

The Bridge of Christian Education.

He whom the fourth gospel calls the "Word of God," revealed God because he was the son of man as well as the Son of God. The book, that we commonly call the "Word of God," reveals God because it is the work of man as well as the work of God. In their controversies concerning the person of Christ, the theological leaders of the fourth century manifested so much theological heat and hate that the records of their councils make us blush with shame. In the present-day discussions of the nature of the Bible many are manifesting such an un-Christlike bitterness that our heresy trials will fill with shame the generations that are to come. Between Apollinarianism, that robbed Christ of his humanity, and Arianism, that robbed him of his divinity, there was a great gulf. Between the unscholarly Christians who so magnify the divinity of the Bible that they practically deny its human element and the worldly students who lay such stress upon its human elements that they fail to see its divine riches, there yawns a great chasm. Through this there leaps a Niagara torrent of bitter denunciation against irreverence and higher criticism, illiteracy and superstition. Pansy only to express the hope that this worse than wasteful rush of energy will, ere long, be expended in turning the wheels of progress in the kingdom of God, let us turn away from these troubled waters that divide to the grand suspension bridge. It is the bridge of Christian education. One side needs education. The other needs insight through the spirit of Christ.

Education is needed to overcome the influences of misinterpretation and doubt. The feeling that the Bible is altogether different from other books and that there is something magical about it, is the explanation of many misinterpretations. I have made a collection of historic, or well authenticated examples, but will take space for but one. Peter the Great, in introducing tobacco into Russia, in view of the remonstrance of her religious leaders, asked if his tobacco smoking was any worse than their brandy drinking. "Yes," they deliberately replied, "for 'not that which goeth into a man but that which cometh out of a man defileth him.'" Though some misinterpretations are full of humor, all of them are full of harm. Church history, from beginning to end, is but a commentary on Bunyan's doggerel: "By misinterpreting evil ensues." Dean Stanley tells of the martyrdom of whole villages of so-called Fire Baptists who committed themselves to the flames because of the corrupt reading "Baptism by fire for the remission of sins." This is but an extreme instance of a class of illustrations with which history teems. The same influences that have been at work throughout the ages are at work today. Would then that a favorite saying of Prof. W. A. Stevens might frequently ring in our ears: "Error, somewhere, sometime, inevitably brings disaster." To prevent this it should be brought more prominently before the minds of the people that the Bible did not drop down from heaven ready-made, but at sundry times and places it was written by man. The same laws that apply to the interpretation of other books apply to it. It contains law; let it be interpreted as law today. It contains poetry; let it be interpreted according to what we know of the laws of Hebrew poetry. The most of it is written as history; let it be treated as an ancient history, according to the laws of historical interpretation, and let us not attempt to spiritualize every verse.

To general education the Bible is a library of many books. Let it be treated as such. Let us understand the books separately. We distinguish between Macaulay and Carlyle. Let us distinguish between Mark and Paul. We distinguish the early English bards and chroniclers from the illustrious writers of the Elizabethan age. Let us distinguish then between the different books of the Old Testament, and between the Old Testament and the New, and see if Christ is present in the one in the same sense in which he is present in the other. This is not handling the butterfly and destroying its bloom. It may decrease superstitious awe but it will only increase acceptable reverence. It will also give relief to the thoughtful Christians who are reading literature from the other side of the chasm and to whom the *ipse dixit* of the preacher is no longer sufficient. It may be said that after all these are few. Compared with the numbers in the church probably they are, but they are increasing in number and some of them are our best. The noblest Christian man I ever knew, and generally recognized as the best citizen of the city from which he controlled his large business interests, once confessed to me how he had frequently left his church after hearing a sermon based on what he had learned since to be an erroneous view of the Old Testament scriptures, with this one cry in his heart unuttered even to his wife: "I cannot, I cannot believe it." If we are to keep such men with us—and we must—we must give them a more intelligent view of scripture. His is but an extreme example of the effect of this critical spirit that is leaving the mass of our church members. If we are to help them not simply to get out of their slough of doubt but to get through it and if we are to prevent large numbers of our brightest and best from falling into it, we must call their attention to the "certain good and substantial" steps through the very midst

of it. If once they learned that inspiration is not identical with infallibility; that authority is not altogether dependent upon authenticity; and that there has been manifest progress in the morality of the Hebrews, and in their conception of God, there would be less fog and more faith.

In a bicycle tour through the beautiful scenery of Cape Breton, somewhat tired, we reached the summit of "Smoky," to be richly repaid. Beneath, draping the valleys and reaching almost to our feet, a heavy vapor completely hid the sea. Above the noise of the falling waters, that sounded like the boiling of a mighty caldron, arose the whistling of a steamer, uncertain of her course. But all around us, the granite rocks and dark green trees were, not only visible in the clear sunlight of heaven, but were beautiful in the golden sunshine from the cloudless blue. Those, who, though after much difficulty, reach the height of the truth that the Bible contains the word of God, not simply in spite of but even because of the fact that it is the work of man, are richly repaid as emerging from the mists that perplex their fellows, they enter into the light and splendor of the unveiled throne of God.

We pass over the chasm to the other side, the greatest need of which is not education but Christian education. The great teacher after one of his pregnant parables of the Kingdom said "He that hath ears let him hear." Christian education, to the unregenerate students of the Bible, exclaims concerning it: There is more in it than you with all your new lights and methods have obtained from it. He that hath ears let him hear the inner, the spiritual meaning of the Word. I shall never forget a lesson learned in good old Dr. Osgood's Hebrew class. Some of us were trying to get the meaning of a passage in the Old Testament. As the result was not satisfactory, he politely called us grammar-and-dictionary fools, adding, by way of explanation, that they were the greatest fools on earth, and then remarked, in words, the meaning of which is deepening as the years roll by: "Young gentlemen I would rather have the interpretation of a spiritually minded old woman, who read her English bible, than the interpretation of such fishermen as you." Far be it from me, while calling attention to the need of education, especially to prevent errors of misinterpretation, to fail to lay due stress on the interpreting insight of the spiritual mind. "It is the heart that maketh theology," said Neander. "The Spirit of God opens the eyes of the true Christian so that, reading between the lines the spirit of the text, he brings wondrous things out of God's law. The spiritually minded, though illiterate old woman, sees more helpful truth than is discovered by the unspiritual German scholar. We read that Petrarch, perfect master of Latin but not of Greek, was presented with a copy of Homer. His reply was: 'Alas Homer is dumb or I am deaf; nor is it in my power to enjoy the beauties I possess. You should have given me a guide who could lead me into the fields of light.'" Is it not similarly true that many of our great scholars are unable to enjoy the beauties of the Bible because they are not subject to the leadings of the Spirit of God? Though they enter the temple gates, they know not the inner glory.

There is great need, then, that the education in our preparatory schools and colleges be Christian education. The greatest argument for a denominational school is, after all, not its denominationalism but its Christianity. Were it not for this Joe Howe was right and our beloved Acadia has no right to exist. This it is which has justified her existence under the Christian leadership of Dr. Sawyer and his predecessors. This it is which gives her a mission for the years that are to come. We are proud of her and because we want her second to none in the power of developing the intellect, we rejoice that the peerless Dr. Sawyer is still able to fill his honored chair. We love her and because we want her second to none in the power of quickening the soul, we rejoice that, when the presidency became vacant, the governors were directed in their choice to Dr. Trotter who enjoys this spiritual insight into the things of God. To both and to all associated with them, we cry, in the spirit of our theme: Give us more general education that we may escape the slough of doubt and the many other evils of misinterpretation; but, better still, give us more Christian education that we may dig down deep into the inexhaustible riches of divine truth.

When we realize the importance of Christian education we are filled with sorrow as we think how few reach our Christian schools; but our sorrow is turned to joy, as we think how many our Christian schools reach. A great responsibility, then, rests upon their students and especially upon those who enter the work of the ministry. Theirs is the work of bridging the chasm. On the one hand, defending the Bible from its overzealous friends who claim for it what it does not claim for itself, they are to convict the worldly students of sin and of the need of the Christ-life; and on the other hand they are to correct the misinterpretations of the people and, by proper methods of treating the scriptures, commend their preaching to thoughtful men. Some one has said that the Bible is divine because it has survived so many poor sermons from it. I dread to think how much of the scepticism of the age has been, if not caused, at least, occasioned by them. I fear that many of our sermons ought to be thrown away, nay, fired away, for they ought never to be touched again save with a match. It is true many of them have been the means of reaching souls and that, after all, is the great mission of the sermon but, through sermons based on true interpretation, the same and better results might be accomplished while this general, but great evil, will be avoided. Let us have earnest evangelistic preaching for we need more than we receive but, for the love of truth, let it be intelligent, let it be truly scriptural.

Mighty forces for good then are regenerated teachers and educated preachers. As we have them, and only as we have them, can we sing of our Convention as Whittier of his State:

Nor heeds the sceptic's puny hands,
While near the school, the church spire stands.
Nor fears the blinded bigot's rule,
While near the church spire, stands the school.

H. F. WARING.

Demonology and Medicus.

Last week, after reading a short but sharp criticism on Dr. Schaffler's article on "Christ's Divine Authority," I wondered if the time would ever come when the "wise and the prudent" would want to take away the whole of the Bible. They have already tried to take away the best part of it. A good many years ago, when scientific men and learned philosophers stood up to speak, Christian men would turn pale with fear, and would tremble exceedingly for the safety of the ark of the covenant. We have often of late stood on the shore and watched with much anxiety the launching of dangerous looking theological torpedo boats, which have threatened distraction to every other vessel afloat; but who would have thought of the good old gospel ship receiving such a broadsider from the medical profession.

As I imagined that I saw the big ship roll over on its side, and as I was wondering whether it would ever be able to right itself again, I fell asleep; and as I slept I dreamed; and in my dream I found myself in an operating room in a large city hospital. On the table lay a man strapped tightly down so that he could not move hand or foot. At the head of the table stood a dignified being who was well known by the profession as "Medicus." Around this great and luminous star were a hundred lesser lights. They were doctors of divinity and preachers of the gospel, whom he was going to lead out of the black darkness of ignorance and error into the glorious light of truth.

When the learned Medicus opened his mouth to speak all was hushed. "Gentlemen," said he, "I have a very serious charge against a Rev. Mr. Schaffler, D. D. He says in an article on 'Christ's Divine Authority' that 'even evil spirits cried out saying that He (Jesus) was the Son of God.' Now, of course, every educated physician recognizes the 'possessed' as insane. Satan, for instance, did not really enter into Judas; he was only insane. This man lying on the table before our eyes has committed murder and many other crimes too numerous and too hideous to mention. It has been said that he is possessed. The government authorities have handed him over to us so that we may examine him and find out if there is any truth in the demon theory. Before using the knife, let me ask: Does any rational man believe, in this age of the world, that evil spirits ever entered into men, and then passed into animals, besides other extraordinary feats?" He paused a moment for a reply, but the D. Ds. seemed to have been dumbfounded. "If evil spirits," continued the great Medicus, "can enter into a human being we shall surely find it out in the case before us." The man was then put to sleep. The knife was carefully examined and, in a short space of time the skilled hand of Medicus made bare for inspection the brain, the heart, the lungs, and every other important part of the human machine. "Can you see any traces of evil spirits there?" asked the triumphant Medicus. "If demons wanted to make their abode in this man, where could they get in? There is no room for them in the heart or in the lungs or in the brain, as you can plainly see with the naked eye." At this point in the lecture the learned Medicus grew eloquent. He gradually raised his voice higher and higher, and louder and louder, until it sounded like rolling thunder. At the sound of his voice the D. Ds. shrivelled up to almost nothing and trembled in their very shoes. "Gentlemen," roared Medicus the great, "I solemnly declare, before the whole world, notwithstanding all that Christ and His apostles have said about men being possessed with demons, that the theory is all false from beginning to end. Such stories as the 'healing of the demoniac' and 'Mary, out of whom it was said was cast out seven demons,' and the 'disciples receiving power to cast out demons,' and 'Satan entering into Judas,' and a host of other such like stories belong to the infancy of the world, and ought to be relegated to the ows and bats of that twilight age." The learned physician, after a moment's pause to take breath, continued: "Gentlemen, I am bold to say that an educated physician is a far greater authority on such theological questions than a doctor of divinity."

Near the close of this somewhat lengthy lecture the patient died. The speaker, after consulting his watch, remarked that the time had arrived for closing, but if the preachers would like to ask a few questions they could do so. "Doctor," asked one of the student ministers, "did that man have a soul? If he had, how did it get into him, and what has become of it?" "Doctor," asked another, "can you explain from that dead body the mysteries of the resurrection? Would it not be equally absurd to believe, in this age of the world, that that dead body can live again?" "Doctor," "Doctor," "Doctor," from quite a number of voices, and then the questions came in thick and fast, but the doctor looked confused and could not answer them. It suddenly occurred to his mind that he had a very particular engagement which called him away at once. So he caught up his hat and coat and strode across the floor, and mounted the steps leading to the street; and the last words that we heard from the lips of the eloquent but much excited Medicus was: "To the ows—to the ows and bats with the whole concern—Bible, soul, resurrection, demons; yes, everything!"

At this stage of the proceedings I awoke from my sleep to find that it was only a dream. I found that the good old book, the Bible, had stood the shock, and that the good Dr. Schaffler was going right on with his work just as though Medicus, the learned physician, had never opened his mouth.

J. WEBB.