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Notes Editorial and Critical

From Wuchow, South China, Rev. R. A. Jaffray, a Canadian missionary, reports to "The Missionary Witness" of August 2, 1910, an extraordinary repetition of the burning of the costly books of magic in Ephesus, recorded

Acts xix. as showing that
Repeated "so mightily grew the word of God

and prevailed". The communication referred to, illustrated by a photo, duplicates, in the case of one man and that the hereditary fortune-teller of that region, the scene in the Acts in Modern China, and shows that the Gospel has the same power in Eastern Asia to-day that it had in Paul's day in Western Asia. The incident is a most significant one, as reported by Mr. Jaffray.

Mr. Cuh-Fi-Hung was a very successful fortune-teller in the streets of Wuchow. His father and grandfather before him had followed the same diabolical profession, and these

A Chinese books, of considerable value in the
Fortune-Teller profession, had been handed down

from generation to generation. Mr. Cuh heard the gospel through one of our Christians and was finally prevailed upon to come to the meetings. He was a proud man, and though he had read a good deal of the Gospel books and was favorably impressed, yet he did not yield to Christ. Finally,

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however, the Spirit conquered and he accepted the Savior.

Shortly before his baptism he came to the missionary in considerable perplexity about what he should do with the books. As we have said, they were of considerable value, but he said, "How can I sell them or even give them away, lest they might damn another's soul as they all but damned mine". I turned him to Acts xix. 18 and 19 and read, "Many also of them that had believed came, confessing and declaring their deeds. And not a few of them that practised magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all".

He at once determined that he would do the same thing on the day of his baptism. On that memorable day, therefore, a company of fellow-Christians, students and missionaries gathered in the court of our mission premises, and made a glorious bonfire around which we sang praises to the blessed name of Jesus, while Brother Cuh with his own hands burned the devilish volumes to ashes.

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We print on another page an able and admirable review of Professor Mathews' latest book, "The Gospel and the Modern Man", in which he attempts the medi-

Prof. Mathews' Latest Book ation role in commending the results of the New Criticism and the New Theology to

"The Gospel and the Modern Man :"" A Review of Prof. Mathews' Book

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The author of this book is Dean of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. He is a comparatively young man, of wonderful versatility and productiveness, with a genius for encyclopedic journalism. He has ability for original and systematizing thought; and could his manifold energies, now accomplishing many brilliant things, be concentrated upon thinking out the problems for the restatement of theology from the point of view of his school of biblical criticism, he would achieve that of which this book gives us the beginning. He is also,—and the reviewer is a pupil of his,—a man of singular simplicity and sincerity and courage, who *knows* the objective reality Christ. Here is the explanation of this book's being so intensely interesting, its being so intensely, though unconsciously, biographical. We see in it how a mind of penetration and ability, accepting the presuppositions that produce the anti-historicist criticism taught in the University of Chicago and so many other institutions, yet holds to, and is held by, the same Christ as the most devout historicists, or those who hold to the full historicity of the Bible.

If the readers of this journal wish to enlarge their sympathies, and their recogni-

tion of the brotherhood of men worthy of respect and of fraternal love, let them buy this book. It will also help them the better to see how utterly groundless is this anti-historicism, since it fails so conspicuously to justify itself in the hands of one of its ablest and most attractive advocates.

The book is in three parts:

Part I. states the problem, how to commend the gospel to the modern man. It makes the gospel of the New Testament to be Christ as deliverer from Satan, sin, and death: it defines the modern man as the man who is already controlled by those beliefs that are making the future; and then restates the gospel in terms of these beliefs. How to do this is the problem.

Part II. proceeds to show that the four chief elements of the gospel, which are the messiahship of Jesus, the fatherhood of the God who is immanent in nature, the forgiveness of sin, and deliverance from death, or deliverance from Satan, sin, and death through Jesus, the Christ, are reasonable to the modern man.

Part III. submits the gospels to the test of experiment for the individual and for society, to demonstrate its power.

The whole is done with charm, persuasiveness, and power.

I. But some Adverse Criticisms must be Presented for Consideration

"The modern man is he who is controlled by the forces making To-morrow".

These "forces" are certain characteristic beliefs, which may be briefly labelled evolution, immanence, socialism, and empiricism. Many men are controlled by these forces or beliefs who reject the gospel while many men who accept the gospel are not controlled by these beliefs. That is, *the gospel is not one of the forces making To-morrow*; not one of the "ideals" which are transforming the world which we have inherited into the newer order

which our children will inherit. It is simply amazing that such a man, himself so manifestly controlled by ideals that his "modern man" rejects, could thus assume that *the gospel is not even among the formative forces of our time*.

If we take up the *first article* in his creed of the modern man, we note that it runs thus, "The modern age is primarily scientific and controlled by the conception of process".

This is as near as Prof. Mathews comes to a strict definition of his meaning. If by this conception of process or evolution, he means what "the creative thinkers of

*"The Gospel and the Modern Man." By Shaller Mathews. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1910.

all time have held tenaciously to", "a world of purpose and order, of unity and meaning", *how can he call it characteristic of our age?* If he means something else, what definitely is that something else that is characteristic of our age? If he means that there is now a fuller and wider appreciation of process or growth or development than obtained hitherto, why does he not say so in precise terms? Or is his meaning this, that our modern men, that is, right-thinking men of our time, have such a conception of process of development as excludes the miracles of the Bible, or makes it hard to believe in them?

If this is what he means, that correct thinking finds it difficult to believe in such events as original creation, the crossing of the Red Sea, the feeding of the multitudes, the resurrection of Jesus, and his sinless consciousness, then he assumes that the anti-miraculous bias is correct, and that the strict historicity of the Scriptures must be given up. But *this is to assume the very point in dispute between the two schools of biblical criticism*, whether the Scripture records have full historicity.

The *second article* of this creed is the "conception of God as immanent in this process rather than an extra-mundane monarch".

As we have not in the Scriptures a merely extra-mundane monarch, and have never had in Christian theology any Deity that was not both immanent and transcendent, it is not easy to make out what is our author's exact meaning here. We may think to get help from this sentence of his, "The political and juristic conception of God persist in our own day, but they are no longer formative in constructive religious thinking". The trouble is that perhaps by constructive he means constructive of systems of theology that omit the political and juristic conceptions of God. But the Professor indicates that he feels the force of a tendency to deny or ignore the personality of God, a pantheistic tendency; and he rightly recognizes the impossibility of harmonizing the New Testament gospel with this tendency.

The *third article* of this creed of the modern man is "the growing sense of social solidarity".

As this grows partly out of "the un-

conscious influence of Christian idealism". that is, out of the justice and mercy that the Prophets taught so earnestly, it is a little difficult to see here just what is characteristic of our age, unless he means that *disposition to deny all connection between human rights and divine appointments*. There is a pantheistic tendency that stops short of denying all rights and obligations binding men together in a social constitution, which would be logical; but that goes so far as to deny to God any authoritative lordship over this constitution, or even any place in it *unless as an equal*.

The *fourth article* in the creed of our modern world is "its refusal to accept as the basis of truth authority or metaphysical speculation."

Here again we are at a loss to understand exactly what is characteristic of our age. He says, "The time has passed when any majority can command universal obedience by saying, 'It seems good to us and the Holy Ghost'". As there never was such a time, this rhetorical sentence does not clear away the obscurity. Elsewhere he says, "Jesus does not need any vote of ecclesiastical majorities to establish his truthfulness". As nobody has ever thought that he did, this pointed thrust does not illuminate.

We do get some help from this sentence, "The modern man yields only to that he finds to be real". Why so clear a writer did not here write, "believes only what he verifies in his own experience", is to be explained by the supposition that he is so far controlled by the tendency to such a position as to come close to it, but so far controlled by "intuitions" as not to go all the way. For to accept that principle will at least postpone our belief in the truthfulness of Jesus' teachings until we have verified them in eternity.

So when he wrote, "Metaphysics, like ecclesiastical authority, has been supplemented, if not replaced, by that type of philosophy which finds its ultimates in values rather than in alleged axioms or intuitions"; if he had omitted the words "supplemented if not", he would not have made this sentence a retraction of approval of the modern world's refusal to accept as the basis of truth authority or metaphysical deduction". For if something is

when supplemented the basis, it is *the basis*.

But here is *the assumption underlying this book*, the denial of all authority external to the mind, and of all metaphysical intuition in the mind. Not that he goes the whole length of this assumption; but he does give to this assumption entertain-

ment in the sanctum of his thinking. If it controlled him, it would destroy his faith in Christ; but it can not control him. But other men who are not held by Christ will laugh at the incompleteness of the Professor's thinking, and go the whole length of this presupposition, at least as against the gospel.

II. Statement of the Principles that Annihilate the Anti-Historicist Criticism

Against this incomplete and vacillating philosophy, these half-true and half-false presuppositions, giving source and basis to the whole anti-historicist criticism, the criticism which denies the thorough historicity of the Scriptures, it is necessary to maintain a few simple principles.

One of these principles is *the validity of metaphysical intuition*, or that the human mind is so constituted that it rightly believes certain propositions without verification, such beliefs being the necessary condition of making experimental verification. If any one denies this, we can only have patience till the passing phase of intellectual adolescence is outgrown.

Side by side with this principle lies another, that *we rightly believe, upon the authority of others, some facts which are not at the time capable of verification by us*.

Otherwise all science would be impossible, and especially the science which conditions all other sciences, the science of history. But if the competent observer is rightly to me an authority to tell me how earthworms behave in certain conditions, it is not an irrational question whether Jesus Christ is not a competent authority to tell me invisible and future realities at present beyond my experience. If Darwin and Kelvin are authorities in science, Jesus and Paul may be authorities in religion.

There is *a fundamental principle in ethics*, whatever may or may not be the political or social condition and constitution at the time: that persons ought to render to one another such respect as is due by reason of their respective natures and relations.

If there is a Creator and Lord of processes, his creatures ought to respect him as such; and if he is infinitely perfect ethically, they ought to revere him and love him accordingly, whether they endeavor to construe him to themselves in terms politi-

cal or juristic or social. And this God has the right to make men and women and children, and to assign to them their respective functions and relations. There is such a God; and his creation is an ethical universe. He has authority; we OUGHT. On this ultimate is grounded both individual and social obligations and rights.

While holding firmly and equally to both the immanence and the transcendence of God, we must also most tenaciously and definitely hold to his *personality*.

And we must maintain constantly, whatever theory of evolution may be in vogue at the time, that there is *no inconsistency between such process or processes as go on and such events as the Bible records and as are commonly called miracles*. Any conception or theory that predisposes the mind to reject the evidence for such events as do occur is somehow erroneous; and therefore, if these miracles really did occur, any conception or theory that predisposes the mind to reject the evidence for them is erroneous.

Or, in short, currently accepted views in philosophy, whether those who hold them label them scientific or metaphysical, are not to be set up as tests of the gospel. *The gospel, so far as it records facts, must be tested by the evidence of testimony*. Whether, for instance, Jesus rose from the dead, is a question of historical fact. The gospel so far as it predicts what will take place upon certain conditions must be tested by experiment so far as we can provide the conditions. The gospel, so far as it asserts or predicts what lies beyond the reach of other available testimony or verification, must be accepted or rejected according to the authority of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures.

Doubtless Professor Mathews himself would largely if not wholly accept these principles; but practically he seems to this

reviewer to be swayed in part by that false philosophy which gives an undue emphasis to process, to immanence, to environment, and to freedom, and too little to the complementary truths of personal initiative, of transcendence, of individual responsibility, and of authority. He goes to one extreme in his protest against another extreme. The true philosophy identifies the God of the original creation and the God of the continuous processes through the revela-

tions made in miracles. The true philosophy unites immanence and transcendence in this infinite Person. The true philosophy appreciates both environment and individual responsibility by asserting ethical obligation binding men in an organic community according to divine appointment. The true philosophy reconciles personal freedom and respect for authority by affirming man's capacity to receive even a revelation from God.

III. But we may well let this Book Remind us of some Timely Truths

There is *progress in the apprehension and the statement of truth*. If there was any gain in formulating the teachings of Scripture into such creeds as the great Nicene statement, we must not suppose that there is nothing yet left for progress in apprehension and restatement. And just as the shifting currents of thought in the intellectual world have in the ages past required the Church to investigate and to reinvestigate, and thus have been the occasion of deeper understanding and clearer expression, so it is now, and so it will be. We have no occasion for being uneasy, and no excuse for fearing the fierce debate and declining the joyous wrestling with one another as thinkers. Just as the individual should grow in his knowledge of the truth, so the Church as a whole should grow; and this growth is impossible without inquiry. Let the inquiry be reverent, and let it be in a controlling passion to unlearn error and to learn truth.

But in doing this *we need not make the mistake of tearing down all that has already been built of the temple of Christian truth*, as Prof. Mathews seems to do before himself rebuilding it very much as it was. We may and should test what has been built, even from the foundation up, and take out a faulty stone here and there, it may be; but our main work should be to go on with the work of the Christian centuries from where we find it. Better to stand on the shoulders of the believers of the ages than on the shoulders of "modern" disbelievers.

We may well let this book impress upon us that *true principle of interpretation*, that the permanent meaning is to be sought through the temporary form, the essential truth of Scripture through the accidental

concepts of the age of its origin. If, for instance, we can see from the dress in which an inspired prophet clothes his message that he conceived the earth as flat, we must inquire whether the flatness of the earth is a part of his message. What God means to tell us is infallible truth, but we must not hold him responsible for what he never meant to assert.

But in doing this we must *avoid the extreme* to which our author seems to go. *We must not make views unknown to the sacred writer, views that we may somehow think are to control the future, stand out as tests*, and then endeavor to equate with some error taught in the Scripture,—labelled by us an error according to the creed of our modern man,—some truth of the modern man's philosophy. Such a process is not interpretation; it is correction. If, for instance, Satan is *physical necessity*, we must not let this modernism correct the promise of deliverance from Satan which we find in the gospel of the New Testament into a promise of deliverance from physical necessity.

The gospel comes to us with an *ascertainable content*, a message from God for which he is responsible; this message it speaks with final authority; and our business is by docile and fearless interpretation to determine what is the message and what is the accent or brogue of the messenger; but that is to be determined from within the gospel and not from without.

We may well receive from this book its best contribution, and a noble contribution it is: that *the gospel is capable of experimental test*; that in all the centuries and now such experimentation demonstrates its truthfulness; and that men must accept this strictly scientific verification of the gospel,

whatever views in philosophy or criticism may seem to them acceptable. We may believe that logically plenary inspiration and the gospel stand or fall together; others may believe that the historicity of the Old Testament and even of the New has been overthrown by historical and critical investigation; but we must both accept the gospel as certified to us by this experimental verification, whatever views in inspiration and criticism may be correct.

And we may well rejoice to see how *such experimental verification confirms the correctness of the Scriptures*. Nearly all the distinctive beliefs of traditional orthodoxy find acceptance and expression with our author. Baffled to explain the atonement, he yet reports from the laboratory of Christendom's experience and his own that it is something more than mere moral influence, and finds by it the forgiveness of sins. He finds that Christ who now be-

comes the object of faith, and of that experimental knowledge to which He challenges the human soul, to be the man of the sinless consciousness and of the resurrection immortality, and also is led to worship him as "God of very God".

If all those who speak to the public as representatives of what is so commonly called *the Higher Criticism*, but what might more accurately be called *anti-historicism in biblical criticism*, had the spirit and moderation and spiritual insight of this writer, instead of that extravagance which were to be rather expected in boys who have broken away from the home theology than in men who know Christ and mean to expound him, there would be less excuse for alarm, less ground for serious concern, and more possibility that all Christendom might share in the real contributions this school is making to the understanding of the Bible.

Requisites for Success in World Evangelization

If the work of World Evangelism, to which the Churches are being roused, is to be accomplished in obedience to Christ's command, there are manifestly certain requisites that must be complied with:

1. The first and fundamental requisite to the full enforcement of the Divine claim is *a more complete, general, constant, and forcible exhibition of the scriptural doctrine of the stewardship of the Church under Christ, the absolute owner of all things*. See June number, p. 431, article, "A Forty-Years-Old Program for the Evangelization of the World".

In the full and correct conception and reception of this truth is laid that solid foundation of principle in its application to the use of property, without which there may indeed be impulsive, spasmodic distribution, but never the intelligent, systematic, liberal, dutiful *Christian giving* which the word of God evidently contemplates, and without which the world will never be evangelized. The obligation to respond in full to every call of the Head of the Church must somehow be made plain beyond possible misunderstanding, and that speedily.

2. The second requisite to full enforcement of God's claim, is *that the Church be aroused to an adequate sense of her Responsibility for Giving the Gospel to the World*.

After the inward principle of beneficence must come the outward call for its exercise in deeds of practical Christian giving. The divine agency for such awakening of the people of God is to be found in those to whom the Great Commission was addressed, embracing not the ministry but the entire membership.

3. A third requisite to the enforcement of the full Divine claim, and the last we mention, is *that appropriate channels be furnished for regular and frequent Response to the Call of God's Word and Providence*.

The order is, first the principle fixed in the heart, next the call for its exercise made imperative, and then the opportunity furnished at the right moment and in the right way for its proper exercise. Here is found the place for all the machinery of systematic Christian giving.