

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### THE BIBLE AND MODERN THOUGHT.

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[At the annual meeting of the Ottawa Auxiliary Bible Society, the Rev. Principal MacVicar, in speaking to a resolution urging the universal circulation of the Word of God, delivered an address of remarkable power, which, slightly condensed, is placed before our readers.]

It is vain to talk of the Bible being now upheld by weak ignorant fanatical pietists, or by cunning hypocrites who are agnostics at heart, but too dishonest and mean to say what they think. The strongest, purest, profoundest minds in the world are arrayed on the side of God's Word. There never was such a vast army as now of clear-headed, learned, critical men of judicial skill who are thoroughly persuaded that in holding fast and holding forth the word of Life they are not following cunningly devised fables. They know, because they have critically tested it, that the book has come down to them accredited beyond all works of antiquity,—has come down to them as delivered by God to holy men of old who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, attested by internal, external and collateral evidences, which are ever increasing in force and conclusiveness, and which to sensible persons have all along possessed overwhelming power.

Equally vain is it to raise the vulgar cry that science is hostile to the Bible, and destined to consume it. This may serve to frighten a few of the unread and unthinking to whom science is merely

#### A MYSTERIOUS AND APPALLING NAME.

But the truth is that the inquiring critical spirit which science manifests is that which the Bible itself inculcates and fosters. It is this very book which invites and provokes discussion, and fearlessly says to men, "prove all things; hold fast that which is good." We have, therefore, no wicked and unnatural quarrel with any of the sciences. We bid them all God speed. We devoutly rejoice in all the wisely-directed efforts and brilliant successes of learned physicists. Let them by all means push forward the lines of knowledge and discovery in every direction far beyond their present limits. Let them find out and formulate new laws of the material universe, and let them assail and destroy every form of ancient, mediæval, and modern superstition that falls within their realm.

But after science has nobly done her work, and after she has occupied a much larger place than now in the thought and confidence of the world, let no one be so simple as to suppose that the Bible is superseded. No! Its domain lies above and beyond the field of the physical sciences. It speaks on themes upon which these sciences are and must ever be silent. What has any science except theology to say about a Saviour and repentance, and pardon and eternal life. What can chemistry or mathematics tell you about the removal of sin and guilt? What can geology or anatomy or astronomy tell you about faith and love and gratitude and moral courage and purity and all that goes to make up a true and exalted man? Absolutely nothing.

But these are great and pressing facts in human experience, and, as long as they are such, the Bible will be indispensable to the human race. Meanwhile the great lesson which scientists and theologians are learning is, that each should keep to his own province and frankly recognize and respect the truth and the glory of what belongs to his neighbour's province. It is surely illogical and foolish to allege that because the Bible is true, science must be false, and, *vice versa*, that because science has grand and eminently practical truth to offer, the Bible must be false. Nay, verily, but let us rather joyfully and reverently accept truth from whatever quarter it hails, feeling sure that ultimately we receive it all from God, the great fountain of truth and love.

And let us beware, whether judging of the progress of science or of the Bible, of falling into the error of mere pessimists who are perpetually looking along the line of their noses into the dirt of this world, but never up to God and to heaven, and who are continually sighing and moaning over the degeneracy of our age and the unutterable badness of the world. Away with these gloomy notions. The world with all its faults is vastly better than ever it was before, and this is undoubtedly due in a very large degree to the wide

circulation and acceptance of the Bible, accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost.

I venture to urge you to scatter it to the utmost extent:

1. Because of what it has already accomplished for the human race. It has done good and not evil. No man has been made a worse husband or father or son, a worse doctor or lawyer or banker, or worse merchant or member of Parliament by doing what is enjoined in the Bible. The

#### GREAT CURRENTS OF HUMAN THOUGHT

and activity have not been corrupted but purified by this truth. I am not in your presence and, during the few moments at my disposal, going to attempt a history of its glowing achievements, but this I will say, that all the nations that are not possessed of this book, move on a far lower plane intellectually, morally and spiritually than those who have it. I say more, that paganism is a failure, an utter failure, whether propped up by the philosophy of ancient or modern times. It is not progressive, inventive, elevated, pure. Pagan lands are not the lands of steamships and railways and steam looms and spinning jennies and telegraphs and telephones and electric light. Pagan lands are not the homes of domestic purity and universal freedom; where property is safe and human life and rights—and specially the rights of strangers—are sacred. No! This state of things you will find only in Bible lands. Cold, secular science and philosophy, whether all moulded by evolution or otherwise, are powerless to save men from the ravages of sin and vice. Hence pagan lands are, and ever have been, the abodes of festering vice and horrid cruelties. We may take them at the zenith of their so-called glory and yet this is true of them. In Imperial Rome both before and after the advent of Jesus Christ, fathers and mothers esteemed it virtuous to put their infant offspring to death, to expose them to the teeth of dogs, or to give them as a prey to murderous jugglers who often used their brains to practice incantations, or saved them alive for the basest purposes of slavery and immorality. Quintillian says, "To kill a man is held to be a crime, but to kill one's own children is sometimes considered to be a beautiful action among the Romans." And we all know how serfdom and slavery, private wars and duels, polygamy and horrid public games and spectacles debauched the people; and how, then as now in all heathen lands, woman was trampled under foot amid unutterable degradation and misery. Against all these and a thousand kindred evils, the Word of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ definitely pronounce. But it does vastly more. It is not like so much of the philosophy of our day, a system of mere negations. It furnishes positive truth. It offers a remedy for the sins and woes of men. It says, "Love thy neighbour as thyself," and this single precept, heartily accepted and obeyed, would annihilate serfdom and slavery over the whole world; and, as a matter of fact, has not this spirit of love, which is the spirit of Christ, laid hold, more or less, upon the human heart wherever the Word of God has been received; and are not the nations to-day learning—too slowly we grant—to settle their international difficulties without appealing as readily as heretofore, to the stern and awful arbitrament of war?

Then think of the humane institutions which we owe to the Bible. Those who wantonly blaspheme against Christ and His Word, are debtors to Him in this respect, a thousand times more than they can ever acknowledge. Look at our homes for orphans, for the aged and infirm who were wont, under the rule of pagan philosophy, to be visited with cruelty and death. Look at our hospitals for the sick, for the incurable, for all sorts of sufferers; our asylums for the insane and the inebriate, as well as our schools for the deaf, the dumb and the blind. These are undeniably the offspring of the Bible. In fact the history of human progress and of civilization in its highest forms, is simply the history of the triumphs of Christianity. No one can deny that Bible lands are to-day elevated, noble, scientific, progressive, free; and that lands which have not the Bible are sunken, vicious, degraded, full of tyranny and cruelty of every form. Hence they are not the true friends of our land and of our race, they are not the advanced thinkers of the age or the promoters even of common morality, but the reverse who oppose and malign this book. A book with such a history deserves to be given to all men. Whichever it has gone it has re-adjusted human thought and reconstructed human society after a

divine model. The records of the past are eloquent in its behalf, and it is full of potency for coming ages. Agnostics and others need not console themselves with the silly thought that intelligent believers in this Word and students of history are in any way trembling for its future. Nor will the apostasy of a few here and there, who usually become noisy in their new circumstances, impede the onward march of the truth and the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. The Word itself foretells the appearance from time to time of its opposers; and these verify its truth by the bitterness of their hatred and opposition. And after all that is said of their recent attempts in this respect, they are heartless and feeble, void of conviction and force, when compared with the efforts of their predecessors. Yet under the sterner treatment of giant unbelievers in the past,

#### THE TRUTH HAS HELD STEADILY ON ITS WAY

and continued to bless and elevate mankind, and its foes may make up their minds that it is sure to advance during the twentieth century with redoubled energy and glory. On the score of patriotism, for the sake of humanity, and in recognition of the mighty things it has already accomplished, we are bound to give this Word to all men. But we are bound to do so:—

2. Because it is the highest and best instrument of intellectual culture. It meets an imperative demand of the human mind by revealing a great and all-sufficient First Cause of all things.

I hold that the recent theories of science in this connection are both unsupported by fact and thoroughly unsatisfactory to the human intellect. To be told, as we are, that molecules, and law and force exist and that these account for all things, cannot set our inquiring spirits at rest.

We ask whence these molecules and this force and law? How did these originate? And science has no answer to give.

We ask how did these dead atoms become transferred into living things? What is life and whence is it? How do you bridge over the broad chasm between dead atoms and living creatures? Science cannot tell. "After centuries of research the term life wanders through science without a definition." The sublime Biblical solution of one of the great problems of our age accords with the highest reason and the verified results of science; for reason demands a cause, and science demands a cause possessed of supreme intelligence where evolution furnishes none.

Now what we allege is that for purposes of true education, of real intellectual culture we must not outrage this law of our being; and the grand peculiarity of the Bible is that it continually leads our thoughts up from the elementary, the finite, the phenomenal to the infinite—and this is a necessity of complete thought and of full intellectual development. You cannot build up a strong physical frame without causing it to undergo vigorous exercise; and so you cannot develop robust, manly intellects fit to work out the true destiny of our great Dominion without teaching them to wrestle with the profound problems of this Book, without bringing them during the process of education face to face with God as the creator and supreme ruler of all things. I do not care to conceal my emphatic opinion that atheism, under whatever scientific or unscientific name it may be concealed, is a destructive evil in any educational system. And I make very little account of the idle cry that the Word of God should be excluded from our homes and our schools because it breeds sectarian strifes and bitterness. History is taught in our schools and our homes, and I ask any candid thinker to say if there is not vastly more in the history of England, say in the history of Henry VIII., or Charles I., or Charles II., to stir up such stifles than in all the writings of the Old and New Testaments. Then why put the truth of God under the ban and not history? And has it really come to this that any one in a Christian land has the hardihood to tell us that the study of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ is not good for us? Will any one tell me that we have in this Book the thoughts of God who has given us our feeble powers of thinking and that what He has given for the health and growth of our spirits is really unwholesome? Nay, verily—

#### CHRIST'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

is that which shall prevail, that "man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." I urge, therefore, the circulation of the Word for this reason: and