

cal doctrine are to constitute the themes of pulpit discourse, then inevitably it must be defensive and apologetic also; and standing in this position it must be prepared to meet all comers and to cross swords with every foe. This would necessarily involve a detailed refutation of the various forms of skepticism prevalent to-day: the relief of doubt, the reply to irreverent cavils; the formal answer to infidel objections; in one word, the work of Christian apology and defense along the whole line of assault upon the citadel of the faith.

But it becomes at once evident that if this course be adopted, the pulpit itself, while endeavoring to counteract the skepticism of the day, would really disseminate its assaults and give them a currency and a hearing in many minds where they were not previously known. And where the difficulties of one doubter might be removed, the suggestions of doubt would be introduced to a score of other minds, and the result would be altogether different from that which was intended and sought for.

A distinguished pastor in one of our large cities announced to his congregation that he would deliver a series of sermons on Sunday evenings upon the fashionable sins of the day. At the close of the first sermon of the series, one of his deacons came to him to say that the members of his family must be excused from attending any subsequent sermons of the course, for the reason, as he alleged, that his sons and daughters had learned that evening of fashionable forms of sin and attractive phases of vice of which they had never known before in all their lives.

Just so with the formal refutation in the pulpit of the skepticism of the day. Many a trustful and believing heart would be disturbed by the statement of objections to our holy faith of which before they had never dreamed.

In addition to this, it must be remembered that intellectual conviction is not the sole object of pulpit instruction. That would be a chilling process which dealt only with the reason, and which permitted itself to stand before the bar of popular approval in which the scoffer and the unbeliever were permitted to be judge and jury both in regard to the verdict. The skepticism of the day is voluntary, and it is of the intellect and the reason rather than of the moral nature of man seeking earnestly the knowledge of the truth. But there is a more powerful element in human nature than the decisions of the intellect or the conclusions of the reason. It is that voice of God within the soul of man which echoes and responds to the word of truth without, and whose best results are reached not by processes of logic, but by the humble acceptance of the docile mind and the child-like spirit. St. Paul's definition of this function of Christian preaching was the significant formula "Commending ourselves to every man's *conscience* in the fear of God." It was not to the reason nor to the doubt, but to the conscience that he made his appeal.