

**THE RIDDLE OF EXISTENCE SOLVED:
OR, AN ANTIDOTE TO INFIDELITY,
BEING AN ANSWER TO PROFESSOR
GOLDWIN SMITH'S "GUESSES AT
THE RIDDLE OF EXISTENCE"**

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The riddle of existence solved: or, An antidote to infidelity, being an answer to Professor Goldwin Smith's "Guesses at the Riddle of Existence" by W. J. Fenton

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W. J. FENTON

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OR

AN ANTIDOTE TO INFIDELITY

Being an Answer to Professor Goldwin Smith's
"Guesses at the Riddle of Existence."

By W. J. FENTON.

AUTHOR OF

"The Unity of the Spirit"; or, "Failure of Brethrenism as a
United Testimony."

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.—HEB. 1 : 1, 2.

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PREFACE.

THE apparent confidence with which Professor Goldwin Smith, in his Preface to "Guesses at the Riddle of Existence," takes it for granted that "liberal theologians have at least half resigned the belief in miracles" and "given up the authenticity and authority of Genesis," and that "with these they must apparently give up the Fall, the Redemption and the Incarnation," are well adapted to shake the nerves of any unsophisticated enquirer after truth. But when such an enquirer sits down to read the book itself without a dictionary by his side, and comes across such words and expressions as these: "Anti-Malthusian," "Strangely anthropomorphic," the "Mosaic Cosmogony," "Vitality of protoplasm," the "Cosmogonical and historical foundations of traditional belief have been sapped by science and criticism," "The hypostatic union of the Pope and the Holy Ghost," "Dogmatic religion is geocentric," "Such a cataclysm," "This altruism," "Transcendental solipsism," "Physic thaumaturgy," etc., with frequent references to the great discoveries of science, it is little wonder if he begins to fancy that the very foundations of faith are giving way, and to feel as if nothing is before him in the future but a great blank void, into which a host of learned professors, scientists and "liberal theologians" are peering with troubled faces, guessing at what they had been evolved from; and wondering whither they are going after this brief span of existence is over.

In the oldest book of the Bible we find Elisha saying as he speaks on behalf of God, "But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise; neither do the aged understand judgment" (Job 32 : 8, 9). And in the New Testament we read, "But God hath chosen

the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor. 1 : 27-29). And again we read, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2 : 14).

The book which Professor Goldwin Smith has published under the general title of "Guesses at the Riddle of Existence" is really a collection of five essays, not connected with each other in any other sense than that they are all infidel writings. The separate titles given to them are : (1) Guesses at the Riddle of Existence, (2) The Church and the Old Testament, (3) Is there Another Life? (4) The Miraculous Element in Christianity, (5) Morality and Theism. The first, third and fifth of these are mainly composed of abstract speculations and metaphysical reasonings, not likely to do much harm, and certainly no good, of themselves to any intelligent reader. It would, therefore, be a waste of time to reply to them separately. But the real venom of the book is contained in the second and fourth essays, which are sandwiched in between the other three, apparently to make them more palatable to the tastes of readers who may not think there is anything very dangerous in his other productions.

The first of these essays, which gives the title to the book, comprises only about forty-five pages, and, instead of being his own guesses, it is almost exclusively devoted to his remarks upon the guesses of other people, including Professor Drummond and Messrs. Kidd and Balfour, all of which guesses, together with his remarks upon them, really amount to nothing worthy of serious notice. The writing of this comparatively harmless essay, seems to have been simply taken advantage of by the learned professor for the purpose of putting all his

infidel writings before the public, in one volume, under a new title.

In his second and fourth essays his chief aim has been to disprove, if possible, the inspiration and authenticity of the Old Testament Scriptures, and especially of the Book of Genesis, against which he seems to have a special antipathy; and to deny the truth of miracles recorded in both Old and New Testament Scriptures, with the expectation, doubtless, that if he succeeds in these objects there will be nothing left in support of Christianity as a supernatural religion, whose faith, as he admits, is still that of those who are the "salt of the earth."

The writer's main object in the following pages is to show, chiefly from the Word of God itself, how frivolous are the arguments used by infidel writers against the inspiration and authenticity of the Scriptures as compared with the overwhelming weight of evidence of the most positive kind, by which they are proved to be a Divine revelation from God to man. Instead of replying, therefore, to the separate essays as such, he decided to treat them as a whole, and reply to the arguments and assertions contained in them in the way that seems to him best suited to bring the general subject of infidelity, with its pretensions and fallacies most clearly before the minds of those who might possibly be led astray by the plausible theories of modern skepticism.

It is quite possible that he has, without knowing it, advanced arguments that have been already used by other and abler writers, and that he has also, through ignorance of their writings, omitted many weightier arguments which they have used. However this may be, it is hoped that some things written herein, if not quite new to persons exercised on the subject, may at least be so arranged as to prove helpful to those, and especially to young people, who are in danger of being misled by the confident assertions, vague generalities and plausible sophistries so insiduously presented by Professor Goldwin Smith, who is all the more dangerous because of the refinement of his style, and his apparent candour in some

respects, which prevent him from indulging in vulgar blasphemies in the same manner as Voltaire, Paine and Ingersoll, whose very coarseness has often doubtless proved an antidote to the poison they tried to instil into the minds of others.

It is really sad to see this learned and eminent professor, in company with his friends, the "liberal theologians," floundering about in nature's darkness, like the ancient philosophers whom they quote so frequently; and trying to weave out of their own fertile brains some philosophical theories to take the place of that Divine Revelation of Himself and His purposes which God has given, and the faith in which they are taking so much pains, if possible, to destroy.

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