

And a greater than St. Paul treated the matter of theoretical difficulties in substantially the same way, when an inquisitive spirit came to him with the query "Lord, are there few that be saved?" The answer was "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." The whole basis of imaginary difficulty was swept away in a moment, by recalling the attention of the inquirer away from some speculative and unimportant query to the one thing which most deeply concerns every man—the meeting of his own personal responsibility in the sight of God. And there is one further fact to be remembered, viz.: that those who accept and endorse the skepticism of the day are not usually to be found in Christian congregations to whom the pulpit makes its appeal.

But it may be said that there will be a secondary and indirect influence of modern skepticism exerted upon those who are sincere in their faith, and the question then will be, How shall the pulpit protect these from the fatal effects of the malaria which is in the very atmosphere they breathe? The answer to that question will be found in the true conception of the work of the Christian pulpit, which meets all the necessities of the case, and which, to those who hear its voice with a reverent faith, can most effectually neutralize the insidious influences of modern skepticism and doubt. It is that which considers the pulpit not a teacher of philosophy, nor a lyceum lecture on current topics, but as bearing a divine message of pardon and peace from God to man; and which, standing before the world, in Christ's stead, beseeches men to be reconciled to God. Narrow as such a definition at first may seem to be, it will yet be found that in practice it is very comprehensive. It will construct the theory of its duty, not upon an abstract system evolved from the heat of religious controversy, but upon the broader basis of the facts which constitute the distinctive basis of Christianity; and following the example of the early apostles, it will simply preach Jesus and the resurrection, offering pardon and peace in His name; and it will persistently continue to do so, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear.

In other words, the best way for the pulpit to counteract the influence of modern skepticism is to preach the positive truth of the gospel, fearlessly and boldly, for the acceptance of faith, rather than to construct argumentative apologies and refutations for those who refuse to accept its message. And it will add immeasurably to the power and force of this divine message if it be delivered with the underlying thought and understanding that it is not unfamiliar with the whole line of assault upon the faith; that it is acquainted with its subterfuges and its contradictions, and yet, that having examined them all, weighed them in the balances and found them wanting, it still calmly and confidently delivers its message of pardon and peace to a sinful world through faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This we conceive to be the function of the Christian pulpit, in its