

and directness to the more intelligent of Parisian skeptics. No one ever depicted the aims, methods and spirit of skepticism more vividly or more truthfully than he, and none ever carried the war with it more directly and more effectively into the hearts of his hearers. The eager throngs that always crowded Notre Dame when he was to speak, felt the truth of his delineation and responded to the power of his appeals, swayed like a forest before a mighty wind. The spirit of atheism and revolution, hunted down to its lair in the heart, and made to look into the all-loving face of Jesus of Nazareth, was compelled to admit the marks of the Divine in his religion, and to confess its own inhumanity and baseness. The power of Lacordaire lay, in no small degree, in the ability which experience had given him to cope with the spirit of unbelief immediately within the consciousness of those whom he addressed. He knew the hiding places of the enemy and could drive him from his cover whithersoever he would flee.

One of the most common defects of every species of preaching in our day, is a failure to bring truth home to men's business and bosoms. Sermons, whether topical or textual, are too often looked at, both by preachers and auditors, as works of art, made for their own sakes and to be judged of according to some ideal standards, rather than by the effects actually produced by them. Preaching that aims to deal with skeptical minds, and to treat of moral and religious questions on an intellectual basis alone, will fail of its end, because the real source of unbelief is not so much in the intellect as in the moral affections. The work of the gospel, accordingly, is not so much to convince that it may convict, as it is to convict that it may convince and thus convert; and conviction can be accomplished only through an awakened conscience. The skeptic must be arraigned at the bar of his own conscience, or all pleading with him will be vain and unprofitable; and for this arraignment Christian truth must be brought home to him as a divine message whose requirements he is conscious of having disregarded, and whose proffered gifts he is equally conscious of constantly needing.

But it may be questioned whether ordinary preachers wisely attempt to discuss, so frequently as some seem disposed to do, the grounds of the popular skepticism of our day—whether such discussion had not better be left to those who know both the strength and the weakness of its grounds, because they have themselves once rested on them—whether attempts at rescuing wanderers over “the waste howling wilderness of infidelity” may not more prudently be left to those who have been made familiar with its entangled paths by having themselves once been astray among them—whether in fact all preaching should not be from the level of the preacher's own experience, so that while refraining from no clearly-revealed truth be-