

# THE Union Seminary Magazine

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VOL. XV.

FEBRUARY—MARCH, 1904.

No. 3.

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## THE PASTOR AND APOLOGETICS.

BY REV. WM. BRENTON GREENE, JR., D. D.,

*Professor of Apologetics and Christian Ethics, in Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N. J.*

APOLOGETICS is that theological science which treats of the rational proofs that Christianity is the supernatural, and so the exclusive, the final—in a word, the absolute religion.

I. It is repeatedly said that, whatever may be the case with the professional theologian, the practical pastor has no need of, because no use for, this science.

Various grounds are urged for this objection. It is maintained, for example, that the truth of God does not require any defence; that if it did, its simple proclamation would be more effective than any argument; that apologetic preaching has often raised doubts which it has not resolved; and that on the preacher himself its influence has frequently been baneful, tending to make him critical rather than aggressive.

II. That there is much force in these allegations cannot be denied. The truth of God is eternal and immutable. How could human unbelief prevail against it? It is also self-evidencing. How could any human argument be so convincing as its own evidence? The preacher who discusses the scientific or the philosophical objections to Christianity may not answer them to the satisfaction of all or of any, and he will be sure to suggest them to many who otherwise would never have thought of them. The minister whose studies are wholly or mainly apologetic is likely to lose zeal and energy. Interest in the progress of a building will be sustained with difficulty if one is continually engaged in testing the foundations. It must be granted, therefore, that as spiritual illumination is more important for every Christian

than any theological science, so those sciences which set forth the content of Christianity are ordinarily more important for the pastor than that which discusses the rational proofs of Christianity. Commissioned to "preach the gospel," he needs most of all to know the gospel. An ambassador of Christ, his chief study must be the Word of Christ.

III. While all this is so, however, and while it needs to be emphasized, it is, nevertheless, true and worthy of special attention that apologetics has its place in the development and work of the practical pastor, and that in its place it is *indispensable*. For several reasons he will need to be himself a trained apologist and to use apologetics. Among these the following are some of the chief:

1. Existing doubts must be resolved. These may be such that, if prevalent, they will furnish an atmosphere fatal to Christian life. This will be the case when systems of the universe contradictory of the gospel hold sway. Naturalism, for example, with its denial of the fall and of supernatural intervention, excludes the gospel, which finds its occasion in the fall, and which is nothing if not a supernatural intervention. Hence, one cannot believe naturalism and the gospel at once. It would be a rational impossibility. Even God could not bring it to pass: to do so would be to violate his rational nature; and "he cannot deny himself." The same is true in the case of pantheism, and in the case of positivism. No man can accept the gospel, if he really holds to either of these.

And how widely influential these systems of error are! In these days of rapid communication the speculations of the philosopher become almost immediately the creed of the people. The naturalism of Darwin dominates the masses. The idealism or pantheism of the Cairds fascinates the thoughtful. The positivism of Ritschl is crowding the gospel out of even our own revival meetings. Hence on all sides the cry that genuine conversions are becoming uncommon. It is not because the gospel has lost its power; it is because an atmosphere has arisen that the gospel cannot enter. Breathing space must be cleared for it, if it is to have its effect.

The inquiry is, How is this to be done? God could do it immediately and supernaturally by his Spirit. He who does regenerate can as supernaturally eject from our minds whatever

hinders the truths through which he ordinarily prepares the sinner for the new creation, and in response to which the "new man in Christ" "turns unto God with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience." He has done so. He can do so again. But the question is, Have we the right to expect him to do so? Are we justified in waiting for God to do for us what he has put it in our power to do? We must depend absolutely on the Holy Spirit to quicken the dead souls around us; but has enlightened and sanctified reason nothing to do in overcoming error, and thus making way for the truth, in connection with which the Holy Spirit usually acts and only in the light and atmosphere of which can the revived soul live? In a word, as false philosophy is a great and very general hindrance to conversion to Christ and to life in him, must it not be refuted? And are not Christian philosophy and apologetics appointed, because adapted, to do it? Not to use them thus is as presumptuous and wrong as for the physician to discard medicine. Faith healing and distrust of apologetics fall under the same condemnation.

2. A hearing must often be gained for the gospel. Just because the preacher is the "ambassador of Christ," and so is charged, above all, with the delivery of his proclamation of grace, is it his duty to get a hearing for the gospel; and frequently this can be done only by means of apologetics. Would the Athenians have listened to Paul for a moment, if he had begun his sermon on Mars Hill with a statement of the doctrines of the cross and of the resurrection, if he had not first, by apologetics, vindicated the right of the gospel to be heard? And there are many in these days like the Athenians—probably more than ever. It is not sufficient to tell them to believe on Christ. They will pay little attention to you, unless you begin by showing them that it is rational for them to believe on him. The trouble may not be the one already alluded to, that their minds are poisoned by false philosophy. There may not be the least unwillingness to accept what, if received at all, must be received on God's authority, and as a supernatural revelation. What keeps them from listening to the gospel may rather be a demand for evidence that the gospel is a supernatural revelation, and so has divine authority. They do not insist that you prove to them all the contents of the Bible; but just because they are ready to accept it throughout, if it has

God's authority, do they insist that you show that it has his authority.

This is right, as well as in accord with the spirit of the age. A state proclamation ought to be obeyed because it is a state proclamation, but it ought not to be so accepted until we have discerned on it the state seal. Just because it is a state proclamation, it must be attended by adequate evidence, and this evidence must be demanded. Precisely so, it would seem that the unreasoning acceptance of the gospel would be wrong. God's proclamation of grace, it must show his seal and require that we receive it because of his seal. This is its own teaching. The Scriptures never demand faith except on the ground of sufficient evidence. "If I had not done among them," says our Lord, "the works which none other man did, they had not had sin." (John xv. 24). Could there be clearer recognition of the principle that faith may not be required without proof? The purpose of the miracles was that they should be the divine seal of the divine revelation. This, however, clearly implies that the world has the right to ask, and so the preacher is bound to offer, more than "the witness of the Spirit" to the truth of the gospel. He ought at least to present that evidence of miracles by which evidence the gospel was at its introduction attended. Necessary to gain a hearing for it then, it or other adequate evidence may not be dispensed with now.

Let there be no misunderstanding at this point. Only "the witness of the Spirit" to and with the gospel in our hearts can make us feel its authority as God's proclamation of grace to lost men. The gospel cannot be received into the heart, however, when the head rejects it. One cannot be made to feel the force of what he regards as unreasonable. Even God could not effect belief in such a case save by proving the apparently unreasonable to be reasonable: for himself the supreme Reason, any other procedure would deny himself; and because he is God, "he cannot deny himself." As "the witness of the Spirit," therefore, is essential to true conversion in every instance, so the argument from reason is necessary when the divine authority of the gospel is questioned on grounds of reason. The situation is like this. If a remedy were offered for a common disease, it would be proper for those afflicted to try it on the testimony of those who had taken it, and thus themselves experience its power. Only

by such trial, indeed, could they assure themselves absolutely of its efficacy in their own case. If, however, the virtue of the remedy were questioned by many—if, for example, it were said that the cures attributed to it were due, not to it, but to some other cause—then it would be proper for those advocating it to show by chemical or other tests, that it was adapted to do what was claimed for it. This would be a right procedure, as well as the only one to secure the impartial consideration and trial of the remedy. Exactly so, when, as now and at Athens in Paul's day, the gospel is assailed on grounds of reason, often the sole way to get a hearing for it is by means of apologetics. As Prof. H. B. Smith said, "There are places where philosophy can be met only by philosophy."

3. The necessity of apologetics is involved in the very nature of faith. This, both as an act and as a state, is rational. It includes the assent of the head as really as the consent of the heart. Let either be wanting, and *faith* is wanting. But the assent of the head is conviction produced by evidence. Constituted as we are, there is no other way by which the assent of the head can be secured than by evidence. This may be of various kinds; but whatever its kind, it must commend itself as rational. Otherwise, it would not be evidence. In the case of saving faith we assent to the truths of the gospel, we receive Christ as our Saviour, on divine testimony. This is their evidence, and it is the highest of all evidence; but even "the witness of the Spirit" in our hearts, on the evidence of which we accept the facts and truths of the gospel, would not be evidence, if true history and sound philosophy and experience rightly interpreted—in a word, if reason—did not harmonize with it. "The Spirit of truth" would deny himself, if his testimony did not agree with the truth of things; and it is only as we discern this, and in part through the appreciation of it, that we can truly and so savingly believe. What is called blind faith—that is, unreasoning faith—is, then, a misnomer; it is superstition, it is not faith. If we would really believe on Christ, and so live in him, we must reason; there is no alternative, faith being the essentially rational act or state that it is; and so apologetics, which aims to develop the rational element in faith, must be of high practical importance with reference to both conversion and sanctification. Though it can never of itself produce saving faith, such

faith can neither grow nor exist, unless, in one way or another, it has been active. It is like the candle wick. In itself it has no power of originating light; yet without it, it were vain for any one to strike a light.

4. Sanctification invariably stimulates the reason. Not only is it the process of overcoming sin, than which nothing is more opposed to mental sanity and vigor; it positively and mightily enlarges and ennobles the mind. It develops a new and uniquely grand world. It causes us to see all things in their relation to that kingdom which is from everlasting, and which shall be universal. It opens to us a new book. The man of the world has the Bible, but its real meaning is "foolishness" unto him. To him, however, who is being taught of the Spirit "the things of Christ" begin to stand out in their preciousness and beauty; and, as he becomes "able to bear it," he discerns in the Bible "the hidden wisdom of God." So, too, sanctification gives us a new God. By bringing us into daily and increasing sympathy with Christ, it enables us to understand him who, as the eternal Word, is the reason of reason. How, then, can sanctification do otherwise than issue in mental development? It would be the greatest of all contradictions, if we did not find that those whom the Spirit of Christ makes holy were, as never before, "in their right mind."

Now sanctification, inasmuch as it thus stimulates the reason, must yield itself to the reason or be repudiated by it. There is no alternative. The teacher of logic must himself be logical, or his teaching will be discredited by his pupils just in proportion as they profit by it. Precisely so, the Christian life must approve itself to reason even when not comprehensible by it, or those who accept it will lose their intellectual interest in it. Constituted as we are, it could not be otherwise.

To lose intellectual interest, however, in the Christian life means eventually to lose all interest in it. Every feeling, even, must justify itself to an idea, and exists only because of an idea. As Prof. Bowen said, "Feeling is a state of mind consequent on the reception of an idea." One cannot love God unless the idea of God enters into his conscience, and his love will be strong largely in proportion as this idea is clear and reasonable. As Prof. Henry B. Smith remarked, "He who thinks highly feels deeply"; and it is only he who thinks highly who can continue

to feel deeply; such is the dependence of feeling on thinking that if one does not think as highly as he can he will soon have no fuel for deep feeling. What, then, could be so suicidal as the tendency to banish reason from religion in the interest of feeling and practical activity? This is to neglect the roots in order to increase and perfect the fruit; and it is all the more suicidal because, as we have seen, sanctification cannot proceed and not stimulate the intellect. It is the very kind of fruit which makes the most demand on the roots. Hence it was that the Reformation was followed by the age of deism and of pantheism; a characteristic of the preaching of the reformers was that it was rarely apologetic. Hence it was that our Lord referred to the little child as the example of faith; not only does he believe on what for him is the most rational of all grounds, the testimony of his parents, but no one equals him in asking the why and the wherefore of what he believes. In any sphere of life, it is only thus that a rational being can continue to develop.

5. Were all this not so, apologetics would still be indispensable to the glory of God. This demands of us the consecration and sanctification of the whole man. St. Paul beseeches us, "by the mercies of God, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service." (Rom. xii. 1.) By as much more, then, as our reason is higher than our bodies ought we to consecrate it. Indeed, St. Paul prays, "And the God of peace sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. v. 23.) So, too, he describes himself as "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. x. 5.) Our Lord also gives as the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all the soul, and with all thy mind" (*δίνοια*) (St. Matt. xxii. 37); and the word rendered *mind* would seem to refer specially to the understanding or logical faculty.

We can see why this is. All that we are and have we owe to God because of what he is to us and has done for us. Consequently, whether we put a high or a low value on the reason, we ought to consecrate it to him. So long as it is a real element of our nature will this be the case.

Now the consecration of a faculty to God implies more than

its subjection to the divine law. We must use it for all the work of God's kingdom that it can perform. Precisely so, the consecration of our reason may not be merely negative. It must be also positive. It is for service that "every thought should be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"; and the service to be rendered is that for which the reason is by nature qualified.

'What, then, is this? To apprehend, to prove, and progressively, though partially, to comprehend "the things of Christ," and even "the deep things of God." In so far, therefore, as one does not strive to do this his consecration is imperfect, his debt to his Redeemer is unpaid. This does not mean that every one must be a skilled apologist: few can be. Neither does it mean that some have no need of apologetics: all, except infants and idiots, can and so should appreciate and use certain of the rational proofs of Christianity. As every one ought to love God with all the emotion that he can stimulate, so every one is bound to love him with all the intelligence that he can develop. Nothing less than this is implied in the consecration that is his due, and for which he asks. Hence, Anselm was right when he wrote, "Negligentia mihi videtur si postquam confirmati sumus in fide, non studemus quod credimus intelligere." Apologetics must, therefore, be indispensable to the pastor. He must seek the true consecration of his flock, as well as of himself; progress in understanding the truth of God is from the first implied in such consecration; and the highest office of apologetics is to develop such understanding. In a word, the pastor's *work* demands that he be a trained apologist.

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VOL. XV.

APRIL—MAY, 1904.

No. 4.

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## THE SABBATH AND MODERN CIVILIZATION.

BY REV. G. B. STRICKLER, D. D.,

*Professor of Systematic Theology, Union Theological Seminary, Va.*

RECENTLY the writer was requested to answer the following question: "Has modern civilization modified the works of necessity and mercy mentioned in the Westminster Standards in connection with the Sabbath?"

It will be seen at once that this is a difficult question, and one about which intelligent and conscientious Christians are not at all agreed. Many seem to think a great modification of such works has been brought about, in the providence of God, by the changed circumstances in which men now find themselves. They plead the necessities of modern civilization: the necessities of commerce, now carried on on so vast a scale, and constantly involving so great interests, and demanding in its exchanges so much promptness and dispatch; the necessities of labor in ministering adequately and seasonably to the numerous and pressing wants of millions of our people crowded together in our great cities; the necessities of the railway, postal and telegraphic service in preserving communication, often admitting no delay, between the different parts of our widely extended country; the necessities of refreshment and recreation, after toil during the week more exacting and exhausting than any to which men were ever before subjected. These alleged necessities seem to have made the impression on them that the Sabbath law of the Scriptures has become unsuitable for this age; that it is impossible to observe it with the strictness there enjoined; that it is unreasonable to suppose we are expected to do it; that the strict observance there required and these necessities, which often can-

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BY REV. WILLIAM BRENTON GREENE, JR., D. D.,

*Professor of Apologetics and Christian Ethics in Princeton Theological Seminary.*

### II.

IN a former paper we considered the place and the importance of apologetics in the work of the pastor. We are now to discuss its function and consequent indispensableness in his own development. Nor is this the less important aspect of our subject. Rather is it the more important. The most powerful factor in our ability to help others is what we are ourselves. "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching" (1 Tim. iv. 16). It was Paul who wrote this, and it was to a young minister that he was writing; but what is most significant is that he put self-culture before teaching.

I. The indispensableness of apologetics to the pastor's best development. This appears along at least two lines:

1. More than all others, the pastor needs apologetics for his own defence. His faith is almost sure to be uniquely tried. His people ought to bring, and in proportion as he fulfils his office, they will bring, their doubts to him. Some of these he will not be able to dispel, and then they will remain to trouble and, perhaps, to weaken him even more than those who brought them to him. Even when he can answer the questionings of his parishioners, it will not always be different. The pastor ought to see more deeply into things than do the members of his flock, and so it will often happen that what will satisfy them will only start him on disturbing courses of thought. Beyond this, the pastor is bound to "give heed to reading"; and he cannot in these days do this and not come into the atmosphere of naturalism and of pantheism and of positivism, which we referred to in the former paper, and which, unless steadfastly resisted, must eventually destroy both faith and piety.

Most serious of all, the great "adversary" himself is sure to make his most subtle as well as his most vigorous attack on the consecrated pastor, and it will be by the suggestion of doubts

that he will be most likely to make it. Whose fall could he so desire as that of the minister of Christ? and how could he so surely effect that fall as by undermining his faith? Much more than other men, therefore, will the pastor be called on to defend "the hope that is in him." Just because he is a pastor will he be in special need of the weapons of apologetics, not only in order to his efficiency as a minister, but yet more in order to his Christian growth and even life.

2. The pastor requires apologetics for his *best* development. This demands the strengthening of his intellect. As we saw in the former paper, complete consecration is impossible unless we love God with all our "*mind*." A true Christian will increase in thoughtfulness with regard to "the things of Christ," as well as in zeal for them, and equally with zeal for them. Hence, the pastor, just because as a pastor he must be an "example in this as in other respects to the flock," will himself need that discipline, and specially that rational discipline, which apologetics preëminently affords. This will be so, too, not only because he of all men ought to try to understand what he believes, but even more, because there is usually much in his position and life opposed to his doing so. The average minister encounters scarcely any temptation more subtle and more dangerous than the temptation to carelessness in study. The demands made on him for practical work are so many and so pressing that he often feels no heart for study, and not infrequently gives it up altogether. Hence, his need of a course of study which, like apologetics, cannot be pursued listlessly, and which, because of its characteristic appeal to the intellect, must develop intellectual vigor and intellectual tastes.

Again, moral integrity makes the same requirement, and, perhaps, more strikingly. It has been said that "preachers are the most dishonest of men." What this means is, not that they are given to intentional deception; but that, in order to greater impressiveness, many of them often exaggerate, distort or otherwise misrepresent facts. Whether or not we admit the truth of this charge, we must all grant both that the pastor is tempted along these lines as no other man is, and that of all men he who is the preacher of "the truth" ought never to yield to this temptation. How urgently, therefore, will the pastor need just the moral discipline which comes, and which comes only, from

the weighing of evidence and the testing of arguments. His habit of mind ought always to be that which, while it would "hold fast that which is good," must "prove all things." Otherwise, he will insult his Lord.

Once more, the pastor demands apologetics for the energizing of his faith. He must move his flock as well as teach them. Indeed, he must teach them in order to move them. Now, this he cannot do if he doubts what he teaches. He may and should believe and teach much more than he understands; but he cannot do so either effectively or rightly unless he is convinced that he has reasonable grounds for so believing and teaching. Man is not built in independent sections. His heart and his head must go together. Even the Holy Spirit will not, because, as the "Spirit of truth," he cannot energize a blind faith. What he can do, and does, is to supply or to point to the evidences that will make it rational. The men who have moved mountains have been men of intelligent as well as of strong faith, of faith that was strong largely because it was intelligent. An illustration of the relation between the energy of faith and apologetics is seen in the fact that both the ancient and the modern missionary eras were preceded and accompanied by great apologetic activity. The gist of the whole matter, then, is this: as no other man's, the pastor's faith must be as energetic as possible; and to be this, it must be a reasoned faith.

II. We may close this paper appropriately with three suggestions to the pastor who is convinced of the indispensableness of apologetics to his own defence and development.

1. Do not let all or most of your reading be in apologetics. Your business is to preach the Word, so that it is the Word that you ought to study chiefly. Your work is conviction rather than criticism; and though the aim and results of apologetics are otherwise, its atmosphere is decidedly critical. All this, however, is no argument against the systematic and earnest study of apologetics on the part of all. Too much meat makes one logy, but that is no reason why we should not eat meat in moderation. The too exclusive study of apologetics renders one speculative, but that is no reason why we ought not to study it in subordination to the revelation of God in his works and in his Word.

2. Just because the pastor's time for the study of apologetics

is limited, he should read only the very best books in apologetics. Among such are Orr's *Christian View of God and the World*, Harris' *Philosophical Basis of Theism*, Flint's *Theism*, Flint's *Antitheistic Theories*, Kellogg's *Genesis and Growth of Religion*, Fisher's *Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief*, Butler's *Analogy*, Ballard's *Miracles of Unbelief*, Godet's *Defence of the Christian Faith*, Christlieb's *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*, Ulhorn's *Conflict with Heathenism*, Storr's *The Divine Origin of Christianity Indicated by its Historic Effects*, Bowman's *Historical Evidences of the New Testament*, Kellogg's *Handbook of Comparative Religion*, Beattie's *Apologetics*, Fairbairn's *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*. The pastor should restrict his apologetic reading rigidly to these and books of equally high character also because the output of apologetic works is now enormous; and while most of these are distinctly good, an unusually small proportion of them are of the first order. If, therefore, the pastor contents himself with reading what happens to come to his notice, the immense probability is that he will read what is beneath *his* notice.

3. Even among the books named, and those equal to them, a discrimination should be made. Ordinarily, the pastor will find it most to his profit to read more on the positive than on the negative side of apologetics; on the evidences of theism and of Christianity, rather than on the refutation of false theories of the universe or of Christianity. Among the evidences, too, a distinction should be recognized. As a discipline, at all events for popular preaching, the historical evidences, because concrete, will be more valuable than the philosophical. In short, it is important to use even the best apologetic literature with wisdom. A stimulant, in proportion as it is strong, must be taken understandingly.