

SUPPLEMENT.

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SERMON.

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[The author of this sermon desires his name and place of residence withheld, that the effort may rest entirely upon its merits, neither strengthened by the prestige he may possess with some, nor weakened by his lack of influence with others. Ed.]

Subject.—INFIDELITY.

Even the imperfect narrative which historians have given us, shows that men opposed to truth have always adopted similar methods; and though these have differed greatly in details, their general course has always been the same.

We do not propose making a minute examination of the intricate mazes through which infidelity has led its march; but shall be contented for the present with a general survey of the forts, arsenals, weapons and fortifications and methods of warfare owned, manned and employed by the foe of the humble Nazarene. We notice that the unbeliever plants himself usually in one of two positions. He affirms either that the Bible is shown to be untrue by internal evidence, or history and science, singly or combined, demonstrate its untruthfulness.

If history is relied upon, we answer first, that it is an incompetent witness.

As no man can judge of the merits of a picture, unless at right distances and angles the light is thrown upon the entire view, so we cannot judge the picture of the Bible, claiming to be divine, by the partial, prejudiced, uncertain, contradictory accounts furnished us by profane historians. It must also be remembered, that the Bible lays claim to historic worth; and the unprejudiced student of history is compelled to acknowledge that in this respect it possesses superior merit; at any rate, we cannot justly cast it aside and fail to consider and properly weigh its statements, when we appeal to history as a material witness in the case. We submit, that for the following reasons, profane history cannot be relied upon to impeach the validity and accuracy of the Bible narrative:

It lacks comprehensiveness. So far as its light from covering the entire field, that it gives but faint and uncertain reflections of undefined and in many instances imaginary portions. The blanks which it leaves are filled either by the imagination of the historian, which by lapse of time become hallowed into historical fact; or its chasms are bridged over by a process called reasoning, which is nothing more than comparison of the known to find out the unknown, which must therefore be uncertain and unsatisfactory, and cannot by any ordinary stretch of im-

agination assume the dignity of historical fact. The relation quantitatively speaking, which the historically known bears to the historically unknown, is not ascertained and cannot be, until the unknown is explored. The unknown may be much greater than the known; in which case, the revelation of that great unknown historical quantity, might be much more startling to infidels than anything they have ever found in the Bible; and might and likely would, so completely modify statements at present received as facts, that they would be found to be startling fictions instead. A careful distinction, we note, must be made between what is received and urged as known, by infidels, and that which is actually known; for professing to seek after facts, and to be willing to receive nothing else, they may justly be compelled by public criticism and demand, to give facts in support of their charges and criticisms.

As a second reason for disputing the infallibility of the world's historical record, we cite the fact that the best class of histories, those termed vaguely "authentic," are constantly undergoing revision and change. That which was received as absolutely true in a historical sense fifty years ago, is in many instances doubted or positively denied, as the old mists and fogs clear away, and new and stronger light comes. This change, which we need only mention, for every one of you who has given the matter any considerable degree of study and thought, knows it to be true, is fatal to the claim of infallibility or absolute truthfulness. That witness, who, surrounded by different

circumstances and persons, and handled by a different lawyer, tells each time a different story, is not worthy of belief, unless supported by strong collateral evidence.

The appeal to science is no less unsatisfactory. Under this term, literally meaning knowledge, by a familiar process of enlarging the domain of words without changing their etymology, has been included all knowledge derived from a study of nature directly. We do not propose to consider the question whether science as now understood and the Bible agree or differ, but as in the case of history, we deny the reliability and infallibility of the witness. No man has yet had the hardihood to affirm, that he possesses or that any one else possesses a complete knowledge of any single branch of science. There is before every explorer in the scientific domain, an unknown, of which he can only affirm, that "there is but one thing he knows, and that is that he knows nothing." Thus in seeking to try and condemn the Bible by a scientific standard, the infidel stands, like the ancients at the pillars of hercules, and measures the Bible by his knowledge of the seas and bays and gulfs around his native land, but never takes into consideration, because he knows nothing about it, the great expanse of unexplored waters before him. He grasps a weapon, of the temper, size and general features of which he confessedly knows but little, and stupidly and persistently declares that with it he can demolish the great civilizing and enlightening force of the ages. Having seen a few of the characteristics of the temple of truth, he

avers that he possesses such complete knowledge concerning all the rest, as to be able by the light which they reflect, to try a record which contains a theory by which men have reached the highest ideals of goodness and greatness. The pretended certainties of science are born of the repeated assertions of that class of scientists, who have again and again demonstrated the truth of the adage, "When philosophers set out to be foolish no folly is equal to theirs." But we must hasten to the other branch of our subject.

Infidels urge that the claims the Bible makes for itself, for God, and for God's people, are all "unreasonable." This charge implies the erection, in their minds at least, of a certain standard, called by them reason. What is this? If they urge that it is outside of and above human experience and power, they seek to lead into the spiritual and inspirational domain, but are not willing to enter therein when led by the Christian, or Bible believer; and if they affirm that it is something within the pale of human experience, then we ask what kind or class of human experience condemns the Bible? That of infidels, or that of Christians? Such a scrutinizing inquiry robs the infidel of at least half his stock in trade, which consists in the charm there is for many minds in the averment, the positiveness of which is only equalled by its carelessness, "It is not reasonable." More closely examined, reason is found to be that faculty of the human mind, by which it compares things known to ascertain things unknown. Galileo compared his knowledge of rotary motion and the facts his rude telescope

revealed with reference to the appearance, disappearance and reappearance of the sun's spots, and concluded from such comparison, that the sun revolved, upon its axis. But had either of the known quantities been wanting, the unknown could not have been discovered. Thus it appears, that knowledge is the instrument which reason uses to enlarge her domain; and that, therefore, concerning that of which we have no knowledge we cannot reason. The infidel affirms his disbelief in certain things because he has no knowledge of them, little thinking that thereby he confesses himself unable to submit them to the ordeal of reason; and that therefore, as against him, who, with equal credit for honesty and veracity, claims knowledge of them, he is an incompetent witness, and that in any court of our land he would be denied a hearing. In France, where the "Reign of terror," born of the worship of the "goddess of reason," drenched Paris with blood, a different rule applies.

We must, then, in order to be accurate and just, discriminate between the childish attempts of those who blatantly affirm that such and such things are not reasonable, and the calm and diligent efforts of those who possess knowledge and are seeking to increase it by the familiar reasoning process.

We may perhaps state here, with as much advantage as at a more advanced stage of the argument, the clear and grand distinction between infidels and Christians: The former is using all the force, ingenuity and ridicule, which he can command, to destroy the belief that a revelation has come from God to man, pointing out the realities and

glories of a future state and bidding men walk in certain clearly defined paths in order to receive a blessed state after death; the latter plants himself upon this platform: "God has revealed himself to us; and if you will comply with his conditions he will reveal himself to you." The infidel says to the Christian, "Enter into my scientific laboratory, and I will demonstrate to you that the Bible is not true;" the Christian enters, wades methodically through what are called demonstrations, and finds them to be simply the conclusions of the scientist, without warrant of fact. The Christian invites the infidel into his laboratory, and asks him in all fairness and candor, to apply the test of his demonstration, but the unbeliever will not go. Loud and many times impudent in his declaration that the Christian will not submit to a demonstrating process the differences between them, he now, when the test is applied, reveals not only his weakness and the weakness of his position, but his moral cowardice also.

In regard to the portions of the Bible which are averred to be unworthy of belief, we can only speak in a general way. We notice first that they are nearly always those parts the existence of which is immaterial to the question of salvation. Moreover, built as we are upon the foundation of revelation from God, both individually and collectively, our position is absolutely impregnable in this regard. If through human weakness, either doctrinal or historical errors have crept into the ordinarily received versions of the Holy Scriptures, we as a people need give ourselves no uneasiness; for God in his own

time and way, according to our faith, will correct error by revealing truth.

We note also and wish especial attention directed to this thought, that the purity, the nobility, the beneficence of the life enjoined by Christ upon his followers, have never been successfully disputed. Of all the benefactors of the human race, infidels have not been able to show one equal to the humble Nazarene. So long as the teachings and life of Christ remain impregnable to the attacks of unbelievers, so long is the victory ours; so long as this the very citadel and high tower of our fortress of truth remains, just so long may we laugh at every maneuver of the foe. In connection with this thought we present the additional one: Infidels are always seeking to get as far away as possible from a discussion and consideration of principle. Their appeal is not to men's love of right and truth; for if it were, they would appeal to Christ; for there as no where else, are found the basic principles, which have appealed to the common feelings of humanity as being just and right. There as nowhere else, are found the searching, though profoundly simple, expositions of human nature; there, as nowhere else, my friends, are found unswerving integrity, dignified sacrifice, yearning love and god-like wisdom. If the infidel were searching for these things, and seeking to accomplish no other and sinister purpose, he would bow the reverend knee at the cross of the great exemplar of truth and righteousness. If an unbeliever could be found who presented as much truth in his whole life as Christ presented in one day; infidels would never tire of

pointing to him as a successful rival of the Christian's Savior.

In this connection we wish also to point to the fact, that infidels to the latter day work, and the fruits thereof, pursue the same course and use the same weapons which infidels to the Bible have always pursued and used. The attacks upon the Book of Mormon and Book of Doctrine and Covenants, have been marked with the same virulence, the same questioning with reference to origin, transcribing, publication, etc., which have marked the attacks of infidels upon the Bible. The Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, all enjoy holiness of life in order to salvation. Is this attacked? Suppose it could be shown that they enjoined unholiness of life in order to salvation, what then? Would infidels pass over this part of the record in silence?

The Bible has its ark, the Book of Mormon its ship that brought Nephi and companions to America; the Bible has its Urim and Thummim, and the Book of Mormon its ball and directors; the Bible teaches the doctrine of vengeance, and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants is objected to for the same reason. Thus we might increase the volume of evidence that proves conclusively that infidels to divine truth have in all ages adopted similar methods.

Christianity comes teaching certain principles, and insisting upon these as the only essential things in the message brought. The infidel refuses to fight upon this ground, and thus admits the correctness of the Christian's theory. The infidel says, as it were, "I admit the exalted character of your Christ and

the purity and holiness of the principles you teach, but I have somewhat of fault to find with the means by which you came into possession of those truths. Your house is good enough to live in and altogether too strong for me to tear down, but I will not come into it and abide there; for according to my notions there are some unreasonable things connected with your account of its erection. An examination of the building reveals nothing rotten, nothing imperfect, deformed, nothing that does not conduce to the welfare and happiness of its inmates; but I fear there is something unsound about your belief as to how the timbers were in the first place formed, or by what means they were brought into position and fitted to each other with such marvelous accuracy. Until these fears are allayed, and you can demonstrate according to my standard that the magnificent structure, which I confess is superior to anything else, was erected according to human reason, I must remain outside, though I confess a longing for the comfort and hope which you say you feel within the protecting walls of your Christian doctrine.

Briefly summarizing we note again:

History and science are incompetent witnesses against the Bible and Christianity, because they lack comprehensiveness, testify to different and contrary things, are constantly changing their point of view, and looking at things in a different light. They are unstable witnesses; in fact they know but little about that of which infidels seek to make them testify, and are totally unworthy of belief, unless sup-

ported by other more reliable evidence.

Human reason is but an application of human experience—a comparison of known facts for the purpose of discovering those which are not known. Upon that, therefore, concerning which we have no knowledge, we cannot reason. He, therefore, who asserts that he knows nothing of any other world than this, thereby confesses that he can not reason concerning any other world or concerning the truths, principles and laws of any other world. Infidels are therefore incompetent to reason upon the Bible, a book largely of laws, truths and facts concerning another world. It is the reason—the experience—of infidels that is against Christianity; that of Christians, the only ones competent to reason upon it, is all in its favor.

The infidel's challenge to investigation within the laboratory of science, if we permit this witness to be heard, has been many times accepted by the

Christian. The Christian's challenge to investigation by direct appeal to God, the infidels have never accepted.

The infidel attacks what he claims to be bad about the Bible; but he will not accept and act upon what he confesses to be good. This shows that his real object is to oppose these good principles, though he will not directly attack them for lack of either show or reality of evidence against them.

Finally, whatever unbelievers may say or do, the golden precepts of the Bible, Book of Mormon, and Book of Doctrine and Covenants, are grand and eternal truths, on which if we rely, no power shall be able to move us from the brightness and certainty of our hope in Christ. The more thoroughly these truths are investigated, the more glorious they appear, hence criticism should be invited, not avoided; but an appeal to basic principles should always be made, rather than pursuing a less comprehensive course.



THE CHURCH AND THE WORKING MEN.

The time was when in our land there was no recognized antagonism between the working classes and the churches. It is a new problem in our civilization. The cause should be easily discovered by unclouded eyes. Fifty years ago, aristocratic pretensions were looked upon as vagaries and treated with contempt. In the churches people felt nothing of the chill of caste. A glance at the centers of population must convince us that now all is changed. There is an evident rivalry in the erection of splendid edifices and in the social and oratorical qualifications of the ministry. The poverty of the workingman's home is accentuated by comparison with the richness of the sanctuary. The chief seat is vivid with purple and fine linen. Outside the house of God exists a social aristocracy, bulwarked by inferior cliques, and governed by unwritten rules, marking distinctions between man and man. We have a moneyed aristocracy, a political dictatorship, landed proprietors, a rapidly-increasing tenant population, the "workingman" and the "tramp." With the vast augmentation of wealth in the possession of the few and the increasing pressure of poverty in the homes of the many, the time is at hand when there will exist between classes gulfs as impassable as that between Dives and Lazarus. Intensifying social struggles are working a transformation in the character of the church, as is manifest from the new terminology coming into general use, such "star preachers," "first-class churches," "wealthy congregation," and "our poor charges." The observer of this is found in the expressions of the workingmen: "We can't dress well enough to go to church;" "your leading members don't notice us on the street;" "your preachers run after the rich;" "the ministers

side against us in the matter of strikes." If present social conditions can be justified, these phases, caught from the lips of the toilers, are simply excuses inspired of the devil for non-attendance upon religious services. The discontent has, however, a basis in fact; but they will give utterance to it do not understand the underlying principle, and hence can not formulate it. With social inequality among members outside the church, there can not be religio-social equality within it. The great human heart of the people comprehends in some measure the fact that Christianity is not a cement to hold a rich veneer to a body of inferior materials, but a furnace to fuse all elements into one homogeneous mass. Under present conditions, it is sheer folly to talk about the rich and the poor meeting together in the house of God; the poor decline the invitation. How can the church regain influence with the workingmen? By teaching God's will concerning social questions while insisting upon purely spiritual matters. By presenting Christ as the Son of man as well as the Son of God. By preaching morality along with religion. For what purpose did God fill the storehouses of nature? Are toil and poverty the outcome of God's intention, or are they the results of violations of divine laws? Has religion anything to do with business, social, and political questions? Does God design the bounties of nature for the benefit of a favored few, or to supply the natural craving of all men? Did Christ intend that his doctrines should burn selfishness out of the human heart, secure justice for all, and abolish involuntary poverty from the world? Are present conditions just, and, if not, where does the injustice inhere? Shall the church be supported by a "better class," and

be constituted the protector of the rights of property, or shall it be the friend and champion of the poor and helpless? The church is thought to have given exclusive attention to spiritual truths, and to be positive in its denunciation of only such evils as are prohibited by civil statutes. It has insisted upon the command, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy soul," apparently in the belief that the enforcement of this doctrine would result in the abolition of all the evils that afflict society; while the equally important and binding injunction, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," has been reiterated, but never thoroughly defined and explained. If a small percentage of the volumes in our theological libraries had been devoted to a discussion of man's duty to his fellow-man, the thought and investigation essential to such a consummation would have brought light to great realms of present darkness. The church has been reaching down into a sin-polluted pool to rescue individuals, but has given little attention to the causes which render the pool impure. Why do covetousness and class distinctions prevail? Manifestly because the rewards of society—ease, pleasure, popularity—are heaped upon those who possess wealth. How does it happen that the bounty God has provided for all men is enjoyed by a class to the exclusion of the masses? The solution of this problem involves the examination of an industrial system which produces such results, and a comparison of it with the spirit of the teachings of our Savior. Such a procedure would soon array all the forces

of righteousness against the rulers of the darkness of this world, work the purification of society, and bring about the reign of universal peace. Such are some of the questions that must be investigated, answered, or, ignored. Evils are not righted by bulwarking those who profit by them, but by listening to the clamor of the oppressed. If they are ignored, the laboring men will resolutely spurn the invitations of a Gospel that has a promise of eternity, but that does not compel justice in the conduct of its professors here. If an honest and impartial investigation be made; if the toilers see that the church is sincerely anxious to protect them from the rich men who keep back their hire, to condemn the usury that devours widows' houses, to stand as a mountain cliff in the way of oppression and injustice, then they will flock to it as doves to the windows, and be loyal to it in the ultimate result. The social problem must be worked out by the followers of the peasant philosopher in whose doctrines the weary and heavy-laden find rest. The saints will again have charge of Cæsar's household and men will no longer hate the name of God.—C. M. Morse, in the *Forum* for February.

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