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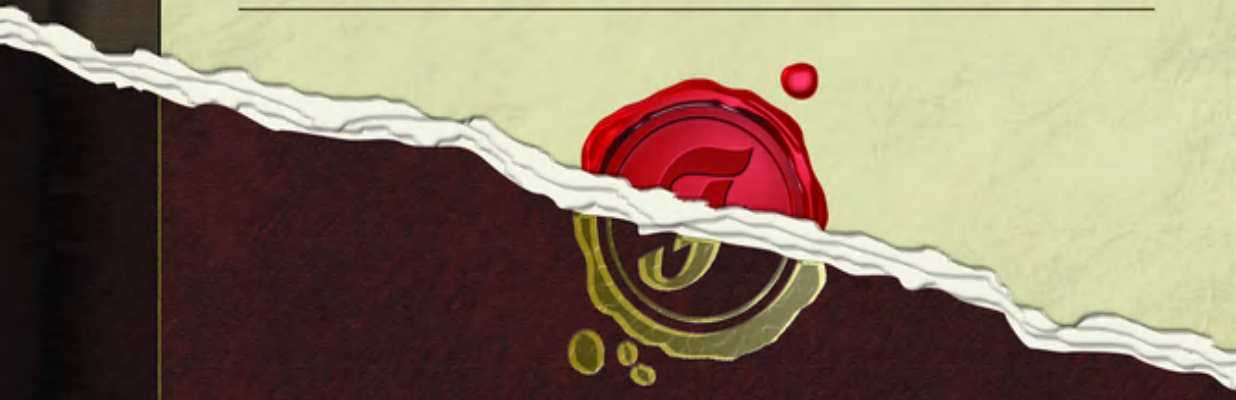

by
Milton S. Terry

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Alchemy

"In changing the base metals into gold and silver by the projection of the Stone, it follows (by an accelerated process) the method of nature, and therefore is natural."

The New Pearl of Great Price, by Peter Bonus, 1338 AD

THE NEW APOLOGETIC

FIVE LECTURES

ON

TRUE AND FALSE METHODS OF MEETING MODERN PHILOSOPHICAL AND CRITICAL ATTACKS UPON THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

BY

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Preface

THE following lectures are of the nature of an introduction to the study of apologetics, rather than apology itself. Their main object is to guard against erroneous methods, and to suggest some few outlines of argument which may be of service to the interests of truth. The lectures have been read before various bodies of ministers and theological students, and have called forth many expressions of desire to obtain them in printed form. They are accordingly given to the public as they were first written and read. A considerable number of footnotes, however, have been inserted, which it is believed will add no little interest and value to the volume.

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Definitions and Historical Retrospect

"Every age must produce its own apologies, adapted to prevailing tendencies and wants."—Schaff, Theological Propaedeutic, p. 310.

The New Apologetic

I

Definitions and Historical Retrospect

EVERY system of belief and practice ought to be able to give a reason for its existence. When a new doctrine is propounded it naturally invites the criticism and opposition of those who think it false. It was to be expected, therefore, that when Christianity began to be proclaimed as a new religion it would meet with various kinds of opposition, first from the Jew, and later from the Gentile. Its adherents were called upon to produce reasons for the new departure. Under the pressure of opposition, and often of bitter persecution, they sought to convince their enemies that Christianity not only had a right to exist, but was the highest form of religion and worthy of the acceptation of all men. Such a defense, or self-vindication, of the Christian faith was called by the early Greek fathers an *apology* (*ἀπολογία*). The word has, therefore, in theological literature a meaning quite different

from that which it bears in common usage, as when one is said to apologize for some wrong which he has committed. The Christian apology, so far from being an acknowledgment of error or of wrongs, is, on the contrary, a vigorous defense against the attacks of enemies. Such defenses, from the nature of their contents, are also often spoken of as "evidences of Christianity."

The defenses of the Christian faith have naturally varied much, both in form and contents, according to the nature of the different attacks. A single apology, written by this or that defender of the faith, was called forth by some practical demand of the time. But after many such works had been written, and had come to form a distinct class of theological literature, the study of Christian evidences assumed the character of a science, and is now known by the technical name of *apologetics*. As in all other departments of research, so in theological discipline, the accumulation of materials must prepare the way for a scientific use of them. As a matter of fact, practice goes before theory; and there was a large number of Christian apologies before there was or could be a science of apologetics. It

is only during the present century that apologetics, as a distinct branch of theological study, has attained to scientific definition and treatment. Ebrard defines the subject as "that science which deduces from the nature of Christianity itself what classes of attacks are generally possible, what different sides of Christian truth may possibly be assailed, and what false principles lie at the bottom of these attacks." *

In order to appreciate the nature and scope of this great subject we must be acquainted with the various forms of opposition with which Christianity has had to contend. Our first lecture will, accordingly, be of the nature of an historical review and a classification of attacks and apologies.

The Jewish opposition to Christ and his teaching is recorded in the New Testament and shows a spirit of bitterness and hatred. The Jews said in their hasty passion, "He casts out devils by the prince of devils;" "No good thing can come out of Nazareth;" "No true prophet can violate the Sabbath as this man does;" "He is opposed to Moses

* *Apologetics;* or, The Scientific Vindication of Christianity. English translation by Stuart and Macpherson, vol. i, p. 3. Edinburgh, 1886.

and seeks to overthrow the temple and worship of Israel;" "Being a man, he makes himself equal with God." The later Jewish opposition, against which Justin Martyr and Origen wrote, was of much the same character. Jesus of Nazareth, crucified as a malefactor, did not satisfy the Messianic expectations of his time. The Christians neglected the law, the ritual of sacrifice, the rites of circumcision, and the Passover. But, in thus breaking away from Judaism, Christianity passed through a life and death struggle. The malice and vituperation of the fanatical party caused most of the first persecutions, and could not be met by reason or by appeals to sympathy. The passionate bigot of any sect or age is blind to all rational appeals, and the malice of Jewish persecution of Christians continued long after Jerusalem had been laid in ruins by the Romans and the temple and its ritual had been effectually destroyed.

The pagan opposition, so far as it arose from ignorance and prejudice, was of much the same character as the early Jewish. When such writers as Tacitus and the younger Pliny could call the new religion "a destructive, perverse, and extravagant

superstition" and "an unchangeable stubbornness," we may well believe that less considerate minds would have for it nothing but words of execration. Hence, the charge of atheism, superstition, want of culture, and worship of a crucified malefactor came evidently from persons too much blinded by prejudice and contempt to bestow upon the doctrines and life of the Christians any fair amount of examination. Such assaults may now be considered obsolete. For, while we may occasionally meet with exhibitions of ignorance and hatred of all religions, and diatribes as bitter and satirical as any of the old Jewish and pagan assaults, they no longer command respect with earnest seekers after truth.

Aside from such ignoble attacks, the forms of opposition which Christianity has been called upon, first and last, to encounter may be classed under three heads: (1) the rationalistic-philosophical; (2) the literary-critical; and (3) those arising out of the study of rival religions. All these may be traced through the Christian centuries, although they vary much from time to time, both in materials and methods. It is a grave mistake to suppose that rationalism, higher

criticism, and the comparison of rival religions are solely the products of modern times. They have appeared, both in the Church and outside of the Church, from the days of the apostles onward.

I. THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONFLICT.

In the earliest outgrowth of Christianity as a new religion it came into contact with Greek and oriental philosophy. Long before the days of the apostles many speculative philosophers had put forth their theories of matter and of mind. Paul found at Athens Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, who "encountered him;" and it is said that "all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." The apostle of the Gentiles afterward admonished the Colossians to beware of "any that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. ii, 8). Justin Martyr, the first great apologist, informs us that in his own earnest search for truth he first surrendered himself to a Stoic philosopher, but, finding in him no knowl-

edge of God, betook himself to a professed disciple of Aristotle. Disappointed again, he sought the instruction of a very celebrated Pythagorean, but with no more satisfactory results. Then he joined himself to a wise Platonist and imagined for a time that he himself had become wise; but, chancing to meet one day with an old man who pointed out to him the insufficiency of his doctrines and the excellency of the teachings of the Hebrew prophets and the Gospel of Christ, a holy flame was kindled in his soul, and he found in Christ the only safe and profitable philosophy. This experience of Justin is an excellent example of the search for truth which many a longing spirit has pursued. All such are like the man of Jesus's parable—"a merchant seeking goodly pearls."

In view of discussions to follow, we will do well at this point to refer briefly to the ancient schools of Greek philosophy. Thales is supposed to represent the earliest of these, and taught that all nature is endowed with life, everything is full of gods, and water is the primordial element of the universe. Anaximander rose to the lofty conception of one original substance, which he called

the infinite (τὸ ἄπειρον), out of which all things arise and to which they return again. According to Anaximenes, all things originate in air; but according to Heraclitus the origin of all things and the principle of perpetual motion are to be found in fire—a clear, light fluid, not essentially different from what Anaximenes meant by air. Out of this original fire-fluid all nature is evolved, the souls of men, as well as all things else. Souls accordingly partake of the quality of the natural environments and the soil from which they spring. The wisest souls originate in a dry land and climate; hence the intellectual greatness of the Greeks. But the drunkard has a wet soul! Probably these notions would not be indorsed by the materialistic evolutionists of modern times. According to Pythagoras, the regulating principle of the universe is to be found in the proportions and harmony of numbers, and the heavenly bodies were supposed to move according to a regular musical scale. He also taught the doctrine of the transmigration of souls.

In Plato, however, we find a higher range of thought. His philosophy was conspicuously spiritual and theistic, as compared

with the materialistic systems of most of his predecessors. Spiritual entities are the only real existences, and the material world is in perpetual change, flowing into forms of being and then flowing out. As the soul of the world existed before the world, so all human souls must have existed before the bodies they inhabit. God is the first cause of all things; but it is difficult to make out clearly whether, after all Plato says about the supreme mind, intelligence, reason, and the highest good, he really believed in the personality of God. His doctrine of "ideas," the eternal and unchangeable archetypes of all that is true and beautiful and good, contains an element of mysticism, and has mightily influenced the speculative tendencies of later theorists.

Such were some of the systems of thought current in the Greek-speaking communities when the Gospel of Christ began to be preached. Long before this date the metropolis of Egypt had become a famous center of intellectual culture. Not the Greek philosopher only, but the Roman rhetorician, the Jewish rabbi, and the Asiatic mystic confronted each other and put their various theories to the test of reason. The Jewish

mind was there so deeply influenced by the prevailing culture that it invented the allegorical method of interpreting those parts of the Old Testament which seemed to be inconsistent with the reigning philosophy. To minds influenced by the various theories of the philosophical schools, the doctrines of salvation through Christ were naturally offensive. When Paul, in his address at Athens, referred to the resurrection of Jesus, some of his hearers mocked; and that mockery may be taken as an example of the manner in which all the materialistic philosophers treated the Gospel message. The Jews asked for signs; the Greeks sought after wisdom; but the doctrine of Christ crucified was a stumbling-block to the one, and foolishness to the other.

The opposition of Greek culture and philosophy voiced itself powerfully in the writings of five distinguished men—Lucian, Celsus, Porphyry, Hierocles, and Julian. Of these, the attack of Celsus, replied to by Origen, will best serve to exhibit the nature of the argument. For Celsus poses as a Greek philosopher, and all his criticisms, when resolved into their fundamental principle, are little else than the intellectual

revulsion of a speculative mind against what he regards as inconsistent with his own philosophical assumptions. And is not this in substance the ground of all subsequent philosophical objections to Christianity? Celsus is especially pronounced against the Christian idea of the incarnation, or of God manifesting himself among men. To his way of thinking, such a manifestation would be a transition from good to evil, from happiness to misery, and therefore repugnant to all worthy conceptions of Deity. In like manner, the simplicity of the Gospel, its adaptation to the poor and unlearned, and the lack of literary finish and perfection in its written documents are all unworthy of approval or authority from God. The notion that man was made in the image of God and stands at the head of creation was a subject of ridicule with Celsus; and he compared the Jews and Christians "to a flight of bats, or to a swarm of ants issuing out of their nest, or to frogs holding council in a marsh, or to worms crawling together in the corner of a dunghill, and quarreling with one another as to which of them were the greatest sinners, and asserting that God, having abandoned the

regions of heaven, 'has become a citizen among us alone, to whom he makes himself familiar and tells us how we may be associated with him forever!'"*

Herein we have a fair sample of the philosophical objections to Christian doctrine which the earliest apologists were called upon to answer. The fundamental dualism of matter and mind, so conspicuous in the best forms of Greek philosophy, could not adjust itself to the concept of the most high God concerning himself with the petty affairs of the world. To those subtle thinkers the anthropomorphism of the Bible was simply preposterous, and they hastily reached the conclusion that Christianity was irrational, and even foolishness.

The higher speculations of Greek philosophy had much to do with the rise and development of gnosticism—that one-sided intellectualism which has been well called the rationalism of the ancient Church. This form of rationalism combined various elements of Greek theosophy and Zoroastrian dualism, and was in its nature and purpose a mighty effort to harmonize the doctrines of Christianity with reason. The

* Origen, *ad Cel.*, book iv, chap. xxiii.

infinite God was assumed to be so absolute and inaccessible that he could not be supposed to have any immediate relationship with the world of matter. But from him downward emanated various spirits, powers, or æons, which became more and more defective the farther they were removed from the original fount of being, until at length, in the process of emanations, wisdom delegated the Demiurge to form the world, after which the Christ descends and will ultimately deliver all spiritual beings from the power of evil. It seems strange to us now that such a congeries of fantastic ideas could have fascinated the minds of many earnest, thoughtful men. But such was the fact, and Schaff pronounces gnosticism "the grandest and most comprehensive form of speculative religious syncretism known in history. . . . The old world here rallied all its energies to make out of its diverse elements some new thing and to oppose to the real, substantial universalism of the catholic Church an ideal, shadowy universalism of speculation!"*

I have dwelt upon these earliest forms of the philosophical attacks on Christianity in

* *History of the Christian Church*, vol. ii, p. 448.

order to show to what an extent they anticipate in general character all later oppositions of philosophy and science to the doctrines of the Christian faith. It is not necessary, therefore, to enlarge upon the skepticism and unbelief which arose in the Middle Ages. The revival of learning in the fifteenth century and the study of the Greek and Roman classics fascinated many minds, as they did the emperor Julian, and led them to prefer the Platonic philosophy to the dogmas of the Church and to adopt pantheistic conceptions of the world. Bacon and Descartes introduced new methods of thought. The English deism, so far as it moved on philosophical lines, was a protest of reason against the idea of a special supernatural revelation. Toland maintained the supremacy of reason in matters of religion, and insisted on the impossibility of believing anything above or contrary to reason. Shaftesbury argued that philosophy and common sense are quite sufficient to work out the problems of natural religion and theology, and he rejected as unnecessary the idea of a revealed theology. Tindal attempted to show that natural religion is perfect in itself, and therefore cannot

receive additions; all that is important or valuable in Christianity, he held, is as old as the creation. Bolingbroke and Gibbon presumed to account for the origin and rapid spread of Christianity by means of natural causes; and Hume maintained that, in view of the established uniformity of nature's laws, no amount of human testimony can prove a miracle.

The French infidelity which flourished in the latter part of the eighteenth century was an offspring of English deism, but it added nothing to its philosophical thought. It took on such low forms of satire and ridicule and displayed such obvious hatred of all religion that it may be compared to the bitter intolerance of early pagan assaults upon the Gospel. Thomas Paine transplanted some of these low attacks among the common people of England and America. In his best sentiments he was an English deist; but in his opposition to the evangelical faith he exhibited the bitterness and hatred of Voltaire.

More dignified and far more subtle and profound was the philosophical rationalism of Germany, which had genetic connection both with English deism and French infi-

delity. The Cartesian philosophy was developed by Spinoza into a system of pantheism, with its postulate of an eternal and infinite substance, manifested in various attributes and modes. Later came Leibnitz, with his theory of monadism, teaching that all things contain an imperishable force, which is the spontaneous cause of the changes and evolutions of the universe. The subsequent development of speculative philosophy in Germany, from Kant to Hegel, has been often traced. Its pantheistic trend is acknowledged, and its general result has been to eliminate the biblical idea of the miraculous from human history.

The so-called "positive philosophy" of Comte and his followers teaches that the entire race of man, as well as each individual, evolves through three successive states —the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive. In this last state we inquire no more after the causes of things, but simply observe phenomena and classify the facts and laws of the same. It substitutes humanity for God, utilitarianism for religion and the basis of morals, and glories in the "worship of humanity."

To all this we must add a reference to the

so-called "conflict between modern science and religion." It is alleged that the churchly representatives of Christianity are disposed to look upon modern science as a troublesome enemy. The most notable point of conflict is the picture of creation and the origin of man as told in the opening chapters of the Bible. Such a miraculous creation is declared to be inconsistent with the doctrines of evolution, which, if not conclusively proven, are made to appear so probable that the scientific mind revolts from the scriptural revelation.

II. THE LITERARY-CRITICAL CONFLICT.

The opposition of philosophy to Christianity is based upon its assumed knowledge and analysis of the nature of things. But the literary-critical attacks are directed against the written records which assume to contain the special revelation of God to men. Most of those who have assailed the Christian faith on philosophical grounds have also found fault with the writings of the Old and New Testaments, when considered as authoritative records of divine revelation.

The assault of Porphyry upon the gen-

uineness of Daniel's prophecies was one of the earliest critical attempts to disprove the claims of recorded prediction. It was a specimen of ancient rationalistic higher criticism, and maintained that the Book of Daniel was no real production of the times of the Babylonian exile. The philosophical critic pointed out the fact that the minute prophecies of the eleventh chapter delineate the wars of the Syrian and Egyptian kings down to the latter part of the career of Antiochus Epiphanes, and then suddenly become vague, and end indefinitely. Hence the natural conclusion that they were written long after the days of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, and are examples of prophecy written after the events which it seems to predict. This early effort of literary criticism appears to have been a more dignified and scholarly attack upon the claims of divine revelation than any other of that ancient time. Porphyry also condemned the current allegorical interpretation, and alleged that there were discrepancies and contradictions in the sacred books.

In the twelfth century Abelard called attention to the contradictions of the Scriptures, but without apparently designing to

shake the faith of anyone. He noticed the corruption of the text, the number of spurious books, and altogether his teaching was regarded as so heretical by the leaders of the Church that he was prohibited from teaching, and his work entitled *Sic et Non* remained unpublished until modern times.

In 1670 Spinoza anticipated modern critical controversies by arguing from internal evidences that the Pentateuch could not have been written by Moses, but that all the books from Genesis to Second Kings are one composite work, derived from numerous ancient sources, self-contradictory in many parts, and probably arranged and edited in their present form by Ezra.

The English deists, whose one common ground was denial of the supernatural and the sufficiency of natural religion, assailed the genuineness and authenticity of many of the biblical writings. For example, Collins, in his *Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (1724), not only disparaged the trustworthiness of the text of Scripture by magnifying the importance of the various readings, but also argued that Christianity itself, so far as it claims to be a fulfillment of Old Testament

prophecy, is invalid and false; he essayed to show how the apostles and early Christians accommodated the Messianic prophecies to the facts of Jesus's life and read into them all manner of allegorical and mystical meanings; he maintained that the essentials of the Gospel system are, at best, only ideally true, and can be supported only by a mystical use of the Scriptures. Woolston took pains to discover all sorts of incongruities and extravagances in the Gospel miracles; and, after having proven, as he assumes, their incredibility as historical facts, he proceeded to point out an allegorical meaning in each of the miracles which might be useful to anyone who was not trammeled with the responsibility of maintaining the literal sense. Others criticised the barbarous cruelty authorized by the God of Israel in the destruction of the Canaanites.

This rationalistic handling of the Scriptures was taken up in Germany and carried forward to extremes of refinement unknown in other lands. Eichhorn explained away the miracles of the Old Testament as hyperbolical pictures of natural phenomena or accommodations of language to oriental modes

of thought. Paulus applied the same method of interpretation to the miracles of Jesus. The transfiguration was nothing but a waking dream of one of the disciples in the midst of the glories of sunrise among the mountains. The command for Peter to cast his hook and from the mouth of the fish first caught find money to pay the tax meant only that, as Peter was a fisherman, he should go and catch enough fish to pay the amount of the tribute money required.

Next followed the mythical theory of Strauss, and then the tendency theory of Baur, and later still the legendary theory of Renan—all of them invented to account for the origin of Christianity without admitting the miraculous. The present passion of rationalistic criticism is to analyze the various books of the Bible into their original sources. The Pentateuch and all the historical books, Job, Proverbs, Isaiah, and Zechariah, are resolved into their constituent elements and distributed among a number of different authors. Even the Apocalypse of John is brought under the same condemnation. The "synoptic problem" is now to discover the literary origin of that which is common to Matthew, Mark, and

Luke, and to work out a scientific explanation of the portions peculiar to each.

I need not continue this outline further. So far as any of these facts and discussions touching the origin, character, and interpretation of the Scriptures could be construed to the detriment of Christianity, there have not been wanting men and women eager to make the most of the case against the claims of the evangelical faith. It is easy to see, and it ought not to be overlooked, that criticisms well directed and entirely legitimate in themselves may have been perverted and employed to antagonize truths which, upon deeper study, may be found to be unaffected by the substance of the criticism.

III. THE CONFLICT OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION.

The antagonism of other religions to Christianity is a natural and necessary result of the propagation of the Gospel in the world. The teaching of Jesus and his apostles first provoked the violent opposition of the Jewish leaders. They looked upon the new religious movement as inimical to the temple worship, to the laws of

Moses, and to the honored customs of the Israelitish nation. The main question was the Messiahship of Jesus. The Christian affirmed, the Jew denied. But the first Christians were Jews, and their main apology was that Jesus was the Christ of whom the prophets had spoken. They insisted that Christianity was not essentially antagonistic to the Hebrew faith, but rather supplementary to it. It was a fulfillment, not a destroying, of Moses and the prophets. The first statement of the Epistle to the Hebrews sets forth the true relation of the Gospel to the Old Testament: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things."

But Christianity soon came into contact with other religions tolerated in the Roman empire. Upon the gods of Greece and Rome the early Christian teachers and apologists made uncompromising war. They ridiculed the idolatry of paganism, and found no words too strong for denouncing the licentious mysteries of the worship of the Greeks. But, though Paul's labors at

Ephesus led to great commotion among the worshipers "of the great Diana, and the image which fell down from Jupiter," Paul was neither a robber of temples nor a blasphemer of the goddess Diana (Acts xix, 35, 37). In his address to the Athenians he courteously acknowledged the religion of the Greeks, and quoted one of their poets to show that men are the offspring of God (Acts xvii, 28). Origen, in his treatise against Celsus, refers to the religious rites of the Egyptians, the Persians, the Scythians, and other nations, which Celsus seems to have put forward as worthy of as much respect as the doctrines of Christianity. Whence it appears that the ancient apologists were called upon to compare the claims of the Gospel with those of many other faiths which were then abroad in the world. Tertullian asks why the Romans, on whom Numa Pompilius laid such a heavy load of superstition, should object to the Christians worshiping God through Christ? Why should not their religious rites receive as much respect as those of Orpheus at Pieria, Musæus at Athens, Melampus at Argos, or Trophonius in Bœotia? If the acceptance and worship of Christ "transform a man

and make him truly good, there is implied in that fact the duty of renouncing what is opposed to it as false." *

The rise of Mohammedanism in the seventh century, and its conquests in Asia, Africa, and Europe, forced a comparison of its claims with those of Christianity. And later, after the Crusades had ceased and commercial intercourse had sprung up between Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans, favorable comparisons were sometimes made, and in some places a liberal spirit showed itself. In the old controversies three views are traceable: (1) That all religions are low superstitions, grounded in fear, and that Moses, Christ, and Mohammed were the three greatest impostors of the world; (2) that Moses and Christ were true prophets of God, and Mohammed was an impostor; (3) that Moses and Jesus were true prophets, but supplemented and superseded by Mohammed. In 1621 a Persian nobleman critically exposed the discrepancies of the Gospels, attacked the doctrine of the Trinity, and defended the divine mission of Mohammed. He maintained that, so far as Mohammed's doctrines seemed

* Tertullian, *Apol.*, xxi.

opposed to those of Christ, the difference was no greater than that between Christ and Moses. He also held that the coming of Mohammed was foretold in the words of Habakkuk (iii, 3): "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise."

Among the English deists we find Chubb, about the middle of the eighteenth century, examining the relative claims of Christianity, Judaism, and Mohammedanism, exposing elements of error in them all, and rejecting them all as revelations of God to man. This was followed in 1791 by the famous work of the French atheist Volney, entitled *The Ruins, or Meditations on the Revolutions of Empires.* He imagines himself meditating amid the ruins of Palmyra, when there arises before him a vision of nations and kingdoms rising and falling, and showing him, among other things, how all religious ideas originate in fear of the elements of nature. These are worshiped under the symbolism of idols, accompanied with the mysteries of priestcraft, and then developed into dualism, and thence through mythology and pantheism into monotheistic

Judaism, which adores the soul of the world; and lastly, through Persian and Hindu systems, to Christianity, which, after all, is only the worship of the sun under the mystic name of Christ!

In our own time we find the comparative study of religions developed into a science, and chairs are established in our leading institutions for the philosophical treatment of this new department of theology. The various opinions and comparative estimates of religions may be classified under four heads, as follows: (1) That which regards all religion as superstition and essentially false; (2) that which treats all religions as equally divine and authoritative; (3) that which holds Christianity to be the only true religion, and rejects all other religions as false and worthless; (4) that which recognizes the elements of truth in all religions, but maintains that Christianity is the ultimate and absolute religion, to which all others must sooner or later give way.

The brief historic sketch just given enables us at once to observe the range of controversy taken by those who have made issue with the claims of Christianity. It is evident that we cannot intelligently grapple

with new issues without some familiarity with the old attacks and the old apologies. It is a fact of incalculable significance that Christianity has been on trial now for more than eighteen centuries, and if its opponents have not yet employed all available weapons of assault it must be that they have not yet been able to find them.

Nevertheless, it is generally acknowledged by men most competent to judge that the older apologies are not adapted to meet the demands of the present time. In making such a statement, however, it is due the past and the present to indicate more clearly what the admission means. This may be sufficiently done for our purpose in a few concluding observations.

1. It must first of all be acknowledged that the apologies of the Christian ages, taken as a whole, form a magnificent contribution to the defense of the "faith once delivered to the saints." The literature of Christian apologetics constitutes a treasury of the best religious thought of the centuries. It must not, therefore, be imagined that the old apologies are useless now. Many of them contain arguments of little value and some things unquestionably

erroneous; but that same remark can be made in reference to most of the contributions made in former time to any department of science.

2. It should not cause us any surprise or alarm to discover that in some things former defenders of the faith made mistakes. We certainly ought not to assume that a defense of the fathers is the same as a defense of the faith itself. To err is human; and we might well presume in advance that zealous advocates of any good cause would be likely to fall into occasional blunders. In some instances we find that the assailant of Christianity was in the right, and its defender in the wrong. But in such cases it will be seen that the apologist confounded some nonessential thing with the truth itself.

3. One of the most glaring mistakes of overzealous apologists has been an apparent assumption that an opponent of the Gospel must needs be a dishonest man. That is a weak defense of any cause which goes about trying to impeach the motives of an opponent who claims to rest his case on valid argument.

4. It will hardly be denied at the present time that an earnest and sincere inquirer

after truth may fall into serious error. The modern apologist, if he be wise enough to learn from the past, will not proceed on the assumption that his opponent has no truth on his side. The more correct method will study to be irenical, rather than polemical. One of the qualities which has made Butler's *Analogy* the immortal book it is is the calm philosophical tone in which he shows all readiness to concede that his antagonist has some reason for his opposition to revealed religion.

5. One very obvious lesson from what we see to have been errors of the past is to *try not to do it again.* Bold *a priori* assumptions, self-confident assertions, and unwillingness to give patient and impartial study to the theories of opponents are always prejudicial to the cause of truth. It is as undesirable as it is unpopular to be found in bad company; yet it is sometimes the case that a man of questionable excellence may be a zealous advocate of a great truth. We shall see, farther on, that the law of gravitation was at first rejected by good men for no better reason than that it was vigorously advocated by the infidel Voltaire. We need also to be occasionally reminded that great

leaders in the Church have insisted on beliefs that "science laughs at now."

6. Finally, the principle and method on which we must agree to test every new issue as it comes is the old apostolic precept, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

II

The Philosophical Apology

II

The Philosophical Apology

PHILOSOPHY, according to the simplest meaning of the word, is the love of wisdom. The human mind aspires to know things, and by observation, reflection, experiment, comparison, classification, and reason has formulated many principles which are supposed to furnish a rational explanation of the nature of the world. Hence philosophy, in the fullest sense, is a product of human thought resulting from efforts to determine the principles, causes, forces, and laws which underlie and explain the facts and phenomena of being. It is, accordingly, the fundamental science, the science of all sciences, and has for its object the ascertainment of the truth of things—the whole truth, so far as it may be known, and nothing but the truth.*

* "There is no province of human experience, there is nothing in the whole realm of reality, which lies beyond the domain of philosophy or to which philosophical investigation does not extend. Religion, so far from forming an exception to the all-embracing sphere of philosophy, is rather just that province which lies nearest to it; for, in one point of view, religion and

The true religion, therefore, has nothing to fear from a true philosophy, but may derive advantage from it. Christianity challenges investigation. She says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good;" "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, on these things exercise reason" (Phil. iv, 8).

But there has been much philosophy and science falsely so called; and also, be it said, much religion falsely so called. The pure-minded man seeks after that which is true both in religion and philosophy, and gives respectful attention to rational objections made to the things which he holds dear.

Why should there be any conflict between philosophy and religion, or between science and religion? The answer is that Christianity propounds a number of funda-

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philosophy have common objects and a common content, and in the explanation of religion philosophy may be said to be at the same time explaining itself."—Caird, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 3. New York, 1894.

mental doctrines which appear inconsistent with fundamental assumptions of certain schools of philosophy. Prominent among these doctrines are the following: (1) The idea of a personal God, Creator and Upholder of all things, infinite in perfections, and yet concerned about the welfare of mankind; (2) the doctrine of man as a child of God, bearing his image, exercising free will, and rebelling against his Creator: (3) the doctrine of Jesus Christ as an incarnation of God, and giving his life for the redemption of sinful men; (4) the ideas of pardon of sin, fellowship with God, and everlasting life after death. Such doctrines very naturally provoked the opposition of Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, and through all the Christian ages they have been assailed as inconsistent with some teaching of philosophy.

I. DUALISM.

One of the early systems of philosophy which came into conflict with Christianity was dualism, which affirms two eternal principles as essential to explain the phenomena of the world. The theory commends itself to many minds as a very

simple way of explaining certain facts which all men have observed. The dualism of good and evil, so conspicuous in the world, seemed to many naturally traceable to the dualism of mind and matter. In the ancient speculations of Chinese philosophers there are found traces of this twofold principle of material and immaterial causation; but a more remarkable development of the doctrine is found in the Persian system known as Zoroastrianism. Two antagonistic powers, or principles, are conceived as the sources of light and darkness, good and evil. The good principle is called Ormuzd, the evil principle Ahriman. This oriental dualism found further development in philosophical discussions of the nature of matter and spirit, and led on to the notion that spirit must be essentially good, and matter essentially evil—a notion which powerfully affected religious thinking, and lies at the root of much of the asceticism of the later Jewish and early Christian Churches. We observed in the previous lecture how this dualism allied itself with Greek philosophy and became prominent in the fantastic speculations of Gnosticism. It took a powerful hold of

Christian thought in the Manichæan heresy, and showed itself so subtle as to captivate for many years a mind like that of Augustine.

The old Gnosticism and Manichæism are now obsolete, and we are in position to inquire, without passion or prejudice, What great truth, if any, is there in dualism that so many brilliant minds should ever have been captivated by it? Is it not a fact that there is a realm of darkness and a realm of light? Good and evil force themselves on human thought; and these are contrary, the one to the other. Here is a real dualism, and all thoughtful inquirers after truth may well ask for some rational explanation. We need not wonder that the distinction between mind and matter, so obvious to human consciousness, was suggestive to the ancients of two eternal opposites.

The great, honest question of dualism is how to bridge the vast gulf between the finite and the infinite, between matter and spirit, good and evil. Christianity has her simple and ready answer in the revelation of Jesus Christ. God is spirit, and the source of all things. The material world

has its ground and reason in him. Moral evil is possible only in beings gifted with intelligent moral freedom. Such beings exist, and by abuse of their exalted gifts have originated moral disorder in the universe. When, where, and how this disorder first broke out, why God allows its existence, what purpose it may possibly serve in his infinite world-plan, and how the problem of evil is to work itself out in the eternal future, no man is able to declare. But, according to the Gospel, Jesus Christ has come into the world as a revelation of God, and through infinite wisdom, power, and love "restoreth all things."

And this is, in substance, the old story of the cross. It is the Christian philosophy of the universe. It is, and always has been, either offensive or unsatisfactory to some minds. It does not pretend to solve all mysteries; but it is irreconcilable with that dualism which sees in mind and matter two eternal opposites, or assumes that matter is essentially evil, or that God is so separate from the world that he cannot be supposed to limit himself into any personal contact with man.

The Christian apologist, however, need

not feel any special obligation, as a Christian, to define philosophically the nature of matter and spirit and to determine the exact relations of the two. It is very easy for human speculation to transcend all certain knowledge. Some Christian philosophers need a little wholesome admonition touching the limitations of human thought. We may feel confident in postulating monism against dualism and polytheism. But we may well hesitate before the task of elucidating the mystery of God's relation to the material universe. Who is sufficient for such a task?

There are two views now current touching the origin of the material world. It has been often said that God made the world out of nothing. But that statement is extra-biblical, and has been called into question by many as without foundation in reason or philosophy. Others, claiming to be devout theists, assert the possibility of the eternity of matter and conceive it as in some sense the eternal abode or manifestation of God. They reject the idea of two eternals, but affirm that matter has its ground of existence in God and is eternally dependent upon God. Whatever dualism

such a postulate of reason may imply, it is by its own definition the tentative hypothesis of a reverent monism.* Before such possibilities of thought it seems to me quite unnecessary for Christian apologists to take alarm. So long as one infinite and eternal Mind is acknowledged to be the ground and reason of the world, the Christian Faith is not disturbed. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ offers us no authoritative deliverance on the primordial possibilities of matter or of mind. Whether matter was

* "It seems to us that the theological doctrine of creation does not necessarily demand even that the matter of the world should have had a beginning at all. It is possible to hold that the world owes its existence entirely to the creative power of God, and yet at the same time to maintain that the world had no historical beginning. . . . We see a ray of light emanating from the sun, and we say that the ray owes its being to the sun. If it were proved that there never was a time in which that ray had not existed it would not in the slightest degree shake our conclusion that it owes its existence to the sun. What makes it a created or dependent object is not the fact that at one time it began to be. but the fact that at every time it is simply an emanation—that it has not at any moment of its being a spark of heat or light which it does not derive from its contact with that source from which it radiates. There is, therefore, no necessary antagonism between the doctrine of a divine creation and the doctrine of a world whose matter had no historical beginning."—Matheson, *Can the Old Faith Live with the New?* p. 101. Third ed., Edinburgh, 1889.

originally created out of nothing, or is without beginning, or is an eternal manifestation of God are questions of metaphysics, rather than religion. It is wisdom in the Christian apologist to refuse to complicate the defense of the Gospel with such speculative discussions. He is concerned to maintain as essential doctrine the great revelation that "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus, who is before all things, and in whom all things hold together" (1 Tim. ii, 5; Col. i, 17).

II. MONISM.

As against dualism, we may for our present purpose resolve all other philosophical systems under one head and call it monism. There are three schools of the monistic philosophy, commonly known as materialism, idealism, and pantheism. Materialistic monism affirms that matter is the only real and eternal substance, mind being but a product of organization and a mode of motion. Human thought is, therefore, only a modal function of the brain. Idealistic monism holds, on the contrary, that mind is the only real substance. The external

world of sense is but the product of self-conscious thought, having no objective reality apart from the thinking mind. Pantheistic monism identifies mind and matter in one eternal universal substance which constitutes the world of being. God and the universe are one, without personality or intelligence. Nature is God, ever changing in outward forms, but unalterably fixed in modes of operation. Human personality and self-consciousness are only temporary and incidental phases of the one infinite substance.

1. Let us look, first, at the postulates of idealistic monism. It doubtless contains some elements of truth; otherwise it could not so powerfully attract truth-loving minds. So far as this system affirms that all things have their origin and being in one eternal Spirit, without whom nothing exists or can exist, we offer no opposition, for this statement is in substance one of the fundamental doctrines of our faith. Paul declared to the men of Athens that "the God who made the world and all things therein . . . himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, and . . . in him we live, and move, and have our being." You may call this

idealism if you will, but it is the truth of God. Modern apologetics should have no controversy with one who is disposed to elaborate such an idealistic monism and adjust it to a well-defined system of thought. Philosophy may thus prove a helpful handmaid of the Christian faith. But when idealism is carried to the extreme of denying the reality of the external world, and, with Berkeley, insisting that the essence of all objects perceptible or conceivable is only an idea of the mind; or, with Fichte, arguing that the outer world, the order of nature, and the very idea of God himself are self-creations of the mind; or, with Schelling, constructing an idealism so transcendental as to maintain that God, the absolute Spirit, comesgraduallytoself-consciousnessthrough the act of creation and first knows himself in man; or, with Hegel, resolving all things, even God himself, into an eternal process of becoming, ever unfolding, but never unfolded, having no independent self-consciousness apart from human consciousness, but a sort of universal personality, which realizes itself in every separate state of human consciousness, and which, multiplied by the individuals of the race, becomes so

many different states of one eternal Mind—when idealism is carried to such extremes we shrink away from its dream-like theories and feel instinctively that they are inconsistent with the facts of our own consciousness. These theories are not sufficient to furnish a satisfactory explanation of the idea of God, the reality of the world, and the consciousness in man of personal freedom and responsible activity.

2. Let us consider next what materialistic monism has to say. It is probable that the extravagance of modern idealism is largely responsible for the remarkable prevalence of materialism at the present time. Scientific research has in recent years disclosed so much in relation to the laws and forces of the material world that not a few jump to the conclusion that natural science may yet account for everything. There is no room left in nature for God. Nature is all the God we are to recognize. The childish, unscientific Hebrew saw Mount Sinai altogether in smoke and the whole mountain quaking greatly, and he imagined that a personal God descended upon it in fire and proclaimed himself as Jehovah, who brought the

chosen nation out of the house of bondage. But some prophets of modern science tell us a vast deal about protoplasm, and chemical affinity, and the correlation of forces, and light and heat as modes of motion; and they parade all these, like so many golden calves, before the simple child of faith and say, "These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

According to this theory the universe is one material substance, existing in its primordial elements from eternity. Matter and its properties are all-sufficient to account for whatever now exists. Persistent and eternal forces inherent in matter are the causes of all change and development. The origin of life is no greater a mystery with the atheistic materialist than is the origin of evil with the speculative theologian. "If it were given me," says Huxley, "to look beyond the abyss of geologically recorded time to the still more remote period when the earth was passing through physical and chemical conditions which it can no more see again than a man can recall his infancy, I should expect to be a witness of the evolution of living protoplasm from not-living matter. I should

expect it to appear under forms of great simplicity, endowed, like existing fungi, with the power of determining new protoplasm from such matters as ammonium carbonates, oxalates, and tartrates, alkaline and earthy phosphates, and water, without the aid of light."* We observe that Huxley here assumes everything. He says he would "expect to see" what he has already assumed as an essential part of his hypothesis. By assumption he has put into his major premise what he expects to find.

Thorough-going materialism, moreover, maintains that all the activities of human thought are merely results of cerebral motion. Self-consciousness is but an attribute of matter under certain conditions. Feeling, intelligence, and volition are natural functions of the matter of the brain—secretions, some say, of the brain-substance, much as gall is a secretion of the liver.

These theories of modern materialism do not seem to differ essentially from the ancient atomic philosophy, which was

* *Critiques and Addresses*, p. 239. This oft-cited passage is notable as an exhibition of the stern though mildly expressed dogmatism of which an eminent scientist may become unconsciously possessed.

taught by Leucippus and Democritus hundreds of years before the Christian era. Those old lights of science maintained that the universe, including all spiritual being, consists of indivisible atoms, which, through differences of form, position, and motion, give rise to all known phenomena of matter, life, and mind. But modern physical science has analyzed, defined, and classified the elements of matter in a manner utterly unknown to the ancients.

What attitude, now, should the modern Christian apologist hold toward this atheistic philosophy?

(1) First of all, we welcome at the hands of men of science all real solutions of physical phenomena which they are able to present. We hail with joy every new discovery in the mysteries of nature and the laws of the material world. We have no fear of the revelations of true science, and most cheerfully accept them when they are clearly shown. But we know that one may be a great scientist and a poor philosopher. Many and many a time has it been seen that a man may have deep insight into some grave question, and yet be purblind to another less difficult to solve.

(2) We aver that materialism gives no adequate explanation of the nature and operations of the human mind. Its hypothesis of thought as a secretion of the brain or a mere mode of action comes far short of a sufficient explanation of the facts of consciousness, of reason, of long and intricate trains of argument. Not many thoughtful minds will soon accept and be satisfied with the idea that Euclid's elements of geometry, the epics of Homer and Vergil and Milton, or the philosophical speculations of Plato and Leibnitz and Huxley and Herbert Spencer are nothing more than the products of physical motion in the gray matter of the brain.

(3) Materialism gives no adequate explanation of moral distinctions and the action of conscience in the soul of man. Its fundamental principles require that all moral conditions and acts of the will be explained as necessary results of certain physical movements of brain and nerves. The difference between a criminal and a virtuous man is, accordingly, due to some disorder in the make-up of the bad man's brain and spinal cord. All that we call moral evil is the natural result of nervous and muscular disease!

(4) Materialism empties the facts and phenomena of religion of all significance and value. A personal God, a loving Father of the spirits of all flesh, a redeeming Christ, and salvation from sin are so many delusions of the brain. They answer to no realities, and therefore the sooner they are exploded the better for mankind.

(5) The assumptions and assertions of materialism may be offset by the opposite assertions of idealism. It is just as reasonable and safe to deny the existence of matter as of mind. I think, on the whole, I have more sympathy with the idealist than with the materialist. If one persistently deny the reality of matter we may, perhaps, reasonably hope that some day he will dash his head against a stone and be converted. But what method of persuasion can be expected to affect him who denies the reality of his own personal existence? What are we to think of reasoning with a man who makes great show of reason, and appeals to your reason as a reasoning being to prove that there is no such thing as a rational mind, and what you call reason is the complex movement of physical atoms over which you have no real control?

3. Pantheistic monism seeks to avoid the extremes of idealism and materialism, and yet to appropriate some elements of both. According to this theory God and the universe are one. But spirit is not reduced to a mode of matter; rather, matter seems to be exalted into spirit. The one infinite, however, is neither matter nor spirit, as separate and distinguishable entities. It is conceived as one substance or one being, according as the idea of matter or of spirit is made most prominent. In the system of Spinoza, mind and matter are conceived as different aspects or attributes of one infinite substance. In Hegel's system the infinite is conceived rather ideally as spirit, unfolding and objectifying itself in the processes of the universe. So it appears that pantheists differ in their methods of conceiving the nature and manifestation of the infinite. But in general it is correct to say that the essence of pantheism is the concept of all things bound fast in infinite unity. The phenomenal world is possessed and pervaded by an impersonal, unconscious, or, it may be, semiconscious *anima mundi*, or world-spirit, which is, nevertheless, identical with the world itself. The universe is a mani-

festation of God, and he is the sum total of it all. The human spirit is only a transient phase or shadow of the infinite, into which it is again absorbed, like a bubble bursting on the ocean. All causes and events are connected by an infinite chain of necessity.

This pantheistic conception of the universe has ever had a charm for thoughtful minds. It is traceable in Hindu and Greek philosophy; and many in our day are captivated by the idea of divine immanence, and the broad and sublime suggestion that all phenomena are so many immediate manifestations of Deity. And there is not a little in all this which accords with well-known doctrines of the Christian faith. For, according to the Scriptures, God is in all things and through all things. What a pantheist was Jeremiah, who wrote of God on this wise: "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith Jehovah? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not find him?" (Jer. xxiii, 24.) Hear also how the Hebrew Psalmist speaks: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the

morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me" (Psalm cxxxix, 7–10). The Hebrew heard God's voice in the thunder; the clouds were his pavilion; he caused the grass to grow, he filled the trees with sap, and watered the hills with his rain. But the difference between this Hebrew pantheism and that of rationalistic philosophy is the extreme difference between theism and atheism. What boots it to call the whole universe God, and yet say in the same breath that it is a substance or a being without conciousness, intelligence, or personality? Such a God is no different from the fetich, save, perhaps, in imaginable bulk; and it is a remarkable fact, often observed, that pantheism in theory begets polytheism in practice.

Against pantheism we may urge nearly all the objections we make to materialism. It furnishes no adequate philosophy of the human mind. It makes our intuitions of moral responsibility a pitiable delusion. Self-conscious personality, with its hope of immortality, is only a delusive dream, and destined to sink into nonentity when life's fitful fever ends. Pantheism leads logically

into a dreary nescience, a stark agnosticism, which effectually explodes the idea of a personal God, and bids us worship the universe instead. We would say to the admirers of this vague system, "Ye worship ye know not what." We do know something about matter and its laws; we know something about mind and its operations; but what know ye? Substance, being, a vast transcendental somewhat, which is neither matter nor mind! Everything tangible or thinkable is thus transformed into one vast phantasm of unreality.

III. NATURAL SCIENCE.

In connection with questions of philosophy we must also notice some aspects of what is often called "the conflict of science and religion." The supposed conflict is chiefly in certain interpretations of Scripture touching the origin of the world and of man.

About the middle of the sixteenth century Copernicus promulgated the helio centric theory of the solar system; but, dying soon after that time, his theory attracted no general attention. But half a century later a distinguished professor of

mathematics at Pisa adopted the views of Copernicus, and astonished the theologians of the Inquisition by presuming to teach that the sun was the center of the planetary system, and that the earth revolved both on its axis and also around the sun. The defenders of the orthodox faith at once pronounced these views absurd, false in philosophy, and contrary to the Holy Scriptures. Galileo was required to kneel down in sackcloth, and swear upon the Holy Gospels never again to teach such heresy. And even after submitting to that self-stultification he was for the rest of his life virtually treated as a condemned criminal.

Isaac Newton was born the year that Galileo died. His great contribution to science was the discovery and elaboration of the law of gravitation. But this discovery brought him into collision with theologians, who jumped to the conclusion that a theory of holding the universe together by means of natural law must logically banish God from the world and lead to atheism. And, indeed, why should they not so judge when such an infidel as Voltaire, who was living in London when Newton died, was so enthusiastic over the

idea that he went back to France and labored hard to propagate the Newtonian philosophy on the continent of Europe? Behold, said some zealous apologists of the Christian faith, how a blasphemous infidel is pleased with Newton's theory! That one fact alone was quite sufficient in the minds of many to condemn the law of gravitation, and smirch the theological soundness of all who accepted it.

Contemporaneously with Newton's discoveries and continuing into our time, the conflict between Genesis and geology has attracted the attention of Christian apologists. Scientific research has long since concluded that the world was not created in six days, and the labor of apologists for the last hundred years has been to reconcile this conclusion with the statements of the Book of Genesis. It may be useful for some of us to remember that ardent defenders of the Bible once insisted that the fossils in the rock were originally created there just as they now appear! Others argued that they were deposited at the time of the deluge. The dogmatic assurance with which some very able theologians have been wont to speak on such

subjects may be seen in the following statement of Richard Watson, first published about seventy years ago: "On the antiquity of the human race geology has been compelled already to give its testimony to the accuracy of Moses, and the time is probably not far distant when a similar testimony will be educed from it as to the antiquity of the globe." *

But in spite of all such deliverances, what is the testimony of science to-day? Not only the immense antiquity of the globe, but also the antiquity of man on the earth far back of the period once commonly supposed, is now the prevalent opinion of scientific men; and not only the antiquity of man, but his evolution from preexistent organic forms of a lower order. Evolution is now the commanding hypothesis, and idealism, materialism, and pantheism all alike employ its facts and postulates to establish their several theories of the universe. The science of biology also adds its strong testimony to confirm the theory of evolution; and so the origin of all organic forms, both of animal and vegetable life, is brought under the domain of

* *Theological Institutes*, vol. i, p. 251.

natural law, and the idea of immediate instantaneous creation by an extraordinary, miraculous act of God seems about to be relegated to the notions of a defunct theology.

There is, perhaps, no living issue of philosophy or science with which Christian apologetics may be supposed to have greater concern at the present time than with the postulates of evolution. Many among us look upon the whole theory as inconsistent with the biblical doctrine of creation and inimical to the Christian faith. Here, then, is a grave question. How are we, as theologians and apologists, to deal with the doctrines of evolution?

One way is to follow the example of the older theologians, who promptly met and refuted the Copernican theory and the law of gravitation and the doctrines of geology by the confident assertion that the new-fangled theory is preposterous, false in philosophy, and contrary to the Holy Scriptures; that is, we may reduce the issue to this sole alternative—either to reject evolution or give up the Bible and the Christian faith. But would it be a sign of wisdom, or of folly, to hazard our religion on an

issue like that? Have we learned nothing from Galileo and Sir Isaac Newton? Does any man of sober sense believe to-day that such a question can be settled by bold assertion or by votes?

There is another and, I think, far better way to meet such questions. It would have been better had some of those theologians who opposed Galileo and Newton reasoned on this wise: "Is it not possible that God has arranged the solar system in just such a manner as Copernicus and Galileo say, and may he not be running it night and day, year in and year out, on that very plan? May we not conceive God as 'upholding all things by the word of his power,' and also in perfect harmony with the law of gravitation?" The discreet apologist will take a similar attitude touching the hypothesis of evolution. Why should we deem it a thing incredible that God created the universe and all that is in it in perfect harmony with the laws and processes of evolution? Is it not as reasonable to believe that God brought all things into existence by a law of evolution as that he continually upholds all things by a law of gravitation?

I, for one, maintain that the only proper method of treating such questions is to leave them open to full and free discussion. Many among us are strong in the conviction that the evolution of man from a lower order of animal life has not been proven. But the same thing was once properly and truly said of the Newtonian law of gravitation. If the doctrine of evolution be false we can safely leave it to the searching tests of free investigation and debate. If untrue, it will sooner or later come to naught. But if it be true ye cannot overthrow it, and may be found to be fighting against God.

But some man will say, "Evolution contradicts the biblical record of creation by the word of God." That, however, is a matter of interpretation. There are more ways of explaining the first chapters of Genesis than there are of setting aside the facts and arguments of science. Where is the scholar who now holds to the literal interpretation of the first chapter of the Bible? We have the geological explanation, which aims to show that the six days correspond with so many eras of development in the crust of the earth. Then we

have the cosmological explanation, based on the nebular hypothesis of the universe, which makes the days so many æons of cosmical evolution. There also is the restitution theory of Chalmers, which puts the ages of geology between the first and second verses of the chapter, and tries to explain the rest literally. And there is John Pye Smith's hypothesis of a local creation; and also the poetical interpretation, which sees in the picture of six days of labor and the sabbath rest an ideal or symbolical representation of great religiou truths. These numerous theories show that it is much easier to adjust the biblical record to a scientific hypothesis than it is to refute the hypothesis. We know that unique literary compositions are capable of various explanations, but we cannot so easily twist the testimony of the solid rocks.

The most explicit statement of Genesis touching the creation of man is the familiar passage, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Does this scripture at all determine just how God created man?

The more carefully you examine it the more certainly will you find that it is remarkably indefinite on just those points where you would like particular information. The theistic evolutionist declares that the language admirably accords with his theory. It teaches that man is a product of the organic union of matter and of life, and, therefore, he most naturally speaks of "mother earth" and Father God. But how long a time it was during which God was forming that dust into the organism of a human body, and how long thereafter he breathed therein before the man became a living soul, are questions on which neither this scripture nor any other has a word to say. For aught that any one can prove to the contrary, the preparation of the dust may have required a million years, and God may have been breathing into his nostrils another million years before he completed the evolution of the first human soul.

IV. AGNOSTICISM.

There are many questions of philosophy and science which cannot in the limits of this lecture be so much as mentioned. But

I will in conclusion make a passing allusion to agnosticism. The earliest commingling of Christianity and speculative philosophy produced the systems of gnosticism. Is it too much to hope that, as gnosticism was one of the first philosophical troublers of the Christian faith, the agnosticism of the nineteenth century may be the last? Gnosticism assumed to know almost everything; agnosticism insists on knowing nothing of the power that is back of all phenomena. The ground of all things, the ultimate source of being, says Herbert Spencer, is unknowable, and we may not ascribe to it our notions of personality.

A careful study of the assumptions, both of gnosticism and agnosticism, may perhaps suggest to us something more rational and satisfactory than either of these systems has been able to furnish mankind. The world of thinking people, in spite of all the assertions of agnosticism, will probably go right on believing and saying that there is all the difference in the world between knowing everything and knowing nothing. There is between these unknowable extremes an immense territory of which we know a great deal, and there is to our thought a marvel-

ous degree of the manifestation of God in it all.*

We may all, however, derive some profitable hints from agnosticism. It is well for the Christian apologist to remember that, according to the Scriptures, no man can expect to find out the Almighty to perfection. Let us acknowledge with becoming humility

* Matheson observes that gnosticism and agnosticism "both take it for granted that the essence of God is his infinitude; and from that premise they quite logically conclude that, if infinitude cannot be known, God is therefore unknowable. But we deny that the essence of God is infinitude. Infinitude is not an essence; it is a quality or attribute; it is a certain degree of intensity possessed by an object already existing. . . . Were we to ask a seeker after God what he is seeking, and were he to answer that he was in search of the infinite, we should again ask, 'The infinite what? Is it the infinite universe, or the infinite void or the infinite mind?' A man may seek the infinite without seeking God. Infinitude is a quality that belongs to time and space, and perhaps to matter itself. That which makes God different from time and space and matter is not his infinitude, but his nature; and therefore to know God is not to know his infinitude, but to know his nature. Paradoxical as it may sound, it is as a finite and not as an infinite being that God must be known. We must form a definite conception of what he is, and then we shall be at liberty to extend that conception indefinitely. If the result of our efforts to extend it should only be to teach us the impossibility of exhausting its contents, we shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing that our inability to comprehend God's infinitude has been taught us by our knowledge of the nature of God himself."—*Can the Old Faith Live with the New?* pp. 63–66.

the limitations of human thought; for some are disposed to be "wise above what is written." We have sometimes been tempted to think that to certain overzealous and dogmatic defenders of our faith it would be a benefit to be a little more agnostic.

What may we now conclude as to the true method of philosophical apologetic? We answer:

1. Nothing will be achieved by denunciation and proscription. The well-informed and truly able apologist will abstain from everything that assumes the air of supercilious antagonism to systems of speculative thought which have engaged the best energy of the most powerful minds. God forbid that we should speak with contempt of men like Spinoza and Hegel and Huxley and Herbert Spencer, and deny the sincerity of their inquiries after truth. The fact that they have not been persuaded of the truth of doctrines we hold dear should admonish us of what Butler's *Analogy* emphasized, namely, that the evidences of Christianity belong to the class called *probable*, not *demonstrative*.

2. Let us not refuse to take from any and all these schools of philosophy whatever

may help us to a better knowledge of the truth. We may learn something from dualism, and idealism, and materialism, and pantheism, and agnosticism. The true philosophical apology takes cognizance of all opposing theories, concedes whatever truth is apparent in any of them, and welcomes it for its own sake. Able Christian apologists have sometimes fallen into error, and their opponents have been clearly in the right. Let us not forget that some opinions once denounced as heresy were subsequently found to be in harmony with the law and the prophets. After the way which some call heresy, so now worship we the God of our fathers.

3. It behooves us, especially in philosophical discussions, to avoid confusing things that differ. Passion and prejudice are too often allowed to sway the judgment. We may hastily reject a great truth for no better reason than that it is heralded by a Voltaire or a Thomas Paine. In his work on *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels* (p. 27), Professor Bruce makes the following observation, which I think is an excellent illustration of the spirit and the attitude of the true apologist: "It is very important to

grasp the truth that modern agnosticism and the doctrine of evolution, though often associated in fact, are by no means inseparable. An impression to the contrary might readily mislead the advocate of Christian theism into a precarious policy of uncompromising antagonism to prevalent scientific views concerning the origin of the world, as if to refute these were a matter of life and death. I, for my part, have no sympathy with such a view of the apologist's present duty. I feel no jealousy of the doctrine of evolution, and see no occasion for cherishing such a feeling. I do not profess competency to pronounce on the scientific pretensions of the doctrine; but I am very sensible of the grandeur of the view which it presents of the universe, and I am not indisposed to accept it as truth, and to acknowledge the obligation thence arising to adjust our whole mode of thinking on religious questions to the new situation."

4. It ought not to be a matter of regret that some old arguments, once deemed conclusive, give place to other modes of thought. It is rather the sign of life and power in a system that it can adjust itself to new conditions. It has come to pass that the time-

honored argument from design, that most popular of all arguments to "prove the existence of God from the light of nature"—even that old teleological argument has fallen into disrepute; for pessimists employ it to show that, if an intelligent Designer planned the world of animal life, the greater part of the evidence in hand goes to show him up as a mighty, malevolent Gorilla, rather than a benevolent Creator. And so, in the hands of a Schopenhauer or a Hartmann, the argument is made to prove to some men's minds that, if this world is not the worst possible world, it is wholly bad.

5. Finally, the Christian apologist can afford to be liberal. His wisest method is that of philosophical calmness and sobriety. No good comes from denouncing and exasperating men whom we think to be in error. It is better, if possible, to make friends of them. I would say to the idealist, the materialist, and the pantheist: "You have taken hold of great truths. Your systems contain elements which have arrested the attention of philosophic minds in all ages. But, I beseech you, observe that the Christian concept of God and the world accounts for more of the facts in

question than any other. The biblical idea of God and the world has been on probation for several millenniums, and claims to be more simple, more comprehensive, and more rational than any other philosophy of the universe."

We do not forget that many deceivers have gone out into the world. It is also true that many a seeker after truth has missed his mark. The only safe and proper method of procedure with all the issues raised by philosophy and science is that of the old Christian proverb, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

III

The Literary-Critical Apology

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The Literary-Critical Apology

BIBLICAL criticism is as old as the biblical canon. A generation before our Lord was born the rabbinical schools of Hillel and Shammai disputed over the rank and sacredness of the Books of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon and Ruth and Esther and Ezekiel. The old Church historian Eusebius records the doubts existing in his day touching the genuineness of the Epistles of James, Second Peter, Second and Third John, and the Book of Revelation. In the discussion of the authorship of John's Apocalypse, Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, produced one of the finest specimens of higher criticism extant, taking the ground that the book was not the work of the apostle.

To many it may seem strange that such criticism should ever have been regarded as inimical to the Christian faith. But to understand its reason we must note that back of all literary criticism there are certain philosophical principles. Critical at-

tacks upon the Bible usually assume some postulate of philosophy. The allegorical method of interpretation was the result of influences which Greek and oriental philosophy had exerted on the minds of Alexandrian Jews. The mythical theory, as applied by Strauss to the interpretation of the Gospels, is a logical outgrowth of certain doctrines of the Hegelian philosophy. The creation of the world in six days, the universality of the flood, the sun and moon standing still at the command of Joshua, when taken as narratives of fact, prejudice philosophical and scientific men against the Bible and provoke assaults upon the credibility of such narratives.

The oppositions of criticism are also provoked by extravagant claims which are sometimes made for the Bible. Since the time of the Reformation the Holy Scriptures have been exalted by Protestants, and declared to be the only and infallible rule of faith and practice. This seemed to be a natural and necessary offset to the Romish claim of an infallible Church. Whatever truth there is in the doctrine of an infallible Bible, it is so mixed up with corollaries of questionable soundness that one hardly

knows just what is really claimed for the Holy Scriptures as a record of divine revelation. What authority is there to-day in Protestantism to decide for us precisely what "inspiration" means?

When men in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were formulating creeds and confessions of the Protestant faith they found occasion to declare the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. It was generally assumed that a book-revelation from God must needs be perfect and infallible. The next step was to affirm that every part of this sacred volume was equally inspired. This proposition seemed further to require that every word and letter, and even the vowel points, were inspired of God. All this was very logical. Once assume absolute perfection of the book, and what remains but to insist that every jot and tittle must partake of the divine perfection?

But these teachings soon led to bitter controversy. Scholars observed that the Greek of the New Testament lacked the perfection and elegance of the old Attic writers. Whereupon the so-called purists took alarm, and learned enthusiasts, assuming that a

contrary opinion necessarily impeached the honor of God's word, insisted, in the face of glaring facts, that the New Testament Greek was as pure and elegant as the classical Greek. And that controversy was kept up for a hundred years!

Along with this contest came also that other about the inspiration of the vowel points of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Buxtorfs, the greatest Hebrew scholars of that day, maintained this supposed necessary adjunct of the current doctrine of inspiration; and one of the Swiss Confessions embodied it as an article of the Christian faith. Was the argument not a simple and conclusive one? The written word is a perfect word, for it is the gift of God; the vowel points are a portion of this written word; therefore, the points are inspired.

But this kind of faith met a more serious trial when, a little later, the science of lower criticism began its work of comparing the ancient manuscripts and discovering thousands of various readings in the different copies of the New Testament. The enemies of the Bible seized upon these facts and used them to cast doubt and uncertainty upon the sacred records. Then there were

paroxysms of alarm. Those who argued that every word and letter was inspired felt the ground giving way under them. If the Almighty infallibly dictated the words of the original autographs, why has he not preserved them?

Another form of attack was made on the ground of immoralities alleged to be sanctioned by the Bible. The polygamy of the patriarchs and of David and of Solomon; the apparent indorsement of slavery in the laws of Moses; the barbarous destruction of the Canaanites by the command of God; the vow of Jephthah, and the inhuman sacrifice of his daughter—these and other like monstrosities recorded in the Old Testament were declared utterly incompatible with the idea that the Scriptures are the pure word of God.

Other attacks were based upon the alleged discrepancies of the Bible. Statements in the Books of Samuel and Kings do not agree with the parallel passages in Chronicles. The Gospels also contain conflicting and irreconcilable accounts of the same transaction. And, finally, the old attack of Porphyry on the genuineness of the Book of Daniel is revived in these latter days, and not on Daniel only, but also on Isaiah and

Zechariah. The Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is set aside, and Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs are no longer attributed to Solomon.

In view of these inroads of criticism, the devout Christian who accepts and loves his Bible as the word of God may easily become perplexed, and ask if, after such a sweep of criticism, there is anything left of the old Bible worth holding fast. Our concern is to know how to meet the questions raised by this kind of criticism. There are thousands of thousands among us who have found the Bible a most precious treasure. To everyone who has learned to appreciate its heavenly truths it is indeed the very word of the Lord. His soul kindles into holy flame as he reads the story of Abraham and Jacob, of Joseph and Moses, of Samuel and David. The Psalms are heavenly manna to his heart. The prophets are so many voices of God to his soul, and their visions carry him away into the heavenly places. In his New Testament he comes face to face with the Lord Jesus as with a familiar friend. Peter and James and John and Paul speak to him as so many apostles of the risen Saviour and instruct him in the ways of life. What a

shock may one of these devout readers feel if you say to him: "There are more than a hundred thousand various readings in the different manuscripts of the New Testament, and no man can now say for certain just what were the words of Jesus or of Paul or of John in several texts which you have loved and written on your heart. The closing words of the Lord's prayer—'Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory'—are not found in the most ancient copies, and there is almost conclusive evidence that they formed no part of the prayer as Christ gave it. The beautiful story of the angel that went down at certain seasons and troubled the waters of Bethesda (John v, 3, 4) is an interpolation; and the same is true of the oft-cited story of the woman taken in adultery (John viii, 1–11)."

In view of such results of the scientific study of the Scriptures, is it any wonder that some cry out: "Away with your science! Away with your criticism! You are tearing my dear old Bible to pieces; nay, ye are taking away my Lord, and I know not where ye will lay him!" If the lower criticism work such unhappy results, what must the higher criticism do?

The Christian apologist, however, cannot avoid the demands of scientific criticism. What shall he do with these questions of texts and dates and authors? And what attitude shall the Christian minister assume on the subject? There are three ways of dealing with the claims of biblical criticism, some one of which we shall be obliged to follow:

1. We may ignore them and keep still about the whole subject of literary criticism. Some deem this best. Do not disturb the peace of pious souls, they say; they know nothing about these things; they are not able to understand the arguments and proofs employed, and will not be benefited by any attempts to make them wiser. Such a policy of silence, I doubt not, is good for certain times and places. It may be properly observed in the ordinary worship of the Church. Common discretion should prevent a minister from parading such topics before a promiscuous audience. There are even considerable portions of the Bible itself which are not suitable for public reading in the congregation. But are we to abstain from meddling with these matters at all times

and places? That would be a deathblow to all biblical science, and, in its very nature, self-stultifying. Such a principle of silence is unworthy of men who love the truth.

2. Another way of dealing with the matter is to wage open warfare against the results of criticism. So the purists of the seventeenth century did with the belief that the language of the New Testament is not as pure as the classical Greek. So others did with the denial of the inspiration of the vowel points. And so did others deal with the Copernican system and the law of gravitation. But is it a sign of wisdom or of honor for the defenders of Christianity to keep up, age after age, that kind of warfare?

3. I venture to say that there is a more excellent way. On such questions as those now under consideration *warfare* is clearly out of place. We cannot determine just what Jesus or Paul said by a tilt at arms. The fate of our modern Israel, so far as it depends on settling matters of criticism, cannot be decided by a duel between any modern David and Goliath. The conflict, if any, belongs to a different world of

action. Assertions, boasts, threats all go for nothing here. It is simply a subject for careful inquiry and calm, intelligent judgment. What are the facts, and what is the truth about them?

In attempting to present some of the facts and methods of the higher criticism I submit two propositions: (1) That the principal facts and conclusions of criticism may be so presented to persons of ordinary intelligence as not to disturb their faith, even though they overturn some of their cherished opinions; (2) that those questions of criticism which are not settled, or not capable of being absolutely settled by means within our reach, should never be recognized in Christian apologetics as fundamental or essential to our faith in Christ. I shall resolve these two propositions into one as I proceed, in some detail, to show what higher criticism claims as facts, how they may be fairly stated, and what relation they sustain to modern apologetics.

I begin with the Book of Ecclesiastes. Ancient tradition assigns its authorship to Solomon. At the beginning of the book we read, "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem." In the

twelfth and thirteenth verses of the same chapter the writer says: "I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven." This language certainly has all the appearance of a direct claim by the author to be Solomon, the son of David. And yet, with almost complete unanimity, the great critics of our day regard the book as one of the latest compositions of the Old Testament. Harman's *Introduction*, which the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church prescribe as a regular study of all candidates for the ministry, says: "There can be little doubt that it is the latest book of the canon, and could not have been written earlier than the time of Malachi; but in all probability it was written still later" (p. 318). Adam Clarke, the time-honored authority in Wesleyan exegesis, says that the attempts to overthrow the evidences of a post-exile date are "often trifling and generally ineffectual."

In this one example now before us we have a fair illustration of the nature of higher criticism. I have sometimes wondered that those who make the loudest out-

cry against such criticism when directed upon the Pentateuch and Isaiah seem never to have heard of this remarkable onslaught on Ecclesiastes. In the face of the assertions of the book itself, we are told by cautious and conservative scholars that the work cannot be reasonably believed to be the composition of Solomon. Their reasons for this conclusion are mainly of three kinds: (1) The Hebrew in which the book is written belongs to the latest period of the literature. This, of course, is a matter of which the unlearned reader cannot judge. (2) The tone, style of thought, forms of expression, social and political allusions are incompatible with what is elsewhere written of the character and reign of Solomon. (3) The old Jewish literature abounds with books which bear an assumed name. Such are the Psalms of Solomon, the Apocalypse of Baruch, the Ascension of Isaiah, and the Book of Enoch, which Jude quotes in his epistle. In the Old Testament Apocrypha, First and Second Esdras and the Wisdom of Solomon belong to the same class. There are also other reasons which are not readily explained to one who is not trained in the details of literary criticism. It is

important to observe that the later Jewish writers, also, were much given to the production of compositions bearing an assumed name. And this kind of literature is found among other peoples. The dialogues of Plato purport to be conversations between Socrates and his disciples; but we all understand that they are the idealized language of an idealized Socrates.

Such are the main grounds for rejecting the Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes. Whether or no they are sufficient to prove the proposition I shall not here attempt to say. But, so long as they have convinced the majority of truth-loving scholars, it is not expedient to withhold the knowledge of the facts from the people out of fear of disturbing the faith of some pious souls. Nor is it wise to go about declaring that all who do not accept the genuineness of Ecclesiastes are destructive critics, traitors in the Lord's camp, undermining the faith of the Church, and sowing the seeds of infidelity.

The facts being as I have stated, the question of apologetics is simply how to adjust the biblical revelation to such conditions. There could be no difficulty in the case but for the assumption which some

make that it is incompatible with the dignity and purpose of Holy Scripture that it should contain a pseudograph. They are hasty to declare that, if the book is not the work of Solomon, it is a sheer forgery. But is that the only alternative? Is it a mark of wisdom for the apologist to force that issue? Might not the student of Greek literature as truly say, "If the dialogues of Socrates, as reported by Plato, are not the real sayings of the great philosopher, they must be forgeries?" Where is the necessity of insisting that the Bible cannot be set in the same forms of literary composition which are found among all cultivated peoples? It is beyond controversy that the Scriptures were given at different times and in many different forms. It has been the boast of apologists that the Bible, as a body of rich and varied literature, is without a rival in the world. Why, then, should not some of its parts have been given in the idealistic way so common in other literatures? Those who affirm that the Bible cannot contain a book that assumes another than its real author's name do so on the assumption of their own competency to declare, *a priori*, what the Bible

ought to be. The only sound and scientific method is, first, to make a careful survey of all the facts in question, and then proceed to formulate conclusions and theories according to the facts; *not*, first, to set up an *a priori* dogma as to what the Bible cannot be supposed to contain, and then force opposing facts into agreement with the self-made dogma.

Let us next examine the Book of Proverbs and see how the same disturbing issues meet us there also. The book begins with the title, "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel." Most readers on opening the book would naturally suppose that these words apply to the entire collection of proverbs at the head of which they stand. But we find upon examination that this book contains at least eight different collections of proverbs, each with a different heading. One collection is attributed to Agur, the son of Jakeh (xxx, 1), and another is entitled "The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him" (xxxi, 1). Another large collection is said to be "proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out" (xxv, 1).

Hezekiah lived some three hundred years after Solomon, from which it appears that the Book of Proverbs, as we now have it, is a compilation made centuries after the time of the famous son of David. You might easily disturb a devout reader of the Bible by merely calling his attention to these facts and offering him no explanation. But there the facts are, clearly recorded in the book itself; and yet thousands have never in their reading stopped to think how utterly inconsistent they are with the title of the book placed at the head of the first chapter. In 1 Kings iv, 32, it is said that Solomon "spake three thousand proverbs;" but this book contains in all only nine hundred and fifteen verses. What has become of the greater portion of those spoken by the wise king?

Taking now the Book of Proverbs for both proofs and illustrations, why should we have any embarrassment or trouble in teaching to old or young the following things? 1. The title placed at the beginning of a book in the Bible is not necessarily a sure witness as to all that the book contains. Along with this Book of Proverbs ascribed to Solomon there is bound up

much other matter from various authors. 2. This book contains the clearest evidence within itself of having been compiled centuries after the death of the wise man to whom it is customary to attribute all the proverbs. 3. There is no sufficient evidence to prove that Solomon was the real author of any considerable number of the proverbs of this book. He may have been only a collector of proverbs. As the Book of Ecclesiastes says of him, "Because the preacher was wise, he . . . sought out, and set in order many proverbs" (xii, 9). 4. The proverbs themselves are not dependent for their value on any of these questions of authorship. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise," is just as wholesome advice and as profitable for instruction in righteousness whether first uttered by some one a thousand years after Solomon or a thousand years before him. If anyone say that this is detracting from the glory of Solomon, it is quite sufficient to answer that he stands in no need of a borrowed glory. It is far better to seek after the truth than after the glory of Solomon. The apocryphal book entitled The Wisdom of Solo-

mon is worthy to have come from even a greater than Solomon; but no one at this day believes that it was written by Solomon, although in chapter ix, verses 7 and 8 this claim is evidently made.

Let us now pass from Solomon to his father David and see how he fares at the hands of modern criticism. The Christian world is accustomed to speak of the "Psalms of David" as if the one hundred and fifty different songs of the Hebrew Psalter were all composed by that sweet singer of Israel, the son of Jesse. According to ancient tradition, David was a gifted musician and singer. When he brought the ark to Jerusalem he instituted there a service of song (1 Chron. xv). It is not improbable that some kind of collection of psalms was made in his day and under his direction. It may have included some of his own compositions. But our present Book of Psalms consists of five distinct books, or collections. Some of the psalms are ascribed to the sons of Korah; a number to Asaph; others to Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman the Ezrahite; one is ascribed to Moses; two to Solomon; and the Septuagint ascribes a number to Hag-

gai and Zechariah. Psalms xiv and liii are almost literally identical; but they fall in different collections, like the same hymn repeated in different hymnals. Psalm cviii, which falls in the fifth book, is composed of portions of Psalms lvii and lx, which belong to the second book. These facts show beyond all question that the Hebrew Psalter is neither the composition nor the compilation of David. The book contains songs of the exiles who sat down by the rivers of Babylon and wept when they remembered Zion (Psalm cxxxvii). It appears to be a collection of centuries of song in Israel, and the present arrangement into five books was evidently made after the Babylonian exile.

And yet this whole collection has ever been associated with the name of David. New Testament writers refer to the book as if it were the work of David. In Hebrews iv, 7, the Holy Spirit is recognized as speaking in the Psalms, and the writer cites a passage from the ninety-fifth psalm, using the simple formula, "saying in David." But that psalm is not ascribed to David in the Psalter. The best critics, moreover, of all schools are now substan-

tially agreed that no dependence is to be placed on the titles and superscriptions of the psalms. All such notes as "For the chief musician," "A prayer of David," "A psalm of David," "Michtam of David," "Set to the Gittith," and "Selah" are of the nature of musical notes and editorial additions, and have no more to do with the psalm itself than the names of tunes in modern hymn books have to do with the date and authorship of the hymns to which they are appended.

In the light of these disclosures of criticism, let us now turn to the Book of Isaiah. For more than a hundred years the leading biblical scholars of Germany have been insisting that the last twenty-seven chapters are not the work of the son of Amoz. The feeling aroused over this discussion has been in some quarters almost extravagant, and even now we hear or read an occasional outburst of sweeping declaration that he who surrenders the Isaianic authorship of those chapters saps the foundation of the Christian faith!

But here, as in the other cases, the lover of the truth has only to ask, What are the facts? The first twelve chapters of the

book are a connected series, and no one has doubted their Isaianic authorship. The next eleven chapters are a group of prophecies against heathen nations, and there is internal evidence to show that some of them are older, and some of them are later, than the time of Isaiah. Chapters xxiv–xxvii are a sublime apocalypse; and the following eight chapters are of a similar nature, but refer to different subjects, and, so far as internal evidence goes, may or may not have been the work of Isaiah. Chapters xxxvi–xxxix are a fragment of the history of the times of Hezekiah, and identical in substance with a portion of the Second Book of Kings (xviii, 13–xxi, 11). Chapter xxxviii contains a prayer which is entitled "The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness." Then follow the twenty-seven chapters, in which it is written: "Zion is become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers worshiped, is burned with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste." This desolation is spoken of as a well-known fact, not as something yet to be. And in the same manner Cyrus is mentioned as one

who has already made his appearance, whom, Jehovah says, "I have raised up from the north" (xli, 25), "whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him" (xlv, 1), and who is divinely called to say of Jerusalem, "Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid" (xliv, 28). Such statements and allusions, it is claimed, are unnatural when referring to events of the distant future, but have great force and naturalness when supposed to have been written near the close of the Babylonian exile, soon after Cyrus had appeared upon the stage of history.

This is the verdict of criticism on the Book of Isaiah. Whether correct or incorrect, it is based upon the same reasonable method of procedure which we have illustrated in the Proverbs and the Psalms. Is it self-evident, or is it safe and wise to say, that a collection of prophecies of different authorship and dates, headed by the name of Isaiah, could not have been compiled as well as a collection of proverbs under the name of Solomon, or a collection of psalms under the name of David? We refer the whole collection to Isaiah, as we refer the Psalms to David, and the Proverbs to

Solomon. For purposes of reference or quotation nothing else is so convenient or practicable. But names and titles thus employed in popular usage are no certain mark of date and authorship.* Who can tell us to-day who wrote the Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and Job? If such a magnificent poem as the Book of Job is of unknown authorship, what folly to affirm that the unique collection of oracles in Isaiah xl–lxvi could not have gone into circulation without the author's name!

It is not necessary to our purpose to pro-

* Who is to determine for us assuredly whether the names "Samuel" and "Moses," as mentioned in Acts iii, 24, and Luke xxiv, 27, denote the individuals or the books so named? Compare the varying forms of reference to the same Old Testament passage in Matt. xxii, 31, Mark xii, 26, and Luke xx, 37. The citation of "Isaiah the prophet," after the manner of John i, 23, and xii, 38, is no necessary commitment of the writer to the effect that all the contents of the Book of Isaiah are from the son of Amoz. And when in John v, 46, 47, Jesus speaks of the "writings" of Moses, and says, "He wrote of me," his statements cannot without violence be construed into a declaration that "Moses wrote all the Pentateuch." No one has a right to assume that such references and citations commit Jesus or any New Testament writer to an authoritative *dictum* on the question of authorship, unless at the same time it can be shown by a valid exegesis that it was *intended to express a critical judgment on that question.*

ceed further with illustrations of the nature and methods of biblical criticism. The Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the integrity of the Book of Zechariah, and the dates and authorship of other portions of the Old Testament and of the New are subjected to the same critical process. Some of these questions are, of course, more simple than others. In the discussion of books like Deuteronomy and Daniel and the Gospel of John questions of a more serious character arise, and facts most difficult on any hypothesis to explain confront us. There is room for great differences of opinion; and not infrequently we meet devout and learned men who adopt one view for a time, and upon further research change about to the opposite hypothesis. And this fact shows the need of greatest care and caution.

The main conclusion we should all reach by this survey of the facts of criticism is, that the apologetics of the present day should recognize the great difference between questions of literature and those of fundamental doctrine. Whether Paul or Apollos or Barnabas or Luke wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews is a question of literary history, and

its determination one way or another will not affect the value of the epistle nor the essentials of the Christian faith. The great purpose of the Holy Scriptures is to make "the man of God complete, furnished completely unto every good work;" and we are admonished that "every scripture, inspired of God, is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. iii, 16). Its great purpose and value, then, are not for instruction in geology or astronomy or physics, but for instruction in righteousness.

But are there any errors in the Bible? The very question seems at first to startle. And how shall such a question be answered? Is it a matter that can be settled by a vote? Let me suggest three ways of dealing with this troublesome question:

1. There is the *a priori*, dogmatic method of affirming that there are and can be no errors in a volume inspired of God. For would it not be as impossible for God to inspire an error as it would be for him to lie?

2. It may be alleged, on the other hand, that there are errors in the Bible. In Josh. x, 40, it is written that Joshua drove out all the Canaanites and utterly destroyed "all

that breathed;" but in Judges we are told that after Joshua's death there were many of the Canaanites yet abiding in all parts of the country. In 2 Sam. xxiv, 24, it is said that David paid "fifty shekels of silver" for Araunah's threshing floor; but in 1 Chron. xxi, 25, the price is put at "six hundred shekels of gold." In Acts vii, 16, Stephen makes an obvious blunder in saying that the sepulcher in which Jacob and the patriarchs were buried was at Shechem and was purchased by Abraham of "the sons of Hamor in Shechem;" but we read in Genesis that the tomb was not at Shechem, but at Hebron, and was purchased of "the sons of Heth." Such errors might be cited by the score.*

3. There is a third and, I think, better way of dealing with this question of errors. It is to neither affirm nor deny, but to say to everyone sufficiently interested, "Come and see," or, "Go and look." It is a question of fact, and not to be entertained as a

*Of course abundant efforts have been made at harmonizing such discrepancies. It has been said, for example, that David paid down at first fifty shekels of silver to bind the bargain, and subsequently paid six hundred shekels of gold when he took possession of the place! But is such harmonizing truly assuring and satisfactory?

matter of doctrine. But some zealous disputant exclaims, "Suppose we do, as a matter of fact, find errors in the Scriptures; what becomes of the doctrine of divine inspiration?" Let us, however, reverse the question and say, "Suppose you hold a doctrine of inspiration that is clearly inconsistent with well-ascertained facts of the Scriptures; what are you going to do with the facts?"

Now hear this parable. A certain man had three sons, who fell to disputing one day over the question whether a well-known and fertile field of their father's contained any stones. The first said, "No, there cannot be stones in a field that has been glorified as that field has been." But the second son said, "There are stones there, for I have noticed them time and again." The first son refused for a while to look at a specimen, but when he did look he pronounced it, not a stone, but a hard lump. At length the third son said, "Brothers, let us all go out into the field and examine for ourselves." Whereupon they went, and found various small stones scattered here and there around the field. But then they disagreed again as to what should be done with the stones.

The first son busied himself a long time in going about the field and trying to cover up all those troublesome stones with dirt. But the next plowshare that passed through the soil turned them up again to view. The other two succeeded in removing a number of the stones out of the field. But after a while one of them asked, "Why should we be so much concerned about these scattered stones? They do no real harm to the field. The fruits and grains grow just as well in spite of them. Is it not the nature of this soil to have such stones in it? Why should we have ever set up the notion that this field must needs be without stones?"

The apologies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are almost monotonous with their threefold division of "external," "internal," and "collateral" evidences. Many of the arguments have force, and the internal and collateral evidences, when clearly stated, have commanding value. But much that went under the head of external evidence is obsolete to-day. No one now questions the main facts of historical Christianity. The accuracy of the biblical writers is often attested by ancient monu-

ments and the results of scientific exploration in oriental countries.

Some modern preachers run into grave mistakes in declaring that our sacred books are older than those of other nations. Antiquity is no sure proof of the value or superiority of a writing. Were it true that the Pentateuch and other portions of the Bible antedate all other literature of antiquity, that in itself would be no certain evidence of their real worth. The oldest books are not necessarily the best books. Such arguments, pressed to their logical results, would prove the Old Testament to be of greater value than the New. There is also reason to believe that the most ancient writings of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, India, and China are as old as the very oldest portions of the Hebrew Scriptures, if not older.

Some apologists have seemed to think that it is conclusive proof of the antiquity of the Book of Joshua to find that its statements are remarkably accurate and confirmed by the recent explorations in Palestine. Such evidence substantiates the accuracy of the narrative, but proves nothing as to the date of the book itself. Nearness to the events

recorded does not always insure the most accurate history. The best histories of ancient Greece and Rome are not those written by the Greek and Roman authors millenniums ago, but those written by German and English scholars of the nineteenth century.*

Among the external evidences, it was formerly customary to appeal to the argument from prophecy and its fulfillment. But many of the old apologies were based on erroneous interpretations of particular prophecies; and, when it was commonly

* "The nervous eagerness with which some Christian men clutch at every confirmation of the accuracy of the Scriptures occurring among the results of modern historical and scientific inquiry is unworthy of the calm and immovable faith in the spiritual substance of divine revelation which is necessary to the strength and joy of the Christian Church."—R. W. Dale, in *The Expositor* of January, 1896, p. 3. It is always gratifying to obtain from the monuments any confirmations of the statements of Scripture; but we should be sufficiently discriminating to know that what confirms a statement of historical fact may have no logical bearing on a question of literary criticism. The Moabite stone, perhaps the most valuable "find" of the century, is a monumental witness of "Mesha king of Moab" (comp. 2 Kings iii, 4), and mentions Chemosh, and Jehovah, and "Omri king of Israel," and the names of several well-known places in and about Palestine; but such coincidences confirm nothing in dispute, and have no bearing on the question of the composition, date, and authorship of the Books of Kings.

assumed that prophecy is "history written beforehand," all manner of extreme and absurd expositions of prophecy came into vogue, and men searched in the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of John to find predictions of the Pope of Rome, and of Mohammed, and of Napoleon Bonaparte. Many premillennialists and second adventists keep up this error in our day, and go about presuming to tell the approximate day and hour of the coming of Christ. The disuse of the apologetic argument from prophecy is to a great extent a revolt from this extravagant claim for prophecy itself. It is not owing to disbelief in the supernatural, but is a revulsion from the unnatural and absurd. We recognize the supernatural in the Scriptures, as we do in Christ, but we reject the unnatural, the extravagant, the prodigious. Predictions of the fall of Assyria and Babylon and Tyre and Egypt were signally fulfilled, and the apologist may still point to them and say, "Behold the finger of God." The Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament are like a golden chain running through the Hebrew Scriptures and training the hearts of the people of Israel to look for the blessed Christ of

God. In them, perhaps more than in any other one feature, we are able to show how the Holy Scriptures are a great organism, evincing divine as well as human elements. A calm and faithful study of the human elements in the Bible will aid us in apprehending the infinite Mind that speaks therein, and in appreciating his "eternal power and Godhead."

The other main department of external evidences, in the older apologetics, was devoted to miracles. The argument from miracles was the most conspicuous feature in the controversies with English deism; but it must be confessed that it holds a much less prominent position now. Fifty years ago Trench, in his work on the *Miracles of Our Lord*, observed that the opponents of English deism in the seventeenth century imagined they could best refute their enemies "by reducing Christianity to a sort of 'revealed deism'" (p. 76). In his recent book on *Apologetics* Professor A. B. Bruce has the following passage: "It must be confessed that miracles cannot be offered as evidences of Christianity now with the confidence with which they were employed for this purpose by the apologists of a past age.

Men do not now believe in Christ because of his miracles; they rather believe in the miracles because they have first believed in Christ" (p. 376).

What I have to say about the apologetic value of miracles will come in more appropriately in connection with the person of Christ. Here I only remark in passing that miracles, whether real or false, are wonderful works to us because we do not know how they were performed. They were not violations or suspensions of the laws of nature. They were in all cases wrought in perfect consistency with the divine order of the universe.* They need for their explanation only a sufficient knowledge of their cause. The miracles of Christ have their explanation in him. He was their sole suf-

* "A supernaturalism which tries to survive alongside of naturalism, dividing the kingdom with it, will soon have taken away from it 'even that which it seemeth to have.' The only hope of a successful issue is to carry the war into the enemy's quarters and to maintain what Carlyle called a 'natural supernaturalism,' that is, the doctrine, not that there are single miracles, but that the *universe is miraculous*, and that in order to conceive it truly we must think of it, not as a mechanical system occasionally broken in upon from above, but as an organism which implies a spiritual principle as its beginning and as its end."—Caird, *The Evolution of Religion*, pp. 319, 320.

ficient cause. If we knew how they were performed they would cease to be mysterious to us. There are profoundest mysteries in the person of Jesus Christ; and he who fully believes in his divine-human personality has no trouble about the miracles. If the infidel could only be brought to know "Jesus as he is" he would apprehend the all-sufficient cause and explanation of his wonderful works, for his unique personality is the greatest of all miracles.

As evidences or proofs of spiritual realities, therefore, miracles are superfluous to the Christian believer at the present day; and as for those who will not believe Moses and the prophets, and Christ and the apostles, we have the highest authority for saying that they would not believe though one rose from the dead.

As a general summing up now of the spirit, principles, and methods of the true literary-critical apology for the Bible, we submit the following propositions:

1. First of all, we should have a definite and rational conception of *what the Bible is.* Half the attacks made against the Holy Scriptures have been provoked by an extreme claim of supernaturalism for the

book itself. From the extravagant declarations we sometimes hear, one might naturally imagine that the Bible had formerly dropped suddenly out of heaven all written by the very finger of God and without defect of any kind. Our examination of the results of criticism has sufficiently shown that the true apology of the Bible will not allow such pretentious claims.

2. The true apology will further take pains to show that the Bible is a very human book. It was written by men of like passions with us, and bears all the marks of variety in styles of thought and expression characteristic of different writers. This conspicuous human element admonishes us not to set up claims of infallibility for the whole book which the several writers do not make for themselves.

3. The true apology will take pains to examine all critical questions of date and authorship and composition. If Moses did not write the Pentateuch as we now have it we shall never gain anything for the cause of truth by insisting that he did. "Truth never was indebted to a lie;" and the most inane thing anyone can do in defense of the Bible is to lie about it.

4. Another thing not to be forgotten is the fact that there were many revelations of God's truth given to men before any part of the Bible was written. In like manner, the teaching of Christ and the preaching of the apostles founded Christianity in the world before there was any New Testament. The essentials of the Gospel are not dependent upon the successful defense of the traditional authorship of a written document. I would not allow even the question of the authorship of the fourth gospel to hold an essential place in general apologetics. The fundamental truths of Christianity can be shown from the three synoptic gospels and the four unquestioned epistles of Paul, our enemies themselves being judges.

5. Finally, the great positive apology for the Holy Scriptures is manifold. It may be stated in four significant and suggestive propositions: (1) These Scriptures are a record of progressive, divine revelation, from the most ancient times down to the end of the apostolic era; (2) this revelation inculcates all the great religious truths which are anywhere recognized among men as helpful to piety and virtue; (3) these Scriptures are remarkably unique among all the

sacred books of the world, and free from the absurdities which abound in most of the so-called Bibles of the nations; (4) they contain all those holy and helpful doctrines and consolations which answer to the deepest yearnings of the human heart and ever tend to elevate and bless mankind.

The apology that substantiates these claims has no need to resort to any questionable methods and doubtful disputations.

IV

The Apology of Comparative Religion

IV

The Apology of Comparative Religion

ONE of the most fascinating departments of modern research is the study of comparative theology. It is now generally conceded that man is a religious being and will worship God or something in the place of God. The religious feeling may show itself in the low forms of fetichism, in groveling superstition, in sorcery and witchcraft, in obscene rites and licentious and barbarous abominations. The strange and irrational extremes to which men will go in matters of religion is one of the marvels of the human mind.

But more commanding in modern thought are the great religions like Brahmanism and Buddhism, which number their adherents by the millions and are pointed out as mighty rivals of Christianity. The Christian apologist is called upon to explain how it is that two thirds of the human race are either entire strangers to the Christian faith or, having some knowledge of it, reject it and prefer their own systems of belief. The

modern Parsee, the Brahman, the Buddhist, the Moslem, and the disciple of Confucius deliberately reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ and insist that their own religions are to be preferred.

It will not do in apologetics for us to start out with the assumption that Christianity is the only true religion, and that all other religions are false. Nor can we any longer make profitable use of the old distinction of *natural* and *revealed* religion. Ritschl is said to have once greatly startled an American student by declaring, "There is no such thing as natural theology." But is not the statement substantially correct? Paul himself teaches that the invisible things of God, as perceived in creation, are a revelation of his eternal power and divinity to the Gentile world (Rom. i, 20). So all religion is revealed.*

* "The notion of revelation, nay, rightly understood, of a supernatural revelation, is presupposed in the notion of religion, or forms the inseparable correlate of it. There can be no elevation of the finite spirit into communion with the Infinite which does not imply divine acts or a divine process of self-revelation. Neither thought nor the aspirations of the religious nature can be satisfied with the rationalistic notion of a merely subjective religion of opinions and beliefs, wrought out by the purely spontaneous activity of the human mind, and implying nothing more on the divine side than is involved

We sometimes speak of dead religions and living religions. This fact alone should suggest that religion itself has been a growth in the history of humanity. As the great nations of to-day are the outgrowth and survival of nations that perished long ago, so the living religions have inherited much from those which no longer exist.

We may classify religions, according to the ruling idea of God which they represent, as pantheistic, polytheistic, dualistic, and monotheistic. But this is hardly sufficient to comprehend all the lower forms of religious belief and practice to be found among men. Nor is Max Müller's classification any more satisfactory, which distributes religions, according to families of languages, into Turanian, Semitic, and Aryan; for the most diverse forms of religion are found under any one of these divisions, and Christianity, which was of

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in the original creation of man's rational nature. A God who does not reveal himself ceases to be God; and religious feeling, craving after a living relation to its object, refuses to be satisfied with a mere initial or potential revelation of the mind and will of God—with a God who speaks once for all, and then through the whole course of history ceases to reveal himself."—Caird, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 60. New York, 1894.

Semitic origin, has made most of its converts among the Aryan races. Religion itself is independent both of language and of nationality. But we may divide all religions into the three classes of tribal, national, and universal religions. We have all these classes represented at the present time in the totemism of Alaska, the Confucianism of China, and the Christianity of all lands. But we may also speak of religions as individual and national—the former, like Buddhism and Islam, tracing their origin to an individual founder; the latter, like the religions of ancient Egypt and Babylon, being the slow growth of the collective traditions and worship of an entire nation, without recognition of an individual founder. There is also the division into nature religions and ethical religions, the one including all the lower cults of animism and polytheism; the other distinguished as lawgiving religions (nomothetic or nomistic) or book religions, having sacred scriptures of authority. This last named would include Confucianism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity.

This glance at the many religions of the

world and the numerous ways they may be classified must impress every thoughtful mind with the conviction that the nature of man demands some kind of religion. We ought also to observe that the missionary religions of the world are individual religions. Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity have propagated themselves beyond the lands where they had their origin, and they are also lawgiving or book religions. These facts suggest that the highest and most powerful religions originate in special revelations of God to an individual, who thereby becomes the incarnation of a divine ideal. To some extent every such ideal is God manifest in flesh. In the light of this proposition, the comparative-religious apology of Christianity resolves itself into an answer to the question, Which of the great religions reveals to man the highest, holiest, best ideal of God?

But before we can intelligently discuss that question we must take into consideration a number of facts which continually meet us in such inquiries. There are at least four different views of religion: (1) There are some people now, as there always have been a few, who regard all religion as

a bane. With these we need not here waste any time. (2) There is another class who argue that all religions are in themselves of equal worth, but Confucianism is best for the Chinese, Islam is best for the Arabian, and Christianity is best for the European and American. (3) Then there is the very opposite opinion, which the old-time apologist assumed, that Christianity is the only religion which is direct from God and without error, and that all others are essentially false and hateful in the sight of God. But this view is obviously inconsistent with the New Testament doctrine that God has not left himself without witness among the nations, but has determined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitations, gifting even the heathen poets to utter great truths like the fatherhood of God, and writing this law in their hearts so that their consciences accuse or excuse them, according to their deeds. (4) There is a fourth opinion, adopted by the best apologetics of to-day, according to which there are many great truths in the non-Christian religions, which truths are as certainly from God as are the same truths when accepted by Moses or Isaiah or Paul.

Accepting this last view as correct, it behooves us further to observe that in all religions we may perceive at least four elements: (1) A sense or concept of dependence on some higher Power; (2) some kind of reverence and worship of that Power; (3) a moral sense which involves the idea of rewards and punishments; and (4) some idea of immortality and a future life. These, then, may be recognized as essential elements to be found, in some form, in all the religions of the world.

Many have undertaken to give a comprehensive definition of religion. I here select one from Kellogg's lectures on *The Genesis and Growth of Religion* which seems to me quite satisfactory: "Religion essentially consists in man's apprehension of his relation to an invisible Power, or powers, able to influence his destiny, to which he is necessarily subject, together with the feelings, desires, and actions which this apprehension calls forth." This definition is "applicable to every form of religion, from the lowest superstition to the highest type of Christianity," and has the merit of representing religion itself as "an experience which has to do equally with every part of our nature."

A clear definition of religion goes far toward answering the question of its origin. It shows it to be an essential experience of human nature. Its universality and persistence prove its necessity to man.

But it would be an error to suppose that we can best define religion by eliminating from all its known forms those elements which are common to all the religions of the world, and then assume that such common elements are the essentials of the highest and best religion. On such a principle, as Caird has shown, that which is highest and most valuable in the highest religion would be kept out of sight, and attention directed only to such things as the lowest forms of religion may exhibit. "There may be in religion ideas or doctrines which are essentially and absolutely true, whilst yet, in the actual experience of the world, the knowledge of them may have come at a late period of history, and even then only to a limited section of the race. . . . To leave out of view the bud or flower or fruit, or to consider only what is common to these with the seed and stalk or stem, would not help us to the essential idea of the plant. If, therefore, in the religious his-

tory of the world we can discover any indications of a progressive development, it is not by leaving out of view what is peculiar to Christianity—those ideas or doctrines which constitute its special glory and excellence—and taking account only of that which it has in common with the earliest and rudest nature-worship, that the essential idea of religion is to be extricated."*

The modern apology cannot well avoid the question of the origin of religion. We know much of the origin of Mohammedanism, for it is only twelve hundred years old. Christianity is less than two thousand years old, but claims that it is the predicted outgrowth and fulfillment of the religion of Israel. We know something of the origin of Buddhism, but it goes back six hundred years before our era and was a revolt from the ancient Brahmanism of India. The origin of Brahmanism is lost in the mists of antiquity; and so also is Confucianism, which is, perhaps, two thousand years older than Confucius. Who can tell us of the origin of the religions of ancient Egypt and Assyria and Babylon and Persia

* See further in Caird, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 77, ff.

and Japan? And what shall be said of those prehistoric cults of whose existence we have only incidental knowledge, and which passed away long before any of the great religions now existing acquired their present form?

It has sometimes been said that a perfect religion was made known to Adam in the garden of Eden, but became corrupted in the successive generations of mankind, save that here and there a great saint, like Abraham and Melchizedek and Job, retained and transmitted the true knowledge of God. But is this a fact so clearly demonstrable that a Christian apologist can safely accept it as an essential doctrine of his system? Look at the testimony, as far as it is available. We readily trace the Jewish people back to Abraham, but find that his ancestors dwelt in old time among the Chaldeans and served other gods. Abraham lived about two thousand years before Christ; but what do we know of the history of religion during the two or more thousand years before his day? The biblical narrative of those far-away centuries is very fragmentary and of doubtful interpretation. There were between Abraham and

Adam only three persons who seem to have been on favorable terms with God; and they were Abel, whom Cain soon put out of the way, and Enoch, whom God took, and Noah, the only righteous man of his time. After the flood God made a covenant with Noah; but both the patriarch and his sons appear in a worse light thereafter. Several centuries elapsed before the call of Abraham, and there is not a shred of evidence to show that the true original religion was transmitted to him from any of his ancestors; but the contrary is matter of record. It was not said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and away from thy kindred and father's house, and I will restore unto thee that true religion which thy older ancestors once possessed, but which thy later fathers have lost."

In view of this absence of knowledge it is not a prudent or sagacious thing for the Christian apologist to assume that the true religion is a matter of ancient and primeval revelation, which has since been transmitted by means of tradition from one generation to another.

A further fact important for us to recognize is that no one of all the great religions

of the world is free from admixtures of human imperfection. The Christian will be very ready to concede this so far as all other religions are concerned, but will hesitate at the idea that his own system has any imperfections. It is affirmed by some that Jesus Christ gave a revelation of God so complete that nothing can now be added to it or taken away from it. That perfect revelation is supposed to be embodied in the New Testament. But the apologist who makes this claim will be challenged in two ways:

1. First, it will be said that the different books of the New Testament are not a perfect report of all that Jesus said and did. The discrepancies of the gospels make it impossible to determine on many points just what the words of Jesus were. If they all disagree in reporting what he said at the last supper and what was written in the title on the cross, what assurance have we that in any other saying his exact language has been preserved? The language, style, and doctrines of John and Paul and James are so different that we must acknowledge a considerable admixture of their own individual ways of conceiving and stating the truth of Christ.

2. But, supposing we satisfy ourselves that the perfect revelation of God in Christ has been faithfully recorded in the New Testament, where is there an infallible interpreter of these records? Where is the individual or the Church in all Christendom that speaks to-day with acknowledged authority on all the essentials of Christianity? The Christian apologist must face the fact that the Greek Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the State Churches of England and of continental Europe, all the other Protestant Churches, and all the heretical sects which now exist or ever have existed under the Christian name must all be taken into account when he meets a Buddhist and undertakes to show that Christianity is the perfect and absolute religion.

The Christian apologist must, I think, acknowledge that his own religion, as well as all other religions, is not without its admixture of error and defect. A religion is judged by all the facts which it represents; and the sum total of Christianity includes, not only the New Testament, but all the Churches and creeds and confessions and worships of the Christian centuries. When, therefore, you ask after the essentials of the

Christian religion you will have to set aside many of the doctrines and practices of the modern Church. And, furthermore, you will find that even the New Testament contains many things which are not essential elements of pure Christianity. You could not assemble an ecumenical council of Christendom to-day, or of any considerable portion of the Church universal, and get them to affirm, as did the council at Jerusalem in the days of Peter, James, and Paul, that three out of four "necessary things" for all the Churches to observe are abstinence from eating blood and things strangled and meats that had been slain for sacrifice.*

Since, therefore, we are obliged to discriminate and reason in order to determine what are the essential elements of Christianity, we ought in all fairness to treat other religions in the same way. We would deem it most unfair for a Mohammedan to visit a Roman Catholic province and observe the adoration of the Virgin and images of saints in the cathedrals, the confessional, the mass, the candles, the incense, and the processions of Romish worship, and

* Acts xv, 28, 29.

thereupon report that these were the essentials of Christianity. Is it not equally unfair for a Christian to go to India and, after witnessing the unclean and degrading forms of Hindu worship and self-torture, conclude that those practices are the essential elements of original Brahmanism? It is said that when the Roman Catholic missionaries first encountered Buddhism in China they were astonished to find that it, also, had monks, hermits, vows of celibacy, tonsure, rosaries, holy water, masses for the dead, prayers in an unknown tongue, kneeling before images in worship, and even a pope in the Grand Lama of Thibet. Said one of the Portuguese missionaries, "There is not a piece of dress, not a sacerdotal function, not a ceremony of the court of Rome which the devil has not copied in this country." But all these accessories of modern Buddhism may be as far from the fundamental teachings of Buddha as are the peculiarities of Romanism from the teachings of our Lord.

All religions, therefore, are entitled in a fair comparison to be judged according to what is highest and best in them, rather than by what is lowest and what may be only incidental and accessory. The faithful

student of religions, seeking to know the real truth, will not dwell on the superstitions and absurdities which have become associated with a religion, and treat them as essentials when there is any reason to suppose that such superstitions are, as in the case of Romish Christianity, not essentials, but accretions of a later time.

We may now indicate the true method of apologetics in dealing with this subject. Having made a fair analysis of the essential elements of the religions that are supposed to rival Christianity, the great argument must be to show that the religion of Jesus Christ contains all these doctrines that are of value and presents them in more perfect and commanding form than any other faith, and also supplements them with most important truths unknown to other religions, or at best so dimly revealed that Christianity is needed as a fulfillment and completion. If such superior claims of the Gospel can be clearly proven it will hardly be necessary to go further and point out the notable defects and failure of other religions to meet all the religious wants of man. And yet fidelity to the truth may require us to call attention to the defects of the rival systems.

I will now endeavor to illustrate these principles briefly by an application of them to Confucianism and Buddhism, two of the most influential systems of Asia.

Confucianism is preeminently the religion of the Chinese Empire. Confucius, however, was not its founder, and we should do him the justice to remember his own claim to be only a teacher and transmitter of the ancient doctrines of his people. It is said of him that "he would not affirm nor relate anything for which he could not adduce some document of acknowledged authority." The sacred books of China cite the words and example of kings that lived before the times of Abraham.

Among the chief facts of Confucianism which require respectful study I will mention four: (1) The worship of Heaven or Shang-ti; (2) the worship of ancestors; (3) the worship of spirits; and (4) the moral code.

In the ancient books known as the *Shu* and the *Shih* we frequently meet the words *Tien*, Heaven, *Ti*, Ruler, and *Shang-ti*, supreme Ruler, or the great Power on high. Dr. Legge maintains that the oldest Chinese conception of God is to be learned

from the written characters of the language, and that those ideagrams which represent heaven, or the supreme Power, point to an original monotheism. He says, also, that the character pronounced "*Shih*" is the symbol for manifestation or revelation, and shows that the Chinese fathers conceived the idea of communication between heaven and men.* All this appears to be implied in the imperial worship. No one but the emperor can offer the great sacrifices. He then stands forth in his royal dignity and, like a great high priest, performs for himself and his dynasty and all the millions of his subjects the various acts of worship.

The following are specimens of prayers offered on such occasions: "To thee, O mysterious Worker, I look up in thought. How imperial is the expansive arch where thou dwellest. . . . My heart is but as that of an insect. Yet have I received thy favoring decree appointing me to the government of the empire. I deeply cherish a sense of my ignorance and blindness, and am afraid lest I prove unworthy of thy great favors. Therefore will I observe all the

* *The Religions of China*, by James Legge, pp. 10–13. New York, 1881.

rules and statutes. . . . Far distant here, I look up to thy heavenly palace. Come in thy precious chariot to the altar. Thy servant bows his head to the earth, reverently expecting thine abundant grace." * Who will presume to argue, when he reads such sentiments, that worship and prayers of this sort were invented without any inspiration from the Almighty?

In the worship of Shang-ti the emperor, as the representative of all his people, stands alone; but the worship of their ancestors is the privilege and practice of all the Chinese people. The doctrine of filial piety is fundamental to the Confucian system. In one of the classic books it is written: "Filial piety is the root of all virtue, and the stem out of which grows all moral teaching. . . . The services of love and reverence to parents when alive, and those of grief and sorrow to them when dead, completely discharge the fundamental duty of living men. The righteous claims of life and death are all satisfied, and the filial son's service to his parents is completed." Confucius is said to

* Quoted from Legge's *Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits*, in Culbertson's *Darkness in the Flowery Land*, p. 36. New York, 1857.

have completed his duty of filial devotion by remaining three years in strict seclusion near his mother's grave.

> "Three years the infant in its parent's arms;
> Three years the mourner at his parent's grave."

The imperial worship includes, also, the worship of ancestors, and the following is a part of a royal prayer: "I think of you, my sovereign ancestors, whose glorious souls are in heaven. As from an overflowing fountain run the happy streams, such is the connection between you and your descendants. I, a distant descendant, look back and offer this bright sacrifice to you, the honored ones from age to age."*

In the imperial worship there is also a recognition of multitudes of spirits; and tribute is paid, not only to departed sages and heroes, but to spirits of the sky and stars, the clouds, rain, wind, and thunder; to spirits of the mountains and the rivers and the trees, and of the seasons of the year. These spirits are not called gods, but they are conceived as ministers of Heaven. The spirits of renowned ancestors, heroes, eminent sages, and virtuous women seem to have gone through a sort of apotheosis and

* Legge, *The Religions of China*, p. 82.

become presiding intelligences or tutelary spirits, whose powers of intercession may be of great value to those on earth.

The emphasis which Confucianism puts on moral law is worthy of special attention. It inculcates domestic virtue, and bids men guard their motives, their thoughts, their words, and their actions. It extols wisdom and filial piety, and builds the whole administration of civil government thereon. It enjoins truthfulness, sincerity, diligence, temperance, and politeness. While there is in China, as in all other countries, no lack of vice and crime, the great body of the people appear to be industrious, contented, and happy. They call their country "the flowery land," "the central land," "the middle kingdom," and they speak of themselves as "the black-haired people."

One may say, after the manner of the old Hebrew prophets, that China is a land greatly favored of God. Has not her remarkable reverence for parents insured to her the blessing of "the first commandment with promise?" Surely her days have been long upon the land which God has given her. Confucius was nearly contemporary with Sakya-muni in India, with

Cyrus in Persia, with Zerubbabel in Jerusalem, and Pythagoras in Greece. And yet, centuries before Confucius, twenty-three hundred years before our Christ, and long before Abraham migrated from Ur of the Chaldees, China was governed by the good king Yao, of whom it is written: "He was reverential, intelligent, accomplished, and thoughtful—naturally so, and without effort. The bright influence of these qualities was felt throughout the four quarters of the land. He united and harmonized the myriad states, and so the black-haired people were transformed. The result was universal concord."

We have now briefly noted some of the chief excellences of Confucianism. Much more might, of course, be said. Probably the greatest saying attributed to Confucius himself is his enunciation of the golden rule. When once asked if he could express in one word an abiding and comprehensive rule of conduct he replied: "Is not 'reciprocity' such a word? What you do not want done to yourself do not do to others." This negative precept has been extolled as antedating Jesus Christ by at least four hundred years.

What now has the Christian apologist to say to such facts and claims as these? If he pursue the method of Paul he will, first of all, give full credit for whatever good things the rival religion can fairly claim. He should, furthermore, acknowledge that all those good things are of God. "Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights," whether it be manifest in Christianity, in Judaism, in Buddhism, or in Confucianism. God has been ever working among the nations. May it not be true that all the ancient systems of thought and worship have been a preparation of the world for Christ? It is almost a commonplace of the modern philosophy of history to affirm that Greek culture and Roman law prepared the world for the coming of Christ, as truly, if not to the same extent, as did Moses and the prophets. Why, then, should we be slow of heart to believe that in far Cathay the worship of Shang-ti, the reverence of ancestors, and the high regard for ethical excellence may also be a divinely ordered preparation of the Chinese nation for a fullness of times when the Light of heaven shall fill that Middle Kingdom with a higher

faith?* We have no word of the Lord to justify us in uttering divine judgment on the countless millions of those "black-haired people" and assigning them to eternal perdition because they have no knowledge of Moses and the prophets and the Christ. We have more reason to say that this ancient system, older than Moses and the prophets, older than Melchizedek and Abraham, numbering its votaries by hundreds of millions when Judaism could only speak of millions, has by its twilight stars

* "We do not pay any real homage to the supernatural by disconnecting it as much as possible from the natural and human; we render only a spurious tribute to the divine Author of revelation by supposing that all that through the long lapse of ages men had believed concerning him was error and falsehood, and that the religious ideas of the past must be wiped clean out of the human spirit in order that the new message from heaven might be written upon it by the finger of God. . . . The Christian apologist in our day usually finds one of his strongest arguments for the divine origin of Christianity in the fact that it meets the unconscious longings of heathendom. It is now one of the recognized lines of apologetic thought to trace anticipations of Christian doctrine in the pre-Christian religions, and to point out the guesses at truth, the foreshadowings of moral and spiritual ideas, which, under many errors and superstitions, can be detected in the sacred books of India and China and Persia, and, in general, in the religious notions, rites, observances, institutions of the heathen world."—Caird, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 333, 334.

turned myriads to a moral life and to thoughts of a spiritual world. How many may have found, in such worship as they knew and loved, a light that led them out of their darkness into the glory of celestial sunrise?

I venture to think that the missionary of Christ who takes pains to find out all the good things he can among those whom he seeks to convert from their ancestral worship, and gives them credit for the same, will find readier access to their hearts than is possible by an attitude of direct hostility. Having first secured attention to whatever truths are held in common, he will have prepared the way for advancing the superior claims of his own system. This was Paul's method when he addressed the men of Athens. And the modern apostles of Christ to China should, as often as practicable, take their texts from the altars of the Confucian faith and utilize whatever truth they may suggest as a means of setting forth the Saviour who is ignorantly worshiped. He can present a clearer and more affecting view of the Power above the heavens than attaches to the Chinese concept of Shang-ti; for he can reveal him as "our Father who

is in heaven." He can proclaim a veneration for parents as deep and true as theirs, and at the same time free from the extravagance and superstition that attach to their ancestral worship. He can tell them of angels and principalities and powers superior to their pantheistic notions of the spirits of the wind and the clouds and the rivers. He can show them an ethical code even superior to that which is their national boast and glory. The old Chinese philosopher Lao-tsze, his older contemporary, surpassed Confucius's golden rule by the higher maxim, "Return good for evil." Confucius is said to have been puzzled over Lao-tsze's doctrine, and finally rejected it, saying, "If you return good for evil, what will you return for good?" "Nay," he added, "recompense injury with justice, and return good for good."

The Christian apologist, recognizing that Confucianism is in some measure, like Judaism, a preparation for something better, may imitate the manner of Christ and say: "Ye men of China, it was said by your ancient teacher, 'Let the emperor worship Shang-ti for his people;' but I say unto you, 'Let every man pray for himself

directly to the God of heaven.' It was said by your men of old time, 'Be like your fathers, imitate their ways, and perpetuate the old customs amid all the changes of the world;' but I say unto you, 'Become better than your fathers, seek new light and power from your heavenly Father, and improve the individual, the family, and the State by the acquisition of all useful knowledge.'"

The Christian apologist will also, at the proper time, show the defects of Confucianism on many things which are of the utmost importance to religion. He will allege its vague and unsatisfactory concept of God as compared with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will expose the error of excluding the masses of the people from the worship of the God of heaven and restricting such worship to the imperial household. Confucianism, moreover, has no clear doctrine of a future life and of rewards and punishments. There is no such thing as sin, in the sense of damning guilt, to the thought of a Chinaman; and his word for sin is identical with that which denotes a breach of etiquette. To his mind a bad life is simply a bad policy, and is likely to result in untimely death. Finally, Confucianism

knows no doctrine of redemption. It has no conception of atonement for sin, no idea of the pardon and regeneration of the guilty soul or of sanctification and progress in spiritual life. It has no song of salvation, no blissful hope of resurrection from the dead. In all these doctrines, and others that might be mentioned, we may triumphantly demonstrate the superiority of the religion of the Gospel of Christ.

In the same general way we may illustrate this apologetical method with Buddhism, that other great rival of Christianity, which numbers its adherents by the hundreds of millions. Modern Buddhism is the growth of nearly twenty-five hundred years; and it has been modified and adapted to meet the conditions of different countries into which it has been introduced. It would be easy to show that, in spite of its boasted revolt from Brahmanism, Buddhism has never escaped the damaging leaven of fatalism, transmigration, pantheism, and pessimism which permeates so much of Indian thought. But our plan is to inquire for the very best things that can be said for Buddhism. What are the excellences of this wonderful system, that

anyone should presume to hold them up in rivalry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

We pass over the questions of philosophical Buddhism and doubtful traditions of the life of Gautama, and examine the moral code. The great commandments of Buddhism are often put in the form of a decalogue, and are in substance as follows: 1. Thou shalt not kill. 2. Thou shalt not steal. 3. Thou shalt not lie. 4. Thou shalt not become intoxicated. 5. Thou shalt not commit adultery. 6. Thou shalt not eat solid food after noon. 7. Thou shalt not visit scenes of amusement. 8. Thou shalt not use ornaments or perfumes. 9. Thou shalt not use luxurious beds. 10. Thou shalt not accept gold or silver. The first five of these commandments are fundamental and obligatory; but the others are acknowledged to be of less importance. So far as they correspond with the Hebrew decalogue, Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism are one. But we must bear in mind that laws against murder, theft, lying, and adultery are older than any of these religions and are written in the hearts of all men.

We may safely challenge comparison of

these ten commandments, when taken as a whole and set in their best form, with the decalogue of Judaism and Christianity. Such comparison reveals the notable deficiency of Buddhism. It has no doctrine of God, no Sabbath rest, no law of honoring father and mother. For apologetic purposes these defects of Buddhism are alone sufficient to nullify its claim of superiority. Original Buddhism knows no God, and this one fundamental defect vitiates its value as a system of religion. A bishop of Calcutta, once observing a devout Buddhist praying in a temple, asked him for what he was praying. "For nothing," he replied. "But to whom have you been praying?" asked the bishop. "To nobody," he replied. Significant illustration of the purposeless character of Buddhist praying—praying for nothing, to nobody! What is the basis of morality and what the nature of prayer apart from belief in a personal God? In its outward form the morality may be blameless, and even beautiful, and the act of praying may be a sign of deep devotion; but how empty must be morality and worship without the doctrine of an adorable and compassionate God! Only contrast the

depth and beauty of Jesus's summary of all the law and the prophets: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself."

But the boast and glory of Buddhism are the so-called "four noble truths." If the system has anything that can be rationally claimed to rival or surpass Christianity it must be sought in these. Briefly stated, they are as follows: 1. All existence is evil. 2. This evil is the consequence of desire. 3. Desire and its resultant evils may be made to cease. 4. There is an eightfold path by which to obtain exemption from all evil and desire.

We might pause at this point and challenge every one of these four propositions. But, remembering that such universal propositions are likely to contain some elements of truth, we waive criticism until we examine the "eightfold path." That wonderful way, which is to lead men out of all evil, is said to consist of (1) right belief; (2) right judgment; (3) right utterance; (4) right motives; (5) right occupation; (6) right obedience; (7) right memory; (8) right meditation. All these eight things seem very good. To be right in all

manner of thought, feeling, and action is a consummation devoutly to be wished. The many good things which Buddhism may claim to have accomplished accord with the teaching of this eightfold path. It breathes a humane spirit, inculcates toleration, peace, and good conduct, is averse to war, treats woman better than any other oriental religion, and proclaims that there is no rest in the outer fashions of the world.

But the seeker after truth will reasonably ask why so many right things have produced so many wrong things as we find in the historical development of Buddhism. The name "Buddha" means "the enlightened one;" but we do not find that his system sheds any remarkable light on the problems of being. His right doctrine means simply the peculiar doctrines of Buddhism. Right judgment is displayed by forsaking one's home and family. Right occupation of the highest grade is the life of a mendicant dependent on the alms of others. Practically, this boasted eightfold path begins with indefinite assumptions, and ends in a dreamy and dreary mysticism. Assuming that all

evil originates in desire, it seems to seek the destruction of desire by the annihilation of the conscious personality of the individual. The goal of noblest being is to attain a sort of absorption into the final rest of what is called *Nirvana*, but which is so intangible to thought that the profoundest students of the system are unable to agree on just what is intended by that word.*

Christianity and Buddhism alike testify that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now." But how opposite their ideas of salvation! Buddhism would escape suffering by the annihilation of the conscious sufferer; Christianity lifts up the sublime watchword, "Perfect through suffering." Buddhism sees nothing good in the body and tortures it by ascetic mortification; Christianity says,

* Put over against this eightfold path Paul's sixfold exhortation to the Philippian brethren to observe "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report" (Phil. iv, 8). These six things are as good in the abstract and as comprehensive as all the eight things, so fundamental and exhaustive, of the Buddhist way of salvation; but how far short they come of exhausting what the Christian teacher has to say of the way of life?

"Glorify God in your body." Buddhism says, "Withdraw from the world and let it alone;" Christianity says, "Overcome the world and make it better." Buddhism inculcates inactivity, repose, solitude; but Christianity says, "Be diligent, and work while the day lasts." The highest style of Buddhist saint is a hermit clothed in rags, and seeking by self-mortification to lose his conscious being in *Nirvana*; the Christian saint is rather the happy, cheerful man, clothed with all outward and inward graces, dwelling in the midst of an esteemed family, loving God and his neighbor, and laboring to make all around him better. Buddhism has no blessed hope of heavenly felicity with the saints in light, but only the vague and mystic ideal of absorption in the universal essence; Christianity points the believer to the heavenly Father's house of many mansions, and assures him that "the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall lead them to fountains of waters of life, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."

It is not necessary to proceed further with this argument. If Christianity is, be-

yond all question, superior to Confucianism and Buddhism, it is quite needless to inquire further among the other religions of the world. They have all been searched out sufficiently to warrant the statement just made. In view of the analysis of the two most conspicuous religions which can be well supposed to rival Christianity, what becomes of the notion that one religion is as good as another, or what reason is there in the idea that Confucianism is better for the Chinaman than the Gospel of Jesus? Deeper and sounder reasons there are for believing that the millions of the "black-haired people" must come into possession of a religion more spiritual than Confucianism before they can rise to a higher and more progressive civilization. The same is to be said of the devotees of Buddha. So long as a dirty, ragged mendicant is the highest ideal of a saint, there is room for a purer religion.

Our conclusion from this comparative study of the religions of the world may be stated in the following propositions:

1. There are elements of truth in all religions, and the Christian apologist should fairly and frankly acknowledge this fact

whenever he is called upon to defend his own faith against the claims of a rival religion. His own defense may be made more valid and convincing by affirming this proposition than by denying it.

2. In the nature of things, that religion must be most authoritative which can best prove its superior fitness to meet all the religious wants of man and supply them in the most helpful form. No apology for Christianity is more far-reaching and controlling than this very plea. We maintain that there is no excellence known to any religion and no element needful to supply the spiritual wants of man which are not to be found in the Gospel of Christ.

3. We maintain, accordingly, that Christianity is sooner or later to become the universal religion. Moonlight is better than starlight, and sunlight is better than both. And, as the moon and stars become invisible before the greater light that rules the day, so must all the lesser religions disappear as the Sun of righteousness arises with universal healing in his wings.

V

The Positive Apology

V

The Positive Apology

THE preceding lectures of this course have been largely negative in their character. Their aim has been to suggest the Christian apologist's best method of defending his faith against the skeptical attacks of philosophy, criticism, and rival religions. Toward some of these forms of assault the wise and thoughtful apologist will assume only a negative attitude. He will remember that, in some of their opinions and methods, the older defenders of the faith were in the wrong. The modern apology must differ from those of former times in displaying a keener analysis of the issues raised. Some time-honored doctrines need restatement and adjustment to the changed conditions of the modern world. We must learn to distinguish between apologetics and polemics. Our task is not to fight Arianism, Socinianism, Calvinism, Arminianism, and Universalism. It is rather with those who deny the claims of Christianity itself that the apologist has to contend.

Accordingly, when called to defend our religion against assailants who question its fundamental truths, our position is one of defense, and not of aggression. But, if we are confident of the truth of our cause, we will not stop at the negative standpoint of a mere defense of our religion. Christianity has her positive apology. We are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, but rather bold and persistent to declare and urge its claims on all the world. At the proper times and places we shall appropriate in substance the words of our divine Master, and say to all the other religionists of the world, "Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship." For the absolute and universal religion is the outgrowth and blossoming of the Hebrew and Jewish revelation, and God, who "spoke in old time unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son whom he hath appointed heir of all things."

1. In presenting, now, a number of the various arguments of our positive apology, the first and fundamental contention is that Christianity is not simply one of the great religions of the world, but *the* religion, which alone has in it all the elements essential to

the spiritual needs of man. Other religions have *many* good things; Christianity has *all* good things. Christ is not merely one among many masters; he is the Lord and Master of all, "the way, the truth, and the life," "the first and the last," the Prophet, Priest, and King. His name is to be honored above every name, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii, 10, 11).

2. I mention, next, as an evidence of the indestructible vitality of Christianity, its remarkable survival of the many errors and follies of its adherents. One of the horrible infatuations which possessed great leaders of the Church for a thousand years was the supposed necessity of burning heretics. This was in part an inheritance from ethnic barbarism; and the Roman Church quite naturally appropriated it from the customs of the empire. It also assumed to derive authority for it from the old Mosaic law: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Another deplorable fact of history has been the quarrels of Christendom over

matters of no importance, such as forms of observing divine worship, images of saints in churches, prerogatives of ministers, the merit of fasts and pilgrimages and relics. There are denominations of Christians whose chief reason for existence is in some question of dress, or in keeping Saturday for the Sabbath, or in the mode of baptism, or in the opinion that a Christian man ought not to vote under a government that does not recognize God in the national Constitution. One of the denominations of Christians in the United States claims to be the only true Church of God in America because its clergy are said to be the only ministers whose ordination has come, without a break, through human fingers, from the apostles down! Is it any wonder that great religious natures, like that of Abraham Lincoln, while profoundly convinced of the divinity of Christianity, decline to commit themselves to the shibboleths of Churches that keep up such controversy over little things? Now, the religion which, in spite of all these aberrations of human frailty, has held its steady, onward sway until it is recognized as preeminently the religion of the most commanding nations of the world

—that religion must needs be essentially divine.

3. As an offset to the humiliating facts just mentioned, it is to be further remarked that Christianity is the religion of free thought. We invite the fullest possible investigation, and are most happy to submit our doctrines and all our special claims to the impartial judgment of mankind. Christianity is the religion of science and culture, the patron of all ennobling art and literature. We have no fear that this holy religion will be harmed by exposure to the most searching light. If such tests but purge away the accretions of error, which are no real elements of the system, they will serve only to set in clearer light the fundamental excellences of the Gospel and vindicate its right to the general acceptance of mankind. We urge no plea for Christianity with greater confidence than that it is a rational religion, and not to be compromised by that assumption of some former apologists who imagined that they were exalting the truth of God by positing revelation against reason.

4. We urge, further, that Christianity is the great missionary religion of the world.

One element of its superior efficiency is its rational and self-evidencing power. We are bold to go to any non-Christian people and say, "We have a better system of thought and life than yours. Come and let us reason together." Does Confucianism honor parents and the dignity of moral law? Christianity honors father and mother more rationally than by superstitious forms of ancestral worship, and it exalts ethical purity on deeper principles by making all the law and the prophets hang upon the great commandment of love, first, of God and, secondly, of man. We oppose a pure Gospel of salvation against the polytheism and pantheism of India, confident that at this hour it is effectually sapping the foundations of Brahmanism in that ancient land of the Veda. How beautiful is the Christian doctrine of the incarnation as contrasted with the avatars of Hindu mythology? When in 1864 Bishop Thomson organized the first India Mission Conference he said: "I envy the brother to be stationed at Sambhal. Beneath that temple, guarded and venerated as the cradle of an incarnate deity, I would preach as Paul did at the altar of the unknown God."

In that spirit we go forth into the presence of all the religions of the world and insist that they have no truth or excellence which we cannot parallel and surpass. And, beyond the best that they can show, the Christian system provides for the remission of sin, the purification of the heart, the sanctity of the home and family, and it is entitled more than any other to be called "the religion of humanity." Where other religions offer to the hungering and thirsting spirit only stones and serpents, Christianity offers the bread of heaven and the water of eternal life.

5. As another positive argument for the Christian faith we point to the religious experience and life of the true disciple of Jesus. Conscious of sin and guilt, he does not, like the Brahman and the Buddhist, go about seeking through bodily tortures to rescue himself from the evil; but he repents of his sin, accepts the Lord Jesus as his redeeming Saviour, and, being justified by faith, has peace with God, and holy joy, and blessed hope, and freedom from condemnation. And, besides all this, giving all diligence, he adds to his faith virtue; and to

virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness. "The time past," he says, "is sufficient to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, and to have walked in lasciviousness, winebibbing, carousing, and such like; henceforth I walk in the Spirit, and do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." We point to the conversion of such men as Saul of Tarsus, and Augustine, and John Bunyan, and to the saintly lives and triumphant deaths of an innumerable company who have made the world better than they found it, and we say, "These are some of the positive evidences of Christianity."

6. We hold up as another reason of our devotion to Christianity its blessed adaptation to the necessities and longings of man's spiritual nature. What significance to the Christian consciousness have such expressions as "peace with God," "the righteousness of faith," "full assurance of hope," "joy in the Holy Ghost," "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge!" What elevation of spirit in a prayer which confidingly invokes "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," to give

"unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge* of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. i, 17–21). Where in all literatures, or in all the fondest dreams of human imagination, can there be found a balm so healing and permanently soothing to the soul as these words have been to Christian believers during all the centuries?

Christian hymnology has caught the inspiration of these heavenly thoughts and woven them into the songs of the Church,

* We may note the suggestive Greek word ἐπίγνωσις, here translated "knowledge." It means full, thorough, correct knowledge. The Christian who has the full knowledge of Christ here invoked is not a gnostic, much less an agnostic, but he is an epignostic.

so that all over the world myriads of hearts and voices are saying:

"Lord, how secure and blest are they
Who feel the joys of pardoned sin!"

"Jesus, where'er thy people meet,
There they behold thy mercy-seat."

"Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease."

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!"

"We may not climb the heavenly steeps
To bring the Lord Christ down;
In vain we search the lowest deeps,
For him no depths can drown.

"But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is he;
And faith has yet its Olivet,
And love its Galilee."

That religion is positively full of comfort and assurance whose divine Founder, speaking as from the bosom of the eternal Father, says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give

you rest." And millions of human hearts are every day responding:

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly."

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

"I know thee, Saviour, who thou art,
Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend;
Nor wilt thou with the night depart,
But stay and love me to the end:
Thy mercies never shall remove;
Thy nature and thy name is Love."

7. Another positive claim of the Christian religion is its beneficial effects on human society. It everywhere makes for peace and righteousness. Unlike much that goes abroad to-day under the name of socialism and scatters pessimistic seeds of anarchy, Christianity teaches the only true sociology. For sociology, in the deepest and truest sense, is only one phase of Christian soteriology. Those would-be reformers who refuse to recognize the facts of sin and guilt in the human heart cannot produce a sound system of sociology. He who professes to observe the Golden Rule and love his

neighbor as himself will not be the highest success unless he first know what it is to love God with all his heart. The Lord Jesus said, "Ye must be born again." All radical and successful reforms in human life and society must begin in the individual heart. In his *Notes on the Miracles*, Trench beautifully suggests how the first miracle that Jesus wrought, in Cana of Galilee, is a symbol of his entire redeeming work among men. "Apart from all that is local and temporary," he says, "this miracle may be taken as the sign and symbol of all which Christ is evermore doing in the world—ennobling all that he touches, making saints out of sinners, angels out of men, and in the end heaven out of earth, a new paradise of God out of the old wilderness of the world" (p. 98).

8. This glorious thought connects naturally with another which should be mentioned as a positive feature of the Gospel of the blessed God. The goal toward which Christianity ever aims and moves is the regeneration and restitution of all things. "We look for a new heaven and earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." The golden age of Christianity is in the future,

not in the past. The kingdom of God and of Christ is like the mustard seed, and the leaven, and the stone cut out of the mountain which rolled onward until it filled the earth. The New Jerusalem of John's Apocalypse is not so much a picture of celestial life in some "far-away home of the soul" as it is of heaven coming down to earth, the tabernacle of God among men. And so we believe the word of prophecy, that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. ii, 14). "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isa. lx, 3). All nations shall delight to walk in his ways; "and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah iv, 3).

9. Among the positive arguments for Christianity we must not fail to mention her Holy Scriptures, which are so unspeakably profitable for teaching, for correction, for rebuke, for consolation, for instruction in righteousness. This divine purpose of

the Bible is not weakened, but rather strengthened, by the most searching criticism. The more thorough the criticism, the more clearly is it seen that the divine power is not in the letter which killeth, but in the spirit which giveth life. Bring forward all the rival scriptures of the world; memorize the noblest Vedic hymns; select the choicest sayings of Buddha from the voluminous Tripitaka; search the Confucian classics and the sacred books of Babylon and Assyria and Persia; peruse Egyptian ritual and Moslem Koran and Scandinavian Eddas; and then come back to the Christian's Bible and you will say, "Those scriptures of the nations are a gloomy and confusing wilderness, lighted by here and there a noticeable star; but the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are a paradise of God, having many a tree of life with healing leaves, and over and through it all the Sun of righteousness shines with perennial rays." Blessed is the man who, like Timothy, has from childhood known these Holy Scriptures, which are able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

10. But the great and crowning apology

of Christianity is Jesus Christ himself. His commanding personality can never fail to attract the respectful attention of all truth-loving minds; and the apologetic argument derived from that unique and adorable personality is now generally recognized as both fundamental and final. This argument has been worked into the best literature and the best preaching of these latest times. It has been presented in so many ways that one hardly knows how to make a selection from the rich stores of thought that have accumulated about this one ideal. Who is this, we ask, and what the explanation and significance of One who appears among men as holy, harmless, undefiled, tempted like other men, but without sin? "This Jesus of Nazareth," said the late Dr. Philip Schaff, "without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Cæsar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, he shed more light on things human and divine than all the philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, he spoke words of life such as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a

single line, he has set more pens in motion and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, and discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and sweet songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times. Born in a manger and crucified as a malefactor, he now controls the destinies of the civilized world and rules a spiritual empire which embraces one third of the inhabitants of the globe."*

How shall we account for this remarkable phenomenon of human history? It is no longer a question whether this Jesus of Nazareth lived, suffered, and died. No man of average information and sobriety denies to-day the main facts of Jesus's life. The great task of those who deny his divinity is to produce some rational explanation of a life so marvelous. The difficulty of this task will appear more clearly when we consider more in detail a number of the facts in the life and character of Jesus:

(1) A first consideration is the impossibility of finding anything in the outward conditions of the life of Jesus sufficient to ac-

* *The Christ of the Gospels*, p. 37. Reprinted, with revisions and additions, from the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*.

count for his immense influence and power. This argument has been elaborated with great ability by Dr. John Young, of Edinburgh, in his little volume entitled *The Christ of History.** Attention is called to the obscure parentage of Jesus, the contempt that attached to his home in Nazareth, his occupation as a carpenter, his association through life with the poor and lowly, his dependence during his public career on the benevolence of his friends, and the notable fact that he mingled freely with publicans and sinners. He was not learned in the usual conception of learning. He obtained no friendly recognition from those in power. Even Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa dared not openly avow him. There was nothing, therefore, in his social position to account for his remarkable influence on his generation. On the contrary, everything of this kind was against him.

The shortness of his public career is another fact to be noted. His first thirty years were spent in comparative obscurity. The only event likely to attract attention was his appearance in the temple when he

* *The Christ of History:* an Argument Grounded on the Facts of his Life on Earth. New York, 1866.

was twelve years old; but there is no evidence that it created any lasting impression except in the heart of his mother. His public ministry lasted little more than three years. Some, both in ancient and modern times, have argued that it lasted less than two years. Origen says, "He taught only during a year and some months, but the whole world became filled with his doctrine, and with faith in his religion." The great sages who have made a lasting impression on the thought of the world lived to mature age, and so had the opportunities of many years to inculcate their ideas. Confucius and Buddha lived to propagate their doctrines for nearly half a century. But how utterly inadequate, on all ordinary probabilities, were two, three, or even four years for Jesus to secure the boundless fame and influence which attach to his personality?

Consider, further, how the ignominy and shame of crucifixion between two robbers must have blighted the hopes of his followers. The unbelieving Jew, the arrogant scoffer, and the most extreme rationalist have never had any difficulty in believing that Jesus died according to the Scriptures.

The satire of Lucian stigmatized Jesus as "the crucified sophist." An ancient *graffito*, discovered at Rome amid the ruins of the palace of the Cæsars, presents a vile caricature of Christian worship under the figure of a short man standing in the attitude of adoration before the crucified image of a man with the head of an ass. Under it, in rude Greek letters, is the inscription, "Alexamenos worships his God!" How, now, could any man, in the face of such reproach and shame and derision, multiply his influences and the number of his followers age after age, until all that calumny is silenced and the cross itself has become the symbol of that which is most sacred to human thought?

We know well enough that here and there a great genius has at times risen above the conditions of obscure birth and a life of poverty. These alone are no insuperable obstacle to triumphs of genius. But when you add all the other facts referred to the spectacle becomes sublimely unique. You will look in vain through all the annals of history to find another men who, with all those conditions against him, in a ministry of three years, cut off by

shameful crucifixion, has commanded a thousandth part of the influence which the name of Jesus has in the world to-day.

(2) The next fact to be noticed is the power and authority of his teaching. "Never man spoke like this man." He taught the multitudes "as one having authority, and not as the scribes." He wasted no time over idle speculations, such as characterize much of the Socratic wisdom and fill pages of Plato and Aristotle. He talked very extemporaneously, but he talked to amazing purpose. There is nothing in his method that looks like the policy of a man calculating on effects or shaping means to ends. He scandalized the Jewish teachers of his time by his free handling of national customs. His ideal of the long-expected Messiah was very different from that which was current among the Jewish people. He boldly assumed to supplement, and even set aside, what was said by them of old time. He made himself greater than Moses and the prophets. He spoke in parables which remain to this day as jewels in the literature of the world. And when surrounded by his enemies and an excitable crowd he did not shrink from employing

such language as, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men." "Ye cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess." "Ye are like whited sepulchers, full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." "Ye blind guides!" "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" Such language evinces the Teacher who is confident in truth and sublime in his consciousness of divine power.

(3) Observe in the next place the marvelous self-expression of this prophet of Nazareth. Who and what is he that, with a quiet and calm assurance, says: "I am the light of the world. . . . I am the way, and the truth, and the life. . . . I am the bread of life. . . . If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever. . . . I am the resurrection, and the life. . . . Whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die. . . . Before Abraham was, I am. . . . And if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." These sayings, to be sure, are all in the gospel of John, and some argue that they are the idealized por-

trait of a Christian writer a hundred years after the death of Jesus. But even if the fourth gospel be allowed such a character we may still ask, Whence came this glorious ideal? The synoptic gospels witness the same calm self-assumption. He declares his authority on earth to forgive sins (Matt. ix, 6; Luke v, 24), and declares himself Lord of the Sabbath day (Matt. xii, 8; Mark ii, 28). He not only assumes to be greater than Solomon and greater than the temple (Matt. xii, 6, 42), but he says: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi, 27, 28; Luke x, 22). He also speaks of his coming in the glory of his Father and the holy angels and rewarding every man according to his works. At the last supper, in giving the bread and wine, he said, "Eat and drink of these, for they are my body and my blood."

Dr. Bushnell lays great stress on these "astonishing pretensions of Jesus." "Was

there ever displayed," he asks, "an example of effrontery and spiritual conceit so preposterous? Was there ever a man that dared put himself on the world in such pretensions—as if all light was in him, as if to follow him and be worthy of him was to be the conclusive or chief excellence of mankind? What but mockery and disgust does he challenge as the certain reward of his audacity? But no one is offended with Jesus on this account; and—what is a sure test of his success—it is remarkable that, of all the readers of the Gospel, it probably never occurs to one in a hundred thousand to blame his conceit or the egregious vanity of his pretensions. . . . For eighteen hundred years these prodigious assumptions have been published and preached to a world that is quick to lay hold of conceit and bring down the lofty airs of pretenders; and yet, during all this time, whole nations of people, composing as well the learned and powerful as the ignorant and humble, have paid their homage to the name of Jesus, detecting never any disagreement between his merits and his pretensions, offended never by any thought of his extravagance. In which we have absolute proof that he practically main-

tains his amazing assumptions. Indeed, it will even be found that, in the common apprehension of the race, he maintains the merit of a most peculiar modesty, producing no conviction more distinctly than that of his intense lowliness and humility. His worth is seen to be so great, his authority so high, his spirit so celestial, that, instead of being offended by his pretensions, we take the impression of one in whom it is even a condescension to breathe our air." *

(4) Another conspicuous fact which places Jesus far above and apart from other men is his sinlessness. One of his most memorable sayings is, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" This phase of our Lord's character is made the subject of Karl Ullmann's volume entitled *The Sinlessness of Jesus an Evidence of Christianity*. The book is one of the most important contributions to the literature of apologetics made in modern times.†

The sinlessness of Christ is evinced, not from his own testimony only, but by the entire portraiture of his spotless character

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* *Nature and the Supernatural*, chap. x. pp. 289–291. New York, 1859.

† English translation by Sophia Taylor. Edinburgh, 1882.

as presented in the four gospels, and by the additional testimony of the apostolical writings. These all witness that he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;" that he "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" that he "was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." He is called "a Lamb without blemish and without spot." From childhood up to the end of his life he maintained a record of spotless purity. He is called "the Righteous" and "the Holy One." Pilate and his wife show, in their testimony to the faultless character of "that just man," what a profound impression his blamelessness had made on those without the immediate circle of his followers. Not the slightest shadow was ever cast upon his moral excellence. He assumed power and authority to forgive the sins of others, but never allowed or acknowledged the least need of repentance on his own part. And no one ever declared the terrible nature of sin or disclosed its "exceeding sinfulness" more searchingly than he.

What a mighty apology for Christianity, then, is this immaculate purity of its Founder? Some few sticklers, sorely be-

stead, have presumed to find fault with his cursing a barren fig tree, his driving the money changers out of the temple, and his calling the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees a brood of vipers. But it is evidence of the hopelessness of their aim when these sublime and significant acts in Jesus's ministry are viewed with such an evil eye.

(5) It remains now to speak, in conclusion, of the supernatural element in this adorable personality. If it has been made clear that the natural conditions of his earthly life furnish nothing sufficient to account for his transcendent influence in the world; if his doctrines are far in advance of those of any other religious teacher of the ages; if his amazing but calm expression of a consciousness of power over life and death—power to forgive sins, power in heaven as well as upon earth—implies such unity with God as no other man has ever known; and if, with all this, he stands before the world as a character of immaculate purity whom no man can convict of sin, our only rational conclusion is that he must have been something more than man. What, then, is that "unknown quantity" which will solve the problem of such a transcendent life?

If we allow the Scriptures to explain themselves, and accept that solution which the Christian Church has held for nineteen centuries, we simply affirm that Jesus Christ was a supernatural incarnation of devine wisdom and power. We believe the personality of Jesus and the facts of his life are explicable in no other way. But this hypothesis logically explains the mystery, and it is the obvious doctrine of the New Testament. Why not accept it as the true solution? We may well say in the words of John Milton: "If our understanding have a film of ignorance over it or be blear with gazing on other false glisterings, what is that to truth? If we would but purge with sovereign eyesalve that intellectual ray which God hath planted in us, then we would believe the Scriptures protesting their own plainness and perspicuity, calling to them to be instructed; not only the wise and the learned, but the simple, the poor, the babes."*

The miracles of Jesus were numerous and of a varied character. There were miracles in the realm of nature, such as multiplying the loaves, walking on the

* *Reformation in England*, book i.

water, and stilling the tempest; miracles of healing, which comprise the greater number of the mighty works of Jesus; and the miracles of resurrection, of which we have the four examples of Jairus's daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, Lazarus, and Jesus Christ himself. The one great fact to be noticed in all these miracles is their profound significance in the self-revelation of our Lord. You cannot separate the mighty works from the teaching of Jesus, for his works and words form one harmonious whole. The most searching criticism finds that the earliest oral tradition and written sources of the synoptic gospels must have been to a remarkable extent a "miracle-gospel." This fact is an insuperable difficulty in the way of the naturalistic and the mythical theories of the origin of the Gospel narratives. They utterly fail to solve the wonderful problem. The earliest sources of the synoptic gospels were too near the facts recorded to admit the suppositions of the rationalistic theories; and we must conclude that the original tradition, received from eyewitnesses, reported the miracles as accepted facts.

The new apologetic, however, will not

define miracles after the fashion of the eighteenth century. The men who replied to Hume's famous argument virtually admitted that, if miracles were not *violations* of the order of nature, they were, at all events, a *suspension* of nature's law or a *deviation* from them *contrary* to the established constitution of the world. The theistic doctrine of evolution has changed this entire concept of the order of nature. The world is not an inanimate machine, attached to certain "laws of nature" and left to run itself. It is, rather, a continuous manifestation of God, who immediately upholds and rules all things, visible and invisible. In the whole realm of nature we recognize the abiding truth of Jesus's word, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Each new departure from the past is but an onward step in the progress of God's eternal plan of the world. The exodus of Israel from Egypt, the Babylonian exile and its discipline for the Jewish people, the conversion of Paul, the evolution of Martin Luther and John Wesley and George Washington, are all parts of one great order of nature, carried onward by the direction of one eternal Mind. Jesus Christ

is himself an evolution from the bosom of the everlasting Father; and his resurrection from the dead was an essential part of the sublime manifestation. The miracles of Jesus, according to this view, were no more violations, or suspensions, or deviations from the order of nature than are any other works wrought for a definite purpose by one who knows what he is doing.* Which is

* Beyond this general but truly scriptural conception, is there not a latent fallacy in any formal attempt to define a miracle? A definition that assumes to be full and exhaustive implicity assumes to explain what, in the nature of things, is beyond human knowledge. When we have said that a miracle is "a wonderful work of God" we have gone to the extent of our ability to define. The same difficulty meets us in any attempt to define a "special providence" or "special answers to prayer." These are all wonderful works of God, inexplicable by us except in general terms. We can only say that these are parts of His ways who is past finding out. They are not violations of his laws, or deviations from his established plans and purposes. This seems to have been, in substance, the answer of Peter and John, when all the people were wondering greatly over the miraculous cure of the lame man. "Why fasten ye your eyes on us," said Peter, "as though by our own power and godliness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Child Jesus. . . . And upon the faith of his name hath his name made this man strong, whom ye behold and know" (Acts iii, 12, 13, 16). Here is no other explanation or definition than that the miracle was a wonderful work of God, wrought through faith in his name.

the grander concept—a mechanical process of inert matter, requiring occasional interpositions from without; or a continual unfolding, a series of surprises, an evolution planned and guided from first to last by the perfect wisdom of supreme Intelligence?

The miracles of Jesus are, therefore, a part of the Messianic plan and order of the manifestation of the eternal Father. It is significant that so large a proportion of them were miracles of healing. These all emphasized the great fundamental truth that his mission was for the restoration of humanity from the curse of sin. Hence, to the sick of the palsy it was as suitable for him to say, "Thy sins are forgiven," as to say, "Arise and walk." The nature-miracles proclaim him Lord of the elements, as well as the Physician of the souls and bodies of men. His casting out demons displayed his power over all the unseen and mysterious forces of the spiritual world. His raising others from the dead and his own resurrection were but the natural illustrations of his marvelous saying, "I am the resurrection and the life." And so all his mighty works were in splendid harmony with the purpose of his mission of salva-

tion. Utterly unlike the wizards that have performed strange feats to awe and confound the vulgar crowd, he never wrought a prodigy for the mere purpose of miraculous display. He gave no sign when it was demanded by the unbelieving multitude, nor would he come down from the cross at the challenge of his crucifiers.*

* Very important for the proper understanding of our Lord's miracles are the statements put forward in John's gospel in their defense. Thus, in John ix, 3-5: "Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. When I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Again, in x, 32, 37, 38: "Many good works have I showed you from the Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? . . . If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." Again, in xiv, 10-13: "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Once more, in xv, 22-24: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin. . . . If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they

The evidential value of the miracles of Jesus must, accordingly, be viewed in closest connection with his divine personality and the nature of his mission in the world. Apart from these considerations, they cannot be put forward as evidences of Christianity to a modern unbeliever. As we showed in a former lecture, no man now believes in Christ because of his miracles wrought two millenniums ago; we rather believe the miracles because we have first come to believe in Christ. And now those miracles stand in the sacred records as so many conspicuous illustrations, symbols, and types of the redemptive work he is continually carrying forward in the world. Every recorded miracle is not only an attested fact, but also a parabolic lesson of the kingdom of Christ. He ever remains greater than his miracles. They are but as shadows of his mighty personality.* The miracle in itself is nothing

had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." All these statements show the inseparable connection between the mighty works and the mighty words of Jesus, and their essential relation to the revelation of God in Christ.

* Hence the moral insignificance of mere prodigies. Separated from a great and good personality and without a purpose worthy of God, they can only be defined as wonderful works of darkness. Men have witnessed many such works at the hands

except as you know its cause and purpose. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him;" and the miracles of the gospels will continue as long as the world stands to be symbolic revelations of the love of God to man.

In view of the great noise made in some places over alleged "faith cures" and the pretensions of "Christian science" (falsely so called), we do well to observe the comparative estimate which our Lord put upon his miracles. While conceding that some might believe because of the works he wrought, yet, as a rule, he disparaged the relative value of mere signs and wonders. When the disciples exulted that devils were subject to them in his name he said, "Rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven." In his *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Edersheim avers that the miracles of Christ, so far from being anything in which he took delight, were rather a part of his humiliation.* They were of the nature

of magicians, sorcerers, necromancers, adepts in what have been well called "the black arts." They could never give any sufficient account of themselves to justify their performance.

* *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. i, p. 489. London and New York, 1883.

of a condescension to human weakness, in order to prepare the way for something better. So it is with a sigh of pity that he says: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." With much long-suffering he showed his hands and side to Thomas, and added with profound significance, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." In the face of all these teachings, there are those who keep on crying, "Show us a sign, and we will believe." Some would seem to be willing to crucify the Son of God afresh every day if they could only see him come down from the cross, for no higher purpose than to confound a scoffing crowd. They would magnify one prayer test above all the lessons of the Sermon on the Mount. They set a higher value on one alleged faith cure, that has made a local sensation, than on the whole record of a saintly life, that has made no greater show in the world than to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and keep unspotted from the world. Jesus wrought miracles of exceptional character, but took pains to say to his disciples that he that believed on him should do greater works than these (John xiv, 12). He that

converts a sinner from the error of his ways, and so saves a soul from death, is greater than he that heals a palsied arm. They who go about making a great noise over miracles of flesh and blood turn men's thoughts away from better things and cultivate morbid superstition, rather than faith in Christ. The deepest, highest, broadest apology for Christianity is "the love of God richly shed abroad in the heart" by the power of the Spirit, and "Christ in you, the hope of glory." This far-reaching truth led Paul to say: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, . . . and have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing."

Recognizing, now, the miracles of Jesus as a part of his revelation of the Father, we must not forget that the Lord Christ himself is unspeakably greater than his miracles, and he for whom any miracle is wrought must needs be greater than the miracle. Hence, the supreme argument for Christianity is the adorable Personality back of the miracles. The signs and wonders wrought by Jesus long ago, in gracious condescension to temporary conditions, are of little value to us now except as they symbolize the

greater works which the blessed Gospel is now and continually working.

And here we conclude our positive apology, pointing to the adorable personality of the Christ of God. By his birth and humble life, by his sympathy and sorrow, by his incomparable doctrine, by his wonderful expressions of conscious union with God the Father Almighty, by the sinlessness of his character and the laying down of his spotless life for the sins of men, by his resurrection from the dead and the miracles of his grace, which repeat themselves a thousand thousand times each day by the power of the Spirit in the hearts of men—by all these facts and more, the Gospel of his love sounds its perpetual call and cries, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

"O thou almighty Lord,
Our Conqueror and King,
Thy scepter and thy sword,
Thy reigning grace, we sing:
Thine is the power; behold we sit
In willing bonds beneath thy feet."

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