

"GUESSES AT THE RIDDLE OF EXISTENCE" BY PROF.
GOLDWIN SMITH.

Written for the Review

Goldwin Smith has published a small volume consisting of five essays, two of which appeared in the *North American Review* and one in the *Forum*. They all deal with the greatest problem that can engage human thought. "Is there another life? How should the church regard the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament? Is the supernatural element in Christianity to be accepted? If the doctrine of one God is abandoned, can our system of morals be maintained? What solutions can be given to the enigmas of life?" The author discusses these problems, and as the conclusion of the whole matter declares himself an agnostic. He does not know whether there be a God or not. He does know that the Bible is not an inspired book, he does know that the miraculous element in the Old Testament and New is mythical, that there was no fall of man, and that consequently there is no need of an atonement, that there was no incarnation nor resurrection of Christ, but whether there is to be a future state he does not know. He believes the best scholars have already rejected the inspiration of the Bible and that many more of the clergy would do so if they were free. But they are bound, their 'bread and butter' is at stake. What would become of them if the collapse were to come suddenly? A few, the celibates amongst them might strike out in new directions, become leaders in the new order of things, but the majority would be stranded. What could they do? He feels some alarm as to the transition state when the world has lost faith in the Bible and has not won another faith in its place. There may then be a bad quarter of an hour. Philosophers will be kept right, of course, not only by their philosophy but by the character which dedication to philosophy implies, although he admits that he himself has witnessed the case of a highly educated mind to whom the leap from theism to agnosticism proved morally fatal. The social shock occasioned by the departure of religion would be severe, but the apprehension of this, as well as the influence of habit and fashion will lead men to support the church in which they no longer believe. What a striking illustration of the Apostle's word, is all this, may we not say, what a proof of the inspiration of the Apostle's word. "When in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom know not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Professor Smith is a man of distinguished ability, he has read extensively and thought profoundly, but it is all human intellect, and human intellect has not yet solved the riddle of existence, and greater intellects than Goldwin Smith's have tried it. The child of faith knows more than the man of unbelief. "What man knoweth the things of a man save the Spirit of man which is in him, even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." That is the eternal principle and it cannot be evaded. No one needs to be greatly alarmed by this ultimatum from Goldwin Smith. It is only another example of which we have had many before, and such is another proof of the truth, the profound spirituality of Scripture teaching. Christ knew what is in man, and told us before hand what was to be. The philosopher may speculate, the critic may use his lance and his scalpel as much and as long as he pleases, but he never will discover by these alone, in animal or in plant, much less in the living Word, the secret of life, the true solution of the enigmas of our existence. There is a spiritual eye which must be opened, and when it is, its objects of vision are no less real and indisputable than those seen by the intellect or bodily eye. Let any man testify who has lived a life of faith upon the Son of God, who has nourished his soul upon the Word of God, who has found out that no more cert only does bread nourish and strengthen the body than the Throne of Grace and the living Word strengthen and nourish the soul. He knows nothing, it may be, about the conclusions of the scholarly critic, but his knowledge is deeper more profound, an experimental knowledge that speculative theories can never overthrow, which the philosopher does not and cannot understand.

We have called this Goldwin Smith's ultimatum. We trust it is not. He is an old man now, and much esteemed for many excellent qualities of head and heart. It would be a great joy to many of his admirers, to read yet another deliverance, a declaration that he has discovered positive truth, and rests upon the Rock of Ages.

The process by which he has reached his conclusions is not new. It is the old story of difficulties in the Bible, and the old difficulties. He thinks if God had really spoken He would not allow any imperfections and that he would put the evidence beyond question. It would be so plainly an inspired utterance than none could dispute it. That is the way in which Goldwin Smith would have inspired a book, but it seems that God has pursued a different course. Is it possible, he asks, that if God intended to reveal truth necessary to man's salvation, He would have left us in such a maze of uncertainty and allow so many to perish without it. Might we not answer, by asking how it is possible that God allowed so many to die of a loathsome disease before vaccination was discovered. But He did. That is his method and to refuse to believe what we do understand because clouds and darkness are around and about Him, is not wise.

The value of his criticism has been estimated by Professor George Adam Smith in a lecture delivered before the University of Chicago in these words. "Prof. Goldwin Smith ignores scientific criticism and has published an article which would have been out of date thirty years ago. He interprets the Old Testament in the most unscientific methods." "It is a hard word to say of the work of such a man, but a more crude and unreasonable utterance upon the Old Testament has seldom issued from the press." These are the words of an acknowledged authority in Biblical criticism which it is well known Goldwin Smith is not and never claimed to be. He has simply followed destructive criticism to its legitimate conclusion, and his example ought not to be without warning.

We would like to quote a paragraph from Dr. Liddon a still abler man, one who excels Goldwin Smith even in the command of forceful English for which he is so justly distinguished. Dr. Liddon writes "Meanwhile the destructive criticism, though against its will, does Christian Faith a service. It clears away the brushwood which in many well meaning but confused souls obscures the interval between an infidel premise and its real conclusion; and it exhibits the naked truth, that between the Adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ as God and the rejection of Him altogether there is no reasonable standing ground. When this alternative is once presented to a religious and well ordered mind there are profound and moral instincts not to speak of a higher assistance which comes from Heaven—that may be trusted to solve the problem. 'Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.'"—R. P. M.

SACRAMENTAL GRACE.

BY REV. THOMAS NATTRESS, B. A.

For the Review.

It has been lately said by a very clever writer that Presbyterian and other non-Episcopal ministers "do not claim to administer Sacramental Grace." This is true in the strictly literal sense, and yet the statement expresses little better than a half truth. Admit the primary meaning of the words as true; we are yet prepared to discuss the question frankly with any supposed opponents, and to find that, though our decision may be an agreement to differ, this "agreeing to differ may yet be a form of agreement rather than a form of difference."

Though we "do not claim to administer Sacramental Grace," this is not to say that we do not believe in any sense in Sacramental Grace. I speak for myself as a minister in and of the Presbyterian Church, but think that I relate the belief of the ministers, the elders, and the deacons of our Church, and of the great majority of the communicants as well, when I say: that, in the observance of the Lord's Supper I become a recipient of Divine Grace inasmuch as, (1) I obey the Lord's command; (2) I commemorate an all-important fact in the Divine economy of grace, and do so both with the reason that the Lord has commanded me, and with the double purpose of calling to mind the fact accomplished by Christ on His cross and by His resurrection, another fact to be accomplished by Him in His second coming, (3) I profess my faith in Jesus Christ and renew my obligation to serve Him who loves me and has given His life for me, whom I love and reverence; (4) I bear witness to the facts of the cross in the rite which I (in company with others His followers) observe, and my witness is seen by my fellow-believers, by the non-professed and by the unbelievers who are present, all