

THE  
PRINCETON  
REVIEW.

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By Whom, all things; for Whom, all things.

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*FIFTY-FIFTH YEAR.*

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JANUARY—JUNE.

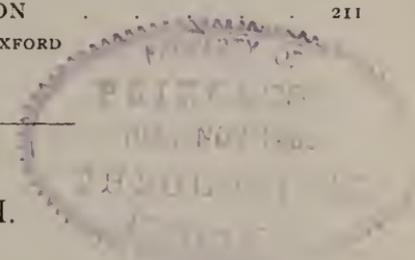
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## THE PULPIT AND SCEPTICAL CULTURE.

IT is neither a new nor an alarming fact that those "set for the defence of the Gospel" should find themselves confronted by what anciently was called the "wisdom," but in this age the "culture," of the world. The Founder of our holy religion, though his advent was heralded with the song "Peace on Earth," announced "I came not to send peace, but a sword." His apostles found themselves confronted by the secular culture of an age in many respects similar to the culture of this. Stoic and Epicurean alike mocked at their Gospel as "foolishness." The most intellectual and learned of the apostles readily admitted that "not many wise men after the flesh are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." Throughout the entire era of the planting of the Christian Church the Gospel preached was assailed not only by the malignant fanaticism of the Jew and the violence of Roman statecraft, but also by the intellectual weapons of philosophers, wits, and poets. Now Celsus denounced the new religion as base imposture. Now Tacitus described it as but another phase of the *odium generis humani*. Now Julian proposed to bring into contempt the prophetic claims of its Founder by the practical test of rebuilding the temple. Now Lucian poured out upon it the floods of his scornful satire as the supremest folly of the world's mad-house. And so at every period of special intellectual activity since have these assaults upon the Gospel been renewed. Yet the world looks, "and, behold, the bush burned in the fire, and the bush was not consumed." In spite of this perpetual conflict, with "the wisdom of the world" in arms

against it, this religion has somehow dominated the civilized world. In the famous saying of Richter, this Jesus "being holiest among the mighty and mightiest among the holy, has with that pierced hand of his lifted the gates of empire off their hinges, has turned the stream of centuries out of its channel and still governs the ages."

But the present breach between the prevailing secular culture and religion, both natural and revealed, is peculiar and unprecedented, whether we consider the width and depth of the gulf which separates them, the formidable proportions which the opposition to religion is assuming, or the new weapons of warfare, and the tactics by which it is assailed. These peculiarities, too, are such as to raise the question how far the teachers of religion—especially the evangelical ministry—should avail themselves of their position in the pulpit to enter into conflict with the blatant infidelity which is seeking to destroy all reverence for religion in the minds of the people. In order to the suggestion of some hints toward an answer to this question, it will be needful to note such of the peculiarities of the current scepticism as bring it more directly in conflict with the pulpit.

Prominent among these peculiarities is the utter anarchy which seems at this day to characterize the intellectual world, insomuch that the old laws of thought generally recognized and the old methods of reasoning in the higher departments of human thought seem to be set aside as obsolete. A revolution seems to have been effected within the last half-century by the sudden rise into extraordinary prominence, and claiming universal dominion of one department of knowledge hitherto known as the "physical sciences" in the narrower sense of that branch of knowledge relating to matter and force, and which arranges and refers to general principles the phenomena of material nature. Hitherto the "republic of letters" had been conceived of as a republic constructed somewhat after the fashion of the American political structure—a republic consisting of several commonwealths, having their several local governments for home rule, yet all combined in one federal union, with a general government of limited powers over the whole. And just what some of the fathers of the American

system feared in regard to the Federal Constitution—namely, that certain of the more powerful commonwealths would gradually gain such strength as to overshadow and absorb the smaller—has actually come to pass in this republic of letters. One department, formerly considered a mere secondary power, seems, by its rapid advance in the precise knowledge of matter and its laws and by its skilful application of this knowledge to the practical uses of society, has gathered an immense popular following, that makes it all-powerful in an age in which learning has become democratic in its spirit. And as its power has increased so its pride and arrogance. Hitherto it had been characteristic of true science to confess that the extension of its knowledge was also the extension of its ignorance. Those who had advanced farthest in exploring the *arcana* of nature were first to confess how far short they had fallen of a full comprehension of them ; and that the result of all their knowledge of the mysteries of nature was only to find themselves confronted with still more insoluble mysteries. They plodded faithfully on in their effort to discover new facts in nature and patiently arrange them, slowly enlarging the domain of science. But the spirit of the recent scientists is entirely the reverse of all this. They seem speedily to tire of the confessedly arduous toil with crucible, telescope, microscope, spectroscope, scalpel, hammer, test and balance, and impatiently fly off from the *terra-firma* of facts which they have gathered up into the regions of speculation ; and on the basis of the partial facts to construct romantic theories not only in material, but also of mental, moral, and theological science. Newton's boy gathering pebbles on the beach of the shoreless ocean, now undertakes to construct out of these pebbles a huge theory of the great oceans of the universe, and to declare the laws of its ebb and flow, its mighty depths, the sources from which it is fed, and the causes of its briny contents. The ages being thoroughly sensational as well as democratic, the simple facts of nature, however curious, do not satisfy its cravings, and the scientist ambitious of fame is tempted to launch out into the region of speculation and hypothesis, and to present these together with his facts as the well-ascertained truths of science. Not only so, but invading

the proper province of the metaphysician and the theologian, he substitutes for their theories of the mental, moral, and spiritual nature of man, his own theory of evolution and development as competent to find for all mental, moral, and spiritual phenomena a physical basis. All that cannot thus be accounted for he quietly relegates to the realm of the unknowable and unthinkable. Science has become as speculative and as prolific of metaphysical theories as the most insane metaphysician could wish. The most distinguished scientists, leaving their proper calling, stray into the wilderness of metaphysics, and become so bewildered as to mistake their gossamer metaphysical theories for the hard, substantial facts of their science.

The necessary consequence of this *coup d'état* and of the usurpation of physical science in the intellectual world, with its materialistic culture, is to render science of necessity thoroughly atheistic. The conflict is no longer between revealed religion and deism, but between atheism on the one hand and natural as well as revealed religion on the other. Naturalists of the new school, no longer confining themselves to the observation and classification of phenomena, aspire to rise above such drudgery to philosophic speculation in the sphere of mental and ethical science, and even of theology. They claim to have discovered that mind is but the product of brain development, just as physical action is produced by development of the muscles, and secretion by development of the glands. Thought consists simply of translocation of the cerebral substance. Any conception of God or spirit—indeed of any other ideas than such as are derived from the inspection of physical nature, are, if not impossible, then indeed to be set over into the region of the unknowable. The heavens and the earth no longer tell the glory of God, but only the glory of Copernicus, Kepler, Laplace, and Newton in some small degree, but in a far higher degree the glory of each one of these more modern discoverers, who have found a universe with no personal God in it. If their cosmological theories are to be accepted, then indeed the dream of the eccentric German dreamer was not all a dream, but the foreshadowing of the gravest deductions of modern science. “When I looked up

to the immeasurable universe for the divine eye there glared down upon me an empty, black, bottomless *eye socket*, and eternity lay upon chaos and ruminating it." Not less surface in conception is the ambitious effort of Mr. Herbert Spencer to build a science of the universe on a philosophy of the Unknowable; or Professor Haeckel's "Natural History of Creation," expounding the *becoming* alike of organic and inorganic nature without making a place for any Creator.

It is somewhat surprising that the leaders of thought in the higher departments of philosophy seem disinclined to resent this arrogant pretence of mere naturalists to enter upon and assume authority in their own peculiar field. So far from this, in many cases they seem ready to submit to these domineering pretensions, and suffer themselves to become permeated by the spirit of the new materialistic philosophy. Worse than this, again, the department of theology proper seems in too many cases to have caught the infection, and "speaks half in the speech of Asdod." A rationalistic scepticism steals within the very inclosures of the conscience, and makes use of the pulpit itself for the purpose of seducing men into disbelief of every thing that is peculiar to the gospel system. In the department of biblical exposition, critics, catching their inspiration, partly from the effete transcendentalism of Germany in the last generation and partly from the new materialism of the present, have devised a keen, relentless criticism that aspires to sweep like a tempest over the entire Scriptures. Assuming that the notion of any supernatural interposition in human affairs belongs solely to an age of ignorance, credulity, and superstition, it proposes to reconstruct the whole story of the church, excluding alike the awful mysteries of Sinai and the still more awful mysteries of Calvary. Now, as ever, the storm that gathers and darkens the whole horizon concentrates its power to burst in its fury upon the head of Him who hangs upon the cross. Nay, the ultimate and real issue of all this Babel-voiced clamor and conflict is simply whether Christendom shall any longer have a Christ—Son of Man, and yet Son of God; nay, whether the universe itself shall have any God.

All this might concern the religious teachers of the people less if the infidels of the present as those of the last century

devised their cosmogonies only for the narrow circle of the learned, to gratify a literary vanity, and an ambition that aspired after the smile of the *élite* only, and would have scorned the coarse applause of the mob. But in this respect, also, all is changed. The spirit of science and philosophy has become democratic. The general prevalence of popular education has given the masses of the people a smattering of knowledge, just sufficient to fill them with the idea that they have capacity for comprehending all knowledge. The people, too, have an immediate interest in the labors of scientific men, which so largely affect the industries of life—arts, commerce, manufactures; therefore science finds itself in possession of a wide field for the display of its facts, and especially of its novel and surprising theories. Therefore eminence in science, no longer above the meanness of mediocrity, is not ashamed to come down to the strategies of the retailers of second-hand knowledge in lectures and popular essays. Indorsed by so high example, the second or third hand retailers come before the people with greater show of authority, mingling with a few important facts of science the poison of their godless speculations. Through attractive popular volumes, through reports of scientific societies, through magazines, through daily and weekly journals, and through popular lectures and discussions, they bring themselves and their speculations into contact with the masses of the people to an extent never known before.

The way being thus prepared for him, the infidel scoffer finds audience for every sort of direct assault upon religion and the teachings of her scriptures, representing them to be the chief antagonists to knowledge. They love to narrate to the people the conquests of science as victories over Christian theology, instead of victories over ignorance, with which true theology had nothing to do. The antiquated views of nature which theologians of the olden time accepted are exhibited as essential parts of their religious faith; and the old theories of nature which modern science has exploded as part and parcel of religious systems which fell with the old theories. They are silent as to the great historic fact that, as a general rule, it was Christian men who led the way in the very discoveries that have made modern science what it is, but are eloquent in pro-

claiming for, the thousandth time how Rome burnt Bruno, how the Inquisition tortured Galileo, how Presbyterian Geneva sent Seryetus to the stake, and how the Synagogue of Amsterdam expelled and cursed Spinoza.

Thus the very atmosphere which the pastor's flock breathes day by day is permeated by this infidel poison. And taking advantage of the popular scepticism which has been produced by these discussions of "science, falsely so called," the open, ribald blasphemer seizes the opportunity to "turn an honest penny" by a speculation in the current infidel prejudices against Christians. He gets up novelties in the way of blasphemies for the amusement of the novelty-loving public. By that cheap sort of wit which depends for its effect rather upon the sacredness of the associations in the mind with what is venerable and holy rather than upon the genius of the blasphemer, he burlesques and caricatures the facts and doctrines of the Scriptures. In order that the shock may not be too great to the prejudices of early education, he may at first avoid the subject of Christ, directing his drollery and derision against Moses and the story of creation, or the doctrine of hell. Yet this thin disguise can hide the true object of attack only from the ignorant and thoughtless. For Jesus thoroughly indorsed Moses as the mouthpiece of God; He preached Moses, expounded Moses, rested His own teaching upon Moses. And more fully and distinctly than any of the inspired teachers did Jesus preach the doctrine of hell. To scoff at Moses and at the doctrine of hell is therefore to scoff at Jesus.

It becomes, no doubt, a perplexing question in many cases, How ought the gospel preacher to deal with such a state of facts? He cannot but be aware that a large number of those to whom he preaches are more or less brought under the influence of this sceptical culture. And besides, he is aware that he and all who stand fast "to the faith once delivered to the saints" are continually held up before the people as ignorant, dogmatic bigots, whose religious creeds of necessity puts them into a position of antagonism towards scientific knowledge and the progress of the age. What, then, is the duty of the preacher in reference to this noisy, rampant, and aggressive scepticism? Can he afford utterly to ignore it? Evidently

not. Shall he then arm himself with sling and stone, and go forth to meet these Liliputian Goliaths who defy the armies of the living God? Must he shame the smatterers by going back to the foundation of their infidel systems, and instructing the people in the categories of Kant and the philosophy of Hegel with their outflowing in the destructive criticism of the Tübingen school? Must he expound and expose the Positive Philosophy, and point out the mistake of Sir William Hamilton in regard to the unconditioned and the unthinkable? Must he discuss with Mr. Herbert Spencer his system of the universe developed from the unknowable, and his new theory of creation under Darwin's law of development? Must he mark out for the people the mistakes of the philosophers concerning that mysterious line which separates between the knowable and thinkable and the unconditioned and unknowable? Must he follow Tyndall and Huxley and Darwin into the *penetralia* of nature and expose the missing links in their theories of the origin of man and of the universe? Must he trudge with Sir John Lubbock over his immeasurable mud-bank of facts often falsely so called, or grope his way with Baron Gould through his immeasurable fog-banks of speculation touching the genesis of man and his religions?

Manifestly not. This would be a practical laying aside the duties of his office. And moreover, such is not the true method of meeting error in the popular mind, even philosophically considered. Every minister of intelligence and experience has discovered that the most effective method of destroying the influence of error over the minds of men is not to give chase after it into the wilderness of controversy, but to instill into the minds of the people clear and distinct ideas of the contrary truth. The surest antidote to falsehood is clear-cut simple statement of the positive truth which falsehood assails. There is a profound philosophy underlying the instruction given by an inspired apostle to a young friend in the ministry, and one specially appropriate to the young ministry of this day: "Keep thou that which is committed to thy trust; avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called." And elsewhere the same apostle declares his own method of dealing with the sceptical culture

of his day: "The Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Greeks foolishness."

But this does not imply by any means that the great apostle ignored all secular knowledge by way of aid to his work in propagating the Gospel—as his noble apologies for Christianity show. This suggests an important distinction between the duties of the preacher as a member of one of the learned professions and an educated member of society, and his duty in the pulpit. In the former relation he has important obligations to discharge in moulding public opinion and elevating the tone of public thought, especially in matters of ethical culture. He is the representative of theology as the highest of sciences. And in this capacity he should resist, in the interests of truth, the attempt of the modern sceptical culture to impress the popular mind with the idea that religion must be relegated to the sphere of *faith*, in the sense of unreasoning credulity, while science and philosophy occupy the sphere of reason and certitude. Nor can the Christian ministry—especially the Presbyterian ministry, presumed to be men of some culture by their very admission into the ministry—afford to recognize the arrogant and insolent claim of the sceptical scientists to all the culture; or to admit that the conflict between them is a conflict of enlightened culture on the one side, with a narrow, ignorant intolerance on the other. It should be his aim as an educated man to show how the history of learning in the past ages attests that the Christian religion, in its secondary influence, has been the nursing mother of science and philosophy, as an aid in the study of the sublime themes of theology. "The universities of Europe seven hundred years ago," observes Thomas Carlyle, who will not be accused of religious bigotry, "all began with their grand aim fixed upon theology—their eye turned earnestly to heaven. What is the nature of this stupendous universe and what are our relations to it, and to all things knowable by man, be known only to the great Author of man and it. Theology was once the name for all this." As an educated man he should show what every intelligent student knows to be true—that the most profound thinkers and the most successful in revealing the secrets of nature and the universe

have been Christian thinkers, whose reverential faith in God furnished the *πov σεω* for the lever whereby they lifted the cover from some of the sublimest mysteries of the universe. It is both amazing and amusing to the true scholar to note the cool insolence of sciolists in philosophy in this day, who raise the hue and cry against the dogmas and the dogmatists of the Christian religion as the chief obstacle, in all time past, to the progress of science and human enlightenment. How would the great fathers of the modern sciences have shuddered at the prediction that a day would come when those who claimed to be their disciples, successors, and eulogists would seek to canonize them as martyrs who fell in the conflict for truth as against Christian theology and its dogmatists, instead of in conflict for truth as against the ignorance of an unscientific age? Let it be imagined that all that has been done for science, physical and metaphysical, by Christian thinkers—lay and clerical—was blotted out of the memory of the world, and how much would science have left to boast of? It is a very trite rehearsal, and yet some of our pretentious scientists need apparently to be reminded of certain historic facts with which school-boys are generally familiar. Was it not the pious Christian believer Copernicus, consecrating his life to the three services of God, man, and science, that pioneered the way into the unknown universe as the great Columbus of the heavens? Was it not the pious Christian believer Galileo—victim though he was of the Inquisition—that proclaimed the maxim “to despise science is to despise the Scriptures, which teach us the greatness and glory of Almighty God?”

In his character as a man of culture, and profoundly interested in the proper education of the public, the preacher should find opportunities to keep such facts as these before the people. And as against the arrogant claims of popular scientists he will do well to remind the people that it was the Christian philosopher Bacon who first organized for science a constitution and laid down the laws under which Nature will reveal her secrets, and, so far from relegating theology to the realm of the unknowable, declared this to be the “crown and queenliest of sciences,” and laid his great work on the altar as a sacrifice to the Immortal God. He should

keep it before the people that Kepler—who demonstrated that the universe had been built, as it were, to the glorious harmonies of a divine music, and filled the whole scientific world with ecstasies of enthusiasm by pointing out how in the minutest structure as in the splendid and harmonious whole the hand of God is seen—was the scientist who declared that in discovering the law of creation he was but thinking the thoughts of God after him. That Newton, who applied his mathematics of heights and distances to the measurement of the visible universe, deemed every step in the knowledge of Nature a step nearer to the knowledge of God. That Locke, who led in the way and blazed the track through the tangled forests of the human understanding, thought it not beneath the dignity of philosophy to become an humble expounder of the revealed Word of God. There are a few illustrations of one of the many sorts of service which the gospel minister, in his character as a member of society, can render the cause of truth as against the insolence of the modern sceptical culture. The list might be extended indefinitely of Christian thinkers in every department of science and philosophy, such as Pascal and Edwards and Butler of the last century, and Chalmers, Hugh Miller, Hitchcock, Morse, McCosh, Dana, and a score of others in the present century, who rise as a great cloud of witnesses to testify against this reckless calumny, that the religion of Jesus Christ interposes obstacles in the way of true science. In his character as a man of true culture, the minister may rebuke even eminence in science, which ought to be above the meanness of mediocrity, when it descends to the level of the charlatan, and insinuates that the Gospel in which these giants in the realm of science and philosophy gloried is the narrow and intolerant enemy of science and progress.

It behooves the preacher as a man of science to prevent the imposition on the people which would represent the Gospel faith as the antithesis to reason in science and philosophy, and to assert the claim of revealed theology to be as truly a science as any other department of human thought. As Lord Bacon affirms, this gospel theology "is the crown and queenliest of sciences. Religion, in the sense of a philosophic theology, is

obviously a science, and as purely inductive as any of the systems which put forth their claims to be sciences, physical or metaphysical. Religion is really anterior in idea to philosophy, which latter is but the attempt of a reverent spirit to explain itself and the universe of which it is a part. The question of a future existence, to which religion chiefly has reference, is not a doctrine of the schools, but of the fundamental faith of humanity—the utterance of an instinct common to the race. And it is on the question of the nature and significance of this instinct that the Gospel stands face to face with the schools of science and philosophy, both of matter and of mind. While the preacher cannot afford to follow the sceptical culture out into the region of speculation, where there is no law to govern the contest and no arbiter to decide as between the parties, it is yet his duty to maintain the dignity of the Gospel as a system of thought entitled to be regarded as a science—yea, the science to which all other science is but ancillary. When the scientist claims to have found some new fact or new truth conflicting with the Scriptures, it is perfectly competent to the preacher to answer, “You are probably mistaken in your facts or have erred in your deductions; for even science, which cannot err, being founded upon direct revelation from the Omniscient source of all truth, affirms the contrary.” If we are consistent in claiming inspiration for the Holy Scriptures, we must stand upon their absolute verity and leave all scepticism to take the laboring oar. The assumption that the teachings of the Scriptures stand upon a common level with the teachings of science, and are to be called in question as any other subjects of human thought, cannot for a moment be admitted by the gospel preacher. His duty is to set before the people as infallible verities the great doctrines of the Scriptures—remitting the controversies raised by the discoveries and theories of science to the great Christian thinkers of the schools whose special function it is to deal with questions of science and philosophy. The Church of God has never lacked men specially qualified to meet scientific culture on its own ground and to defend the faith against the assaults of unbelief.

The preacher must indeed recognize the fact that ignorance of science in time past has led to erroneous interpretations of

portions of the Holy Scriptures which have had a very general acceptance in the church. He will avail himself of any new light thrown upon the interpretation of God's Word by modern science. But nothing tends more certainly to impair the confidence of the people in the Scriptures as a rule of faith than the over-readiness of many to accept too hastily the claims to have made discovery which overthrows even the common interpretation of the inspired Word, and thereupon to begin some overstrained interpretation with a view to bring the Scriptures into harmony with the new discovery or with some fanciful theory proclaimed with great confidence. It is ever to be borne in mind also that, as a general rule, the scientists who assail the Scriptures and demand new interpretations are themselves deplorably ignorant of the scriptures and of the common-sense principles upon which they should be interpreted.

As a general rule, any attempts to meet the sceptical scientists half way, and devise strained interpretations of Scripture or modifications of the creed of the church with a view to give the Gospel a fair standing with the wisdom of this world, leads to discreditable failure. It gains little credit from the sceptics, and impairs the confidence of Christian people in the minister who makes the compromise.

The fallacy that underlies most of these compromises is that theology is a science which grows from partial ignorance up to full stature as the merely secular sciences. Whereas, while secular science must grow up slowly from ignorance to perfectness, the science of theology starts from infallible revealed truth at first, and its changes as it passes through the hands of fallible men are generally in the direction of corruption. For here Tertullian's maxim has its most forcible application, "What is first is true, what is more recent is false." The only changes that can improve theology come from improvement in the interpretation of the language of the Scriptures of which theology is the systematic expression. To set aside the interpretation of Scripture as it has been maintained by the steadfast faith of God's people for eighteen centuries at the call of any new theory, or except upon absolute demonstration of error, is surely not the part of true reason. To set aside erroneous opinions in science held in connection

with certain truths of Scripture obscuring their interpretation, may be all well enough. But to assume that after eighteen centuries the substantial meaning of the Scriptures, outside of unfulfilled prophecy, has not yet been reached, is in effect to declare the revelation practically useless.

These may suffice as illustrations of the relation of the gospel preacher to the current sceptical culture in his character as an educated man and member of one of the learned professions. We have aimed to select only specimens of the duties that devolve upon him in that capacity, and the obligation that rests upon him to maintain the right of theology to rank as a science in the great sisterhood of sciences, and to repel the insolent ignorance of "science falsely so called." But when it comes to the question of his duty as a minister of Christ in the pulpit, speaking officially in the name of Christ, it is a somewhat different matter. Then the great Apostle of the Gentiles should be his model: "I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Though, in a human point of view, this may seem an unphilosophic method of meeting the infidel, and to the inexperienced young minister it may seem so hopeless a task to preach the Gospel against such an array of unbelief, that he cry with the prophet's servant, "Alas! what shall we do?" the minister of age and experience will answer, "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." After all, the preached Gospel, pure and simple, may be shown to be of all others by far the most philosophic means for convincing men of the truth, in spite of all the plausible delusions of scepticism. Discouraging as may be the outlook to the preacher when he perceives his flock exposed to these perversions of true science, which seek to undermine the very foundations of Christian faith, he has but to consider the great fact upon which the apostle relied so confidently, that in preaching the simple gospel, however the "carnal heart" may be arrayed against him, he is yet "commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Here is his great advantage against all the learning, all the strategies, all the plausibilities of the sceptical culture—that while they may delude the understanding and win the affections, he has hold of the con-

science, and in his reasoning may rely upon the primary intuitions and conscious spiritual wants of mankind. The grand peculiarity of the Gospel of Christ as a system of thought is its self-evidencing power to the human soul. It goes into no profound argument, after the fashion of natural religion, to demonstrate the existence of a personal God and moral ruler, the immortality of man, and a retribution in the life to come. It assumes all these to be truths which the moral intuition of men must recognize. It comes as bread for a hunger and water for a thirst that is presumed to exist more or less consciously in every soul in its normal state, and as yet not perverted by the riot of the passions or the treacherous reasoning of a deceitful heart.

A very slight analysis of this general proposition will exhibit the *rationale* of the power which the gospel preacher wields as against the influence of the sceptical culture over the masses of the people.

However plausibly the sceptical culture may urge from the discoveries of science the probable non-existence of a personal intelligent Creator and Ruler in the universe, and even for the time being succeeding in dazing the minds of men, still the average humanity, as distinguished from the smaller proportion of the speculative humanity which has succeeded in stifling its own native instincts and searing its conscience on coming to itself under a preached Gospel, will revolt at the idea of a universe without a Creator, without a Providence overruling it, without a Judge to enforce the eternal distinction between right and wrong, without an eschatology which provides for the final triumph of good over evil. The speculations of atheism so profane all the sanctities of man's nature, that the unperverted masses of men, whether able to reason with the theorists or not, will resent with scorn the insult put upon them by thus reducing them to the same level with the brutes and even with inorganic matter. As against this degrading view of humanity, when the gospel preacher comes with the story of the Infinite Maker and Ruler, not only interested, but so profoundly interested in all that concerns man that He made an infinite sacrifice in order to restore him, meets with a responsive echo in every human soul. And though "the natural man re-

ceiveth not the things of God," yet it is one of the paradoxes of humanity in its present state that while a personal God brought very near is painful rather than pleasant, yet, on the other hand, the appalling desolation implied in the idea of no personal God, creator and moral ruler, renders atheism repulsive. From this paradox of dislike to a personal God brought very near to the soul, and yet the shrinking back from the idea of no God, which leads to the attempt of theism to preserve the idea of God, and yet not so as to disturb the moral consciousness, have come most of the corruptions of religion in every age. It is hardly necessary to adduce proof of this remarkable propensity of men while unhappy under the sense of a near presence of God yet to revolt at atheism. The investigations of such sceptics as Lubbock and Baron Gould, and all the recent discussions concerning the genesis of the idea of God, all go to establish it. Here, then, the gospel preacher at the very outset has a tower of strength in these original intuitions of mankind. After scepticism has made its mightiest efforts, and has even been successful for a time in obscuring the instincts of humanity, the preached Gospel needs only bring back the mind to its own consciousness in order to efface the temporary impression.

The same general facts are true of the literal preaching of "Christ crucified" as asserting the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God. If it cannot appeal to the primary intuitions of men, it does appeal with no less power to man's instinctive tendency to worship God as a Being who concerns himself with human affairs. For the doctrine of the incarnation presents God to the human soul in the only method in which He can be so conceived of as to be really worshipped. For it may be shown that God within the measure of humanity—the infinite God who must include all the finities, presenting his finite side to the conception of the finite human mind—is the only form in which the emotions of the soul can be drawn forth in worship. Even granting that some of the more subtle and philosophic minds might so conceive of God, a pure spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, as to be able to render him the homage of the heart, very manifestly the masses of men can reach no such philosophic height. Still

more manifestly the souls bowed down with sorrow and affliction, who most feel the need of communion with God, are in no condition to rise to this transcendental conception of Him that they may speak to Him. The doctrine of a God incarnate now seated upon the throne of the universe, to whom all men may approach, is, even philosophically considered, an absolute necessity to meet the felt wants of man's spiritual nature. Just here, no doubt, lies the secret of the propensity of men in all ages anterior to the incarnation to make their gods men or their men gods. So that the Jupiter, the Apollo, the Minerva, and the thousand other gods of the classic mythologies were, as Dean Trench has shown, but the unconscious prophecies of the incarnation. Philosophers may speculate about a pure spiritual being; but man cannot really worship such a Being in the sense of having his moral affections go forth toward Him. Man may worship, as the ancients did, that which is below himself or in himself resembling God, but not what is infinitely above himself and purely spiritual.

Hence, notwithstanding all the unbelief of the understanding which the sceptical culture may generate in the minds of men, and however it may blunt the instinct of worship, the return to spiritual consciousness with the coming of affliction, deep sorrow, and alarm in view of imminent danger, will render the message of the gospel preacher attractive again, because it presents a divine human friend and saviour in whom the conscious wants of the soul are met.

The adaptedness of the preached Gospel, as bread for the hunger and water for the thirst of the soul, will be seen still more clearly if we attempt to analyze the impulses of the soul itself and note those spiritual paradoxes of which it is full. Thus every thoughtful man who has attempted to know something of his own spiritual constitution has discovered that he is possessed of energies and spiritual faculties which find no adequate theatre for their exercise within the narrow sphere which limits his earthly existence. He seems to have within him the singular paradox of the powers of a Hercules tethered within the limits of a cradle. Hence the restlessness and dissatisfaction with themselves which the more reflective men of the world feel as they muse upon the littleness of their existence.

Akin to this is the consciousness of desires and hopes so much wider in their scope than can ever be the earthly objects to satisfy them. This is doubtless the cause, in large part, of those excesses to which men are prone. They run into excesses of every sort in pursuit of that which will "minister to the mind diseased." It is the vain effort to feed the hungry soul "with the husks that the swine do eat," and failing to satisfy the hunger at one feeding they crave more husks until they imbrute themselves. Even when such excess is avoided there is a sense of soul-hunger that keeps them on the move. So that though one has attained to more than he ever hoped or desired at first, the heart is still unsatisfied. And when the mere man of the world comes to look back over his life from the verge of the grave, he seems to himself to have been all his life long but repeating day by day the freak of childhood when in the abiding faith of the nursery he chased the beautiful rainbow that stood down in the meadow, hoping to find the spot in which the pot of gold was buried, but found the rainbow ever receding before him.

These phenomena no sceptical science can account for, nor do ought to relieve the troubles that spring from them, however urgent the call for relief. The gospel preacher alone has the science at command that meets the case and relieves the trouble, and therefore he wields a power that no scepticism can gainsay or resist. His science points out the solution of the paradox. For it can tell him of the original greatness of his nature, constructed as it was on a platform of immortal existence; of the ruin that came by sin, and of the proposed restoration by Jesus Christ. Therefore these energies within him, that find no theatre for their exercise within the narrow limits of the life here. These desires and hopes are so far beyond the capacity of temporal objects to fill them, are just as they are because, as Augustine so finely said, "The soul being made for God can find rest only in God." And in spite of the plausibilities of the sceptic, that may deceive the understanding for a time, the power of the Gospel will be recognized in the moment of calm and serious reflection.

The advantage of the pulpit with its science of salvation over the theories of a sceptical philosophy, in getting and main-

taining ascendancy over the soul, may be still more clearly seen when we come to consider the moral paradoxes of the soul. Thus every thoughtful man must have been conscious of the singular fact that he has capacity for idealizing and approving a far higher standard of character than he ever actually reaches; and therefore he is ever restless and dissatisfied with himself. And even though he may succeed in stifling the soul-cry of reproach amid the din of business, the excitements of ambition, or the noisy revelries of pleasure, yet in the moment of calm reflection the dissatisfaction returns upon him. And besides this general consciousness of dissatisfaction, he finds within him a conscience—no matter whether a distinct faculty or the result of the combined action of all the faculties of the soul—which sits as a judge holding assize and pronouncing judgment upon his thoughts, words, and actions as right or wrong. And these judgments against him for the wrong suggest the idea of a retribution for the wrong done, which of necessity disturbs his self-complacency. Moreover, he finds this peculiarity, that when some great sorrow or calamity comes upon him he finds a strange propensity to connect the sorrow back with some sin, perhaps a long-forgotten sin, for which the sorrow comes as the penalty. That picture of Reuben and his brethren conferring together concerning their deep affliction in the governor's house in Egypt is not more marvellously true to nature than profoundly philosophic as an illustration of this curious law of man's moral nature. Though twenty years and more have passed away and the sin against Joseph long forgotten, yet now that affliction and alarm has come upon them, how it recalls the sin which they conceive has brought down upon them the judgment! "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." It is the outcropping of a mysterious principle that lies deeply imbedded in the human soul. We have represented conscience as a judge sitting to pronounce sentence and suggest penalty. This judge may be represented as having also a clerk of court—even the memory, which records the indictment and the sentence. But in this he is a treacherous clerk, scrawling his record on the walls of

the soul as the boy with his phosphorous stick scrawls upon the sides of his schoolroom. So long as the sun shines brightly and all is well, there is no trace of the record; but once by reason of deep sorrow the darkness of midnight comes upon the soul, then the accusing record glares out fearfully in lines of fire upon the wrongdoer.

It is needless to point out how here again the gospel preacher has at command a power against which no scepticism is proof. His science finds the solution of the problem of conscience in the fact that man was made originally in the image of God, and this is the voice of God speaking within him. In his doctrine of sin and "the blood that cleanseth from all sin," he has the means of giving peace to the conscience and solace for the troubles of the soul. And on the soul that once experiences relief from this Balm of Gilead no theories and fancies of infidelity can make any impression. If he cannot answer philosophy with philosophy, he can at least successfully silence the cavillers after the method of the restored blind man: "Whether he be a sinner, I know not; but this I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see."

And thus the Gospel meets all the wants and solves all the mysteries and paradoxes in the spiritual constitution of man. Indeed just here is the peculiar glory of the gospel revelation. It aims not merely to reveal the mysteries of God to man, but also to reveal man to himself, and expound the mysteries of which his soul is full. What is needful to man beside the knowledge of God is a revelation that may become the articulate voice of the intuitions and mysterious paradoxes of his spiritual nature.

The conclusion of the whole matter is, that the real power of the pulpit, as against the influence of scepticism over the people, is in pressing the advantage which it has in laying hold upon the conscience and making it appeal to the spiritual nature. Science and philosophy, in the secular sense, have no power in this domain. They cannot meet the soul wants as the science of the Gospel meets them, and thereby has its self-evidencing power. For this is one of the "evidences of Christianity" which all men cultured and uncultured alike can see and feel the force of.

It would not be difficult to show that this general view of the subject is thoroughly scientific as well as the practical view, and in full accord with the scriptural view of the duty of those "set for the defence of the Gospel." Even Kant, though denying the possibility of either an ontological, cosmological, or physico-theological proof of the existence of God, yet recognized the irresistible force of the argument which is built upon the moral nature of man, which demands a supreme judge as a necessary consequence of the intuition of sin.

While, therefore, as himself a man of culture, a member of one of what are known as the educated professions and among the leaders of public thought, the gospel preacher should maintain the dignity of the science which he represents, and resent the arrogance of any science that would ignore this highest of all sciences; while he should not ignore, but keep abreast with, the advanced science and learning of his age, and be able to warn the people against imposture; yet speaking officially in the name of Christ from the pulpit he should, like the apostle, know nothing among his flock, "save Jesus Christ and Him crucified," feeling assured that the truths thus set forth will make themselves manifest as the power of God and the wisdom of God against all forms of unbelief. The Church of God relies not upon the pulpit for the discussion of questions of science and philosophy with unbelievers. For that she has not lacked in time past nor at this day faithful sons filling other positions able to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." Such sons have ever been her rich reward for her toils and sacrifices in fostering the very science and philosophy which the enemies of the truth would now turn against her.

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