

colouring to all. Thus men began with lying, though they meant to tell the truth, and it is only now that, under the surgery of modern science, men's eyes have become sound and clear. But how do such baseless assumptions accord with historic faith? The scholarly Greeks and cultured Romans were not so easily duped, while the Jews were "slow of heart to believe" without satisfactory evidence, and on this account while Christ "came unto His own, His own received Him not."

It was some years after giving up Christianity ere he came to the conclusion "There is no God." I can now only very briefly state how he did so. The argument from "design" in the universe was but the development of natural law—of "beneficence," etc., was met by the amount of suffering—of "strong inward conviction" that there is a God, this was neither universal nor infallible—of "the impossibility of conceiving that the universe is the result of mere chance" by saying, "Can the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind low as that of the lowest animal be trusted in drawing such conclusions? Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, or are the convictions of a man's mind, matured from a monkey, of any value or at all trustworthy?" Such assumptions and assertions, instead of arguments and illustrations, are the most suicidal that any sane man could utter, and settle the whole question, for why does he, or how can he, evolved from such a progenitor, expect others who claim no such origin to attach any weight or importance to his conceptions or conclusions. Clinging to such a brute-bred origin, and cleaving to such a bestial existence, we envy no one either the honour or the advantage of such a relationship.

Some have attributed the apparent conflict between science and religion to the profession and preponderance of "science falsely so-called," and even to direct Satanic agency. Others, by such persistent absorption in the natural as to dull and deaden aught of the spiritual. Others, by the unintelligible and oft repellent way in which religious truth is presented to the mind. But the simple, all-inclusive and universal reason is ever this, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." "Who readeth let him understand."

In Darwin we see a noteworthy manifestation, unfortunately too common, of very marked natural powers and scientific acquirements gradually estranging their possessor, by their injudicious employment, from that truth which alone can make free, from that wisdom which is ever profitable to direct, and even from that God "in whom we live and move and have our being." We see in him how a man, justly eminent in many departments, may, by the power of pet schemes and prepondering predilections, be sadly if not solely defective in other departments. All know that to excel as a merchant would not make a mechanic, or a mechanic would not thereby be fitted for a farmer, and especially in either case, where the liking was lacking, so Darwin's being a scientist did not constitute him a theologian. Thus Darwin acknowledged no God, no divine providence to guide, no divine goodness to give and no divine grace to sanctify and save, and what system had he instead? Of it Agassiz well says, "It is a scientific mistake; untrue in its facts, unscientific in its method, and mischievous in its tendency."

PERFECTIONISM.

I have chosen this subject because it is a living one. My treatment of it must necessarily be very meagre owing to limited time at my disposal. This is no new doctrine. With many it passes as such; it is pretty generally talked about as the new theory of holiness. But is it new? Every intelligent theologian or Church historian knows that it has been a long time in existence. But systems like men are not always good in proportion to their age. The age of some systems is only matched by their badness. Like many of the errors of the present this is an old one resurrected and dressed up anew. It has had its advocates in almost every period of the Church's history. I find an exponent of it a long way back. And he evidently was in full possession of the system when he said "God I thank thee that I am not as other men are." In the discussion of this topic some things will have to be candidly admitted and some things will have to be emphatically denied. No system of unmixt error can stand intelligent investigation for a moment. This theory is not without some elements of truth. These we must conserve. But this mixing a drop of truth with an ocean of error deceives many a one. It is dangerous to teach less than the truth. It is dangerous to teach more than the truth. The theory of perfect holiness is clearly a misconception of the work of sanctification. Here we must follow the clear teaching of the word of God. You are all familiar with the teaching of scripture regarding the nature and progress of divine grace in the hearts of believers. The Shorter Catechism of our Church defines it beautifully and scripturally when it says; "Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness." The sacred writers invariably speak of it as a progressive work. In this matter grace-like nature is gradual in its developments. In the physical world the plant does not reach perfection with a bound. It is a matter of gradual development. The rose does not burst into beautiful perfection in a day. Nor does a man become a full-grown Christian in a day. The analogy between grace and nature is close. One of the divine injunction is: "Grow in grace

and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Unlike illiterate school-boys (i.e. sacred writers never used words at random. They knew the meaning of the terms and figures which they used. Two of them at least speak of fairly well informed Christians as babes in Christ. Paul is one and Peter is the other. Surely they knew the force of what they said. What did they mean? Simply this. That the babe must pass through all the stages of development between baby-hood and man-hood in Christ. That the babe in Christ must yet reach the stature of man-hood in Christ. How long will this take? A life time. For the soul to see the Saviour in his unclouded glory is to be freed from the last stain of sin. "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." It would seem that the souls of believers are purified from the least and last defilement of sin in the act of passing from time into eternity. All believers shall be perfectly holy. Conformity to the image of Jesus was Paul's great idea of redemption. Every believer shall therefore arrive at perfect holiness. But when? In this life? I think not. Is perfection attainable in this life? This is the question that I propose to discuss in this paper. My answer to this question is, No. Should it be said that we are commanded in Scripture to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect, I freely grant this. But we must be careful and not mix matters. When Christ gave a standard he gave one like himself—perfect. He said to his disciples "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." This passage is quite clear to an intelligent reader. It must be read in the light of the context. For only in the light of the context can it be rightly understood. Clearly the excellence demanded of the disciples here is not a matter of degrees but of kind. The word perfect never signifies in New Testament usage sinlessness. It points out a true Christian character as contrasted with a defective, half finished and partial character. We are frequently reminded by the advocates of perfectionism that God commands his children to be holy and that he has power to make them perfectly holy even in this life. I gladly admit all this. But we must remember that there is a vast difference between what God could do and what he has promised to do. There are many things that he could do that he has nowhere promised to do. Has God anywhere in his word promised to make his children perfect in holiness on this side of the grave? Are there any cases on record in which the promise has actually been fulfilled? I have no hesitation in answering these questions in the negative. The best Christians the world has ever seen confess sin and pray for pardon. It will ever be so. So long as believers are in this world they will need to pray for pardon. How do I know this? I gather it from several scriptural sources. First I gather it from the spirituality of the divine law. A man is perfect when he comes up to the requirements of a perfect standard. There is a standard for almost everything. And there is a standard by which men's character is to be tested. What is it? It is the divine law. Now regarding this law two questions suggest themselves. What are its demands? And does it ever change? The moral law demands perfect obedience—nothing more, nothing less. Paul quoting from the Old Testament says: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). James' reading of the law is equally clear. This is what he says on the matter. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). It is a beautiful seamless robe that is ruined by a single rent. It is a delightful musical harmony that is marred by a single discordant note. Just here I shall quote two sentences of the celebrated Dr. Guthrie. "Even so—though you may start at the bold assertion and when you think of some gross and horrid sins may be ready to exclaim, Is thy servant a dog that he should do such a thing: the man who is capable of breaking one of God's commandments is capable of breaking them all in mind and in spirit; he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all." The scribe's question drew from Jesus this concise but comprehensive answer: "Thou shalt love thy Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This is man's duty in a nut shell. He who fails to love God with all the powers of his complex nature, and to love his neighbour fails to come up to the divine standard and therefore commits sin. But some one may say "Oh, that's the law in all its old fashioned vigor. It has been modified. It has been toned down to meet the infirmities of God's children. The law of perfect obedience is no longer the standard of Christian duty but the law of love. We are not bound down to the obedience of immortal man in paradise."

It is well to be wise. But it is dangerous to be wise beyond what is revealed. This is the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church—the doctrine of those that talk about "the higher life"—the doctrine of the great majority of the pretenders to perfection. It has the smack of holiness about it. It sounds well. But to me it sounds painfully like nonsense. The Bible recognises but one standard of Christian duty. God has never lowered this standard to meet the circumstances of sinful men. That they have rendered themselves incapable of keeping it is their own sin. This rule of duty change! Impossible! As well might God change. Why, it is the very transcript of God himself. The Bible knows no toning down process. But it knows and makes provision for a toning up process. Instead of toning down the standard to man it aims at toning up man to the standard. Why do men so frequently over-rate themselves spiritually? Because they apply a false test. Because they fail to make their lives square with the

true test of Christian duty. In a word they fail to compare themselves with the divine law. Conclusions are right or wrong according to the process by which we arrive at them. It is an easy matter to elevate ourselves to a very high spiritual plane when we adopt a false measure. Let a man choose his own measure, and he can put himself just about where he pleases. He might say: "I'm three yards high," if he used a two-foot yard in the measurement. But the process is wrong and consequently the conclusion is wrong. His legitimate height therefore would not be nine feet but six. Any man might claim perfection after this fashion. Judas might have claimed for himself at least a respectable Christian standing: A boy unaccustomed to the use of carpenter's tools sets to work to plane a board. He works hard and finally comes to the conclusion that he has made a splendid job of it. He runs his inexperienced eye down it and pronounces it perfect. An older and more experienced mechanic comes along and advises him to test the correctness of his work. How shall I do it? says the boy. Apply the straight edge, says the mechanic. Down goes the straight edge, and to his astonishment he finds that rats could run between it and the board. The straight edge did two things. It took the conceit out of the boy by revealing the imperfections of his work. There is nothing like an honest test. Women are generally good housekeepers. Many of them are scrupulously clean and exact. Some take a special but mistaken interest in the principal room of the house. The doors are shut, the shutters are closed, the blinds are drawn down, and so it stands. It must be clean for you cannot see any dust around anywhere. But is it? No. How is the matter to be tested? Very simply. Raise the blinds, open the shutters and let the light in. Then you will soon learn that you could write your name on many of the articles of furniture in the room. Light never fails to show up the dust. It is a grand thing to have plenty of light. All we want to arrive at a just conclusion is a true test. A true test intelligently and honestly used will always secure a just conclusion. Men into whose heads and hearts the light of God's law has shined will be the very last to claim perfection.

2. I gather this view also from the statements of the Bible regarding all men. The Bible charges all men with sin. It says emphatically and repeatedly that all men are sinners. Now what does the Bible mean when it makes this broad, emphatic statement? Does it apply to all men, at all times, and under all circumstances in this life? Some say yes, some say no. All intelligent Scripture readers believe that this statement is applicable to all men, while they are in this world. But men who are tinctured with perfectionism tell us that is not universally true. Of course, to be consistent with themselves, they must hold this view. To adopt the opposite view would wipe out this whole theory. There should be no difficulty in understanding the mind of the Spirit here. When the Bible speaks of all men as sinners, it means not only that they have sinned and are guilty, but that sin is still cleaving to them. The sacred writers meant what they said, and said what they meant. And if we fail to catch their meaning, so much the worse for us. An advanced theologian is reported as having said. "Well Paul believed that, but I don't." Let us hear from some of the inspired writers. The apostle John says in one of his epistles, If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us; if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10). This is a poor lookout for the perfectionist. John makes short work of perfectionism. Humility is the road to exaltation. We are humble first and exalted next. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way" (Psalms xxv. 6). Some systems shut out their advocates from an interest in this precious promise. Humility and love were prominent traits in the character of John, the peerless apostle. No man had more of the spirit of the Master about him. He was truly Christ-like, still he wasn't perfect, in the sense of being sinless. He never claimed to be so. He associated himself with the rest of the Christians when he said, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The wise man had something to say on this matter long before the Christ-like apostle was born. Do their testimonies agree? Let us see Solomon says, "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not" (Ecclesiastes vii. 20). Is this what John says? Undoubtedly. The two statements are substantially one. Surely things must have changed marvellously since the days of Solomon, if there are men who live without sin. Now the matter stands thus: The ancient Solomon vs. the modern Solomons. Which shall we believe, the ancient or the modern, the inspired or the uninspired? Which? I read this emphatic statement in the first Book of Kings: "There is no man that sinneth not." Perfectionists have a hard piece of logic before them here. They have their choice of providing one of two things. They must either prove that this inspired statement is false, or that they have no connection whatever with the human race. I leave them to make their own choice in the matter. But a choice they must make. The apostle James makes a pertinent statement, and with it I will close this part of the subject. This is the statement: "In many things we offend all" (James iii. 2). If the passages of Scripture that I have referred to teach anything, they teach that sin cleaves to all men so long as they are in this world.

3. Again, I find this view sustained by the experience of Biblical men. We are always safe in quoting the religious experience of men on whom the Word of God has pronounced. When the Bible holds a man up as a Christian, he is a Chris-