

overthrown, not by opinions of moderns, but by contrary voices from the ages in which our own evidences were accumulating. It is replied "this is a very antiquated position." It is not antiquated, though it is allowed to be conservative. But, though such, and though taken in the midst of the very furnace where destructive views are forged, it is held with a very sober belief that, though old, it is sounder than the principle which governs later criticism.

It would be wrong to deny all good to rationalism in whatever direction it may operate. It has had generally a good motive—a thirst for a better understanding of things. I question very much the soundness of the view that there are mysteries into which we are forbidden to peer, and do not believe that the Creator has put a formal prohibition upon the intellect so that it may not enter any of the accessible fields of knowledge. The finiteness of the human mind is the only insurmountable limitation which it knows. All the Divine lets and hindrances are moral in their purpose, and if a man have a right heart, there is before his intellect the expanse of the Infinite and all within it which he, if he wishes, may seek to apprehend. Without this right heart, a man has no permission to know anything. We put restrictions upon the knowledge of children for good and wise reasons—moral reasons in this case, too, and such as do not deny their right to know, if they were only able to take the full responsibility of the knowledge. This responsibility a man is able to take, and thus the general motive of rationalism accords with that high prerogative of reason which allows it to open every door of investigation and explore every dark cavern of mystery.

As to the method of the system, we, in criticising the exaltations of the individual thinker, have already passed the most important judgment which we would pass. Still, we may find in the method, also, something of good which is beyond all price. Great stress is laid by rationalists upon the duty of men to think for themselves; and, in order to think well and truly, they say with admirable earnestness that mental discipline and expansion, together with as full an equipment of knowledge as is obtainable, should be secured. This is right; no duty is more imperative than that of judging things for ourselves. It may be practically impossible to examine the bases of all our beliefs, but the obligation to do so should be acknowledged as far as our opportunity extends, and should be felt especially in relation to beliefs on which depend great moral issues. To look at some of these beliefs; it would appear to be dishonoring to the Creator for me to believe in Him, and yet to neglect opportunities of examining the evidences for my belief. The belief in immortality, the resurrection of the body, and many other doctrines of the Christian system, is sometimes made to depend upon religious teachers or theological text books. But it is surely the responsibility of every believer in these holy mysteries to examine their evidences in and outside of the Bible, and come to a conclusion for himself in regard to their sufficiency. So with the Bible itself, the evidences of its Divine authority and origin are not to be thrust aside because we have no questionings as to the Book, but rather examined that we may know whether we hold just views in relation to a volume on which we have staked so much. Of course, the beliefs untested by us, which are our heritage under the Testament of a dead

past, are priceless in their practical value, and many for themselves know them to be as true as they are priceless; but still, as opportunity is afforded, we must each try to satisfy himself that things which are so valuable are also not unreasonable.

The mistake of the rationalist is in discrediting the evidences of our beliefs by the application of tests which he has made himself. We must accept these evidences, unless we have something stronger than our own opinion to offer in their stead; and, having received them, we must then enquire if they adequately support the belief which we have held. It should be a principle with every thinker that his opinion cannot overthrow the testimony of fact or to fact which comes to us from without ourselves. It is only when there is something irrational in testimony from without that we are justified in opposing it, and, even then, suspended judgment may be in order with a view to ascertaining whether we have really obtained a proper account of the evidence in question.

But the degree to which mental culture and education are urged by rationalism belongs, also, to the consideration of its method, and points to a great and good end which the movement has accomplished. It is just as important that a man should qualify himself to form sound judgements, as that he should judge for himself, while it is eminently more moral to judge of things when qualified to do so than to judge without fitness. The student life of Germany is to a great extent the result of a rationalistic stimulus to education and mental culture in general, and is a fine compliment to this good feature of a movement which, in other ways, has borne fruit unto evil.

It is somewhat discouraging to see mental advance discounted in some quarters. There is a praiseworthy enthusiasm with all classes everywhere for popular or elementary education, but in some minds the fear lurks that higher mental development will involve heresy in relation to the cherished dogmas of science or of faith. This fear, as far as it leads to results, is unwise, for, if we shut up the avenues of knowledge, we shall leave our sons and daughters to judge of things—for judge of them in some fashion they will—without good means of so doing. Ignorance and bigotry will neither banish error nor defend the truth. Truth has its fulness and error its extinction only as knowledge grows. So we consider that a full provision for the intellectual business of human life is one of the best of blessings to the living present and one of the best legacies to the future, and, more than that, it is one of the burning obligations to our developing humanity. Only this should be remembered, that reverence for the opinions and testimony of the past, a conservative spirit in relation to the heritage into which we have come, and an unvarying humility in the holding and advancing of personal views are characteristic of any safe attitude of mind.

I touch only slightly upon some other observed results of rationalism. The movement is positive enough, notwithstanding the fact that "negative" is a name very generally applied to it by German conservative thinkers and by many others. In the realm of Old Testament literature the new critics have not only attacked and discarded the traditional view; but, as most people who read know, they have their own theories as to the composition of the Old Testament and its several parts; and these theories they support, too, by evidence of

their own choosing, while they refuse much of the testimony offered for the orthodox opinions. These new theories, having a basis in the thought of the critics, rather than one which is historical, must be insecure and variable. And, as a matter of certainty, we see that this is the case in the fact that important positions vary in the view of different critics, and also in the view of the same critic at different times. It is observed, too, that not only does the rationalistic spirit often spring from pride of intellect, but it also fosters the same evil feature. This might be the more easily tolerated were it not that this pride of intellect rules out of our thought much of the supernatural, which is ever essential to the solution of all the deep problems of life and the universe, and which is as well the true glory of all things visible and invisible. I say that rationalism rules out *much* of the supernatural; it should, perhaps, logically exclude the latter altogether, but the very arbitrariness which makes the individual thinker the sole judge as to the kinds and degrees of evidence and explanation, and, consequently, as to the quantum of the supernatural to be admitted, is at once one of the haughtiest and most dangerous aspects of the movement.

I do not think that the permanent faith of the race will favour conclusions based on any other than historic premises, and cannot believe that the dogmas of the present rationalistic movement will be doctrines in the final confession of the race. They are the temporary ebb of a rising tide setting in steadily toward a more intelligent and expanded view, the foundation of which is the indubitable testimony of a great cloud of witnesses, whose lives were spent in the atmosphere of the events, if they were not actual eyewitnesses of them.

The pressure of the Infinite and Abiding on men is so felt that the universal reign of exclusive rationalism is an impossibility. In the future, men will see more and more that God's action among them, especially for great spiritual ends, is largely above the ways and thoughts of the human sphere; and, if reported to us by good and credible authority, must be accepted as history. Everyone will admit the superiority of divine action over that which is human, and will come to see in time that the occurrence of such action is decided finally by the credibility of the evidence supporting it, rather than by its intrinsic probability or improbability from the human point of view.

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MONTREAL LETTER.

The football season is in full swing and the long-haired athlete treads the green sward with the air of a gladiator, urged on to the conflict by the waving of hundreds of tiny, silk, perfumed handkerchiefs and the shouts from the throats of a thousand enthusiastic college chums. The football champion is indeed the hero of the hour.

Miss Abbott has been interesting large audiences by her exhibitions of the mysterious force with which she is possessed. Her performances are remarkable, but as that young lady does not attempt to explain them there are many who have their doubts as to their genuineness. Her answers to questions are unsatisfactory and she insists on the performers holding the various articles in her way and no other. This is apt to lead the onlooker to think that her