblical allusions lost by a failure to explore its grandeurs. 'Whiles,' said Bailie Nicol Jarvie about the Highlanders of the early eighteenth century, 'there are mair drawn dirks than open Bibles amang them, when the usquebaugh gets uppermost.' In tales and traditions of the older Ossian type the drawn dirks are obvious, the open Bibles absent, even when the usquebaugh is not flowing among the chiefs and caterans. And if there are no dirks, there are no Bibles in the richer songs of love and nature.

§ 3

Finally, I rule out, even from 'Scots Literature' thus defined, the large majority of sermons, expositions, and theological treatises. It is not only that

¹ Quoted, in *The Literature of the Highlands* (p. 129), by Dr. Magnus Maclean, who observes that Christianity is never mentioned in Gaelic proverbs (pp. 147 f.): 'There is no reference to Christ by any of His names, nor is there any allusion to the popular doctrines of the Christian religion.'

their very subject-matter is biblical more or less, but their value is seldom literary. Exceptions do occur, even during and after the sixteenth century. *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis* belong to Scots literature as legitimately as the *Pilgrim's Progress* belongs to English literature; so do prose pieces like Patrick Walker's *Lives* and Boston's *Crook in the Lot*, the annals of Spottiswoode and Calderwood, and James Melville's *Autobiography*. Such works claim a place in our literature just as Calvin's French works or Fénelon's have to be estimated by French literary historians. But the exigencies of religious controversy led to a preoccupation with the Bible which generally produced treatises of merely devotional or dogmatic importance. The faults which John Foster pointed out in the evangelical literature of his day in England, the style 'flat and dry as a plain of sand,' the misuse of biblical metaphors, the unnatural diction, largely due to biblical phraseology, and the identification of good writing with worldliness—these and other sources of 'the aversion felt by persons of cultivated taste to evangelical religion' became too visible and widespread in some departments of Scots post-Reformation literature. It is rarely arterial, from the literary point of view. The writers knew, none better, how to argue and exhort. But their indifference to literary form has generally handicapped them in appealing to posterity.

§ 4

By the Bible in Scots Literature I mean either explicit quotations or fairly obvious allusions to phrases, incidents, and characters in the Scripture, such as may be culled from our literature during the five centuries under survey. My aim is to trace the

influence of the Bible upon the choice of subjects or the handling of a theme, or even upon the style and diction, in writers at successive periods of the literature, to indicate how and why this influence varied, and to sketch in outline, not comprehensively of course, but, I hope, adequately, the part that knowledge of the Bible has played in the literature of the nation. We shall see the Bible used and misused, but not for long ignored. No doubt the effect of the Bible is to be felt much more widely than in the literature. Literature after all is but a fragmentary expression of national consciousness at any period. Still, to know the literature is to become aware of how the main currents are running, and this holds true, even when the literature is studied from a particular angle.

Our quest then is for the biblical element. I propose to examine the literature with the limited but rather interesting object of noting the impact of the Bible upon the verse and prose at successive periods, whether the impact is direct or indirect. Which means two things. One is, that there are few pears for us on some of the richest trees in the garden of Scots literature, while sometimes we have to pick fruit from second-rate quarters—second-rate, that is, in literary value. This is unavoidable, and it must be frankly owned at the very outset. Also, we must disclaim the slightest suggestion that the biblical element supplies anything like a test for the literature. There is good, healthy literature, to be read with a relish, in the shape of songs, tales, and ballads, which never mentions the Bible, just as there may be verse or prose, drenched in biblical references, which is inferior and unliterary if not actually unwholesome. We come upon literature aiding religion, but we also find it defying or ignoring religion. We see religion inspiring literature, and at other times spoiling it.

Scott was alive to the heightening effect of the Bible upon the very language of the peasantry when he noted, in the advertisement to *The Antiquary*, how 'the antique force and simplicity of their language, often tinged with the Oriental eloquence of Scripture, in the mouths of those of an elevated understanding, give pathos to their grief and dignity to their resentment.' Stevenson marked the same quality in the old Scottish gardener whom he describes in *Memories and Portraits* (ch. v.): 'He rarely spoke without some antique idiom or Scripture mannerism that gave a raciness to the merest trivialities of talk,' the reason being that 'all day long he had dreamed of the Hebrew stories, and his head had been full of Hebrew poetry and Gospel ethics, till they had sunk deep root into his heart, and the very expressions had become a part of him.' But there was another side to the matter. Deep study of the Bible may lend raciness and point; yet the employment of biblical language may also become hackneyed and affected. It tends more than almost anything else to become glib, when the religious sense abates, and this affects not only the spoken language but the literature of the age. There is a biblical pose, sometimes, which grates on us. Besides, it is well known that the very sense of reverence for the sacred book may create a narrow disparagement of any other writing, till we find that for a time Christianity, in Scotland, as one expert indignantly protests, places under its ban 'almost every form of secular literature—literature underived from or uninterlarded with Scripture—as essentially mundane and frivolous, and therefore sinful.'¹ What has sometimes damaged music has more often damaged literature, and there are distinct traces of this tendency in some quarters of Scotland,

¹ T. F. Henderson *Scottish Vernacular Literature* p. 10.

from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards. The results were more unfortunate for Christianity than for literature, in the long run. But this makes it all the more necessary to insist at the very outset that we are not attempting to make scriptural allusions a criterion of literary excellence, any more than to suggest for a single moment that the literary quality of a book determines its religious value. In looking out for traces of biblical influence, we shall have to pass by a great deal that a literary critic would pause to admire. This applies particularly to the lyric verse. Glance, for example, at anthologies of the best Scottish verse like J. D. Ross's *Book of Scottish Poems, Ancient and Modern* (1878), T. F. Henderson's *Little Book of Scottish Verse* (1899), Professor Macneile Dixon's *Edinburgh Book of Scottish Verse* (1910), Sir George Douglas's *Book of Scottish Poetry* (1911), and even George Eyre-Todd's larger series, *Early Scottish Poetry, Mediæval Scottish Poetry, Scottish Poetry of the Sixteenth Century, Scottish Poetry of the Seventeenth Century, and Scottish Poetry of the Eighteenth Century*, to say nothing of the rich separate collections of ballads. How little there is in such books for our present purpose! Sometimes we get something; nothing, now and then. Several of the leading names barely come within our view, and it is not always the best work of a poet or even of a prose writer which concerns us here. This is inevitable, as inevitable as if we were to go on a similar quest through English literature.¹ When you are looking for white heather on the moors, you cannot always be watching the great hills and the glens; for the time being you must leave them out of account. But this by no means

¹ One difference is that no Scots author seems to have attempted a biblical epic; we have had no poet who tried to do exactly what Milton and Cowley did.

implies that we are undervaluing what appeals to a specifically literary technique and taste. I disclaim the notion of using the Bible as a tape by which to measure the excellence of any verse or prose that may come before us in our survey. That would be an injustice not only to the Bible but to Scots literature. In his essay upon 'The Sceptic' Hume observes caustically that 'the mathematician who took no other pleasure in reading Virgil but that of examining Æneas's voyage by the map, might perfectly understand the meaning of every Latin word employed by that divine writer, and, consequently, might have a distinct idea of the whole narration,' but would be ignorant of its beauty. It would be equally futile to read Scots literature with a mere eye to the number of biblical allusions in any book, as if that were its title to literary fame, or as if a biblical *patois* made up for any artistic defects.

§ 5

A small difficulty is started by the **dialect**, *i.e.* by the quotations from the early Scots (*i.e.* down to about 1450) and the middle Scots (from 1450 to 1620) literature. If this essay were meant for scholars and students of the original texts, there would be no problem at all; the method would be to print quotations as they were written, with spelling and punctuation unaltered. But the majority of those for whom I am writing would probably find the dialect as foreign as Chaucer's. Even for Burns most people, north as well as south of the Border, require a glossary now and then, and how much more for a writer like Dunbar? There are two ways out of the difficulty. One is popular, and may claim the sanction and example of Sir Walter Scott, who boldly modernized the spelling and even the phraseology when this was necessary,

in order to let the old writers catch his later public. For example, this stanza occurs in *Chrystis Kirk of the Green*, a rollicking poem which used to be ascribed to King James I. :—

Thome Lular wes their menstrall meit,
 O Lord ! as [how] he cawd lanss [spring, or ply the
 fiddle bow] ;
 He playit so schill and sang so sweet,
 Whill [that] Towsy took a transs.
 Auld Lychtfute ¹ there he did forleit [forsake],
 And counterfutig Franss ;
 He use [behaved] himself as man discreit
 And up took moreiss danss,
 Full lowd,
 At Chrystis Kirk of the green.

Scott quotes this in *Redgauntlet*, as follows :—

Tam Luter was their minstrel meet,
 Gude Lord as he could lance,
 He played sae shrill, and sang sae sweet,
 Till Towsie took a trance.
 Auld Lightfoot there he did forleet,
 And counterfeited France ;
 He used himself as man discreet,
 And up took Morrice danse
 Sae loud,
 At Christ's Kirk on the green that day.

Another example of his method occurs in *Quentin Durward*. When the hero is urging Lady Isabella to preserve her personal freedom, he quotes ' a poet of my own land ' to this effect :—

Ah, freedom is a noble thing—
 Freedom makes man to have liking—
 Freedom the zest to pleasure gives—
 He lives at ease who freely lives.
 Grief, sickness, poortith, want, are all
 Summ'd up within the name of thrall.

¹ A Scots tune, of quick movement, which the player exchanges for a ' French ' slow movement, which he imitated.

Which is at least more intelligible to a modern than the original of this stirring apostrophe in Barbour :—

A ! fredome is a noble thing,
 Fredome mayss man to haiff liking [pleasure] ;
 Fredome all solace to man giffis :
 He levys at ess that frely levys !
 A noble hart may haiff nane ess,
 Na ellys nocht [nor anything else] that may him pless [please]
 Gyff [if] fredome failzhe [fails] ; for fre liking [freedom to
 please oneself]
 Is zharynt our [yearned for, above] all othir thing.'

In *The Abbot*, again, he quotes from *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis* one of the trenchant, popular songs of 1560 :—

The Paip, that pagan full of pride,
 Hath blinded us ower lang,
 For where the blind the blind doth lead,
 No marvel baith gae wrang.
 Like prince and king,
 He led the ring
 Of all iniquity.
 Sing hay trix, trim-go-trix,
 Under the greenwood tree.

And so on, evidently quoting as usual from memory, freely and even loosely. This method may vex scholars, but it is an effective way of using the ancient verse for modern purposes ; indeed, it was through a modernized version of this kind that Burns, for example, caught fire from Blind Harry. The other way is to reproduce the original exactly, adding modern equivalents in brackets, as I have done above. In some cases this is essential, if the pronunciation, on which so much depends for the effect of rhyme, is to be retained. I have not adhered strictly to either method. Both have been employed. But the common point is to prevent the ordinary reader from

being put off by archaic language. Some of these old Scots writings look quaint and curious ; you are apt to smile as you read their odd spelling, and perhaps to imagine that the writers were not only uncouth barbarians but playing with their subjects. They were not. They were educated men and they were in living earnest. This was no literary artifice to them, and nothing must be allowed, even in reproducing their language, to convey any such suggestion to the modern mind. Whether we translate or annotate such quotations, we ought to recollect that the writers were saying or singing things that were real to them in what was for them a direct and natural form of expression. To realize this we must sometimes sacrifice the archaic guise of the original. It is a sacrifice which, I hope, will be pardoned by any experts who happen to look into these pages, just as, I hope, it will be justified by inducing the general public to see more than they have seen in Scots vernacular literature.

II

§ 6

So much for ‘Scots Literature.’ As for the **Bible**, the first thing to notice is that Scots literature draws upon a larger Bible than our own. The so-called **apocryphal** books formed part of the mediæval Latin Bible, books like those of the Maccabees, Judith, Tobit, Bel and the Dragon, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus. From the very outset we find that stories and sayings from these books must have been almost household words in Scotland. Indeed, several of the tales were incorporated in the miracle-plays. Hence it is perfectly true to history for Scott

to make poor Abbot Boniface, in the thirty-fourth chapter of *The Monastery*, quote from the books of Maccabees, when the Abbey of Kennaquhair is threatened. After recalling the improvements he had made, he sighs :—

But all these things avail nothing—as we read in holy Maccabee, *capta est civitas per voluntatem Dei*. . . . Will bell, book, and candle drive back the English heretics? or will Murray care for psalms and antiphonars? or can I fight for the Halidome, like Judas Maccabeus, against those profane Nicanors? or send the sacristan against this new Holofernes, to bring back his head in a basket?

Again, in the twenty-sixth chapter of *The Abbot*, the quack doctor at Kinross tells Saunders Darlet to be sure to come back to him for medical advice :—

and remember what Ecclesiasticus saith: ‘Give place to the physician—let him not go from thee, for thou hast need of him.’

Which is an echo of Ecclesiasticus 38¹². Similarly, in the twenty-second chapter of *The Betrothed*, the novelist tells how Father Aldrovand used to read to the household at the Garde Doloureuse every evening out of some holy legend, or from the homilies of some departed saint, such passages as he deemed fit for the hearing of his little congregation. Sometimes, also, he read and expounded a chapter of the Holy Scripture; but in such cases, the good man’s attention was so strangely turned to the military part of the Jewish history, that he was never able to quit the books of Judges and of Kings, together with the triumphs of Judas Maccabeus.

§ 7

This brings us to the problem of how the Bible was known.

As soon as Scots literature begins, it shows a

remarkable familiarity with these biblical stories and sayings. No doubt most of the early authors were ecclesiastics, whose training included a knowledge of Scripture. But they wrote for popular audiences, and evidently assumed that their allusions would be caught up. From the fourteenth century onwards, the literature presupposes readers who understand what is meant by references to characters in Scripture and who appreciate a telling biblical quotation. Now where did the Scottish people get this early knowledge of the Bible ?

From the Bible itself ? But then the Bible was in Latin. **No Scots translation** was made, till Murdoch Nisbet of Loudoun in Ayrshire made his attempt early in the sixteenth century. Nisbet had been stirred to devotion by the local Lollards, and his version of the New Testament was indebted to the Wycliffite version of Purvey ; according to Dr. T. G. Law, who edited it for the Scottish Text Society, it was ' simply a transcript of Purvey's English into Scots.' But, though made in 1520, it was never published. Tyndale's version occupied the ground ; indeed, this Genevan version was the popular Bible, so popular that, from the day of its issue by an Edinburgh firm in 1576-1579, it left no room for any other. It rivalled even the so-called ' Authorized Version ' in Scotland down to the middle of the seventeenth century, although proposals were made by 1601 to prepare a new translation or at least, as Mr. John Row argued, to see ' that Inglish words (not understood in Scotland) be idiomatiz'd.' Scotland, therefore, never possessed any native version of the Bible, and down to the beginning of the sixteenth century had practically no access to any version except the Latin Vulgate. As only a minority of the people ever knew Latin, this must have restricted familiarity with

the text, except through the medium of little psalters¹ and vernacular service-books like the *plenaria* of the fifteenth century, which included some passages from the Gospels and Epistles.

(a) Where then did the people pick up their knowledge of the Bible? Largely **from preaching**, from hearing sermons upon it delivered by private chaplains, parish priests, and itinerant friars. It is true that during the fifteenth century the neglect of parish churches and the ignorance as well as the indifference of priests led to a lack of preaching in many quarters of the country. The Franciscans and the Dominicans to some extent made up for this. Often a friar's sermon would be an exposition of Scripture. But the demand of people to be taught the Bible, and the resentment felt against clergy who did not preach, were among the leading motives for the re-forming of the Church. When the Provincial Council of 1549, at Edinburgh, made a vain effort at the eleventh hour to set the Church's house in order, it candidly traced the re-forming movement in the main to the corrupt life of the clergy and to their 'crass ignorance of letters' (*bonarum literarum et artium omnium crassa inscitia*). How long this illiteracy of the clergy had been going on, and how far it extended, we cannot definitely ascertain. About 1539 the bishop of Dunkeld is said to have openly thanked God that he 'never knew what the Old and New Testament were'; his breviary and book of rites were quite enough for him! This may not be typical. But evidently there had been a distinct deterioration among the clergy, for in 1540 Archibald Hay, subsequently Principal of

¹ The Oxford Provincial Council's prohibition (1408) of any vernacular translation of any book of the Bible 'seems never to have been interpreted as applying to verse translations of the psalms' (Margaret Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, p. 147), in England at anyrate.

St. Mary's College at St. Andrews, sadly recalls the good old days when the clergy learned and taught the Bible, instead of boasting that they had never touched it. Comparing, he says, our ancestors' 'diligence with our slothfulness, their unwearied labours in good literature with our thoughtlessness, I cannot but be moved. They searched the Scriptures to ascertain the law of the Lord and impart it to others, we sunk in the vilest pleasures of the body' miss what they sought and found.¹ This degeneration must have affected the opportunities of the people for learning the Bible through preaching. Still, even after all allowances are made on this score, it is fairly obvious that while preaching, as a channel for imparting information about the Bible, must have been clogged and dry often, the channel was there, and some acquaintance with the Bible trickled into the popular mind, even during ages of clerical deterioration. It is important to bear this in mind, for the Church discouraged any access of the laity to a knowledge of the Bible in the vernacular, and, although the educational system was far from neglected by the Church, even a knowledge of Latin was by no means common or attainable, when the educational system became defective, and schools in villages and towns fell off. Before 1284, few schools, apparently only about eighteen, are known to have existed in Scotland, and of the eight connected with monasteries only that of Kelso was important.² An Act had to be passed as late as 1496 ordering the sons of barons and freeholders to attend school from the age of eight or

¹ From his Panegyric to Cardinal Beaton, a rare Latin work cited in Dr. Hay Fleming's *Reformation in Scotland*, pp. 93, 94.

² See Dr. A. R. MacEwen's *History of the Church in Scotland*, i. 200 f. A rather more favourable view is given in Principal Lindsay's 'Notes on Education in Scotland in Early Days' (*Translations of Glasgow Archæological Society*, vol. i., 1885).

nine till they had ‘perfyte Latine’; but this applied merely to the aristocracy, and we do not know to what extent it was ever enforced, though an instinct for education was not inactive throughout the nation. However, the knowledge of the Bible, like other knowledge, did not depend on books or reading; it was probably transmitted orally. Faith came by hearing. Stories and sayings of the Bible circulated like popular songs. Besides, there were still results of the good work done by the old Celtic Church, and new schools were flourishing by the sixteenth century, when the leeway in education had been partly made up; the Bible began to be read here and there in the vernacular, and some Scots folk must have been doing what Bede declared that both Scots and Picts did in the eighth century, viz. read the Bible in Latin. Nevertheless, down to the sixteenth century it is preaching in the vernacular which explains more than anything else—more even than the Mass, which did interpret Christ’s passion—that undoubted familiarity with certain parts of the Scriptures which Scots literature assumes. Then, and only then, did the people read the Bible in their own tongue. This gave an extraordinary impetus to reading in all classes. The taste for literature may have been slowly acquired, but education after the Re-formation was revived, and with it a desire for the literature of the Bible.

(b) Arguing from analogy, from contemporary religious life in England and upon the Continent, we may go still further, and ask whether the Scots did not receive some knowledge of the Bible story **through art**. Even if people could not read the Bible story, they could look at **Bible pictures**, for example. This was a recognized means of education in the Church. Art was used not simply for decoration, but for edifying purposes, in two directions.

(i) From the fourth century onwards we find manuscripts of **the Bible illustrated** with quaint and sometimes exquisite miniatures. Scribes in monasteries were often artists, who illuminated texts and margins of the sacred writings.¹ Nor did art confine itself to manuscripts which, after all, were circulated in a small audience of scholars. Illustrated Bibles for common people were issued, *i.e.* texts with pictures drawn to paint the moral or adorn the allegory, as the case might be. The Gospels were so published, and sometimes special books like Job and the Apocalypse of John. All this brought the Bible home to the common people, as indeed the name of one of them, the 'Biblia Pauperum,' is probably meant to suggest; such pictures were the Bible of the poor and uneducated classes. Faith is never nourished on print alone. Even Scots peasants who could read might say with Allan Ramsay's shepherd :

What ken we better, that sae sindle [seldom] look,
Except on rainy Sundays, on a book ;
When we a leaf or twa hauf read, hauf spell,
Till a' the rest sleep round as weel 's oursell.

We have little or no direct knowledge of the extent to which these illustrated Bibles circulated in Scotland. Manuscripts were certainly illuminated, but the vogue of the mediæval picture-books during the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, upon the Continent, cannot be definitely traced in Scotland, apart from incidental facts like the possession, by Queen Margaret, of a handsome illuminated copy of the Gospels. When printing came, the Bible was

¹ When Messrs. Birch and Jenner published their *Early Drawings and Illuminations* (1879), they calculated that the British Museum alone contained 2500 'pictures relating to the history of our Saviour, executed within a range of eight centuries, from A.D. 800 to 1600.'

illustrated with engravings upon wood;¹ Luther's New Testament of 1522 with its woodcuts, and the Genevan Bible with its vigorous, popular pictures thus carried on the mediæval tradition of the picture-Bible which goes back to the beginning of the fifth century. But it was mainly in Holland during the first part of the seventeenth century that religious art was permitted to help the knowledge of the Bible. The circulation of picture-Bibles in Scotland is proved, however, by the protest against them in Mr. John Row's proposals for 'the bettering of the English translation of the Bible' (1612). Row's project, which was not brought before the General Assembly till 1655, demanded among other things 'that all useless additions be lop't off, that debase the wisdom of the Spirit;—to instance: 1. All the Apocryphal writings; being merely human. 2. All popish and superstitious prints, plates, and pictures.' We also know from Robert Wodrow that when James Sharpe was murdered on Magus Moor in 1679, his travelling trunk was found to contain 'a large Bible full of fine cuts, and pictures of Christ and the New Testament saints.' It is from one or two incidental allusions like these that we infer the partial circulation of such picture-Bibles. Their educational function among simple folk especially was real, however limited.

(ii) Pictures again might be **inside churches**. The practice of having sacred representations displayed inside church buildings was sometimes checked in the earlier days by the fear of superstition; pictures or images were occasionally found to foster what seemed idolatry, and some ardent reformers would abolish or discourage them, from time to time. But, as Gregory the Great properly pointed out to a bishop

¹ One of the first books to be printed was the Dutch *Speculum Salutis*, a picture-book with woodcuts of sacred history.

of Marseilles who had destroyed the pictures in his church :

those who cannot read may at least read with their eyes upon church walls what they could not learn from the pages of a book. . . . It is one thing to adore a picture, it is another thing to learn through a picture, as through a narrative, what ought to be adored. What the written book conveys to its readers, the painting conveys to the uneducated people who gaze upon it.¹

When the Scottish Church had to be re-formed in the sixteenth century, the reformers adopted the policy of the bishop of Marseilles in the sixth ; the carved figures in the churches were destroyed as ‘idols,’ which had been hopelessly associated with superstition during the Roman sway. We know next to nothing about pictures in the churches of Scotland. The architectural records hardly allow us to infer that the Scottish churches offered pictures of Bible scenes to the worshippers as freely as some of the English churches did. At Wearmouth and Jarrow, for example, by the beginning of the eighth century Benedict Biscop, Bede’s friend, was furnishing church interiors with simple pictures to instruct folk upon the gospel-story ; whether they could read or not, the laity were face to face with graphic reminders of Christ and the saints, as they entered church. All these pictures ‘were meant to direct and to render more definite the thought of worshippers and visitors alike. These pictures, and the like in other churches, stamped an indelible impression upon the English religious mind.’² We must not, however, idealize. Mediæval pictures of this kind were more likely to

¹ *Epp.* ix. 105, xi. 13.

² Dr. Edmund Dale, in *National Life and Character in the Mirror of Early English Literature*, pp. 86, 87.

represent romances of the so-called 'saints' than biblical tales, and when they did portray truths like the Trinity, for example, the crudity of the drawings was bound to be misleading.¹ There was a materialistic side to the use of art in churches, against which Wyclif entered a vain but timely protest. Besides, we are without evidence as to the extent to which Scots people had any opportunity of being influenced along this line. There are, of course, some stray cases in point. For example, Elgin Cathedral had a beautiful timber-screen, illuminated on one side with a scene depicting the Day of Judgment, and on the other with the Crucifixion in gold and colours. This was not destroyed till 1640, when the parish minister instigated some local Covenanting fanatics to tear it down; indeed the minister even attempted to use the wood for his kitchen-fire! Such an exquisite example of truth conveyed by art may not have been common. Still, there are some other isolated traces of fresco-painting having been used in parish churches during the first half of the sixteenth century, to illustrate the lives of saints as well as biblical story. The old church of St. Congan at Turriff is one instance, and Dr. John Stuart² adds the case of Robert Reid, Abbot of Kinloss, who in 1538 'engaged a painter, Andrew Bairhum, whom he retained at Kinloss for three years, during which time this artist painted three pictures on panel for adorning the chapels of the Magdalene, of St. John the Evangelist, and St. Thomas of Canterbury,' besides painting frescoes for the private rooms of the Abbot. Our knowledge of art in pre-Reformation Scotland is too scanty to permit of any definite conclusions about the extent to which such illustrations of the Bible story were within

¹ See on this Mr. G. G. Coulton's *Five Centuries of Religion*, pp. 46 f.

² In his Spalding Club edition of *The Book of Deer* (1869), pp. cxlii-cxliii.

reach of the people. Admittedly, they were by no means so common as in Elizabethan England. And as for information about the **domestic** use of such paintings, on canvas or panels, our information is still more meagre. We may infer, from the opening of a poem like *The Dream*, if Dunbar is describing a Scottish interior, that houses were decorated with hangings of this kind. Dunbar declares :—

This hinder night [last night] half-sleeping as I lay,
Methought my chamber in a new array
Was all depeint [painted over] with many a diverse hue,
Of all the noble stories old and new,
Since our first father forméd was of clay.

Certainly this was a favourite decoration of houses and even of inns in England. Thus we learn ¹ that Falstaff's bedroom at the Windsor inn was 'painted about with the story of the prodigal, fresh and new,' and that the parable of Dives and Lazarus was one of the subjects often treated by artists in this connexion. Again, Borachio, in *Much Ado about Nothing* (Act iii. scene 3), speaks of men dressed 'like Pharaoh's soldiers in the reechy [dirty] painting,' or 'like god Bel's priests in the old church window.' If such decorations were employed north of the Border at this period, they generally ² elude our eyes.

However, the less fragile art of **sculpture** yields some evidence that there must have been symbolism in the shape of **carved stones**, which showed a rude effective art. The very fabric of a church might help to educate people by its sculptured monuments, and

¹ *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Act iv. scene 5). It is in 1 *Henry IV.* (Act iv. scene 2) that Falstaff protests his company are 'as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth, where the glutton's dogs licked his sores.'

² Some instances of carving on panels are noted by Mr. Warrack in *Domestic Life in Scotland, 1488-1688* (pp. 75 f.), including eight mediæval panels in Balfour House, Fifeshire, which represent among other things the Annunciation and the Passion.

such slabs or stones sometimes were outside churches, like, for example, the ' Priest's stone ' of Dunfallandy, near Pitlochry, which has a rude carving of Jonah and the whale, resembling one at Podgoritza in Albania. This was an extremely popular theme for the sculptor as moralist. Equally rich in symbolism is the Ruthwell Cross, with its delineations of the Annunciation, the Flight into Egypt, the Crucifixion, etc. The Crucifixion, however, is not so common on Celtic monuments in Scotland. More popular were sculptured figures of the Virgin and Child, of some miracles, and of angels. At Iona in the transept, and on a stone at Farnell in Forfarshire, the Garden of Eden and the temptation of Eve are depicted, while at Inchbrayock in Forfarshire Samson slaying the Philistines appears to be drawn. The paschal lamb is carved in the chapter-house of Dryburgh Abbey, the sacrifice of Isaac is sculptured at Kildalton in Islay, and David playing the harp occurs on a slab at Nigg in Ross-shire and at Aldbar in Forfarshire, with Daniel in the den of lions, as *e.g.* at Meigle in Perthshire, at St. Vigean in Forfarshire, and at Iona, while at St. Andrews there were David encountering the lion and (possibly) the raising of Lazarus, the former being not infrequent, though not nearly so popular as Daniel in the den of lions. In many parts of Scotland such stone-symbols of the faith, recalling biblical incidents, helped to educate the common people.¹ At the Reformation the Church unfortunately found itself unable, as a rule, to distinguish between the use and the abuse of such valid appeals to the religious imagination. Certainly, as far as pictures are con-

¹ See J. Romilly Allen and J. Anderson's *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (1893). Some of the rude representations of Daniel in the lions' den, and of Jonah, are reproduced in vol. xi. (part 2, 1876) of the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries in Scotland*.

cerned, it is highly improbable that many Scots worshippers would be moved to the soul, as Luther himself had been during his spiritual agony, by pictures of the Lord inside a church.¹ And even the general effect of the parish churches, along this line, cannot have been so marked as sentimentalists sometimes imagine. During the mediæval period, prior to the Reformation, slovenliness and dirt disfigured many of the Scots churches as well as of the Italian. After studying the statutes of the pre-Reformation Church, as their learned editor observes, ‘he would be a bold man who would assume *simpliciter* and insist, as Mr. Lang, for example, assumes and insists, that throughout feudal Scotland “the ancient Church provided an education in things beautiful—architecture, music, sculpture, painting, vestments, and services—of a kind from which Scotland has been long divorced, and all this in addition to reading and writing.” ’² Nevertheless, even after all abatements are made, it remains true that sculptured stones told their own story, and that some knowledge of the Bible was conveyed to the common people by means of this artistic symbolism, independent of books.

(iii) These carved stones or coloured pictures in churches or elsewhere were closely connected with the scenic representations which were originally under the ægis of the Church. Their vivid delineations of Christ, hell, heaven, and incidents in biblical history corresponded often to what was put before the eyes of the illiterate in the miracle-plays, whose plot was eked out with rude stage scenery.

For another medium still for the transmission of biblical knowledge cannot fail to have been the

¹ On this aspect of Christian education, read Professor Baldwin Brown’s article in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. i., pp. 845-859.

² *Publications of the Scottish Historical Society*, vol. liv., p. lxxvii.

religious drama, which more than any other thing popularized the Bible story during the Middle Ages. These religious plays were by no means confined to the incidents of the Bible; mythology, Church history, and exploits of saints were favourite topics. But while the 'miracles' which they loved to represent, and which gave them their name of 'miracle-plays,' were drawn from far and wide, the Bible supplied a rich store, from the downfall of Lucifer to the horrors of the day of doom. Homely scenes in the vernacular, staged effectively, conveyed to people's minds a graphic sense of Bible themes. From them a real acquaintance with the Bible was picked up. Unluckily our knowledge of the influence exerted by such plays in Scotland is meagre, even during the hey-day of their popularity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. We can only infer their extent. They are familiar to any student of early English literature and social life, and they certainly did not stop at the Tweed. In fact there were elementary and indigenous rites already practised, like that, for example, of the 'guisers' in the Hebrides, youths dressed in white, who on Christmas Eve roamed the countryside, enacting a sort of primitive religious drama. 'When they entered a dwelling they took possession of a child, if there was one in the house. In the absence of a child, a lay figure was improvised. The child was called "*Crist, Cristean*"—Christ, little Christ. The assumed Christ was placed on a skin, and carried three times round the fire, sunwise, by the "*ceann-snaodh*"—head of the band, the songmen singing the Christmas Hail. The skin on which the symbolic Christ was carried was that of a white male lamb without spot or blemish, and consecrated to this service.'¹ Such impromptu habits in the Western

¹ Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, i., p. 126

Isles would form a setting for the larger and more elaborate representations of the biblical story which were performed. Yet the traces of such are scanty. Aberdeen in the north of Scotland, like York in the north of England, seems to have been particularly fond of these ampler religious plays. At Aberdeen they are known to have been performed frequently. The burgh records¹ notice municipal plays and pageants, especially on Candlemas Day, from 1440 onwards; thus in 1445 the sacred drama of the Holy Blood (*Halie Blude*) was performed, in the open-air as usual, on Windmill Hill. Probably it was dramatic pieces of this kind which James Inglis, the Abbot of Culross, composed in early life, if we are to believe Sir David Lyndsay's lines:—

Who can say more than sir² James Inglis says
In ballads, farces, and in pleasant plays? —

although Scots drama was not wholly sacred, as the interlude composed by Dunbar, called *The Droichis* (Dwarf's) *Part of the Play*, is enough to indicate. A play or pageant by William Lauder was performed municipally at Edinburgh to welcome Mary of Guise, and on 17th January 1568 another play composed by Robert Sempill was performed before the Lord Regent and the nobility there. Apparently even the university play was not unknown. In July 1571 James Melville saw a play performed at St. Andrews, in presence of John Knox, which Mr. John Davidson, one of the regents of the university, had written; it was acted at the marriage of a Mr. John Colvin, but

¹ These are excerpted by Mr. E. K. Chambers in his invaluable work upon *The Mediæval Stage*, vol. ii., pp. 330-337.

² 'Sir' here and elsewhere, when applied to an ecclesiastic, is a conventional title of respect for any one who was not a 'Magister,' i.e. in possession of an academic degree.

apparently was allegorical, for therein, 'according to Mr. Knox's doctrine, the Castle of Edinburgh was besieged, taken, and the captain, with one or two with him, hanged in effigy.' The 'captain' was Kirkaldy of Grange. The play was prophetic, but hardly bridal—not a masque like one of Ben Jonson's. By this time the drama in Scotland indeed had become definitely satirical; playwrights, whether laymen or clergy, criticized freely the condition of the country and especially the vices of the priests and friars. Sir David Lyndsay's *Satire of the Three Estates* is the only extant specimen of this drama; it is of extraordinary force and length. But we hear of others, one by James Wedderburn at Dundee, and another by Friar Kyllour. The latter drama 'against the Papists' was performed on the morning of Good Friday, 1535, before King James at Stirling. Three years later the exasperated Church authorities had Kyllour put to death. Lyndsay, being himself the dramatic censor, and close to the king, was left untouched. George Buchanan's two scriptural plays were not written till he was safe in France, where his students at Bordeaux performed them. But the drama was now proving a means of popular education, awakening the people to the religious issue. As Row declares, 'There were some theatricall plays, comedies, and other notable histories acted in publick; for Sir David Lindesay his Satyre was acted in the Amphitheater of St. Johnestoun (Perth), before King James the V., and a great part of the nobilitie and gentry, fra morn to even, whilk made the people sensible of the darknes wherein they lay, of the wickednes of their kirkmen, and did let them see how God's kirk should have bene otherwayes guyded nor it was; all of whilk did much good for that tyme.' Row implies that for his time, *i.e.* for the seventeenth

century, such primitive methods of propaganda were out of date. Scots drama was generally a very feeble plant in literature. The blight of the Church's displeasure withered it, and this was originally due to the discredit into which the popular plays and pageants had fallen, even before the Re-formation. Their religious function had degenerated in Scotland as elsewhere. Ribaldry and buffoonery had begun to creep into many performances, like the Robin Hood and May plays, as Scott shows in the twenty-second chapter of *The Abbot*. The day had passed when the sacred pageant or miracle play taught uneducated crowds the facts and truths of the faith. The Roman Church itself, which had encouraged or tolerated them so long as they served its purpose, had to take action in Scotland as well as in England and France against the scurrilous tendencies of the dramatic performances, and the Re-formed Church, resenting their Sunday noise and counter-attraction to preaching, continued this censorship with increased severity, though the objections at first were not to the drama as such, but simply to irreverent comedies and tragedies upon scriptural themes.

Yet down to the end of the fifteenth century at least the religious pageants and miracle plays cannot fail to have done much to familiarize the masses in some parts of Scotland with some of the biblical stories. They lasted even into the sixteenth century, despite official frowns. In 1577, for example, Lord Rothes and some Perth citizens were threatened with excommunication for having dared to perform the Corpus Christi play, that 'idolatrous and superstitious' fancy, on 6th June. But finally these municipal pageants collapsed, owing to economic as well as to religious causes, for merchants and guilds began to object to the waste of time and money

involved in arranging for the performances. Thus, while the religious drama was recognized in the dawn of the Re-formation, as a useful popular means of exposing the Roman Church, it never got the chance of making any positive contribution to the spread of the re-formed faith. Calderwood tells us about James Wedderburn's play. This burgess of Dundee 'made divers comedies and tragedies in the Scottish tongue, wherein he nipped the abuses and superstitious of the time. He composed in forme of a tragedie the beheading of John the Baptist, which was acted at the Westport of Dundee, wherein he carped roughlie the abuses and corruption of the Papists.' The murder of John the Baptist was a favourite dramatic theme at this time; it lent itself to denunciations of those who dared to silence a prophet of faith. But, as the century advanced, with the increase of printed books and of popular preaching, this preliminary means of propaganda fell into disuse. It is true that in 1689 the undergraduates of Marischal College, Aberdeen, did improvise a semi-religious show, in order to give vent to their Protestant enthusiasm; they gave a dramatic representation of the Pope and the Devil, which caused much popular merriment. Yet this was only a sporadic flash, and hardly scriptural. The truth is that such naïve methods had been generally allowed to drop by the middle or end of the sixteenth century. Which makes it all the more necessary for us to allow for the impetus which had been originally given by the religious drama to the people's knowledge of the Bible, an impetus only second to that given by preaching.

CHAPTER I

FROM THE LATE FOURTEENTH TO THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The Battle of Bannockburn: 1314

- § 1. RISE OF SCOTS LITERATURE AFTER THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.
HUCHOWNE (=SIR HUGH OF EGLINTON?): 1320-1377.
BARBOUR'S 'THE BRUS' (BRUCE): FINISHED BY 1376.
ANDREW WYNTOUN'S 'THE ORGYNALE CRONYKIL': 1350-1420.
- § 2. SCOTTISH CHAUCERIANS.
KING JAMES I.: 1394-1437.
SIR RICHARD HOLLAND'S 'THE BUKE OF THE HOWLAT': c. 1450.
- § 3. BLIND HARRY'S 'SCHIR (SIR) WILLIAM WALLACE': c. 1480.
- § 4. MORE CHAUCERIANS.
ROBERT HENRYSON: c. 1490.
WILLIAM DUNBAR: c. 1500.
- § 5. POPULAR VERSE OF THE PERIOD.
'THE THREE TALES OF THE THREE PRIESTS OF PEEBLES,' ETC.

The Battle of Flodden: 1513

- § 6. GAWAIN DOUGLAS: 1472-1522.
- § 7. SIR DAVID LYNDSEY: 1490-1555.
- § 8. BIBLICAL INSCRIPTIONS.

CHAPTER I

§ 1

THE earliest scrap of Scots literature which has been preserved happens to be a stanza with a religious tinge. No one knows who wrote it. We cannot even tell whether its original form has been reproduced by Wyntoun, who, after a hundred and forty years, quotes it in his rhymed history. But the setting and spirit of the verse are unambiguous.

Quhen Alysandyr oure kyng was dede
That Scotland led in love and lé,
Away wes sons of ale and brede,
Of wyne and wax, of gamyn and glé ;
Oure gold wes changyd into lede ;
Chryst, born in to Virgynyte,
Succoure Scotland and remede
That stad is in perplexyte.

Which, in modern phrasing, would run :—

When Alexander our king was dead,
Who Scotland led in love and law,
Away went our plenty of ale and bread,
Of wine and wax, of sport and glee ;
Our gold was changèd into lead.
Christ, born in virginity,
Succour Scotland and heal it,
That fixed is in perplexity !

Three points of interest emerge here. One is the language. Although Gaelic was still spoken not only in Galloway and Carrick, but even in counties like Perthshire and Stirlingshire, and although

Alexander III. was 'the last Scottish king of the pure Celtic race, the popular lament for his death was composed in Scoto-English.'¹ Evidently English was becoming more and more the language of the country as a whole. The second point is this. Nearly half a century later Barbour's *Brus* starts with the same emphasis upon the critical position of affairs in Scotland, when Alexander was killed by a fall from his horse on the stormy night of 19th March 1286, as he rode impetuously along the cliffs near Kinghorn.

When Alexander the king was dead,
Who Scotland had to steer and lead,
The land six years and more per fay [verily]
Lay desolate after his day.

Alexander left no sons, and Scotland was soon plunged into the political troubles which brought on the war for independence; the comparative prosperity she had been enjoying, during Alexander's reign, broke down almost at once. His death, as Mr. Andrew Lang puts it, left Scotland under the curse,¹ 'Woe to the kingdom whose king is a child'; for the king's little grand-daughter, the Maid of Norway, was the only direct successor to his throne.

The third point is the tardy rise of such literature. Scots poetry is late in starting. Its vernacular verse was centuries behind that of England, which had *Beowulf* and Cædmon as far back as the seventh century. French literature had blossomed in the *Chanson de Rolande* during the eleventh century, and had its rich romance-poetry in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which, through the troubadours, had influenced Italian literature, 'the first literature of modern Europe to strike the true and grand note,'

¹ Scott, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, i. 32.

² Eccles. 10¹⁶.

Matthew Arnold claims, 'and to bring forth, as in Dante and Petrarch it brought forth, classics.' The ripe work of Italians like Petrarch and Boccaccio was being written, be it remembered, while poets like Huchowne were still trying their powers in Scotland. However, when Scots verse did begin, it commemorated a national struggle in lines that at once moved the nation's heart. And this is true, although in strict chronology a patriotic poet like Barbour was preceded by a writer of less ardent verse.

Thomas of Erceldoune (Earlston), or **Thomas the Rhymer**, at Dunbar Castle, is said to have prophesied King Alexander's death on the day before it occurred, and he is the earliest name in Scots literature. But he is a name and little more. The tradition which links him to poems of fairyland and mediæval romance is too fragile to be trusted, and in any case these poems have nothing vital for us. Even the next name of **Huchowne** (a corruption of Houston=the diminutive of Hugh) can only be connected doubtfully, though plausibly, with a real man, Sir Hugh of Eglinton, a poet whose death is deplored more than a century later by Dunbar. Sir Hugh was an Ayrshire magnate of the fourteenth century, who served under David II.; he was a brother-in-law and justiciar of Robert II. 'Huchowne of the Awle Ryale,' as Wyntoun calls him, would thus mean 'Hugh belonging to the royal court (*aula regis*).' Anyhow, the poems attributed to him on this hypothesis¹ illustrate the wide range of biblical allusions which is so characteristic of Scots literature during this period. He draws freely, for example, upon the 'apocryphal' books of the Old Testament. *The Pistill off Swete Susane* (the writing about Susan) is based on the

¹ Expounded most ably by Dr. George Neilson in his *Sir Hew of Eglintoun and Huchown off the Awle Ryale* (Glasgow, 1900-1901).

story of Susanna and the elders, a Jewish apologue of the first century B.C., which the Latin Bible read at the end of the Book of Daniel. It became immensely popular in the Early and Mediæval Church. Poems and plays were written on this instance of a calumniated woman being righted by 'a Daniel come to judgment.' The History of Susanna (verse 45) records how, when the woman was being led away to be put to death, 'the Lord raised up the holy spirit of a young youth, whose name was Daniel.' It is to this story that Shylock refers in his premature delight over Portia's appearance in court :—

A Daniel come to judgment ! yea, a Daniel !
O wise young judge, how I do honour thee !

Shakespeare may have taken his knowledge of the story from Elizabethan versions of it such as Nash and Greene had printed, but the author of the *Pistill* probably drew directly upon the biblical text. The tale proves how the Bible, as well as the Arthurian romances and patriotic legend, helped to provide for the love of stories in that age. And elsewhere the writer shows that he is familiar with the Apocrypha ; when in his chivalrous *Morte Arthure* (3230 f.) Huchowne enumerates the six kings who failed to maintain their position on the revolving wheel of Fortune, in spite of their supreme abilities, three of them are pagans, Alexander, Hector, and Julius Caesar, while three are Jewish princes :—

The ferthe [fourth] was Sir Judas, a justere [fighter] fulle nobille,
The maysterfulle Makabee, the myghtyeste of strengthes ;
The fyfthe was Josue, that joly mane of armes,
The sexte was David the dere, demyd [deemed] with kynges
One of the doughtyeste that dubbede was ever.

Sir Hugh was a layman from the south ; **John Barbour** was an ecclesiastic in the north. He

served along with Sir Hugh as an auditor of the Exchequer in 1347. Ten years later this archdeacon of Aberdeen was able to complete his studies at Oxford and in France, but he returned a fervid Scot, and by 1376 had composed the first great Scots poem, *The Brus*, full of miscellaneous learning, but aglow with the passion for civil liberty. It depicts, in nearly 14,000 lines, the fortunes of Robert the Bruce. Romances like those of Arthur and Alexander? There is no romance like that of the Bruce! So Barbour thought, as he penned what he called this 'suthfast story,' a romance with hearty and spirited passages, to inspire his fellow countrymen. Mr. Russell Lowell, who wastes no affection upon the older Scots poets, admits that the supreme merit of Barbour's *Brus* is 'the natural and unrestrained tone of manly courage in it, the easy and familiar way in which Barbour always takes chivalrous conduct as a matter of course, as if heroism were the least you could ask of any man.' Historically, his poem is significant as marking the rise of Scots literature in the fervour stirred by the recent war of independence. It is largely thanks to Barbour, that Bruce's name is

To be found, like a wild flower,
All over his dear country.

Barbour sowed this seed, and in doing so he, too, used the 'Apocrypha'—as, for example, in i. 464 f., describing the plucky Scots heroes:—

for-thi [therefore]

They were like to the Machabeys,
That, as men in the Bibill says,
Through their great worchip [bravery] and valour,
Fought in many a stalwart stour [combat] . . .
And delivered their land all free ;
Wherefore their name should lovéd be.

It was natural for Barbour to appeal here and elsewhere to the Maccabean heroes as leaders in a fight for national freedom. The present parallel is closer than it is in the case of Edward de Bruce invading Ireland (xiv. 312 f.) :—

This gude knight that so worthy was,
To Judas, Maccabeus that hycht [is called],
Might likened well be in that fight ;
Na multitude he forsook [retreated before] of men,
While he had ane agains [against] ten.

But Barbour draws freely upon Bible characters for contrasts and comparisons. Thus Macnab, the false traitor who betrayed Sir Christopher de Setoun, Bruce's brother-in-law, to the English, is 'a discipill of Judas' (iv. 18) ; and when the hostess of Bruce in Arran predicts his rise to the throne of Scotland (iv. 632 f.), Barbour reflects that only persons directly inspired by God can foretell the future, like

David and Jeremy,
Samuel, Joel, and Ysai [Isaiah],

whereas, nowadays, inquisitive folk have recourse either to astrology or to necromancy :—

As whylum [once on a time] did the Phitones,¹
That when Saull abasit wes
Off [by] the Philistianis mycht,
Rasit, through her mekill slycht [great skill]
Samuel's spirit als til [very soon],
Or in his stead the evill spirit,
That gave right graith [ready] answer her to.
But of herself right naught wist scho [she].

Touches like these are natural and effective. Barbour was a priest, but he does not moralize ; he uses the Bible now and then as one of the books which were familiar and fresh to his readers. There is no

¹ The witch of Endor is called *pythonissa* in the Vulgate of 1 Chron. 10 ¹³.

biblical allusion, however, so elaborate as the classical tale of Eteocles and Polynices which (vi. 179 f.) is narrated at length, or the story of the fox and the fishermen (xix. 649 f.) which Douglas told the Earl of Moray, or the tale of Fabricius and Pyrrhus (xx. 521 f.).

According to his admirer Wyntoun, Barbour also wrote rhymed genealogies, *The Brut* and (or?) *The Stewartis Oryginalle* (the origin of the Stewarts), in which he patriotically traced the Stewart lineage back through Brutus to Ninus, the founder of Nineveh. For the Bible was the source-book of primitive history for the Middle Ages, and men's interest in its early chapters was partly due to their desire of connecting themselves with the patriarchs through legendary manipulations of classical history. This is really the interest of Wyntoun himself. **Andrew de Wyntoun** was prior of St. Serf's at Lochleven, where he completed the nine books of his *Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland* (i.e. Chronicle of the Origins of Scotland) by 1420. He undertakes the congenial and formidable task of proving that Japhet, the son of Noah, is the original ancestor of the Scottish nation. The line runs through a certain Greek, Gedell-Glaiss, who, leaving Scythia, married Scota, a daughter of the Pharaoh who oppressed Israel. This extraordinary pedigree is, after all, no more grotesque than the similar efforts of Welsh and Irish chroniclers to root their ancestors earlier than the deluge. It was gravely elaborated by Hector Boece, the learned principal of King's College, Aberdeen, in his Latin history of Scotland. The fact is, it was a part of the national self-defence. If the miserable English deduced their descent from the Trojans, the Scots outdid such a Cymric legend by claiming an ancestor who not only belonged to the Greeks, the conquerors of Troy, but had a biblical

connexion! Scott concludes his *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* by remarking, 'The sailors have a proverb that every man in his lifetime must eat a peck of impurity; and it seems yet more clear that every generation of the human race must swallow a certain measure of nonsense.' The Scots swallowed this ethnological nonsense for about three centuries. It was not till the sixteenth century that John Major was unpatriotic enough to dismiss all such romantic theories regarding Gedell-Glaiss as 'dubious and unprofitable.' To Wyntoun it was a proud truth. He accepted the tradition without question, as better men did. He followed with admiring gusto the adventures of Gedell-Glaiss and his family in Europe, and especially the fortunes of his son Heber, who conquered Iberia or Ireland, and imprinted his mother's name on Scotland (ii. 750 f.). Wyntoun's biblical history, by the way, like his secular chronology, is not always accurate; he calls Achan 'Achor,' for example (ii. 1081). But this is a trifle. It is more important to notice how he will occasionally quote a phrase from the Vulgate, as *e.g.* in the prologue to the ninth and last book, where he cites Ps. 119⁹⁶ (*omnis consummationis vidi finem*), apparently to prove the wisdom of ending a book as it began. Otherwise, the Bible in his book is employed usually as a source for stories and annals. It was a period when the past was popular, not simply the recent past of the nation, but the far past, as revealed in old romances, in the classical traditions, and in the Bible. What the Scots at this period found in the Bible was more than examples of faith, courage, purity, and wisdom, more than warnings against treachery, the faint heart, and injustice. They sought and they found in the histories of the biblical books the title-deeds of their inheritance

as a people, and, inspired by men like Wyntoun, discovered proofs to justify their present place among the nations.

§ 2

One of Wyntoun's bitter grievances against the English is their capture and treatment of King James, who is the next author in our literature. **James I.** was not a Solomon; he did not even profess to be a Solomon, like James VI. But, like Solomon, he has been credited with several writings. If these are authentic, he must have been a very considerable poet, second to hardly any one of his generation, either in England or in Scotland. He had a romantic career, and a spirit of romance from the outside world, inspired by his 'dear masters,' Gower and Chaucer, breathes through his musical poems. He, too, knows his Bible. In **The Kingis Quair** (*King's Book*), it is true, there is only one biblical quotation, combining Eccles. 3¹ ('to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven') and Isa. 28¹⁶ ('he that believeth shall not make haste'). It is in stanza cxxxiii. :—

All thing has time, thus says Ecclesiaste ;

And wele is [well it is with] him that his time well abit [abides].
Abide thy time, for he that can bot [knows nothing but] haste
Can nought of hap, the wisē man it writ.

Ecclesiaste or Solomon is quoted to prove that all will go well with a man who can wisely bide his time; the sage or prophet Isaiah is quoted to clinch the truth that the man who knows only how to be in a hurry knows nothing of good fortune. The odd thing is that these are counsels to a lover, and counsels

given to him by 'the patient goddess' Minerva, within her palace, to which Good Hope has conducted him. The advice of the goddess contains another biblical allusion; for (in stanza cxxx.) the inquiring lover is told to invoke divine guidance in his courtship :—

Tak Him before in all thy gouernance [conduct],
 That in His hand the stere [guidance] has of you all;
 And pray unto His hyë purveyance [high providence]
 Thy lufe to gye [guide], and on Him traist [trust] and call,
 That corner-stone and ground is of the wall,
 That failis noght [not]; and trust, withoutin drede,
 Unto thy purpose sone He shall thee lede [lead].

This allusion to passages like 1 Cor. 3¹⁰⁻¹¹ and Eph. 2²⁰, which is natural to the mediæval passion for making love a sort of religious enthusiasm, is accompanied by an indirect allusion to Matt. 7¹⁵ in stanza cxxxvi., where selfish and seducing lovers are compared to wolves in sheeps' clothing :—

Fy on all such ! fy on thaire doubilnesse !
 Fy on their lust and bestly [beastly] appetite !
 Their wolfis hertis, in lambis likënesse ;
 Their thoughtis blak, hid under wordis white.

James may have possessed the 'incredible ardour for scriptural knowledge' with which Bower, his chronicler, credits him; still, it certainly does not tinge his charming poetry. The *Kingis Quair*, by the way, is the first, though not the last book in our literature that was composed in England; it was inspired by his romantic passion for Lady Jane Beaufort, who became his queen. Those who write on the place of the Bible in Scots literature, however, must sometimes follow the example of the Border raiders who

Sought the beeves that made their broth
 In Scotland and in England both.

And, as far as the fifteenth century goes, this Scots poetry was far above any English verse of the period. Later, in the seventeenth century for example, Scots literature fell far below English, but writers like Occleve and Lydgate are no match for Scots poets like King James, Barbour, Henryson, and Dunbar.

The Book of Jealousy or **The Quare of Jelusy**, written either by the king or by a certain James Auchinleck (Affleck), is more biblical. In 222 f. :—

All virtuouse womman Salamon holdith dere,
And mekle worth [much honour comes] of thair gouirnance :
They are oure ease, they are our suffisance :

we overhear the praise of virtuous women in Prov. 12⁴ (‘ a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband ’) and 31^{10f}. In 350-351 the poet declares that jealousy, which is born of hell, prevents any one from living a well-ordered life, even although he may be

As chaste, as true, and rule himself as well
As ever hath do [done] the prophet Daniel—

an allusion to Dan. 1^{8f}. (‘ Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself ’). Then, in 359 f. :—

But charity thus evermore he leaveth,
Which Christ of wedding depith [calls] the habyte [garment],
But which of hevin every wight beleuyth [who misses]
But of the blisse and of the fest is quyte [is deprived].
And Paul thus to the Corinthians doth write
Of faith, of hope, and eke of charity :
The last the most [greatest] he depith [calls] of the three.

And he declareth in the samyn chapture
That though men be as angels eloquent,
Or all their gudis gyvith to the pure [poor],
Or yet for Christ ysuffering such torment
To be yslawe, ymarterit, or brent [burned],
Or doth all gude the which that may be wrought,
And lacketh charity, all it availeth nought—

we have not only reminiscences of 1 Cor. 13, but an identification of 'the wedding garment' in the parable of Matt. 22¹¹⁻¹³ with love. The warning of Matt. 18⁷⁻⁹ is quoted in 394 f. :—

And Jealousy hath ever such a tongue
That from the malice of his heart proceedeth. . . .
And Crist he saith, ' That who of slander dreadeth
Wo be to him ! ' and, more, unto him bedith [biddeth]
Away the slanderous member for to kerne [cut],
Which damneth you eternally to sterne [die].

The next stanza holds a quotation from Ecclesiasticus 25¹⁶ :—

I will rather dwell with a lion and a dragon
Than keep house with a wicked woman,

which is by a slip of memory (familiar to readers of Chaucer) attributed to King Solomon :—

And Salomon saith, ' Far better that it were
Alone to dwell with lions, than be near
A slanderous tongue of chiding and of hate ' :
So odious he holdeth such debate.

For the first time in Scots literature we overhear echoes of the Old Testament wisdom books and Psalter, as well as of the New Testament sayings. Also, we note in James i. that the Bible is being used now for more than historical or antiquarian or romantic reasons.

In the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* this set of moralistic lives is attributed to King James :—

Since through virtue increaseth dignity,
And virtue is flower and root of nobles [nobleness] aye,
Of any wit or what estate thou be,
His steps follow, and dread for none effray [terror] :
Eject vice, and follow truth alway,
Love most thy God that first thy love began,
And for ilk inch He will thee quyte [requite] a span.

Be not o'er proud in thy prosperity,
 For as it comes, so will it pass away ;
 The time to count is short, thou may well see,
 For of green grass comes faded hay.
 Labour in truth, which sooth is of thy fay [faith],
 Trust most in God, for He best guide thee can,
 And for ilk inch He will thee quyte a span.

Since word is thrall, and thought only is free,
 Thou dant [subdue] thy tongue, that power has and may [is
 weighty]
 Thou steik [shut] thine eyes from the world's vanity :
 Refrain thy lust, and hearken what I say :
 Graip [grope, feel your way] ere thou slide, and keep forth
 [along] the highway,
 Thou hold thee fast upon thy God and man,
 And for ilk inch He will thee quyte a span.

The verses may not belong to James, but it says something for a king that such lines could be attributed to him at all. As for the moralistic tone, which echoes the books of Proverbs and of Ecclesiastes, it reappears in an old scrap of song called 'A Welcum to Eild,' where old age is rather coolly welcomed :—

My curling hair, my crystal e'en,
 Are bald and bleared, as all may see ;
 My back that sometime brent [straight] has been
 Now cruikis [bends] like a camok tree.
 By me your sampil [example] ye may see,
 For so said worthy Solomon,
 Elding [ageing] is end of earthly glee ;
 Welcome eild, for youth is gone.

There is a prayer to the Virgin Mary as (751 f.) :—

Thou seker trone [thou stable throne] of Salamon,
 Thou worthy wand of Aaron,
 Thou joyous fleiss [fleece] of Gideon,
 Us help the behufis [it behoves thee to help us] ;

there is an allusion to Prov. 16¹⁸ ('pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall') in 960 f. :—

I may be sampill [an example] heir eft [hereafter]
That pryde never yet left
His feir [companion] but [without] a fall,

and those are practically all the biblical echoes to be overheard in **The Buke of the Howlat**, though the author, Richard Holland or de Holande, was a secular priest who held several benefices, one after another, in the north country and in Shetland. The 'Book of the Owl' describes how that fowl once persuaded Dame Nature to improve his dingy appearance by granting him one feather from each of the other birds; but the owl became so intolerably conceited in his borrowed plumes that Nature solemnly reproved the delinquent :—

'Thy pryde,' quod [saith] the Princes[s], 'approaches our
hie [too high]
Lyke Lucifer in estaite;
And sen [since] thou art so elate,
As the Ewangelist wrait,
Thou sall lawe [low] be.'

The owl then learns practically the meaning of Matt. 23¹², for every one of the borrowed feathers is taken away, and so pride has its fall.¹ But the poem is a political allegory, which is more interesting for its eulogy of the Douglas family than for its biblical allusions, though there is a hymn of praise to the Virgin Mary. Henryson shortly afterwards wrote a set of simple lines on the Annunciation. Holland is more elaborate. He hears the mavis, the ousel,

¹ According to Major, Lord Stewart actually used this fable in taunting Wallace before the battle of Falkirk.

the lark, the starling, and the nightingale chanting a song to Mary :—

Hail temple of the Trinity, crowned in heaven,
Hail mother of our Maker, and medicine of myss [misdeeds] . . .
Hail alterer of Eua [Eve] in[to] ave but ure [without doubt].

This is a rendering of the mediæval quibble about the name of ‘Eva’ being changed to ‘Ave,’ in the ‘Ave Maria’ of Gabriel (Luke 1²⁸). Holland employs the Bible as a religious book pre-eminently in such passages; it is more than a source of illustration for historical or even for moral purposes. And, what is equally important, he uses it when he is writing in the major key. Too often, after him, we shall find scriptural allusions sounding most frequently when the writer is composing in the minor key.

§ 3

Barbour had never mentioned Wallace, but this is made up for by **Blind Harry**, the wandering minstrel who sings his own lays in the halls of the great. He declares that he was a ‘burel’ (*i.e.* uneducated) man, but he has picked up learning of a kind, though he is neither an ecclesiastic nor a court-poet. His *Wallace* yields us very little. And the little is on the level of Barbour and Wyntoun. He is writing a straightforward romance, in which biblical allusions would be out of place. It is true that when he comes to describe the misdoings of the English in Scotland, under ‘Edward, that false king,’ he cries out indignantly :—

King Herod’s part they playit in Scotland,
Of young children that they befor them fand (i. 165-166).

But Herod was a familiar ogre in the miracle-plays. Harry is more likely to be recalling the Bible in vii. 175 f., one of his classical patches, where the murderous and mischievous effects of the planet

Saturn¹ are chronicled, including the tragedy of Judges :—

When Samson powed [pulled] to ground the great piller,
Saturn was than in till the heast sphere [in his highest sphere].

These are all the biblical allusions of Harry, though he does tell the story (xi. 1393 f.) of how Wallace always carried a Psalter with him, and how he obtained permission for a priest to hold it up before his eyes at his execution. Harry closes by bidding his book go and try its fortunes in the learned world :—

Now bide thy time and be a remembrance.

He modestly asks his readers to pardon his lack of fine language, and asks their prayers, as he lays down his pen :—

Now beseech God that giver is of grace,
Made hell and earth and set the heaven above,
That he would grant us his dear lasting love.

His poem certainly made Wallace remembered. It was modernized, and down to the beginning of the nineteenth century traces of its use and popularity are to be found among the Scottish peasantry. One of the latest is the testimony of Hugh Miller, who tells how as a boy of ten, in 1812, he became a thorough Scot by reading a popular edition of the book, which fired his national pride :—

The recollections of this early time enable me, in some measure, to understand how it was that, for hundreds of years, Blind Harry's *Wallace*, with its rude and naked narrative, and its exaggerated incident, should have been according to Lord Hailes, the Bible of the Scotch people.²

¹ Where did Harry pick up this astrological lore? From Chaucer? In the *Knight's Tale* Saturn tells Venus that when he is in the sign of the Lion,

Mine is the ruin of the high halls,
The falling of the towers and of the walls,
Upon the miner or the carpenter ;
I slew Samson in shaking the pillar.

² *My Schools and Schoolmasters* (ch. iii.).

§ 4

Hitherto, the love of Scotland, the love of Nature, and the love of woman, together with an interest in the Arthurian romances, have been the main characteristics of our literature. Now we mark an extension of its range of interests in the poetry of 'the venerable master'¹ **Robert Henryson** (or Henderson), who was enrolled, on 10th September 1462, as a member of the newly formed University of Glasgow. He rose to the charge of the Benedictine Abbey School at Dunfermline. Sometimes his poetry flows in a didactic vein, which prompts a biblical allusion. Thus, in *The Abbey Walk* or *Obey and Thank thy God of [for] All*, he cites Job and Tobit to illustrate his theme:—

Job was maist riche, in writ we find,
 Thobe [Tobit] maist full of charity :
 Job wex peur [waxed poor], and Thoby blind,
 Baith temptit with adversity.
 Sen [since] blindness was infirmity,
 And poverty was natural,
 Therefore in patience baith he and he ²
 Obeyed and thanked God for all.

His delightful love and Nature poems do not come our way, but his *Fables* are charged with a 'good morality,' which he likes occasionally to tip with a sly biblical allusion. For example, in the moral to Esop's fable of the two mice he quotes apparently from Prov. 17¹ ('Better is a dry morsel,' etc.) or 16⁸ ('Better is a little with righteousness'), if not from

¹ i.e. 'Magister,' a man with an academic degree.

² The one and the other. Professor Gregory Smith, in his edition of *Henryson's Poems* (Scottish Text Society), quotes Tennyson's opening sonnet in *Harold* :

But he and he, if soul be soul, are where
 Each stands full face with all he did below.

Eccles. 3²² ('There is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works') :—

Thy own fire, my friend, sa it be bot ane gleid [supposing it
be only a small flame, an ember],
It warmis weill, and is worth gold to thee ;
And Solomon sayis, gif that thou wilt read,
'Under the heaven there cannot better be,
Than aye be blyith and live in honestie.'
Wherefore I may conclude be [with] this reason :
Of earthly joy it beris maist degree,
Blyithness in heart, with small possessioun.

Several texts may have been in his mind when he added this moral to the fable of the trial of the fox :—

Salamon's saying thou may persaif [perceive] herein :
'Think on thy end, thou shalt not gladlie sin.'

In the moral to the fable of the sheep and the dog, he laments the state of the country, which was certainly ominous, and echoes Ps. 44²³ in his wail :—

Lord God, why sleepest thou so long ?
Walk [wake] and discern [judge] my cause, grounded on right.

In the fable of the wolf and the lamb, the wretched lamb protests against the injustice of being punished for his father's wrongdoing, and reminds the wolf of the true Scripture doctrine, as laid down in Ezek. 18^{19f.} :—

Sir, it is wrong that for the father's gilt [guilt]
The saikles [innocent] son should punished be or spilt [harmed].
Have ye not heard what holy Scripture sayis,
Endytit with the mouth of God Almycht ?
Of his own deeds each man shall bear the prais [reward],
As pain for sin, reward for werkis right.

This is one of the Chaucerian touches in Henryson. In *Orpheus and Eurydice* he tells how Orpheus, on visiting hell, found not only many popes, cardinals,

bishops, abbots, and priests there, but also kings and queens like Hector and Priam, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar ('for his crueltie'), Herod (for marrying his brother's wife), Nero, Pilate ('for his breking of the lawe'), Pharaoh, Saul, Ahab and Jezebel (for their treatment of Naboth). As for his *Garment of Gude Ladies*, Lord Hailes was not far wrong in calling it a wearisome paraphrase of 1 Tim. 2⁹⁻¹¹. The poet, for example, advises 'my good lady' to make honour her hood, good thoughts her muff, and so on. Too much learning makes these poems dull. Henryson is a captivating poet; he and King James were the first Scots poets who, like Keats in later days, humbly dared

In wayfaring

To stammer where old Chaucer used to sing.

But his supreme achievements, like the poem on Troilus and Cressida, are not for us.

Then, as the fifteenth century ends, out of the troubled years of James III. and James IV. the genius of **Dunbar** gleams, the first really great Scots poet. This 'rhymer of Scotland,' as he is called in the Privy Council Accounts, began as a roving Franciscan friar. He reminds us of Villon in his shameless begging, his command of forceful verse, his keen imagination, his rough intensity, and his mastery of metre. He is the first Scots poet who reveals something of himself in his verse. 'We can see horribly clear in the works of such a man,' says Keats of Burns, 'his whole life, as if we were God's spies.' We cannot say this about Dunbar, but his poems show some aspects of his personality, his tastes, his antipathies, and his manners, and although the revelation is partial and not endearing, it is embarrassingly frank; there is a fascination about this disreputable vagrant, vivid churchman. However, it

is his use of the Bible which is our concern here. Dunbar's verse presupposes an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures. He was as emancipated an ecclesiastic as Swift or Sterne, but professionally he could not help acquiring some familiarity with the Bible, and the traces of this begin to emerge as the poet grows older. One of the few allusions in his earlier verse occurs in *Blithe Aberdeen*, which he wrote after visiting that town in the train of Queen Margaret (May 1511). The Scots queen had a royal reception from the magistrates and citizens, who gave a display of religious and historical tableaux in the open-air. The former consisted of 'the salutation of the Virgin,' 'The three kings offering their gifts to the Child Jesus,' and 'The expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise.' In his poem Dunbar congratulates Aberdeen upon the entertainment. But this allusion is merely an incidental proof of the popularity of religious plays (see above, pp. 29 f.), not any clue to Dunbar's personal interests. It is true that under his poem on Covetousness we can overhear, in the refrain, an echo of the text, 'The love of money is the root of all evil' (1 Tim. 6¹⁰). Covetousness or greed is one of the vices attacked with special vehemence in Scots literature, greed of barons, greed of clergy, greed of merchants, and so forth. For this reason it is worth our while to translate or transliterate some of Dunbar's pointed stanzas :—

Freedom, honour, and nobleness,
 Meid [courage], manhood, mirth, and gentleness,
 Are now in court reput [considered] as vice ;
 And all for cause of covetyce.

Hawking, hunting, and swift horse running
 Are changed all into wrongous winning ;
 There is no play but cards and dice ;
 And all for cause of covetyce.

In burghs, to landward and to sea,
 Where was pleasure and great plenty,
 Venison, wild fowl, wine, and spice,
 Is now but care and covetyce.

Honest yeomen in every town
 Were wont to wear both red and brown,
 Are now arrayed in rags with lice ;
 And all through cause of covetyce.

He who does deeds of pitie,
 And lives in peace and charity,
 Is held a fool, and that full nice [utterly ignorant fellow] ;
 And all through cause of covetyce.

And who can reive [rob] other men's rowmis [property],
 And upon poor men gather sowmis [heap debts],
 Is now an active man and wise ;
 And all through cause of covetyce.

Man, please thy Maker and be merry,
 And set not by [value not] this world a cherry ;
 Work for the place of paradise,
 For there reigns no covetyce.

But, apart from some moralizing touches like this, it is only in his later verse, on serious and religious topics, that Dunbar betrays any real knowledge of the Bible, or, at any rate, any interest in it. Even in some of these poems, in *Lord God, how sall I governe me?* or in the stately and sombre dirge, *Timor mortis conturbat me*, there is no biblical allusion where it might well be expected. But when he withdrew from the Court, a disappointed man, and wrote in the late afternoon and evening of his life, his lines reveal a close acquaintance with the Bible and especially with the Vulgate version, which he quotes occasionally to good purpose. Thus the three stanzas *Of the Worldis Vanity* chime to the refrain of Eccles. 1² in the Latin version. We may quote the second :—

Walk furth, pilgrame, quhill thow hes dayis lycht,
 Dress fro desert, draw to thy dwelling-place ;
 Speid home, for quhy ? anone cummis the nicht
 Quhilk dois the follow with ane ythand chaise !
 Bend up thy sail and win thy port of grace ;
 For and the deith ourtak the in trespas,
 Then may thow say thir wourdis with allace !
 Vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas.'

[Walk forth, pilgrim, while thou hast daylight, make ready to leave the desert of this world, draw near to thy dwelling-place ; speed home. For the night is coming on at once, which follows thee with an eager pursuit ! Hoist thy sail and gain thy port of grace ; for if death overtakes thee in the midst of trespass, then thou mayest say these words dolefully, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.']

The Passioun of Christ is an extraordinarily vivid description of our Lord's sufferings—the first attempt in Scots literature to portray any incident in His life realistically. If Dunbar preached as he wrote, he must have been an arresting expounder of the Gospel narrative. His devotional poems are rich in biblical phrases, woven aptly into their lyrical texture, though in *Ane Ballat of our Lady* he allows his devotion to the Virgin Mary to carry him the length of applying to her ('hodiern modern, sempitern') the description of Jesus Christ in Heb. 13⁸ ('the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever'). It is more pleasant to recall these—and they are not a tenth part of the available material—than the parody on the Lord's Prayer which he put into his attack upon the town of Stirling. As for specific quotations, his lines upon self-management (*Rewel of Anis Self*) quote a phrase from the Vulgate of Ps. 18²⁵⁻²⁶ :—

In company cheiss [choose] honorable feiris [companions],
 And from vile folkis draw the [thyself] far on syd [aside] ;
 The Psalm says, Cum sancto sanctus eris :
 He rules well that well himself can guide.

Which is a misapplication, for the psalm (' with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure ') refers to God's fellowship with man, not to human companionship. The *Tabill of Confessioun* has this allusion to Luke 7³⁸ :—

Though I have not thy precious feet to kiss,
As had the Magdalene, when she did mercy crave,
I shall, as she, weep tears for my miss [wrongdoing],
And every morrow seek Thee at thy grave.

In *The Maner of Passing to Confessioun* he begins by recalling the temptation of Jesus :—

O sinfull man, thir [these] are the forty days
That every man should wilfull [voluntary] penance dre [suffer] ;
Our Lord Jesu, as holy writ us says,
Fasted himself our example to be ;
Since such a mighty king and lord as he
To fast and pray was so obedient,
We sinfull folk should be more diligent.'

But it is a poem like *Of the Resurrection of Christ* that shows Dunbar's energy as well as his reverence in handling scriptural allusions, and as so much of the verse which we shall meet in this line is respectable but not remarkable, the two opening stanzas of this poem may be quoted :—

Done is a battle on the Dragon black,
Our champion Christ confounded has his force [power] ;
The yetts [gates] of hell are broken with a crack,
The sign triumphal raised is of the cross,
The devils trymmillis [tremble] with hideous voice,
The souls are borrowit [redeemed] and to the Bliss can go,
Christ with his blood our ransoms doth indoe [endorse] :
Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro.

Dungin [overcome] is the deadly dragon Lucifer,
The cruel serpent with the mortal stang [sting] ;
The auld keen tiger, with his teeth on char [half open],
Who in a wait [on watch] has lain for us sae lang,

Thinking to grip us in his clawis [claws] strang ;
 The merciful Lord would not that it were so,
 He made him for to felye [fail] of that fang [booty] :
 Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro.

This is the great note struck for the first time in Scots religious verse, by a poet who has command of scriptural allusions as well as of metrical resources.

§ 5

It would be a godsend if we knew more than the names of all the twenty-three Scots poets whom Dunbar mentions in his sonorous *Lament for the Makaris* (poets)—a lament whose stanzas sound like mournful notes of a bell tolling through the twilight. The catalogue of dead poets shows what an outburst of verse must have poured from the court-circle during this semi-Augustan age of Scots literature, when literary forms like satire and allegory rose alongside of lyric, epic, and burlesque verse. But a number of these are mere names to us. On the other hand, we may tentatively assign to this period or to the sixteenth century some **Anonymous Poems**, from which I shall cull five or six passages. (a) One is from *The Thrie Tailles of the Thrie Priestes of Peebles*—a rollicking descriptive poem. The three priests meet on St. Bride's Day, and each tells a story. In one the king is made to address his clergy thus :—

Welcome bishops, he said, with my blissing ;
 Welcome my beadsmen, my bliss, and all my bield [shelter] ;
 To me ye are baith Helmet, Speir, and Scheild.
 For right as Moses stood upon the Mont,
 Praying to God of heaven, as he was wont ;
 And right so, be [by] your devout orisoun,
 Mine enemies should put to confusion.

A reference to the incident described in Exod. 17¹¹⁻¹³,

Whoever the author of these satirical tales was, he was a cleric who derided pleasantly the bad manners and morals of the country, from the court downwards. He may even have been the King's secretary, John Reid or Stobo. At any rate he knew his Bible, especially the Gospels and the Book of Acts. He represents, for example, this question being put, why cannot the modern clergy work miracles as their progenitors did ?

Wherefore and why
 In old times and days of ancestry
 So many bishops were and men of kirk
 So great will had aye good works to work,
 And through their prayers made to God of might
 The dumb men spoke, the blind men got their sight,
 The deaf men hearing, the crooked got their feet ;
 Was none in baile [trouble], but well they could them beit [aid].

The answer is, that when bishops were to be chosen of old, they were chosen by the laity :—

Unto the kirk they gathered old and ying [young],
 With much hard fasting and praying,
 And prayed God with words not in waist [vain]
 To send them wit [discretion] down by the Holy Gaist [Ghost].¹

Whereas nowadays the election is a farce. The bishop who ought to be a true shepherd 'climbs up some other way' (John 10¹). He buys the appointment or secures it by royal patronage :—

He comes not in at the door.
 (God's plough may never hold the furrow.)
 He is no herd to keep these silly sheep,
 Nought but a tod [fox] in a lambskin to creep.
 How should he kyth [know anything of] miracles, and he so evil ?
 Never but by the dysmel [fiend] or the devil. . . .
 Such wickedness this world is within,
 That simony is counted now no sin ;

¹ Alluding to Acts 13¹⁻³.

And this is the cause, both all and sum,
 Why blind men sight, nor hearing get the dumb ;
 And thus is the cause, the sooth to say,
 Why holiness from kirkmen is away.

(b) Another passage from this anonymous literature, which I select, yields an unexpected touch of vivid imagination ; it occurs in the lines of some author who signs his *Dreme* as '*Lichtoun monicus* (a monk ?).' He tells us how he dreamed that he sailed as far as Paradise :—

The place where Adam was.
 Be [when] we approached into that port in hye [on high],
 We were well ware of Enoch and Elye [Elijah]
 Sitting, on Yule even, in ane fresh green schaw [wood],
 Rostand straberries at ane fyre of snaw.

Enoch and Elijah sitting in the greenwood, on Christmas Eve, roasting strawberries at a fire of snow !

(c) The third passage is from *Golagros and Gawane*, a long knightly tale, which is commonly supposed to have been written by some 'Clerk of Tranent,' during the second half of the fifteenth century. In it we come upon another (see above, p. 38) note of eight worthies in the far past :—

Hector and Alexander and Julius Caesar,
 David and Joshua and Judas the gent [fair],
 Samson and Solomon, that wise and worthy war [were],
 And that ring [reign] on earth, richest of rent [in possessions].

The Judas is, of course, Judas Maccabeus. Then (d) we light upon an allusion to 1 Kings 4³³ ('and he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall') in an early sixteenth century poem, *Do For Thy Self Quhill Thou Art Heir*, which has been sometimes attributed to Dunbar. As the poet meditates by the riverside in a forest about the uncertainty of life, a

bird tells him that his plain duty is to look after himself while he is here in the world, and clinches this counsel of self-reliance by observing :—

If any man his life might lenth [lengthen]
 I wot it had been Solomon ;
 Of all wisdom he had the strength,
 He knew the virtue of herb and stone ;
 He could not for himself dispone
 Attour his dait, to leif a yeir ; ¹
 Ane wysar wicht was never none ;
 Do for thy self while thou art here.

(e) A common mixture of Latin phrases and vernacular translations from the Bible occurs in another sixteenth-century poem on the Resurrection of Christ, which has also been sometimes set down to the credit of Dunbar. The poet has Matt. 28¹⁻⁷ in his mind. He describes the angel appearing to the women, and adds :—

Beholding the brightness of this angel
 The Magdalen and Mary Salamee [Salomé]
 Abaséd wer in spirit, as says the Evangel,
 And stood aback. ‘ Be not afraid,’ said he,
 ‘ The Lord is risen whom ye come to see,
 Ipse preceidit vos in Gallelela ;
 To his apostles go tell the veritie,
 Surrexit sicut dixit, allalua ! ’

This interest in the Gospel narrative became so infrequent during the latter phases of Scots literature that it may be further illustrated from a minor, earlier piece, preserved in the Bannatyne Manuscript and elsewhere. This old quaint composition describes with unwonted sincerity the kindness and the sufferings of Jesus in His lifetime on earth. We may

¹ Even he could not arrange for himself to live one year beyond his appointed date. And there never was a wiser man than Solomon !

take these lines from it, modernizing their spelling in order to render them intelligible :—

In Symon leper's house of [at] Bethany,
 Thy feet anointed Mary Magdalen
 With precious balm and nardus spicardy [of spikenard] . . .
 Through Mary's soul the sword of dolour thirst [thrust],
 When that thou saidst, ' See here thy son, woman,'
 Commending her to John the evangelist ;
 Sharp, bloody tears her crystal eyes outran.
 Swelled were thy sides for scourges black and wan,
 Naked and pale dead on the cross thou [didst] hang,
 Crowned with thorns for scorn two thieves amang.

Another anonymous poem of the period describes with simple effectiveness the Annunciation, telling how Gabriel reassured the Virgin Mary :—

Consent, virgin, unto this high message,
 Whereby follows the redemption
 Of Abraham and all his whole lineage ;
 Thy word may now infernal ¹ folk discharge,
 The fathers eke that darkness doth inance
 With woful Adam weeping in penance.

§ 6

With these anonymous versifiers and with Dunbar we have crossed into the beginning of the sixteenth century, when the mediæval period ends with Gawain Douglas and the transition to a new order of things is represented by Sir David Lyndsay. Scotland had two struggles for freedom to live and breathe. First, she had to fight England for political independence, in the fourteenth century. Then, in the sixteenth, she had to strip off the Roman organization, in order to gain religious liberty. Both struggles produced literature, although the first led to a richer output than the second. The difference between the two

¹ *i.e.* Resident in the lower world, the 'spirits in prison.' (See above, p. 57.)

struggles, however, was this, that literature helped to win the second, and the literature included the Bible.

The great figure at the opening of the sixteenth century is Dunbar's younger contemporary, the aristocratic poet-priest **Gawain (Gavin) Douglas**. His early years were devoted to literature. Douglas was not among the bishops who fought and fell at Flodden; indeed, it was not until two or three years after Flodden that he became Bishop of Dunkeld. Then he played a high, anxious, and vexatious part in politics, diplomacy diverting him from literary interests. He anticipated Voltaire's rule that one should not write poetry after the age of forty; his verse was done by 1513. Allan Ramsay tells us how he liked to think

On the lear'd days o' Gawn Dunkell;
Our country then a tale could tell,
Europe had nane mair sneck an' snell
At verse or prose;
Our kings were poets too themsell,
Bauld an' jocose.

This is hearty, if not critical. But Douglas was certainly a learned prelate, and proud to be a Scots poet in that early work of his, not simply an 'English' writer in Scots. He comes before us here as an author, and in connexion with his biblical allusions, which, as might be expected, are numerous. Thus, in *The Palice of Honour* (1501), which is written to prove that 'virtue is the only way to honour, and not riches or high blood,' he gives a moral allegory of the soul's progress to the heavenly palace, which blends pagan mythology and biblical history in what strikes our modern taste as an insipid and disconcerting fashion. In the train of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, he sees this oddly assorted company:—

The prudent Sibyls full of bliss,
Cassandra eik [also] Deeбора and Circes,

The fatal sisters twining our weirds [fates] out,
Judith, Jael, and mony a prophetess.

The men include :—

Salomon, the well of Sapience,
And Aristotell fulfillit [full] of prudence.

Accompanying Socrates and some others he observes

Galien [Galen], Averroes, and Plato,
Enoch, Lamech, Job, and Diogenes,
The eloquent and prudent Ulisses,
Wise Josephus and facund Cicero,
Melchisedec with uther many mo.

He brackets Ahithophel and Sinon as rascals, and among other things gives some account of 'the wonderfull workis of douchtie duke Samsone.' There is no historical division of secular and sacred for Douglas. He can describe, for example, how the pagan goddess Diana is associated with Jephthah's daughter, and how Calliope's nymph, 'maist faithful and decoir,' whisked him by the hair of his head across the purgatory of the slothful, 'as Abacuk was brocht to Babylon'—one of the earliest allusions in Scots literature to the popular apocryphal tale of Bel and the Dragon, in which an angel lifts the prophet Habakkuk by the hair of his head, and conveys him from Judæa to Babylon, that he may take his dinner to Daniel in the lions' den. This cheerful blending of sacred and secular pervades Scots verse for long. As late as the seventeenth century Samuel Colvill, or whoever wrote the rollicking *Whig's Supplication* in 1681, used the same method, for example, in the stanza :—

One man, quoth he, oft-times hath stood
And put to flight a multitude,
Like Sampson, Wallace, and Sir Bevis,
And Finnacoul beside the Lewis—

where, by the way, 'Finnacoul' is the very Ossianic warrior, Fingal, whom Douglas saw among the gods and heroes in his vision, under the name of 'Fyn Makcoul.'

Douglas wrote another allegory, *King Hart*. It is a moralistic variation upon the theme which Bunyan afterwards worked out in *The Holy War*. The translation of Vergil's *Æneid*, which is his chief literary feat, does not sound a promising field for biblical allusions, but in the prologues which he inserted there are some strange indications of his interest in the Scriptures. Thus he does not see why Æneas could not have descended to the lower world, when the witch of Endor could bring up the ghost of Samuel to Saul. In the prologue to the fourth book, the panegyric on the power of Love contains this odd apostrophe:—

Thou doutit [didst overpower] Alexander for all his vassalage
[valour].

Thou festynit [didst hold] Jacob fourteene years in bondage.

In the prologue to the thirteenth¹ book he defends himself against the objection that a man like himself was wasting time in translating a pagan author, and refers to the well-known tale of Jerome:—

How he was dounge [felled] and beaten in his sleep,
For he to Gentile bukis gaif sic kepe [attention].
Full sharp reproof to some is writ, ye wyst [know].
In this sentence of the holy Psalmist²:
'They are corrupted and made abominable,
In their studying things unprofitable.'

¹ There are only twelve books in the *Æneid*. But Douglas had an urgent reason for adding another. Mapheus Vigeus, a fifteenth-century Italian, who had perpetrated a thirteenth, appeared to him in a vision and induced him to translate this also. The inducement included a cudgelling!

² Psalm 14?

§ 7

Douglas is the last great ecclesiastic of the Roman Church who made his mark in Scots literature. He died on the verge of a complete change in the Church as well as in the State, a change marked by the name and work of **Sir David Lyndsay**. Lyndsay, like Douglas, was a St. Andrews graduate. His versatile and energetic spirit is reflected in his verse, which is of double interest to us ; it shows not merely his own intimate knowledge of the Bible, but the rising popular demand for the Bible which helped to hasten the re-formation of the Church. Scott calls him

The flash of that satiric rage,
Which bursting on the early stage,
Branded the vices of the age,
And broke the keys of Rome.

Allan Ramsay protests that

Sir David's satires helped our nation
To carry on the Reformation,
And gave the scarlet dame a box
Mair snell than all the pelts of Knox.

Yet Lyndsay never left the Roman Church ; he lashed its vices from within. His allegories and satires are not diatribes like those of Dunbar, due in the main to thwarted ambition, but actuated by a sense of large, positive issues for Church and State, and in denouncing the social or religious corruptions of the day he contrives to use Scripture most effectively. To any one fishing for biblical allusions, the work of Lyndsay offers teeming pools. Like Dunbar, he is fond of quoting phrases or tags from the Vulgate. Thus *The Testament of Squyer Meldrum* ends with this stanza :—

My spirit hartlie [from the heart] I recommend

In manus tuas, Domine ;

My hope to thee is to ascend,

Rex, quia redemisti me ;

Fra syn [from sin] *resurrexisti me,*

Or else my soul had been forlorn :

With sapience *docuisti me :*

Blest be the hour that Thou wast born.

Similarly in *The Dreme*, a poem intended for the instruction of his young pupil King James v., he walks out on a bright winter morning, and lying down in a cave by the seashore, where the sight of the waves suggests to him the instability of the world, he has a vision of Dame Remembrance who takes him on a Dantesque journey to heaven, purgatory, and hell, as well as throughout the world. The motto prefixed to the poem is from the Vulgate of 1 Thess. 5²⁰⁻²¹ ('prophetias nolite spernere. Omnia autem probate: quod bonum est, tenete'). But when John the Commonweal, who represents Scotland, is asked why the country suffers from so much mischief and misery, he quotes Eccles. 10¹⁶ :—

I see right well, that proverb is full true,

Woe to the realm that has ouer [too] young ane King.¹

For Lyndsay, writing to interest a popular audience, uses the vernacular as well. He introduces several biblical quotations in his terse *Complaynt to the Kingis Grace*, written after James had asserted himself against the Douglas faction. He hopes that the King will not forget the old servant who had done so

¹ The long minorities of some Scots kings gave the turbulent nobles a chance of arbitrary lawlessness, which the commons dreaded. Shakespeare voices this feeling in *Richard the Third* (Act ii. scene 3):—

‘THIRD CITIZEN: Doth this news hold of good King Edward’s death?’

SECOND CITIZEN: Ay, sir, it is too true; God help the while!

THIRD CITIZEN: Then, masters, look to see a troublous world.

FIRST CITIZEN: No, no; by God’s good grace his son shall reign.

THIRD CITIZEN: Woe to that land that’s governed by a child!’

much for him in early days. Let him remember the parable of the workmen in the vineyard (Matt. 20¹⁻¹⁶)!

I hope thou shalt do as weill [well]
As did the father of fameill [the household],
Of whom Christ makes mention,
Who, for a certain pension [wage],
Feit [hired] men to work in his vineyard,
But who came last got first reward,
At which the first men were displesit :
But he them prudently [wisely] amesit [satisfied] ;
For, thocht [though] the last men first were served,
Yet got the first that [what] they deserved.

Lyndsay reminds the King that as he had borne the burden and heat of the day in the capacity of tutor and guardian, he deserved his penny or pension. Later on (330 f.) he denounces the clergy as unworthy of their name and calling :—

For Esayas, in his wark,
Calls them like dogs that cannot bark,
That called are priests, and cannot preach,
Nor Christ's law to the people teach.

This application of Isa. 56¹⁰ (' his watchmen . . . are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark ') to the Roman prelates is followed by (420 f.) an appeal to the King to check the idolatrous worship of saints. Let him take warning by the fate of King Jeroboam, who tolerated and patronized idolatry !

I do thy Grace tyll understand [let your Grace know]
Geve [if] thou to mennis [human] laws assent,
Against the Lord's commandiment,
As Jeroboam and mony mo [more],
Princes of Israell also,
Assentaris to idolatry,
Who punished were right piteouslie [piteously],
And from thair realms were rooted out ;
So shalt thou be, without a doubt,
Baith heir and hyne [back and front], withoutten more.'

Finally (487 f.) he quotes Prov. 21¹ as a word of David :—

For David, king of Israell,
Who was the great prophet royal,
Says, God has haill [wholly] at his command
The hearts of princes in his hand :
Even as he list them for to turn,
That must they do without sudgeorne [delay].

Even the king's parrot, in *The Testament and Complaynt of the Papyngo*, knows not only Church history but the Scriptures. The bird laments the fate of James III., murdered after the battle of Sauchieburn in 1488 :—

Would God that Prince had been that day confortit [upheld]
With sapience of the prudent Solomon,
And with the strength of strong Sampson supported,
With the bold oste [host] of great Agamemnon !

Another plaint of the bird is over Constantine's endowment of the Church, which divorced the Church from her apostolic bride, Poverty :—

John the Baptist went to the wilderness.
Lazarus, Martha, and Marie Magdalene,
Left heritage and goods, more and less ;
Prudent Saint Paul thought property profane,
From town to town he ran, in wind and rain,
Upon his feet, teaching the word of grace,
And never was subjected to riches.

The penitent ghost of Beaton, in *The Tragedie of the Cardinal*, quotes Scripture repeatedly :—

Then was I put aback [pushed back] from my purpose,
And suddenly cast into captivity,
My pridefull heart to dant [humble], as I suppose,
Devised by the high Divinity :
Yet in my heart sprang no humility.
But now the Word of God full well I know,
Who doth exalt himself God shall him law [lower].

What use had it been for him to erect St. Andrews Castle as a safeguard for his life and wealth ?

Such a Fortress was never found in Fife,
Believing there durst no man me invade ;
Now find I true the saw that David said,
Without [unless] God of an house be Master of wark,
He works in vain, though it be never so stark [strong]—

a reminiscence of Ps. 127¹ (‘ Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it ’). In the very next stanza he quotes from the book of Judith :—

As David did slay the great Golyas,
Or Holoferne by Judith killéd was,
In myd among [in the very midst of] his triumphant army,
So was I slain within my chief citie.

The conflict between David and Goliath recurs in *The Historie of Squyer Meldrum*, where (310 f.) that stalwart Fifeshire hero defies the French champion, Talbart :—

Then said this Squire to the knight,
I grant ye are baith great and wecht [strong] ;
Young David was far less than I,
When with Golias manfullie,
Withouttin either spear or shield,
He fought and slew him in the field.
I trust that God shall be my guide,
And give me grace to stanche [quench] thy pride.

The poet is glad also to think (1500 f.) that the knight who murdered Squire Meldrum was himself put to the sword on Stirling Bridge :—

For cruell men ye may well see,
They end oft times with crueltie ;
For Christ to Peter said this word,
Who ever straikis [strikes] with ane sword,

That man shall be with ane sword slane :
 That saw is suith [true], I tell you plain :
 He means, who straikis cruellie,
 Against the Law without mercie.

This interpretation of Matt. 26⁵² was necessary, for Meldrum himself was far from being a meek Christian. Finally, the hero is made to reflect :—

The holy man Job, ground [foundation] of patience,
 In his great trouble truly did report,
 What I persave [perceive] now be [by] experience,
 That mennis [men's] life on earth be wounder [wonder-
 fully] short.
 My youth is gone, and eild [age] now doth resort [come] ;
 My time is gone, I think it but a dream,
 Yet after death remain shall my good fame.

In Lyndsay's main work, the one surviving specimen of the sixteenth-century Scots drama at its best (see above, p. 30), we hear the Bible constantly. **Ane Pleasant Satyre of the Thrie Estates in Commendatioun of Vertew and Vituperatioun of Vyce** pleased the age greatly. It was performed, e.g. at Linlithgow before the King and court in 1540, at Cupar Fife in 1542, and at Greenside, near Edinburgh, in 1544. These performances we happen to know of, but they are only some out of a large number. It took apparently about nine hours, beginning at seven or nine in the morning, and owed much of its popularity to the fact that in a lively, stinging, broad, and humorous fashion this drama voiced powerfully the popular resentment against the Church as well as against the State abuses. Thus, when divine Correction comes upon the scene, the three estates of the realm are convened by a proclamation beginning :—

Beati, qui esuriunt et sitiunt Justitiam :
 These are the words of the redoutit Roy [famous Roi],
 The Prince of Peace, above all kingis King.

To this quotation from Matt. 5⁶ we may add the effective use of a Pauline text by John the Commonweal, who voices the complaint of Scotland against the lazy monks and priests, just as Langland had done in *Piers Plowman*. Indeed, the charges brought by the Scottish poet are as trenchant as those of his English predecessor :—

Sir, I complain upon the idle men :
 For why, Sir, it is God's own bidding,
 All Christian men to work for their living ;
 Saint Paul, that pillar of the kirk,
 Says to the wretches that will not work,
 And be to virtues laith [loth, slow] :
Qui non laborat non manducet,
 This is in Engliche toung or leit [language].
 WHO LABOURS NOT HE SHALL NOT EAT.

This application of 2 Thess. 3¹⁰ (' we commanded you that if any would not work, neither should he eat ') is a word specially directed, John insists,

Against these great fat friars,
 Augustines, Carmelites, and Cordeliers.

When the clergy protest against being expected to preach, the dramatist makes Good Counsel silence them by reading 1 Tim. 3¹⁻² (' This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be . . . apt to teach '). The clergy, represented as Spirituality or the Spiritual Estate of the Realm, retort that laymen have no business to meddle with such matters. The Temporal Estate replies :—

Sit still, my Lord, ye need not for till brawl,
 These are the very words of th' apostle Paul.

Spirituality rejoins :—

Some say, by Him that wore the crown of thorn,
 It had been good that Paul had never been born.

Good Counsel, horrified, asks them if they had ever read the New Testament :—

Na, sir, by him that our Lord Jesus sold,
I read never the New Testament nor the Auld.

A true illustration of this ignorance is given in the next scene, when one of the sergeants of police mutters :—

On Doomsday, when Christ shall say,
Venite benedicti :
The Friars will say, without delay,
Nos sumus exempti.

They are so accustomed to claiming exemption from taxes, and so ignorant of the Bible, that they will not understand, ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father’ ! They will take it for a demand upon their possessions and privileges ! Lyndsay’s invectives, like Dunbar’s, are not to be viewed as a complete picture of the contemporary Church ; we know that at Aberdeen, for instance, learning flourished among the local priests. Still, there were parish priests, especially in the south, whose lives more than justified the dramatist’s criticism. It is satirical, no doubt, and ‘Satire to be popular must exaggerate,’ as Mark Pattison observes. ‘But it must be exaggeration of known and recognized facts.’ And because Lyndsay’s dramatic satire had this basis, it told upon the popular mind. George Gilfillan, in one of his literary essays, argues that no one could doubt the possibility of conjoining Christianity with satire or invective, if he read the last chapter of 2 Peter and the Epistle of Jude. But Lyndsay’s satire is inspired by the Old Testament as much as by the New ; it never troubles to justify itself by citing scriptural precedents. From the soil of honest indignation it leaps out into Scots literature for the first time, that is, for the first time

in combination with the Bible. Lyndsay's English contemporary, John Bale, did ampler work in drama of a Protestant temper; but Bale was an ecclesiastic, and half the force of Lyndsay's satire was due to the fact that it came from a layman.

But it is in the long poem, *Ane Dialog betwix Experience and ane Courteour*, a poem almost as dull as it is long, that Lyndsay shows most familiarity with the Bible. This is natural; for Father Experience gives the Courtier an account of ancient mythology and history, including the Bible story, and a fairly comprehensive sketch of the Christian religion, with its divergences from the Roman faith and practice. Some of the details are curious. He knows, like Chaucer, that Adam was created by God at Damascus (364), and that Longus was the name of the soldier (278) who pierced the side of Jesus with a spear. He wonders how long Adam and Eve 'reigned' in the Garden of Eden (852 f.) :—

The Scripture makis no mention
How long they rang in that Region;
But I believe the time was short,
As divers Doctors do report.'

He agrees with the Genevan version in its famous 'breeches' rendering of Gen. 3⁷ :—

When they had eaten of the fruit,
Of joy then were they destitute . . .
And made them breikis of leaves green.

He knows that Cain's wife was 'callit Calmana' (1205), and he is able to supplement the account of Nimrod in Gen. 10⁸⁻⁹—a mighty man, although

Moses, in his first book,
That story lightly did overlook.

From Orosius and Josephus here, as elsewhere from Diodorus Siculus and Ctesias, Lyndsay develops the

significance of Nimrod as the builder of Babylon and the originator of idolatry. He argues that at the Resurrection the dead are to rise as at the age of thirty-three (5616 f.) :—

The Scripture says they shall appear
As at the age of three and thirty years,
Whether they died young or old.

And he foresees how the witches will appear for judgment, out of France and Scotland especially, headed by the witch of Endor, whose name, like Barbour (see above, p. 40), he knows :—

With Phitonissa, I hear tell,
Who raised the spirit of Samuel,
That day with her there shall resort
Of rank witches a sorrowful sort [crew].
Brought from all parts, many a mile,
From Savoy, Athole, and Argyle,
And from the Rhinds of Galloway,
With many a woeful ' wall-away ! '

When Dr. South, in his famous sermon on human perfection, declared that ' an Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam,' he was unconsciously following in the footsteps of the Scottish poet. For to Lyndsay, Adam in Eden is a paragon of moral, mental, and physical excellence (950 f.) :—

He gave thee strength above Samson,
And sapience more than Solomon ;
Young Absolom, in his time most fair,
To thy beauty was no compair ;
Aristotle thou didst precall [excel]
In philosophy natural ;
Virgil in his poetry,
Nor Cicero, in oratory,
Was never half so eloquent.

Drummond of Hawthornden could hardly say more

about James VI., though he did drop a sonnet on his grave, beginning :—

Let holy David, Salomon the wise,
That king whose breast Egeria did inflame,
Augustus, Helen's son great in all eyes,
Do homage low to thy mausolean frame !

In *Ane Dialog* (538 f.) Lyndsay justifies his method of writing in the Scots vernacular. He has 'Jock and Tam' in view. Why should they not hear the works of God in their own tongue, as the Israelites did when they received the Law from Moses ?

He wrote the Law, on tables hard of stone,
In their own vulgar language of Hebrew,
That all the bairns of Israel, every one,
Might know the Law and so the same ensew [carry out].
Had he done write in Latin or in Grew [Greek],
It had to them been but a sawreless [tasteless] jest :
Ye may well wit [know] God wrocht all for the best.

Aristotle and Plato did not write in Dutch or Italian ; Vergil and Cicero did not write in Chaldee or Greek or in the Saracen tongue, or in Hebrew ; these authors worked in their native vernacular. So Lyndsay argues. Not that he would disparage the study of languages like Greek and Latin and Hebrew ; indeed, he is sorry that he is not one of the 'cunnyng men' who know these tongues. Still he would wish that

All books necessare
For our faith were in tyll [within] our tongue Vulgare.

His plea for the use of the vernacular in legislation and in religion is telling just because it is moderate and sensible. He recalls the object of the gift of tongues at Pentecost (608 f.), and contrasts the divine intention here with the familiar spectacle of nuns chanting their Latin psalms and hymns without

understanding a word of what they say—just ‘like a starling or a parrot.’ Why mumble devotions in Latin, when ‘God have mercy on me’ would be as pleasant to the spirit as *miserere mei, Deus*? Saint Jerome rendered the Bible into Latin—and it has been hid from us for a long time! But

Had Saint Jerome been born within Argyll,
In the Irish tongue he would his books compile.

Did not Saint Paul say that he would rather speak five words with his understanding than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue (1 Cor. 14¹⁹)? Then

In our language let us pray and read
Our Pater Noster, Ave, and our Creed.

Throughout the *Dialogue* Lyndsay’s use of biblical phrases and incidents is fresh; they have not become conventional or artificial; he and his readers are entering a new world in the English Bible, and his verses retain something of the directness and naïve delight of first impressions. Thus there is imaginative power in his description of the Flood (1441 f.):—

The fishes thought them ill beguiled
When they were swimming through woods wild;
Whales a-tumbling among the trees,
Wild beasts swimming in the seas.
Birds, with many a pitiful pew [cry],
Terrified in the air they flew,
So long as they had strength to flee,
Then swatterit [they splashed] down into the sea.

And his religious convictions come out in the protest against praying to the saints (2621 f.)—for Lyndsay criticized doctrines as well as conduct. He lays stress on the words ‘to thy Father’ (Matt. 6⁶: ‘When thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret’):—

Who teacheth us, by his divine scripture,
 To correct prayer the perfect ready way,
 As writeth Matthew in his sixth chapter,
 In what manner and to whom we should pray—
 One short, compendious orison, every day,
 Most profitable for both body and soul ;
 The which is not directed, I hear say,
 To John nor James, to Peter nor to Paul,

Nor any other one of the apostles twelve,
 Nor to no saint nor angel in the heavens,
 But only to our Father, God Himself.

The prediction of Luke 21²⁵ (' And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon,' etc.) is explained (5320 f.) thus. The sun is the spiritual authorities ; their darkening means ruin to all the lesser lights in the State. The moon signifies the royal power, and Lyndsay deplores the darkening of this light by war among Christian monarchs :—

I think that they should think great shame
 Of Christ for to take their surname,
 And then live not like Christians,
 But more like Turks and pagans.
 Turk against Turk makes little war,
 But Christian princes have no fear,
 Who should agree as brother with brother,
 But now each one dings [knocks] down the other.

Through his pages we can see the neglect of the Bible by the Roman clergy in Scotland, which is bound up with their neglect of preaching to the people. This complaint and charge is written over all Lyndsay's work. For example, Beaton in *The Tragedie of the Cardinall*, confesses :—

That day when I was bishop consecrait [consecrated],
 The great Bible was bound upon my back ;
 What was therein, little I knew, God wait [wot] !
 More than a beast bearing a precious pack.

An equally sarcastic indifference to the Bible is attributed by several writers to the Roman clergy. Thus the Earl of Glencairn, in his satirical *Epistle direct fra the Holye Armit* [hermit] of *Allarit* [Loretto] to his Brethren the Gray Freiris, makes the hero sneer at the wretched Lutherans :—

These smaikis [poor churls] do set their whole intent
To read the English New Testament,
And say we have them clean deceived.

Lyndsay reproduces the same attitude in priests of his own day, for by 1543 men were beginning to ask why they should not have the Bible in their own language, and beginning to get copies surreptitiously. Lyndsay describes graphically the effects produced by the first introduction of these English Bibles, *i.e.* of the Scripture in the vernacular, which Scott mentions in the opening chapters of *The Monastery*. Thus in *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* Truth arrives with a copy of the New Testament, much to the indignation of the spiritual authorities, who suspect and resent this attempt to let the people know God's word for themselves. Flattery warns them to be on their guard against this dangerous innovation :—

O reverend Fathers of the Spiritual State,
We counsel you, be wise and vigilant :
Dame Veritie has alighted now of late [not long ago],
And in her hand bearing the New Testament :
Be she received, but dout we are bot schent.

If she is received, there is no doubt that we are simply ruined ! So Lady Truth is put into the stocks as a menace to the realm. She protests :—

The prophecy of the prophet Esay [Isaiah]
Is practised, alas ! on me this day ;
Who said, the Veritie should be trampled down
Amid the streit [street] and put in strong prison :

His five and fiftieth chapter, who list look [whoever cares to look]
 Shall find these words, written within his book.
 Richt so, Saint Paul writes to Timothie,
 That men shall turn thair ears from veritie.

The Isaianic reference seems to be to 59¹⁴ ('Truth is fallen in the street'); the other is to 2 Tim. 4⁴ ('They shall turn away their ears from the truth'). Then she warns the religious authorities :—

But, ye princes of spiritualitie,
 Who should defend the sincere veritie,
 I dread the plagues of Johnës Revelatioun
 Shall fall upon your generatioun.
 I counsell you this misse [error] to amend,
 So that ye may escape that fatall end.

When Queen Mary made her state entry into Edinburgh, on 2nd September 1561, the magistrates presented her with a Bible and a Psalter. She did not miss the significance of the gift; the Scottish people were determined to have the Bible in the vernacular as their rule from God. This demand had been growing, and it is loudly voiced already in the verse of Lyndsay, who ridicules the desperate attempts of the clergy to suppress the copies of Tyndale's New Testament, which were being smuggled into the country and read eagerly by the people. In *Kitty's Confession* one of the least objectionable questions put to the Scots girl by her unworthy father confessor, is whether she has heard any English books read aloud, *i.e.* any copies of the New Testament :—

Quod [said] he, ken ye na heresie ?
 I wait [know] not what that is, quod she.
 Quod he, Heard ye na Inglis books ?
 Quod she, My master on them looks.
 Quod he, The bishop that shall know,
 For I am sworn, that for to show.

Kitty blurts out her disappointment with another priest :—

And mekil [much] Latin he did mummil,
I heard na thing but hummill bummill.
He showed me naught of Goddis word,
Which sharper is than any sword.

§ 8

For our purpose Lyndsay's verse is therefore of first-rate importance. It marks a vital use of the Bible in literature and at the same time the historical significance of the demand for a vernacular Bible in Scotland. Also, it indicates how deeply the Bible had entered into the minds of men in Scotland, who had picked up phrases and tales from its pages by the hearing of the ear, at any rate, long before they had a vernacular version. A contemporary proof of this may be added; although it does not belong to Scots literature, I note it as an illustration of how texts from the Bible were even then commonly used. It appears that some Scots in the French service, possibly soldiers in the famous Scots Guards, occasionally used to scrawl verses on buildings. Four of these have been found,¹ for example, in **Inscriptions** cut within the chapel of the château of Chenonceaux : 'The reward of sin is deid [death], the grace forsooth of God is pays [peace] and life in Jesu Christ our Lord' (Rom. 6²³), 'The ir[e] of man worketh not the justice of God' (James 1²⁰), 'Be not overcome with evil' (Rom. 12²¹), and 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die' (Rom. 8¹³). These are dated 1543, 1546, and 1548. Such scriptural mottoes were sometimes carved on Scots houses, partly as a talisman to ward off disease and bad luck. We find 'Deus illuminatio

¹ Dr. W. A. Craigie, in *The Scottish Historical Review* (1921), pp. 131, 132.

mea,' for example, and on a house in Dunfermline, once the residence of Robert Drury or Dalgleish, there is a Latin inscription noting how it had been rebuilt in 1626 after a fire in 1624 : ' Since an hour's fire on 25th May 1624, with its fierce flames, could work so much damage, O think of the fearful fires which the breath of Jehovah, as with a torrent of brimstone, will kindle, Isaiah 30³³ ["The pile thereof is fire and much wood : the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it "]. ' Beside the family coat of arms on a shield are the words ' *Nisi Dominus frustra* ' [from Psalm 127¹ : ' Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it ']. Underneath, in Latin, the pious sentence is carved : ' If a kindly Providence has been willing to bestow afresh these new buildings, as you see, for us to dwell in, O think on "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," Heb. 11¹⁰ ; note, I pray you, "the goodness and the severity of God," Rom. 11²². ' This Fire Stone at Dunfermline is one of the most elaborately equipped stones in Scotland, so far as biblical references go. It is seventeenth-century work, but the habit was in vogue a century earlier.

CHAPTER II

THE RE-FORMATION OF THE CHURCH, AND THE LATER SIXTEENTH CENTURY

§ 1. RISE OF SCOTS PROSE.

'THE COMPLAYNT OF SCOTLAND': 1550.

JOHN KNOX: 1505-1572.

GEORGE BUCHANAN: 1506-1582.

PITSCOTTIE: 1532-1578.

§ 2. POPULAR VERSE OF THE PERIOD.

SIR RICHARD MAITLAND: 1496-1586.

ROBERT SEMPILL: c. 1570.

SIR JOHN MAITLAND: 1545-1595.

JOHN DAVIDSON: 1549-1603.

WILLIAM LAUDER: c. 1550.

'THE GUDE AND GODLIE BALLATIS': c. 1550.

§ 3. JOHN STEWART OF BALDYNNEIS: c. 1580.

WILLIAM FOWLER OF HAWICK: c. 1580.

JOHN ROLLAND OF DALKEITH: c. 1580.

§ 4. ALEXANDER SCOTT: c. 1560.

ALEXANDER MONTGOMERIE: 1540-1610.

THE HUMES OF POLWARTH: 1560-1610.

§ 5. KING JAMES VI.: 1578-1625.

CHAPTER II

§ 1

HITHERTO Scots literature has been in verse. Now we arrive at the **rise of prose in the vernacular**. It is true that slight efforts had been already made in this direction. We find not only that Scots prose began, like English prose, with translations, but that one or two native pamphlets had appeared like *The Craft of Deying* (dying) and the treatise upon the duties and education of a prince which John of Ireland, rector of Yarrow, wrote for James IV. in 1490. The latter is 'the earliest example of original literary prose in Scots,' according to Professor Gregory Smith, and, as we might expect, it has handfuls of biblical allusions—for example: 'Thy hieness [highness] suld in all thy werkis and operacciounis ask at the hie god of wisdome that he will direk thee to wyrk in all thing eftir his pleasaunce and will; for sua teichit tobias [Tobiah] his son.' But these and some other pieces of a different kind, like Bellenden's translations from Livy and Boece (1530-1540), merely anticipate the sudden, late emergence of the sixteenth-century prose, which was largely due to the spread of the Bible under the re-formed Church. Till then the prospects of vernacular prose were wintry. Perhaps

History, not wanted yet,
Leaned on her elbow, watching Time, whose course
Eventful should supply her with a theme.

At any rate it was the Reformation which started Scots prose of the classical order, and the prose was historical.

The earliest specimen of our native prose, however, is by a member of the Roman Church. Alan Chartier, a French poet, had written in 1422 his *Quadriloge invectif*, a sombre appeal launched after Agincourt to rouse his fellow-countrymen against the English. In 1548 a Scots exile, whose identity eludes us, took this French piece and adapted it to the situation of his own country after the Scots defeat at Pinkie (1547). By 1549 he had completed **The Complaynt of Scotland**, a patriotic prose appeal by a man who saw no help for his country except in siding with France against England. He hates the English, because they are English and Protestant. But the point is that he, too, employs Scripture freely in his political advocacy of the Guises. It is no doubt awkward for him that a text like Eccles. 10¹⁶ (‘Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child’) seems to tell against his argument,¹ since Mary Queen of Scots was very young; but he gets round the obstacle by insisting that youth here means ‘ignorance and inconstance,’ not actual age! He assures Mary of Guise that God has raised her up to save Scotland, ‘as he inspirit queen Esther to delyvir the captive Jewis quehn thai and Mordocheus [Mordecai] war sinisterly accusit and persecutit by Hamman, and as the holy widow Judith was inspirit to delyvir the Jews from the crueltie of that infideil pagan Oli-phernes.’ Esther and Judith are again hailed as the prototypes of an energetic queen. And in warning the Scottish people, especially the borderers, to have

¹ Isa. 3¹² (‘As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them’) is equally awkward. But he pleads that this is not to be taken literally!

no dealings with these ‘auld subtil doggis,’ the English, either by trade or by inter-marriage, he recalls how ‘in the days of Moses the Jewis durst nocht have familiarite with the Samaritanis, nor with the Philistines, nor the Romans with the Africans, nor the Greekis with the Persians’—blending sacred and secular history. He almost despairs of Scotland, in his indignation at the sufferings of her peasantry. Indeed, the world, he tells us, is nearly at an end. It was intended only to last for 6000 years; 2000 from Adam to Abraham, 2000 from Abraham to the Incarnation, and 2000 from the Incarnation to the second Advent. But the third period is not to be completed, for does not Matt. 24²² predict that these days are to be shortened? ¹ Incidentally he is indignant at the credit assigned by the English not to the biblical prophecies, but to the ‘profane prophecies’ of Merlin and other old ‘corrupt vaticinaris,’ who predicted ‘in their rusty ryme that Scotland and Ingland sall be undir ane prince.’ A singularly unfortunate verdict, in the light of what was to happen half a century after he wrote!

Whoever this pioneer in prose was, ‘a literary adventurer rather than a literary amateur,’ ² his Scots contemporaries usually broke out in other directions. Scots prose in the sixteenth century is mainly historical or political, sometimes both. The spread of printing helped its popularity, for while poetry can be repeated orally, prose needs the written

¹ Napier of Merchiston thought the same. ‘The last trumpet and vial beginneth anno Christi 1541 and should end anno Christi 1786. Not that I mean that that age, or yet the world, shall continue so long, because it is said that for the elect’s sake the time shall be shortened; but I mean that, if the world were to endure, that seventh age should continue until the year of Christ, 1786.’ This was in 1593!

² Prof. J. H. Millar, *A Literary History of Scotland*, p. 129.

page to be effective. Besides, reading became more common, as the Reformation had encouraged schools. But Scots prose was still far behind English; there was no one to write as More, Raleigh, or Bacon wrote south of the Border. The Scots clung longer to Latin prose, and such prose as they did write was generally theological rather than literary, unless it was used by translators.

John Knox is the supreme exception, especially in his *Historie of the Reformation in Scotland*. 'The story, as he has told it, has gone into the popular mind as effectively as the chant of an epic poet.'¹ We note in his sinewy prose, as in Lyndsay's, both the new power of the Bible in the country and also his own power of using it. Thus, in describing the temporary triumph of 1543, which secured from the Earl of Arran, the head of the government, formal permission for reading the Bible in the vernacular, but which also led to a good deal of ostentatious religion, Knox was shrewd enough to admit that many professed to side with the new movement for freedom, whose motives were not absolutely sincere. There is a grim irony in his paragraph on the effects of the new legislation:—

Then mycht have been seen the Byble lying almaist upoun everie gentilmanis table. The New Testament was borne about in many manis handes. We grant, that some (alace!) prophaned that blessed wourde; for some that, perchance, had never red ten sentences in it, had it maist common in thare hand; thi wold chope [clap] thare familiares on the cheak with it, and say, 'This hes lyne hyd under my bed-feitt these ten yearis.' Otheris wold glorie, 'O! how oft have I bein in danger for this booke: How secreatlie have I stollen fra my wyff at mydnycht to reid upoun it!' And this was done of many to maik courte thairby; for all men

¹ Hume Brown, *Life of John Knox*, ii. p. 217,

esteamed the Governour to have bein the most fervent Protestand that was in Europa.

As for his own use of the Scripture, I prefer to quote, not from the luckless *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstruous Regiment* [rule] of *Women*, which is crammed with curious proofs extracted out of the Bible as well as out of classical and mediæval sources, but from the *History* again. We may make space for three instances. (a) One is the use of Jer. 10¹¹ in the sturdy story of how he flung the painted wooden image of the Virgin Mary into the water, when the officers of the galley tried to make him kiss and hold it :—

These are thingis that appear to be of no great importance ; and yit yf we do rychtly consider, thei expresse the same obedience that God requyred of his people Israell, when that thei should be caryed to Babylon ; for he gave charge unto thame, that when thei should see the Babylonians wirschipe thare goddis of gold, silver, mettall, and woid, that thei should say, ‘The goddis that have nott maid the hevin and the earth shall perish from the hevin, and out of the earth.’

Another (b) is from the third book, where he is describing how some remarks in his sermon at Cupar (1560) offended the Earl of Arran :—

For, in his discourse upon the manifold assaultis that the Church of God had sustained, he brocht for exampille the multitude of strangeris that persewed Jehoshaphat after that he had reformed religion. . . . Jehoshaphat was stout, and to declair his courage in his God, he comforted his pepile and his souldiouris ; he came fourth in the mydst of thame ; he spak lovinglie unto thame. He keipit not himself (said he) inclosed in his chalmer, but frequented the multitude, and rejoiced thame with his presence and godlic comforts. These, and the lyik sentences, took the said Erle to be spoken in

reproach of him, because he keipit himself more close and solitary than many men wold half wished.

Finally (c), to show how **the Old Testament** was becoming dominant in the thought of the period, I quote this from his account or rather his interpretation of the humiliating surrender of the Scots raiders at Solway Moss in November 1542. The disaster is compared to the rout of Benhadad, King of Syria, which is recounted in 1 Kings 20¹⁻³⁴; in both cases, the discomfiture of a large force by a small was the doing of God :—

In this formare discomfiture, thare did two hundreth and thretty personis in the skyrmyshe, with sevin thousand following them in the great battell, putt to flyght the said Benhadad with thretty kingis in his company. But hear thare is, in this schamefull discomfiture of Scotland, verray few mo then three hundreth men, without knowledge of any back or battell to follow, putt to flight ten thousand men without resistance maide. Thare did everie man reaconter [meet] his marrow [match], till that the 230 slew such as matched them. But heir without slauchter the multitud fled. Thare had those of Samaria the prophete of God to comforte, to instruct, and to promesse victorie unto them. But England, in that persute, had nothing, but [except] as God secretlie wrought by his providence in these men that knew nothing of his wirking, nether yitt of the causes thareof, more then the wall that fell upoun the rest of Benhadadis army knew what it did. And tharefor, yit againe we say, that such as in that suddane dejectioun beholdis not the hand of God, feghting against pride for fredome of his awin litill flock, injustly persecuted, do willingly and malitiouslie obscure the glorie of God.

George Buchanan's prose counted among his fellow-countrymen. Its reputation may be gauged by the ironical proposal of Sir William Drummond to the Parliament in 1639, ' that Buchanan's Chronicle

shall be translated into the vulgar Scottish, and read in the common schools ; and the books of Apocrypha being taken away from the Bible, his Book *De jure regni* be in the place thereof insert' ! Although the pamphlets in the vernacular, which prove his mastery of style and mental grasp, do not yield much in the way of biblical allusions, we may modernize the following sentence from his *Admonitioun Direct to the Trew Lordis Maintenaris of Iustice and Obedience to the Kingis Grace*, written towards the end of April 1570, when Scotland was practically in a state of anarchy after the murder of the Regent Moray. Buchanan has been appealing to the nobles to safeguard the young king and rally the forces and friends of the Protestant cause, instead of bickering and intriguing. And at the end of the pamphlet we come upon the one biblical allusion (to Matt. 26⁵³) in these words :—

Neglect not ye the offer of friends ; be in fear that if you let slip this occasion, ye shall crave it in vain in your necessity. Think it no less a providence of your heavenly Father than if he had sent you a legion of angels for your defence.

Buchanan was hailed as ' ce grand poète Escossois ' by Montaigne, one of his pupils at the Collège de Guyenne, but this was on the score of his Latin poems. His biblical play *Baptistes* was translated in 1642, as ' Tyrannical Government Anatomized : being the Life and Death of John the Baptist.' Which involved a change in the political application of the drama, as Dr. Hume Brown points out¹ ; thus Malchus is Laud, no longer Cardinal Beaton, Herod is Charles I. instead of Francis I. of France, and Herodias becomes the prototype of Henrietta Maria. This, however, lies beyond and outside our immediate survey.

¹ In *Vernacular Writings of George Buchanan*, pp. xxii, xxiii (Scottish Text Society, 1892).

To speak of Scots prose in any connexion, however, without mentioning **Pitscottie** would be ungrateful and unfair. Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, near Cupar Fife, was the first man who wrote the annals of Scotland in vernacular prose, and he remains the foremost author in such prose. His *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, as Sheriff Mackay his editor observes, shows 'a graphic and, in the main, an honest chronicler, skilful in selecting salient points or characteristics, able to represent them in a lively fashion, ready, after the manner of his countrymen, to moralize on the past.' But while he moralizes, it is not in biblical language. Pitscottie may have had piety, but he does not parade it in his pages. Not even in the rugged verses between the section of his book does he employ scriptural allusions. Any allusions are to conventional, classical themes. He does mention, in the course of his chronicle, how Henry the Seventh sang the forty-third psalm when he landed at Milford Haven to challenge Richard in 1485 :

eftir the said Harie had landit, he humblit him sellff upon his kneis, prayand to his lord God, thankand him of his grete graice and mercie and benefittis that he had schawin and bestowit upon him in the bringing of him throw the raiging sea bot [without] ony storme of violence of wether and that he was saifflic landit bot impediment of any enemyeis, and thairfoir he gave lowein [loving] thankis unto the lord his God on this maner, singing the xliii. psalme, 'Judge and revenge my caus, O Lord.'

But this is merely an incident recorded in the history, and not even in connexion with a Scots king! Pitscottie takes his sturdy way, apart from pious and biblical tropes. His prose is practically untouched by any interest in the Bible.

§ 2

As for the **Scots verse** of the sixteenth-century struggle, it is loud with the party-cries of minor men, who can quote Scripture for their purposes. One recurring feature is the odd mixture of classical and biblical allusions. This may be illustrated from a sixteenth-century *Tragedie in forme of Ane Diallog* (Cranstoun's 'Satirical Poems of the Time of the Reformation,' i. 84-85), which extols the gifts and graces of the Earl of Murray in this fashion :—

True Faith he learnéd of good Abraham,
 With hope and charitic knit to the same :
 He learned also of Salomon the wisdom,
 How with the fear of God to rule a kingdom :
 Of strong Samson he had also the fors [force]
 For to resist God's foes on foot and horse ;
 He had likewise the Justice of Jethro,
 And also the chastitie of Scipio :
 He had of David the benignitie,
 And of Titus [*i.e.* the Emperor Titus] the liberalitie.
 What would you more ? To tell of all his vertus
 For common welthis [commonwealths] he did excell Camillus.

Another contemporary broadsheet, *The Bird in the Cage*, attacks Maitland of Lethington, that 'scurvy scholar from the lair of Machiavelli,' that

Doegis craft right cunningly imprent,
 Quha can [began] in hart pure David's Regne to stay ;
 Achitophell misordour [misrule] to invent ;
 A proud Haman the faithful to betray ;
 Sobney ¹ the scribe false treason to display ;
 Uproris [tumults] to raise. an atheist Abiron ;
 To stalwart knights a guileful Ganelon.

¹ 'Sobney' is from the Vulgate form of Shebnah (2 Kings 18¹⁸), 'Abiron' is the Abiram of Num. 16¹⁴, and Ganelon is the Judas of the Charlemagne romance. Doeg is, of course, the treacherous Edomite who damaged David's prospects (1 Sam. 22¹⁸⁻²²).

Naturally, the mixture of Latin tags from the Vulgate is not quite so common in these broadsheets intended for circulation among the people, though it appears now and then, as, for example, in the pasquinade which emerged against Bothwell and his associates after the murder of Darnley, denouncing those who

Consented to that foul band,
 And did subscribe it with their hand,
 And other silly, simple lords,
 Who fear their hanging into cords.
 God is not glee'd [deceived] though ye him [Bothwell]
 clenge [acquit] ;
 Believe me, well He will revenge
 The slaughter of that innocent lamb :
Mihi vindictam, et ego retribuam.

Darnley as an 'innocent lamb' is decidedly startling ; the Vulgate version of 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' was probably chosen for the sake of a word to rhyme with the said 'lamb.'

Much more common is the appeal to 'apocryphal' stories which were still popular. This may be seen in a vigorous poem by **Robert Sempill** or Semple, who, like Sir Philip Sidney, happened to be in Paris during August 1572, and just escaped with his life from the massacre of Saint Bartholomew. He writes in a white-heat of Protestant horror and indignation at the 'maikles and saikles' (unparalleled and unprovoked) slaughter inflicted by the French monarch on his subjects ; the worst he can say of him is that he is a second Antiochus Epiphanes.

In Ilis [the Hebrides] nor in Orkney, in Ireland O'Neill,
 They dar not, they gar not their lieges be stickit :
 Solyman, Tamerlan, nor yet the mekle Deill,
 Proud Pharaoh, nor Nero, was never so wickit :
 Neither Turk nor Infidel usis sic thing
 As be their awin burres [executioner], being ane king.

Baith auld men and wemen with babis on their breist,
 Not luling nor huling [off their guard, unsuspecting], to hurl
 them in Seine !

All being murdered down, what do ye neist [next] ?

Procession, confession, and up Mass again !

Proud King Antiochus was sum tyme [once] as holy,

And yet our God guschit out the guttis of his belly.

Sempill belonged to an Ayrshire family, of which several members contributed to the political and religious letters as well as to the life of the period. In two other poems, denouncing Patrick Adamson, the notorious bishop of St. Andrews, and all bishops, Sempill is not content to describe bishops as the heirs of Balaam or the successors of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram ; he proceeds again to the 'apocryphal' histories :—

In Maccabees whoever likes to look
 By Alcimus and Jason they may learn
 Men-sworn bishops that Moses' law forsooke,
 Renouncing God for worldly goods and gear.

This kind of polemical verse is deplored by old **Sir Richard Maitland** (1496-1586), the father of Maitland of Lethington :—

Some of the poets and makars, that are now,
 Of grit despyte and malice are sa fow [full],
 That all lesingis [lies] that can be inventit,
 They put in writ and garris [make] them be prentit.

Sir Richard wrote some prose, but he has earned the gratitude of posterity by his collection of old Scots verse. His own verse is not effective as literature. We can see that he knew his Bible, as when he advises people to be merry in a lawful manner, when troubles rose—a counsel wrung from his own experience, for the old statesman was afflicted with blindness, though he saw shrewdly into the abuses of

Church and State ; also, he was sadly compromised by his brilliant son's political career.

When I have done consider
 This world's vanity,
 So brittle and so slidder [slippery],
 So full of misery ;
 Then I remember me
 That here there is no rest ;
 Therefore apparently
 To be merry is best.

Let us be blythe and glad,
 My friends all, I pray ;
 To be pensive and sad
 Nothing it help us may.
 Therefore put quite away
 All heaviness of thought :
 Though we mourn night and day,
 It will avail us nought.

It will not be our sorrow
 That will stop God's hand,
 To strike both even and morrow
 Both on the sea and land.
 Since none may it withstand,
 Let us be all content
 To underlie the wand
 Of Godis punishment.

What God pleases to do,
 Accept it thankfully ;
 What pain he puts us to,
 Receive it patiently.
 And if that we would be
 Relievéd of our pain,
 For sin ask God's merey,
 Offend him not again. . . .

Yet plainly I conclude,
 Into [in] all worldliness [the life of the world]
 Nothing for man's so good
 As lawful merriness ;

For there is no riches
So long his life can lenthe [lengthen],
Preserve him from sickness
And keep him in his strength.

Therefore with true intent
Let us from God ask grace
Our sins to repent
While we have time and space ;
Then bring us to that place
Where joy is evermore,
And see God face to face
In His eternal gloir [glory].

As for the quarrelsomeness of popular writers, it need only be said that the controversial use or misuse of the Bible in such broadsides of the period was not confined to one party in the religious struggle. The Romanists could also find ammunition in scripture for their attacks upon the Protestant leaders. One of these may be cited from prose, from an angry *Disputation concerning the Controversit Headdis of Religion* by **Nicol Burne**, a priest. He was exasperated to think that Knox's second wife belonged to a good county family ; she was the young daughter of Lord Stewart of Ochiltree. Burne could only suppose that the devil must have beguiled the girl by investing Knox with unwonted charms of face and figure, and he recalls for his purpose the saying of the apostle that ' Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light ' (2 Cor. 11 ¹⁴).

As is plainly reported in the country, by sorcerie and witchcraft he did so allure that poor gentil [well-born] woman, that she could not live without him ; which appears of great probability, she being a damosel of noble blood, and he ane auld decrepit creature of most base degree of any that could be found in the country ; so that such a noble house could not have degenerated so far, except John Knox had interposed

the power of his master the devil, who, as he transfigures himself sometimes into an angel of light, so he caused John Knox to appear one of the most noble and lusty men that could be found in the world.

The usual attacks were not so stupid as this, however, and were generally in verse. Thus Nicol Burne himself, in *Ane Admonition to the Antichristian Ministers in the Deformit Kirk of Scotland*, prefixes to some vigorous lines the motto 'Exurgat Deus, et dissipentur inimici eius' (from the Vulgate of Ps. 68¹), and calls the Protestant ministers

Workmen of Nimrod . . .
Nimrod is Luther, son of perdition,
That Roman Antichrist, blasphemous knave,

crying out on them :—

The Lord beholds your knavery great and small,
Your doctrine and your lives vicious,
As of his sanctuary ye break the wall,
Scoundrels violent, false, and seditious !
Such pests were never sent, pernicious,
By God our Lord to Pharaoh the king,
As you whom damnéd Satan Cerberus
Has placéd over Christians to reign.

But Nimrod was more often used by the other side in the struggle. Thus, when Sir William Kirkaldy of Grange was holding Edinburgh Castle for Queen Mary, from 1570 to 1573, an angry 'Lamentation of the Commons of Scotland' appeared, denouncing him for the loss and misery he was causing to the industrial life of the country :—

The shame is thine, though we the sorrow drie [suffer].
Cursed Nimrod, richt [truly] of Babylon the chief !
We commons all loud vengeance cry on thee,
Blaming thy treason, the cause of all our grief.

The balladist makes a poor widow wail :—

I and my bairns shall crave God's plagues full right
To befall thee, Grange, thou cruel crocodile !
With forty more [plagues] than did on Pharaoh light :
Blaming thy treason, that causes us bewail.

When the siege was over and the Castle had been surrendered, Robert Sempill wrote a vivid poem upon it, enjoining the Regent Morton to follow up this success unflinchingly :—

Wherefore put God the power in your hand ?
To punish loons [rascals] that have o'erlaid this land
By murder, treason, done from year to year.
If ye obey not, breaking that command,
I am in doubt if your estate shall stand,
But soon be rooted from this realm, I fear.
Spare never Agag for no bribe of gear [property].
What came of Saul with his fat oxen there ?
Go, read the Bible ; it will soon declare.

Evidently, the story of Agag in 1 Sam. 15¹⁻³³ was well known. As was also that of Caleb, in Num. 13^{30^f}, for Sempill concludes by praising highly Queen Elizabeth's representative, Sir Hugh Killigrew, as a modern Caleb, who would neither be disheartened himself nor allow others to be disheartened in a crisis :—

As Caleb sent was for to see the land
(The guides that came made Moses understand
The land was fearful, and the people strong),
Because he knew it was the Lord's command,
He would not stay, but stoutly took in hand
Right unabasitlie [fearlessly] all that gait [road] to gang,
O'erthrew their castles and their giants dang [felled],
Brought those to misery who sought to wrong us :
He was that Caleb since he came among us.

An earlier appeal by Sempill to the Scots Lords

contains this sound and much needed reminder of 1 Tim. 6¹⁰ (see above, p. 54) :—

For God's sake, above everything,
Keep clean your hands from wrongous gear [ill-gotten gains] ;
If ye would have His true blessing,
Show first that ye the Lord do fear.
Exert yourselves in gentill weir [honourable warfare],
And flee from filthie avarice,
Which is, as I in Scripture leir [learn],
The very root of every vice.

These pasquinades shot over Scotland after any event that stirred the country, and few incidents roused the people like the Hamiltons' murder of the Regent Murray at Linlithgow in 1570. We read in one vehement popular broadside :—

This mortal feud, this hatred and envy,
Did first begin, as God's own book does tell,
As in the Genesis we may plainly spy,
Betwixt two brethren, Cain and Abel. . . .
And from these two this whole world did descend,
Who never can amongst themselves agree,
But both their offsprings may be clearly kenned,
Cursed Cain's clan by their impiety,
And Abel's seed for right and equity.
And thus all murderers are descended down
From cursed Cain and his posterity,
As is the tyrant, traitor Hamilton.

Which is not strictly accurate, for the Bible makes no mention of Abel leaving any children. Robert Sempill again makes the young King stand on Snowdon (that is, Stirling) hill, praying God to avenge him on his enemies, who had slain Murray :—

O Scotland ! thy Josiah true,
That first idolatry o'erthrew,
He was, and Christ's true kirk restored :
Through him in my realm grace aye grew :
Judge and revenge his cause, O Lord.

He Abraham's faith but feir [without fear] professed ;
 He David's mercy manifest[ed] ;
 With Solomon's wit [wisdom] he was decored [adorned] ;
 Samson's strength to him accrest [accrued] :
 Judge and revenge his cause, O Lord.

Elsewhere, the same parallel with King Josiah (2 Kings 22^{1f.}) is drawn, and also Joshua is brought in :—

All ye that would the true gospel advance,
 Bewail, bewail for that sweet Joshua,
 Your second Moses, that led you through the sea.
 Had he survived, your Canaan land had stand [stood].
 Despair not yet. Christ will your captain be,
 Since he is gone, James, Regent of Scotland.

It is the more martial passages of the Old Testament, especially those bearing on kings and prophets, which are naturally to the front at this period. But we do come across, in a rhymed tirade against the selfish Scots lords, this quieter warning :—

Satan sure doth them allure
 With words both false and vain,
 Aye promising them to be king,
 Whereof they are full fain.
 In Paradise he did entice,
 By subtle craft and trane [deceit],
 The man first made, so God has said
 In sacred scripture plain.

He said that he should equal be
 To God omnipotent,
 The apple sweet if he would eat,
 Whereof was made restraint [which was forbidden].
 With small defence he gave credence,
 But did he not repent,
 When afterwards he felt the smart
 And God against him bent ?

There is a short, manly piece, by one of the King's friends, **Sir John Maitland** (1545-1595), the second

son of old Sir Richard, denouncing the Scots noblemen who betrayed the Earl of Northumberland, after the failure of his luckless rebellion in 1569-1570. He writes :—

Judas who sold our Saviour to be slain,
 A viler draught than thou did never draw ;
 Nor Ganelon against Charles the maine [Charlemagne],
 Nor Andro Bell, that wicked, wild outlaw,
 Nor yet the traitor Eckie of the Harlaw,
 That says he sold him to redeem his pledge. . . .

The Jews would not put in their common purse
 The price of Christ which Judas kaist [cast] again :
 The price of blood brings aye with it a curse,
 Which on thy race for ever shall remain.

Here the allusion is to Matt. 27⁵⁻⁶ ; ‘ Andro Bell ’ is a mistake for ‘ Adam Bell,’ the famous outlaw and archer of the north in England (there is a ballad about him and his two companions in Percy’s *Reliques*), whilst Eckie or Hector Armstrong was the borderer who sold the Earl basely to the Regent Murray, in violation of old friendship and pledges of protection.¹ The interesting thing is to notice how naturally a biblical allusion tips the point of a political reproach, and also how the knight appeals to the New Testament. So does **Mr. John Davidson** (1549-1603), who in his time played many parts, in literature, politics, and the Church, a small, undaunted irascible person. In 1573 he wrote a poem in praise of his friend, John Knox, called ‘ A Brief Commendation of Uprightness,’ which as a rule employs the

¹ The grouping of Ganelon with biblical traitors is old (see above, p. 93), indeed as old as Chaucer who, in the *Nonne Priestes Tale*, apostrophizes the red fox thus :

‘ O false murderer, rucking [lurking] in thy den,
 O newë Scariot, newë Ganelon,
 O false dissimulour, O Greek Sinon !’

ordinary scriptural illustrations, but once moves into fresh ground :—

They who walk uprightly with the Lord,
In greatest troubles want not inward rest,
As the apostles, dounge [persecuted] for God's word,
Rejoiced that for Christ so they were drest [treated].
Peter in prison slept but molest [without disturbance],
Paul in the stocks and Silas with gladness
Did sing a psalm at midnight ; so the best
Sureness [security] that man can have is uprightness.

Such allusions to the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are not common in the literature of the day, which is mainly interested in the Old Testament with its pictures of national religion.

His older contemporary, **William Lauder**, was born in the Lothians and educated at St. Andrews University. Lauder, as we have already noticed, was a minor dramatist ; he wrote a pageant or play which was performed in February 1548-1549 at the marriage of Lady Barbara Hamilton, the eldest daughter of the Duke of Chatelherault, and apparently another for the royal marriage of Mary and Francis in 1558. His verse—for he was also given to poetry—is crowded with biblical allusions, but lines like those which he called *Ane Compendious and Breve* (brief) *Tractate Concernynge ye Office and Dewtie of Kyngis, Spirituall Pastoris, and Temporall Jugis* (c. 1555) rise no higher than the scriptural paraphrases of his distinguished contemporary, James Melville ; they are pious but not literary. Lauder afterwards joined the Reformed Church and became minister of Forgandenny in Perthshire. His minor poems, the work 'of W. L., playwright, poet, and minister of the Word of God,' have been edited by Dr. Furnivall for the Early English Text Society.

They show a creditable indignation at the cruel treatment of the poor by the rich during the plague¹ and famine which broke out in 1567-1568; Lauder castigates selfish Protestants as vigorously as Roman Catholic persecutors. His lines entitled *Ane Godlie Tractate* are a rhymed sermon for the times upon John 15⁶⁻⁸.

Another writer of the period, **John Burell**, an Edinburgh citizen, describes the tapestries hung out on the occasion of the queen's state entry into the capital of Scotland, on the 19th of May 1590. The subjects were mainly classical; but Burell noticed some hangings which depicted

How Iacon [Jael] Sisera did pursue
And drove a nail into his brow;
And Jephthah, who his daughter slew,
For till observe his oath and vow:
And how that all great Nilus' flood
Was turn'd and alter'd into blood.

The plagues of Egypt evidently were a favourite subject for these painted cloths, as we have already seen (see above, p. 25).

Some contemporary evidence shows that the **book of psalms** was particularly popular, and, although they do not exactly belong to literature, two small proofs of this may be cited. One is from David Home of Godscroft's tribute to his father, David Home, a Berwickshire laird, who died in 1574, 'the first (it is said) of his family who had died a natural death—all the rest having lost their lives in defence of their country. He had the psalms, and particularly some short sentences of them, always in his mouth; such

¹ It was during this plague that George Bannatyne, an Edinburgh merchant, retired to compile the precious anthology of old Scots verse which is called *The Bannatyne Manuscript*.

as, "It is better to trust in the Lord than in the princes of the earth," "Our hope ought to be placed in God alone." He particularly delighted in the 146th Psalm, and sang it whilst he played on the harp with the most sincere and unaffected devotion.'¹ His son, Sir George Home of Wedderburn, followed in these footsteps of his father. 'He was diligent in reading the sacred Scriptures, and not to little purpose. He likewise wrote meditations upon the Revelations, the soul, love of God, etc. He likewise sang Psaltery to his own playing on the harp.' Another odd proof of the psalms retaining their popularity is to be found in the inscription placed by the Regent Morton over the Edinburgh Mint. It had better be quoted from the acid comment of Robert Johnston, whose account of sixteenth-century Scotland in his *Historia Rerum Britannicarum* was not published till 1655 at Amsterdam. In 1574, says Johnston, the Regent 'was restoring the Castle of Edinburgh at vast expense, and also erecting a new mint—putting over its door, by the way, a prayer which he had at this time much need to use :—

BE MERCYFULL TO ME, O GOD.'

Indeed, it was under Morton's regency that an effort was made to enforce the possession of a Bible and a Psalter by every family. From incidental items like these, as well as from the specimens we have cited of the floating popular literature, it is clear that a rough and wide knowledge of the Bible text could be assumed on the part of the general public. It could even be assumed that some were familiar with recondite details of the Old Testament. This may be illustrated from a ballad denouncing some assassin,

¹ Quoted in Chambers' *Domestic Annals of Scotland*, i. p. 95.

which contains this allusion¹ to Jer. 41² (‘Then arose Ishmael and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah whom the King of Babylon had made governor over the land’):—

O cursit Cain ! O hound of hell !
 O bludie bairn of Ishmaell !
 Gedaliah when thou did steir [attack]
 To vices all thou rang the bell,
 Through cruel murder of my dear.

Perhaps the victim here was Murray. At any rate the familiarity with rather out-of-the-way passages in the Bible is plain. It was not confined to Scotland, of course, for in contemporary English verse of a minor character we come upon traces of it; one writer, Jud Smith, for example, published in 1575 *A Mysticall Devise*, containing among other pieces a set of stanzas upon the sixth chapter of the apocryphal Book of Baruch, which has ‘the epistle that Jeremye sent unto the Jewes which were led away prisoner by the King of Babilon.’²

Of all this kind of popular verse, the most important for us is **The Gude and Godlie Ballatis**, which we probably owe in the main to the brothers Wedderburn of Dundee. ‘Good’ in the title is to be taken ethically. The collection includes versified parts of the Bible, translations of psalms and of German hymns, and a number of secular songs which have been adapted to religious purposes, as had been done already in Italy and Holland. The Ballads were

¹ John Major, in his *History*, actually makes Robert the Bruce allude to the last chapter of Jeremiah in addressing the Scots troops before battle. Bruce declares that no Englishmen shall ever have the chance, in their banquets, of jeering at a captive Scots king, as ‘in sacred history we read that Nabuchodonosor, the Assyrian king, mocked at the last king of Judæa during his captivity, and jeered at him in his presence.’

² Quoted in the Parker Society’s (1845) collection of Elizabethan *Select Poetry*, vol. ii., pp. 518, 519.

most popular. They took a strong hold of the people, who eagerly bought and sang them, as they circulated in broadsheets. They are the Re-formed faith coming to the lips of the Scots people with relief and delight, which rise through occasional coarseness as snowdrops are sometimes stained by dirt splashed up from their soil. A joy in having the Bible breathes through their pages. When Christianity in Scotland gathered its vital forces together and saved itself by discarding the Roman form, the Re-formed Church produced, in these ballads, the verse counterpart to Knox's *History*. They are spontaneous and effective, a genuinely popular outburst of literature, and instinct with a living interest in the Bible. Thus one cries :—

Blink [gaze] in this Mirror, man, and mend,
For here thou mayest thine example see. . . .
There is none in state so high,
Prince, King, nor Emperor,
From this doom [of death] a foot may flie,
For all his gold and his valour :
Therefore thou blink in this Mirror,
That is graciously to thee send [sent] ;
Think on the sweet and also the sour :
Blink in this Mirror, man, and mend.

In another the Lord calls to mortals :—

Remember, man, remember, man,
That I thy soul from Satan wan [won],
And have done for thee all I can,
Thou art full dear to me.

Wolves, of whom my evangelists write,
And Paul and Peter did indite,
Alas, have you deceived quite
With false hypocrisy !
My New Testament, plain and good,
For which I shed my precious blood,
Your only hope and soul's food,
They hold for heresy.

These ecclesiastics of the Roman antichrist are then denounced for their misdeeds and idolatry :—

Their trifles all are made by men.
 Who my gospel did never ken ;
 My Law and my Commandments ten
 They hid from men's eine [eyes].
 My New Testament they would keep down,
 Which should be preached from town to town,
 'Cause it would cut their long-tailed gown
 And show their lives unclean.

But hold thou to my Testament fast,
 And be no whit of them aghast,
 For I shall bring down at the last
 Their pride and cruelty.
 Then clearly shall my word be shown,
 And all their falsehood shall be known,
 That they in every land have sown
 By their idolatry.

Elsewhere the Ballads show the same mixture of classical and biblical lore, the identification of Roman priests with Hophni and Phinehas, or with Caiaphas, the comparison of the Re-formed Church to the Israelites escaping from Egypt, and the occasional use of the Vulgate—features which we have already encountered, for the most part. Stanzas like these recur, showing how detailed and extended the knowledge of the Bible had become :—

There is no King nor Emperor,
 Duke, nor lord of great valour,
 But he shall fade as lily flower,
 And down shall come, down aye, down aye.

Where is Adam and Eve his wife,
 And Hercules with his long strife,
 And Methuselah with his long life ?
 They all are come down aye, down aye.

What of Korah and Abiram,
Jamnes, Jambres, and Dathan ?
To resist God who made ready ?
Have they not all come down ?

And where is Balaam's false counsel,
Where are the prophets of Jezebel ?
And Bel's priests—by Daniel
Down they were all brought, down.

Some make gods of stocks and stones,
Some make gods of the saints' bones,
Who, were they living here, would say,
' Idolaters, do way [desist], do way.
To us give neither land nor gloir [glory].
O fools, if ye will ask, wherefore ?
We had nothing through our own might,
But all we had through Christ our light.
To that [as an] example shall be Paul
At Lystra, who refuséd all
Manner of glory, and this did say,
Give glory to Christ, the light of day.'

Did not dainty Delilah
The mighty Samson bring to nought ?
When he his secret head did betray,
In Venus' snare she had him caught.
Did not Apamê, in like case,
Alas ! alas !
Strike that great king upon the face,
As came to pass.

Even modern readers may know less of Apamê than of Delilah. She was a Persian or Egyptian king's mistress, who once merrily seized the monarch's crown and put it on her own head, striking the infatuated man with her left hand. The story is told in the apocryphal First Book of Esdras as a proof of the power of women over doting men. The mention of it here is another proof of how widespread the knowledge of the biblical Apocrypha must have been

among the common people of Scotland at this period.

Trenchant and healthy as these ballads are upon the whole, they indicate, however, the beginning of a trend which was not to prove sound. The Wedderburns, like Coverdale in England, issued their Christian songs to replace the licentious, profane ballads and ditties which were so popular. The preface quotes from Col. 3¹⁶ the words about singing 'psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,' in order to justify the production of such good and godly ballads, which are intended specially for 'young personis and sic as are not exercisit in the Scriptures.' The attempt was legitimate and successful, within certain limits. Clean, religious songs, set to the old airs, did dislodge some of the scurrilous and coarse favourites. But bad literature will never be replaced by merely pious literature. What is required is good literature—that is, 'good' in the sense of clean, natural, and vital. As Vinet once put it, you cannot have a literature made for your Christian convictions; if you had it, then it would not be literature. It must be spontaneous, and it need not be biblical. In many cases it had better not be biblical at all. But the Reformers were too apt to imagine that Scotland's singing instinct had to be pressed inside religious and biblical cages. Alexander Hume, later in the century, for example, wrote *Hymns and Spirituall Songs* (1599) for the benefit of Scottish youths and girls whom he hoped to wean from singing 'profane sonnets and vaine ballads of love,' or reciting mediæval tales 'or other such like raveries.' Scots songs were corrupt enough, in many cases; the vein of grossness in our literature, due either to the court or to the clergy or to both, is sadly conspicuous in a number of them. But the real method of dealing

with them was that followed by Burns. It was a well-meant but erroneous idea to attempt, as Churchmen sometimes did, to replace them by biblical hymns, or to excommunicate them as worldly.

§ 3

Meanwhile there was another group of poets, like the Fifeshire man, **John Stewart of Baldynneis**, who in his *Rapsodies of the Author's Youthfull Braine* sometimes touches a religious chord, and shows a deep knowledge of the Bible even in verses which are not devotional, as in the lines *To Ane Honorabill and Distressit Ladie* :—

The Israelites in thrall
Lang vexit were with woe,
But God well freed them all
At last from bondage ; so
That Pharaoh, their fell foe
There drownéd did remaine,
Where they againe did go
Safe from all perille plaine.

The woeful Hester ¹ Queene
Opprest with miserie,
Her careful [anxious] cause did meine [intrust]
Unto the Lord most high,
Who of his mercie free
Soone granted her desire,
So that her eyes did see
The thing she did require.

When innocent Susan
Was damnit to the deed [condemned to death],
God mightily began
To make her then remeed [redress],

¹ A morality play, the *Godly Queen Hester*, is known to have been acted in England by 1561.

Revenging all their feed [enmity]
 To the false judges' paine,
 And life and womanhood
 Restored to her againe. . . .

Did not Judith depart
 And meed the towne remeed [deliver the town],
 When men grew faint in heart
 For to sustain the feed ?
 Her beautie white and red,
 Did Holifern allure,
 While she struck off his head
 By God's assistance sure.

Esther, Judith,¹ and the Israelites occur more than once in his verse as proofs of God's saving help, with Daniel and Jonah. Stewart, like Spenser not long afterwards in *An Hymne of Heavenly Love*, knows and uses the gospel story :—

My days do fast consume
 Like withered gorse with wind :
 My flesh for thoughts [worries] doth fume,
 My heart no rest can find.
 I grant, Lord, I have sinned,
 As did the publican,
 But now my wounds upbind,
 Thou sweet Samaritan.

The Levite and the priest
 But [without] pity are past by,
 But thou my baleful [woeful] briest [breast]
 Cure, bleeding where I lie.

Also, he can exhort men to be 'als charitabill as was the just Tobe' (*i.e.* Tobit), he can praise his royal master as a true son of God's Jacob ('for we Jacobus may for Jacob read,' when we read of Jacob's blessing in Gen. 49²⁵ upon his descendants), and in *Ane*

¹ Du Bartas, the brilliant Huguenot poet (1544-1590), wrote his *Judith* in 1573; no Scots adherent of the Reformed faith at this period ever found the Bible such a source of literary inspiration as Du Bartas did.

Schersing Out [Representation] of *Trew Felicitie*, which is full of such allusions, mixed up with classical proofs, he can scorn the love of money thus, with reminiscences of Job and of the Gospels :—

I naked came as others monie mo[re]
 Into this world, and naked thence must go.
 Why should I then my mind for gold molest,
 Which is so slippery, flowing to and fro,
 Obtained in trawell [travail] and outspent with wo [woe],
 And keepéd by suspicion and unrest ?
 O how difficill is the heaven possest
 By wealthy men ! more easy is to see
 A camel pass through smallest needle's e'e. .

In fact, the old man who appears to him in that poem goes over the Old Testament history, including the books of the 'Apocrypha,' and passes on to the New Testament, whereupon the poet has a vision of the New Jerusalem, in which he is privileged to look at the Book of Life ; one entry in it he wishes to proclaim to all the world, the name of 'Jacobus Sextus Hic Scotorum Rex' in golden letters !

Stewart has been called ¹ 'The Scottish Desportes,' in allusion to the French abbé whom he imitated. He did for Scotland what Sir John Harington was doing for England at the same period, he translated Ariosto. Like him, the **Rev. William Fowler of Hawick** was cultured enough to translate Italian poetry and to write sonnets. He rendered Petrarch into verse. One of his sonnets may be modernized thus, for the sake of its indirect allusion to the life of Jesus :—

Lord, who didst march upon the stormy seas,
 Whose ways were high like hills and low like hell,
 Who bounds the same by thy eterne decrees,
 And calms them most when they in rage did swell ;

¹ By Mr. G. A. Dunlop, *Scottish Historical Review*, xii. 303-310.

Lord, who didst save that soul that did rebel,
 And did repine against thy holy will . . .
 Calm, Lord, these waves more high than any hill,
 And stay the tempests that us all affray. . . .
 Hear us, great God, who did the winds rebuke,
 And on thy servants, of thy mercy, look.

These men stand apart from the fervour and clash of the impossible loyalties which were dividing the Church and country. They are both more considerable poets than **John Rolland of Dalkeith**, an ecclesiastic whose knowledge of law as well as of mythology comes out oddly in his poem, *The Court of Venus* (1575), addressed, as he says, to cultured people. Rolland was no writer for the common folk. He describes, allegorically, the controversy between Esperance, the knight of Venus, and Desperance, who is defended by Vesta. The theme is love, and naturally Rolland plays with the stock illustrations from the Old Testament—Samson, David, and Solomon—as well as from ancient history. Not only are Joshua and David ranked along with Hector, Julius Caesar, and Alexander the Great, but the ten Sibyls are shown :—

Well exercised in science and study,
 And specially of the incarnation
 Of Jesus Christ, and other prophecy ;
 All in ane voit [unanimously] set their felicity
 On future things and predestination.
 Daily this was their main occupation.

Rolland bases his work on *The Palace of Honour* by that

honest orator,
 Profound poet, and perfect philosopher,

Gawain Douglas, and his use of Scripture is much the same as in Douglas's lines, though even Douglas

would hardly have made Vesta and Venus discuss the stories of Jacob, Reuben, and Susanna, or hold a keen debate upon the inferences to be drawn from the inclusion of Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba in St. Matthew's genealogy of our Lord ! But the goddesses are learned ladies :—

First doun they kest [took down] Moses' Pentateuchon,
With histories and Paralipomenon,
Judith, Esther, Ruth, Regum indite,
The Epistles of Paul, the sayings of Solomon,
With Lyra's gloss upon the writ canon,
The Maccabees with stories infinite,
The New Testament profound and eke perfite [perfect] :
Peter and James, the apocalypse of John ;
And all prophets in prophecy did write.

Lyra is the Franciscan monk, whose vast commentary on the Bible was much used by Luther ; in the *Dunciad* it 'extends a dreadful front' among the 'dry bodies of divinity.'

§ 4

Stewart, Fowler, and Rolland, however, represent the smaller circle of court-poets, who either reproduce archaic models or affect foreign fashions, especially in love poems. The truth is, even as the century advanced, the religious settlement did not lead to any revival of real literature. In particular, the **vernacular literature** of the period was not abundant, and, such as it was, it rarely rose to any high excellence ; it is thin and stunted, even beside contemporary verse of a religious kind in England, like that of Barnaby Barnes and Drayton. This was due 'in large measure, no doubt, to the narrowing controversies of the Reformation, which warped the literary taste of the Scottish people in a

way to which there is hardly a parallel in the southern kingdom.' ¹ A puritanical suspicion of literature was abroad in many quarters, except at the court, and the influence of the court was not particularly elevating. But a certain English influence had affected several writers, two of whom are above the level. One is an interesting figure, although tantalizingly little is known about his life, a man whom Mr. T. F. Henderson ranks as 'the rival of Surrey in finish and grace,' **Alexander Scott.** ² He seems to have lived and sung about Edinburgh. Apart from lyrical pieces, his poetry shows remarkable sympathies. In *Ane New Yeir Gift to the Quene Mary, quhen scho came first Hame*, 1561-1562, he reminds her that among the duties which her loyal subjects expect her to fulfil, there is not only the reform of the corrupt Roman Church, but the strict organization of the State (169 f.) :—

Sen so thow sittis in saitt superlatywe,
Caus every stait to thair vocation go,
Scolastik men the scriptouris to descrywe,
And maiestratis to vse the swerd also,
Merchandis to trafique and travell to and fro,
Mechanikis wirk, husbandis to sow and scheir ;
So salbe welth and weilfaire without wo,
Be grace of God, aganis this guid new yeir.

[Since you sit in the highest seat, see that every state of the realm goes about its calling, that learned men expound the scriptures, that magistrates also use the sword, that merchants traffic and travel to and fro, that mechanics work, that farmers sow and reap ; in this way there shall be wealth and welfare, without woe, by God's grace, in view of this good new year.]

¹ George Stevenson, *Poems of Alexander Montgomerie* (Scottish Text Society, 1910), pp. xlvii-xlviii.

² His poems were edited for the Scottish Text Society in 1896, by Dr. James Cranstoun, and for the Early English Text Society in 1902, by Mr. A. K. Donald.

He translated the first and fifty-first psalms unsuccessfully, but what inspires some of his best verse—and ‘sweet-tongued Scott,’ as Allan Ramsay called him, did write some good verse—is a concern for the poor. The wrongs of the working-classes continued after the Reformation, and Scott, like Lauder, voiced the cry for justice and redress. Thus he writes about the doleful state of the poor :—

Pure folk ar famist with thir fassionis new,
 Thay fail for falt that had befor at fouth.
 Leill labouraris lamentis and tenentis trew,
 That thay ar hurt and hareit north and south ;
 The heidismen hes ‘cor mundum’ in thair mouth,
 But nevir with mynd to gif the man his meir.

[Poor folk are being starved by these new fashions, they fail for want who formerly had plenty; loyal labourers lament and honest tenants, that they are hurt and harried north and south; the masters have ‘a clean heart’¹ in their mouth, but they have no mind to give a man his due.]

His friend, **Alexander Montgomerie**, was an Ayrshire man in the service and retinue of King James during the last half of the sixteenth century. Like Dunbar, Montgomerie was a courtier, though not a priest, who wrote poems towards the end of his life which were not only moral but devotional, in sharp contrast to much of his early verse. His best verse is unbiblical. Some of his religious pieces are versions of the Psalms²; indeed, when the General Assembly of 1601 were discussing the project of a new version of the Psalter, Montgomerie was one of the poets whose offer of help was declined. He was among

¹ From the Vulgate of Ps. 51¹⁰.

² ‘Apply’d to a new pleasant tune, verie comfortable to everie ane that is rightly acquainted therewith.’ Evidently the General Assembly was not!

those who were fond of translating the Psalter. Apart from this, we note how in his poem *The Navigatioun*, written to celebrate King James VI.'s entry into Edinburgh in 1579, he suggests that

The preachers treu mot [may] ay thy gardeners be
To cleanse thy root from weeds of heresie.
Thy gardene wall mak the New Testament ;
So sall thou grow without impediment.

Like Herrick in a later day, and like one of his own contemporaries, Alexander Hume, he has to repent of having written some amorous verses in his early days. Which leads him to employ this scriptural allusion to Acts 2^{1f} :—

Thy Spirit, my spirit to speik, with speed, inspyre.
Help, Holy Ghost, and be Montgomerie's Muse ;
Flie down on me in forked tongues of fyre,
As thou did, on thy oun Apostills, use ;
And with thy fyre me fervently infuse
To laud thee, Lord, and longer not delay.
My former foolish fictiouns I refuse :
Peccavi, Pater, miserere mei.

In his allegorical poem, *The Cherry and the Slae*, which became most popular throughout Scotland, there are the conventional allusions to Phoebus, Cupid, and Apollo, but no biblical references, except when he makes Experience tell Hope to be careful about making rash promises to men :—

For ay since Adam and since Eve,
Who first thy leasings [falsehoods] did believe.
I sold thy doctrine dear.
What hath beene done, even to this day,
I keep in mind almaist :
Ye promise further than ye pay,
Sir Hope, for all your haste,

In his own later days Montgomerie had reason to feel the truth of this warning, for he allowed himself to be mixed up in some Roman Catholic political intrigues, which promised much and brought him little but unhappiness. Elsewhere, in his characteristic verse there is hardly a biblical allusion, except in a stanza like this from one of his love poems, which illustrates the incongruous blend of pseudo-classicism and religion. He encourages lovers to be patient by noting that

Hope causit Jacob fourtene yeiris
 In bondage base for to remayne ;
 Hope caused Atrides and his feiris [fellows]
 In Troy ten yeiris to fecht full fane [gladly] ;
 Hope caused Penelope to refrane
 Lang tuentie yeiris in obseruance ;
 Hope causit Iufaris to constrane,
 And luif in hope with pacience.

Of the writers who never reach the level of Scott or Montgomerie, we can only say a word about the brothers Hume. Both had a court connexion, though **Alexander Hume of Polwarth**, who began by attending the court of King James, in the course of which he visited France for several years, ended as minister at Logie in Stirlingshire. *Ane Epistle to Maister Gilbert Mont-Creif* (the royal physician), which expresses the disgust of the poet with the legal and fashionable world of Scotland, has two scriptural allusions towards the close. One is to 1 Cor. 15³³ :—

These cursed times, this worse nor iron age,
 Where virtue lurks, where vice does reigne and rage,
 Where faith and love, where friendship is neglected,
 Contagiouslie with time hes me infected . . .
 O sentence suthe : I say for to conclude,
 ‘ Ill companie corrupteth maners gude.’

The other is to Phil. 1²³ :—

Not threttie times as yet the shining sun,
His carrier [course] round and propre course hes run,
Sen [since] nature first me buir to joy [enjoy] his light,
And yet I would (if justly wish I might)
Dissolved be, renewed, and be with Christ,
Or [ere] flesh to fardar [further] follie me intist [enticed].

The sentiment does not sound very wholesome, however; it is a youth being driven to religion by an early disappointment in love. His subsequent output was religious and devotional, in prose as well as in verse. In a preface to the latter he solemnly advises the youth of Scotland, as we have already seen, to give up singing ‘prophane sonnets and vain ballats of love,’ and study the Bible. For example:

Walde thou have a subject of love? looke the song of songs, of the love betwixt Christ and his kirk. Would thou rejoice or lament, praise or disprais, comfort or threaten, pray or use imprecation. Imitate the auld Hebrew David in his Psalmes, as a paterne of all heavinly poesie. In a word, the high & holy mysteries, & felicitie of the life to come, conteined in the auld and new testament, may be a more noble and worthie subject, whereupon the whole cunning and eloquence of mans loftie spirite should be employed nor upon these trifles, & sensuall villanies.

The aim here is the same as in *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis* (see above, p. 110). It was a mistaken policy, due to the contemporary reaction against demoralizing literature especially among the youths and maidens of the better classes. Roger Ascham has the same set of people in view, when he writes in *The Scholemaster* (1560-1570) about the circulation of translations from foreign, particularly Italian, literature :—

I know when God’s Bible was banished the court and ‘Morte Arthure’ received into the Prince’s chamber. What

toyes the daily reading of such a book may work in the will of a young gentleman or a young maid, that liveth wealthily and idly, wise men can judge and honest men do pity. And yet ten 'Morte Arthures' do not do the tenth part so much harme as one of these books made in Italy and translated in England.

Only, Ascham was too sound an educationalist to substitute the Bible for all literature. He advocated more intellectual interests and a deeper study of the classics. Whereas Hume, and some earnest Scots who thought like him, would have fain discouraged what is miscalled 'secular' literature altogether.

Hume, says Professor Saintsbury, 'is one of the dullest dogs in Scottish poetry.' And he is sometimes most dull when he is most biblical. Still, the man had touches of real poetry, now and then, which breathe a religious spirit. He wrote a delightful open-air poem as 'A Summer Day' (*of the day estivall*), which has the true feeling for nature, with picturesque glimpses of bright sky, woods, hedges, birds, and rivers. He sees a salmon river, the Tay or the Tweed, with the salmon being hauled into the cobbles, and the trout dimpling the pool with their rises :—

The bells and circles on the weills [eddies]
Throw lawpping of the troute.

O ! then it were a seemly thing,
While all is still and calm,
The praise of God to play and sing
With cornet and with shalme [a reed-instrument].

This is the very spirit of sport and faith and cheerfulness which was to breathe from Izaak Walton in the south during next century.

His elder brother, **Sir Patrick Hume**—the poet who told Montgomerie that his name was derived from ‘Mount’ and ‘Gomorrha’!—wrote a fulsome piece called *The Promine* (1580), addressed to the monarch himself, which describes him as he sets out to hunt from Snowdon (Stirling) Castle :—

Thou Solomon secund [the second] in sapience,
Ane Job in justice, joined with pietie.

When the Bible is used for flattery, it is misused. But Sir Patrick was only following the fashion. When James made his state entry into Edinburgh on the 30th of September 1579, the magistrates received him at the West Port with a representation of King Solomon deciding between the two women who claimed the young child (1 Kings 3).

§ 5

Which brings us to **King James** himself. The fifteenth century began with a royal author; the sixteenth ended with one. Although James VI. was not a poet like James I., he wrote both prose and verse. The latter is negligible. The one illustration I shall select is from his lines on the battle of Lepanto, in which he draws upon Job 1 to describe how God called on the Venetians against opposition to start operations against the Turks :—

One day it did fall out,
As glorious God in glistering throne,
With angels round about,
Did sit, and Christ at his right hand,
That craftie Satan came,
Deceiver, liar, hating man,
And God's most sacred name ;

This old abuser stood into
The presence of the Lord ;
Then in this manner Christ accus'd
The sower of discord.

And so on. But the king's prose has more vitality, and it has more for our special purpose. Robert Wodrow called him 'an unclean pultron,' and Sir Thomas Urquhart was not ironical when he described him as 'such a mere scholar that he could neither fight by sea nor land.' Yet in his prose pamphlets James was generally hitting out at some one or something, from tobacco to witches or presbyterians. This makes his prose move even under its pedantic armour. In his dialogue on *Daemonologie*, for example, he sets himself to explain how witches can attend the convention of their master the devil. One way, he suggests, is that they are

carried by the force of the spirit which is their conductor, either above the earth or above the sea swiftly, to the place where they meet ; which I am persuaded to be likewise possible, in respect that as Habakkuk was carried by the angel in that form to the den where Daniel lay, so, think I, the devil will be ready to imitate God as well in that as in other things.

This alludes, of course, to the apocryphal story which we have already met (see above, pp. 26, 64). His paraphrase (in prose) of the Book of Revelation, and the Two Meditations on Rev. 20⁷⁻¹⁰ and 1 Chron. 15²⁵⁻²⁹, and even the *Basilikon Doron* (*Of a King's Christian Duetie towards God*), are edifying rather than literary, however, while *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* is little more than a royal homily on 1 Sam. 8⁹⁻²⁰. In his *Premonition to all Christian Monarches* he incidentally describes his position towards the 'apocryphal' literature :—

As for the Scriptures ; no man doubteth I will beleve them : But even for the Apocrypha ; I hold them in the same accompt that the Ancients did : They are still printed and bound with our Bibles, and publikely read in our churches : I reverence them as the writings of holy and good men . . . concluding this point with Ruffinus (who is no Novelist, I hope) that the Apocryphall books were by the Fathers permitted to be read, not for confirmation of Doctrine, but onely for instruction of the people.

In the same treatise he quotes John 14² against Cardinal Bellarmine's plea for purgatory :—

As for Purgatorie and all the trash depending thereupon, it is not worth the talking of ; Bellarmine cannot finde any ground for it in all the Scriptures. Only, I would pray him to tell me if that faire greene Meadow that is in Purgatorie have a brooke running thorow it ; that in case I come there, I may have hawking upon it. But as for me ; I am sure there is a Heaven and a Hell, *praemium et poena*, for the elect and reprobate : How many other roomes there be, I am not on God his counsell. *Multae sunt mansiones in domo Patris mei*, saith Christ, who is the trewe Purgatorie for our sinnes : But how many chambers and ante-chambers the divell hath, they can best tell that goe to him : But in case there were more places for soules to goe to than we know of, yet let us content us with that which in his Word he hath revealed unto us, and not inquire further into his secrets. Heaven and Hell are there revealed to be the eternall home of all mankinde ; let us indeavour to winne the one and eschew the other ; and there is an end.

We may pick one more reference out of his discursive prose. The Leyden University proposed to elect to a vacant chair Dr. Conrad Vorstius, a German professor whose views were objectionable to his Majesty. He spoke his mind to the Dutch authorities in a *Declaration against Vorstius*, where he writes in the preface :—

In Autumne last, about the end of August, being in our hunting Progresse, there came to our hands two books of the said Vorstius . . . which bookes, assoone as we had received, and (not without much horror and detestation) cast our eye onely upon some of the principall Articles of his disputations conteined in the first booke, and his commentary thereupon in the second, God is our witnesse, that the zeale of his glory did so transport us as (to say with S. Paul) we stayed not one houre, but dispatched a letter presently to our Ambassador resident with the States.

The king thus took diplomatic action in order to prevent an academic appointment. How the Dutch authorities were to act, James does not take it upon him to suggest, but he warns them seriously against patronizing Dr. Vorstius :—

We are so farre from prescribing them any rule herein, as we shall be very well contented (so as the businesse be well done) that there be even no mention at all made of our intercession, in their public Acts or Records. Their manner of proceeding, we leave absolutely to their own wisdoms. *Modo praedicatur* Christus, so as Christ be preached, let them use their own forms in the name of God.

James did not get his metrical version of the Psalms accepted by the Scots Church, but he has the credit of promoting the great 'Authorized' Version of the English Bible, which became a classic of our literature and the standard for all Churches in his domain. With him, on the other hand, vernacular prose begins to flicker out of our Scots literature.

CHAPTER III

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

James VI., King of England : 1603

§ 1. THE LITERARY DECLINE.

§ 2. TRANSLATORS OF THE PSALMS, ETC.

ZACHARY BOYD : c. 1640.

SIR WILLIAM MURE OF ROWALLAN : 1594-1657.

§ 3. THE COURTLY POETS.

ALEXANDER, EARL OF STIRLING : 1580-1640.

DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN : 1585-1649.

KING CHARLES I. : 1648.

§ 4. MINOR PROSE OF THE PERIOD.

HABAKKUK BISSET'S 'ROLMENT OF COURTIS' (1622), ETC.

WILLIAM LITHGOW : 1582-1662.

§ 5. PASQUILS AND POPULAR BALLADS.

§ 6. THE LARGER PROSE OF THE PERIOD.

SIR THOMAS URQUHART OF CROMARTY : 1605-1660.

SIR GEORGE MACKENZIE : 1636-1691.

SIR AENEAS MACPHERSON : 1644-1705.

JOHN FRASER OF WARDLAW.

BISHOP BURNET : 1643-1715.

FLETCHER OF SALTOUN : 1655-1716.

CHAPTER III

§ 1

Scots literature in the seventeenth century makes a poor show beside the literature of England, and even when we confine ourselves to tracing the Bible in it, the result is fairly meagre. This inferiority in output was not due merely to the unsettlement produced by war; that affected England as well. Nor was it due entirely to the fact of the Bible engrossing men's minds. The tendency in this direction has been exaggerated by some writers. It is well to recollect what Scott had in mind when he made Henry Warden counter the Roman priest's insinuation in *The Monastery*. Eustace the sub-prior had hinted that the new faith of the Re-formed Church might perhaps forbid his old friend to keep a place in memory 'even for what high poets have recorded of loyal faith and generous sentiment.' Warden rejoined, 'The faith of Buchanan and of Beza cannot be unfriendly to literature.' Neither it was. There was no attempt on the part of the early reformers to discourage culture. Knox speaks warmly of 'that notable man, Mr. George Buchanan,' who remains alive to this day (he is writing in 1566), 'to the glory of God, to the great honour of his nation, and to the comfort of those that delight in letters and virtue.' The aim, if not the effect, of the movement was to foster the spread of knowledge in the country. At the same time, the struggles of the seventeenth century did not ripen literature in Scotland. The

Bible was itself literature, no doubt; it helped to educate the taste as well as to purify the lives of many people. But a sharpness born of strife did tend to wither for a time 'the faith of George Buchanan' in some quarters, and even when there was learning, there was little literature. Was it because the Scots universities failed to inspire young poets, as Oxford and Cambridge did, during the first half of the century? Or because the withdrawal of the court to London robbed Scotland of one impetus towards literature? Whatever be the reason or reasons, the fact remains clear, that literature fell away. 'Christian snubbeth his fellow' applies to much that was written alike in prose and verse. Now snubbing may produce good literature; Dryden's satires are an instance of this. But in Scotland snubbing had more spirit than form, unfortunately. As for the Bible, it was used freely, and misused frequently. Shakespeare's Richard the Third avows that he decked out his villainy

With odd old ends stolen forth from Holy Writ.

No Scots king ever did this, nor did any Scots commoner in literature; in the seventeenth century phrases and illustrations were picked from the Bible, by all the parties in the struggle, but it was honestly done. Honestly and yet uncouthly often. Whether men quoted Scripture as a literary ornament or as a polemical weapon, they were apt to employ it in a more or less unnatural fashion.

In 1616 **Andro Hart**, the distinguished Edinburgh publisher, brought out, 'at his shop on the north side of the High Street, a little beneath the Cross,' a new edition of Barbour's *Bruce*. This was patriotic. But was it wise? It seemed hardly the psychological moment to re-issue this classic, at the beginning of new relations between England and

Scotland. It was only thirteen years since King James of Scotland had succeeded to the English throne, and some may have wondered whether it was politic to revive memoirs of the old struggle over national independence, when Scotland had to fight England for freedom. Some parts of history are better forgotten; at least, it is inadvisable to recall certain bitter phases, if the recollection of these far-off unhappy days serves to maintain old feuds and grudges. Hart evidently anticipated this objection, for he writes in his preface: 'There be some who hold the opinion that the publishing of those books is hurtful, as embers of consumed discord.' His reply is:—

I am persuaded that all men of sound minds wil rather abhorre discord in reading of these bookes, seeing what the miseries and horrible calamities these warres bring forth, and what great occasion we of both nations have to magnifie God's goodness, that in our daies, since the Gospell hath bene in sinceritie published amongst us, hath turned all these bloodie broyles into a peaceable Calme, especially now in the person of our dread Sovereigne: so that now, as the prophet sayeth, *Our swords are broken into mattocks, and our spears into sithes (scythes)*.

§ 2

Isa. 2⁴ is a text that comes up with pathetic frequency in our militant literature; it was a prediction which the seventeenth century at any rate failed to fulfil for Scotland. The storm silenced most of our singers, and it is not needful to do more than glance at one or two versifiers of the day. What often occupied them was versifying the Bible and especially the Psalter. This was no new interest, nor indeed was it confined to Scotland. It had been in vogue in

England during the previous century, and was continued by poets like Carew and Sandys and Quarles; even in France, as we see from the work of de Racan (1589-1670), the Psalter was attracting poets to paraphrase it. Now Scotland produced several writers along the same line.

One of these was a distinguished citizen of Glasgow. Bailie Nicol Jarvie told Frank Osbaldistone to amuse himself on the Monday forenoon in Glasgow by going down to the University, where he 'might read a spell o' the worthy Mr. Zachary Boyd's translation o' the Scriptures—better poetry need nane to be, as he had been tell'd by them that kend or suld hae kend, about sic things.' **Zachary Boyd** was not only one of the strong personalities who have been ministers of the Barony church, but a University don and a copious author in prose and verse. His translations and 'Garden of Zion' do not convey to the modern reader what Bailie Jarvie intended Osbaldistone to receive; they are often pithy and pleasant, but too full of edifying purpose, and his dramatic sketches, for all their poetry, are not free from amusing anachronisms, 'as when he makes the daughter of Herodias dance a strathspey¹ and Joseph reason with Potiphar's wife in the language of the New Testament.'² Boyd also was an inveterate versifier of the Bible. So, by the way, was his learned fellow-countryman, Napier of Merchiston, who not only expounded but versified part of the Book of Revelation. He was more successful with logarithms.

Another translation of the Psalter was made by

¹ To men like Patrick Walker, the biographer of the Covenanted saints in a later age, the daughter of Herodias furnished a cogent warning against the sin of dancing: 'it had been good for that unhappy lass, who danced off the head of John the Baptist, that she had been born a cripple, and never drawn a limb to her.'

² George Eyre-Todd, *The Glasgow Poets*, p. 11.

Sir William Mure of Rowallan, near Kilmarnock, a metrical version which Robert Baillie said that he liked ‘much better than any I have seen.’ As Mr. Tough, who prints this version for the first time (*Works of Sir William Mure*, vol. ii., pp. 299 f., Scottish Text Society, 1897-1898), observes, ‘though never printed, the Psalter may have been made use of. The old English version of the Psalms was not popular among the people of Scotland, and that of King James and Sir William Alexander was even less so. Consequently many attempts were made about this time, generally with very indifferent success, to produce a suitable version.’ Although the Westminster Assembly adopted one based on the work of Francis Rous, the Scottish General Assembly next year (1647) ordered a revision of that work, and recommended the revisers to study Mure’s version among others.¹

But Mure did better work than this. He was proud of being a nephew of Alexander Montgomerie, and he himself does count as a poet of the second order. He fought for the Covenant; he was wounded at Marston Moor in 1644. But he had already written for his religion rarely better than in the lines on *The True Crucifixæ for True Catholickes, or the way for True Catholickes to have the True Crucifixæ*, which have John 4²⁴ (‘God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth’) prefixed as a motto, and are often a metrical canto of texts. Mure explains that his

principall aime and purpose is to show that whosoever doth love to see the true portraits of JESUS CHRIST our Lord, must verse himselfe in holy Scripture except he will choose to lie open to delusion.

¹ It was just then (1640) that the first book printed in America was published, a translation of the psalms, the *Bay Psalm Book*,

He argues that instead of gazing on the Crucifix,

We should these holy ordinances haunt,
His Sacraments, means which Himself did grant,

for the Crucifix is a Christian replica of idolatry, popularized by those who really wish to suppress the Scriptures and their true doctrine. The poem is interesting and unique in its age on account of the stress which it lays upon the human life of Jesus as portrayed in the New Testament; Mure dwells lovingly on the details of our Lord's suffering and teaching. The theological argument is an interesting attempt to give reasons for an unreasonable objection to art in the service of religion. Sir Thomas Browne, his contemporary, had a firmer grasp of realities when he wrote: 'At the sight of a Cross or a Crucifix I can dispense with my hat, but scarce with the thought or memory of my Saviour.' But Mure makes up for this defective sympathy by his devotional intensity. Thus he loves to point out how God, desiring to provide the world with a true and authentic representation of Jesus, inspired the writers of the gospels:—

So that (though atheists this woven coat would rend,
God's Word by heavenly inspiration penn'd)
What these, what His evangelists record,
Sweet strains in sweetest harmony accord . . .
If Christ's true portrait truly then to see
Thou long'st, the Scripture must thy mirror be . . .
The mirror pure, in which Christ's face doth shine,
The Scripture is, that register divine
Of holy writ, that sacred, saving Book,
In which our Lord hath licensed us to look ;
Where, if we labour earnestly for His sight,
The scales of darkness which our eyes be-night
He doth remove and makes us clearly see
With open face the beams of majesty . . .
And in this study as we progress make,
We of the glory which we see partake,

Changed in our souls by Christ's renewing grace,
 As on the mount was changéd Moses' face . . .
 Seek by the eye of living faith to look
 On Christ describéd in the sacred book
 Of God's two Testaments, the mirror true
 From whence alone reflects His perfect view,
 And all in Him (if rightly seen) shall find
 For each defect of body or of mind
 Some seasonable good, some sovereign cure
 To do away in them sin's spots impure.
 No look on Him shall be bestowed in vain,
 For He in mercy shall look back again.

In *Doomesdaye* (805 f.) we come upon another proof of Mure's singular interest in the life of Jesus. He writes :—

If yet a babe, thy sight benign
 So Simeon's soul with joy did sting,
 That he his obsequies did sing,
 With age and weakness worn ;

If Eastern sages spared no pain,
 By pilgrim's toils, thy sight to gain,
 An infant, born but to be slain,
 In manger meanly laid ;

What soul then can these joys contain
 Which shall arise to see thy reign,
 The glory of thy heavenly train,
 Whose pomp shall never fade ?

No Scots author in literature or even in theology had felt so vividly as Mure the appeal of Jesus as a historical personality ; it reminds us of Gower, in earlier days, and still more of Mure's English contemporaries, Giles and Phineas Fletcher, and Donne.

Another piece was drawn from him in the same good cause of the re-formed faith. About 1640 the Jesuit Bishop of Killala published a clever pamphlet sarcastically congratulating the Covenanters in Scotland, on behalf of the Society of Jesus, upon the 'sweet

harmony and correspondency in divers materiall points of Doctrine and Practice ' between them, and ironically hoping that as the Covenanters had reverted to the true assertion of the Church's authority over the State, they might be led to embrace the other doctrines of the Roman Church. Mure came out with an angry *Counter-Bluff*, in which he quoted not only Terence, Bacon, and Rabelais, but the Psalter, e.g. Ps. 26⁴ :—

King David hates a two-tongued hypocrite,
And these that in malicious lies delight ;
Thou styles thyself a Jesuite, and so
For a disguised liar thou must go.

Mure always repels any insinuation of disloyalty, and ten years later, in his *Cry of Blood and of a Broken Covenant*, he bitterly repudiates the regicides in England, using biblical examples and commands to rally the Covenanters round Charles II. Thus he takes Malachi 3⁵ (' And I will come near to you to judgment ; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against false swearers . . . saith the Lord of Hosts ') :—

Then shew we faces, foes let us defy,
While Jesus Christ his Standard rears on high.
Fall may who ripe are to receive the Crown,
Or rotten branches, fit for hewing down,
But fall who will, the Cause shall never fall,
While stick to him a seed, a remnant shall.
For he who comes in judgment lands to sift,
Against the sorcerers a witness swift,
Shall, cloath'd with vengeance, poure contempt and shame
Upon false-swearers, by His Holy Name.
Then Colours fly, Drums beat, gird on your Swords,
Arme, Gallants, arme ; the Battle is the Lord's.

Even in his miscellaneous verse he employs, now and then, a biblical allusion, as, for example, in his praise

of King James whom he exalts as more merciful than Joshua of old (referring to Joshua 11 ²¹⁻²²) :—

Though Anak's curséd children did repine,
Yet heaven made Joshua over them prevail.
Though hellish hearts envied thy glory's shine,
Yet in the practice their attempts did fail.
But lo ! thy mercy still to be admired !
Thou sparéd them against thee who conspired.

In the light of history, this hardly squares with the facts, but Mure took a poet's licence. From the sonnets which deplore and confess the time he had wasted in early life on composing love-verses, I take these two passages :—

Eternal Justice, thou who (undeclined)
To every work proportions the reward,
Pity my follies past : with spirit refined
So shall I praise thee who my paths repaired ;
So from Egyptian brick and clay set free,
My songs shall only, only be of thee.

But while my spirit above the spheres aspires,
And from the world would separation make,
Mine eyes, repining at my soul's desires,
With Lot's fond [foolish] wife, relenting looks cast back.

§ 3

Another knightly poet of the day has much less for us. **Sir William Alexander** of Menstrie (1580-1640) became Earl of Stirling in 1630. He enjoyed the King's friendship and favour, and helped him in his metrical version of the Psalms. Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty, who disliked him as a statesman, admitted that 'he was born a poet,' and some of his own friends ranked his poetry high, but the contemporary estimate of Alexander has long since

been abandoned. He is 'vaguely remembered,' says Professor Masson, 'as the second-rate Scottish sycophant,' and, even for our special purpose, his verse yields next to nothing. His *Jonathan, an Heroick Poeme Intended*, never got beyond its first book—a fate which few readers will deplore. When Palgrave asked Tennyson once why he did not write an idyll on the Book of Ruth, the poet promptly answered, 'Do you think I could make it more poetical?' Alexander was one of the pious versifiers in the seventeenth century who seriously thought they could improve upon the Old Testament tales. His four 'monarchicke Tragedies,' on Croesus, Darius, Alexander, and Julius Caesar, are more legitimate, but naturally they are as useless for our purpose as the amorous sonnets in *Aurora*. Pseudo-classicism makes Alexander's amatory verse a dreary waste, and even in *A Paraenesis addressed to Prince Henry* (1604) he illustrates his theme from Lycurgus and Justinian, Aristotle and Agesilaus, pedantically. The nearest approach he makes to a biblical allusion is this :—

That dignity when first it did begin,
 Did grace each province and each little town.
 Forth, when she first doth from Ben Lomond rin [run],
 Is poor of waters, naked of renown,
 But [as soon as] Carron, Allan, Teith, and Dovan [Devon] in
 [flow in],
 Doth grow the greater still, the further down :
 Till that, abounding both in power and fame,
 She long doth strive to give the sea her name.

Even so those sovereignties which once were small,
 Still swallowing up the nearest neighbouring state,
 With a deluge of men did realms appal ;
 And thus th' Egyptian Pharaohs first grew great,
 Thus did th' Assyrians make so many thrall.

In *Doomesdaye*, which is full of moralizing passages on creation and history, the flat, fluent verse is barely redeemed by any lines of pith, though, after describing Jezebel's fate, he drops a couplet like this :—

Yet did that judgment but to her remain,
An earnest-penny of eternal pain !

At the sound of the last trumpet he sees the Egyptians emerging from the Red Sea :—

Lo, from the mud they now creep poorly out . . .
The trumpet makes them tremble (though erst stout)
As thinking it their sentence will proclaim ;
And even great Pharaoh, vile amidst his own,
Can by no sign more than the rest be known.

And so on, and so on. It is one of the tideless poems to which Pope's line applies :—

We cannot blame indeed—but we may sleep.

The truth is, Alexander, unlike Mure, rarely touches Scripture except in the minor key, or when he desires to be decorative. He is one of the writers of verse in this period who never seem to have appreciated the Bible when they were vital. Indeed, his 'vital' verse is either conventionally erotic or servile, as a rule. And, so far as it was servile, it had its reward. Sir John Scot of Scotstarvet, in next century, put into his pamphlet on *The Staggering State of Scottish Statesmen* a story of how Alexander secured from the king among other lucrative things 'a liberty to coin base money, far under the value of the weight of copper, which brought great prejudice to the kingdom ; at which time he built his great lodgings in Stirling, and put on the gate thereof, *per mare, per terras*, which a merry man changed, *per metre, per turners* ; meaning, that he had attained to his estate by poesy, and that gift of base money.'

One of Alexander's friends was **Drummond of Hawthornden**. He is the chief glory of Scots literature in the century, although his verse is not distinctively Scottish. He, too, could use the Scripture easily. Thus in his *Irene, a Remonstrance for Concord, Amity and Love, amongst His Majesty's subjects*, which was written after Charles I.'s declaration had been published at Edinburgh on the 22nd of September 1638, we find this bit of ardent prose :—

Now ye people, to whom Days present seem ever worst, who extol and praise the former Ages ye never knew or remember'd, and condemn and despise the present Time, though ye know not the Disease of it . . . When did you ever prosper by resisting and opposing the lawful Authority of your Princes ? Your Seducers constrain you to wed their quarrels, bear the charges of their Wars, to ply your backs to them, to ascend the Stages of their Ambition, Avarice and Revenge ; but they forget to tell you that if the Stage overlaid by too much Weight shall fall, they shall tumble headlong down, and ye remain miserably bruised. When a Time shall come, wherein ye shall be constrained to abhor these Men, turn your Hatred and Spite against them, and, with the Price of their Blood, redeem your own Lives, buy your Pardons and Absolutions : then, to your Destruction, shall they and ye together find what it importeth to pull the Scepter from your Sovereign, and wrest the Sword out of the Hand of the lawful Magistrate : For Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and Stubbornness is as Iniquity and Idolatry, 1 Sam. 15²³. Every factious cause is weak.

Later on, he quotes 1 Cor. 14²³ to the same purpose :—

The Doctor of the Gentiles saith, If an Heathen come in and hear you speak with several Tongues, will he not say you are mad ? But if he or any Heathen should come, and see you shedding innocent Blood and by Mahomet's Sword propagating Religion by Wars ; or by sanguinary Persecutions

to force Consciences, nourish Seditions, Conspiracies, and Rebellions, to put the Sword in the People's Hands, tending to the Subversion of all Government, which is the Ordinance of God; and your Church turned into a Camp: would he not say, ye came nearer to him who was a Murderer from the beginning than to your Creator, and were a number of Assassins?

Again, after quoting James 1²⁷ ('Pure religion and undefiled before God is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world'), he adds: 'Ye have made it pure Religion to make many Fatherless and Widows, increase their Affliction, make the Guiltless groan for the Guilty, turn many to be spotted with Blood, Rapine, and Sacrilege in the World.' I prefer to give these illustrations from his prose, and from prose other than the stately *Cypress Grove*; his accomplished verse is not devoid of biblical allusions, but these rarely present any distinctive features. The Bible inspires his *Flowers of Zion* and *Shadow of the Judgment*, yet they are uninspiring. However, his sonnet on John the Baptist is among the best sonnets of the century, and, since the fact of its inclusion in anthologies may not mean that it is familiar, it shall be quoted here:—

The last and greatest herald of Heaven's King,
Girt with rough skins, hies to the desert's wild,
Among that savage brood the woods forth bring,
Which he than man more harmless found and mild.
His food was locusts, and what young did spring,
With honey that from virgin hives distill'd;
Parch'd body, hollow eyes, some uncouth thing
Made him appear, long since from earth exiled.
Then burst he forth: 'All ye, whose hopes rely
On God, with me amidst these deserts mourn;
Repent, repent, and from old errors turn!'
—Who listened to his voice, obey'd his cry?
Only the echoes, which he made relent,
Rung from their marble caves, 'Repent! Repent!'

There is sustained power in these lines ; they show a court-poet who has depth and moral weight. Most of the poetry produced by Drummond lies quite outside our scope, but this sonnet alone proves how vitally he could use a Bible subject when he chose. Indeed, we come across no sonnet of equal merit in Scots literature till two centuries later, when in the pre-Victorian days of the nineteenth century, **W. Bell Scott** wrote his *Contentment in the Dark* :—

We asked not to be born : 'tis not by will
 That we are here beneath the battle-smoke,
 Without escape ; by good things as by ill,
 By facts and mysteries enchain'd : no cloak
 Of an Elijah, no stairs whereupon
 Angels ascending and descending shine
 Over the head here pillowed on a stone,
 Anywhere found ;—so say they who repine.
 But each year hath its harvest, every hour
 Some melody, child-laughter, strengthening strife,
 For mother Earth still gives her child his dower,
 And loves like doves sit on the boughs of life.

Finally, the court-poets may be followed by their king. If **Charles the First** is to be counted into Scots literature because he was born at Dunfermline, we may quote these lines of his, as an echo of Luke 23³⁴ :—

Nature and law, by thy divine decree,
 (The only root of righteous loyalty),
 With this dim diadem invested me :

With it the sacred sceptre, purple robe,
 Thy holy union, and the royal globe :
 Yet I am levelled with the life of Job.

But, sacred Saviour ! with thy words I woo
 Thee to *forgive*, and not be bitter to
 Such as thou knowest *do not know what they do*.

§ 4

In humbler waters of the period we also find many traces of acquaintance with the Bible. For example, there is the writing of **Sir Thomas Craig** upon the need of union between Scotland and England. Sir Thomas was one of the Scots Commissioners who signed the articles of Union at the end of 1604, a grave, responsible statesman of the day. His work was written in Latin.¹ But although, strictly speaking, it falls outside our province, I refer to it for the sake of showing how it was still natural and telling for a serious political writer to use the Bible in his argument. Thus, in proving that monarchy is the best system of government, he points out that neither aristocracy nor democracy has any warrant in scripture, quoting (ch. ii.) Deut. 33⁵ (Moses 'was king in Jeshurun') and Prov. 8¹⁵ ('By Me kings reign, and princes decree justice'), among other proof-texts. How truly, he observes (ch. i.), does the internecine warfare between the British chiefs, which allowed the Romans to conquer Britain, illustrate our Lord's saying, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to ruin' (Matt. 12²⁵). To enforce the need for union, he more than once urges religious considerations; 'evil minds may perhaps regard it as trifling,' he admits, but he argues earnestly from our Lord's words like, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another,' and from the one hundred and thirty-third psalm.

Then there was **Habakkuk Bisset**, a turbulent Writer to the Signet, who composed his 'Rolment of Courtis'²

¹ Edited and translated by Professor Terry, in 1909, for the Scottish History Society.

² Edited by Sir Philip Hamilton-Grierson for the Scottish Text Society (1920 f.).

in 1622. Bisset's father was a cook (cater) in Queen Mary's household, who ventured one day to ask her Majesty, on her way to Mass, to give a name to his boy. She must have opened a Bible or a prayer-book, for, we are told, 'the first name she cast up' was that of the prophet Habakkuk! Bisset's book is far from biblical; it is a legal compilation. Yet he shows some knowledge of the Bible, for in dedicating his work to Sir George Hay and Charles I. he actually compares his production to the book of the law found by Hilkiah in the temple and handed by him

to Shaphan the Chancellare, and he nocht onlie caused cary it to the king Josiauch bot caused reid the samin to the king himself quha repentted eftir the heiring red the wordis of the law and obey it in all poyntis. Evin so lykewyis I Abacuch bisset has delyverit this writtin buik of the lawes of the kingdome of Scotland collected and written be me,

and so forth. The subsequent conduct of King Charles, however, did not come up to that of good King Josiah. Bisset refers more than once to the Bible, even in the body of his legal treatise. He knows, of course, like any patriotic Scot, that Fergus, the first king of Scotland, was a contemporary of Alexander the Great, so that 'Scotland hes bene ane free kingdome this nynetene hundredth fyftie and sex yeiris'! Also that Caractacus, the eighteenth king of Scotland, was, as 'all awtentick historiographouris' agree, taken to Rome twelve years 'or thereby' after the crucifixion, where he embraced Christianity—long before the king of France, as Bisset is careful to point out! In a poetical appendix to the dedication he exhorts King Charles to punish murderers and homicides strictly, according to the law of Moses. Bisset, by the way, was not alone in this opinion, for in 1662 the same

advice was given to Charles II., according to Evelyn.¹

In his prose exposition, which is a trenchant demand for strict justice on all offenders, leading up to a bare list of documents and an equally bare *résumé* of Scottish history, Bisset mentions as the third cause of ruin to a commonwealth, ‘particular proffets and insaciabill desyre and covattousnes of land, gold, money, riches, and honouris (quhilk sanct Paule callis the ruit of all evillis, as it is in deid, and may be sa weill called)’—a pungent application of 1 Tim. 6¹⁰, which was still needed (see above, p. 54). In a chronological section, he begins by giving some account of the twelve apostles and their missions, in the course of which we are informed that St. John was exiled by Trajan to the island of Patmos, ‘where he wrote also the gospel which afterwards he published at Ephesus by Gaius, his host and deacon, to whom Paul the apostle, writing to the Romans, doth testify, saying, “Gaius my host, etc.”’ We learn from Bisset also that of the two disciples mentioned in the last chapter of Luke’s gospel as having seen Christ on the road, one was Luke himself, while the other Cleopas was the Lord’s ‘cousin german.’ Bisset’s work belongs to jurisprudence rather than literature, it must be allowed. Still, it is a compilation which is on the verge of literature in the old Scots vernacular, and it proves that an appeal to the Bible was still potent in many quarters which were not distinctively pious. His edifying counsel to Charles I.

¹ In his *Diary* (Jan. 15, 1662), noting the general fast held in England on account of ‘God’s heavy judgment on this land,’ by way of evil seasons, he tells how the House of Commons attended St. Margaret’s, where ‘Dr. Reaves, Dean of Windsor, preach’d on Joshua 7¹², shewing how the neglect of exacting justice on offenders (by which he insinuated such of the old king’s murderers as were yet reprieved and in the Tower) was a maine cause of God’s punishing the land.’

was repeated nearly forty years later to Charles II. by **William Lithgow** (1582–1662), a roving Scot, a sturdy Protestant, and a profuse writer. When Lithgow is most racy or vigorous, he does not use the Bible; neither does he, in his adulation of monarchs or of any one in high position. But in welcoming King Charles II. to Scotland, he falls back on the Bible, to support his hints that Scotland expected much from the new king.

Let King Josiah and thy grandsire be
Exemplar types and speaking maps to thee :
He with his royal robes his heart did rent,
For the neglect of God's blest covenant,
Then caus'd the same be read and sworn to all
Who in the limits of this land did dwell.

This is more healthy than the use of scripture to prove the divine, absolute right of monarchs, in which he believed as heartily as Dryden, being tired of republican squabbles :—

'Tis better far a tyrant known should reign,
In any soil, nor want a lawful king.
Yea, though an infidel, we should obey
And for his honour and his safety pray.

Whereupon Lithgow quotes the advice of the prophet Jeremiah to the Jewish exiles in Babylon (Jer. 29⁷ : 'Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives'), and our Lord's words, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's,' which prove, he thinks, that obedience is due to kings,

Who are, though tyrants, authorized from heaven.

§ 5

Much more effective is the use of scriptural references in slighter and lighter literature of the period. 'More solid things do not show the complexion of

the times so well as ballads and libels,' wrote John Selden (*Table-Talk*, lxxxi.). Now the **popular satires** or **pasquils** of the seventeenth as well as of the eighteenth centuries¹ show a biblical tinge as well as other signs of the time. Thus one anonymous versifier, who is supposed to have been a Mr. Thomas Forrester, the Episcopal minister of Melrose, wrote a trenchant satire on the Glasgow Assembly of 1638, which had dared to depose his reverence. In one verse he echoes Acts 25¹¹ ('I appeal to Caesar'), against the claim of the Church to supersede the civil power :—

St. Paul made Caesar supreme judge,
To Caesar had his last refuge ;
Fy then on these who dare appeal
From Caesar in preposterous zeal.

There is a good deal of assertion in these pasquils which, like Captain Paton, we

Scarce could credit, having heard
The *con* but not the *pro*.

One instance of this, containing another allusion to the Acts of the Apostles, occurs in an unfeeling epitaph on Gladstones, the archbishop of St. Andrews, who died of a loathsome disease in 1615. It contains these lines :—

As by his death his life ye may determine,
A lazie life draws on a lowsie death,
A fearful thing ! sith vile Herodian vermine
Did stop that proud presumptious Prelat's breath '—

a harsh allusion to Acts 12²³ ('The angel of the Lord smote Herod, because he gave not God the glory : and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost').²

¹ Collected in *A Book of Scottish Pasquils* : Edinburgh, 1868.

² In the next century Robert Wodrow used this to mark what was for him the providential check to the Jacobites in the deaths of Queen Anne (1714) and of Louis Quatorze. 'The King of France's death was as remarkable as

Gladstones, for some reason, seems to have stirred the spite of his ecclesiastical opponents, as we can see from two separate epitaphs upon him written by Sir William Mure, one of which is eulogistic, the other scornful. The elegist on Lady Margaret Callendar, who had died in 1659, is kinder; he begins by hailing her as a paragon :—

Here lies the phoenix of her sex, the ark
Where loyalty and honour did embark,
The day of our deluge; what had she been,
Had she been he, a soul so masculine!
Bruce, Wallace, should remounted have the stage
Of action, with the worthiest of that age.

Which, at any rate, lets us see what kind of woman Lady Margaret must have been.

There are so few harbours on this bare coast of seventeenth-century literature, that we are not sorry to put in for a moment to small ports like an anonymous dramatic piece called **Philotus**, published in 1603. The theme is the absurdity of age marrying youth. It is written in rhymed verse, and ends with a song of four lovers, which reproduces the common blend of classical and scriptural allusions :—

Were Jacob's sons mair joyfull for to see
The waltring waves King Pharaoh's oist [host] confound?
Was Israel mair glad in hart to be
Freed from all fear, before in bondage bound,
When God them brought from the Egyptian ground?
Was Mordocheus [Mordecai] merrier nor we,
When Artaxerxes altered his decree?

hers; who, as she was taken off when all was ready to be accomplished in favour of the Pretender, so he was cut off when the rebellion was ready to be executed, and he was carryed off not by any ordinary formed sickness, but by a suddane mortification, without any apparent outward cause bringing it about, but like a direct stroak, as was Herod's case, from the hand of God! (*Analecta*, vol. iii. p. 474).

Was greater gladness in the land of Greece,
 When Jason came from Colchus hame again,
 And conquered had the famous Golden Fleece,
 With labour lang, with peril and with pain ?

And so on. The general tendency, however, is to concentrate upon scriptural allusions, till even the apocryphal ones become less frequent in the popular verse of the period. Thus in a black-letter pasquil, written before 1639, and entitled

BRITAINE AND IRELAND'S LAST ADEW
 TO ROME, AND BABEL'S CURSED CREW,

the author hopes that England, Scotland, and Ireland will join in the good work of rooting out the 'Romish brambles' from the land. The pasquil ends :—

Amen, quoth he, who prays these three,
 By God conjoined in unitie,
 May still in one Religion
 Fear God, under one tripled Crown :
 That *Dagon* here as he hath been,
 May near God's ark no more be seen.

Which is not more trenchant than another pasquil against Laud and some other Episcopalians, introduced by the lines :—

SCOTLAND'S TRIUMPH IN SPIGHT OF ROME AND SPAINE,
 WHO WOULD CURST JERICHO'S WALS HEER BUILDE AGAINE.

This Protestant use of Joshua 6²⁶ is followed up by a number of biblical allusions in the satire, *e.g.* to the Book of Esther :—

Now wonder strange and greatest change of all,
 That tottering hierarchie begins to fall,
 Like Haman curs'd before blest Mordecai,
 Pointing out Sion's rying, Rome's decay.

O what a change, that lord who late rewl'd all,
 Now cashier'd goes, most like to catch a fall,
 And Ireland's late Lieutenant, Strafford's lord
 With Haman is in danger of a cord.

How popular this biblical tag was in Scots literature may be judged by two examples of its use. One is in a very unlooked-for quarter. In the ballad of 'Sir Hugh le Blond' (of Arbuthnot) the hero defends the honour of his Queen against a slanderous intriguer called Rodingham, who confesses at the point of death,

I like to wicked Haman am,
 This day I shall be slain.

The same Old Testament villain is employed to point the moral of a popular threat in *A Scottish Litany* of 1688 or 1689, written against the Duke of Hamilton :—

That Satan's agents these years past,
 Who Israel held in bondage fast,
 Haman's reward may find at last,
 Quaesumus.

James Cockburne, a contemporary versifier, was more ambitious and less polemical when he published in 1655 two sets of lines upon *Judas' Kiss to the Son of God* and *Gabriel's Salutation to Mary*. The latter represents the Virgin Mary reading a printed account of the plagues of Egypt!—indeed, a printed copy of the Old Testament. Effusions of biblical verse like this abound. But it is more significant to notice the open-air use of the scriptures in a piece like **The Packman's Paternoster**, a swinging popular satire on the Roman Church, which gives further proof of the hold gained by the Bible over the common mind. This piece is a rare example of composite authorship; it was written by Sir James Sempill, one of the Scots ambassadors, and then enlarged by his son Robert

Sempill of Beltrees, who issued it in 1669. The motto is :—

This pious poeme buy and read,
For off the Pope it knocks the head.

The packman or pedlar argues with a priest called Sir John upon some tenets of the Roman Church, and proves too much for the cleric. He tackles him on the reasons for mumbling prayers in Latin, wishes to know how the Virgin Mary ever learned Latin, and how she knows the Mass, when there was no Mass in her day. All the priest can say is :—

Packman, if thou believe the legendary,
The Mass is elder far than Christ or Mary ;
For all the patriarchs, both more or less,
And great Melchizedek himself, said Mass.

Finally, the priest in desperation tells the pedlar to consult the prior of an adjoining monastery. But the anxious inquirer is not satisfied even with these experts.

Sometimes he doubted if the monks were men
Or monsters ; for his life he could not ken.
He said Sir John was a fair fattéd ox ;
Sometimes he said he lookéd like John Knox ;
But Knox was better verséd with the Bible.
A study that Sir John thought very idle.

The pungent satire ends with the pedlar in flight from the monastery, where the very wares in his pack have been stolen from him.

And still [ever] he cried, ‘ Shame fall both monks and friars !
For I have lost my pack and learned no prayers.
So farewell Ave, Creed, and Paternoster !
I ’ll pray in my mother-tongue, and quit the closter.

Another vigorous production was *The Whig’s*

Supplication, written by **Samuel Colvill** in 1681 against the Presbyterians, after the manner of *Hudibras*. The hero or knight is drawn on mock-heroic lines, as an omniscient pedant.

All things created he doth know,
In heaven above and earth below :
He solves the questions every one,
That Sheba's Queen ask'd Solomon :
Or any other knotty doubt,

such as whether

We ought to believe them
Who say Melchizedek was not Shem ? . . .
If the emperor Prester John
Be the offspring of Solomon ? '

There is a curious echo of Mark 10²⁵ ('It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God ') in the lines :—

Though all the cables in the navy,
In one, should pass through needle's-eye,
Whigs still would doubt their honesty.

Butler in *Hudibras* (Part i. canto 3) had taunted the Presbyterians with being more rapacious than the priests of Bel :—

Bel and the Dragon's chaplains were
More moderate than these by far :
For they (poor knaves) were glad to cheat,
To get their wives and children meat :
But these will not be fobb'd off so ;
They must have wealth and power too,
Or else with blow and desolation
They 'll tear it out o' the heart o' the nation.

Colvill repeats this verbally, in contrasting the priests of Bel with contemporary clergy of the Roman

Church ; the only change he makes is to alter the last two lines into

Or else they 'll make their party good
By making nations swim in blood.

It is another (see above, p. 64) allusion to the apocryphal tale of Bel and the Dragon, which narrates how the seventy priests of Bel in Babylon supported themselves and their wives and children by abstracting from the temple the provisions offered daily to the god himself. All this rough popular literature is, of course, an undergrowth. Still, such Scottish outbursts belong to literature as the Marprelaté pamphlets belong to English prose of the sixteenth century.

§ 6

There is abundant theological prose in Scotland during these years, but hardly any writer realized what Balzac was telling the French in his *Socrate Chrestien* (published in 1652): 'Ce n'est pas assez de savoir la théologie : il faut encore savoir écrire, qui est une seconde science.' Fortunately there were one or two authors outside theology who had an instinctive or a trained sense of this 'seconde science.' Sometimes they took their own line in literature as well as in life. The astonishing prose of **Sir Thomas Urquhart** of Cromarty yields practically nothing for our present purpose. But he issued in 1641 a volume of *Epigrams Divine and Human*, which has one or two biblical echoes, although the majority of the epigrams are moral rather than religious, and even the religious ones are not biblical. One bears the prose title: 'As it was a precept of antiquity, to leane more to vertue than parentage, so is it a tenet

of Christianity, to repose more trust on the blood of Christ than on our own merits.' The epigram on this evangelical theme runs :—

Vertue, not blood, was thought of anciently ;
 Yet blood more than our vertue ought to please us,
 For we on blood, not vertue, should rely ;
 Not on our vertue but the blood of Jesus ;
 His blood being able to make heavenly kings
 Of men, plagu'd here for lacke of earthly things.

Plainly he has Rev. 1⁵⁻⁶ in his mind (' Unto him that washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father '), just as he was thinking of 1 Cor. 6¹⁸⁻¹⁹ (' He that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What ! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you ? ') or of 1 Cor. 3¹⁶⁻¹⁷ (' Know ye not that ye are the temple of God ? . . . If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy '), when he wrote :—

Wrath makes a man to sin coragiously,
 And pride doth swell with faire appearances ;
 But drunkenesse and too much leacherie
 Are sloven, filthie, villanous and base ;
 For, by the one God's image being exil'd,
 His temple by the other is defil'd.

Sir Thomas fought for the King at the battle of Worcester ; **Sir George Mackenzie** won the title of ' bloody ' in a different fashion. However, with his political and legal career we are not concerned. Dryden called him ' that noble wit of Scotland,' and it is the literature he produced that interests us here. He detested the Covenanters for their works and words against the divine right of kings, which was to

him the keystone of Church and State. In his prose denunciations he can apply scripture, sometimes with a grave sententiousness which, like some other features of his style, recalls Sir Thomas Browne. Thus he writes :—

I remember that I was once detained by this reflection upon seeing David, that mighty prince, who killed lions and giants, represented in his last age upon a couch, changing his shirt, where the pale colours and empty wrinkles of old age were to be seen sitting upon that hero who was once so beautiful as to enflame the daughter of his king, and now so crazy that he feared more a cold blast than he would formerly an army of Philistines.¹

This must refer to some picture representing 1 Kings 1¹. Again, he writes severely of the Covenanters :—

All murders became sacrifices by the example of Phineas and Ehud ; all rapines are hallowed by the Israelites borrowing the ear-rings of the Egyptians, and rebellions have a hundred forced texts of Scripture brought to patronize them. But I oftentimes wonder where they found precedents in the old Testament for murdering and robbing men's reputation, and for lying so impudently for what they think the good old cause.²

Such verdicts have temper in them as well as truth. It is pleasanter to catch echoes from his verse, like this from the lines upon *Caelia's Country-House* :—

Spread to the east, embroidered gardens lie,
O'er which the sun looks with a fruitful eye,
As his sweet offspring, and seems to be vain
That glorious Solomon and all his train
Were, by the greatest Master, thought outdone
By these robes he had for the lilies spun.

¹ *Works* (ed. 1716), i., 7.

² *Works*, i., 139.

The lines end with a popular comparison ¹ :—

Sure if great Solomon did live this day,
He would the Sheban visit here repay,
And justly wonder at her beauty more,
Than that great queen his wisdom did adore.

But the poem has its flick at his religious opponents, in the description of a picture which portrayed our Saviour's passion :—

Our Saviour there we so alive do see,
He Calvin could oblige to bend his knee. . . .
The pencil here, like Aaron's rod, cuts deep
Our rocky hearts, and with delight we weep.
I fear these tears the painter here hath spread
Are far more real than the tears we shed,
Since our hearts break not at so great a wonder,
Which did the rocks and temple rend asunder.

And again, in describing Charles I., 'great Charles, God's noblest image among men,' he writes with a royalist exaggeration which is carried off by its vigour, that the king was

Above all martyrs in this magnified,
They for religion, but it with him died.
This fixes that blest race which long has stood,
Great by its own, but greater by this blood :
This for reward a matchless son did bring,
Heaven's only governed by a better king ;
And such as cannot under him be free,
To knaves and fools should slaves for ever be.
Fretted religion sickens into zeal,
That holy fever of the commonweal ;
By this sweet name false men their rage baptize,
And not to God but Molech sacrifice ;

¹ Stevenson's old Scottish gardener (*Memories and Portraits*, ch. v.) made a quainter use of 1 Kings 10⁷, when he applied it to his bees: 'They are indeed wonderfu' creatures. They just mind me o' what the Queen of Sheba said to Solomon—and I think she said it wi' a sigh—"The half of it hath not been told unto me."'

Making their enemies pass through a fire,
They do their offerings kindle by their ire—

an allusion to the rite forbidden in passages like Lev. 18 ²¹ (‘Thou shalt not give any of thy seed to make them pass through the fire to Molech’).

Meantime the minor prose of the clans showed a certain familiarity with the Bible. There was **Sir Aeneas** or Angus **Macpherson** (1644-1705), who was writing his *Loyall Dissuasive* ¹ and other pieces. He could lament over young Andrew Macpherson’s death in 1666, for example, in these terms :—

So it pleased Providence that this paragon of his age, the rose and stay of his family, and ornament of his country, was snatched away in the prime of his youth, and (to aggravate our sorrow) buried the same Tuesday he should have married. He was ane Absolom for beauty, a Joseph for continence, a Tully for eloquence, and a Jonathan for friendship.

He finds scriptural precedent for the honour paid to Highland chieftains.

If we consult the sacred scriptures, the best and truest of all histories, we shall find there that, during the whole legall dispensation, the children of Israel, tho’ they had neither duke nor earl, etc., had their nobles whom they called the Princes of Israel, who were the heads of their several tribes, and no other than our Chiefs.

The *Loyall Dissuasive* is a vigorous protest against the claim of the Mackintosh family to be the head of Clan Chattan, and has this English version of a Gaelic couplet in its title :—

When you are at open warr with the M‘Intoshes,
Bolt your door once ; when in peace and friendship, bolt it twice.

¹ Edited by Rev. A. D. Murdoch for the Scottish History Society (vol. xli.) in 1902.

It is the Macphersons, Sir Aeneas holds, who are the real head, a tribe that

grows not out of the ground like mushrooms, nor is it to be set up in ane instant. The king may make a man rich of a sudden, or create ane other a duke; and (if he pleases) he may make a third both; but it was Almighty God, and he only, could say to Abraham, I'll make of thee a great family or nation.

When he was suspected of Jacobite intrigues, and even threatened with torture in the Tolbooth, he pled that no gentleman should be tortured, alleging among other proofs Acts 22 ^{25f.} :—

This seems plain and evident, not to speake of other authors, from the sacred storie itselwe: there we find St. Paul, tho' born at Tarsus the metropolis of Cilicia, where the Romans had a great collonie, vested with ample priviledges, pleads his being a Roman against his bonds and buffeting, which was immediatlie sustained to clear him of his fetters, so tender was that terrible nation of the honour and priviledges of their Country. And I think, my Lord Commissioner, with submission to your government and this honourable board, it is no less competent to me against racks and tortures, that I am a Scots gentleman.

Whether the appeal to Scripture was admitted or not, it is pleasant to find that Sir Aeneas was released.

A more obscure author was writing in the north, at this time, who deserves mention for his prose, if not for his verse, a man who travelled over the Continent, and who sympathized strongly with the royalist cause, like Urquhart and Mackenzie. The *Polichronicon seu Policratica Temporum*,¹ which

¹ The bulk of the Scottish part of the manuscript was edited for the Scottish History Society (vol. xlvii.), by Mr. William Mackay, in 1905.

in spite of its Latin title turns out to be a vernacular history of Europe and Scotland, or rather of the honourable Fraser clan, was composed by **Master John Fraser**, minister of Wardlaw (Kirkhill) near Inverness. He seems to have written this loose, long, but decidedly entertaining book between 1666 and 1700. He tells how, in the tenth century, a certain Julius de Berry treated King Charles the Simple to a feast of fruit, with which that monarch was so pleased that he knighted the purveyor and dubbed him 'Fraise,' because the strawberries were so good. For it was in France that 'we had our origin.' In next century, the Frasers settled in Scotland, where at first, among ill-minded Macdonalds and Cummings, the family was like a 'lilly among thorns' (Song of Solomon 2²). I could tell of other clans and families, says Mr. Fraser piously, whose fortunes were not founded as ours were, on innocence and justice, people who 'by force and fraud, sword and scourge, expelled and dispossessed their nighbours that themselves might succeed, like Ahab to Naboth's vineyard.' Later on, he speaks of 'the barbarity and inhumanity of our Highlanders,' declaring that 'the good Earles of Rosse are weary of their own situation near and among them, and the Lords of Lovat uneasie in such a bad neighbourhood'; in fact, these godly lambs 'may say with David, Wo is me that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar, my soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace, but when I speake they are for war'! This application of Ps. 120^{5, 6, 7} is characteristic of Fraser. No scripture is too noble for the Fraser clan. Now and then he introduces quite aptly and naturally an allusion to the Bible in his narrative. For example, when the Frasers were cut to pieces at the battle of Lochy in 1544, the historian compares

Lord Hugh Lovat and his son Simon to Saul and Jonathan, quoting David's lament (2 Samuel 1 ¹⁹⁻²³) over these two Fraser chiefs, so 'pleasant in their lives.' 'It is observable,' he says elsewhere, apropos of the name Simon, 'a name pretty rare in Scotland, south or north, although kindly to this family' of Fraser :—

that Simon was commonly a happy name in the Scriptures ; there was Simon Zelotes, either Christ found him or made him a zealot when he called him to the apostleship, a zealous man, Simon of Syrene, that helped Christ to bear his crosse, a compassionate man. Simon a Tanner, Peter's host, a charitable man. And Simon Peter, a sanctified man.

He is discreetly silent about Simon Magus ! According to Fraser, the Lovats themselves had scripture often on their lips. Whether this is historical or not, their chronicler does not hesitate to use Bible tales and sayings in describing them, though he does object to Cromwell mixing his public talk 'with smooth phrases of Scripture to make it the more plausible.' One instance may be given, for the sake of its naïve ingenuity. When Alexander II. transferred the Frasers from the south of Scotland to the north, we are told, Alexander, 'in whose mind the Lord (who turns hearts as the rivers of water) ¹ did put to fix his heart and eye with his royalle favoures upon that deserving person, Sir Simon Fraser,' might well have said, 'Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves : be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves' (Matt. 10 ¹⁶), so our historian alleges. Then he expounds this in order to justify the Frasers' policy :—

Let meekness be mixt with wariness. Christianity calls us not to a weake simplicity, but allows as much of the serpent

¹ An allusion to Proverbs 21 ¹: 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water ; he turneth it whithersoever he will.'

as the dove ; the dove without the serpent is easily caught ; the serpent without the dove stings deadly. Religion without policy is too simple to be safe ; policy without religion is too subtil to be good. Their match makes themselves secure, and a serpent's eye is a singular ornament in a dove's head.

Fraser was a peaceable Episcopalian, and quotes the mournful lines written by Dr. George Wishart, afterwards Bishop of Edinburgh, on the deaths of Laud, Strafford, and Charles I., beginning :—

The world 's a tennis-court, man is the ball,
Toss 't 'gainst the wall !
High soaring hopes and languishing despair
The rackets are. . . .
Our sanctuary with blood 's defil'd,
And truth 's exiled,
Bethel, Bethaven is,¹ Doeg treads downe
Our high priest's mitre and imperiall crowne.

Vain is it, he adds, for mortal man to toil,

For who can shun a fall,
When heaven writes Mene Tekel on the wall—

not a very happy application of Daniel 5²⁵, for it suggests, though this was far from good Dr. Wishart's mind, that Charles I.'s fate resembled that of Belshazzar.

Bishop Burnet was an anglicized Scot, and I simply refer to his work here, to corroborate the general avoidance of biblical phraseology in the larger prose of the period. Thus, in his *History of His Own Times*, which Swift censured for referring too often to Scotland ('two-thirds of it relates to that beggarly nation and their insignificant brangles and

¹ A recondite allusion to Hosea 4¹⁵, 5⁸, 'Bethel' meaning the house of God, 'Beth-aven' the house of idols.

factions'), it is rare to find any biblical allusion. There are Scotticisms, but few scriptural references. One occurs in the paragraph on Montrose's campaign in the Highlands on behalf of Charles I. :—

The Marquis thought that his name would do all, and bear down everything before it. But he found his mistake; for, while he was vaunting over his conquests from Dan even to Beersheba, and inviting his royal master to come down and take the city, lest it should happen to be called by his name, he was miserably defeated, and his poor dispersed army was by the country-people, and at the instigation of their teachers, who called upon them not to spare, nor do the work of the Lord deceitfully, cruelly knocked on the head in cold blood.

Which shows that he remembered, and expected his readers to remember, the tale of Joab and David at the capture of Rabbah, in 2 Sam. 12²⁶⁻²⁸. But this is quite exceptional, though he now and then mentions the Bible, as in the account of how he was punished in 1684 for using Ps. 22²¹ as a text :—

For a sermon preached at the Rolls Chapel, on the 5th of November, on these words, 'Save me from the lion's mouth; thou hast heard me from the horns of unicorns,' which was thought of dangerous construction, because the lion and the unicorn were the two supporters of the king's escutcheon, I was by the king's order dismissed from being preacher of the Rolls.'

Burnet in this respect resembles Urquhart rather than Mackenzie, rather even than the ultra-patriotic **Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun**. Fletcher 'was a man a little untoward in his temper,' Sir John Clerk of Penicuik judged, 'and much inclined to eloquence.' But he was a resolute and patriotic Scotsman, whatever his political or personal defects may have been,

and he wrote literature. I choose this passage for our purpose from his *Second Discourse concerning the Affairs of Scotland* (1698). He begins by inquiring into the reasons why there should be so many poor people, idle vagabonds, and beggars in Scotland.

At length I found the original of that multitude of beggars which now oppress the world, to have proceeded from churchmen, who (never failing to confound things spiritual with temporal, and consequently all good order and good government, either through mistake or design) upon the first publick establishment of the christian religion, recommended nothing more to masters, in order to the salvation of their souls, than the setting such of their slaves at liberty as would embrace the christian faith, though our Saviour and his apostles had been so far from making use of any temporal advantages to persuade eternal truths, and so far from invading any man's property, by promising him heaven for it, that the apostle Paul says expressly, 'In whatever condition of life any one is called to the christian faith, in that let him remain. Art thou called being a slave? Be not concerned for thy condition; but even though thou mightest be free, chuse to continue in it. For he who is called whilst a slave, becomes the freeman of the Lord; and likewise he that is called whilst a freeman, becomes the slave of Christ, who has paid a price for you, that you might not be the slaves of men. Let every one therefore, brethren, in whatever condition he is called, in that remain, in the fear of God.' That the interpretation I put upon this passage, different from our translation, is the true meaning of the apostle, not only the authority of the Greek fathers, and genuine signification of the Greek particles, but the whole context, chiefly the first and last words (which seem to be repeated to enforce and determine such a meaning) clearly demonstrate.

This application of 1 Cor. 7²⁰⁻²⁴ may fitly close a century in which the Bible had been used increasingly as an oracle upon political and social as well as upon religious issues. Not that the practice was confined

to Scotland. English literature in the seventeenth century shows a similar tendency. And, instead of clinching this with more or less familiar instances, I shall simply quote one from so cool and shrewd a politician as Lord Halifax. In his pamphlet called *A Rough Draught of a New Model at Sea*, written in 1694 in order to advocate what modern statesmen would call the views of the 'blue-water' school, Halifax observes that

it may be said now to England, 'Martha, Martha, thou art busy about many things, but one thing is necessary.' To the question, What shall we do to be saved in this world? there is no answer but this, Look to your moat. The first article of an Englishman's political creed must be that he believeth in the sea.

When a political pamphleteer could use such phrases to wing a naval plea, the Bible evidently must have been familiar to readers who did not belong to the serious, devout party, south of the Border as well as north.

CHAPTER IV

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The Union of Scotland and England : 1707

Verse of the Period

§ 1. NATURE-POETS.

JAMES THOMSON : 1700-1748.

JAMES MACPHERSON : 1710-1796.

MICHAEL BRUCE : 1746-1767.

§ 2. POPULAR VERSE : PASQUILS, SONGS, AND BALLADS.

§ 3. SONG-WRITERS.

ALLAN RAMSAY : 1685-1758.

ROBERT FERGUSSON : 1750-1774.

§ 4. MINOR VERSE.

ROBERT BLAIR : 1699-1747.

JAMES GRAHAME : 1765-1811.

JOHN MAYNE : 1759-1836.

MRS. GRANT OF LAGGAN : 1755-1838.

Prose of the Period

§ 5. PHILOSOPHICAL PROSE.

JAMES BEATTIE : 1735-1803

DAVID HUME : 1711-1776.

LORD KAMES : 1696-1782.

DR. HUGH BLAIR : 1718-1800

LORD MONBODDO : 1714-1799.

§ 6. GENERAL PROSE.

SMOLLETT : 1721-1771.

BOSWELL : 1740-1795.

CHAPTER IV

THE Union of Scotland and England, which Fletcher of Saltoun deplored and denounced, set up a further assimilation of Scots literature to English. Yet, side by side with this, there was a genuine revival of Scots vernacular literature. In both there is a welcome improvement upon the output of the previous century; and in both the Bible is evident, though more so in the latter.

Dr. William Robertson, in 1759, closed his *History of Scotland* by congratulating himself and his nation upon the advantages of the union.

The Scots, after being placed during a whole century in a situation no less fatal to the liberty than to the taste and genius of the nation, were at once put in possession of privileges more valuable than those which their ancestors had formerly enjoyed; and every obstruction that had retarded their pursuit or prevented their acquisition of literary fame, was totally removed.

This breathes the air of the Augustan age during the last half of the century, when in philosophy especially, but also in history, in criticism, and even in science, Scots literature and learning ceased to be provincial in thought or in expression. The movement centred largely, though not exclusively, in the brilliant Edinburgh circle of the period. Hugh Miller, while allowing full weight to the prestige of the university and of the legal class, declared that what did more

to produce this brilliant life was the influx of distinguished clergymen of the Church of Scotland. It was an age when, as he points out, 'the Scottish clergy, whatever might be their merely professional merits as a class, were perhaps the most literary in Europe.' At the same time, theological interests no longer predominated, and even when they were discussed, it was in a larger air of culture. Literature became more and more emancipated from controversial religious passions. Most of the leading writers, especially in prose, were anglicized. Yet the romantic interest, which woke to a fresh appreciation of nature, stirred a hearty enthusiasm for ballads and Celtic traditions, and, as a consequence of this, in the soil of poetry a distinctively Scottish type bloomed.

This carried with it an **emancipation from biblicism**. There is a convenient mark of this movement to be seen in a sentence from the preface to Pinkerton's *Ancient Scottish Poems* (vol. i., p. xiv), one of the delightful collections which revived interest in the literature of the past. Pinkerton was an outspoken critic; he declares, 'the scripture is merely a doctrinal work, and it moves pity to see questions of philosophy decided by scripture.' The Bible is more than a doctrinal work, but we know what Pinkerton means; he is protesting specially against the habit of using the Bible as our oracle upon questions like ancient ethnology (see above, pp. 41 f.). The mere fact that this frank word could be written in 1792 shows that a return to the better view of the Bible was in progress. What handicapped it for long was the mania for 'elegant' or fine writing. It was the age when trout became 'the scaly denizens of the brook,' and flowers 'the aromatic tribes,' when literary persons could hardly speak of earth

except as 'this huge rotundity we tread,' or of death except as 'the great man-eater,' when even Burns felt obliged to address God in roundabout deistic phraseology as 'Thou dread Power,' or 'Thou Great Being,' or 'O Thou Unknown, Almighty Cause.' To this affectation the simplicity and directness of the Bible did not appeal, and the result was that wherever such rhetoric saturated the mind there was an instinctive avoidance of biblical subjects or style as not ornamental enough.

§ 1

The output in verse is rich in almost everything except biblical allusions. Consider **James Thomson**, for instance. His poems were written in England; he was more identified with the south than even Drummond of Hawthornden had been. Yet we may claim him for Scots literature upon larger grounds than those of birth, though few could go the length of Professor Wilson, who maintained that 'his suns rise and set in Scottish heavens, and, strange as the assertion would have sounded in the ears of Samuel Johnson, Scottish are his words, their sough and their roar.' Thomson's early associations were with the Jed; Roxburghshire and the Borders were the setting of his youthful associations. But he was twenty-four when he left Leith for London, and his verse is not distinctively Scottish.

Did he take from the manse at Ednam a close knowledge of the Bible as well as of the scenery? We find no wealth of biblical allusions in his verse, at any rate. In *The Seasons* they are few and disappointing, e.g. the comparison of thick fogs in autumn to the chaos and darkness at the creation of the world:—

A formless grey confusion covers all.
 As when of old (so sung the Hebrew bard)
 Light, uncollected, through the chaos urged
 Its infant way ; nor order yet had drawn
 His lovely train from out the dubious gloom.

In the hymn at the close he does strike out one unconventional phrase :—

The Great Shepherd reigns,
 And his unsuffering kingdom yet will come.

It is another phrase of the same kind, about the birds (‘ To him they cry in Winter’s pinching reign ’), which is the only unconventional thing in the paraphrase of Matt. 6²⁵^f. But the artificial temper which Thomson had not succeeded in throwing aside at this point clings awkwardly to the lines upon the tapestry in *The Castle of Indolence* (Canto i, 37). Of all the scenes depicted,

Those pleased the most when, by a cunning hand,
 Depainted was the patriarchal age,
 What time Dan Abraham left the Chaldee land,
 And pastured on from verdant stage to stage,
 Where fields and fountains fresh could best engage.
 Toil was not then. Of nothing took they heed,
 But with wild beasts the sylvan war to wage,
 And o’er vast plains their herds and flocks to feed :
 Blest sons of nature they ! true golden age indeed !

‘ Dan Abraham ’ is dreadful, and the passage, with its false suggestion of idyllic peace, outrages the sense of history as well as the æsthetic taste. Still, this is not Thomson at his best. And when he was at his best, he represented the real advance of Scots literature during this period to a position of honour in the literature of Europe. ‘ It was during the eighteenth century that the intellectual product of Scotland first commanded the attention of the world . . .

James Thomson, though he spent the greater part of his life in England, yet received his inspiration from his native country. In his *Seasons* he freshened the sources of poetry by his direct return to nature, and his inspiration was of potent effect in the imaginative literature not only of England, but of France and Germany. During this period, also, Scotland may be said to have heralded the Romantic movement in literature which attained its full fruition by the close of the century.' ¹

The romantic interest in Nature as well as in old legend stirs in the Ossianic verse (1760-1763) of **James Macpherson**, who like Thomson spent most of his working days outside Scotland. The Ossian Poems were one of the productions which recalled men to the northern stores of romance, and they have a certain biblical tinge in form as well as in diction, *i.e.* resemblances to the prophetic outbursts of the Old Testament and to the style of the lyrical sections. Indeed, Macpherson cleverly called attention to a number of these in his notes. A number of them are parallels to the Song of Solomon. Thus, when Cuchullin exclaims, 'Fergus, first in our joy at the feast, son of Rossa! arm of death! comest thou like a roe from Malmor, like a hart from the echoing hills?' we are told to compare the phrase in Cant. 2¹⁷ ('Be thou like a roe or young hart on the mountains of Bether'). When Fingal addresses Comala, 'Look from thy rocks, my love, and let me hear the voice of Comala. The storm is over, and the sun is on our fields,' Macpherson notes Cant. 2¹⁴ and 2¹¹ ('O my dove that art in the clefts of the rocks, let me hear thy voice . . . the winter is past, the rain is over and gone'). Sometimes he draws upon

¹ Hume Brown, *History of Scotland*, iii., 211. See further his paper on 'Scotland in the Eighteenth Century' in *Surveys of Scottish History* (1919).

the Lament over Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sam. 1^{19f.}, as in the poem on the battle of Lora, where he makes Ossian apostrophize one of Fingal's foes as follows: 'Erragon, king of ships, chief of distant Sora! how hast thou fallen on our mountains! How is the mighty low!' Or again in the lament over Calmar: 'The spear of Calmar is covered with blood! But it is covered with the blood of foes, sister of car-borne Calmar! his spear never returned unstained with blood, nor his bow from the strife of the mighty.' Passages like these suggested to Professor Blair 'a remarkable resemblance to the style of the Old Testament.' He defended 'one of the most exaggerated descriptions in the whole work . . . at the beginning of Fingal, where the scout makes his report to Cuchullin of the landing of the foe,' by arguing that it represented naturally the tendency of fear to exaggerate facts, which are viewed 'through the medium of a troubled imagination. Hence all those indistinct images of formidable greatness, the natural marks of a disturbed and confused mind, which occur in Moran's description of Swaran's appearance, and in his relation of the conference which they held together; not unlike the report which the affrighted Jewish spies made to their leader of the land of Canaan. "The land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature: and there we saw giants, the son of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight"'—an allusion to Num. 13³²⁻³³. In the days of the Ossianic controversy such biblical traits were hailed by admirers of Macpherson as a proof of antique origin; it is safer to regard them as ingenious touches from the hand of Macpherson himself.

Poor **Michael Bruce**, the consumptive school-master of Kinross-shire, on a much less ambitious level, has a little more for us, but less than we might expect from so pious a young versifier. There is the inscription he wrote upon the fly-leaf of his little Bible :—

'Tis very vain for me to boast
How small a price my Bible cost.
The day of judgment will make clear
'Twas very cheap—or very dear.

But classical conventionalities hampered him also, and no one would look out for biblical echoes in a poem on 'The Cuckoo.' The lines upon 'The Last Day' have some biblical allusions, including a paraphrase of Matt. 25⁴¹⁻⁴⁵ and of Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones springing to life, but then this is an early effort, and it is barely poetical. Besides, it is disconcerting to discover that when Britain is summoned to behold her poets in eternal glory, the four poets are Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, and Young! 'Lochleven' has nothing for our purpose except the description of the lovers :—

Like the first pair,
Adam and Eve in Eden's blissful bowers,
When newly come from their Creator's hand,
Our lovers lived in joy. Here, day by day,
In fond endearments, in embraces sweet,
That lovers only know, they liv'd, they loved,
And found the paradise that Adam lost.

§ 2

These are ultra-literary echoes, though Bruce's better use of the Bible is to be found in the metrical paraphrases which eventually won their place beside the Scottish Psalter. In the **popular verse** of the

day—that is, verse other than religious verse like Ralph Erskine's *Gospel Sonnets* which had their own popularity—there is evidence of the Bible being used more naturally and freely. This is a patch of very minor literature, but we may glean it in passing. Thus we have an elegy with not ineffective biblical traits. And I quote from it all the more readily, since elegies are generally weak and wordy. It was written upon the death of the Earl of Errol in 1704, and the lines close thus :—

And now farewell, blest Shade, immortal Ghost,
 While we are toss'd,
 Thy welcome soul is landed on the coast ;
 All that a muse unglorified can do,
 Is to pursue
 Thy paths, so far as we can keep thee in our view.
 But now a blaze of glory shining bright,
 With uncreated light,
 Dazzles our eyes and takes thee from our sight,
 Which flam'd about thy sacred dust ;
 Such is the retribution of the just.
 And now the shadows of the grave do fly,
 And death is swallowed up in victory.

Beside this we may set two interesting applications of the 137th Psalm, the cry of the exiled Jews in Babylon. One is by **Hamilton of Bangour** (1704-1754), the Jacobite song-writer, bewailing the rout of the young Pretender at the Battle of Culloden :—

On Gallia's shore we sat and wept,
 When Scotland we thought on,
 Robbed of her bravest sons, and all
 Her ancient spirit gone. . . .

If thee, oh Scotland, I forget,
 Even with my latest breath,
 May foul dishonour stain my name,
 And bring a coward's death.

May sad remorse of fancied guilt
My future days employ,
If all thy sacred rights are not
Above my chiefest joy.

Remember England's children, Lord,
Who on Drummosie day,
Deaf to the voice of kindred love,
Raze, raze it quite, did say.

And thou, proud Gallia, faithless friend,
Whose ruin is not far,
Just Heaven, on thy devoted head,
Pour all the woes of war.

When thou thy slaughter'd little ones
And ravish'd dames shall see,
Such help, such pity, may'st thou have,
As Scotland had from thee.

This is a modernized paraphrase. The other is actually a political parody, by an irrepressible Edinburgh physician, **Dr. Archibald Pitcairn** :—

At Athole's feet we sat and wept
When Bothwell we thought on,
And Pentland Hills, where we were wont
To randesvouze upon.

When he required of us a sang,
A sang of our own nation,
The de'el a sang had we to sing
But the Oath of Abjuration.

Our gracious Queen, she is not lyke
Our griefes for to turne over ;
But we maun flee to our elect,
The Emperour and Hanover.

Pitcairn was a convivial wit ; he wrote satirical verse of this kind about the Presbyterians, whom he hated as an Episcopalian and as a Jacobite. Lord Hailes

praised his Latin poems for 'their humour and poignant satire.' That may be, but his Scots verse now and then defied the standards of good taste; he had the 'cross-bench' temperament. Indeed, there is rather an odd anti-Hanoverian touch, now and then, in a number of other contemporary biblical allusions. In 1728, for example, an old woman called Marjory Scott died at Dunkeld. She was said to have lived for a hundred years. Whereupon **Alexander Penne-cuick**, who cared as little for the Church as did his friend Allan Ramsay, wrote this epitaph for her, which he clinched with an echo of Ps. 119⁹⁶ :—

Stop, passenger, until my life you read,
 The living may get knowledge from the dead. . . .
 Betwixt my cradle and my grave hath been
 Eight mighty kings of Scotland and a queen.
 Full twice five years the Commonwealth I saw,
 Ten times the subject rise against the law ;
 And which is worse than any civil war,
 A king arraigned before the subjects' bar.
 Swarms of sectarians, hot with hellish rage,
 Cut off his royal head upon the stage.
 Twice did I see old prelacy pulled down,
 And twice the cloak did sink beneath the gown.
 I saw the Stuart race thrust out ; nay, more,
 I saw our country sold for English ore ;
 Our numerous nobles, who have famous been,
 Sunk to the lowly number of sixteen.
 Such desolations in my days have been,
 I have an end of all perfection seen.

A similar note is struck by an anonymous pasquil, which recalls Hos. 13¹¹ ('I gave thee a king in mine anger') :—

When Israel's sires invok'd the living Lord,
 He scourged their sins with famine, plague, and sword ;
 They still rebell'd—He in his wrath did fling
 No thunderbolt among them but a king.

A George-like king was Heaven's avenging rod,
 The utmost fury of an angry God.
 God in his wrath sent Saul to punish Jewry,
 But George to Britain in a greater fury.

Still more interesting is the echo of Gen. 19²⁶ in a Scots ballad, although it is less surprising when we remember that the verse was written by Murdoch M'Lennan, the parish minister of Crathie. In his capital ballad on the battle of Sheriffmuir between Mar and Argyle, in 1715, we read :—

For Huntly and Sinclair
 They both played the tinclair
 With consciences black like a cra's, man.
 Soone Angus and Fifemen
 They ran for their life, man,
 And ne'er a Lot's wife there at a', man.

Yet another allusion crops up in this quarter, in the sixteenth or seventeenth century Border ballad of *Dick o' the Cow*. Dick upbraids Johnnie Armstrong for stealing his cows :—

There is a preacher in our chapell,
 And all the live-long day teaches he :
 When day is gone, and night is come,
 There 's ne'er a word I mark but three.

The first and second is—Faith and Conscience ;
 The third—ne'er let a traitor free.
 But, Johnnie, what faith and conscience was thine,
 When thou took awa my three kye frac me ?

Perhaps the author of the ballad thought of 1 Tim. 1¹⁹ (' Holding faith, and a good conscience '). Such allusions, as I have already explained, are rarely to be met inside the rich growth of the older **ballad-poetry**. It is not that the religious note is entirely absent from the ballads. Thus in 'Burd Helen,' when the heroine in page's attire runs after her

discourteous lover and follows him even as he fords the Clyde, we come upon this touch :—

About the middle of the Clyde
There stood an earth-fast stone ;
And there she call'd to God for help,
Since help from man came none.

Or again, in another ballad, when a lady asks the ghost of her husband :—

I ha'e a question at you to ask,
Before that ye depart from me ;
Tell me how long I ha'e to live,
And the kind o' death I ha'e to dee ?

the knight answers :—

I ha'e nae mair o' God's ain power
Than He has granted unto me ;
But come to heaven when ye will,
There porter to you I will be.

But biblical allusions would generally be out of place, and the balladist never thinks of them. When fair Janet rescues her lover from the wiles of fairyland, the fairy queen in her indignation does seem to utter a biblical phrase :—

Up then spake the fairy queen,
Out of a bush of rye—
' She 's ta'en away the bonniest knight
In all my companie !

' But had I kenn'd, 'Tamlane,' she says,
' A lady would borrow thee,
I wou'd ha'e ta'en out thy twa gray een,
Put in twa een of tree !

' Had I but kenn'd, 'Tamlane,' she says,
' Before ye came frae hame,
I wou'd ta'en out your heart o' flesh,
Put in a heart o' stane ! '

The biblical phrase, ' I will take away the stony heart and give you an heart of flesh ' (Ezek. 36 ²⁶), occurs to us. But the contrast is too obvious to require such a derivation, and in any case it is but the echo of an echo.

These are south country ballads. In the north, traces of the Bible at work are to be found even in the wild life of the period. Thus Robert Wodrow, writing in 1725, is rejoiced to hear of ' a very happy change ' in Lord George Murray, ' third son to the late Duke of Athole. . . . He was a half-pay officer and went to the Rebels at Preston. After that he came over with the handfull of Spaniards. At Glenshiel he escaped, and, with a servant, gote away among the Highland mountains, and lurked in a hutt made for themselves for some moneths, and sau no body. It was a happy Providence that either he or his servant had a Bible, and no other book. For want of other busines, he carefully read that neglected book, and the Lord blessed it with his present hard circumstances to him ' (*Analecta*, iii. p. 232). Another north country echo may be heard in another quarter. There are so few merry pieces with any biblical colour in this century that we may listen to these lines from the song, ' The Rock and the Wee Pickle Tow ' :—

In the first of the world, when Adam and Eve
Was station'd here at the beginning o't,
Their very first work was to sew the fig leaves,
An' syne gaed to try the spinning o't.
When Adam he delvèd, and mother Eve span,
There was naething like pride and like gentry than ;
But now there 's enuegh baith in woman an' man.

Alexander Ross (1699-1784), the Lochlee school-master who wrote this swinging song, was even more popular as the author of the rustic tale of *Helenore*,

or the *Fortunate Shepherdess*. But *Helenore* has nothing for us here.

Apart from such references, the biblical allusions in the Jacobite or anti-Jacobite verse are undistinguished. An opponent is Nero or Herod; if the opponent is feminine, she is Jezebel, of course. One angry set of verses after Culloden suggests to the Duke of Cumberland that he may fare worse even than the Nebuchadnezzar of Dan. 4³³, who, for his arrogance, 'was driven from men and did eat grass as oxen.' The exasperated Jacobite writes:—

Proud boaster ! think of Babel's king.
 Repent ere 'tis too late,
 Lest thou, like him, be made to roam,
 Or meet severer fate.
 If with a curse thou shalt be sent
 To feed 'mongst hoof and horn,
 No herd, no flock, will take thee in,
 But drive thee off with scorn.

Then he recalls Ezekiel's vision of the valley in which the dead bones came to life, and warns the Duke of what will happen to him when the dead victims on Drummossie Moor are raised again:—

Remember, William, thou must die.
 Dread what may be thy doom,
 When God shall make these dry bones live
 And cover'd be with skin.
 View, cruel savage, view thy guilt !
 Read what 's decreed by Heav'n,
 ' To those that will no mercy show,
 No mercy will be given ? '

Next to the Duke of Cumberland the Jacobites hated Murray of Broughton with a special hatred, for having changed sides after the defeat. The Rev. Thomas Drummond tells him, in 1747, that his soul will be distracted,

Your passions devils, and your bosom hell . . .
And when the fates shall cut a coward's breath,
Weary of being, yet afraid of death ;
If crimes like thine hereafter are forgiven,
Judas and Murray both may go to heaven.

The virulence of religious strife during the last half of the seventeenth century was replaced by an equally virulent political temper during the first half of the eighteenth century, till Culloden happily broke the Jacobite delusion. But the literature reflects virulence that is non-political also. Thus, the wiles of Delilah occur again in a scurrilous and satirical epitaph on Sir William Hamilton of Whytlaw, who was Lord Justice-Clerk when he died in 1704 :—

Stand passenger, and pass not by,
Till that ye know who here doth lye.
A Lord he was, some tyme ago deceast,
Abhorrer of King, Prophet, and of Priest,
And of Archbishops, Bishops, and their kynd ;
Brawler of men who were not of his mynd.
His means were still his God, his dog his child,
His wife the Dalilah who him beguiled.

And in a popular ballad of 1714, Dagon is once more drawn upon. An Episcopal clergyman called Cockburn had started the Episcopalian form of worship in Glasgow, to the wrath of the citizens, who celebrated their delight at Queen Anne's death by wrecking the chapel. A contemporary ballad, describing the riot, ends thus :—

The chess-window did reel, sir,
Like to a spinning-wheel, sir,
For Dagon he is fallen now ;
I hope he 'll never rise, sir.

Cockburn may not have been a very high class curate, but the ballad is as distasteful as the action which it celebrates.

§ 3

In the greater poets of the period who write songs the traces of the Bible are quite incidental at first, even when the verse is frankly popular. If Allan Ramsay's genuine stream of poetry is spoiled by some conventionalities, these are not biblical but classical; it is the old mythological tags about Lethe and Cupid and Ceres that obstruct the flow of his verse, not any items of scriptural lore. **Ramsay** put his own religious position quite frankly :—

I 'm nowther Whig nor Tory,
Nor credit gie to purgatory ; . . .
Know positively I 'm a Christian,
Believing truths an' thinking free,
Wishing thrawn parties wad agree.

Occasionally he recalls a Bible phrase, as in the *Tale of Three Bonnets* when he recollects Delilah :—

The famous jilt o' Palestine
Thus drew the hoods o'er Samson's e'en,
And gart him tell where lay his strength,
O' which she twinn'd him at the length ;
Then gied him up in chains to rave,
And labour like a galley slave :
But, Rosie, mind, when growing hair
His loss o' pith 'gan to repair,
He made o' thousands an example,
By crushing them beneath the temple.

Again, in sending a copy of his poems to Dr. Boswell, the uncle of Johnson's biographer, Ramsay writes :—

From my first setting out in rhyme near forty years have wheel'd,
Like Israel's sons, so long a time through fancy's wiles I 've reel'd.
May powers propitious by me stand, since it is all my claim,
As they enjoy'd their promised land, may I my promised fame.

Robert Fergusson is a still greater name, but his verse is a bush with almost as few berries for us. His praise of fresh, cold water is decidedly unexpected; *Caller Water* does not at first sound characteristic of a man who was notoriously convivial, and who frequented taverns rather than pumps. But Fergusson's praise of cold water is devoted to it as a cleansing liquid rather than a drink, and, unless all accounts libel Edinburgh, his recommendation was timely. However, he does begin by urging the superiority of water to wine :—

Whan father Adie first pat spade in
The bonny yeard of antient Eden,
His amry had nae liquor laid in,
 To fire his mou',
Nor did he thole his wife's upbraidin'
 For being fou.

A caller burn o' siller sheen,
Ran cannily out o'er the green,
And when our gutcher's drouth [grandfather's thirst] had been
 To bide right sair,
He loutit [stooped] down and drank bedean [forthwith]
 A dainty skair [share].

His bairns a' before the flood
Had langer tack o' flesh and blood,
And on mair pithy shanks they stood
 Than Noah's line,
Whae still hae been a feckless brood
 Wi' drinking wine.

To this we may add the inevitable allusion to Solomon, in his *Elegy* on John Hogg, late porter to the University of St. Andrews :—

When I had been fu' laith [reluctant] to rise,
John than begude to moralize ;

‘ The tither nap, the sluggard cries,
 And turns him round,
 Sac spake auld Solomon the wise,
 Divine profound ! ’

Nae dominie, or wise Mess John,
 Was better lear’d in Solomon ;
 He cited proverbs one by one
 Ilk voice to tame :
 He gar’d ilk sinner sigh or groan,
 And fear hell’s flame.

§ 4

From a parish minister, like **Robert Blair** of Athelstaneford, and in a poem like *The Grave*, we should expect biblical allusions, but the atmosphere of *The Grave* is not distinctively Christian. Our quest brings us to one or two passages like the lines in Adam’s expulsion from paradise (541 f.) :—

Like one that is condemned,
 Fain would he trifle time with idle talk,
 And parley with his fate,

and these on the ascension of Christ (677 f.) :—

Methinks I see him
 Climb the aërial heights and glide along
 Athwart the severing clouds : but the faint eye,
 Flung backwards in the chase, soon drops its hold.

But apart from these there is nothing biblical in the poem, beyond an occasional reminiscence like that of Job 17¹⁴ (‘ I have said to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister ’) in the description of the dead tyrant :—

Now tame and humble, like a child that ’s whipp’d,
 Shakes hands with dust, and calls the worm his kinsman ;

or of Eccles. 9¹⁰ (‘ There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest ’) in the warning to a proud astronomer, who is reminded that

Great heights are hazardous to the weak head ;
Soon, very soon, thy firmest footing fails,
And down thou dropp’st into that darksome place
Where nor device nor knowledge ever came.

Blair’s verses seldom do more than weaken any biblical phrase which he happens to employ. Thus the prose of Eccles. 12⁶⁻⁷ (‘ Or ever the pitcher be broken at the fountain : then shall the spirit return unto God who gave it ’) is only spoiled by being versified in this way :—

For part they must—body and soul must part !
Fond couple, link’d more close than wedded pair.
This wings its way to its Almighty Source,
The witness of its actions, now its judge ;
That drops into the dark and noisy grave,
Like a disabled pitcher of no use.

So with **James Grahame**, who began life as a Scots lawyer and ended it as a Church of England curate. He was a gentle soul, distressed by the slave-trade and by war ; if his heart was not in the Highlands, it was always north of the Border at least. He died near Glasgow at the age of forty-seven, leaving verse that shows a curious mixture of general culture and a romantic interest in the Covenanters. His famous and first poem, on *The Sabbath*, is naturally rich with biblical allusions, but none is striking. We have, indeed, his picture of the shepherd-lad :—

The Sabbath-service of the shepherd-boy
In some lone glen, where every sound is lull’d
To slumber, save the tinkling of the rill,

Or bleat of lamb, or hovering falcon's cry,
 Stretch'd on the sward, he reads of Jesse's son ;
 Or sheds a tear o'er him to Egypt sold,
 And wonders why he weeps.

Also the lines on Scots emigrants to America :—

Yes, far beyond the high-heaved western wave,
 Amid Columbia's wildernesses vast,
 The words which God in thunder from the mount
 Of Sinai spake, are heard, and are obey'd.
 Thy children, Scotia, in the desert land,
 Driven from their homes by fell Monopoly,
 Keep holy to the Lord the seventh day.
 Assembled under loftiest canopy
 Of trees primaeval (soon to be laid low),
 They sing : ' By Babel's streams we sat and wept.'

But this is almost all that is worth noting. His *Biblical Pictures* have no literary merit ; they are tepid paraphrases of the biblical text. Yet it was of him that Professor Wilson wrote referring to *The Sabbath* :—

Some chosen books by pious men composed,
 Kept from the dust, in every cottage lie,
 Through the wild loneliness of Scotia's vales,
 Beside the Bible, by whose well-known truths
 All human thoughts are by the peasant tried.

This is praise more apt for Bunyan than for Grahame. Byron went to the other extreme when he wrote how

Sepulchral Grahame pours his notes sublime,
 In mangled prose, nor e'en aspires to rhyme ;
 Breaks into blank the Gospel of St. Luke,
 And boldly pilfers from the Pentateuch ;
 And, undisturbed by conscientious qualms,
 Perverts the Prophets, and purloins the Psalms.

Another Scot who, like Thomson and Grahame, spent most of his life in the south, falls to be mentioned here. Carlyle tells how King James stopped

at Dumfries in 1617 on his way back to England, and presented 'the Dumfries population with a miniature bit of ordinance in real silver, saying, "Shoot for it annually," and encourage the practice of weapons. Which "Siller gun" and annual practice of shooting did accordingly continue itself almost to our own days. Scotch readers know *The Siller Gun*, by a Dumfries Native named **John Mayne**, a small brown Poem-Book not without merit.'¹ Few Scots readers know this vivacious poem nowadays. Yet Mayne was a creditable minor poet (1759-1836). He was born in the same year as Burns, and his *Hallowe'en* pleasantly anticipates the poem of his great contemporary. I quote this from Mayne's description of the pictures in flowers constructed by the gardeners at Dumfries :—

Amang the flow'ry forms they weave,
There 's Adam to the life, and Eve :
She, wi' the apple in her neeve [hand],
Enticing Adam ;
While Satan 's laughing in his sleeve
At him and Madam.

Then we have a minister's wife like **Mrs. Grant of Laggan**, whose *Poems on Various Subjects* were printed in 1803. This gifted Inverness-shire lady wrote *A Familiar Epistle to a Friend* in 1795, which humorously bewails the lack of time for study and authorship on the part of women with households and husbands to manage :—

The lyre and the garland were forc'd to give place
To duties domestic and records of grace :
Then farewell *Illysus*, adieu *Hippocrene*,
The vales of *Arcadia* and *Tempe* so green ;

¹ *Historical Sketches*, pp. 137, 138.

To the hills of *Judea* we now must draw near,
 King Lemuel's good mother's wise maxims to hear,
 And strive to leave none of the duties undone
 Which the matron prescrib'd for the spouse of her son :
 For my part, I labour'd and strove with my might
 To do all that the proverbs applauded as right :
 Fine coverings I made that with tapestry vied,
 And with heather and madder my fleeces I dy'd ;
 While the sun shone I still made the most of his light,
 And my candle most faithfully burnt through the night ;
 And while that and large fires thro' the winter did glow,
 Not a farthing my household would care for the snow ;
 Their plaids, hose, and garters, with scarlet adorn'd,
 Chill December they braved and its rigours they scorn'd ;
 Yet these were not all my pretensions to claim
 Of a matron industrious and virtuous the name ;
 My mate (can you doubt it ?) was known in the gates,
 Among seniors and elders and men of estates :
 I made him a coat of a grave solemn hue,
 Two threads they were black, and the other two blue ;
 So warm and so clerical, comely, and cheap,
 'Twas a proof both of thrift and contrivance so deep.

But, since she did her best to practise the counsels of
 Prov. 31^{15 f.},

Quite dead and extinct all poetical fire,
 At the foot of the cradle conceal'd lay my lyre.

§ 5

Mrs. Grant also wrote some prose, but, although she was a minister's wife, she does not interlard her *Letters*¹ on the Jacobites with biblical terms. Her story of Highland affairs is told simply and directly ; it is rare to come across any scriptural tag. The main allusion occurs in a description of the primitive life in the Highlands, which she apologizes for comparing

¹ First published and edited by Mr. J. R. N. Macphail, for the Scottish History Society (1896, vol. xxvi. pp. 250 f.),

with the patriarchal age as depicted in the Old Testament. The Highlanders, she says,

became hunters from necessity, and the transition from the hunter to the warrior is a very short one. He who braves danger in the forest will not shun it in the field ; and he who goes always arm'd, will not readily submit to inquiry or insult. The hunter Esau, who pursued the sylvan chase thro' the forest of Mount Seir was bred in the same pastoral tent, and under the same patriarchal dominion, with the shepherd Jacob, who fed his flocks in the adjoining plain, and seem'd equally solicitous to obtain the paternal blessing. Yet hardened by his manner of life, he was sturdy and self-righted, and evidently an object of terror to those who had injur'd him, tho' the sequel shows him generous as brave.

She also has 1 Sam. 22 ¹⁻² in mind when she is describing Simon Fraser, the Master of Lovat. He attracted a number of followers, she declares, and

having them once under his command, that undefinable magic by which he all his life sway'd the minds of those who neither lov'd nor esteem'd him, made them follow his desperate fortunes. Indeed, he at this period somewhat resembl'd David when in the cave of Adullam, for ' every one that was discontented and every one that was in debt ' literally resorted to him.

This mention of Mrs. Grant's letters brings us to **Scots prose**, which, like Scots verse, became rich and ramified during the eighteenth century, though it never threw up any distinctively national work. The Bible is much less prominent, and for this there were various reasons. It was not that the Bible was being neglected, either among the peasantry or in what Smollett called that ' hot-bed of genius,' Edinburgh. In 1715 Lady Grisell Baillie's husband, pleading ' for mercy to the poor unhappy sufferers by the rebellion,' ventured to remind Parliament of the precedent for

lenity which was furnished by 2 Kings 6²²⁻²³, where Elisha orders the king of Israel to spare his Syrian prisoners. Plainly even politicians could still see the point of such an argument. Again, Dr. Carlyle of Inveresk tells us how at the age of six he was once perched upon a tombstone, reading 'very audibly' to about twenty old women and others who were unable to get into church one Sunday, 'the whole of the Song of Solomon'! That was in 1728. Lord Cockburn, in *Memorials of His Time* (ch. ii.), when describing the painful deposition of Henry Erskine, Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, tells how 'only one of Erskine's personal and political associates deserted his principles and opposed him. . . . When his name was called and he gave his vote, the clock happened to strike three; on which John Clerk said, with great intensity, "When the cock crew thrice, Peter denied his Master."' That was in 1796. The Bible was still familiar enough. But, for one thing, the range of literature had widened; the Bible was no longer practically the one or the main book for education and culture. Again, literary men fought shy of biblical allusions, which seemed to savour of the sectaries. On a lower level, there was a disposition in some quarters to adopt an attitude of superiority to it, on literary and philosophical grounds. These and other causes led to a reaction against the biblicism which had been and still was, to some extent, a powerful influence in the country. There was, indeed, a danger of the Bible and of literature falling apart. Many in the Church severely discountenanced the art or the appreciation of letters as a pagan declension from Christianity. And this austere extreme was met by an interest in literature which professed to have little or no concern with the Bible, which, indeed, ostentatiously ignored it as far as possible. It was a

real service rendered by the better moderates among the churchmen of the age that they derided the divorce between literature and Christianity. Only, it was the beginning of other things than progress when 'young ministers began . . . to wander from the Calvinism of John Knox, to aim at rhetorical airs and graces, and to regard the chief end of religion as the promotion of virtue.' ¹

The result of all this may be seen in a man like **Beattie**—to take one representative of the thoughtful, religious class. Beattie was a metaphysician who, from his chair of moral philosophy in Aberdeen University, was not afraid to tackle Hume; he was also a poet of large contemporary fame, even beyond Scotland. But in *The Minstrel*, this mild, melodious versifier never mentions the Bible; Plato, Plutarch, and Shakespeare furnish allusions, not the Scriptures. Even in his prose *Dissertations* he is reluctant to employ a Bible illustration, though he does quote Job's description of the war-horse as an instance of the sublime in literature. He protests gravely against 'all these allusions to the doctrines and phraseology of Scripture, that are intended to raise laughter.' Probably he had Swift in his mind, but this flippant use of the Bible was not unknown even then in Scotland, for in 1745 a political parody, *The Chronicle of Charles the Young Man*, made its appearance in pseudo-biblical dress, a precursor of the *Chaldee MS.* which set Edinburgh ablaze in 1817. Beattie and others may have dreaded such profane applications of the Bible so keenly that they determined to avoid scriptural allusions in dealing even with moral topics. At any rate, the fact remains that their writings are thinly sown with Bible phraseology or illustrations. What is becoming frequent is the unconscious use of

¹ Andrew Lang, *History of English Literature*, p. 443.

the Bible in phrases that have now passed down into the ordinary vocabulary, like 'weighed in the balance and found wanting,' 'falling into the hand of the Philistines,' 'the handwriting on the wall,' 'spoiling the Egyptians,' 'gall and wormwood,' etc. Even when the diction is far from biblical, such phrases are beginning to crop up, though not yet in prose like that of the sedate Adam Smith, whose illustrations are classical or contemporary rather than scriptural. It is significant that in the Rev. Dr. **Alexander Carlyle's** convivial, genial *Autobiography*, almost the only allusions to the Bible are in connexion with other people. As, for example, in the case of Sir James Stair. 'One day,' says Dr. Carlyle,

we were talking of the deistical controversy, and of the progress of deism, when he told me that he knew Collins, the author of one of the shrewdest books against revealed religion. He said he was one of the best men he had ever known, and practised every christian virtue without believing in the Gospel ; and added, that though he had swam ashore on a plank—for he was sure he must be in heaven—yet it was not for other people to throw themselves into the sea at a venture.

Sir James had, of course, in mind the story of St. Paul's shipwreck in Acts 27⁴³⁻⁴⁴, which tells how some who could swim managed to reach the shore, while 'the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship,' got to land safely.

As for **Hume**, he rather avoided anything like a biblical allusion or even a biblical phrase ; he was, or wished to be thought, indifferent to the contents of the Bible.¹ Thus, in his essay 'On Public Credit,'

¹ One of the stories about him is that when he quoted Shakespeare's lines about 'the cloud-capt towers' to Dugald Buchanan, the latter quoted gravely Rev. 20¹¹⁻¹³ as a finer example of the sublime in literature, and Hume asked who wrote this passage.

when he has occasion to enumerate instances of the ancient practice of amassing treasures, he observes, as he runs over the classical stories :—

If I remember right, the Scripture also mentions the treasure of Hezekiah and the Jewish princes ; as profane history does that of Philip and Perseus, Kings of Macedon.

The off-hand allusion to the Jewish kings contrasts with the definite interest of the writer in Philip and Perseus. Almost the only direct quotation which he makes occurs in the essay which he wrote, ‘ Of the Middle Station of Life,’ in order

to persuade such of my readers as are placed in the middle station to be satisfied with it, as the most eligible of all.

His praise of the middle classes begins by pointing out that they are not so likely to be immersed in pleasure as the great, or to be over-occupied in earning a livelihood as the poor are :—

Agur’s prayer is sufficiently noted—‘ Two things have I required of thee ; deny me them not before I die : remove far from me vanity and lies ; give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord ? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.’ The middle station is here justly recommended, as affording the fullest security for virtue.

In the same way, when **Lord Kames** published what Dr. Johnson called his ‘ pretty essay ’ on *The Elements of Criticism* (1761), his illustrations were drawn from literature far and wide, but rarely from the Bible. And the biblical passages are not striking. For example, in speaking about comparisons between similar effects produced by objects ‘ that have in

themselves no resemblance or opposition,' he remarks : ' There is as little resemblance between fraternal concord and precious ointment ; and yet observe how successfully they are compared with respect to the impression they make,' quoting Ps. 133. Or, again, he maintains that there is not ' a finer or more correct allegory to be found than the following, in which a vineyard is made to represent God's own people, the Jews.' Whereupon he quotes Ps. 80. Similarly, in his *Sketch of the History of Man*, he now and then illustrates from the Bible, as when he denounces the ' horrid deed ' of Jael—a proof of the defective morality of that ' cloudy and peevish tribe ' the Jews. Usually this is the rather frigid and rhetorical use of the Bible which appears even in a professional writer like **Dr. Blair**, who was not only professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the University of Edinburgh, but a minister of the High church. His lectures on *Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* were published in 1783, when he retired from that chair. In the sixteenth lecture he illustrates the power of personification and apostrophe in literature from the glowing Oriental imagination of a passage like Jer. 47⁶⁻⁷ : ' O thou sword of the Lord ! how long will it be ere thou be quiet ? put thyself up into thy scabbard, rest and be still ! How can it be quiet, seeing that the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore ? there hath he appointed it.' Another illustration, selected ' because it contains a greater assemblage of sublime ideas, of bold and daring figures, than is perhaps anywhere to be met with,' is the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah. In the forty-first lecture, on the poetry of the Hebrews, he describes the Book of Lamentations as ' the most regular and perfect elegiac composition in the scripture, perhaps in the whole world ' ; he points out how

the similes of Greek and Roman writers are elaborate and 'carry too visible marks of study and labour,' as compared with the biblical comparisons which first glance aside and presently return to the track, instancing the words of 2 Sam. 23³⁻⁴ ('He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain'). Further, he singles out Isaiah as

without exception, the most sublime of all poets. This is abundantly visible in our translation; and, what is a material circumstance, none of the books of scripture appear to have been more happily translated than the writings of this prophet. Majesty is his reigning character; a majesty more commanding, and more uniformly supported, than is to be found among the rest of the Old Testament poets.

The only Old Testament book which is held to rival Isaiah is that of Job. 'No writer whatever abounds so much in metaphors. He may be said not to describe, but to render visible, whatever he treats of.' This is the beginning of literary appreciation of the Bible in our literature. It is a note echoed in his contemporary, **Lord Monboddo**. In his elaborate treatise on *The Origin and Progress of Language* (vol. v., pp. 246, 247), for example, he uses the Bible to illustrate a point of style. The passage chosen is from Acts 8¹⁹, and the argument which it is summoned to exemplify is that the natural order of words in a sentence must not always be followed.

The elegant writer will very often (not always, for there must be variety in writing as well as in other arts) invert that order, and put the relative first, saying, for example, as the translators of our Bible say, 'Give me also this power,

that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost'; besides many other instances that might be given of the same kind. Here what is called the natural order would be, 'that he may receive the Holy Ghost, on whomsoever I lay my hands.'

§ 6

From this 'elegant' idea of the Bible we get into the open-air when we turn to the wider prose of the period, where men neither shun nor analyse the Bible. Take **Tobias Smollett's novels**, for example. Our interest here is to mark any biblical phrases and characters which had become so much a part of the common language that they occurred to a writer who was remote from any scriptural tendency. Thus, in *Roderick Random* (ch. vii.) the hero calls his employer, Mr. Crab the surgeon, 'The Nabal my master.' In *Peregrine Pickle* (ch. xl.) we learn that when a French lady had been 'lampooned by some obscure scribbler,' the government had ordered 'no fewer than five-and-twenty abbés to be apprehended and sent to the Bastille, on the maxim of Herod, when he commanded the innocents to be murdered, hoping that the principal object of his cruelty would not escape in the general calamity.' Humphrey Clinker at Edinburgh quoted Scripture eagerly 'in defence of "the fire everlasting prepared for the devil and his angels,"' when a Mr. Moffat had tried to persuade Mrs. Tabitha Bramble that 'eternal' signified 'no more than an indefinite number of years.' Mr. Moffat was before his day. We learn incidentally that Mr. Bramble called himself and liked himself to be called 'Matt,' because he was ashamed of his full name Matthew. 'The truth is,' as he explained to the astonished Lieutenant Obadiah Lismahago, whose Christian name

was equally scriptural, 'I have a foolish pique at the name of Matthew, because it savours of those canting hypocrites who in Cromwell's time christened all their children by names taken from the Scripture.' These examples must suffice. The fact is, we hardly expect biblical allusions from characters such as Smollett drew so vigorously, although Roderick Random does profess to be shocked on board ship by 'the irreligious deportment of my shipmates and the want of the true Presbyterian doctrine.' Apart from his novels, Smollett could speed his irritable criticism with a biblical phrase; once he denounced Walpole as a 'direct descendant of the impenitent thief.' But this was by the way.

Richer evidence is furnished by **James Boswell**. Now and again, in his biography of Johnson, he will quote a scripture phrase, sometimes sententiously, as in the course of his remarks upon *Rasselas* ('This have I learnt from a pretty hard course of experience, and would, from sincere benevolence, impress upon all who honour this book with a perusal, that until a steady conviction is obtained, that the present life is an imperfect state, and only a passage to a better, if we comply with the divine scheme of progressive improvement; and also that it is a part of the mysterious plan of Providence, that intellectual beings must "be made perfect through suffering"; there will be a continual recurrence of disappointment and uneasiness'), but sometimes aptly. For example, the use of Luke 12⁴⁸ and even of 1 Cor. 15¹⁹ in the closing estimate of Johnson's character is to the point:—

The solemn text, 'of him to whom much is given, much will be required,' seems to have been ever present to his mind in a rigorous sense, and to have made him dissatisfied with his labours and acts of goodness, however comparatively great; so that the unavoidable consciousness of his superiority was,

in that respect, a cause of disquiet. He suffered so much from this, and from the gloom which perpetually haunted him and made solitude frightful, that it may be said of him, 'If in this life only he had hope, he was of all men most miserable.'

There is also a citation of Ps. 82⁷ at the beginning of the end :—

It is not my intention to give a very minute detail of the particulars of Johnson's remaining days, of whom it was now evident that the crisis was fast approaching when he must 'die like men, and fall like one of the princes.'

When he speaks for himself and about himself in *The Tour to the Hebrides*, we overhear at intervals an echo of the Bible. Thus, when he woke at Corrichatachin with a severe headache on Sunday, 26th September 1773, after having been drunk on the previous evening, he notes :—

When I rose, I went into Dr. Johnson's room, and taking up Mrs. M'Kinnon's Prayer book, I opened it at the twentieth Sunday after Trinity, in the epistle for which I read, 'And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.' Some would have taken this as a divine interposition.

This allusion to Eph. 5¹⁸ may be bracketed with his little homily on Mal. 4² at Aberdeen, after he and Dr. Johnson had been discussing the Atonement on Sunday afternoon, 22nd August. Boswell makes the following entry in his journal :—

I would illustrate this by saying that Christ's satisfaction resembles a sun placed to shew light to men, so that it depends upon themselves whether they will walk the right way or not, which they could not have done without that sun, 'the sun of righteousness.' There is, however, more in it than merely giving light—'a light to lighten the Gentiles': for we are told, there is 'healing under his wings.'

At the very opening of the journal he quotes from a letter written by Dr. William Robertson, in which this distinguished clergyman and historian declared that while Dr. Johnson sometimes cracked jokes upon the Scots, 'he will find that we can distinguish between the stabs of malevolence, and "the rebukes of the righteous, which are like excellent oil, and break not the head."' This is an allusion to Ps. 141⁵ ('Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head'). It was magnanimous of Dr. Robertson to say such a thing. But Boswell frankly adds, in a footnote, that 'our friend Edmund Burke, who by this time had received some pretty severe strokes from Dr. Johnson, on account of the unhappy difference in their politicks, upon my repeating this passage to him, exclaimed, "oil of vitriol!"' Boswell seems to have quoted Heb. 13² to the parish minister of Laurencekirk, a Mr. Forbes, with whom he was slightly acquainted :—

I sent to inform him that a gentleman desired to see him. He returned for answer, 'that he would not come to a stranger.' I then gave my name, and he came. I remonstrated to him for not coming to a stranger; and, by presenting him to Dr. Johnson, proved to him what a stranger might sometimes be. His Bible inculcates 'be not forgetful to entertain strangers,' and mentions the same motive.

If Boswell had confined himself to remembering the Bible in such connexions, it would have been better for him. But he knew his Bible almost too well. It jars us to hear him, a month after his wife's death, deploring the fact that he had been passed over as a parliamentary candidate: 'Let me never impiously repine. Yet, as "Jesus wept" for the death of Lazarus, I hope my tears at this time

are excused' ! Boswell has not even the justification of Chaucer's Melibaeus, who naïvely laments over his wounded daughter : ' What man shulde of his weeping stint, that hath so gret a cause for to wepe ? Jesu Crist, our Lord, himself wept for the deth of Lazarus his frend.'

When he reissued *The Journal of a Tour to Corsica* in 1768, the preface to this third edition contained the following paragraph :—

To those who have imagined themselves very witty in sneering at me for being a Christian, I would recommend the serious study of Theology, and I hope they will attain to the same comfort that I have, in the belief of a revelation by which a Saviour is proclaimed to the world, and ' life and immortality are clearly brought to light.'

The criticisms to which Boswell refers were directed against his sympathetic and abundant notices of religion in Corsica. Boswell made no secret of his interest in the faith as well as in the freedom of the Corsicans. Thus he tells how he visited the comfortable Franciscan monastery at Corte, where the fathers ' seemed much at their ease, living in peace and plenty. I often joked them with the text¹ which is applied to their order, "*Nihil habentes, et omnia possidentes*—Having nothing, and yet possessing all things.'" He also records a remark of Paoli, the Corsican leader :—

after representing the severe and melancholy state of oppression under which Corsica had so long groaned, he said, ' we are now to our country like the prophet Elishah stretched over the dead child of the Shunamite, eye to eye, nose to nose, mouth to mouth. It begins to recover warmth, and to revive. I hope it shall yet regain full health and vigour.'

¹ 2 Corinthians 6¹⁰.

Boswell often discussed the Roman religion with the natives, and held his own on points of doctrine like transubstantiation and the infallibility of the Pope. Once he heard Paoli tell a story of the Jews, which he afterwards discovered in the eighth chapter of First Maccabees. Whereupon he observes that ‘the first book of the Maccabees, though not received into the Protestant canon, is allowed by all the learned to be an authentick history.’ It is the tale of the Romans’ alliance with the Jews against the Greeks, and Paoli applied it to the relations of Great Britain and Corsica. In this connexion we may also notice how Prov. 27¹⁷ pointed an ejaculation, a wish that his friend Dr. Johnson could meet Paoli: “As steel sharpeneth steel, so doth a man the countenance of his friend,” says the wise monarch. What an idea may we not form of an interview between such a soldier and philosopher as Mr. Johnson, and such a legislator and general as Paoli!’¹

Finally, I take this from his letters. On 26th August 1764 he wrote to Sir Andrew Mitchell, the British Envoy at Berlin, begging him to persuade old Lord Auchinleck to allow his son’s visit to Italy:—

My father seems much against my going to Italy, but gives me leave to go from here [*i.e.* Utrecht] and pass some months in Paris. I own that the words of the Apostle Paul, ‘I must see Rome,’ are strongly *borne in* upon my mind; it would give me infinite pleasure; it would give me *talk for a lifetime*, and I should go home to Auchinleck with serene contentment.

A characteristic application of Acts 19²¹!

¹ This text from Proverbs had been already used by John Major in his *History* (book i., ch. 6), to prove that universities ought not to be too numerous in a country! ‘I look with no favour on this multitude of universities; for just as iron sharpeneth iron, so a large number of students together will sharpen one another’s wits.’

CHAPTER V

BURNS AND THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

- § 1. ROBERT BURNS : 1759-1796.
- § 2. SEMI-RELIGIOUS VERSE OF THE PERIOD.
 - ROBERT POLLOK : 1799-1827.
 - THOMAS AIRD : 1802-1876.
 - JOANNA BAILLIE : 1762-1851.
 - LADY NAIRNE : 1766-1845.
 - WILLIAM MOTHERWELL : 1797-1835.
 - JAMES HOGG : 1772-1835.
- § 3. THOMAS CAMPBELL : 1777-1844.
- § 4. THE EDINBURGH LITERATURE OF THE PERIOD.
 - SIR ALEXANDER BOSWELL : 1775-1822.
 - SUSAN FERRIER : 1782-1854.
 - ' NOCTES AMBROSIANAE ' (1822-1835).
 - THE PERIODICAL LITERATURE.

CHAPTER V

IN sketching the attitude of the eighteenth century towards the Bible we have noticed the effects of the biblical predilection which started in the later sixteenth century and struggled into the seventeenth. The effects were not wholesome. But it is not quite so easy as it seems to estimate this 'biblicism' fairly. We should make some allowance for the fact that in certain cases it was the spontaneous, though rather stiff, expression of what was really felt. Many of the pasquils and ballads prove this. Whatever we think of the feelings, they were real. It is true that sincerity is not sufficient to win the race, in literature any more than in life, but we make a mistake in dismissing all such utterances as if they could not possibly have been used by serious men, as great a mistake as it would be to argue, for example, from old pictures of English cricketers in tall hats that they did not take their game very seriously. Again, even when the biblical patois was modish, was it after all more so than the intolerable fashion of writing about Dan Cupid, Flora, Phoebus, Apollo, Strephon, and the nymphs, which prevailed in some contemporary circles of versifiers? This vapid, amatory, and pastoral poetry was due to anglicization, but it spread like a weed in the small Scots garden of poetry. Honest **Duncan Forbes**, the Lord President of the Court of Session, had bluntly declared, in the early eighteenth century, that he would have no more to do with such 'soft Italian verse' and sentimental conceits.

Nor snaw with crimson will I mix,
 To spread upon my lassie's cheeks ;
 And syne the unmeaning name prefix,
 Miranda, Chloe, Phillis ;
 I 'll fetch nae simile frae Jove,
 My height of ecstasy to prove.

But Forbes was not followed. Such inanities persisted in verse, and they might be held to balance the pietistic unliterary employment of the Bible in ruder quarters. No one party in literature had a monopoly of the unreal, in that age. Still, even after all such allowances are made, there is an affectation which is particularly distasteful and unreal. The Bible is one of the most real books in the world, but no book has been more associated with unreality, and few kinds of unreality are more nauseous than the semi-religious. In the seventeenth century such a forced and affected use of it did spread in our literature, and this ere long provoked a reaction. The result was, as we have seen, on the one hand, a more or less deliberate avoidance of biblical language by men who were trying to write real literature, and, on the other hand, a tendency to use it almost exclusively for expressing the sombre or passive aspects of human life. Gush and grief were apt to monopolize it. It was not till writers of the innate strength of Burns and Scott rose, that these extremes were superseded by a healthy return to the Bible as a part of the national, natural literature.

§ 1

Burns is the most representative of all the writers in the later eighteenth-century Scotland ; he really points forward more than backward. More than any of his contemporaries, he sums up the national genius, and his interest in the Bible forms one aspect of this

representative character. Both in his verse and in his prose he uses phrases from the Bible as a people's book, alluding often in a casual way to its sayings and stories, especially to the Old Testament. His method shows some traces of the eighteenth-century attitude towards the Bible, but in the main it is an advance. So far as his use of the Bible goes, he belongs to the group of early nineteenth-century writers rather than to his predecessors or contemporaries in the eighteenth.

Once or twice, as in *The Gowden Locks of Anna*, *The Dean of Faculty*, *To Terraughty on his Birthday*, and *The Calf*, Burns introduces a biblical allusion or quotation humorously ; but this is not characteristic. What he thought of the Bible in his better moments is expressed in the famous lines of *The Cottar's Saturday Night* upon the Scottish peasant at family worship :—

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
 How Abram was the friend of God on high ;
 Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage
 With Amalek's ungracious progeny ;
 Or how the royal Bard did groaning lie
 Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire ;
 Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry ;
 Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire ;
 Or other holy Seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
 How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed ;
 How He, who bore in Heaven the second name,
 Had not on earth whereon to lay His head ;
 How His first followers and servants sped ;
 The precepts sage they wrote to many a land :
 How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
 Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand ;
 And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by Heaven's
 command.

This reproduces the home-life in which Burns was trained. 'My father,' says his brother Gilbert, 'had been a subscriber to Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*. From this Robert collected a competent knowledge of ancient history.' But he knew the Bible itself, from reading as well as hearing it at home. When he was twenty-four, he told his old schoolmaster, John Murdoch, that he prized Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* 'next to the Bible.' Four years later (12th December 1787), he wrote to Miss Chalmers :—

I have taken tooth and nail to the Bible, and am got through the five books of Moses, and half way in Joshua. It is really a glorious book. I sent for my bookbinder to-day, and ordered him to get me an octavo Bible in sheets, the best paper and print in town, and bind it with all the elegance of his craft.

This, in the midst of his philandering with Clarinda ! If he secured such an edition-de-luxe of the Bible, it did not satisfy his desire for editions of the Scripture, for next July we find him inquiring about 'proposals for a publication entitled, "Banks's New and Complete Christian's Family Bible"'—an illustrated work about which he prudently wishes to know something before he became a subscriber. The Bible evidently arrived, for on 1st October 1788 he acknowledges its receipt. 'The Bible you sent me is truly elegant ; I only wish it had been in two volumes.'

All that can be said of his versions of Pss. 1 and 90¹⁻⁶ is that they are not worse than similar effusions by smaller poets of Scotland. Allusions to the **Psalter** are comparatively rare in Burns. Of the few which are worth chronicling, one is a quotation from Ps. 137⁵ in a grateful letter to Lady Glencairn (1789): 'As to forgetting the family of Glencairn, Heaven is my witness with what sincerity I could use

these old verses, which please me more in their rude simplicity than the most elegant lines I ever saw :—

If thee, Jerusalem, I forget,
Skill part from my right hand.
My tongue to my mouth's roof let cleave,
If I do thee forget,
Jerusalem, and thee above
My chief joy do not set.'

But this prose tribute is not equal to the last verse of his *Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn*. Another allusion to this psalm occurs in a note (1794) to his friend James Johnson :—‘ You should have heard from me long ago ; but over and above some vexatious share in the pecuniary losses of these accursed times, I have all this winter been plagued with low spirits and blue devils, so that *I have almost hung my harp on the willow trees.*’ A passing phrase from the psalter lies in his commonplace book, where he writes thus of his special delight in winter :—

There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion : my mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, ‘ walks on the wings of the wind.’

The allusion is to Ps. 104 ³ :—

Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters,
Who maketh the clouds his chariot,
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind.

Apart from the reproduction of chap. 4 ² in a stanza of *Cessnock Banks* :—

Her teeth are like a flock of sheep,
 With fleeces newly washen clean,
 That slowly mount the rising steep :
 An' she has twa glancin' sparkling e'en—

I do not remember any phrase from the **Song of Solomon** which has passed into his verse. The only prose allusion occurs in a letter to his friend William Nicol (18th June 1787): 'From you, my ever dear sir, I look with confidence for the Apostolic love that shall wait on me "through good report and bad report"—the love which Solomon emphatically says "is strong as death."' Burns likes to speak of Solomon's 'emphasis.' He had told Mr. Gavin Hamilton (7th December 1786) that in Mr. Dalrymple of Orangefield he had met 'what Solomon emphatically calls "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."' But the term 'emphatic' seems to have been commonly applied to biblical language. There is a case of it, for example, in *The Fair Maid of Perth* (ch. xxxv.), where Scott puts 2 Sam. 18³³ into the lips of King Robert II., when he hears that the Duke of Rothsay has been murdered at Falkland:—

'O Rothsay!—O my beloved David!—Would to God I had died for thee, my son—my son!' So spoke, in the emphatic words of Scripture, the helpless and bereft father, tearing his grey beard and hoary hair.

Another case occurs in the fiftieth chapter of *Guy Mannering*, where Dominie Sampson 'at length, in the emphatic language of Scripture, lifted up his voice and wept.' Again, in the seventh chapter of *The Heart of Midlothian*, we are told of Captain Porteous in jail: 'Relieved from this doubtful state of mind, his heart was merry within him, and he thought, in the emphatic words of Scripture on a

similar occasion, that surely the bitterness of death was past '—a very apt use of 1 Sam. 15 ³². Readers of Cowper's *Letters* will remember how he too uses this term 'emphatic.' Burns was following a fashion of the day in adjectives.

The Book of **Job** more often furnished him with suggestions. Twice he mentions the scene in Job 1 ^{6f.}, where Satan appears in the presence of the Almighty; once, in *The Holy Fair* :—

Should Hornie, as in ancient days,
 'Mang sons o' God present him,
 The vera sight o' Moodie's face
 To 's ain het hame had sent him
 Wi' fright that day—

and again, in *The Address to the Deil* :—

D' ye mind that day, when in a bizz [flurry],
 Wi' reekit duds [smoky clothes] an' reestit gizz [sing'd wig],
 Ye did present your smoutie phiz [smutty face]
 'Mang better folk,
 An' sklented [turned] on the man of Uzz
 Your spitefu' joke ?

An' how ye gat him i' your thrall [power],
 An' brak him out o' house an' hal',
 While scabs an' blotches did him gall,
 Wi' bitter claw,
 An' lows'd [loosened] his ill-tongu'd, wicked Scawl [scold],
 Was warst ava ?

In a more serious tone, Job 3 ¹⁷ (' There the weary be at rest ') suggested the last stanza of the dirge, *Man was made to Mourn* :—

O Death ! the poor man's dearest friend,
 The kindest and the best !
 Welcome the hour my agèd limbs
 Are laid with thee at rest !

The great, the wealthy fear thy blow,
 From pomp and pleasure torn ;
 But, oh ! a blest relief to those
 That weary-laden mourn !

In a manly mood he quotes Lam. 3³⁹ by mistake for Job, writing from Ellisland (June 1788) to Mr. Robert Ainslie : ‘ My farm gives me a good many uncouth cares and anxieties, but I hate the language of complaint. Job, or some one of his friends, says well—“ Why should a living man complain ? ” ’ Two years later, in writing to Dr. Moore about a proposed enterprise of literary criticism, he remarks more accurately : ‘ I am fond of the spirit young Elihu shows in the book of Job—“ And I said, I will also declare my opinion.” ’

These specimens may suffice. But another group of books was much more of a favourite with him. It is in the affected correspondence with Clarinda that Burns happens to mention all the three Scriptures attributed to King Solomon :—

I am miserably stupid this morning. Yesterday I dined with a baronet, and sat pretty late over the bottle. And ‘ who hath wo—who hath sorrow ? they that tarry long at the wine ; they that go to seek mixed wine.’ Forgive me, likewise, a quotation from my favourite author. Solomon’s knowledge of the world is very great. He may be looked on as the *Spectator* or *Adventurer* of his day ; and it is, indeed, surprising what a sameness has ever been in human nature. The broken, but strongly characterizing hints, that the royal author gives us of the manners of the court of Jerusalem and country of Israel are, in their great outlines, the same pictures that London and England, Versailles and France, exhibit save three thousand years later. The loves in the ‘ Song of Songs ’ are all in the spirit of Lady M. W. Montagu or Madame Ninon de l’Enclos.

The Song of Solomon we have already noticed. Let us take, almost at random, some other allusions to **Proverbs** and **Ecclesiastes**. Thus, he tells Dr. Blacklock in a letter (15th Nov. 1788): ‘Two things, from my happy experience, I set down as apophthegms in life—A wife’s head is immaterial compared with her heart; and, “Virtue’s (for wisdom, what poet pretends to it?) ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”’ This quotation of Prov. 3¹⁷ is closer to the original than Burns evidently knew; what ‘wisdom’ meant to the Hebrew was not far from ‘virtue.’ Five months before, he had quoted Prov. 14¹⁰ in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop (2nd August) with unmistakable sincerity:—

There are some passages in your last that brought tears in my eyes. ‘The heart knoweth its own sorrows, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith.’ The repository of these ‘sorrows of the heart’ is a kind of *sanctum sanctorum*; and ’tis only a chosen friend, and that, too, at particular sacred times, who dares enter into them.

Then he came back more than once to Prov. 31⁶⁻⁷:—

Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish,
And wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.
Let him drink, and forget his poverty,
And remember his misery no more.

In *The Big-Bellied Bottle* he echoes this maxim, and it is prefixed to *Scotch Drink* in this versified form:—

Gie him strong drink, until he wink,
That ’s sinking in despair;
An’ liquor guid to fire his bluid,
That ’s prest wi’ grief an’ care;
There let him bouse, an’ deep carouse,
Wi’ bumpers flowing o’er,
Till he forgets his loves or debts,
An’ minds his griefs no more.

In his Commonplace Book for October 1785, he asks any young reader ‘in the vestibule of the world’ to attend to his warnings, ‘as I assure him they are the fruit of a poor devil’s dear-bought experience. I have literally, like that great poet and great gallant, and by consequence that great fool, Solomon, “turned my eyes to behold madness and folly.”’ Two years later he quoted Eccles. 2¹² again, in an autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore: ‘I assure you, Sir, I have, like Solomon, whose character, except in the trifling affair of wisdom, I sometimes think I resemble—I have, I say, like him turned my eyes to behold madness and folly, and like him, too, frequently shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship.’ Solomon’s word in Eccles. 7¹⁶ (‘Be not righteous overmuch’) is paraphrased as a prefix to the *Address to the Unco Guid, or the Rigidly Righteous* :—

My son, these maxims make a rule,
And lump them aye thegither ;
The RIGID RIGHTEOUS is a fool,
The RIGID WISE anither :
The cleanest corn that e’er was dight [winnowed]
May hae some pyles o’ caff [grains of chaff] in ;
So ne’er a fellow-creature slight
For random fits o’ daffin [merry-making].

And in writing to Mrs. Dunlop (22nd August 1792), regretting that they were not to meet soon, he again quotes from Ecclesiastes—this time from 5¹³ :—

This world of ours, notwithstanding it has many good things in it, yet it has ever had this curse, that two or three people, who would be the happier the oftener they met together, are, almost without exception, so placed as never to meet but once or twice a year ; which, considering the few years of a man’s life, is a very great ‘evil under the sun,’ which I do not recollect that Solomon has mentioned in his catalogue of the miseries of man.

We have only to glance over his prose and verse, to find how deeply some phrases from the Old Testament had sunk into his mind. They come up at almost every turn. Thus, in June 1788, he makes this entry in his Commonplace Book :—

Farewell now to those giddy follies, those varnished vices, which, though half sanctified by the bewitching levity of wit and humour, are at best but thriftless idling with the precious current of existence ; nay, often poisoning the whole, that, like the plains of Jericho, *the water is naught and the ground barren*, and nothing short of a supernaturally gifted Elisha can ever after heal the evils.

This allusion to 2 Kings 2¹⁹ is more distinct than the reference¹ to Isaiah 2⁴ at the close of *The Brigs of Ayr* :—

Last, white-rob'd Peace, crown'd with a hazel wreath,
To rustic Agriculture did bequeath
The broken, iron instrument of Death.

But he certainly thought of 2 Pet. 2²² when he wrote, in his autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore (2nd August 1787) :—

I entered on this farm with a full resolution, ‘ come, go to, I will be wise.’ I read farming books ; I calculated crops ; I attended markets ; and in short, in spite of the devil and the world and the flesh, I believe I should have been a wise man ;

¹ It is more distinct in *The Young Maid's Wish for Peace*, where Alexander Scott (1757-1839), his contemporary, cries :

‘ Wae's me that vice had proven the source of blood and war,
An' sown among the nations the seeds of feud and jar !
But it was cruel Cain an' his grim posterity
First began the bloody wark in their ain countrie . . .
But I hope the time is near when sweet Peace her olive wand
To lay the fiend of war shall soon stretch o'er every land ;
When swords turn'd into plough shares and pruning hooks shall be,
An' the nations a' live happy in their ain countrie.’

Scott was a herd in Roxburghshire, who had served in the British Army during the American campaign.

but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second from a late harvest, we lost half our crops. This overset all my wisdom, and I returned, 'like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.'

James 5¹⁶ occurred to his mind when, on the morning of New Year's Day, 1789, he wrote to Mrs. Dunlop: 'This, dear Madam, is a morning of wishes, and would to God that I came under the Apostle James' description!—"the prayer of a righteous man availeth much." In that case, madam, you should welcome in a year full of blessings.' And, to conclude, there are two echoes of **the book of Revelation** which are worth quoting. On 27th December 1781 he wrote from Irvine to his father that his principal, and indeed his

only pleasurable employment is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains and uneasinesses and disquietudes of this weary life; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it, and if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

Burns did very much deceive himself. It was thoroughly unhealthy for a young man of twenty-three to indulge in such hypochondria. He was not tired of the world; he was simply depressed because he had been rejected by Miss Ellison Begbie, and because he disliked the flax-trade. However, he was not conscious how unnatural his pious weariness of the world would sound, and he proceeds to add: 'It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 7th chapter of Revelation than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble

enthusiasm with which they inspire me for all that this world has to offer.' The other allusion—to 6²—is slighter. When Mr. George Thomson objected to the term 'Alexander' in the first stanza of *Bonie Lesley* :—

O saw ye bonie Lesley
As she gaed o'er the border ?
She 's gane, like Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther—

Burns refused to make any alteration, and justified his refusal. 'My dear Sir, I must not, cannot, alter *Bonie Lesley*. You are right, the word "Alexander" makes the line a little uncouth; but I think the thought is pretty. Of Alexander, beyond all other heroes, it may be said, in the sublime language of Scripture, that "he went forth conquering and to conquer."'

Upon the whole, Burns alludes generally to Old Testament scenes and phrases; he quotes much more freely from the Old Testament than from the New, a characteristic which almost suggests that the former was specially congenial to him as to Byron.¹ The Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul seem to be rarely used in his literary work. It is exceptional to come across an allusion like this (to Rom. 14²³) :—

As a very orthodox text, I forget where, in Scripture says, 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin,' so say I, whatsoever is not detrimental to society, and is of positive enjoyment, is of God, the giver of all good things, and ought to be received and enjoyed by His creatures with thankful delight.

This is from a letter to Dr. Moore in 1791.

¹ In 1821, Byron wrote from Ravenna to Murray to send a copy of the Bible :—

'Don't forget this, for I am a great reader and admirer of those books, and had read them through and through before I was eight years old,—that is to say, the Old Testament, for the New struck me as a task, but the other as a pleasure. I speak as a boy, from the recollected impression of that period at Aberdeen in 1796.'

Such an extensive and fairly unaffected use of the Bible is not characteristic of the age, it must be confessed; Burns here is by himself. The general use of the Bible in the early nineteenth century is practically the same as in the eighteenth. Indeed, the convenient but artificial method of reckoning by centuries is misleading at this point, for the eighteenth century really lasts till about 1830, and the tendencies already noted in the latter half of the eighteenth century are largely reproduced in the writings and writers now before us, after Burns. It was not till Scott that Burns's attitude towards the Bible was recaptured.

§ 2

The semi-religious verse of the period continues to be marked by conventionality in its employment of biblical material. Take, for example, **Robert Pollok**. His immensely popular work, *The Course of Time*, first published in 1827, contains visions of heaven and hell, of history and the judgment day, which are pervaded by a biblical spirit; but the paraphrases of passages from Proverbs and Revelation are tame, and Pollok did not improve matters when he allowed his imagination to play upon the text of Scripture, as *e.g.* in the description of Satan let loose (Rev. 20³):—

It was not so in heaven. The elders round
The Throne conversed about the state of man;
Conjecturing, for none of certain knew,
That Time was at an end. They gazed intense
Upon the Dial's face, which yonder stands
In gold before the Sun of Righteousness,
Jehovah, and computes times, seasons, years,
And destinies, and slowly numbers o'er
The mighty cycles of eternity.

None of the other writers in this class does much better, not even James Montgomery. The trail of the commonplace is over them all. 'The book he loved best was the Bible, and his style is often scriptural :

His ears he closed, to listen to the strains
That Sion's bards did consecrate of old,
And fix'd his Pindus upon Lebanon.'

What Professor Wilson said of Pollok applies to others of his age ; it explains their failure to produce vital literature, even of a religious type. Their range of culture was unduly limited. Thus, **Thomas Aird** of Bowden in Roxburghshire wrote a quantity of minor verse, often on religious and biblical subjects, like *The Demoniac*, *Belshazzar's Feast*, and *Nebuchadnezzar*, but it is invariably undistinguished. The prose of Dan. 5⁵, for example (' In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace '), is impressive ; but there is no impressiveness about Aird when he tries to describe how

Fiery signs in lettered row
Began to run along the gloom ;
Their spangled lightnings chase and show
A Hand that wrote with rapid plume.

He makes better use of the Bible in his pleasant prose, as when he confesses,

In the days of childhood I had a sort of religious regard for the juniper, from ' the coals of juniper ' mentioned in Scripture¹ along with ' sharp arrows of the mighty,' and also from the circumstance that I had never seen the berries till they were brought me by my grannie, who plucked them on a remote hill-side as she came from a Cameronian sacrament.

¹ Ps. 120⁴

Even **Joanna Baillie's** religious verses and phrases of Scripture are no better than those of her predecessors. In her miscellaneous poetry we hardly find an echo of the Bible, though, when she is praising Lady Noel Byron, she hails her friend's steady faith during old age, thus :—

Ay, 'tis a noble faith, not fenced and bound
By orthodoxy's narrow plot of ground.
The Bible, not the Church, directs her way,
Nor does she through entangled labyrinths stray.

But she does close her comedy of *The Election* by making Mr. Truebridge declare that he will erect in the wood

a little bower, where we will all sometimes retire, whenever we find any bad disposition stirring within us, with that book in our hands which says, 'If thy brother offend thee seven times in one day'—no, no, no! I must not repeat sacred words with an unlicensed tongue.

She also makes Ethwald, the Saxon prince, in the drama called after him, break out indignantly to his brother :—

These cunning priests full loudly blast my fame,
Because that I with diligence and cost
Have had myself instructed how to read
Our sacred Scriptures, which, they would maintain,
No eye profane may dare to violate.
If I am wrong, they have themselves to blame ;
It was their hard extortions first impelled me
To search that precious book, from which they draw
Their right, as they pretend, to lord it thus.
But what think'st thou, my Selred, I read there ?
Of one sent down from heaven in sovereign pomp
To give into the hands of leagued priests
All power to hold th' immortal soul of man
In everlasting thralldom ? O far otherwise.

‘ Mean and miserable verses,’ Lord Jeffrey remarked. Mean, certainly, and artificial, though no worse than the allusion in her description of the Giant’s Causeway as a host

Of marshall’d pillars on fair Ireland’s coast,
Phalanx on phalanx ranged with sidelong bend,
Or broken ranks that to the main descend,
Like Pharaoh’s army on the Red Sea shore,
Which deep and deeper sank, to rise no more.

Joanna Baillie wrote one or two real lyrics, but her dramatic reputation among her contemporaries is one of the mysteries of literature. As for **Lady Nairne**, she was a deeply religious woman ; she appealed once to the Irish :—

Sons of old Ireland, too long kept in blindness,
High Heaven itself sends glad tidings to you ;
Claim your Bibles, you ’ll find them all love and all kindness,
The joy and the peace of fair Erin.

But her lyrics are naturally unbiblical, as unbiblical as *John Gilpin*, and the same may be said of blithe songs by Tannahill and others of the day. **Motherwell**, the west of Scotland poet, provides us with a Covenanting Battle-Song, in which naturally the Old Testament echoes sharply, more sharply than in James Hyslop’s *Cameronian’s Dream*. I quote two stanzas :—

Uplift every voice
In prayer, and in song ;
Remember the battle
Is not to the strong.
Lo, the Ammonites thicken !
And onward they come,
To the vain noise of trumpet,
Of cymbal and drum.

They haste to the slaughter
 With hagbut and spear ;
 They lust for a banquet
 That 's deathful and dear.
 Now, horseman and footman,
 Sweep down the hill-side :
 They come, like fierce Pharaohs,
 To die in their pride !

On the other hand, a touch like this is not felicitous, when in a dainty set of verses called 'Hollo, my Fancy,' describing imaginatively the flight of fancy through the world, he actually begins one stanza,

Hither, brave Fancy ! speed we on,
 Like Judah's bard to Lebanon !

Allan Cunningham's songs yield us as little, though now and then, as in these lines, he notices, like Burns, the place of the Bible in the peasant's life :—

The morn-wind is sweet 'mang the beds o' new flowers,
 The wee birds sing kindlie and hie ;
 Our gudeman leans owre his kale-yard dyke,
 And a blithe auld bodie is he.
 The Beuk maun be ta'en when the carle comes hame,
 Wi' the holie psalmodie,
 And thou maun speak o' me to thy God,
 An' I will speak o' thee.

So the lover tells the girl of his heart, at the farm.

Hogg may have been, as his uncle declared, 'gey ready at his Bible—the readiest ever I saw.' But little water flows from his work to our mill, even though his themes sometimes permitted a biblical allusion. There are scraps, like the lines in *The Mountain Bard* :—

But He who feeds the ravens' young
 Lets naething pass He disna see ;
 He 'll sometime judge o' right an' wrang,
 An' aye provide for you an' me.

But his sacred pieces rank with Aird's or Joanna Baillie's ; if he describes heaven, he is always better when he is drawing on romantic fairy lore than on the Bible.

§ 3

It is **Thomas Campbell** who shows a true interest in the Bible, though Campbell belongs to Scots literature, it must be allowed, only as Drummond of Hawthornden and James Thomson do. His lyrics naturally lie outside our reach, but in a poem like *The Pleasures of Hope* he employs the Bible freely. In the first part, for example, he compares hope to Elijah's mantle :—

Thus, while Elijah's burning wheels prepare
From Carmel's heights to sweep the fields of air,
The prophet's mantle, ere his flight began,
Dropt on the world—a sacred gift to man.

This reference to 2 Kings 2⁸⁻¹¹ is meant to suggest that when war and murder scared peace and mercy from the world, the retreating friends of man left hope to him. Hope is again described scripturally :—

Bright as the pillar rose at Heaven's command,
When Israel march'd along the desert land,
Blazed through the night on lonely wilds afar,
And told the path,—a never-setting star :
So, heavenly Genius, in thy course divine,
Hope is thy star, her light is ever thine.

After bewailing the fate of Kosciusko, the poet asks :—

Oh righteous Heaven ! ere Freedom found a grave,
Why slept the sword, omnipotent to save ?
Where was thine arm, O Vengeance ! where thy rod,
That smote the foes of Zion and of God ;

That crush'd proud Ammon, when his iron car
 Was yok'd in wrath, and thunder'd from afar ?
 Where was the storm that slumber'd till the host
 Of blood-stained Pharaoh left their trembling coast ;
 Then bade the deep in wild commotion flow,
 And heaved an ocean on their march below ?

Then he refers twice to the Garden of Eden. Once when he is praising Linnaeus :—

The Swedish sage admires, in yonder bowers,
 His wingéd insects and his rosy flowers ;
 Calls from their woodland haunts the savage train,
 With sounding horn, and counts them on the plain—
 So once, at Heaven's command, the wanderers came
 To Eden's shade, and heard their various name.

And again, in the second part of the poem, as he pays this handsome tribute to women :—

Till Hymen brought his love-delighted hour,
 There dwelt no joy in Eden's rosy bower. . . .
 The world was sad !—the garden was a wild :
 And man the hermit sighed—till woman smiled.

The second part indeed is almost equally studded with reminiscences of the Bible, like the echo of 2 Sam. 18³³ (' And the king was much moved . . . and wept ; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom ! my son, my son Absalom ! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son ! ') :—

Thus, with forgiving tears, and reconciled,
 The king of Judah mourned his rebel child !
 Musing on days, when yet the guiltless boy
 Smiled on his sire, and fill'd his heart with joy !
 My Absalom ! the voice of nature cried :
 Oh ! that for thee thy father could have died !
 For bloody was the deed, and rashly done,
 That slew my Absalom !—my son !—my son !

But the only other passage worth lifting from Campbell is the allusion to Gen. 4¹⁰ in the stirring *Lines on Poland*, where he anticipates the dawn of independence for that unhappy country :—

Should Fate put far—far off that glorious scene,
And gulfs of havoc interpose between,
Imagine not, ye men of every clime,
Who act, or by your sufferance share the crime—
Your brother Abel's blood shall vainly plead
Against the ' *deep damnation* ' of the deed.

Though Poland, Lazarus-like, has burst the gloom,
She rises not a beggar from the tomb. . . .
For body-killing tyrants cannot kill
The public soul—the hereditary will
That downward as from sire to son it goes,
By shifting bosoms more intensely glows.

His *Fragment of an Oratorio from the Book of Job* is as dull as any similar attempts.

§ 4

Under the pseudonym of ' Simon Gray,' **Sir Alexander Boswell**, James Boswell's son, dedicated his lines on *Edinburgh* to the craftsmen of that city, congratulating them that ' our churches, our chapels, and our meeting-houses are as much crowded as in the days even of John Knox. There is probably as much religion, and much more charity amongst us, for there seems to be more cheerfulness and less rancour.' This was written in 1810. Sir Alexander turned out some merry songs, but he had not, perhaps he had not the opportunity of showing, the knowledge of the Bible that his father possessed. I notice in *Edinburgh*, however, an apparent echo of the well-known passage in Ecclesiasticus (38²⁵), which asks, ' How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough,

and that glorieth in the goad, that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labours, and whose talk is of bullocks ?' The farmer in the sketch tells the townsman :—

I'm but a rustic : Far remov'd from harm
I watch the culture of an ample farm.
Our neighbouring markets, and the price of grain,
The choice of stock, the likelihood of rain ;
Ploughs, harrows, sheep, and oxen, are my care,
And my red-letter day some well-known fair.
To such as me, though wisdom is denied,
We oft must chat around a warm fireside.

The only other allusion in his rollicking verses is in the lines upon '*Curse God and Die*'—which are the usual insipid paraphrase of Job 2⁹.

Sir Alexander may be taken as a representative of the '**Edinburgh**' literature of the period. It was mainly prose, and we mark in it the same paucity of biblical references, and the same lack of vitality even in most of the allusions which turn up. Galt's novels, no doubt, involve allusions to the Bible sometimes ; his subjects lead him in this direction. But he is too natural to drag them in. For example, when he gives his inimitable description of the idle man in a Scots town—' a carle that dauner'd aboot the doors wi' his hands in his pouches, and took them out at meal-times '—he does not think it necessary to add a biblical tag about the sluggard and the ant. He has too much literary sense, for one thing. Indeed, the prose of this period is characterized by quite a healthy non-biblical flavour. In July 1804, an Edinburgh reviewer praised Miss Edgeworth warmly for having had the courage, in her novels, to break away from fashionable jargon and affected types. 'She deserves,' says the critic,

to be compared to those patriotic worthies who first ventured, after the revival of letters, to write in their native language,

and to interest their countrymen in stories of their home manufacture ; who spoke of love without allusion to Ovid, constructed dramas altogether independent of Scripture, and published tales that were not to be found in the Book of Troy.

We know what the reviewer means. And the same independence of Scripture came out in the choice of style as well as in the choice of subjects. I shall illustrate this by a reference to one novelist. In 1795, when Mrs. Grant of Laggan published her poem called *The Highlanders*, she criticized the cultured modernists of Edinburgh, who affected to despise the peasantry with their love of the Bible :—

They in ignorance and darkness grope,
And labour on, and talk of faith and hope ;
Far nobler labours aid us to extol
The task of minds, the labour of the soul.
To trace French novelists with steady gaze,
Thro' sentiment's inexplicable maze . . .
New modes, new governments, new laws, new light,
Shall put all superstition's train to flight ;
And revelation's trembling, dubious ray,
No more its faint, uncertain beams display.

A literary sister was soon to compose Scots novels of a healthier type. Miss **Susan Ferrier** wrote three Edinburgh novels, which are too little read, *Marriage* (1818), *The Inheritance* (1824), and *Destiny* (1831). In a preface to the second she defends 'the introduction of religious sentiment into works of fiction,' and only wishes it had been given to her 'to have raised plants of nobler growth in the wide field of Christian literature.' But in her use of the Bible there is little that is vivid or notable ; as a rule, the allusions to Scripture are confined strictly to moralizing passages. I quote one specimen of these from *Marriage*. The heroine has been forbidden by her

fashionable mother to attend church. Whereupon, she

eager to reconcile impossibilities—viz. the will of an ungodly parent with the holy commands of her Maker—thought now of another argument to calm her conscience. ‘The Scripture,’ said she, ‘says nothing positive about attending public worship; and, as Lady Emily says, I may say my prayers just as well at home.’ But the passages of scripture were too deeply imprinted on her mind to admit of this subterfuge. ‘Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.’ ‘Where two or three are gathered in my name, there will I be in the midst of them,’ etc., etc. But alas! two or three never were gathered together at Beech Park except upon parties of pleasure, games of hazard, or purposes of conviviality.

A reference like this is relevant and artistic; it suits the character, and it is not overdone.

We find a similar attitude in **Noctes Ambrosianae**, the rollicking, good-humoured sketches which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* between 1822 and 1835. Here, as we might expect, the biblical references are few, but Professor Wilson or his coadjutors had the sense to put most of them into the lips of James Hogg, ‘The Shepherd,’ where they were appropriate enough. One is an apt word on Titus 1¹⁵, in criticizing the sophistry of people who quote this verse to excuse what is improper and inexcusable on the stage:—

To the pure a’ things are pure—and on the faith o’ a sayin’ in Scripture, ane o’ the holiest ever inspired, do people justify indecency after indecency till—where, may I ask you, is it proposed there shall be a stop?

Twice the Shepherd is made to exalt the place of the Bible in life:—

Hearken till me, sir. If there be no agonies that wring the

hearts of men and women lowly born, why should they ever read the Bible ? If there be no heavy griefs makin often-times the burden o' life hard to bear, what means that sweet voice callin on them to ' come unto me, for I will give them rest ' ? If love, strong as death, adhere not to yon auld widow's heart, while sairly bowed down, till her dim een canna see the lift, but only the grass aneath her feet, hoo else would she or could she totter every Sabbath to kirk, and wi' her broken, feeble, and quiverin' voice, and withered hands clasped together on her breast, join, a happy and a hopefu' thing, in the holy Psalm ?

And again, in a convivial scene, he breaks out :—

Men ca' the wee sleek mole blind because he has nae een they can see, and leeves darklin in the moul ; but he has een fitted for his condition as weel as the eagle's, and travels along his earth-galleries aneath the soil as surely as the royal bird along his air-paths on the sky. But we that ca' him blind are far blinder oursels ; for we forget we hae speeritual as well as corporeal een—that they see, by a different licht, far ither objects—I hae nae philosophy, my dear Mr. North, but I howp I hae some religion. If I had not, the bones o' my father and mother would not lie at rest in Yarrow kirkyard. I fear there are luke-warm and cauldrie Christians in the Forest wha consider gospel truths like ony ither truths, and the Bible like ony ither gude book—not the book in comparison wi' which a' the ither were worthless—not effectual like it to shed light on the darkness o' the grave.

There is, at least, nothing anaemic or adventitious about these allusions, in the mixed web of the 'Noctes.' Indeed, in **Professor Wilson's** own essays, there are didactic rhapsodies which carry the same kind of biblical references as those which elsewhere he put into the lips of Hogg. We may take this as a sample :—

The art of seeing has flourished for many centuries in Scotland. Men, women, and children all look up to her

lovely blue or wrathful black skies, with a weather wisdom that keeps growing from the cradle to the grave. Say not that 'tis alone

The poor Indian, whose untutor'd mind
Sees God in clouds, and hears Him in the wind !

In Scriptural language, loftier even than that, the same imagery is applied to the sights seen by the true believer. Who is it 'that maketh the clouds His chariot' ? The Scottish peasantry—Highland and Lowland—look much and often on nature thus ; and they live in the heart of the knowledge and of the religion of nature. Therefore do they love Thomson as an inspired bard—only a little lower than the prophets.

Or this, to show how naturally a biblical allusion bubbled up in his rhetoric :—

Well, then, streams ! The unpardonable thing about Edinburgh is, that she wants a river. Two great straddling bridges without one drop of water ! . . . What a glory it would be were a great red river to come suddenly down in flood and sweep away Mound and Bridge to the sea ! Alas, for old Holyrood ! What new life would be poured into the Gude Auld Town, thus freshened at its foundations ! . . . Oh that, 'like Horeb's rock beneath the prophet's hand,' yonder steep would let escape into light the living waters !

Further on, in the same *Blackwood* essay, he goes into rhapsodies over the Fall of Foyers (as it then was), moralizing thus :—

Oh, Nature, Nature ! art thou all in all ? and is there no God ! The astounded spirit shrinks from superstition into atheism—and all creeds are dashed into oblivion by the appalling roar. But a still small voice is heard within my heart—the voice of conscience—and its whispers shall be heard when all the waters of the earth are frozen into nothing, and earth itself shrivelled up like a scroll !

Periodical literature had begun in Edinburgh shortly after the middle of the eighteenth century, but now it acquires a real place in literature, with the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*. The latter, like its rival, shows the tendency to which we have already referred, to purge style of biblicisms. But this makes the occasional introduction of biblical allusions all the more effective, as, for example, when a writer in *Blackwood's* (November 1817) attempts to describe the overpowering impression produced by Dr. Chalmers as a preacher, when in his rapt moods :—

It is in such an altitude of awful ecstasy that we represent to ourselves the Hebrew prophet, when ‘the heavens were opened and he saw visions of God, being among the captives by the river Chebar.’¹ It is to such a tone of solemn denunciation that earth shall listen, when ‘the angel shall come down, having great power, and crying mightily with a strong voice, Babylon is fallen!’²

Upon the whole, the same restraint is observed in the *Edinburgh Review*, though *Blackwood's Magazine* warned the public in 1818 against its rival on the ground that ‘there is no artifice, no petty subterfuge, no insidious treachery, by which it has not endeavoured to weaken the influence which the Bible possesses over the minds of a devout and meditative people.’ At the impartial distance of a century, we are apt to regard this as a journalistic exchange suitable for Mr. Pott and Mr. Slurk. Five years later the other side puts in a word. Lord Jeffrey, reviewing novels by Lockhart and Professor Wilson in the *Edinburgh Review* for October 1823, observes that these novelists are ‘mighty religious . . . but somewhat wanting in manliness, freedom, and liberality; and, while they enlarge, in a sort of pastoral, emphatic,

¹ Ezekiel 1¹.

² Revelation 18¹⁻².

and melodious style, on the virtues of our cottagers, and the apostolical sanctity of our ministers and elders, the delights of pure affection and the comforts of the Bible are lamentably deficient in that bold and free vein of invention, that thorough knowledge of the world, and rectifying spirit of good sense, which,' Jeffrey adds, characterize their great original, Sir Walter Scott.

And so we come upon the great name of 'Scott.' In *Memorials of His Time*, at the end of the third chapter, when he is speaking of the change in Edinburgh's prestige and society after 1815, Lord Cockburn notes that the first factor was the death of the interesting old members :—

Then London drew away several of our best young. There was a gap in the production of fresh excellence. Peace in 1815 opened the long-closed floodgates, and gave to the Continent most of the strangers we used to get. A new race of peace-formed native youths came on the stage, but with little literature, and a comfortless intensity of political zeal ; so that by about the year 1820 the old thing was much worn out, and there was no new thing, of the same piece, to continue or replace it. Much undoubtedly remained to make Edinburgh still, to those who knew how to use it, a city of Goshen, and to set us above all other British cities except one, and in some things above even that one. But the exact old thing was not.

Still, there was **Sir Walter Scott**, and Scott belonged to Edinburgh as much as to Abbotsford. He had written his main poems by 1815, and by 1820 the *Waverley Novels* were in full swing. Scott belongs to the early nineteenth century. But he requires, as he deserves, a chapter to himself.

CHAPTER VI

SIR WALTER SCOTT : 1771-1832

§ 1. SCOTT'S USE OF THE BIBLE.

§ 2. REFERENCES TO VARIOUS BOOKS OF THE BIBLE, IN ORDER, THROUGH-
OUT HIS WORKS :

- 1802-1803 : *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.
1805 : *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.
1808 : *Marmion*, and edition of Dryden.
1810 : *The Lady of the Lake*.
1811 : *The Vision of Don Roderick*.
1813 : *Rokeby*, and *The Bridal of Triermain*.
1814 : *Waverley*, and edition of Swift.
1815 : *The Lord of the Isles*, and *Guy Mannering*.
1816 : *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, *The Antiquary*, *The Black Dwarf*, and *Old Mortality*.
1817 : *Harold the Dauntless*, and *Rob Roy*.
1818 : *The Heart of Midlothian*.
1819 : *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *A Legend of Montrose*, and *Ivanhoe*.
1820 : *The Monastery*, *The Abbot*, and *Lives of the Novelists*.
1821 : *Kenilworth*, and *The Pirate*.
1822 : *Halidon Hill*, and *The Fortunes of Nigel*.
1823 : *Peveril of the Peak*, *Quentin Durward*, and *St. Ronan's Well*.
1824 : *Redgauntlet*.
1825 : *The Betrothed*, and *The Talisman*.
1826 : *Letters of Malachi Malagrowth*, and *Woodstock*.
1827 : *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte*, *Tales of a Grandfather*,
The Two Drovers, *The Highland Widow*, and *The Surgeon's Daughter*.
1828 : *The Fair Maid of Perth*.
1829 : *Anne of Geierstein*.
1830 : *The Doom of Devorgoil*, and *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*.
1831 : *Count Robert of Paris*, and *Castle Dangerous*.

CHAPTER VI

§ 1

Scott was too good a man of letters as well as too good a Christian to use the Bible for meretricious purposes. No writer in Scots literature made such copious use of it, but he never was irreverent. What he felt about the Bible breathes from his own lines :—

Within that awful volume lies
The mystery of mysteries !
Happiest they of human race,
To whom God has granted grace
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch, and force the way ;
And better had they ne'er been born,
Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.

Scott had occasion often to use the Bible in amusing connections, but he is never flippant or superior ; he scorned this as heartily as Dr. Johnson did. Scriptural allusions and quotations with him are not a mere literary artifice. He was attacked, no doubt, for ‘ making scriptural terms ridiculous ’ in *Old Mortality* ; in some quarters he was charged with profanity for having put the misuse of the Bible into the lips of fanatical Covenanters. But Lord Jeffrey fairly answered the charge in the *Edinburgh Review*, defending Scott against his critics. ‘ Undoubtedly,’ said Jeffrey, ‘ all light or jocular use of Scripture phraseology is in some measure indecent and profane : yet we do not know in what other way these hypocritical pretences to

extraordinary sanctity which generally disguise themselves in such a garb can be so effectually exposed. . . . When an author, whose aim was amusement, had to do with a set of people, all of whom dealt in familiar applications of Bible phrases and Old Testament adventures, and who, undoubtedly, very often made absurd and ridiculous applications of them, it would be rather hard, we think, to interdict him entirely from the representation of these absurdities; or to put in force, for him alone, those statutes against profaneness which so many other people have been allowed to transgress, in their hours of gaiety, without censure or punishment.' Scott never transgressed in this way, whether he wrote gravely or gaily. More than once, indeed, he takes occasion to reprobate any careless or perverse misuse of Bible language. When Brian de Bois-Guilbert declares (in *Ivanhoe*, ch. xxiv.) that 'the protectors of Solomon's Temple may claim license by the example of Solomon,' Rebecca's retort to the Templar is, 'If thou readest the Scripture and the lives of the saints, only to justify thine own license and profligacy, thy crime is like that of him who extracts poison from the most healthful and necessary herbs.' Again, in the opening chapter of *Woodstock*, when the Puritan soldier pushes rudely into the church at Woodstock, enters the pulpit, and begins to preach from Ps. 45³⁻⁴ ('Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty: and in thy majesty ride prosperously'), Scott adds that 'upon this theme he commenced one of those wild declamations common at the period, in which men were accustomed to wrest and pervert the language of Scripture, by adapting it to modern events. The language which, in its literal sense, was applied to King David, and typically referred to the coming of the Messiah, was, in the

opinion of the military orator, most properly to be interpreted of Oliver Cromwell.' Scott would have felt the same aversion to any cheap or flippant use of Bible language in a literary work. His own is devoid of such weaknesses.

He quotes from memory freely, and it is not surprising that the references are occasionally loose or inaccurate. Take, for example, the last chapter of *The Pirate*, where he is describing the change which passed over Norna's character :—

Enveloped in the vain occult sciences which she pretended to practise, her study, like that of Chaucer's physician, had been 'but little in the Bible.' Now, the sacred volume was seldom laid aside ; and, to the poor ignorant people who came as formerly to invoke her power over the elements, she only replied—'The winds are in the hollow of His hand.'

But there is no such text in the Bible. One prophet does speak of God measuring 'the waters in the hollow of his hand' (Isa. 40¹²), but the winds are not described in this way. Similarly, Scott was probably thinking of Rev. 13¹⁰ ('He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword') when he wrote the passage in the seventy-fifth chapter of *Waverley*, where Flora MacIvor reproaches herself for not checking her brother's hot passion for rebellion :—

Oh that I could recollect that I had but once said to him, 'He that striketh with the sword shall die by the sword' ; that I had but once said, Remain at home ; reserve yourself, your vassals, your life, for enterprises within the reach of man. But O, Mr. Waverley, I spurred his fiery temper, and half of his ruin at least lies with his sister !

The same is true when he observes, in the fourth chapter of *The Abbot*, that

the sermon, by means of which Henry Warden proposed to restore concord and good order to the Castle of Avenel, bore for text the well-known words, 'He who striketh with the sword shall perish by the sword,' and was a singular mixture of good sense and powerful oratory with pedantry and bad taste.

In both cases the quotation is loose and free.

These inaccuracies, however, are extremely few in number. What some of them really show is that phrases of the Bible floated into his mind so freely that he did not always distinguish them from one another. There is a good instance of this in Edie Ochiltree's meditation among the ruins of the old church of St. Ruth, in the twenty-first chapter of *The Antiquary*. Edie looked at the broken masonry, the ivy, and the moonlight streaming through the remains of the windows, and said to himself :—

I wonder whether this is mair pleasing to Heaven than when it was lighted up wi' lamps, and candles nae doubt, and roughies [links, or torches], and wi' the mirth and frankincense that they speak of in the Holy Scripture, and wi' organs assuredly, and men and women singers, and sackbuts, and dulcimers, and a' instruments o' music—I wonder if that was acceptable, or whether it is of these grand parafe o' ceremonies that holy writ says 'it is an abomination to me.'

Here we have blended reminiscences of texts like Isa. 1¹³ ('Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me'), and Dan. 3⁵ ('The sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music').

§ 2

In looking over some of Scott's characteristic allusions to the Bible, it will be best for us to take them in the order of the Biblical books, as far as possible.

Starting from **Genesis**, we light upon an allusion to 9²⁰⁻²¹ ('And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: and he drank of the wine, and was drunken') in the table-talk of Arnold Biederman, the Swiss chief in *Anne of Geierstein* (ch. iii.). He

resumed the wine-flask, and having filled the cup of his guest, poured the remainder into his own. 'At an age, worthy stranger,' he said, 'when the blood grows colder, and the feelings heavier, a moderate cup of wine brings back light thoughts, and makes the limbs supple. Yet, I almost wish that Noah had never planted the grape, when of late years I have seen with my own eyes my countrymen swill wine like very Germans, till they were like gorged swine, incapable of sense, thought, or motion.'

He refers to Gen. 10⁸⁻⁹ ('And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord') at the beginning of the third canto of *Rokeby*, where, after pointing out that birds and beasts prey on one another but spare their own likeness and lineage, he adds:—

Man, only, mars kind Nature's plan,
And turns the fierce pursuit on man;
Plying war's desultory trade,
Incursion, flight, and ambuscade,
Since Nimrod, Cush's mighty son,
At first the bloody game begun.

Nimrod, as we have already seen, had appealed often to the imagination of Scots writers. With this we may bracket the description of the hunt in the seventh chapter of *Rob Roy*: 'As we rode thither, I observed to Diana, that I did not see my cousin Rashleigh in the field; to which she replied—"O no—he's a mighty hunter, but it's after the fashion of Nimrod,

and his game is man.”’ An extremely effective use of Gen. 12¹⁰⁻²⁰ occurs in the twenty-second chapter of *Kenilworth*, when Anthony Foster is trying to persuade Amy Robsart to assume temporarily the title of Lady Varney, in order to protect the interests of Leicester :

‘ Such deceit is not utterly to be condemned when practised for a righteous end ; and thus even the patriarch Abraham feigned Sarah to be his sister when they went down to Egypt.’
 ‘ Ay, sir,’ answered the Countess ; ‘ but God rebuked that deceit even in the father of his chosen people, by the mouth of the heathen Pharaoh. Out upon you, that will read Scripture only to copy those things, which are held out to us as warnings, not as examples !’

In a biographical sketch of Smollett, he declares that the chief purpose of *The Adventures of an Atom*, Smollett’s political satire, ‘ besides that of giving the author an opportunity to raise his hand, like that of Ishmael, against every man, is to inspire a horror of continental connections.’ This use of the phrase in Gen. 16¹² is less direct, however, than the reference to the wooing of Rachel and the marriage of Leah by Jacob (Gen. 29¹⁶⁻²⁸) in the dialogue between Roland Graeme and Catherine Seyton in the thirty-first chapter of *The Abbot* :—

‘ But when I have toiled successfully to win that Leah, Honour, thou wilt not, my Catherine,’ said the page, ‘ condemn me to a new term of service for that Rachel, Love ?’
 ‘ Of that,’ said Catherine, again extricating her hand from his grasp, ‘ we shall have full time to speak ; but Honour is the elder sister, and must be won the first.’

John Bright once compared the burden of the middle classes in England, under taxation, to the position of Issachar in Gen. 49¹⁴ (‘ Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens’). Scott had

already employed the quotation to describe a royal personage and his responsibilities, in the wonderful sketch of King James VI. which he inserts in the twenty-seventh chapter of *The Fortunes of Nigel* :—

‘ See to me, man ’—(he pointed to the pockets of his great trunk breeches, which were stuffed with papers)—‘ We are like an ass—that we should so speak—stooping betwixt two burdens. Ay, ay, *Asinus fortis accumbens inter terminos*, as the Vulgate hath it—ay, ay, *Vidi terram quod esset optima, et supposui humerum ad portandum, et factus sum tributis serviens*—I saw this land of England, and became an overburdened king thereof.’

The very interlarding of Latin is true to the character of the pedantic James.

As for **Exodus**, there is a loose combination of Exod. 2¹³ and Gen. 37²⁷ at the close of his second letter of *Malachi Malagrowth on the Currency* :—

Our Scottish nobles and gentlemen, I cannot better exhort to resist the proposal at every stage, by the most continued and unremitting opposition . . . than by using once more the words of the patriotic Belhaven :—‘ Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. He is a present help in time of need ; a deliverer, and that right early. Some unforeseen providence will fall out, that may cast the balance. Some Moses will say, Why do you strive together when you are brethren ? Some Judah or other will say, Let not our hand be upon him, he is our brother.’

The whole incident of Exod. 2¹⁰⁻¹² is employed in the thirty-fifth chapter of *The Monastery*, when Halbert Glendinning is supposed to have killed Sir Piercie Shafton. Murray asks Morton, ‘ But what shall we do with this young homicide ? What will our preachers say ? ’ ‘ Tell them of Moses and of Benaiah,’ said Morton ; ‘ it is but the smiting of an Egyptian when all is said out.’ ‘ Let it be so,’

said Murray, laughing; 'but we will bury the tale, as the prophet did the body, in the sand.' In his biography of Dryden (section viii.) Scott elaborates, rather heavily, an allusion to Exod. 4¹⁰⁻¹⁶, where Aaron is appointed to be the spokesman of Moses to the people.

The philosopher may indeed prosecute his experimental researches into the *arcana* of nature, and announce them to the public through the medium of a friendly *rédacteur*, as the legislator of Israel obtained permission to speak to the people by the voice of Aaron; but the poet has no such privilege; nay, his doom is so far capricious, that, though he may be possessed of the primary quality of poetical conception to the highest possible extent, it is but like a lute without its strings, unless he has the subordinate, though equally essential, power of expressing what he feels and conceives, in appropriate and harmonious language.

Much more happy are the two allusions to Exodus in *Woodstock*. In the second chapter Scott recalls the incident of the burning bush (3²⁻³), as he makes Sir Henry Lee bewail the fate of Oxford under the Roundheads:—

Ah, poor Oxford! seat of learning and loyalty! these rude soldiers are unfit inmates for thy learned halls and poetical bowers; but thy pure and brilliant lamp shall defy the foul breath of a thousand churls, were they to blow at it like Boreas. The burning bush shall not be consum'd, even by the heat of this persecution.

In the seventeenth chapter, the Presbyterian clergyman, Mr. Holdenough, alludes to the plagues of Egypt (8^{5^{f.}}), as he expresses his disgust with the religious situation of England:—

Glad shall I be to close these wearied eyes against the sight, and shut these harassed ears against the croaking, as of frogs,

of Antinomians, and Pelagians, and Socinians, and Arminians, and Arians, and Nullifidians, which have come up into our England, like those filthy reptiles into the house of Pharaoh.

The latter reference is included in the background of the lines prefixed to the fifteenth chapter of *Quentin Durward* :—

He was a son of Egypt, as he told me,
And one descended from those dread magicians,
Who waged rash war, when Israel dwelt in Goshen,
With Israel and her Prophet—matching rod
With his the son of Levi's—and encountering
Jehovah's miracles with incantations,
Till upon Egypt came the avenging Angel,
And these proud sages wept for their first-born,
As wept the unletter'd peasant.

Twice in his Journal he uses the phrase of 14²⁵ (‘ They drave them heavily ’). On 30th December 1826, speaking of the usual gathering at Abbotsford, he confesses—‘ We had all the usual appliances of mirth and good cheer. Yet our party, like the chariot-wheels of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, dragged heavily ’ ; and on 11th April 1831, he notes that in composition he has ‘ a want of the usual inspiration, which makes me, like the chariot-wheels of Pharaoh, in the sands of the Red Sea, drive heavily.’ Exodus also supplies some of the scriptural phrases which came with special fitness and frequency to the lips of Jeanie Deans ; *e.g.* the echo of 17⁷ in her pathetic words (*The Heart of Midlothian*, ch. xxvii.) :—

And I minded the Scripture about the sin of Israel at Meribah, when the people murmured, although Moses had brought water from the dry rock that the congregation might drink and live. Sae, I wad not trust mysell with another look at puir Woodend, for the very blue reek that came out of the lum-head pat me in mind of the change of market days with us.

But her simple reply to Butler when he hinted at the difficulty of gaining access to the King and Queen ('I have thought of a' that, Reuben, and it shall not break my spirit. Nae doubt their claiths will be very grand, wi' their crouws on their heads, and their sceptres in their hands, like the great King Ahasuerus when he sate upon his royal throne foranent the gate of his house, as we are told in Scripture. But I have that within me that will keep my heart from failing, and I am amaist sure that I will be strengthened to speak the errand I came for') is a reminiscence of Esther 5¹ ('The king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house'), and the touching comment upon her sister's disgrace ('Ah, Reuben, Reuben, ye ken it is a blot that spreads to kith and kin. Ichabod—as my poor father says—the glory is departed from our house; for the poorest man's house has a glory, where there are true hands, a divine heart, and an honest fame—And the last has gane frae us a' ') echoes 1 Sam. 4²¹ ('And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel'). Finally, there is the text she marked for Butler in his pocket-Bible before leaving :—

With a black-lead pencil, she had marked the sixteenth and twenty-fifth verses of the thirty-seventh Psalm,—‘A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of the wicked.’—‘I have been young and am now old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.’

To return, however, to the order of the books in the Bible—there is a solitary quotation from *Leviticus* in *Ivanhoe*. When the Grand Master of the Templar order is denouncing and bewailing the corruption of his knights, in the thirty-fourth chapter, he aptly

alludes to the fourteenth (not, as Scott's footnote says, to the thirteenth) chapter. It is in 14^{33f.} that the regulations for purging leprosy from a house are given. The indignant Beaumanoir recalls them thus :—

There is a stain in the fabric of the Temple, deep and foul as that left by the streaks of leprosy on the walls of the infected houses of old. I WILL purify the fabric of the Temple ! and the unclean stones in which the plague is, I will remove and cast out of the building.

The allusions to **Deuteronomy** are equally scanty, though one (29²³) does occur in the opening chapter of *The Talisman* :—

The whole land around, as in the days of Moses, was 'brimstone and salt ; it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth thereon' ; the land as well as the lake might be termed dead, as producing nothing having resemblance to vegetation, and even the very air was entirely devoid of its ordinary winged inhabitants, deterred probably by the odour of bitumen and sulphur which the burning sun exhaled from the waters of the lake, in steaming clouds, frequently assuming the appearance of waterspouts. Masses of the slimy and sulphureous substance called naphtha, which floated idly on the sluggish and sullen waves, supplied those rolling clouds with new vapours, and afforded awful testimony to the truth of the Mosaic history.

It would be superfluous to note the numerous allusions to a story like that of Samson and Delilah in the book of **Judges**, and we have only space to chronicle the moving application of **Ruth** 1¹⁶ in the fifteenth chapter of *Guy Mannering*, where Dominie Sampson refuses to abandon the daughter of his late master :—

‘No, Miss Lucy Bertram, while I live I will not separate from you. I’ll be no burden—I have thought how to prevent that. But, as Ruth said unto Naomi, Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to depart from thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou dwellest I will dwell; thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death do part thee and me.’ During this speech, the longest ever Dominie Sampson was known to utter, the affectionate creature’s eyes streamed with tears, and neither Lucy nor MacMorlan could refrain from sympathizing with this unexpected burst of feeling and attachment.

The books of **Samuel**, with their masterpieces of story-telling, were special favourites of Scott; they furnish a wealth of allusions, which is only rivalled by the book of Job. Thus the story of Dagon in 1 Sam. 5¹⁻¹², which we have met so often already, is repeatedly mentioned. For example, the description of the ruined cell of Saint Cuthbert, in the eighth chapter of *The Abbot*, runs thus:—

The few rude utensils of the solitary’s hut were broken down, and lay scattered on the floor, where it seemed as if a fire had been made with some of the fragments to destroy the rest of his property, and to consume, in particular, the rude old image of St. Cuthbert, in its episcopal habit, which lay on the hearth, like Dagon of yore, shattered with the axe and scorched with the flames, but only partially destroyed.

Again, when George Heriot is preparing to show the piece of Italian gold plate to King James VI., in the fifth chapter of *The Fortunes of Nigel*, the monarch hopes that the device has

naething in it tending to papestrie. . . . It is weel kend that I wrestled wi’ Dagon in my youth, and smote him on the groundsill of his own temple; a gude evidence that I should

be in time called, however unworthy, the Defender of the Faith.

A third reference to the same tale occurs in the motto prefixed to the thirteenth chapter of *The Abbot* :—

What ! Dagon up again ? I thought we had hurled him
Down on the threshold never more to rise.
Bring wedge and axe ; and, neighbours, lend your hands,
And rive the idol into winter faggots.

So, when Rob Roy pays the thousand merks to Bailie Nicol Jarvie (‘ It ’s gude French gowd, and ne’er was in Scotchman’s pouch before mine—look at them, man—they are a’ louis d’ors, bright and bonnie as the day they were coined.’ ‘ The waur, the waur—just sae muckle the waur, Robin,’ replied the Bailie . . . ‘ Rebellion is waur than witchcraft, or robbery either ; there ’s gospel warrant for’t ’), the Bailie’s ‘ gospel warrant ’ is to be found in 1 Sam. 15 ²³ (‘ rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft ’) ! Again, towards the end of the first act of *The Doom of Devorgoil* he recalls 16 ²³ (‘ And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp and played with his hand : so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him ’) in these lines :—

We ’re warranted, my child, from ancient story
And blessed writ, to say that song assuages
The gloomy cares that prey upon our reason,
And wake a strife betwixt our better feelings
And the fierce dictates of the headlong passions.

When David was offered armour by Saul, to fight Goliath, he declined it, on the ground that ‘ he had not proved it ’ (17 ³⁹). *Usum non habeo*, his answer runs in the Vulgate. This is echoed in the sixth chapter of *Anne of Geierstein*, where the young

Englishman, on being offered a large two-handed sword, mutters :—

‘*usum non habeo*, I have not proved the weapon.’ ‘Do you repent the bargain you have made?’ said the Swiss; ‘if so, cry craven, and return in safety. Speak plainly, instead of prattling Latin like a clerk or shaven monk.’ ‘No, proud man,’ replied the Englishman, ‘I ask thee no forbearance. I thought but of a combat between a shepherd and a giant, in which God gave the victory to him who had worse odds of weapons than falls to my lot to-day.’

But Scott had already referred to this text in the fifteenth chapter of *A Legend of Montrose*, when speaking of the superiority of the Highlanders in the seventeenth century as fighting men :—

The mountaineers, with the arms and courage of their fathers, possessed also their simple and natural system of tactics, and bore down with the fullest confidence upon an enemy, to whom anything they had been taught of discipline was, like Saul’s armour upon David, a hindrance rather than a help ‘because they had not proved it.’

The words of 22¹⁻² (‘David therefore escaped to the cave Adullam . . . and every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them’) have often furnished political life¹ with one of its favourite phrases. Scott used the text more than once in connexion with the Jacobites. Thus, in the seventh

¹ It has nothing to do with Scots literature, but Mr. G. M. Macaulay’s story about this text, in his biography of John Bright, is too good to be passed by. Bright applied the verse in 1866 to the Liberal dissentients in the House of Commons, and this led to an odd lapse on the part of M. Seignobos, the distinguished French historian, who told the readers of his *Histoire Politique de l’Europe Contemporaine* (1897, p. 60) that this remark in Bright’s speech was an ‘allusion à un passage de la Bible. Adullam avait voulu tuer David’!

chapter of *Redgauntlet* Nanty Ewart the smuggler, who suspects that Alan Fairford is mixed up in the Jacobite conspiracy, and who wishes to show that he knows his Bible as well as his Sallust, repeats ‘in a snuffling and canting tone the scriptural text: “David therefore departed thence, and went to the cave of Adullam. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves together unto him, and he became a captain over them.”’

Another echo of it is heard in the fifty-seventh chapter of *Waverley*, describing the Jacobites’ invasion of England in 1745:—

The few who joined them were such as bigotry of political principle blinded to consequences, or whose broken fortunes induced to hazard all on a risk so desperate. The Baron of Bradwardine, being asked what he thought of these recruits, took a long pinch of snuff, and answered drily, ‘that he could not but have an excellent opinion of them, since they resembled precisely the followers who attached themselves to the good King David at the cave of Adullam; *videlicet*, every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, which the Vulgate renders bitter of soul.’

It is not the only time when the worthy Baron has a text on his tongue. Later on, as he is in hiding near Tullyveolan, he tells *Waverley*:—

We poor Jacobites are now like the conies in Holy Scripture (which the great traveller Pococke calleth Jerboa), a feeble people, that make our abode in the rocks.

This application of Prov. 30²⁶ is illustrated by the fact that his only amusement in the cave of his retreat ‘was the perusal of his old friend Titus Livius, varied by occasionally scratching Latin proverbs and

texts of Scripture with his knife on the roof and walls of his fortalice, which were of sandstone' (*Waverley*, ch. lxxv.). 'And,' he adds indignantly, 'they have sent soldiers here to abide on the estate, and hunt me like a partridge upon the mountains, as Scripture¹ says of good King David, or like our valiant Sir William Wallace—not that I bring myself into comparison with either.'

One or two allusions to the second book of Samuel may be added. The incident of 12^{20f.} is echoed in the second chapter of *Peveril of the Peak*. Major Bridgenorth, the rigid Puritan, uses it to justify himself in accepting Lady Peveril's invitation to dinner :—

It becomes me to be grateful to Heaven for the good he has sent me by the means of your ladyship. David, the man after God's own heart, did wash and eat bread when his beloved child was removed—mine is restored to me, and shall I not show gratitude under a blessing, when he showed resignation under an affliction ?

Scott also quotes it in the third chapter of *The Highland Widow*, when Elspat is dreaming of her son's future in war :—

With such wild notions working in her brain, the spirit of Elspat rose to its usual pitch, or rather to one which seemed higher. In the emphatic language of Scripture, which in that idiom does not greatly differ from her own, she arose, she washed and changed her apparel, and ate bread, and was refreshed.

(This, by the way, is another instance of Scott's practice of using the adjective 'emphatic' to describe Scripture ; see above, p. 210.) Scott twice alludes to the story of the widow from Tekoah, who was

¹ 1 Sam. 26²⁰,

employed by Joab to work upon David's feelings (14^{2f.}). He relieves the tragedy of the murder trial in the twenty-third chapter of *The Heart of Midlothian* by describing how one of the judges proved ignorant of a biblical allusion. When Jeanie Deans was taking the customary oath that her evidence had not been suggested to her by any one interested in the case, her father broke out :—

‘Na, na, my bairn is no like the widow of Tekoah—nae man has putten words into her mouth.’ One of the Judges, better acquainted, perhaps, with the Books of Adjournal than with the Book of Samuel, was disposed to make some instant enquiry after this widow of Tekoah, who, as he construed the matter, had been tampering with the evidence. But the presiding Judge, better versed in Scripture history, whispered to his learned brother the necessary explanation.

Three years later Scott used the same incident in *Kenilworth* (ch. xxiii.), assuming that the daughter of Tony Foster would be more familiar with it than the Scottish judge. When Amy Robsart is escaping from Cumnor, Wayland Smith tells her maid to remember the excuses she is to make for her mistress's non-appearance. ‘There will be no pursuit, if you, pretty Mistress Janet, forget not thy lesson.’ ‘No more than the wise widow of Tekoah forgot the words which Joab put into her mouth,’ answered Janet. The grim touch of desperation in 17²³ (‘And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died’) is employed playfully by Scott in his Journal for 13th May 1827. He was arranging his papers before leaving Abbotsford. ‘Assorting papers and so forth. I never could help admiring the concatenation between Ahithophel's

setting his house in order and hanging himself. The one seems to me to follow the other as a matter of course.' Finally, let us recollect the allusion, in the sixth chapter of *The Talisman*, to the famous episode of 23¹⁵⁻¹⁶ :—

The Crusaders had to purchase the means of sustaining life, by life itself ; and water, like that of the well of Bethlehem, longed for by King David, one of its ancient monarchs, was then, as before, only obtained by the expenditure of blood.

The books of **Kings** also furnish Scott with a wealth of illustrations and aphorisms, from which the following specimens may be selected.

When George Heriot, in the fifth chapter of *The Fortunes of Nigel*, exhibits the gold salver to King James VI., the monarch approves of the design :—

the subject, as you say, Master George, vera adequate and beseeming—being, as I see, the judgment of Solomon—a prince in whose paths it weel becomes a' leeving monarchs to walk with emulation.' 'But whose footsteps,' said Maxwell, 'only one of them—if a subject may say so much—hath ever overtaken.'

To this echo of 1 Kings 3¹⁶⁻²⁸, which we have already heard (see above, p. 122), we may add that of 12¹³⁻¹⁴ ('And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him ; and spake to them after the counsel of the young men') in Bailie Nicol Jarvie's advice to young Osbaldistone, in the twenty-sixth chapter of *Rob Roy* :—

Aye take the counsel of those who are aulder and wiser than yoursell, and binna like the godless Rehoboam, who took the advice o' a wheen beardless callants, neglecting the auld counsellors who had sate at the feet o' his father Solomon,

and, as it was weel put by Mr. Meiklejohn, in his lecture on the chapter, were doubtless partakers of his sapience.

Scott draws upon the story of 17¹⁷⁻²² in the thirty-second chapter of *The Monastery*; after Halbert Glendinning is found to be alive, the Sub-Prior tells Edward :—

‘let the sorrowing mother know that her son is restored to her from the grave, like the child of the widow of Zarephath; at the intercession,’ he added, looking at Henry Warden, ‘of the blessed Saint whom I invoked in his behalf.’ ‘Deceived thyself,’ said Warden instantly, ‘thou art a deceiver of others. It was no dead man, no creature of clay, whom the blessed Tishbite invoked, when, stung by the reproach of the Shunamite woman, he prayed that her son’s soul might come into him again.’ ‘It was by his intercession, however,’ repeated the Sub-Prior; ‘for what says the Vulgate? Thus is it written: *Et exaudivit Dominus vocem Helie; et reversa est anima pueri intra eum, et revixit.*’

There is an allusion to 18¹⁷ (‘And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?’) in the conversation between Sir Duncan Campbell and Montrose (*A Legend of Montrose*, ch. viii. : ‘I might have guessed that no evil influence inferior to your lordship’s, distinguished as one who troubles Israel, could have collected together this rash assembly of misguided persons.’ ‘I will answer unto you,’ said Montrose, ‘in the manner of your own Puritans. I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father’s house’); and 18^{44f.} (‘Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand . . . and it came to pass that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain’) gives point to *The Vision of Don Roderick* (II. xxxvi.), where Scott compares the

mustering of the French army to invade Spain with the cloud seen by Elijah :—

As that sea-cloud, in size like human hand,
 When first from Carmel by the Tishbite seen,
 Came slowly overshadowing Israel's land,
 A while, perchance, bedecked with colours sheen,
 While yet the sunbeams on its skirts had been,
 Limning with purple and with gold its shroud,
 Till darker folds obscured the blue serene,
 And blotted heaven with one broad sable cloud,
 Then sheeted rain burst down, and whirlwinds howl'd aloud.

Later on, in the same poem (III. ii.), he writes :—

While downward on the land his legions press,
 Before them it was rich with vine and flock,
 And smiled like Eden in her summer dress ;
 Behind their wasteful march, a reeking wilderness.

In a note on this passage he writes :—

I have ventured to apply to the movements of the French army that sublime passage in **Joel**, which seems applicable to them in more respects than that I have adopted in the text. One would think their ravages, their military appointments, the terror which they spread among invaded nations, their military discipline, their acts of political intrigue and deceit, were distinctly pointed out in the following verses of Scripture,

i.e. in Joel 2²⁻¹⁰, including the third verse ('A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth : the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness, yea, and nothing shall escape them'). Scott adds :—

In verse 20th also, which announces the retreat of the northern army, described in such dreadful colours, into a 'land barren and desolate,' and the dishonour with which God afflicted them for having 'magnified themselves to do great things,'

there are particulars not inapplicable to the retreat of Massena ; —Divine Providence having, in all ages, attached disgrace as the natural punishment of cruelty and presumption.

Another biblical phrase from Joel 1⁴ (‘ That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten ’) had passed into a proverb, so much so that it could be misquoted from memory—as by the London apprentice in *The Fortunes of Nigel* (ch. i.) who, on seeing Richie Moniplies, exclaims, ‘ A raw Scotsman, just come up, I suppose, to help the rest of his countrymen to gnaw old England’s bones ; a palmerworm, I reckon, to devour what the locust has spared.’ This has taken us away from the books of Kings, however. We have still to note the happy reminiscence of 1 Kings 21¹⁻¹⁶ in the scene from *The Fortunes of Nigel* (ch. ix.), where King James VI. is hesitating to restore Lord Glenvarloch’s estate, on the ground that his son and the Duke of Buckingham coveted it as the best hunting-land in Scotland. Lord Huntinglen, who is pleading his countryman’s cause,

listened with great composure, and answered, ‘ An it please your Majesty, there was an answer yielded by Naboth when Ahab coveted his vineyard—The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.’ ‘ Ey, my lord—ey, my lord ! ’ ejaculated James, while all the colour mounted both to his cheek and nose ; ‘ I hope ye mean not to teach me divinity ? Ye need not fear, my lord, that I will shun to do justice to every man. . . . ’ So saying, he hastily wrote an order on the Scottish Exchequer for the sum in question, and then added, ‘ . . . and now you see, my Lord of Huntinglen, that I am neither an untrue man, to deny you the boon whilk I became bound for, nor an Ahab, to covet Naboth’s vineyard.’

The outstanding passage in Second Kings which appealed to Scott was the story of **Naaman and**

Elisha in the fifth chapter. Three times over we find it clinging to his memory, in the novels. Thus, Captain Dugald Dalgetty explains, in the second chapter of *A Legend of Montrose*, how he was pricked in conscience by a religious scruple when he served under the Spaniards. He found that he was expected in garrison to go to Mass with the regiment, which, 'as a true Scottish man, and educated at the Mareschal College of Aberdeen,' he had been trained to regard as 'an act of blinded papistry and utter idolatry.' Father Fatsides, the Roman Catholic priest, whom he consulted during a drinking-bout, told him it did not matter whether he went to Mass or not, since a heretic like himself was doomed at anyrate! A Dutch Reformed pastor

thought I might lawfully go to Mass, in respect that the prophet permitted Naaman, a mighty man of valour, and an honourable cavalier of Syria, to follow his master into the house of Rimmon, a false god, or idol, to whom he had vowed service, and to bow down when the king was leaning upon his hand. But neither was this answer satisfactory to me, both because there was an unco difference between an anointed King of Syria and our Spanish Colonel, whom I could have blown away like the peeling of an ingan, and chiefly because I could not find the thing was required of me by any of the articles of war.

This was the text which helped Jeanie Deans to overcome her Cameronian scruples about entering a church in England to worship (*The Heart of Midlothian*, ch. xxxi.) :—

The prophet, she thought, permitted Naaman the Syrian to bow even in the house of Rimmon. Surely if I, in this streight, worship the God of my fathers in mine own language, although the manner thereof be strange to me, the Lord will pardon me in this thing.

Jeanie has Naaman again in her mind when, in the thirty-fourth chapter, she defends her scruple about attending family worship in the rector's house. The rector sensibly points out that the streams of divine grace are not confined to Presbyterian Scotland. 'Ah, but,' said Jeanie, 'though the waters may be alike, yet, with your worship's leave, the blessing upon them may not be equal. It would have been in vain for Naaman the Syrian leper to have bathed in Pharpar and Abana, rivers of Damascus, when it was only the waters of Jordan that were sanctified for the cure.' Finally, we come upon another, more playful, use of the same phrase. Writing as Laurence Templeton, a Cumberland squire, to the Rev. Dr. Dryasdust, in the dedicatory epistle to *Ivanhoe*, he introduces two biblical allusions which might be supposed to appeal to his correspondent. One backs the plea that English traditions may be as interesting and romantic as Scottish :—

The name of Robin Hood, if duly conjured with, should raise a spirit as soon as that of Rob Roy; and the patriots of England deserve no less their renown in our modern circles than the Bruces and Wallaces of Caledonia. If the scenery of the south be less romantic and sublime than that of the northern mountains, it must be allowed to possess in the same proportion superior softness and beauty; and upon the whole, we feel ourselves entitled to exclaim with the patriotic Syrian—'are not Pharpar and Abana, rivers of Damascus, better than all the rivers of Israel?'

This reminiscence of 2 Kings 5¹² is immediately followed by an application of Ezek. 37¹⁻², in order to illustrate the difference between Scotland and England as subjects for romance; the Scottish wild life is comparatively recent, and still lives in the memory of the present generation, whereas 'the English author, on

the other hand, can only have the liberty of selecting his subject amidst the dust of antiquity, where nothing was to be found but dry, sapless, mouldering and disjointed bones, such as those which filled the valley of Jehoshaphat.' This, by the way, is a slight inexactitude; Ezekiel's valley in the vision was not the valley of Jehoshaphat to which the prophet Joel (3²⁻¹²) alludes. But, before enumerating Scott's further references to the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, we must look into one of his favourite books, the book of Job.

According to Lockhart, Sir Walter once criticized the Introduction to Goethe's *Faust*, saying 'that blood would out—that, consummate artist as he was, Goethe was a German, and that nobody but a German would ever have provoked a comparison with the book of Job, "the grandest poem that ever was written."' His Journal is studded with phrases from the Scripture. When he was attacked by a severe complaint at Abbotsford on Christmas Day, 1825, he wrote manfully: 'I cannot expect that this first will be the last visit of this cruel complaint; but shall we receive good at the hand of God, and not receive evil?' This quotation of Job 2¹⁰ is followed up next month (21st Jan. 1826) by an application of 1²¹: 'Things are so much worse with Constable than I apprehended, that I shall neither save Abbotsford nor anything else. Naked we entered the world, and naked we leave it. Blessed be the name of the Lord!' The novels tell the same tale of familiarity and appreciation. When Helen Macgregor asks Bailie Nicol Jarvie, in the thirty-second chapter of *Rob Roy*, if he is not afraid to die, 'Kinswoman,' said the Bailie,

nae man willingly wad cut short his thread of life before the end of his pirn was fairly measured off on the yarn-winles.

And I hae muckle to do, an I be spared, in this warld—public and private business. . . . Sae that, laying a' this thegither—skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life.

Beside this allusion to 2⁴ we may set the sixteenth chapter of *Redgauntlet*, where Scott makes Nanty Ewart recall a phrase from Job 29¹¹ ('When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me') in the description of his father:—

There was my father (God bless the old man!), a true chip of the old Presbyterian block, walked his parish like a captain on the quarter-deck, and was always ready to do good to rich and poor—off went the laird's hat to the minister, as fast as the poor man's bonnet. When the eye saw him—Pshaw! what have I to do with that now?

Again, 19^{9,10} furnishes the pathos in the twentieth chapter of *The Heart of Midlothian*, the scene between the sisters in the Tolbooth:—

'Na, na, Jeanie, a' was ower when ance I forgot what I promised when I faulded down the leaf of my Bible. See,' she said, producing the sacred volume, 'the book opens aye at the place o' itsell. O see, Jeanie, what a fearfu' scripture!' Jeanie took her sister's Bible, and found that the fatal mark was made at the impressive text in the book of Job: He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone. And mine hope hath he removed like a tree. 'Isna that ower true a doctrine?' said the prisoner—'Isna my crown, my honour removed? And what am I but a poor wasted, wan-thriven tree, dug up by the roots, and flung out to waste in the highway, that man and beast may tread it under foot? I thought o' the bonny bit thorn that our father rooted out o' the yard last May, when it had a' the flush o' blossoms on it; and then it lay in the court till the beasts had trod them a' to pieces wi'

their feet. I little thought, when I was wae for the bit silly green bush and its flowers, that I was to gang the same gate mysell.'

Finally, we recollect how it was 38¹¹ ('And [I] said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed') which was in Scott's mind when he made Morton reflect, in *Old Mortality*: 'Our resolutions, our passions, are like the waves of the sea, and, without the aid of Him who formed the human breast, we cannot say to its tides, "Thus far shall ye come, and no further."' '

The independent use made by Scott of the **Psalms** is less striking than we might have expected. But one or two instances deserve to be quoted. There is the echo of Ps. 8⁵ in the last words of *The Pirate*, upon the end of Minna Troil's life:—

Thus passed her life, enjoying from all who approached her an affection enhanced by reverence; insomuch, that when her friends sorrowed for her death, which arrived at a late period of her existence, they were comforted by the fond reflection that the humanity which she then laid down was the only circumstance which had placed her, in the words of Scripture, 'a little lower than the angels.'

Again, Ps. 50¹⁵ ('Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee') and Hebrews 13⁵ ('I will never leave thee nor forsake thee') colour the thirtieth chapter of *The Monastery*, where Mary Avenel finds in her mother's Bible a paper on which she had transcribed some of those texts which are promises:—

In Mary Avenel's state of mind, these attracted her above all the other lessons, which, coming from a hand so dear, had reached her at a time so critical, and in a manner so touching. She read the affecting promise, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' and the consoling exhortation, 'Call upon me

in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee.' She read them, and her heart acquiesced in the conclusion, Surely this is the word of God ! There are those to whom a sense of religion has come in storm and tempest ; there are those whom it has summoned amid scenes of revelry and idle vanity ; there are those, too, who have heard its ' still, small voice ' amid rural leisure and placid contentment. But perhaps the knowledge which causeth not to err, is most frequently impressed upon the mind during seasons of affliction ; and tears are the softened showers which cause the seed of Heaven to spring and take root in the human breast.

There is a loose quotation of Ps. 73 ⁴ (' There are no bands in their death ') in the description of Varney's death by self-poisoning in the last chapter of *Kenilworth* :—

He was found next morning dead in his cell ; nor did he appear to have suffered much agony, his countenance presenting, even in death, the habitual expression of sneering sarcasm, which was predominant while he lived. ' The wicked man,' saith Scripture, ' hath no bands in his death.'

We also overhear the language of Ps. 84 ⁶ (' Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well ') in Mr. Oldbuck's words to young Lovel in the sixteenth chapter of *The Antiquary* :—

Look round you—how few do you see grow old in the affections of those with whom their early friendships were formed ! our sources of common pleasure gradually dry up as we journey on through the vale of Baca, and we hew out to ourselves other reservoirs, from which the first companions of our pilgrimage are excluded.

More direct is the use of Ps. 106 ⁴⁶ (' He made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captives ') in the thirty-fourth chapter of *Woodstock*, where Cromwell repudiates the suggestion that his prisoners

should be tortured : ‘ We may slay malignants as we crush noxious animals, but to torture them is a deadly sin ; for it is written, “ He made them to be pitied of those who carried them captive.” ’

In *The Covenanter’s Fate* Scott makes the fierce Covenanter invoke the curse of God upon Claverhouse :—

O, in fell Clavers’ hour of pride,
Even in his mightiest day,
As bold he strides through conquest’s tide,
O stretch him on the clay !

His widow and his little ones,
O from their tower of trust
Remove its strong foundation stones,
And crush them in the dust !

Which recalls Ps. 109⁹ (‘ Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow ’). He had already touched the early history of Israel in Rebecca’s hymn (*Ivanhoe*, ch. xxxix.), which rivals Byron’s Hebrew Melodies. The verses are familiar, but the last may be quoted, as it is sometimes omitted in hymn books :—

Our harps we left by Babel’s streams,
The tyrant’s jest, the Gentile’s scorn ;
No censer round our altar beams,
And mute our timbrel, trump, and horn.
But Thou hast said, the blood of goat,
The flesh of rams, I will not prize ;
A contrite heart, and humble thought,
Are mine accepted sacrifice.

Which echoes the 137th psalm, as well as the fiftieth and the fifty-first. Finally, Ps. 146³ is echoed in the thirty-second chapter of *Kenilworth* :—

‘ She is indeed my good and gracious mistress,’ said Leicester after another pause ; ‘ but it is written, Put not thy trust in

Princes.' 'A good sentence and true,' said Varney, 'unless you can unite their interest with yours so absolutely, that they must needs sit on your wrist like hooded hawks.'

The book of **Proverbs**, which was carefully taught and learned in Scotland, supplied him with far more quotations and allusions than the Psalter. To pick out only a few specimens, we may recall the use of 11¹⁴ in the fifteenth chapter of *Kenilworth*, when Sir Walter Raleigh excuses himself to Queen Elizabeth for having refused her physician access to the Earl of Sussex :—

'Thou wert overbold to deny the access of my Doctor Masters. Know'st thou not the Holy Writ saith, In the multitude of counsel there is safety.' 'Ay, madam,' said Walter, 'but I have heard learned men say, that the safety spoken of is for the physicians, not for the patient.'

In the ninth chapter of *Peveril of the Peak*, Master Solsgrace the Puritan divine quotes 12¹⁰ by way of comment on Sir Jasper Cranbourne's attempt to persuade Major Bridgenorth to fight a duel with Sir Geoffrey Peveril, the knight's plea being that Sir Geoffrey's 'exquisite skill of fence may enable him, as his good nature will incline him, to disarm you with some flesh wound, little to the damage of your person, and greatly to the benefit of your reputation.' 'The tender mercies of the wicked,' said Master Solsgrace, emphatically, by way of commenting on this speech, which Sir Jasper had uttered very pathetically, 'are cruel.' 13¹² is twice quoted, first of all in *The Heart of Midlothian*. 'The day after her interview with the Duke was spent in that "hope delayed which maketh the heart sick." Minutes glided after minutes—hours fled after hours . . . yet the hope which she disowned, she could not altogether

relinquish.' The other case is in the fourth chapter of *The Highland Widow* :—

She reasoned in vain—her son's expected summons did not call her from the lowly couch, where she lay dreaming of his approach. Hamish came not. 'Hope deferred,' saith the royal sage, 'maketh the heart sick'; and strong as was Elspat's constitution, she began to experience that it was unequal to the toils to which her anxious and immoderate affection subjected her.'

The first part of 18²¹ is introduced into the description of the Templar establishment at the Preceptory of Templestowe, in the thirty-fifth chapter of *Ivanhoe* :—

A knight was now and then seen to cross the court in his long white cloak, his head depressed on his breast, and his arms folded. They passed each other, if they chanced to meet, with a slow, solemn, and mute greeting; for such was the rule of their Order, quoting thereupon the holy texts, 'In many words thou shalt not avoid sin,' and 'Life and death are in the power of the tongue.'

The pungent proverb of 27²² ('Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him') recurs in his biography of Dryden (section vii.), where, commenting on the drubbing given by Dryden to Sir Richard Mackmore, 'a drubbing which would have annihilated any author of ordinary modesty,' he adds :—

After having been 'brayed in a mortar,' as Solomon expresses it, by every wit of his time, Sir Richard not only survived to commit new offences against ink and paper, but had his faction, his admirers, and his panegyrists, among that numerous and sober class of readers, who think that genius consists in good intentions.

An earlier saying from the same chapter 27¹⁰ : ('Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not') is quoted in the well-known lines upon Sir William Forbes which he prefixed to the fourth canto of *Marmion* :—

If mortal charity dare claim
The Almighty's attributed name,
Inscribe above his mouldering clay,
'The widow's shield, the orphan's stay.'
Nor, though it wake thy sorrow, deem
My verse intrudes on this sad theme ;
For sacred was the pen that wrote,
'Thy father's friend forget thou not.'

Finally, two quotations from the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs deserve mention. In the twenty-eighth chapter of *Peveril of the Peak*, the description of the Duke of Buckingham's levée, with the ante-chamber full of gamesters, speculators, poets, architects, and musicians, is closed thus :—'Such, and many such like, were the morning attendants of the Duke of Buckingham—all genuine descendants of the daughter of the horse-leech, whose cry is "Give, give."' The allusion is, of course, to Prov. 30¹⁵ ('The horse-leech hath two daughters, crying, Give, give'). But an earlier verse of the same chapter is cited with real effect in the biographical sketch of Robert Bage, a popular but long-forgotten novelist of the eighteenth century. Scott mildly suggests that Bage's radical and anti-social views had led him to present an unfair view of the aristocracy and the lower classes alike :—

They who look upon the world with an impartial eye, will scarcely be of opinion that Mr. Bage has seized the true features which distinguish either the upper or the lower ranks. The highest and lowest rank in society are each liable indeed to temptations, peculiarly their own, and their relative situation

seems to illustrate the wisdom of the prayer, 'give me neither poverty nor riches.'

This is the well-known saying of Agur, which we have already met (see above, p. 193).

The language of **Ecclesiastes** 3⁵ ('There is a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together') is turned to account in the ninth chapter-letter of *Redgauntlet*, where Mr. Alexander Fairford's letter to Darsie Latimer concludes with a hope that he will soon come back to his legal work in Edinburgh. 'For there is a time, as the wise man sayeth, for gathering, and a time for casting away; it is always the part of a man of sense to take the gathering time first.' There is also a reminiscence of 12⁶ ('Or ever the pitcher be broken at the fountain') in the pathetic farewell note at the close of *Castle Dangerous*, written when Scott was leaving for Italy in 1831:—

The gentle reader is acquainted that these are, in all probability, the last tales which it will be the lot of the Author to submit to the public. . . . Had he continued to prosecute his usual literary labours, it seems indeed probable that at the term of years he has already attained, the bowl, to use the pathetic language of Scripture, would have been broken at the fountain.

Two other texts from the same book may be singled out. The deep sentence of 9¹¹—'I returned, and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all'—Scott uses in his biographical sketch of Richardson. He has been speaking of the improbabilities which critics have marked in *Clarissa*. 'But,' he adds,

it is unfair to tax an author too severely upon improbabilities, without conceding which his story could have no existence ; and we have the less title to do so, because in the history of real life, that which is actually true bears often very little resemblance to that which is probable. If every assault were skilfully parried, and every man played with ability, life would become like a trial of skill with foils, or like a game at chess, and strength and address would no longer be defeated by time and chance, which, in the words of Solomon, happen unto all men.

Once more, it is in Ecclesiastes (10²⁰), not in the book of Ecclesiasticus, that the prudential maxim occurs (‘Curse not the rich in thy bedchamber : for a bird of the air shall carry the voice’) which he uses twice. First, when Ramsay, the Scottish watchmaker, speaks of the Duke of Buckingham’s nativity (in the sixth chapter of *The Fortunes of Nigel*), and George Heriot checks his friend : ‘It is not good to speak of such things, especially of the great ; stone walls have ears, and a bird of the air shall carry the matter.’ Then, in the twenty-sixth chapter of *Rob Roy*, Bailie Nicol Jarvie observes :—

I have whiles thought o’ letting my lights burn before the Duke of Argyle, or his brother Lord Ilay (for wherefore should they be hidden under a bushel?), but the like o’ thae grit men wadna mind the like o’ me, a puir wabster-body—they think mair o’ wha says a thing than o’ what the thing is that’s said. The mair’s the pity—mair’s the pity. Not that I wad speak ony ill of this MacCallum More—‘Curse not the rich in your bedchamber,’ saith the son of Sirach, for a bird of the air shall carry the clatter, and pint-stoups hae lang lugs.

The references to the **Prophets** are so few that it may be worth while to recall the echo of Jer. 13²³ (‘Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard

his spots ? ') in Everard's rebuke to the atheistical hypocrite, Bletson, in the sixteenth chapter of *Woodstock* (' I further apologize for the time that I have wasted in endeavouring to wash an Ethiopian white, or in recommending rational inquiry to a self-willed atheist '), and the passage in the twenty-fifth chapter of *Peveril of the Peak* which describes the Puritan conspirators at their armed worship. Major Bridge-north preached.

The nineteenth chapter of Jeremiah was the portion of Scripture which he selected ; in which, under the type of breaking a potter's vessel, the prophet presages the desolation of the Jews. The lecturer was not naturally eloquent ; but a strong, deep, and sincere conviction of the truth of what he said, supplied him with language of energy and fire, as he drew a parallel between the abominations of the worship of Baal and the corruptions of the Church of Rome—so favourite a topic with the Puritans of that period ; and denounced against the Catholics, and those who favoured them, that hissing and desolation which the prophet directed against the city of Jerusalem.'

The strange episode of Jer. 35 is employed in the fortieth chapter of *The Heart of Midlothian*. The Duke of Argyll drinks ' to all true hearts that lo'ed Scotland,' and offers a glass to Jeanie Deans :—

Jeanie, however, declined it, saying ' that she had never tasted wine in her life.' ' How comes that, Jeanie ? ' said the Duke—' wine maketh glad the heart, you know.' ' Ay, sir, but my father is like Jonadab the son of Rechab, who charged his children that they should drink no wine.' ' I thought your father would have had more sense,' said the Duke, ' unless, indeed, he prefers brandy.'

In the nineteenth chapter of *Rob Roy*, when Scott has to depict the stones in the churchyard round Glasgow Cathedral, he writes :—

The contents of these sad records of mortality, the vain sorrows which they preserve, the stern lesson which they teach of the nothingness of humanity, the extent of ground which they so closely cover, and their uniform and melancholy tenor, reminded me of the roll of the prophet, which was 'written within and without, and there was written therein lamentations and mourning and woe.'

This is an allusion to Ezek. 2⁹⁻¹⁰ ('And, lo, a roll of a book . . . and it was written within and without, and there was written therein lamentations and mourning and woe'). Ezek. 18² is quoted in the twentieth chapter of *The Fortunes of Nigel*. 'You have heard of the bitterness of the ancient Scottish feuds, of which it may be said, in the language of Scripture, that the fathers eat sour grapes, and the teeth of the children are set on edge.' The same topic is handled in *The Monastery*, where Edward Glendinning declares :—

'The blood of my brother must not cry for vengeance in vain—your reverence knows our Border creed.' 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will requite it,' said the monk. 'The heathenish custom of deadly feud which prevails in this land, through which each man seeks vengeance at his own hand when the death of a friend or kinsman has chanced, hath already deluged our vales with the blood of Scottish men, spilled by the hands of countrymen and kindred.'

But here the biblical quotation is from a passage like Rom. 12¹⁹ ('Vengeance is mine : I will repay, saith the Lord').

Twice in *The Heart of Midlothian* he takes over biblical quotations from Patrick Walker, the romantic annalist of the Covenanters ; once, in the ninth chapter when David Deans, after the death of his wife, tells how he has been comforted by a rapture of soul

(‘ I declare there have been times during this night when my meditation has been so wrapt, that I knew not of my heavy loss. It has been with me as with the worthy John Semple, called Carspharn John, upon a like trial—I have been this night on the banks of Ulai, plucking an apple here and there ’). This allusion to the mystical passage in **Daniel** (8²) is accompanied by a cento of allusions in the tenth chapter, where Deans is bitterly shocked at the idea of his daughters even mentioning dances :—

Dance, said ye ? I daur ye, limmers that ye are, to name sic a word at my door-cheek ! It ’s a dissolute profane pastime, practised by the Israelites only at their base and brutal worship of the Golden Calf at Bethel, and by the unhappy lass wha danced off the head of John the Baptist, upon whilk chapter I will exercise this night for your farther instruction, since ye need it sae muckle, nothing doubting that she has cause to rue the day, lang or this time, that e’er she suld hae shook a limb on sic an errand.’

But it is Dan. 3 which explains the delightfully perverse reply of Mause Headrigg to Lady Margaret Bellenden in *Old Mortality* (ch. vii.) :—

Prelacy is like the great golden image in the plain of Dura, and as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were borne out in refusing to bow down and worship, so neither shall Cuddy Headrigg, your ladyship’s poor pleughman, at least wi’ his auld mither’s consent, make murgeons or Jenny-flections, as they ca’ them, in the house of the prelates and curates—

an exposition of Scripture to which her ladyship listened, very naturally, ‘ with the greatest possible indignation as well as surprise.’

There is a solitary reference to the book and story of **Jonah** in the motto prefixed to the seventeenth chapter of *The Bride of Lammermoor* :—

Here is a father now
Will truck his daughter for a foreign venture,
Make her the stop-gap to some canker'd feud,
Or fling her o'er, like Jonah, to the fishes,
To appease the sea at highest.

The same novel contains one or two further biblical quotations. The most famous, in the thirty-third chapter, is based on the historical application of Num. 30²⁻⁵ by Lady Ashton in order to justify her plea that her daughter's promise to Edgar Ravenswood was invalid, as it had not been sanctioned by her parents. But there are others. For example, in the opening chapter, Scott, speaking in the rôle of the landlord who is supposed to tell the tale, declares that he has no mind to display himself as a literary lion in the fashionable circles of London. He knows his place, and cares nothing for the attentions of those in high position :—

I cannot be tempted to 'come aloft' for these marks of distinction, and, like imprisoned Samson, I would rather remain—if such must be the alternative—all my life in the mill-house, grinding for my very bread, than be brought forth to make sport for the Philistine lords and ladies.

This allusion to Judges 16²¹⁻²⁵ is followed by another in the second chapter to Judges 21²⁵; in describing the state of Scotland towards the middle of the seventeenth century, he writes :—

The character of the times aggravated these suspicions. 'In those days there was no king in Israel.' Since the departure of James VI. to assume the richer and more powerful crown of England, there had existed in Scotland contending parties, formed among the aristocracy, by whom, as their intrigues at the Court of St. James's chanced to prevail, the delegated powers of sovereignty were alternately swayed. . . . There was no supreme power, claiming and possessing a

general interest with the community at large, to whom the oppressed might appeal from subordinate tyranny, either for justice or for mercy.

There is a slight reminiscence of the Song of Solomon 8⁶ in the fifth chapter, where Sir William Ashton and Lucy are attacked by the bull—‘assailed by a danger so imminent, firmer courage than that of the Lord Keeper might have given way. But paternal tenderness, “love strong as death,” sustained him.’ The other biblical allusions are incidental. But in the eighteenth chapter Caleb Balderstone, watching his young master ride away with the daughter of the family’s hereditary foe, soliloquizes: ‘Close to her bridle-rein—ay, close to her bridle-rein!—Wisely saith the holy man, “By this also you may know that woman hath dominion over all men.”’ This is a quotation from 1 Esdras 4²², where a Jew tells King Darius and his court, ‘By this also ye must know that women have dominion over you,’ viz. by the fact that men work hard to make money for their wives. In this connexion, it should be remembered that Scott and his public were far more familiar with the so-called ‘**Apocryphal**’ **Books** of the Old Testament than most modern readers realize. This feature of Scots literature has repeatedly met us, and it is prominent in Scott’s prose. As, for example, in Bailie Nicol Jarvie’s word to Frank Osbaldistone:—

I like ye, man, I like a lad that will stand by his friends in trouble—I aye did it mysell, and sae did the deacon my father, rest and bless him! But ye suldna keep ower muckle company wi’ Hielandmen and thae wild cattle. Can a man touch pitch and no be defiled?—aye mind that.

This is an echo of Ecclesiasticus 13¹ (‘He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled therewith, and he that

hath fellowship with a proud man shall be like unto him'). A famous proverb from the next verse in Ecclesiasticus ('how agree the kettle and the earthen pot together? for if the one be smitten against the other, it shall be broken') is applied by Lord Dalgarno in the eleventh chapter of *The Fortunes of Nigel*, warning Nigel against crossing the path of the Duke of Buckingham :—

'You are the vase of earth; beware of knocking yourself against the vase of iron.' 'The vase of earth,' said Glenvarloch, 'will avoid the encounter, by getting ashore out of the current—I mean to go no more to Court.'

Even Balfour of Burley, in the sixth chapter of *Old Mortality*, quotes from Ecclesiasticus 40^{1.5} :—

He then mounted his horse and, turning to Morton, repeated the text of Scripture, 'An heavy yoke was ordained for the sons of Adam from the day they go out of their mother's womb, till the day that they return to the mother of all things; from him who is clothed in blue silk and weareth a crown, even to him who weareth simple linen,—wrath, envy, trouble, and unquietness, rigour, strife, and fear of death in time of rest.' Having uttered these words he set his horse in motion, and soon disappeared among the boughs of the forest.

In *Marmion* (v. xxxi.) the Abbess of Saint Hilda is exclaiming,

God judge 'twixt Marmion and me;
 He is a Chief of high degree.
 And I a poor recluse:
 Yet oft, in holy writ, we see
 Even such weak minister as me
 May the oppressor bruise:
 For thus, inspir'd, did Judith slay
 The mighty in his sin,
 And Jael thus, and Deborah—

when her roll-call of belligerent women is interrupted by Blount rudely reminding Fitz-Eustace that they have no time to waste in listening to sermons. A similar reminiscence occurs in the twenty-ninth chapter of *Peveril of the Peak*; Edward Christian, the unscrupulous conspirator, tells Bridgenorth,

I cannot look upon Alice, but it is strongly borne in on my mind that there will be work for a creature so excellent beyond ordinary women. Courageous Judith freed Bethulia by her valour, and the comely features of Esther made her a safeguard and a defence to her people in the land of captivity, when she found favour in the sight of King Ahasuerus.

The puritanic hesitation about the Apocrypha, however, is also noticed. Thus, when the pedlar in *Waverley* (ch. xxxvi.) wishes to wait for his little dog, his companion, the dour Habakkuk Gilfillan, signifies

gruffly that he could not waste his time in waiting for a useless cur. 'But if your honour wad consider the case of Tobit——' 'Tobit!' exclaimed Gilfillan, with great heat; 'Tobit and his dog baith are altogether heathenish and apocryphal, and none but a prelatist or a papist would draw them into question.'

This is, of course, an allusion to the famous book and story of **Tobit**, and Scott puts another reference to it in the lips of Richie Moniplies, the Scots servant in *The Fortunes of Nigel* (ch. vii.):—

Alack-a-day! wha can ken, if it please your worship, whether sic prayers as the Southron read out of their auld blethering black mess-book there, may not be as powerful to invite fiends, as a right red-het prayer warm frae the heart may be powerful to drive them away, even as the Evil Spirit was driven by the smell of the fish's liver from the bridal-chamber of Sara, the daughter of Raguel? As to whilk

story, nevertheless, I make scruple to say whether it be truth or not, better men than I am having doubted on that matter.

But Richie has evidently no scruple about the similar tale of Bel and the Dragon, for when he has to admit that food is served daily to the mysterious lady who is a guest of George Heriot, he adds :—

It's no to be supposed she would consume it, ony mair than the images of Bel and the Dragon consumed the dainty vivers that were placed before them. There are stout yeomen and chamber-queans in the house, enow to play the part of Lick-it-up-a', as well as the threescore and ten priests of Bel, besides their wives and children.

The citations from the **New Testament** are less numerous, and less interesting upon the whole. Once or twice Scott draws up from his memory a phrase of **St. Matthew's Gospel**. Thus he notes, in *The Fortunes of Nigel* (ch. ix.), that 'Blessed are the peacemakers' ('*Beati pacifici*') was the favourite benediction of King James VI.: 'Ay, ay—*Beati pacifici*. My English lieges here may weel make much of me, for I would have them to know, they have gotten the only peaceable man that ever came of my family.' Again, Matt. 7⁶ ('Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you') appears in the third chapter of *A Legend of Montrose*, where Captain Dugald Dalgetty doubts if it is worth while to devote his military skill to a host of Highlanders :—

If I were teaching them to form battalia by extracting the square root, that is, by forming your square battalion of equal number of men of rank and file, corresponding to the square root of the full number present, what return could I expect for communicating this golden secret of military

tactic, except it may be a dirk in my name, on placing some M'Alister More, M'Shemei or Capperfae, in the flank or rear, when he claimed to be in the van?—Truly, well saith holy writ, 'if ye cast pearls before swine, they will turn again and rend ye.'

In the introduction to *Marmion*, which he wrote in 1830, he mentions the familiar epistles prefixed to the cantos of that poem,

in which I alluded, perhaps more than was necessary or graceful, to my domestic occupations and amusements—a loquacity which may be excused by those who remember that I was still young, lightheaded, and happy, and that 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.'

This echo of Matt. 12³⁴ is as personal as that of Matt. 6³⁴ in the eighth chapter of *Redgauntlet*:—

I have rarely, in my life, till the last alarming days, known what it was to sustain a moment's real sorrow. What I called such, was, I am now well convinced, only the weariness of the mind, which, having nothing actually present to complain of, turns upon itself, and becomes anxious about the past and the future; these periods with which human life has so little connexion, that Scripture itself hath said, 'sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.'¹

By a slip of memory, Scott once attributes to St. Paul the words of Jesus in Luke 16⁹ ('Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness'). This is at the beginning of the thirty-first chapter of *Quentin Durward*:—

On the perilous and important morning which preceded the meeting of the two Princes in the Castle of Peronne,

¹ Lord Rowton once asked Lord Beaconsfield what was the most remarkable, the most self-sustained and powerful sentence he knew. The answer was, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'

Oliver le Dain did his master the service of an active and skilful agent, making interest for Louis in every quarter, both with presents and promises ; so that when the Duke's anger should blaze forth, all around should be interested to smother, and not to increase, the conflagration. He glided, like night, from tent to tent, from house to house, making himself friends, but not, in the Apostle's sense, with the Mammon of unrighteousness.

On the other hand, in his biography of Dryden, Scott twice uses the words of **Luke 20²⁵** ('Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's') with good effect. Once, in speaking of Dryden's religion ('Dryden was satisfied to give to Caesar the things that were Caesar's, without being in a hurry to fulfil the counterpart of the precept. Foremost in the race of pleasure, engaged in labours alien from serious reflection, the favourite of the most lively and dissolute nobility whom England ever saw, religious thoughts were not, at this period, likely to intrude frequently upon his mind, or to be encouraged when they did so': section vi.), and again, in criticizing the fulsome adulation of his dedications ('It is probable that Dryden considered his panegyrics as merely conforming with the fashion of the day, and rendering unto Caesar the things which were Caesar's—attended with no more degradation than the payment of any other tribute to the forms of politeness and usage of the world': section vii.).

To round off the scanty quotations from the four Gospels, we may recall the application of **John 9⁴** in the eightieth chapter of Lockhart's biography. His visit to Milton-Lockhart had been suddenly shortened by the news of a neighbour's sudden illness, which made him resolve to return to Abbotsford :—

He would listen to no persuasions. 'No, William,' he said, 'this is a sad warning. I must home to work while it is called day; for the night cometh when no man can work. I put that text, many a year ago, on my dial-stone; but it often preached in vain.'

In a year he was dead.

With regard to the **Acts of the Apostles**, we take the following reminiscences. To begin with, that of 16^{23f.} in the thirty-first chapter of *The Monastery*. When Henry Warden, the Protestant preacher, refuses to promise that he will not speak of religion to the household, the prior threatens him with imprisonment. To this Warden replies :—

Thou mayst indeed cast me into a dungeon, but can I foretell that my Master hath not task-work for me to perform even in that dreary mansion? The chains of saints have, ere now, been the means of breaking the bonds of Satan. In a prison, holy Paul found the jailor whom he brought to believe the word of salvation, he and all his house.

There is an allusion to Acts 22²⁵ ('And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?') in the fourteenth chapter of *Old Mortality* :—

'The charter that I speak of,' said Morton, 'is common to the meanest Scotchman. It is that freedom from stripes and bondage which was claimed, as you may read in Scripture, by the Apostle Paul himself, and which every man who is free-born is called upon to defend, for his own sake and that of his countrymen.' 'Hegh, sirs!' replied Cuddie, 'it wad hae been lang or my Leddy Margaret, or my mither either, wad hae fund out sic a wiselike doctrine in the Bible.'

Again, 27³¹ is quoted by the Archbishop of Tyre in *The Talisman* (ch. viii.), when consulted as to whether

Richard Cœur de Lion could accept the services of a Saracen physician :—

‘ Again,’ proceeded the prelate, ‘ there is no doubt that the primitive Christians used the services of the unconverted heathen—thus, in the ship of Alexandria, in which the blessed Apostle Paul sailed to Italy, the sailors were doubtless pagans ; yet what said the holy saint when their ministry was needful—*nisi hi in navi manserint, vos salvi fieri non potestis*—unless these men abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.’

Later on, in the same novel (ch. xxiii.), Scott uses indirectly another passage (9¹⁸) from the Acts of the Apostles, as he makes Saladin repudiate the idea of Islam employing force in order to make converts :—

‘ Have I not told thee,’ the Saracen answers the Scottish knight, ‘ that Saladin desires no converts saving those whom the holy prophet shall dispose to submit themselves to his law ? violence and bribery are alike alien to his plan for extending the true faith. Harken to me, my brother. When the blind man was miraculously restored to sight, the scales dropped from his eyes at the Divine pleasure—think’st thou that any earthly leech could have removed them ? No. Such medicine might have tormented the patient with his instruments, or perhaps soothed him with his balsams and cordials, but dark as he was must the darkened man have remained ; and it is even so with the blindness of the understanding.’

It is in the twenty-eighth chapter of this novel, by the way, that Zech. 13⁷ is cited by Saladin to justify him declining Richard’s challenge to single combat :—

‘ Even this,’ said Saladin, half smiling at Cœur de Lion’s affectionate earnestness for the combat, ‘ even this I may not lawfully do. The master places the shepherd over the flock, not for the shepherd’s own sake, but for the sake of the sheep. Had I a son to hold the sceptre when I fell, I might

have had the liberty, as I have the will, to brave this bold encounter ; but your own Scripture sayeth, that when the herdsman is smitten, the sheep are scattered.'

We have already heard Scott quoting **Rom. 12** ¹⁹, and some fresh proofs of his predilection for that text may now be given. For example, when Staunton, the ringleader of the Porteous mob, tells Jeanie Deans (*Heart of Midlothian*, ch. xxxiii.) how he had failed to rescue his fellow-criminal, and thenceforth thought of nothing but vengeance, the girl protests :—

' O, sir, did the Scripture never come into your mind, Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it ? ' ' Scripture ? why, I had not opened a Bible for five years,' answered Staunton. ' Wae 's me, sirs,' said Jeanie—' and a minister's son too ! '

Again, in the second chapter of *The Two Drovers*, the judge who is presiding at the trial of Robin Oig for murder, observes in his charge to the jury that

the first object of civilization is to place the general protection of the law, equally administered, in the room of that wild justice, which every man cut and carved for himself, according to the length of his sword and the strength of his arm. The law says to the subjects, with a will only inferior to that of the Deity, ' Vengeance is mine.' The instant that there is time for passion to cool, and reason to interpose, an injured party must become aware that the law assumes the exclusive cognizance of the right and wrong betwixt the parties.

There are two quotations from the epistle of **James** in *Woodstock*. The first is in the fifth chapter, when Markham Everard hears some one whistling in the park :—

This could hardly be a friend ; for the party to which he belonged rejected, generally speaking, all music, unless

psalmody. 'If a man is merry, let him sing psalms,' was a text which they were pleased to interpret as literally and to as little purpose as they did some others.

This use or misuse (see above, p. 120) of James 5¹³ is followed, in the eleventh chapter, by an application of James 2¹⁹ to the atheistical hypocrite, Bletson :—

We have known many like Bletson, whose curtains have been shrewdly shaken by superstition, though their fears were unsanctioned by any religious faith. The devils, we are assured, believe and tremble; but on earth there are many, who, in worse plight than even the natural children of perdition, tremble without believing, and fear even while they blaspheme.

To these we may add, from a letter to Mrs. Hughes in 1830, a semi-playful reminiscence of the same text. He is defending his disbelief in stories of apparitions. 'I do not believe my own experience would convert me; though I might tremble, I would reverse the part played by the devils and certainly *not* believe . . . I think the balance of evidence preponderates so heavily upon the side of imputing all such appearances to natural causes that the mysterious stories "winna believe for me." '

In conclusion, we may note the application of a verse like **1 John 1⁸** at the close of his biography of Napoleon :—

The faults of Buonaparte, we conclude as we commenced, were rather those of the sovereign and politician than of the individual. Wisely is it written, that 'if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' If, instead of asserting that he never committed a crime, he had limited his self-eulogy to asserting that in attaining and wielding supreme power he had resisted the temptation to commit many, he could not have been contradicted.

There is also an apt adaptation of **Rev. 21** ²⁷ in the twenty-second chapter of *Kenilworth*, where Anthony Foster justifies his suspicion of the astrologer and poisoner by observing that

‘ the Holy Writ says, that the gold and precious stones of the Holy City are in no sort for those who work abomination, or who frame lies.’ ‘ Well, my son,’ said the Doctor, ‘ and what is your inference from thence ? ’ ‘ That those,’ said Foster, ‘ who distil poisons, and administer them in secrecy, can have no portion in those unspeakable riches.’

The paucity of allusions to the epistles is as noticeable in Scott as in Burns, probably because they had been so largely appropriated by theological controversy. It is indeed in a reference to one phrase of the epistles that Scott for once shows a lack of dramatic fitness. Waverley’s ‘ very vacillation gives him a sort of character,’ as Bagehot observes ; but is it likely that a highland chief of Fergus MacIvor’s stamp would tell him that he was ‘ blown about with every wind of doctrine ’ ?

Thus, what we get from Scott is, like Mr. Pepys’s dinner, ‘ noble and enough.’ These illustrations, taken from the twenty-eight years of his literary activity, between 1805 when the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* sang itself into the heart of the public, and 1831 when the last of the Waverley Novels dropped from his tired pen—these illustrations and quotations are by no means comprehensive, but they are characteristic. They speak for themselves. Even a selection like this will show how free Scott was from the literary mannerisms of his day ; current affectations did not warp his judgment, and he does not seem to have been hampered either by hesitancy about using the Bible or by conventionality when he did use it. He has

hardly one falsetto note here. His writings exhibit the influence of the Bible almost at its best upon our Scots literature, particularly upon its imaginative prose. There was Scots literature after Scott, but our rapid survey may well end with him. Matthew Arnold wished that he could persuade Stopford Brooke to close his primer of English literature with Scott's death in 1832, on the ground that 'the death of Sir Walter Scott is a real epoch; it marks the end of one period and the beginning of another—of the period in which we are ourselves now living.' Though it is half a century since this was written, the judgment holds good still. And to stop at 1832 is doubly advisable when our interest is not simply in literature but in the effect of the Bible upon literature, for in this respect it may be honestly urged that after Scott anything would come as an anti-climax more or less.

Lockhart tells us how, during the last week or two of Sir Walter's life, 'his recollection of whatever I read from the Bible seemed to be lively.' Indeed he did not require to depend altogether upon hearing the Bible read aloud to him; he had much of it by heart, and when he became unconscious and lay murmuring to himself, 'commonly whatever we could follow him in was a fragment of the Bible (especially the prophecies of Isaiah and the book of Job).' Once he did ask Lockhart to read aloud to him. 'And when I asked from what book, he said, "Need you ask? There is but one."' Scott had loved books of almost every kind in his day, but the time came when for him there was no literature except the one Book, when the Bible meant more to him than even Scots literature,

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