

ARTICLE VII.

AN APPEAL TO THE NEW SCHOOL OF
THEOLOGY.¹

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WHEN we turn to discuss the great question of the Higher Criticism, we find almost the same thoughts awaiting expression in different form. First comes approval of the principle. I have seen conservative lips curl in scorn at the mere mention of "the accursed thing": I have heard talk about "laying foul hands on the ark of the covenant." Shall we need to repudiate such nonsense? My conservative brother, what were the Reformers but higher critics of things that all men then held to be divine? Did not Jesus Christ apply the pruning-knife of criticism to many things thought sacred by good men of his day? Do not you yourself apply the principles of literary criticism to the Bible when you explain that much of the pious talk in the book of Job comes not from God, but from Job's worldly friends; or are you not using historical criticism when you admit it to be possible in antediluvian chronology that "the names denote an individual and his family spoken of collectively," and that "the longevity is the period during which the family had prominence or leadership"?² Are you not doing something that your forefathers would have condemned? Are you not indulging in the pernicious right to probe and to change one's mind?

¹Continued from p. 529.

²These sentences are quoted from a Bible dictionary of a most conservative type.

No sane man will imagine that this discussion is aimed at the Higher Criticism as such; the indictment is against its contempt for scholarship that has not reached its own radical conclusions, and against its preponderatingly negative attitude. We should remember that the New School has no patent rights on these tardy epithets, these remarks that "no intelligent man accepts that notion nowadays" or that "scholars and scientists rejected this idea long ago." These weapons which the ordinary liberal uses so generously against his conservative brother are just as handy for the Unitarian against the liberal who still accepts miracles; for the ethical culturist against the Unitarian if he believes in prayer and responsibility; for the agnostic against the ethical culturist if he insists on the ethical significance of life; and perhaps, even, for the materialist against the agnostic. I do not think that conservatives get full credit for their profound scholarship in this flippant age, nor that calling "tardy names" will mend matters much. What better illustration of this spirit could be found than a recently published remark made by a foreign critic about an American preacher whom he was eulogizing? "Of course," said he, "thinking men disagreed with him on many points." "*Thinking men*," forsooth! Is not that intolerable? Granting that much, if not most, scholarly opinion is with the critic in many of his views, what right has he thus dogmatically to ignore the ripe scholarship on the other side, and to award to his own school the modest title of "thinking men"? Take another case. A certain higher critic has been much attacked (unwisely and sometimes not too kindly, it seems to me), and behold an apostle of liberalism asserts that all this opposition is due to "invincible ignorance or unchristian malice." This is being "broad" and "liberal"!

The advanced school's contempt for hostile scholarship,

and its calm assertion that it has the support of all really intelligent people, is aggravated by its desire to pose as a school of purely scientific investigation without prejudice leading in either direction. One of the articles we shall discuss presently, contains the statement that the higher critics have "no theories"; "they simply investigate and report what they find." Well and good; that is the only way to reach the truth in any sphere. The candid physicist or philosopher should proceed on no theistic assumptions; and the candid critic, on no Christian presuppositions regarding either the spirit or the letter of the Bible. But to begin with no assumptions, and to reach no conclusions, are somewhat different. The first is agnosticism of the proper sort, permitting the most dogmatic conclusions; the second precludes religion. Somehow we cannot think of Jesus Christ as saying: "I am an investigating scholar without convictions. I do not know whether God is your Father, nor whether my word is authoritative in religion; I am simply examining and reporting what I find. I have no positive message." And then we are not apt to picture the apostles as men of "no theory," after their contact with Jesus, their experience of his life and teaching, and especially after a certain rather famous Easter morning. Some of them, at least, probably had "no theories" at first; but they have left upon the world the impression that of all men's theirs were the most positive theories, the most fervent opinions, the deepest convictions man has known. If higher critics pretend to have reached conclusions that may be called Christian in any real sense, then there are some things about which they have no business to have "no theories."

Worst of all, most disheartening, most perilous, is the indiscriminate insistence on the havoc wrought by the Higher Criticism in traditional beliefs. Frankly, one might get the

idea that all is over. Perhaps we can find God in nature; possibly philosophy may guess at immortality; the conscience is fairly sure (at least *so long as our heredity and environment are religious*) to suggest duty; "but," thinks many a man, "as for certainty in Christ, it is gone; Genesis is primitive tradition, Jonah a foolish tale, and modern scholarship is sure to destroy the other marvelous features as it has these; sooner or later miracles, and with them revelation, must go." Now this is not advanced as the true conception of modern critical work. Many of us would accept *The Outlook's* dictum that, while the result of the Higher Criticism has been to remove the Old Testament records so far from the events that they are supposed to record as to make them historically dubious, yet it has pushed the New Testament documents back to the time of the apostles, so that their testimony is reliable. We need not worry about Genesis and Jonah; but it is our great comfort to know that men of skeptical and radical tendencies, after rejecting so much of the old beliefs, have, through purely intellectual processes, reached the conclusion that the kernel at least is credible. But the common idea of the Higher Criticism is far different. It is regarded as the death-blow to Christianity; and I maintain that this view is eminently justifiable when we consider the attitude of these critics themselves. In fact, those of us who think otherwise have probably had to fight our way through the slough of despond to our present knowledge of their almost concealed positive teachings. Teachers, preachers, and writers of this school are known to the public, not as defenders, but as destroyers of the faith. One is famous for his ridicule of "the Jonah myth"; another is known for his attack on the Pentateuch; a third thinks that the Fourth Gospel and the Acts are not reliable; and where will you find one who will come out boldly, and

in ringing tones proclaim his belief in the Christianity that sent Paul and Peter out on their fight against sin and doubt, —the supernatural religion, based on the conviction of Christ's resurrection and authority, the only kind that will convince, convert, and regenerate this unbelieving age? No doubt these men believe all this, but *why* do they not talk more about it?

The public opinion may be wrong, but it is justifiable. The reason men misunderstand the higher critics is that the critics themselves spend, in preaching negatives, and in telling us what fools conservatives are, time that they ought to use in giving the world something positive. I turned the other day with a keen sense of expectancy to an article of this sort that appeared recently in a leading religious journal. Its reassuring title¹ and its opening words justified the hope that here at last was one who would separate the wheat from the chaff, who would talk of positive results, and stop harping on "what we have outgrown." I confess that I laid down the article with a feeling of disappointment. With the writer's clear and convincing statement of the rights of the Higher Criticism I have a hearty sympathy. Besides, it is a pleasure to record that he makes several assertions of a strongly positive nature. "Higher critics," he says, "have not lost their faith in Christianity, their love for the church, nor their belief in the Bible," of which they "are the true defenders." They have "killed Ingersollism" and "redeemed the Bible from infidelity." There need be "no fear for the future." The evolutionary view helps us to believe that "God has been inwardly speaking to" man, and at the same time it "confirms what is highest and truest" in the Bible. "If at times its [the critical school's] studies seem to make it a critic of the

¹"Where We Are," by Rev. T. T. Munger, D. D., in the *Congregationalist* for October 18, 1902.

church and its creeds and institutions, it as often explains and vindicates them." Now for all these thoughts of an enlightening and positive sort, I am deeply grateful; but it seems a thousand pities that such a convincing, calm, generous, and moderate article as this should so brilliantly illustrate those failings of the New-school theologians upon which our attention is now centered. So, while we cheerfully admit—nay maintain—its positive value, we are inclined to use it as a striking concrete example of the weaknesses of the school; but be it remembered that we are dealing with it as a type, and not stirring up personal controversy. It is to be noted then, first, that the writer's attention is centered solely on the Old Testament, and here upon negative results as far as *historicity* is concerned. (To be sure he carefully informs us that the Revised Version "removes the only textual basis for the doctrine of the Trinity,"—but that is only in passing, nor is it altogether constructive, either.) Now I am not here to fight for Genesis and Jonah as if Christianity rested on their being verbally historical. Most of us know better—or think we do. But when a minister of the gospel is telling the Christian public "where we are" in this criticism fight, is it right or wise in him wholly to ignore the New Testament? Do Luke's Gospel and the Epistle to the Romans contain something more than "poetry, myth, and legend"? If they do, would it not be well to say so? Or is this question of no moment?

Furthermore it may be well to "draw the line at the spirit instead of the letter," in studying the ancient stories of creation; but when you do so, you must be ready for two searching questions: (1) your skeptic is going to ask you why you accept so readily the spiritual teaching of these stories; have they any more claim than Browning or Mother Goose? (2) he will want to know about the "spirit" and the "letter" in

the New Testament; and if you here cling to historicity, he will perhaps wonder why higher critics as a class are so timid about making this assertion; or if you admit that here, too, only the spirit is important, he may say something disagreeable about the honesty that allows you to dodge this issue, or something contemptuous about the power of such a "poetry-and-myth" religion to attract rational men.

So much for the negative spirit. Turn next—and it should be remembered that we are dealing with this article chiefly as a type—turn next to the writer's cheerful acceptance of the charge of naturalism. I shall plunge into no scholastic quibbling about the supernatural and the natural; but I have a right to ask the reason for believing that "God is inwardly speaking" to man in the Bible more than in other books that flatly contradict it. If it be true that "it is easier to explain this patriarch [Abraham] than to do away with eternal law" (evolution), then I want to know if you apply the same canons to Jesus Christ (frankly I don't worry much about Abraham); and if here you cannot "do away with eternal law" that forged Mahomet and Brigham Young—if you have no Christ with peculiar claims, no authoritative revelation, and no visible victory over death,—then do not ask me to accept him as my moral leader, or at any rate to take my ideas of God from him. And then if you will tell me that I am making absurd statements about the Higher Criticism, I sincerely hope you are right; but you must allow me to remind you that you cannot prove your statement by reference to this article that purports to tell us "where we are."

Of course critics and scholars must be honest, and should not preach what they do not believe; but, if they have reached that misty region where all is doubted except a hazy idea that there is a God somewhere and that "Jesus" taught a pretty

good philosophy of life, is there not a grave question whether they have a right to label themselves the successors of Paul and John in teaching "the faith once delivered to the saints"? I have several friends in a theological seminary famous for its modern views, and one of them in a conversation on this very subject frankly admitted that the atmosphere of his seminary is coldly negative and destructive, and that such teaching is no preparation for men from whom the world expects a positive message. "This," he went on to say, "is the weakness of our school of thought, and I have often remonstrated with my companions on this point." Some graduates of this same institution were recently pursuing their studies in Germany, and they there were much thrown with an American woman of an avowedly pessimistic, cynical, anti-Christian type of mind, who always had a sneer ready for religious people, and for whom the phrase "any power there may be above" would seem to be the clearest idea of God possible. Now beyond question these young theologians had a right to "exercise their intellectual freedom" and "leave the beaten track of conservatism"; but may one not question the value of theological teaching, or ask what, forsooth, is this sort of "Christianity," which left on the mind of this poor melancholy woman the impression that (to use her own words) "the professors and students of this seminary did not believe the Bible any more than anybody else, and had given up the idea that Christ is the Son of God"? Such expressions, to be sure, may mean a great variety of things, but the *evident influence of these graduates of a theological seminary was to hasten the extinction of the last sparks of faith this woman had.* Such is the result of much of the higher criticism of our times.

I refer to men who sedulously, if not gleefully, record the progress of the most extreme types of higher criticism in

Christian circles, or the defeat of the orthodoxists in some professional appointment; who are always ready almost to extol "educated men who are turning from the church," as if this were primarily the fault of the church, and as if excuses for inexcusable irreligion were not just as welcome among the educated as among others; or who promptly take up the cudgels to defend no matter whom—even to agnostics—against conservatives honestly endeavoring to serve Christ by their criticisms—eager, I say, in such service, but with never rebuke for the most radical teachings, never a demurrer, though all that is best in Christianity be at stake in the appointment to some chair of theology—this I say is a peculiar business for teachers of religion. In doubt-ridden Germany, do you think that Adolf Harnack's chiefest influence is to attract agnostics to a Christianity of any sort, or to weaken the faith of the more orthodox? If it is the latter, is he a useful Christian teacher? Or Dr. Martineau, why is he busied—in spite of his splendid philosophy and his firm spiritual convictions,—just as much, if not more, with antagonizing the scholarly Liddon, as with combating Huxley and Hæckel, men consistently hostile to the most elementary sort of religion?¹ Against what is it wise, in an age of doubt, to direct our most emphatic antagonism,—against what we consider conservative stupidity, or against agnosticism? I can think of our religion as a great fort to be held against a vast horde, most of whom hate our purpose, but some of whom doubt the strength of our cause. In this fort there is dissension. There are those who cling to "the good old ways." Swords and battle-axes were used by the fathers; they want no powder nor Gatling guns. Every petty redoubt and trench must, at

¹To be sure, Harnack and Martineau represent a more rationalistic type of thought than the theologians under discussion, but they serve well to illustrate our point.

any cost, be as stubbornly fought for as the citadel itself. Change our policy? why that is ruin! Compromise with our comrades in arms who do not agree with us? Give up the traditional ideas? Death first! But another school of warriors is gaining power in this fort. They believe in all that is new and modern—sometimes simply because it is new. Many a redoubt and bastion they would surrender because they believe it untenable. The old weapons, too, are behind the times. Now what is their attitude toward friend and foe? Conciliation of one and defiance of the other? Far from it. On the one hand there is vituperation for the stupidity of the “moss-backs” who do not share their high intelligence and their new views. On the other, in the face of friend, foe, and neutral, there is enthusiastic advertising of changes and losses, of worn-out weapons to be rejected, of position after position to be abandoned. Seldom a word about the new and better weapons that replace the old, nor of the splendid citadel that their very critical examination has shown to be more impregnable than ever. Why not? God knows. Is that the way to defend a cause? Let the prevalent opinion about these warriors be an answer.

Speaking broadly, the whole religious world is harmed by this fatuous misplacement of emphasis on negative results. But there are certain classes of people who would seem to be doomed to be the greatest sufferers from it in the near future. Just now its influence appears to be more or less limited to the educated, in obedience to the law of all intellectual movements. The harm already done here needs no further discussion. But I ask you to contemplate the diffusion of this spirit among the uneducated, men who love God with all their heart rather than with all their mind; whose faith is sturdy and sincere, but whose thinking is apt to be merely a re-

flection of what is going on about them. Is it comforting to contemplate the effect of all this destructive teaching—unaccompanied by a something of a positive nature—on the great mass of simple, pious Christians? A certain professor of theology has asserted that the new view of the Bible (his own view) is bound to have an unfortunate effect on the popular attitude toward the book. Exactly; and the trouble is that professors of that ilk have been clamorously telling us how to reject our old notions without suggesting a new theory that shall be equally positive and equally Christian.

Think too for a minute of the young candidates for the ministry. A certain clergyman of the most radical school maintains that the present dearth of students of theology is to be blamed on "the creeds." Conservative bodies, it would seem, are cramming a lot of unessential dogmas down the unwilling throats of young men who lean toward the ministry, but who have accepted certain modern notions in science, philosophy, and criticism. Obviously this is partly true. Much of the blame can be placed right here. But just as much, if not considerably more, of the responsibility is to be accepted by the radicals themselves. Imagine a cautious, thoughtful, half-skeptical young man in his last year of college life. He has always expected to be a clergyman, but his ardor has recently become cooled. Why? He has been gradually learning of a powerful school of theology, claiming all the real scholarship on its side, which apparently foretokens the collapse of Christianity. Things he has firmly believed from his youth up are unhesitatingly ridiculed. Thought is said to be continuing its steady rejection of all this traditional nonsense. Is anything now left? Will anything be left in another generation? Ominous silence on the part of the critics. You say that this young man has grossly misunderstood the results of

Higher Criticism, and of course you are right; but is it any wonder that he has done so, in view of the attitude of the critics themselves? or that his final decision is to renounce a career in which he could have but a wavering, half-negative faith? This is the case of an honest man. The hypocrite (I have known not a few of this sort) who first loses his interest in religion, or who ceases to be even decently moral, and who then attributes his desertion of the ministry to the loss of faith due to the trend of modern scholarship, is sure to seek support in the results of the Higher Criticism; and where will you find a public expression of theirs to condemn him?

Think further of the missionary. He naturally is a little behind the times. He leaves home young and perhaps has no time to keep up with the changes of thought. He has been spending his life preaching what he has firmly believed to be the gospel as taught by Christ and the apostles. Now imagine some keen Brahmin, or wide-awake Buddhist, or perhaps some oriental disciple of Spencer,—think, I say, of such a man who may have discovered some of the recent “scholarly” publications of certain radicals. How long do you think it would take him to find your missionary, and chaff him about the approaching collapse of his religion as evidenced by the purely destructive nature of these books? Suppose the missionary have a sufficiently clear grasp of the situation to reply: “Yes, many of our theologians and critics have changed their views of certain less important things, but they are stronger than ever on the underlying principles.” Would he be believed? Would he not at once be met by an embarrassing, “Prove your statement”? and could he do so without great difficulty? Is it not a crying shame that these heroes who follow in the footsteps of the great first missionaries should be subjected to embarrassment and ridicule because certain

bumptious and one-sided critics spend their energies parading negative results? Tell me, is the Higher Criticism as now understood (incorrectly to be sure, but most justifiably) likely to help or mar the work of the missionary?

V.

Our argument is ended. We have first admitted our sympathy with the New School of Theology, and then emphatically urged its weakness. These, in our opinion, are its contempt for the piety and scholarship on the other side of the question; and the impression it generally makes of being really antagonistic to any Christianity worthy of the name, because it is continually and vigorously proclaiming negative views. These great faults, together with a glance at the constituency, and at certain other fallacies of the school, we have discussed. The insufficiency of the arguments is painfully apparent to their expounder. In addition to incapacity for sound logic, from which the keenest of us suffer now and then, a debate of this kind is made difficult by the fact that in the last analysis the criterion is human experience; and, even if the limits of space and patience did not prevent an exhaustive scientific marshaling of evidence, this same varied human experience might give a far from unanimous answer to our questions. Nevertheless, we shall hope that some candid minds have only been needing a systematic exposition of the case to admit the facts, and that the evidence derived from quotation and instance may convince others. Of one thing there is no question. This is not a cold, unfeeling disquisition of no more than academic interest to its writer. It comes from deep conviction, and is the result of intellectual struggle extending over a long period. No wonder then that the writer feels anxious about these critical times, and longs to accomplish

something by this discussion. It is his honest opinion that the essence of his contention will be admitted. The New School has been making mistakes, and most thoughtful people know it. What then is needed? A radical change of method.

An attempt should be made to conciliate conservatives; but, even if this fails, we must have a strong stand for positive convictions—a clear, ringing declaration from pulpit, magazine, and professional chair that we still believe in the apostolic and evangetic Christianity, in spite of our newer and larger views. Such is the tone of Professor Clarke's winsome book "An Outline of Christian Theology," because, as *The Outlook* says, it is a help to those "who have accepted in whole or in part the new philosophy, and would like to see it reconciled with the old faith." Such I should think would be the influence of Dr. Gladden's "What is left of the Old Doctrines" if he has attained the object announced in his preface to "show that the Christian may cling to his historic faith in the face of the most recent discoveries in science and in criticism." Even when judged through the perhaps distorting medium of an unfriendly review, the recently published book on "The Christian Point of View" by Professors Knox, McGiffert, and Francis Brown, of Union Seminary, cannot fail to impress one as a step in the right direction. Most conservatives and not a few moderates would, I am sure, consider its position as near the danger line of radicalism as a Christian should go; and in its teaching many might miss some of the robust beliefs that they think they find near the heart of gospel and apostolic teaching. Some might even be so bold as to suggest that subjective religion-building has played too large a part, and objective study of our only sources too small a part. These questions we waive. The refreshing thing that even our hostile reviewer lets us see, is the unequivocally posi-

tive nature of the teachings contained. There is little or none—speaking loosely—of your gloomy destruction and misty negation; but there is, instead, an outspoken virile profession of a real Christian faith. The dominant note is its loyalty to Christ as the center and authority of our religious beliefs.

We cannot say how this position was reached—whether by the logic of the older apologetics of the apostles or by some new road,—but one cannot fail to see that such teaching is a long, long way from rationalism or naturalism—yes, even so far that some who scorn an external seat of authority might dub it credulity and superstition. Right in the very preface we find the authors saying of their articles that, “with variety and even divergence as to matters of detail, *they agree in laying supreme emphasis on Jesus Christ as the source, standard, guide and authority in Christian life.*”¹ Is there any doubt about the positive content of such a declaration of faith as that? Professor Knox, in discussing the “Problem of the Church,” first laments the “painfully slow” “progress in winning the world to Christ,” and then maintains that, discarding natural theology and church symbols, we must go to God “directly and only through Christ.” This view of religion, he thinks, if “adopted with full consciousness of its meaning in our systems, will revolutionize theology, and more, adopted with full power in our lives, it will revolutionize the world”; and, we are tempted to add, if believed, preached, and emphasized, in contrast to the misty nothings some liberals are preaching, it will give a virile rationality to our religious thought that will make us feel we are dealing in certainties, in spite of the recent negative trend. Professor McGiffert speaks of “Theological Reconstruction.” In spite of his ultra-ethical point of view, who but the most bigoted conserva-

¹ Italics are ours.

tive could object to his plea for a reconstruction accomplished on the basis of "the historic figure of Jesus Christ and the revelation which he has brought," "the real starting-point in the Christian theology"? All the Christian world can indorse clear, ringing declarations of this sort, and join their writer's hope that there would "ultimately be a greater transformation than any church has witnessed since the Reformation."

Dr. Brown's message is similar. He deals with "The Religious Value of the Old Testament," and his criterion is "the Christian test," "the teachings, life, and spirit of Jesus Christ." "Whatever does not accord with these lacks religious value for us, whether it stands in the Old Testament or in day-before-yesterday's sermon." Men who talk like that understand our age and our world. I dare say they are radicals. No doubt they have discarded many of the older beliefs; but here is vigorous, loyal Christianity proclaimed in no halting accents. When men talk that way, we cease feeling that we have outgrown the sturdy faith of Paul and Peter, we still realize that we have something—yes everything—left. Mr. R. F. Horton's "Revelation and the Bible" is a work of similar import. For a sane combination of distinctly modern views and of sturdy Christian faith it has few superiors. We need more such books and more such teaching from professors and editors and preachers. In no sense is this a plea for a stifled intellect. Let examination and the weighing of evidence go on, no matter where they may lead us. If the result of these be the loss of faith by some honest and good men, we can but wonder and grieve; but this is not the case with the New School. These men are said to be (and I believe that it is true) as firm of faith as any. Then let them speak out. This school stands high in popular favor; it could turn the tide of speculation into Christian channels if it would but carry on a vigor-

ous campaign against unbelief. To many observing minds the reaction against skepticism has already set in. But many a battle remains to be fought. Can any one doubt the glorious result if that school of men who have stripped Christianity of much that was not essential and have been mistakenly thought hostile to the faith,—if these same critics—should make it their practice from now on to minimize negative results, and should bring comfort to friend, consternation to foe, and conviction to the hesitating, by systematically proclaiming the positive elements of the real faith that they have always held?

Just how should this be done? Well, let us not be dogmatic about the method. Perhaps a series of articles in our public press by eminent "heretics" on the positive element in modern religious thinking, would be a good tonic for the average man. The pulpit, too, and perhaps courses of lectures in our large cities, would be proper channels for such teachings. I can think of intellectual communities, in this country and elsewhere, that would be fine missionary fields for radicals who would be willing to stop berating conservatives, and who would like to preach a little positive religion to the indifferent,—places where ethical regeneration is as sadly needed as a religious revival; where you will not only find hostility to the confusion of prohibition with temperance, but where indifferentism has spread the teaching that a "good fellow" is perfectly justified in "celebrating" now and then; where men are not simply decrying Puritanical restraints in literature and on the stage, but where they are fiercely chafing under "artificial, conventional repression of normal, natural instincts"; where you will meet not simply the hatred of orthodox religion and morals, but a passionate or a sullen murmur against the creed that life means effort, struggle, battle—

not for ourselves, but for God and the race; where not only is orthodoxy scorned, but where "liberal" ideas both moral and religious prevail, where God himself and belief in the soul's existence have no place, and where, furthermore, the ethical significance of life has no strong foothold, where virtue and vice are—with Taine—regarded as predetermined products like sugar and vitriol, where purity is a fanatical struggle against legitimate impulses, where charity itself is useless sentimentality, life a delusion, temporary pleasure the only good, death a sad end to a meaningless existence. Or perhaps irreligion may take the "devil-may-care" form. Men of this creed are no sombre pessimists. "Life is sweet," you hear them say; "the end is certain; the hereafter is improbable; let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." If these are not literally and universally true pictures, they have at least many individual examples and are tendencies we may well fear. For release from this despondency and moral impotency or this optimistic indifference I look to but one source, and that the pure, vitalizing impulse of a real belief in Jesus Christ "as he is revealed to us in the Gospels."

As to the content of the teaching to be expected of our reformed radical, a similar reticence must be observed. All we shall venture, is to generalize a bit. In the first place, it should obviously be catholic, that is to say, just as inclusive and tolerant as one can be and avoid inconsistency, *and this means toleration for old views as well as for new ones.* Secondly, it must be outspokenly Christian. We shall not make a sharp definition of what this means, but shall venture to mention a few things it obviously does not mean. It hardly seems to be enough to be an honest seeker after truth: Nietzsche's philosophy and Zola's views on marriage are not generally thought to be Christian, though Nietzsche and Zola

may have been sincere men. Nor is mere virtue all of the Christian religion. John Stuart Mill and John Morley may be noble types of manhood, and more acceptable to God than many a "believer," but I hardly think we should dare refer their teachings to Jesus or to Paul as samples of the religion that the founders of Christianity thought the world needed. Furthermore I cannot see how any one whose belief ends with God can think that he is teaching the full spiritual content of our religion. Lastly, even Dr. Harnack maintains, if one may rely on a newspaper report, that "any judgment confusing Christ with the other masters must be rejected"; and with this backing I should like to enter a demurrer against the "Confucius-Buddha-Jesus-Goethe" brand of Christianity.

The common liberal tendency to pat the ethnic religions on the back is just a bit exaggerated. It is well for us, no doubt, that we have begun to recognize the divine hand in all religions; but it is time that some New-school theologians reached and preached definite convictions on certain points about which Christianity and other religions differ as day from night: whether, for instance, we are to believe in the vague and doubtful God of Buddha, the tyrant God of Mahomet, or the personal, loving God of Christ; whether we shall look forward to absorption into the infinite, to an eternity of lust, or to a Christian heaven. Perhaps, too, your boasted spiritual consciousness will not settle these questions. It may be better for us if we are thrown back on the derided principle of authority—not of church, nor even of book, but of the Son of God; possibly even the twentieth century is not too intellectual to learn of him. Argue as we may, there are generic differences between Christianity and most heathen religions, and if we have any beliefs at all we must have a rational basis for our choice of them. The writer of this discussion

has frankly and emphatically taken his stand for a supernatural religion that finds its center in a supernatural person and part of its evidence in supernatural events. He has done so because he can put no other interpretation on the words of those who knew what Christianity was in the beginning, if any one ever knew; because he believes such a view to be philosophically admissible; and, more than that, because he feels that this sort of religion is rationally demanded by a world like ours. But some think otherwise. They consider Christ the world's Redeemer, and its Guide in things spiritual and moral, without our belief in the so-called supernatural. Let us have no quarrel with them. Let us all only preach Christ. I cannot comprehend the logic of such people, and it must be admitted that I am hedging a little in thus compromising with them; but I am glad of their conclusions, meager though they seem to be. Far be it from me to impose my conception of Christianity upon them. All I say is: "Friends, speak out your message; preach God, life everlasting, Christ, duty, destiny, hope, to an ignorant and sinful world; but have a little toleration, too, for your brother whose old-fashioned views you may not admire, for he is a soldier in the same army with you."

Finally, there are two cogent reasons why a New-school attack would lead to victory over the irreligious forces of our day. 1. Conservative apologists are regarded with no little suspicion of bias, whether because they really are not open-minded, or because their opponents—Christian or non-Christian—have forced this reputation upon them by continuous insinuation—whether, I say, it be from one cause or the other, or from both, Old-school apologists for Christianity are not generally thought to be as free from prejudice as are the radicals; and so, persuasive and defensive statements of religion

made by the latter class would appeal with double force to the doubting. 2. A great deal of our present-day doubt is obviously emotional rather than intellectual, it is a *feeling* of hesitation rather than a *conviction* of erroneous conclusions—due, I suppose, to the absurdly extreme and even false conclusions it was fashionable not a great while ago to draw from recent discoveries in science and in criticism. Now, I say, that it would be a downright surprise to many people, if certain scholars and preachers whose negative work we have described, should consistently and enthusiastically, from now on, lay emphasis on the positive side of their belief. Quite aside from any specific arguments these men could urge—and I doubt not that their way of looking at things would persuade some never reached along older lines of thought,—their very presence among the outspoken champions of a real, virile Christianity would have against emotional doubt a counteracting influence whose power I should not care to limit.

The strategic moment to strike has come. What looked like defeat proves to be only retiring to more tenable ground. This retreat has drawn on the enemy, discouraged our soldiers, and turned neutrals against us; but it can be used as a feint; a firm stand, a defiant display of colors, and a swift return to the charge would have a tremendous moral and practical effect. A crying need has been pointed out. Does any one doubt its existence? Various remedies have been broadly outlined and the call to arms is sounding. Will the New School heed the appeal? Who will take the lead?