

those stupendous facts was firmly believed by all Christians from the first remains indisputable. That there should be circumstantial variations in the accounts handed down seems not only natural, but inevitable under the circumstances attending their composition. As against the advocates of verbal inspiration, our author's proofs are invincible; but they do not in the slightest degree invalidate the basis of Christianity as an historical religion, still less the inestimable morality and spirituality which form its distinctive and imperishable essence. Those who deny the possibility of a supernatural revelation, no matter what may be the strength of the evidence in its favour—and our author is one of them—need hardly trouble themselves about discrepancies in testimony which they have antecedently resolved to reject at all events. Failure of proof is a matter of little or no consequence, if one is convinced that no proof can avail to prove a given proposition. When the author of *Supernatural Religion* took his stand upon 'universal experience,' there was an end to satisfactory controversy regarding the authorship and contents of the sacred writings. It was natural, therefore, that as he began with Hume, having traversed the circle, he should end where he began with the crucial test of antecedent improbability.

Probably the last task undertaken was the worst. Myths, as Strauss urged, may grow, and if our Gospels were written a century or a century and a half after the events they record, there is abundant scope for the mythical theory; but the words of St. Paul are not so easily got over although our author wrestles with them valiantly. He admits that four of the Epistles attributed to Paul were undoubtedly written by him between twenty and thirty-five years after the crucifixion. These are those addressed to the Romans, the Corinthians, and the Galatians. There is no reasonable doubt that the five following epistles and the first to Timothy are genuine; the other pastorals are

open to some objection, and the letter to the Hebrews was certainly not written by St. Paul. Here then, so far as four Epistles are concerned, we are on secure ground, and from them may be gathered, although differently stated, [the universal belief of the primitive Church that Jesus rose again and ascended from earth to heaven. The Apostle not only "received" it—a word upon which our author dwells somewhat unnecessarily—but asserted vehemently that he had himself seen Jesus in bodily form since His ascension. There is no mistaking the positiveness and force of statements like these: "Last of all He was seen by me also," and again, when he was vindicating his disputed claim to the dignity of the apostleship: "Have I not seen the Lord Jesus?" The fact may be disputed, and may be explained or dissolved into delusion, optical or cerebral; but that the apostle, in common with the evangelists and the entire body of early Christians, believed that Jesus rose from the dead is beyond all question; for we have the undisputed testimony of St. Paul upon that point.

Having thus cursorily glanced at the chief features of this elaborate work, we very sincerely recommend it to careful and earnest perusal. Those who have studied only the orthodox side—the rather feeble apologists of theological colleges—will be astonished to learn how little the real difficulties of the case are exposed by their professorial mentors, or perhaps even known to them. A professor would do more real service to a senior class in divinity, by taking *Supernatural Religion*, even for purposes of refutation, than by the hum-drum system which even yet treats the Scriptures as a book homogenous and complete, beginning with the creation, and ending with a curse upon any one who shall add to or take away, not from the particular "book of this prophecy," but from any of the books found between the two lids of the Bible. The times of such ignorance as this ought at all events to be past and gone for ever.

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NOTE.—The extended critical notice of the complete edition of *Supernatural Religion* which appears in the preceding pages has taken up the space at our disposal for 'Literary Notes' this month, and unfortunately compelled us to defer notices of other works received which we should have liked to have acknowledged in the present issue.