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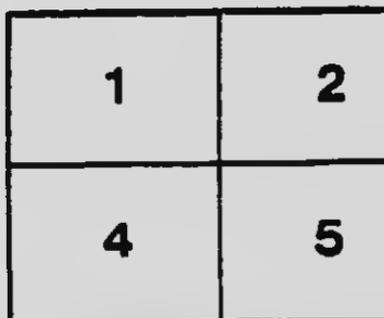
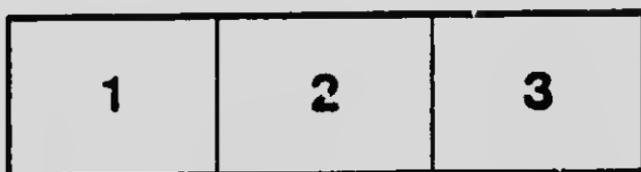
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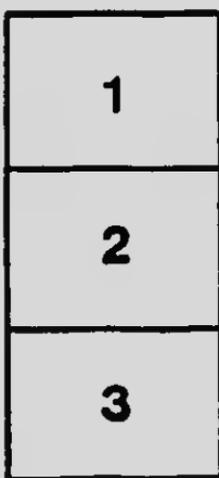
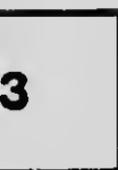
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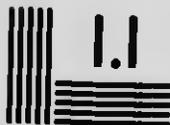
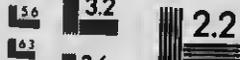
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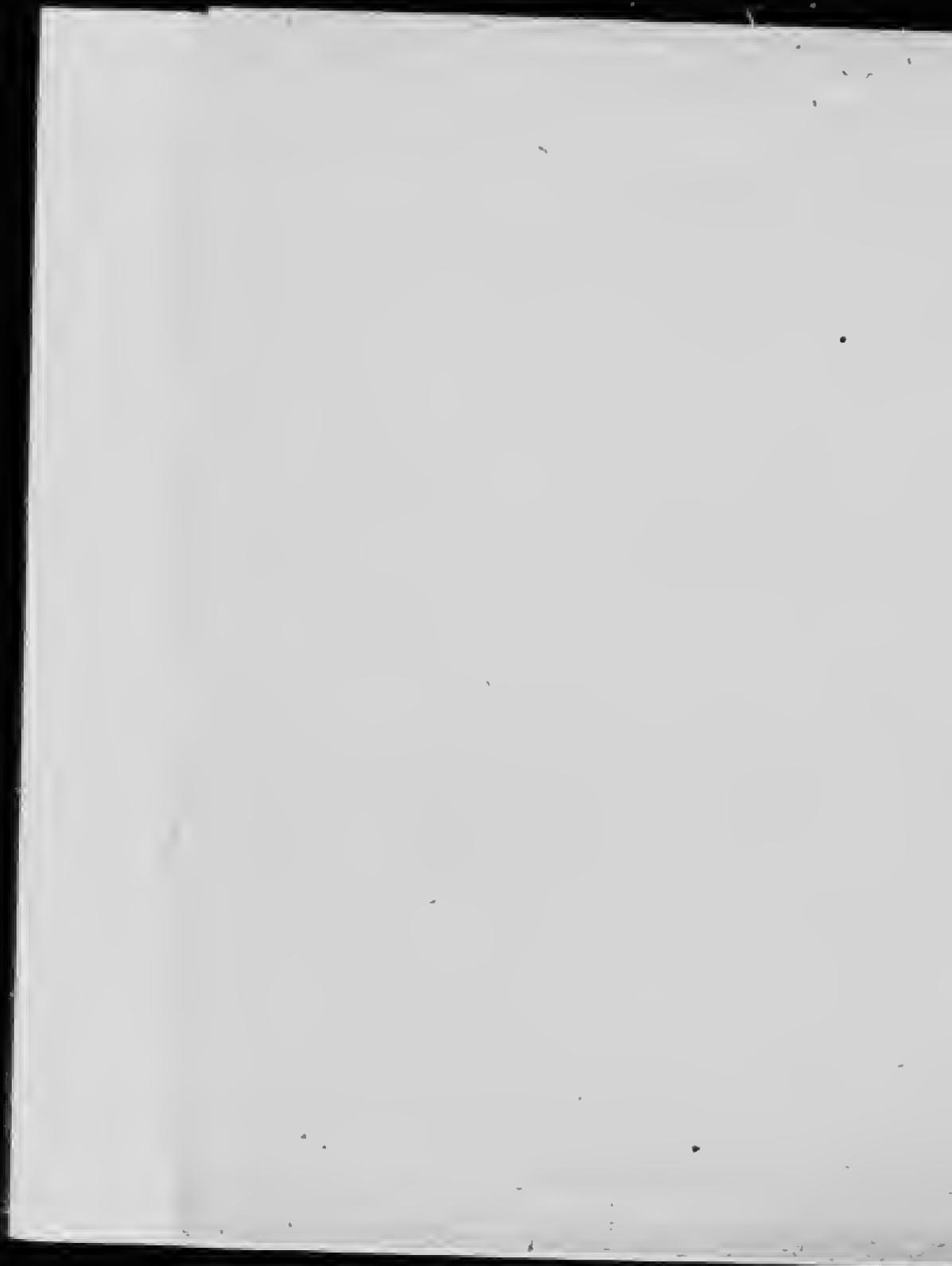
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The Supernatural

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The Supernatural

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The Supernatural

By REV. DR. CARMAN.

Christianity is the masterpiece of God, the paramount moral and spiritual design, and the crowning glory of the Infinite and Eternal Creator and Maker of all things. Christianity in its essential unity and central energy is supernatural; it is that, or it is a stupendous fraud. The Christian religion, peculiarly separate from other religions, is a system distinguished and dominated by the supernatural, or it is at once an insidious and vexatious delusion. It deals with God and moral responsibility, and with the life and souls and destiny of men. It is an orderly arrangement, and a firm, wisely designed compact of supernaturalism as clearly opposed to naturalism and humanism in the spiritual domain. Its solid facts, its indisputable relations, its sure doctrines given of God, constitute a supernatural fabric of strength and beauty; and its inner life is a supernatural light, a superhuman flame. Otherwise its advocates are impostors, and its teachers and propagators are weaklings, grossly deceived or deliberate deceivers. There is no middle ground. It is not a case of half-true, half-false. It is God's gift to man, or it is a gigantic falsehood. Its structure and essence are clear to the honest, open vision. Its principles are fixed in the moral and spiritual constitution of the eternal God, and its nature, aim and energies have been demonstrated tens of thousands of times in the relations of God and men.

THE APOSTLE PAUL.

In the first chapter of Romans, the profoundest and surest ethical philosophy extant, gives us an explicit statement of the difference between naturalism and supernaturalism. He was not ashamed of the Gospel (a supernatural provision and a superhuman system) of Christ (an indisputably supernatural being), for it is the power of God (a supernatural energy) unto salvation (a supernatural result) to every one that believeth (a supernatural spiritual process and act). This supernatural being, its centre and foundation, is declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead—all supernatural.

On the other hand, the nations sank into naturalism when they know God and glorified Him not as a God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient—walking in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart, and being past feeling, they gave themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. Supernaturalism is to life; naturalism always to death. God in revelation and special spiritual energy is the only hope of the human race. In the supernatural is the power of God-sent salvation.

THE HOLY BIBLE.

The Holy Bible is Christianity's book, Christianity's code, Christianity's spiritual revelation from God. The Bible is that book, or there is none. Of course there is, figuratively speaking, the book of nature open to sense and intellect, the book of human reason, the book of the natural conscience, the book of human experience all universal books, marvelous and profound, all books of naturalism, books of human civilization, if we could only read them; but in the best light they can furnish, men and nations have sunk into paganism, heathenism, and, so far as human efforts and means are concerned, into the outer darkness. Even these wonderful books are open and understood only within range of the light of revelation. The issue is square and straight: Has God given us a revelation from the beginning? Was God in the beginning? And was He all through human history intelligently directing and governing and revealing Himself to a fallen race in wisdom and love?

WAS GOD EVOLVED, OR WAS HIS REVELATION PROGRESSIVE TO SUIT OUR FACULTIES?

Was He recognized and known as the One Living and True God from the beginning? Which is simply to ask, whatever the course and degree of divine revelation, is the Bible account trustworthy and true? Was our religion, our incipient and progressive Christianity, a revelation from the Godward side? Or was it man,—our humanity, as some put it—crawling upward out of darkness and slime to the moral and ultimately to the spiritual and divine idea? And when he came within the Bible range—for they cannot deny that the Bible is

here and gives its own account of things—are the same principles and forces operative, dragging their weary length of the milleniums without a literature, without an effective civilization, without a positive moral code, without a blessed psalmody, without a purposeful priesthood, a clear prophecy and high types of personal character and holy living till down in the times of the Jewish captivities and restorations? Must we accept so violent dislocations of Bible history, such disturbance and deletion of Bible narrative, and such denials of the highest authorities in Bible attestation in obedience to a theory that leads science to failure, philosophy to bankruptcy, and ethics to confusion? Can we more readily and satisfactorily explain the course of human history as we trace it, and the condition of the world to-day, by taking the Bible as it is, at par, and for what it pretends to be worth, or by attempting to gather up what is left after one man has swept out everything till Abraham, another till Moses, another till the Kings, another till the captivities, another till Christ, and all join hands to rob man of his nature and Christ of His essence and atoning work? What nonsense to cry out and insist, God! God! full of God, aflame with Deity, and yet all fable, myth, legend, allegory, figure of speech. Have we no more substantial and trustworthy God and Father than this implies? Can He not reveal Himself to men in facts and certainties as easily as in fables and misrepresentations? The Apostle Peter seems to convey the idea that he and his fellow witnesses and brethren had not followed cunningly devised fables. And he and they sealed their testimony, as thousands had done through the centuries, with their blood.

IS THE EVOLUTION TAPER OR THE REVELATION SUN THE LIGHT BY WHICH TO READ THE BIBLE?

With the taper the keenest, brightest men stumble in confusion and lose themselves in the darknesses. We have scores of proofs. With the sunlight men of common understanding walk safely on with a steady tread. The critics invade the Scriptures with their evolutionary preconceptions, and lines and positions are strained, broken and misplaced to suit their varied and varying notions. The historian traces the course of events, accepts the recorded wonders as suited to their times, and concurs with the common mind in judgments that hold the world to reason and men to truth and righteousness. That is the proper sphere of common sense. Keep God in His Bible, and the records of His servants, and what is there in them incredible or impossible? Let the supernatural positively govern, then might men have larger liberty of interpretation. Leave God and His revelations out of the records, and then start on a free field and full chase with evolutionists, atheists and infidels. Take the statement, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Delete, destroy the rest of the book. I am alone scanning the earth and peering into the heaven. There is Bible enough mayhap for the universe throughout all the ages.

WHAT WOULD WE HAVE KNOWN OF GOD OR CREATION BUT FOR SUCH A STATEMENT?

I have no antecedent theories. I do not know anything about it. But here is a proposition, if unobscured,

on which my faith and reason—put faith first, the psychological order—come to a perfect rest. Here is a proposition, simple enough, that all Egyptians, Babylonians and Greeks never learned.

Take another statement: "*God created man in His own image: in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them.*" That to reason and universal experience explains the world sociologically, as it has been for ages, and as I see it to-day. My mind rests there with a perfect content. Men made in the image of God by disobedience lost that image. No other position, in the New Testament light, explains the world, morally, religiously or theologically as it is this hour. Why did they not see the malady and the only remedy? Grovelling in naturalism, rejecting the supernatural, is the one only and all-sufficient answer.

The world by wisdom knew not God. Babylonians and Greeks and Romans had been puzzling themselves with the problem for centuries. They ought to have known God. They might have known God. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, precisely because when they knew God they glorified Him not as God, but rejected both the natural and supernatural revelation of God, and were alienated from God through the ignorance that was in them because of the blindness of the heart. This is the profound and indisputable ethical philosophy of Holy

Scripture, vastly deeper than Plato's or Kant's or Hegel's. Man once fallen went down, down into the depths of sin and ruin by evolution, by naturalism, by "the historic method." But evolutions cannot lift him out of the pit of his defilement, guilt and misery, any more than the historic or evolutionary method of interpretation can adequately and clearly explain Holy Scripture. They are off the same piece. A Kingston professor who prudently for himself declined to meet Dr. Orr to test issues, asserted—as reported—that Dr. Orr must mean by progressive revelation the same thing as the evolutionists mean by historic development. Certainly not for one moment. Progressive revelation has God in it from the beginning, unfolding His will and plans and purpose as best for the world. Of this the Bible is the record. Historic development develops a God and His government and is anything the evolutionists make it, beginning and stopping here, there and anywhere at pleasure and tending whithersoever they will.

If instead of adopting as their guiding star of interpretation the naturalistic and evolutionary presupposition or theory of Christianity, of the religion of the Bible and its records, which has always led to heathenism and its darkness, an honest inquirer give God His place as Governor and disposer of events, and enter upon the study of the book as supernaturalistic, as a revelation from God to man, he will understand the books and accept and maintain the records.

METHODISM BELIEVES IN SUPERNATURALISM.

John Wesley accepted God and His work as fully as he accepted England and its people. Methodism is built

on supernaturalism, and without prominent and predominating supernaturalism has no place or justification. John Wesley so understood and propagated it. to be effective its agencies, energy and results must be keyed up to the heights and strength of the supernatural.

Personal conviction of sin by the Holy Ghost, as a condition of man, and too often an act, is supernatural. Genuine repentance is supernatural. True faith and pardon and peace are supernatural. Regeneration and holiness are supernatural; that is, the human soul, by grace concurring, they are the direct work of the personal God in the spiritual nature, above the processes of nature, above and completely separate from any and every merely physical energy: they are God's own special act in the covenant of grace in His dealings with the human subject of His government and object of His love. Unless a man so preaches Methodism from Methodist pulpits, he perverts and disowns it.

To accomplish God's blessed purposes in man these spiritual forces must be accepted at their highest and best, and as supernatural forces kept tense and keenly operative under their own law. There is a terrible tendency to sagging, to running our machinery with loose bearings and slipping cogs, as the mechanics say.

See how the Bible in every part tones us up to supernaturalism: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Every word, every syllable, every thought, every breath supernatural; nothing of this world, nothing of the earth, earthy; nothing of the flesh or the carnal mind; keyed up to what some people profess to be so much afraid of—other worldliness, the

spiritnal mind. That was original Methodism, primitive Christianity; and if we are not there we have lost place and power. "That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man: that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and gronnded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and depth and length and height: and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." How much naturalism, mere humanism, is there in that? How much rationalistic evolution? Again, "Making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesns Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints: and what is the exceeding greatness of his power t usward who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Is this timid language? Are these fearful words? They are nothing, of course; mere empty sounds to many rationalists and eritics. Bnt I am writing to people that profess to believe in Christ and accept His doctrine. Snpernatural again and always: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not

God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son." Where is this record written? What would we know about the Son of God but for the Holy Scriptures attested in the heart of the believer? "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory"—all belonging to the supernatural realm. But why should I transcribe the whole Bible, all aflame with the supernatural. The ancient day spake with the most decidedly superhuman voice: "The Lord our God is one Lord, and Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." No wonder the evolutionists and critics would push that demand down to recent times. Their theories would not explain it if they waited even yet a thousand ages. But put God in His place at the beginning and through the unfolding centuries and it is easily understood. But He is not left in His place in the rent and wrested records of critical redactors.

THE ATTITUDE OF A MAN.

towards the supernatural determines his attitude toward the religion of the Bible and the Gospel of Christ. And the converse of this proposition is equally true. His conception of the supernatural is his conception of God with man in the olden time, and of Jesus of Nazareth in the Church since His incarnation. A man's impressions and thoughts of the supernatural, perhaps often unconsciously, govern his ideas and convictions on faith and prayer and his power with God in humble

confession, supplication and thanksgiving. In the same way and to the same extent are governed his views of this personal knowledge of sin on his part and the personal act of God in his pardon and cleansing. This firm persuasion of the supernatural, indeed, if undimmed by sin, this radiant instinct of the soul, sheds its light upon the atonement and reveals the sublime purposes of the wisdom and love of God in the stupendous marvels of human salvation.

THESE ARE THE INDISPENSABLE ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM.

All the way from the depths of penitence to the heights of glory the supernatural energies are at work. A Gospel minister's view of Bible records, of this moral and spiritual government of God through the centuries, of the intervention of miracles at suitable points for the plans of that government, of the declaration and fulfilment of prophecy, of the crowning miracles of the fulness of time in the conception of our Lord by the Holy Ghost, and His resurrection from the dead, must depend upon his ideals of the supernatural, the personal and special work of this Eternal God. Shall they go to the revelations of God in Holy Scriptures, or to the theories of the naturalistic and critical evolutionists? for the living to the dead?

Doctor Paley well asks: "In what way can a revelation be made but by miracles?" And answers, "On none which we are able to conceive." With regard to miracles, so indispensable to revelation, many critics stand in with the infidel Hume or the blasphemous Paine. Of course the idea of revelation from God to

man is scouted. Buddhism and Confucianism are not perplexed with any special revelations from the Eternal Father. They are not troubled with Moses or Daniel or Jesus miracles. They may be fair ethical systems engrafted on our human nature. Why not take them and be content?

Let no man imagine that we deny to naturalism broad fields and grand achievements. It has its own sphere, and especially in religious teaching should keep to it. We do not underestimate our humanity, but we do not accept it as a substitute or an equivalent for the Infinite and Eternal God in the religion of our race, nor are its inferences any substitute for the written records of revealed truth. God is over and above humanity, and worketh in it and through it in all its varied adaptations through all the ages. The naturalism of our era or nation is not by any means the naturalism of all eras and nations: for it has not an abiding standard, a steady guiding star, as has the Church of the Living God in Holy Scripture, the light of revealed truth. Still, it has been allowed a score of times to do its best, and to lift its subjects to its highest planes. It embraces physical conditions, personal capabilities, social incentives, and national characteristics in varying stages. It gathers general intelligence, and has its ideas of civil government, and in some degree, of learning and philosophy, of science, industry and art. It discerns natural principles of justice and frames to itself a standard of manhood and social order. And because such elements and attributes are ingrained in our human nature, that they may be responsive to the mind and revelation of God, it will have axioms and

schemes of ethics, and even forms of religion. Were not these things so, there could be no civilization, no perpetual succession of generations; and ultimately, as with our North American Indians or the buried empires of the past, no human race. This naturalism of humanity must accept the supernaturalism of Deity or it surely perishes.

This naturalism, this evolution of humanity, as some call it, has done so much that superficial thinkers contend that it is all-sufficient and does all. If it were more penetrating and profound, more authoritative and obedient, it surely had accomplished more. But, as Paul clearly saw, their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. The who? and the why? of the eternal power, purpose and order escaped its notice and its grasp. It dallies with the what? and the when? and the how? and the where?—questions of sense—but never reached the bottom or the top; and without revelation from heaven never could. A shallow and bewildered philosophy, it could never reach the center and source of things. God, a person, an infinite intelligence, a wise ruler and loving Father; Christ an Almighty Saviour; the Holy Spirit, a regenerator, guide and sanctifier; man a sinner redeemed, looking for the blessed hope of a glorious resurrection and an assured immortality; holy living and triumphant dying; these are the only answers to the who? and the why? And truly naturalism here leaves us in thick night, to wander in impenetrable darkness. Whatever it has done, it has never lifted the veil from the weeping eyes of this weary, ceaseless tramping procession of the family of man. It is the shal-

lowest philosophy; worse than that, with this universe in sight it is the bluntest contradiction of terms to speak of evolution answering the who and the why of the stupendous order. The evolver likely must have something to evolve to start his machine; and there ought to be some reason, some final cause for running it.

As a Methodist I may be permitted to say, while fully recognizing the attainments and good work of other Christian people, that this supernaturalism is essential—yea, indispensable, to Methodism. Whatever others may have, Methodism has no other occasion, origin or justification. Britain and the Continent in Wesley's time abounded in naturalism and humanism, deism, atheism and infidelity. It was in the fitness of things in the kingdom of darkness that Voltaire and Bolingbroke and Tom Payne should prepare a soil in which Astruc, whose personal character was deeply marred by the vices of French society, with his disciples, should plant the seed of the fragmentary and supplementary treatment of the sacred records. John Wesley struck at once for the fountain of life and made the British Isles ring with the clarion peal of supernaturalism. He fully believed in the integrity and trustworthiness of the entire Holy Scripture. Without this faith he had been powerless and easily defeated. He proclaimed God created the heavens and the earth, created man upright and provided him a Saviour from sin, even from the foundation of the world. He proclaimed God loved the world and gave His Son, that he that believeth hath life—all spiritual and supernatural from start to finish. He proclaimed the power and office of the Holy Spirit, the con-

viction of sin, genuine repentance, living faith, and the regeneration and sanctification of every true believer. He stood with the Lord Jesus and the Holy Apostles in their estimate of the ancient Scriptures, and the validity, historicity and perfect trustworthiness of the law, the prophets and the Psalms in their records and utterances concerning Christ and His Church from the beginning. He wielded the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; and he conquered. By the power of God he brought a Pentecost on the land. It is well said, he, by the grace of God, saved England from the bitter experiences and the calamities of France. By preaching Jesus and the resurrection, the regeneration and full salvation, he saved England; he did much to save America. Again, it has been well said, "The arm of flesh cannot wield the sword of the Spirit." Can German rationalism wield the sword of the Spirit? Can destructive criticism wield the sword of the Spirit? Can philosophic speculation wield the sword of the Spirit? Can naturalistic evolution, to critics the canon of interpretation, wield the sword of the Spirit? Can proud, boasting scholarship wield the sword of the Spirit? Can imperious wealth and haughty civilization wield the sword of the Spirit? Possibly we live in a time when Methodism is sharply called to remember the rock from which she was hewn and the pit from which she was digged.

WHO BUILT UP METHODISM

we are enjoying? What forces did those men and women employ? Were they the temporal and worldly forces of naturalism, or the spiritual and divine forces of super-

naturalism? Do the times require of us to stamp on our theological goods, "Made in Germany," whether imported directly or indirectly by way of England. A man was famous as he lifted up the axe upon the thick trees; but now they break down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers? Are we getting a better axe and a mightier chopper?

As I write and remember these things, my mind reverts to the men that have been with us and left us this Methodism as their legacy. Keeping to recent times, I cannot but recall such names as S. D. Rice and John A. Williams, Wellington Jeffers and John Carroll, Edward Hartley Dewart, who vigorously exposed and resisted the critics, and John Potts, who more than once said to me, certain men were living in a certain kind of a paradise. But these men and their mighty compeers were all "back numbers." They could not spell or pronounce "myth" or "legend" or fable, and so could not rank with scholars, and were no models for Methodist preachers. And might I not say the same of a George Douglas or a William Morley Punshon. Yet somehow or other, with all their defects, they labored and built, and propagated and established; and we have churches and circuits and districts and conferences and many and various institutions out of all this incapacity and ignorance. Is it not strange? I wonder how it all came about? And I wonder if the evolutionists will evolve as much as did the revelationists? And I think of Black and G. O. Huestis and Pope and Daniel and many other precious names in our Maritime Provinces, for whose toils and harvests I give glory to God. But alas! alas! they never knew the modern learning. How

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could they hold up their heads with their poor Bible and their poor faith and Gospel before the people? But the people were saved by thousands, and societies, churches and institutions grew and flourished. I wonder will the modernists do us well? One thing is sure, the men of whom I have spoken aimed to build up Christianity as expressed by Methodism, and they did build it, and we have it, whatever we are making of it.

If I dare venture outside our own Communion for the "incapables" of the haughty toss of those who claim the monopoly of the scholarship of our times, I timidly suggest the name of William Caven, of Knox College, recently deceased. In a paper on the Testimony of Christ to the Old Testament, Dr. Caven argues to my satisfaction such propositions as "The Old Testament Canon of the first Christian century is the same as our own. The evidence for this is complete." Our Lord "never calls in question any of the books, but distinctly assigns them to writers, as the Law to Moses: and by His quotations is not unobservant of historical exactness." "Christ accepts Old Testament narratives and records as authentic, historically true, not mythical." "Christ accepts the old dispensation and its Scriptures as in a special sense from God. He never charged the Jews with adding to or taking from the Scriptures." "Our Lord's knowledge was perfectly adequate to His prophetic office: to impute imperfection to Him as the Teacher of the Church were indeed impious." "Our Lord's testimony to the character of the Old Testament must remain unimpaired." But again I forget. What is the use? Dr. Caven was no scholar. I marvel that some are so easily and so soon removed out of former

conviction to another Gospel. What novelty will next set us all agog?

Conning these things, and rather inclined to the concrete and practical, I am querying what estimates should be set upon such faithful ministers and profound scholars as Doctors Fyfe and Cassels in the Baptist Church, Bishops Sweatman and Baldwin of the Anglican Church; or Doctors Burns, Gregg and King of the Presbyterian Church? To those who knew them, they were at least the equals of some that are now moving across the stage, and they did as grand a life work. But I am reminded there are people to whom Edward the Third and William of Orange were no royalties; Pitt, Burke and Gladstone no statesmen; and Blake, Nelson, Havelock and Wellington behind the times in their commands on land and sea.

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