

moral evil, and to piety and virtue, that it is here affirmed to be? Are men who receive the Bible and submit themselves to it made good men, or otherwise? Is the practical influence of the Bible beneficial or injurious?

On many sides its claims are disallowed. It is denied that in any divine or special sense it is inspired at all. A book of transcendent human genius it is admitted to be, but inspired of God only as all intellect is of God—only as Plato, and Bacon, and Shakspeare, and Milton, are inspired. It is not, we are told, even true as a history. Its chronology is preposterous, its statistics are erroneous, its science is false, its miracles are impossible violations of natural law, its prophecies are but remarkable coincidences or sagacious prognostications. There is in the book nothing that may not be accounted for on natural principles. Probably at no previous time has the literature of Christianity been so variously and severely questioned, or more contemptuously disparaged.

How then are the divine claims of the book to be vindicated? Christianity has scholars and philosophers abundantly competent to reply to the scholars and philosophers of infidelity; to determine how far these exceptions are well founded, and what value is to be attached to such inferences as may be drawn from them. Nay, it is not arrogant to say that the chief learning and science, criticism and philosophy of the world, are arrayed on the side of Christianity. The greatest names in the history of learning have long been and still are those of men of devout religious belief. The master minds of our literary and philosophical history have accepted this book, not indeed in the forms which its less instructed or more fanatical believers may have insisted upon, but yet as pre-eminently and uniquely a book from God.

Hitherto, moreover, every assault of hostile criticism has only called forth new champions of the faith, who by fresh researches and new lines of argument have shown how impregnable and manifold its defences are. If, therefore, we adduce empirical arguments, it is not for lack of philosophical ones. While every skeptical attack has been refuted again and again, the great apologies of Christianity are still unanswered. From Augustine to Butler, from Athanasius to Paley, the chief scholastic bulwarks of Christian theology have been called forth by hostile assaults. And thus it must ever be. "No weapon formed against it shall prosper."

But the vindication of the Bible need not be left to learned argumentation. The battle need not be relegated to the fields of philosophy and criticism. We may appeal to the religious character and to the religious achievements of the Bible. Alone among the religious books of the world it is a book of history—it consists of historical facts concerning men and things: and further, as a book, itself has a history among the nations of the earth. The Bible is not like the Zendavesta, a book of liturgies; nor like the Vedic Hymns, a book of impossible legends; nor like the writings of Confucius and Plato, a book of moral philosophy; nor like the Koran, a book of mere doctrine and precept. Fundamentally and characteristically it is history. The Old Testament is the lengthened history of a nation, in which its entire religious cultus is embodied; the New Testament is the history of a Person, in whom all distinctive Christian teachings are incorporated. This subjects the Bible to the most searching tests. What, then, is the moral character of the Bible as judged by the religious sense of men; and what have been the moral effects which in the course of history it has wrought?

Take as a test of the Old Testament the Book of Genesis. Is it history or is it legend? Is it from God or is it of men? Do we need a Niebuhr to give us a reply? Nay, verily. Make what abatement we may for historic or scientific difficulties, for obscurities or errors, great, unmistakable, and indisputable religious characteristics remain. How, for instance, are we to account for the personal characters of its heroes? Abel, Enoch, Abraham—whence came the conception and delineation of such men? Moses is older than Homer. How is it that Abraham, the "friend of God," is not, like