

Two extremes of view, as to the value of apologetic preaching, have been maintained. According to one view, preaching, when unbelief prevails, should deal largely with the evidences of Christianity, as among the Anglican divines during the prevalence of Deism in the last century. According to another view, all preaching should simply aim to so present the gospel as to make men aware of their need of it, trusting to their experience of its power as the best evidence they can have of its divine origin. Thus Coleridge, in his "Aids to Reflection," exclaims: "Evidences of Christianity! I am weary of the word. Make a man feel the want of it; rouse him, if you can, to the self-knowledge of his need of it; and you may safely trust it to its own evidence—remembering only the express declaration of Christ himself: *no man cometh to me, unless the Father leadeth him!*" Archbishop Whately, in a letter to Mrs. Arnold (widow of Dr. Arnold, of Rugby), says: "Such a notion as that of Coleridge is, I conceive, doing incalculable mischief, on account of the large admixture of truth in it; for error and poison are seldom swallowed undiluted. It is true that internal evidence is a great and indispensable part of the foundation of faith; and hence he makes it the whole, and makes each man's own feelings the sole test of what he is to believe." Neither view seems to cover the whole case.

The early centuries were prolific in apologies for Christianity. Some of them were very able, and addressed to the Roman emperors, whom they are conjectured to have rarely, if ever, reached. There is no evidence that any considerable numbers of persons were ever won by them to Christianity, though believers were doubtless confirmed in their faith. Whether or not the Apostle Paul was dissatisfied, as Neander suggested, with his apologetic discourse at Athens, and so at Corinth determined to dwell only on Christ the crucified, it is evident that he always so presented Christ and his gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike as to supplant their special grounds of unbelief, and thus, if possible, make them aware that in Christ was to be found what they and all men were blindly groping to find. The Apostle's example would seem to be a strictly safe one always to imitate, so far as modern thought makes it imitable.

Formal attempts to overthrow skeptics by direct attacks on their positions are pretty sure to end in loss of labor and waste of opportunity. The labor will be lost, because skeptics, as a rule, do not come within the reach of the pulpit; and, if they do, they are not in an attitude of mind to be convinced, but rather to be confirmed in their unbelief. Too often, unfortunately, they have reason to complain that when assailed they are misrepresented; persons who least understand the real grounds of their unbelief are usually the most ready to attack them. Formal attempts at a refutation of modern skepticism in ordinary pulpit ministrations are also a waste of opportunity.