

University of Wisconsin, and J. H. Kellogg, Superintendent of the Battle Creek Sanitarium. Every paragraph seems to have been well weighed, is clear to the understanding of the youngest, and touches the stern facts of daily living.

To 'Every Christian's Library' of very evangelical volumes Messrs. Pickering & Inglis have added *The Life that Pleases God*, a practical treatise on the preservation of the Spirit and Soul and Body, by A. T. Schofield, M.D., M.R.C.S. (1s. net).

Every sermon in the Rev. A. W. Gough's *God's Strong People* (Scott; 2s. 6d. net) is swept into the swirl of the war. Nevertheless they are not war sermons. They speak about the war; they are thrilled by the war; yet they are sermons on their texts, and out of their texts bring moral and religious truths, good for all times and peoples. Clearly Mr. Gough is a wise steward.

A small volume of simple evangelical sermons has been published by the Rev. J. Lionel Homer, Incumbent of Cargill, Canada, under the title of *Spiritual Fundamentals* (Stock; 3s. net).

Through the same publishers, but from the other end of the earth, there comes a volume of sermons, dealing also with fundamental and spiritual things, and with similar evangelical simplicity. The title is *Seeing the Invisible*, and the author is the late Rev. N. A. Ross, M.A., LL.D., of Johannesburg (2s. 6d. net).

Professor H. A. Giles, LL.D., the author of the Hibbert Lectures for 1914 on *Confucianism and its Rivals* (Williams & Norgate; 6s. net), is a specialist. The moment he oversteps his boundaries he flounders hopelessly. His remarks about the Bible are full of humour, which is as harmless as it is unconscious. The lectures are popular, and for that reason they are not likely to obtain a large circulation, for the study of the religions of the world is not a popular study yet, though it is moving in that direction. First the scholars, and then the people.

In discussing the difficulties which Christianity has to meet in China, Dr. Giles lays stress on these three: 'First of all, the Confucian dogma that man is born good; secondly, the practice of ancestral worship, which, as has already been shown, is incompatible with Christian doctrine; and thirdly, the rules and practice of filial piety, due directly to the patriarchal system which still obtains in China. It has indeed been seriously urged that the unparalleled continuity of the Chinese nation is a reward for their faithful observance of the fifth commandment. In the face of this deeply implanted sentiment of reverence for parents, it is easy to see what a shock it must give to be told, as in Mk 10^{7-29, 30}, that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife; also, that if a man leaves his father and mother for Christ's sake and the gospel's, he will receive an hundredfold now in this time, and in the world to come eternal life.'

The Study of Theology.

BY THE REV. J. AGAR BEET, D.D., RICHMOND,

IN the June number of this magazine, Mr. Alban G. Widgery brings a serious indictment against theology, or at least against theologians, and contrasts theology unfavourably with other branches of knowledge. That this indictment contains much truth, I do not deny: but it is not a fair statement of the whole case; and the writer does not suggest a practical remedy. The seriousness of the matter prompts me to discuss it in this paper, and to propose a remedy.

The indictment is as follows: 'Theology alone still suffers from absolute uncertainty and poverty

of method. For in the Christian world Theology has been and is almost entirely dogmatic, starting with certain quite arbitrary assumptions and arguing to certain foregone conclusions. The chief assumptions are the truth of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and, among Catholics, the validity of the claim of the Church to interpret them. The foregone conclusions may be summarized as the traditional creeds. At times philosophers have independently discussed theological problems, but no free scientific Theology has yet been established. In this region of research, the

greatest need of to-day is perfect liberty to seek and proclaim the truth, unconcerned by the acquiescence or denial of the dignitaries of any ecclesiastical organization whatever.'

Touching the manuals put into the hands of students in some minor schools of theology, the above charge is true. But it is utterly untrue of the works of the best modern theologians. Of these, I may mention, as the ablest book of the kind which I have ever seen, Neander's *Planting and Training of the Christian Church*, published at Berlin in 1832 and frequently republished and translated. Throughout this great work, all conclusions rest on decisive evidence adduced, and are deduced from it by rational inference which compels conviction. The chief evidence is found in the sacred records preserved in the New Testament; these being tested, touching their genuineness, correctness of text, truth, and worth, in the full light of the scholarship of the day in which the book was written. Moreover, the modern scholarship which, since that day, has given us a purer text of the New Testament has done little or nothing to modify or add to the theological results recorded in the work mentioned above.

The evils referred to by Mr. Widgey flow from the complicated relation between the results of modern research and the traditional teaching of the Churches. In all ages, the disciples of Christ have been grouped in communities smaller or larger, bound together by mutual help and a common faith, propagated by oral teaching, public and private reading of the Bible and other books, and various forms of worship. This traditional belief reproduces for the more part the actual teaching of Christ, and has commended itself as substantially true by its influence on the mind, heart, and life of multitudes of men and women in all ages and in all positions in life.

In different communities theological tradition took different, and sometimes contradictory, forms; and these differences gave rise to theological controversy. This contradiction reveals error on one or both sides. And, in many cases, the error escaped detection because of the helpful truth with which it was associated.

These varieties of belief took permanent form in carefully worded creeds, convenient records of the belief of those who made them. Of these I may mention, as the most valuable of them all, what is now commonly called the Nicene Creed, a wonder-

ful link binding together all the older and many modern Churches. Of modern creeds, I may add the Augsburg Confession, the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, the Anglican Articles, and the Westminster Confession. These various formularies reveal, amid minor differences, a wonderful agreement, each with the others, and all with the teaching of the New Testament. Some other forms, e.g. the Articles of the Synod of Dort and those of the Dutch Remonstrants, reveal more acute differences.

Each denomination must have, in order to secure continuance, schools of theology; and in these schools the teaching must be in harmony with the general belief of those who support them. Now in all schools of learning, theological, literary, and scientific, the beliefs of the teachers and the evidence they adduce mould more or less the beliefs of their pupils. For it is much easier and more convenient for these last to accept the conclusions thus set before them ready-made than to sift for themselves the evidence on which they rest. All this, and the material interests involved, tend to warp the judgment, and limit the freedom, of thought, of students of theology; and prompts some men, especially in official positions, to conceal secret aberrations from the traditional beliefs. Such concealment is unworthy and degrading.

What, then, is to be done? An adequate remedy, the only remedy, is in the hands of every theological professor, pastor, and church member. Let each one sift carefully for himself the grounds on which rest the beliefs which are living factors in his own religious life as carefully as every man of business sifts the trustworthiness of those to whom he entrusts his goods. This is easier and much less dangerous than at first sight appears. For the points of agreement in all churches are much greater and more important than are the differences. But, whether easy or difficult, safe or dangerous, such sifting of the grounds of our faith is absolutely needful. For with truth error is apt to mingle: and all error obscures and weakens the truth.

What is needed is a profound sense of the importance and sacredness of THE TRUTH. Christ said, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.' The Truth is the Way of Life. All error leads away from Christ, and towards death. Consequently, our loyalty to Him binds us both to seek

the Truth, and to make known to others whatever truth we believe that we have found, seeking their judgment about it. In other words, we are bound to place, before all sincere inquirers, without reserve, the results of our own search for the Truth. In this search and announcement, many have laid down their lives. But the Truth still lives and reigns in Christ; and is able to repay, and will repay, every sacrifice made on its behalf.

This full and frank statement is specially needful in our day. For every one knows that we do not hold now all that our fathers held and asserted sixty years ago. And intelligent and devout men and women ask what these changes are, on what grounds they rest, and what our teachers are still prepared to assert and maintain. This last is of utmost importance. When the whole case is fully stated, it will appear that all we value most in the Christian tradition is confirmed by modern scholarship, and that the changes which this last has forced upon us strengthen immensely the foundation of the historical faith of the Church.

The chief changes are as follows:

1. Our fathers taught confidently that every statement in the Bible, especially touching morality and religion, is true in the sense intended by the writers. This theory of Inerrancy has been disproved by more careful search of the sacred documents. There are, especially in the Old Testament, moral sentiments expressed and approved which the cultivated moral sense of the disciples of Christ forbids them to accept; and some apparently contradictory statements of fact. Even touching the day on which Christ was put to death, the plain statements in Mt 26¹⁷, Mk 14¹², Lk 22⁷ are inconsistent with what nearly all scholars accept as more accurate indications of time in Jn 18²⁸ 19³¹.

These inaccuracies, here and there, in small details do not lessen the supreme and infinite value of the sacred records of the life and teaching of Christ. For, in the marvellous general agreement or harmony of the Four Gospels, the Book of Acts, a remarkable Apocalyptic work, and various letters, some of which are traced by decisive evidence, such as can be brought for no other ancient documents, to the founder of the Churches of Europe,—in these various witnesses compared we find abundant evidence, sufficient to banish all doubt, touching the historical reality and the teaching of Christ. In the Old Testament,

testing the authorship and date of its various books, and the correctness of our copies, as we should any other similar ancient works, we have evidence abundantly sufficient to prove that God revealed Himself to Israel with a clearness and fulness not given to any other ancient nation.

Thus, in the New and Old Testaments we have all the documentary evidence needful for intelligent and assured faith in Christ and in God. The now absolute theory of Inerrancy, for which no adequate evidence has ever been brought, somewhat obscured this abundant internal evidence of their substantial historical truth. In other words, modern scholarship has been a retreat from an untenable to an impregnable position.

2. Another marked difference between the almost unanimous belief of all thoughtful men to-day and the opinions current sixty years ago touches the human life of the Incarnate Son. It was then, too hastily assumed that the Sacred Boy in the temple courts was in full exercise of divine omniscience and omnipotence. Vain attempts were made to harmonize these with the growth in knowledge recorded in Lk 2⁵², with His ignorance (Mt 24³⁶, Mk 13³²) of the day of His return, and (Mt 26⁵³) with the 'twelve legions of angels' ready to rescue Him from His enemies. For growth in knowledge is impossible to one who already knows all things, and the help of angels was superfluous to the Almighty. The true reconciliation is plainly stated in Ph 2⁷, where we read that 'He emptied himself,' and in 2 Co 8⁹, 'He became poor, though he was rich.' This self-limitation of the Incarnate Son does not lessen His authority as a Teacher sent by God. For the close harmony of various witnesses is complete proof of their historical correctness; and the appeal of this teaching to man's felt need of salvation, and its verification in the experience and life of untold multitudes, leave no room for doubt that this harmonious and life-giving teaching is a correct reproduction of the actual teaching of Christ and a true statement of the merciful purpose of God.

3. A still more conspicuous change is seen in the treatment, in the modern pulpit, of the Doom of the Lost. Our fathers did not hesitate to say that it would be endless suffering as bad as the agony caused by fire to living and conscious bodies. A keener sense of the mercy of God, and of the due proportion of crime and punishment, has long ago made such teaching impossible. But in this

as in the other cases, we must guard against the opposite extreme. This solemn topic, so conspicuous in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, has almost vanished from the modern pulpit. This ought not so to be. The way of safety is to follow the writers of the New Testament, who describe it, more frequently than all other expressions put together, by the one Greek word rendered sometimes *destroy* and *destruction*, at other times *perish* and *perdition*, and elsewhere *lose* and *lost*. The word thus rendered means, not necessarily either extinction or endless suffering, but always the loss of whatever gives worth to existence. The solemn teaching in Ph 3¹⁹, touching 'the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is *destruction*,' demands emphatic assertion to-day.

Some writers make the great mistake of putting more emphasis upon the small errors which modern scholarship has detected in the ancient traditions of the Church rather than on the all-important elements in which the ancient tradition has been confirmed by modern research. To some ears, discord is more conspicuous than harmony. But the trained ear listens for and delights in concord.

The close agreement between the indisputably genuine letters of Paul, the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle of John, the Synoptic Gospels, and the Book of Revelation, four very different types of teaching, all coming down to us from the first century, without any substantial note of discord, leave no room for doubt that the Founder of Christianity claimed for Himself a unique relation to God, raising Him above men and angels as the only begotten Son of God; and that this supreme claim was accepted by all His disciples whose opinions have come down to us, with complete confidence, because they had proof which convinced them that the body laid dead in the grave had returned to life and was raised to heaven. Similar harmonious agreement proves that, along with moral teaching loftier than even the highest in the Old Testament, He announced pardon of sins and endless life with God in heaven for all who put faith in Him and walk in His steps; and that He promised to them the Holy Spirit of God, to be in them the breath of a new life of devotion to God, and a divinely-given pledge of endless blessedness. All this rests, as I have proved in my *Manual of Theology*, on decisive historical and documentary evidence, confirmed by an experience

which has transformed and raised their whole inward and outward life.

Compared with this evidence, the changes noted above are insignificant.

A serious defect in Mr. Widgery's paper is the oversight of the chief evidence on which theology rests, namely, the religious literature of ancient and modern times, in which lie open to our inspection the thoughts, and in some measure the lives of men who, in all ages and in widely different circumstances, have pondered the great unseen realities which underlie human thought and life.

This literature falls into three clearly marked divisions. Every one who reads carefully (1) the New Testament and compares it with the Old, with other ancient literature, and with later Christian literature, finds in the contrasts thus presented decisive proof that Jesus of Nazareth gave to the world a religious impulse which turned back into a new and better channel the whole course of human life and thought. This claims for the New Testament a supreme place as the earliest record of the most wonderful teaching ever given to man. Similarly, comparison of (2) the Old Testament with (3) all contemporary literature proves that Israel anticipated the teaching of Jesus about God in a measure infinitely above that of any Gentile nation. On the other hand, a comparison of the Old and New Testaments reveals the immense addition which Jesus made to our knowledge of God. Our study of theology must include these three great divisions of religious literature.

This literature is embodied in ancient languages known to us only by philological methods. Yet Mr. Widgery says that 'Far too much time is spent in most of our theological colleges and divinity halls in philological studies; which have not even a secondary value for the ministerial office.' But whatever else they are taught, all theological students need, and may easily gain, a good working knowledge of that wonderful language in which the words of Christ, the narratives of the Evangelists, and the teaching of some of the Apostles, have come down to us. And this implies careful philological study of words, inflexions, and phrases.

Oversight of this primary element of theological research makes Mr. Widgery's paper little more than a caricature. Evidently he has seen theological teaching only in its most defective forms.

Hé says: 'Except among a few scholars attached to free religious bodies, such (absolute) freedom has never existed in the Christian Churches in the past, and it does not exist to-day. Almost all theological students—including most Professors of Divinity—are officially attached to ecclesiastical organizations, to hold any position in which subscription to specific statements of doctrine is demanded.' He adds: 'Faculties of Theology should be quite free, and in the interest of thought and religion itself no one should be allowed to occupy a Chair of Divinity who holds any position which requires definite adherence to prescribed doctrine.' But he has not faced the difficulties in the way of this negative suggestion. At the same time, the matter of subscription deserves consideration.

But, apart from this, a simpler path is open. Let each one claim and take liberty for himself. For this, all that is needed is the courage of our convictions, inspired by a due appreciation of the infinite value and sacredness of the Truth. This will stimulate earnest and patient search for it, and a frank and unreserved statement, to all sincere inquirers, of whatever we have found. We must also admit the limitations of our knowledge. This will evoke our pupils' confidence, and open a way for their intelligent reception of those

many matters for which we can bring decisive evidence.

The above criticisms pass in silence over many good things in Mr. Widgery's thoughtful paper. Even caricature is a legitimate form of literature. And it may do good by calling attention to what in the past has been, and to some extent still is, a serious hindrance to progress in theological thought. We have been more anxious to bring our pupils to our own opinions than to evoke in them intelligent convictions of their own. That so intelligent a man as Mr. Widgery has this opinion about theological method, reveals serious fault somewhere.

Another point to be ever kept in mind by teachers, especially by those who teach the future pastors of the flock of Christ, is that knowledge implies responsibility. Whatever we know about the eternal realities has been revealed to us by God in order that we may pass it on to others. That light shines upon us from and through the Cross of Christ. By teaching the Truth, and so far as our teaching corresponds with the Truth, we impart to others the infinite blessings purchased for us and for them by that great Sacrifice. Consequently our loyalty to Christ binds us to loyalty to the Truth, both in our search for it, and in its announcement to others.

Recent Foreign Theology.

Pre-Hellenic Civilization.¹

THE appearance of the new edition of M. Dussaud's big book, and the publication of Mr. Hall's new volume—a companion to Handcock's *Mesopotamian Archaeology*—are very appropriate at the present time, when, even apart from the outbreak of war, there is a kind of pause in the onward movement of investigation.

By and by, no doubt, when things have readjusted themselves in the various areas concerned, the movement will be resumed, perhaps with all the greater vigour for the pause, and probably under very different and more favourable condi-

tions, in some lands at least, than have hitherto characterized the progress of exploration. Meanwhile the pause is a very fitting opportunity for archæological stock-taking, and that is what the volumes of M. Dussaud and Mr. Hall really amount to.

Of the two books, that of M. Dussaud is, of course, incomparably the more exhaustive. It not only covers a good deal more ground than Mr. Hall's, taking in the Troad, which Mr. Hall expressly rules out, and devoting a long chapter (rather too long) to the civilization of Cyprus, which Mr. Hall only handles incidentally; but it also deals at considerable length with matters which the scheme of the English writer's book only permits him to glance at in passing. Thus the chapters on Ægean influence in Palestine and

¹ *Les Civilisations Préhelléniques dans le Bassin de la Mer Égée*. Par René Dussaud. Second edition, 1914. *Ægean Archaeology*. By H. R. Hall. 1914.