

**SOME MODERN
DIFFICULTIES:
NINE LECTURES**

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Some modern difficulties: nine lectures by S. Baring-Gould

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S. BARING-GOULD

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BY THE REV.

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'LIVES OF THE SAINTS,' ETC.

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P R E F A C E.

SIX of the following lectures were delivered "ad Clerum" in the Trophy Room of S. Paul's Cathedral, by kind permission of the Dean and Canons, in the week before Advent, 1874.

They were listened to with attention and interest, and I was requested to publish them.

Their object is to draw the attention of the Clergy to some of the difficulties which beset minds at the present day in the matter of Christian belief; and to show that, granting nearly everything established by natural science and Biblical criticism, our Faith in God the Creator, and in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, need not be shaken.

I desire also to protest with all my heart against the attitude assumed by so many of the Clergy towards science and Biblical criticism. It seems amazing that it should be necessary for one to utter a word of warning on such a subject, but the following extract from the 'Times' of December 1st, 1874,

which came into my hands whilst these pages were passing through the press, proves that such a protest is not uncalled for.

“The Bishop of —¹ preached on Sunday evening at the first of a series of special Advent services, held in the nave of — Cathedral. The Bishop took his text from the 11th verse of the 18th chapter of S. Matthew—‘For the Son of man has come to save that which was lost.’ His Lordship compared the history of the four Gospels with the ‘Gospel of Science,’ which had now so many prophets and apostles, and asked what the latter Gospel was. Was it even good news for man? In it there was no eternity or hereafter; no Divine life, and, properly speaking, no humanity; that all that was within us was bestial, and we shared it with the brutes—no virtue, no vice, good nor evil. It made us mere automaton, mechanically moved according to our molecular structure—moved by atoms coming none knew whence and going none knew where. He should not stop to ask whether it were a true or false Gospel or true or false news. He would only ask if it were good news? That Gospel of Science, if a Gospel at all, was a Gospel for the strong and the clever, but not for the poor, the weak, the sick, or the suffering. It was a Gospel which taught mankind to live as the brutes, in which the strong trampled down the weak and the poor; it was a Gospel according to which the institutions and hospitals for the sick and the incurable were a scientific mistake. It taught us to fight, to trample, and push our way in the world, no matter what we fought with or what we trampled down, and if we succeeded we could eat, drink, and be merry, for nothing was to come hereafter; and if we did not succeed, why should we lead a useless life? for we should be no longer in the fore-front of humanity. Society had no need of us, and we could take ourselves out of the way—crawl into a hidden place as a sick or wounded animal did into some deep thicket to die away from its fellows. That was the Gospel that in this our day was set up against the grand old story—‘The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’ The Gospel for the lost was what humanity needed, not the Gospel for the strong—the Gospel for the weak, for the poor, for the dying, for the outcast, for the suffering. That was a Gospel that no

¹ I omit the designation purposely.

human philosopher had ever discovered, and that no natural science could ever reveal to mankind. Thank God for the old story in our Bible Gospels—that which philosophers had not yet robbed us of. As we stood by the sick beds and looked at the dying, as we ministered to the sick and the suffering, we thanked God we had the old story still to prove that the Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost. That was the only safe foundation on which human society could securely rest."

Is it not piteous to see science thus misrepresented, science which labours night and day to alleviate the maladies of human nature! It is necessary for the Bishops, as well as our inferior Clergy, to learn that the Gospel of Science is as Divine as any historical Gospels of Christ; that one is as much a revelation as are the others, that rightly understood there can be no antagonism between them. To pit the canonical Four against the Gospel of Science is like the work of those critics who pit S. John against the Synoptics.

Such a passage as that quoted reads like an extract from the '*Osservatore Romano*' on Protestant civilization. The same ultramontane virulence, misrepresentation, injustice. If to the Ultramontane we say, "Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's," we may say to our divines, "Render also to God the things that are God's;" for the truths disclosed to science are as certainly Divine as are the truths revealed to Apostles and Prophets, only, the truths belong to a different order.

The Gospel of Science without Christianity is

false because one-sided. And Christianity without science is also imperfect. God has many aspects ; the Church reveals one, science reveals another.

For myself, I can truly say that with every fibre of my soul I cleave to the Catholic faith, and to the Gospel of Science ; that with quiet composure I can hold simultaneously the truths revealed to the Church and revealed to science, and patiently wait till apparent contradictions shall be solved by the outpouring of more abundant light.

Philo says that the Word, which is the manna feeding the soul of man, is made into two cakes, tasting of honey and of oil, and that the one is the Word revealed through science, and the other is the Word in religion.

CONTENTS.



	PAGE
LECTURE I.	
<i>THE ASPECT OF MODERN THOUGHT</i>	1
LECTURE II.	
<i>ON MYSTERIES</i>	22
LECTURE III.	
<i>THE MYSTERY OF CREATION</i>	38
LECTURE IV.	
<i>THE MYSTERY OF MAN</i>	56
LECTURE V.	
<i>PRIMEVAL MAN</i>	71
LECTURE VI.	
<i>BIBLICAL INSPIRATION. I. THE OLD TESTA- MENT</i>	93

	PAGE
LECTURE VII.	
<i>BIBLICAL INSPIRATION. 2. THE NEW TESTA-</i>	
<i>MENT</i>	116
LECTURE VIII.	
<i>THE MYSTERY OF EVIL</i>	145
LECTURE IX.	
<i>THE INCARNATION</i>	161