

Symposium.

CURRENT UNBELIEF.

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THERE are so many phases of unbelief that few men are competent to map out the subject with anything like completeness. A symposium in which different writers take up different phases, and discuss them in their roots and causes, seems therefore to be not uncalled for. Each writer may be expected to treat, not of theoretical, but of actual forms of unbelief with which he has come in contact, and which he has had some opportunity of diagnosing. Nothing is proved against the truth of his experience, if another observer claims that he knows nothing of it, and that his experience of life has been totally different.

I propose to speak in this paper of unbelief in the Inspiration of Holy Scripture and of false views of Inspiration as the cause of the unbelief. The Church claims that there is an element in the Old and New Testament Writings that can be found in no other literature, and therefore it declares them inspired. But the Church has never defined, in any of its great Creeds or Confessions, the nature and extent of Inspiration, either positively or negatively. Evidently too, it must be impossible to define, with any approach to accuracy, the divine or extra-human element, until we have exhausted the human element. That has not been done yet, and cannot be done until scholarship and thought, investigation and criticism have spoken their last words. The wisdom of the Church in not formulating any theory of Inspiration may thus be seen so clearly that it is hardly possible to avoid acknowledging a divine guidance of it in the matter. It is notorious however, that fools rush in where angels fear to tread, and the wisest man is more or less foolish. The wisdom of the race is needed to supplement the deficiencies of the individual. Where the Church has been silent, the priest, the pulpiteer, the dogmatist, and the schoolman have been accustomed to speak frequently, loudly, volubly; and too often civil or ecclesiastical authority has been ready to back them. They have usually enunciated views of Inspiration similar to