

Is Christianity True?

A Debate Between

T. H. Scambler

Minister of the Glenferrie Church of Christ

And

J. S. Langley

Secretary of the Rationalist Association of Australia Limited



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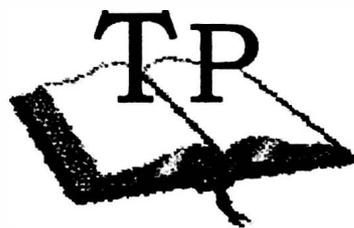
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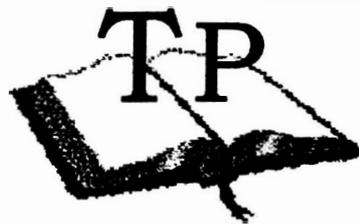
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Introduction

Nearly twenty centuries ago, Pontius Pilate expressed skepticism when he asked Jesus Christ, "What is truth?" Since that time, many others have demonstrated a similar attitude. However, a great number of conscientious and persistent souls continue the search for truth in our day.

On December 7, 1927, Mr. T. H. Scambler, minister of the Glenferrie Church of Christ, Glenferrie, Victoria, Australia, and Mr. J. S. Langley, Secretary of the Rationalist Association of Australia Ltd., met to debate the subject "Is Christianity True?" Mr. A. R. Main, Principal of the College of the Bible, presided. The debate took place in the Temperance Hall, Melbourne.

No verbatim report of the oral debate was taken. Consequently, the debaters agreed to repeat their discussion through the columns of "The Rationalist," from which paper the following debate is taken. The course of the original debate has been followed as far as possible, but it will be understood that the following pages are not a record of the actual words spoken on December 7th.

The question—"Is Christianity True?"—is just as relevant today as it was nearly three-quarters of a century ago. The publisher urges the readers of this debate to read carefully, consider the arguments thoughtfully, and answer the question in view of our eternal destiny.

—Thomas N. Thrasher

Mr. Scambler's Opening Speech

In affirming that Christianity is true, I wish, to make clear in the first place what I mean by Christianity. In common speech it is a somewhat vague term. Lessing, the German Deist of the 18th century, said: "Christianity has been tried for nearly 2,000 years; it is now time to try the religion of Christ." If that distinction were made I would defend the religion of Christ as against "Christianity." We must not confound Christianity with Christian nations, so-called. There are no Christian nations in the complete sense of the word, and I would not for a moment defend many things that are done in countries where Christianity predominates. Nor am I willing to defend the organized churches as equivalent to Christianity. Many things have been done in organized churches which Mr. Langley rightly condemns. I would join with him in the condemnation. I am not tonight defending Judaism, as set out in the Old Testament, nor will the limits of the debate allow a discussion of the inspiration of the Old Testament.

By Christianity I mean specifically the system of religious faith and morals to be derived from the teachings, character and work of Christ, as conveyed to us in the New Testament. From the standpoint of conduct, Christianity is the practice of the mind of Christ.

In this discussion two positions will be set before you—the faith of a Christian and the faith of a Rationalist. My acceptance of Jesus Christ as my Saviour is a matter of faith. The position of a Rationalist with regard to the world of reality is also a matter of faith. In neither case can the argument be demonstrative. Of course, as W. B. Selbie says, in "The Psychology of Religion," our beliefs must be brought to the bar of logical determination. The distinction between belief and credulity must be maintained.

My object, then, is to show that of the two positions. Christianity is the more reasonable.

I wish briefly to advance four arguments in support of my affirmation that Christianity is true.

The Wondrous Life

My first argument is based on the wondrous life of Jesus Christ. He is "beyond all reasonable question, the greatest man who ever lived." In the realm of moral character, he is supreme among men. "Through all the aeons . . . among all the best, is not to be found one to compare with him."

He made the remarkable claim of sinlessness. I need not stay to demonstrate that. His friends affirmed it. Though they were Jews fully believing their Scriptures which said, "There is none righteous, no, not one," they made one exception--"He did no sin." His enemies were witnesses to it. With all their malice, they dared not prefer against him any moral charge, and their insinuations, such as "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them," fell harmless upon him.

The gospel writers do not merely affirm his stainlessness. As P. Carnegie Simpson said, "that were easy. They exhibit it, which it were simply impossible to do except from the life. We have there what Jesus said and did in all kinds of circumstances and on all manner of occasions—in public and private, in the sunshine of success and in the gloom of failure, in the house of his friends and in the face of his foes, in life and in the last great trial of death. It is the detailed picture of a man who never made a false step, never said a word that ought not to have been said; never, in short, fell below perfection."

This idea of Christ's character has impressed itself on the world in a remarkable way. I cannot do better in support of this assertion than to quote the statements of leading Rationalists. W. R. Cassels, in "Supernatural Religion," said: "He presented the rare spectacle of a life, so far as we can estimate it, uniformly noble and consistent with his own lofty principles, so that 'the imitation of Christ' has become almost the final word in the preaching of his religion, and must continue to be one of the most powerful elements of its permanence."

John Stuart Mill: "Whatever else may be taken away by rational criticism, Christ is still left—a unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers, even those who had the direct benefit of his teaching."

Quoting again from the sane and acute J. S. Mill: "It is no use to say that Christ as exhibited in the Gospels is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by his followers." For as Mill goes on to ask: "Who among his disciples was capable of . . . imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels?"

Only one thing accounts for it: they had a model and copied it faithfully. The perfect life was lived before their eyes, and the wondrous picture is due to the fact that in simple veracity they told the story of his life.

Jesus claimed to be divine. If he spoke the truth, he was divine. If he did not speak the truth, he was not good.

Here, then, is the dilemma: Either he was divine or he was not good; either he was divine, or that picture of a perfect character in the Gospels has no reality behind it; either he was divine, or the wonderful impression made by his character on the world of men, including leading Rationalists (for in addition to those I have quoted, I could give you equally striking testimonies from other Rationalists—Renan, Strauss, Matthew Arnold, Lecky) was made by the greatest deceiver in history.

Jesus Christ is divine; Christianity is true.

The Matchless Teaching

My second argument is based on the matchless teaching of Jesus Christ. Time will permit but a brief emphasis upon the leading features of the teaching of Christ. In the first place, it is characterized by a passion for righteousness. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

In the, second place, I ask you to notice the radical nature of Christ's teaching on righteousness. He traced character back to the inner motive and thought, so that not only the acts but the thoughts of the heart may be murder or adultery.

In the third place, note that in Jesus' teaching love and service to others at personal cost is strongly emphasized. "I am amongst you as one that serveth." He urged upon them the ideal of ministering to others instead of being ministered to. It is interesting to note how his great decisions upon important questions hinged upon the idea of service to others. Thus the last great judgment is to be determined by the—way that men care for or neglect their brethren in need—the hungry, the

thirsty, the sick, the imprisoned. He expounds the law of the sabbath with reference to human needs. The great commandments of the law include, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

In the fourth place, his teaching has permanent validity. Dr. G. J. Romanes, once an atheist, but who before his death became a believer, said: "One of the strongest pieces of objective evidence in favour of Christianity is not sufficiently enforced by apologists. Indeed, I am not aware that I have ever seen it mentioned. It is the absence from the biography of Christ of any doctrines which the subsequent growth of human knowledge—whether in natural science, ethics, political economy, or elsewhere—has had to discount. This negative argument is really almost as strong as the positive one from what Christ did teach. For when we consider what a large number of sayings are recorded of—or at least attributed to—him, it becomes most remarkable that in literal truth there is no reason why any of his words should ever pass away in the sense of becoming obsolete." It certainly is remarkable that there is nothing in the teachings of Jesus that implicated it with the temporary notions of his own day or—which is still more remarkable—has brought it into collision with the later discoveries of science or criticism.

A fifth point I would emphasize is the superior character of the teachings of Christ in comparison with that of other teachers. Quoting further from Romanes: "Contrast Jesus in this respect with other teachers of like antiquity. Even Plato, who, though some four hundred years before Christ in point of time, was greatly in advance of him in respect of philosophic thought, is nowhere in this respect (he is speaking of spiritual and moral matters) as compared with Christ. Read the Dialogues, and see how enormous is the contrast with the Gospels in respect of errors of all kinds, reaching even to absurdity in respect of reason, and to sayings shocking to the moral sense. Yet this is confessedly the highest level of human reason on the lines of spirituality, when unaided by alleged revelation."

There is but one way of accounting for the matchless teaching of Jesus Christ. He was divine, and Christianity is true.

The Ethical Programme of Christ

My third argument is based on the ethical programme of Jesus Christ. Henry Drummond said: "What Christ came here for was to make a better world. The world in which we live is an unfinished world. It is not wise, it is not happy, it is not pure, it is not good—it is not even sanitary . . . This teeming universe of men in which we live has almost all of its finer colour and beauty yet to take. Christ came to complete it."

You remember that Christ came one day to Nazareth, his own city, and entered the synagogue. He read from the prophecy of Isaiah the part now numbered chapter 61, verses 1-3, which begins: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath appointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted." Drummond called this The Programme of Christianity. "Remember as you read the words," he said, "to what grim reality they refer. Recall what Christ's programme really was, what his society was founded for. This programme deals with a real world. Think of it as you read—not of the surface world, but of the world as it is, as it sins and weeps, and curses and suffers and sends up its long cry to God. Limit it if you like to the world around your door, but think of it—of the city and the hospital and the dungeon and the graveyard, of the sweating shop and the pawn shop and the drink shop; think of the cold, the cruelty, the fever, the famine, the ugliness, the loneliness, the pain. And then try to keep

down the lump in your throat as you take up his programme and read: To bind up the brokenhearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives; to comfort all that mourn, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness . . . There is not one burning interest of the human heart that is not represented there.

What are the great words of Christianity according to this programme? Take as specimens these: Liberty, Comfort, Beauty, Joy. These are among the greatest words of life. Give, them their due extension, and the significance which Christ undoubtedly saw in them, and which Christianity undoubtedly yields, and there is almost no great want or interest of mankind which they do not cover."

Sometimes the complaint is made by those who do not understand Christianity that it has to do only with another world. Certainly the gospel does hold out hope for the world to come, but it is wrong to say it is not concerned in this present world.

I can speak of one only of these great human needs with which the gospel undertakes to deal.

Since I accepted the challenge to debate this question I have had occasion to be much in the houses where sickness and death had come. I have stood with children by the bedside of their dying father. I have stood with a grief-stricken mother by the casket in which lay her babe. I was glad in those moments that I was not a Rationalist, that I had the word of comfort to speak to those who mourned—the word of him who came to comfort those who mourn.

Because of this divine programme, which proves itself in experience, and shows Christ to be the total answer to the world's need, I say Christianity is true.

The Regenerating Power of Christ

My fourth argument is based on the regenerating power of Jesus Christ. First in this connection let me speak of the regeneration of the life and soul of the individual. The fact of conversion is one of the most outstanding characteristics of Christianity as I understand it. Sinful men and women become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Drunkards become sober, the impure become chaste, thieves become honest. This is a phenomenon that goes on today, before our eyes. There is no other force in the world to do it, or attempt it. What is a Rationalist going to do with a man who is hopelessly in the grip of some vice? But Christianity is able to do it. Jesus is mighty to save.

Sir J. H. Seeley, in "Ecce Homo," said: "Compare the ancient with the modern world. One broad distinction in the characters of men forces itself into prominence. Among all the men of the ancient heathen world there were scarcely one or two to whom we might venture to, apply the epithet 'holy.' In other words, there were not more than one or two, if any, who besides being virtuous in their actions, were possessed with an 'unaffected enthusiasm of goodness, and besides abstaining from vice, regarded even a vicious thought with horror. Probably no one will deny that in Christian countries this higher toned goodness, which we call holiness, has existed. Few will maintain that it has been exceedingly rare. Perhaps the truth is that there has scarcely been a town in any Christian country since the time of Christ where a century has passed without exhibiting a character of such elevation that his mere presence has shamed the bad and made the good better, and has been felt at times like the presence of God himself."

Let me now speak of the regenerating power of Christ in society. I can touch only a few of the

important things. You, know something of the Roman amphitheatre, and the horrors connected therewith, where for the amusement of the populace men were set to fight with men or with wild beasts. Do you know the influence that destroyed that evil? Lecky, the Rationalist historian, in "The History of European Morals," said: "It is well for us to look steadily on such facts as these . . . They enable us in some degree to estimate the regenerating influence that Christianity has exercised in the world. For the destruction of the gladiatorial games, is all its work."

We are all more or less familiar, too, with the evils of Roman slavery. The more recent system of slavery in America, and in England, terrible enough indeed, were but as a drop in a bucket compared with the slavery of Roman days. Quoting again from Lecky, in "The History of Rationalism": "It will remain an undoubted fact that the reconstruction of society was mainly the work of Christianity. Other influences could produce the manumission of many slaves, but Christianity alone could produce the profound change of character that rendered possible the abolition of slavery. There are few subjects more striking, and at the same time more instructive than the history of that great transition. The Christians did not preach a revolutionary doctrine. They did not proclaim slavery altogether unlawful; at least not until the bull of Alexander III. in the 12th century, but they steadily sapped it at its basis by opposing to it the doctrine of universal brotherhood, and infusing a spirit of humanity into all the relations of society."

In connection with the regeneration of society, I ought to speak of the subject of chastity. Recall the state of the world in Christ's day. We cannot in plain terms describe the nature and extent of the evils of that day. The great dramatists of that day, and other writers allude casually and without shame to excesses and habitual vices, whose very name is lost to modern ears.

Seneca said: "So public has iniquity become, so mightily does it flame up in all hearts, that innocence is no longer rare: it has ceased to exist." Christ demanded the utmost purity, in thought and deed, in man as well as in woman.

C. Loring Brace, in his monumental work "Gesta Christi" shows how the early church set itself like a wall against the tide of impurity; how the ideals of purity developed, and how legislation in the Roman Empire was affected by the influence of Christianity.

Many illustrations could be given of the way the power of Jesus made for purity in social life. T. H. Green, in his "Short History of the English People," tells of the moral and religious condition of England in the 18th century.

"There was a revolt against religion and against churches in both the extremes of English society." In the higher circles everyone laughed if one talked of religion.

"Of the prominent statesmen of the time the greater part were unbelievers in any form of Christianity, and distinguished for the grossness and immorality of their lives. Drunkenness and foul talk were thought no discredit to Walpole. Purity and fidelity to the marriage vow were sneered out of fashion; and Lord Chesterfield, in his letters to his son, instructs him in the art of seduction as part of a polite education."

Note Green's connection between rejection of Christianity and the looseness of the lives of the period.

But a better England came to, be in a little while. How? Through the work of John Wesley, Charles Wesley, George Whitefield at Oxford and throughout the land, what is known as the

Evangelical Revival was born, and the regenerating power of Jesus Christ swept the land, and created a new England.

The Christian missionary enterprise deserves to be included in any description of the socially regenerating power of Jesus Christ. The missionary himself is a splendid evidence for the truth of Christianity. The pure spirit of altruism that moves young men and women to sacrifice their lives to a great ideal is one of the most beautiful things of life. I know—I am a teacher of young men and women who are devoting their lives to this purpose, and I know the spirit of self-sacrifice that actuates them. This spirit needs explanation. "The Christian missionary is a phenomenon without parallel in history."

But it is more especially of the achievements of the missionary I wish to speak. Darwin, in his "Journal of a Voyage Round the World," in commenting on the effect of the work of missionaries on the Tahitians, said: "Human sacrifices . . . a system of profligacy unparalleled in other parts of the world, infanticide . . . bloody wars, where the conquerors spared neither women nor children—all these have been abolished, and dishonesty, intemperance and licentiousness have been greatly reduced by the introduction of Christianity. In a voyager to forget these things is base ingratitude; for should he chance to be at the point of shipwreck on some unknown coast, he will most devoutly pray that the lesson of the missionary may have extended thus far."

A few years ago the "John Murray," a ship belonging to the Commonwealth Government, was wrecked on a voyage from San Francisco. The wreck took place at Maiden Is., in the Pacific Ocean. The Melbourne "Argus," in reporting the occurrence, made this significant statement: "As the group, which includes Maiden Is., is inhabited by Christian natives, there need be no fear for the safety of the crew." Now this is entirely a Christian influence. "Only Christianity creates the missionary. It evolves him; gives him a message; inspires him with adequate motives; clothes him with strange forces. And so it visibly works that greatest of social miracles—the transformation of whole communities." So says Dr. Fitchett, of our own city. Could you imagine a group of Rationalists going to a savage island, "and undertaking to change cruelty into love, lust into purity, and naked savagery into civilized order?"

How account for these things? Is there a lie at the root of this miracle of regeneration in so many centres of the earth? On these four arguments, then, I base my affirmation tonight. Hear them again, and keep them clearly in mind: The wondrous life of Jesus Christ, the matchless teaching of Jesus Christ, the ethical programme of Jesus Christ, and the regenerating power of Jesus Christ.



Mr. Langley's First Speech

What is the main argument advanced for Christianity? If I understand it aright, it is this—there is but one way of accounting for the character of Jesus Christ. He was divine, and therefore Christianity is true. But do you not detect the fallacy of this argument?

Let us assume that it is proved that Jesus lived, and that he was the most wonderful character

and most perfect teacher the world has known. This would only prove his pre-eminence, not his divinity. Would you assume that a man two inches taller than all other men is divine? To account for a superior character by assuming that he is supernatural is equally fallacious.

But is Christianity merely a belief in a perfect, matchless teacher? From a Church of Christ point of view, are not its essentials, belief in a God-sent Saviour, born of a virgin, who died and rose again? Is there no historical evidence for these essentials? The only evidence offered by Mr. Scambler is a series of arguments every one of which rests on a fallacy.

I have just arrived back from the city of Broken Hill. There I lectured on scientific subjects and answered all questions to, the best of my ability. Imagine the question regarding a scientific statement: "How do we know this to be true?" What would you think if I answered: "Scientists are men of integrity, their moral standard is high, and their researches have regenerated society—therefore their statements must be true" ? But is not this similar to Mr. Scambler's argument for Christianity? According to the Christian bible, the resurrection is the vital item of Christianity. No claim by the scientist is more wonderful than the miracle story of the resurrection of Jesus. Yet in support of the faith of which this story is the chief cornerstone, Mr. Scambler advances a form of argument which, if offered in support of scientific claims, would doubtless produce a smile.

The wonderful character of Jesus! Tell us plainly what is wonderful in his character. A matchless teacher! What in his teaching cannot be matched by the teaching of other men? Let me apply the acid test and invite you to mark Mr. Scambler's reply. Where is there in the teaching of Jesus anything that was new and original to the world? Obviously, if Mr. Scambler cannot answer this practical question his main argument breaks down. Where in the life of Jesus do we find a noble example which is not to be found prior to his time? Did he ever condemn the hideous evil of slavery? Did not his disciple propagate the teaching: "Slaves, be obedient to your masters"? His moral standard did not rise superior to the hideous idea of hell fire. His hell story of Lazarus and the rich man is one of the most revolting on record. His attitude to those who differed from him is intolerant and vulgar. To call one's opponents vipers and hypocrites is below the standard of the normal man. How, then, can one, who fell below normal human standards be claimed "divine" ?

To Mr. Scambler's talk of the perfect Jesus, I reply by asking him to face the facts. The Jesus of the Gospels in all too many instances exhibits the weaknesses, the ignorance, and the human standards of that distant age. His teachings have caused the greatest divisions this world has known. His followers cannot agree as to the meaning of his teachings.

The men quoted by Mr. Scambler date from fifty years ago, when criticism was in its infancy. Great changes have come in the intervening years. Now it is the foremost of Christian scholars who recognise the human limitations of Jesus. Nowadays it is men like the Anglican Dr. Kirsopp Lake who candidly admit that the Great War has brought out the human limitations of the ethics of Jesus by the intellectual horizon of his own time. I can, if so desired, quote from memory many cases of similar admissions on the part of Christian scholars. Surely Mr. Scambler knows the trend of modern theological thought. Why, then, does he revert to the opinions of over fifty years?

Let us not, however, confuse the issue by excursions into the realms of other men's ideas. Let us face the facts. I offer again another practical test. It was a Stoic philosopher who taught: "If any man can convince or show me that I do not think or act aright, I will gladly change, for I seek the truth by which no one was ever injured, but he, is injured who abides in his error and ignorance." Who, will deny the nobility of this pagan expression? But where did Christ reach a like standard? Again I

ask you—note Mr. Scambler's answer.

Compare the "Lord's Prayer" and its commonplace petitions for daily bread and deliverance from the evil one, with the pagan prayer of Cleanthes to the God Zeus, for those cherishing "the works of the flesh": O Lord Zeus, "save those men from their unhappy folly, which do thou, O Father, scatter from their souls." Where does the prayer of Jesus surpass the prayer of Cleanthes? Again I ask for an answer, and ask you to note the reply.

The regenerating power of Christ. I do not think that Christianity has anything to boast about in its "conversions." It is significant that the decline in religious belief is attended by an improvement in the standards of morality. Sound aspirations, high ideals, and a commonsense conception of the responsibilities of life exert a healthy influence. I think society owes more to its sensible, sympathetic and painstaking mothers than it does to repetitions of the words of Christ. The, problem of the world's vice and crime is very largely the problem of the feebleminded, and here the scientist, and not the teachings of Christ, is our hope.

In cases of death Mr. Scambler is thankful he is not a Rationalist. In such cases I am thankful I am no longer a Christian. Think of some terrible case of tragedy and of those who are left to mourn. Could you face the bereaved and utter words about a God of love, a Father in heaven who watches and cares? Call to mind the breadwinner of a poor family cut off. Could you go to the young mother left with a large family of little children and utter the platitude, "God knows best"?

The Regeneration of Society

Let us assume that it is true that the teachings of Christ have exercised a regenerating influence on society. Then to argue that this regeneration proves Christianity to be true is but to adopt another fallacy. The influence of Buddhism has led his followers in the way, not of war, but of peace. But every Christian will admit that it would be fallacious to argue that because of this regeneration Buddhism is true. Mr. Scambler quotes Brace, the Christian apologist. I, too, will quote the same writer:

"It might have been thought that the great Reformer would have uttered some words against this stupendous abuse. To the mind of the writer, it has often been a subject of difficult questioning why He, who felt so keenly the evils of humanity, should not have put forth one simple command against this gigantic system of injustice.

"No direct word against slavery, however, came forth from the great Teacher. It was not until the ninth century after that one of his humble followers, Saint Theodore of Studium (Constantinople), ventured to put forth the command, 'Thou shalt possess no slave, neither for domestic service nor for the labour of the fields, for man is made in the image of God.'

Nine centuries before a follower of Christ condemned the keeping of slaves, and this the testimony of the very book quoted by Mr. Scambler! For centuries the Christian church was one of the largest slave holders. In the eighteenth century the infamy continued in even Protestant countries, and even the "Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Lands" owned plantations of slaves. How, then, in regard to slaves, can Christianity boast of its regenerating power?

Re women and chastity. Has Mr. Scambler forgotten a command of the Church in the eleventh century directing that the wives of the clergy be taken from them by force and made slaves? Need I

refer to the teaching of Jesus about eunuchs and marriage and its effect on history?

What a sorry plight Christianity is in when Mr. Scambler finds it necessary to disassociate himself from the many things done by Christian churches. It seems to me like saying, "I want you to let me throw overboard all Christianity's errors, and present only the good it has accomplished." When it comes to paganism it seems as if he reverses this policy by ignoring the good, and presenting in a very exaggerated manner the evils of pagan days. Mr. Scambler's picture of the world in Christ's day is not in accord with the facts. I am willing to meet him or any other clergyman on this question.

Under Christianity flourished the, most shocking abuses. What of the child slaves of 100 years ago? Of recent years there has been an increasing realization that not prayers but human effort can help the race. Improvement has been proportional to man's determination to work out his own salvation. Fatal to all Mr. Scambler's claims stands the fact that, with the decline of religion, the world has become a better place to live in Foreign Missions. Evidently China does not think much of missionaries, nor is the fact that missionaries are in that country under treaty rights much credit to Christianity. Many missionaries have easy jobs. Others, doubtless, are self-sacrificing men. But we find the same qualities in secular activities. Has Mr. Scambler heard of Robert Owen, who devoted his time and his fortune to the work of education and social reform? We hear from time to time of scientists who give their lives in the conquest of disease.

Clergymen today owe their intellectual freedom in no small measure to the brave freethinkers who faced persecution and death in the fight for the freedom of thought. The missionary offers no great quality that is not found elsewhere.

Mr. Scambler bases the truth of Christianity on the wondrous life, the matchless teaching and the regenerating power of Christ. Even if these things were true of Christ, they would not prove that Christianity is true.

But the life of Jesus was obviously human, marred by many defects, of which I have evidenced two examples—a brutal hell idea and a bad-mannered intolerance to those who differed from him.

To the claim made that he was a matchless teacher, I have applied a practical test. I have asked Mr. Scambler to give us one item of his teaching which is unmatched. I have quoted a pagan philosopher and asked him to match it in the teachings of Christ.

In regard to slavery, I think I have said sufficient to show that Christians have cause for shame and not for boasting. The argument of the regenerating power of Christ is rendered void by the fact that religious belief is declining, but the world is becoming a better and a happier place.

An uncritical acceptance of oft-repeated statements seems to be one of the main weaknesses of Christian believers. I hold in my hand a Church of Christ pamphlet, "Why We Believe in the Bible." The same fault runs through its pages. On page 13 it reads: "The other nations were built upon slavery; the Hebrew peoples, even when they allowed slavery, surrounded it with many alleviations, and no one was held in servitude more than seven years, or beyond the year of jubilee." "All through the ages since, Christianity has condemned slavery and driven it from its borders."

Who can claim that these statements are true? The defence for the truth of Christianity rests upon statements which will not bear critical examination.



Mr. Scambler's Second Speech

Mr. Langley began by seeking a fallacy in the argument drawn from the character of Christ. Certainly no one would assume that because a man is two inches taller than all other men he is therefore divine. No one would think that because scientists are men of integrity, therefore all their statements as astronomers are correct. There is no relation between two inches in stature and character; there is no relation between the integrity of a scientist's character and the facts he discovers in distant stars. But you can see, and Mr. Langley can see, that there is a very vital relation between the fact that Jesus was a perfect character and his claim to, be the Son of God. Let me state the argument in a more formal manner. Here it is: If Jesus spoke the truth he was divine; if Jesus did not speak the truth he was not good. Either he spoke the truth or he did not speak the truth; therefore he was divine, or he was not good. The perfection of Jesus' character has been acknowledged down the ages. As I have shown, even the Rationalists whose names count in the world of thought have acknowledged it. The only logical conclusion is that his claims are true, and that he is divine.

But Mr. Langley is not prepared to admit that there was anything wonderful in the character of Jesus, no matter what others may say, for he senses the inevitable results of such an admission. I do not need to do more, however, than to remind you of the way that Jesus has compelled the admiration of the ages. The sublime character which won the loyalty of Augustine, Origen, Chrysostom, Savonarola and Luther, and the admiring respect of Mill, Renan, Strauss, Lecky, and many other Rationalists, will not be dispelled by the petty exigencies of debate.

Mr. Langley next proposes to apply the acid test to the argument drawn from the matchless teaching of Jesus, and his way of doing it is to ask what there is in the teaching of Jesus that cannot be matched by others of the world's teachers. What is new and original in the teaching of Christ? It is a little curious to me that Rationalists have to range over all the teachers of the world, and gather together the most elevated teachings of all, in order to match this Teacher of Galilee, and yet are not able to see that he is a wonderful teacher.

Will you please note, however, that I did not claim that there was anything new and original in Christ's teachings, nor did I say that his teachings, point for point, cannot be paralleled by those of others. I believe that might be done fairly well, provided you made your scope of investigation wide enough. And if I cannot support a thing I did not say, and would not dream of saying, is Mr. Langley to think his acid test has eaten my argument away? He put the acid on the wrong place.

One of the very common things in Rationalistic attacks on Christianity is the idea that somehow Christians resent the finding of parallels to the teaching of Jesus in earlier teachers. Before the debate Mr. Langley kindly provided me with some Rationalistic literature. Here is one booklet on "Pagan and Christian Morality," by Walter Mann. The writer is at great pains to show that Christ's noblest teachings were uttered in substance before Christ came. Incidentally it shows that Christ did utter some noble teaching, which fact Mr. Langley might note. Walter Mann's purpose is to destroy the argument from the matchless teachings of Christ.

But I ask you to emphasize in your mind that newness or originality did not constitute my argument. My argument was expressed in these particulars: Christ's passion for righteousness, the radical nature of his teaching, which traced character back to the inner motive and thought, his emphasis on service to others at personal cost, the permanent validity of his teachings, and the superior character of his teachings in comparison with those of other teachers. But that superiority was not shown in the utterance of original precepts of an isolated kind. There is a completeness about his teaching of righteousness that is not found elsewhere. I pointed out, with reference to Plato, the excellent precepts of pagan teachers are selected from among others, some of which are of an entirely different character. This book of Mann's gives some excellent teaching from Plato.. What it does not give is his teaching about the exposure of infants, or a community of wives. It quotes Seneca, failing to mention that Seneca counselled suicide. It quotes Max Muller as saying that "the highest truth of Christianity (love to enemies) had been reached independently by what we call the pagan religions of the world." What it does not tell us is that when Max Muller published the "Sacred Books of the East," in England, he explained that there were whole sections that he dared not publish in English, lest he should lay himself open to a criminal prosecution. You see, Mr. Langley's acid test works in curious directions.

Mr. Langley seems disappointed because I did not base my argument on the miraculous side of Christianity—the virgin birth and the resurrection. We cannot cover the whole field of Christian evidences in one debate. When the divinity of Christ is established, there will be no difficulty about the miracles recorded in the New Testament. The evidence that I advanced belongs more directly to the realm of our experience, and it is much easier for my opponent to suggest that this form of argument is calculated to produce a smile than it is to meet and answer it.

"Face the facts," says Mr. Langley, and, you see, we are delighted to face the facts. My friend objects to my Rationalistic authorities because they date from over fifty years ago. But the moral sense of the world still pays tribute to the matchless teaching of Jesus. Mr. Langley, however, driven by the stern necessities of his position, cannot bring himself to say one generous thing about Jesus and his teaching, but condemns him utterly. And what are the charges he brings against him? These—that he never condemned slavery, that he held the idea of hell fire, and that he called hypocrites by their correct names. With regard to the last, what words then or now could adequately describe the kind of men who, devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made long prayers?

And what of Jesus' teaching on hell? T. R. Glover says: "For clear-thinking, ethical natures such as those of Jesus and Paul, it is a downright necessity to separate heaven and hell as distinctly as possible. It is only ethically worthless speculations that have always tried to minimise this distinction. Carlyle is an instance in our own times of how men even to-day once more enthusiastically welcome the conception of hell as soon as the distinction between good and bad becomes all-important to them."

Sin has consequences, and the consequences of sin are expressed by hell. A mother warns her loved boy that his course in drinking will involve him in moral and physical ruin. Is that mother a fiend because she warns? Jesus sees the inevitable result of his people's wrong-doing and warns them. Is he therefore criminal? Is not that the expression of love? Let Mr. Langley face the facts. Jesus' words are startling in form, but to speak of anger, intolerance, spite, is impossible to anyone who has really read the story of Jesus understandingly. In Matthew's gospel, in the very chapter that contains the names vipers and hypocrites, there is this heartbroken cry: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered

thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Jesus of the loving heart sees his people rushing madly over moral precipices to ruin, but the refined culture of Mr. Langley will not allow him to raise his voice in startling tones, for that is intolerant and vulgar!

But Jesus never condemned slavery! Mr. Langley quotes from Loring Brace's "Gesta Christi" to that effect, and quotes in such a way as to give the impression that this Christian historian agrees that Christ did not do anything to combat the evils of slavery. But Brace writes his chapter to prove that it was the power of Christ that overthrew slavery. Let me read to you a part of the chapter which Mr. Langley missed:

"The truth is, that a fathomless pauperism was then covering the empire—the result of conquests, oppression, had finance, invasion of barbarians, and slavery—and to thousands of the poor slavery was a less evil than the poverty they endured. As we shall relate afterwards, there came a time when an imperial law, permitting those who 'took up' exposed children to make slaves of them, was a law dictated by motives of humanity. It is doubtful if the world has ever seen an era when so many human beings were exposed to, such bitter poverty, and even to starvation, as during the few centuries after Christ. Now for a divine teacher to have proclaimed, then and there, the duty of absolute and immediate emancipation, would have plunged the world into a misery beyond all bounds of conception, and would have let loose a war of extermination between masters and slaves which would have turned Europe and Asia into a field of blood and slaughter. The principles which Christ taught evidently must overturn slavery from its foundation. They scattered the seeds of absolute freedom and equal justice. They destroyed all distinctions of caste and race . . . It is true that in the succeeding centuries bishops and clergymen not infrequently held slaves. But the spirit of Christianity began immediately that long contest with human slavery which, under changing fortunes and with many defeats, has been waged now for eighteen centuries, and may be said only to have won its final victories in the middle and latter half of the nineteenth century."

It has been necessary to read that extensive quotation to correct the impression that Mr. Langley's brief extract was calculated to give. With regard to the influence of Christianity on slavery, Prof. Goldwin Smith says: "The very course which the gospel takes upon this subject seems to have been the only one that could have been taken in order to effect the universal abolition of slavery. In this manner alone could its object, a universal moral revolution, have been accomplished. For if it had forbidden the evil instead of subverting the principle; if it had proclaimed the unlawfulness of slavery and taught slaves to resist their masters, it would instantly have arrayed the two parties in deadly hostility throughout the civilised world. Its announcement would have been the signal for servile war, and the very name of the Christian religion would have been forgotten amidst the agitation of universal bloodshed."

No better statement of the effect of Christianity on slavery could be given than that of Lecky, the Rationalist, in "The History of Rationalism."

He says: "It will remain an undoubted fact that the reconstruction of society was mainly the work of Christianity; other influences could produce the manumission of many slaves, but Christianity alone could produce the profound change of character that rendered possible the abolition of slavery. There are few subjects more striking, and at the same time more instructive, than the history of that great transition. The Christians did not preach a revolutionary doctrine. They did not proclaim slavery altogether unlawful; at least not until the Bull of Alexander III., in the twelfth century; but they steadily sapped it at its basis by opposing to it the doctrine of universal

brotherhood, and infusing a spirit of humanity into all the relations of society."

Is Mr. Langley really serious when he tries to fix the responsibility for crimes of the eleventh century, with reference to the wives of the clergy, and other sexual excesses, on Jesus Christ?

In my first speech I gave you historical facts showing the regenerating power of Christ in society. Mr. Langley calmly states it is significant that the decline in religious belief is attended by an improvement in the standards of morality. But not a word of proof! Mr. Langley ought to bear in mind that this audience will want the evidence for such sweeping statements.

And before we finally pass Mr. Langley's cheap sneer about platitudes that Christian people may speak in the house of death, would he mind telling us what word of solid comfort a Rationalist lecturer can give to the bereaved?



Mr. Langley's Second Speech

Mr. Scambler restates his argument only to exhibit another fallacy. It does not necessarily follow that, because a man claims to be divine, he is truthful. Martin Luther believed that he was visited by the devil. It would be fallacious to argue that there must be a devil or Luther was not truthful. An erroneous idea may be held sincerely. A Galilean carpenter could entertain the delusion that he was divine without necessarily being an untruthful man.

You cannot establish the perfection of Jesus by arguing that it has been acknowledged down the ages. The story of Adam and Eve was acknowledged by even longer ages, but this does not make the story true. Nor is it any good naming a few men from past centuries who believed in his perfection. I can name a number of equally illustrious people who believed that the world was flat. Who would dream of urging this as evidence against the rotundity of the earth ?

In the early days of modern criticism, Lecky, Mill and others regarded Jesus as a great ethical character, but since their day careful criticism has gone further and now it is Christian clergyman such as the Rev. Campbell who tell us that to speak of Jesus "as morally perfect is absurd, to call him sinless is worse."

Mr. Scambler says it is curious that Rationalists, have to range over the world to match the teachings of Jesus. He ignores the essential point—The Jesus teachings can be matched and this establishes the fact that Jesus does not exceed human standards. But there is no need to range over the whole world. On any night I am prepared to take one pagan philosopher and Mr. Scambler can take Jesus. I will contend that the pagan philosopher is the greater teacher.

In his first speech Mr. Scambler emphasized the "matchless" teaching of Jesus. I asked: What in his teaching cannot be matched?

Where is there anything new or original in what he taught? He replies that he did not claim that there was anything new or original in Christ's teaching. Thus when confronted by a definite test my

Christian friend concedes the unoriginality of Christ's teaching. Later on, however, he proceeds with less caution and refers to "the superior character of Jesus' teachings in comparison with those of other teachers!"

Let him come down to definite facts. I ask him to name one Jesus utterance which shows this alleged superiority. In my opening speech I quoted two pagan utterances and asked, "Where did Jesus reach a like standard." I asked you to note Mr. Scambler's answer. He has made no answer.

Mr. Scambler speaks of Christ's passion for righteousness. I could equally well speak of the passion of Socrates and Marcus Aurelius for righteousness. Once more I ask Mr. Scambler to avoid mere assertions. Let him tell us definitely where Christ exceeded other men in a passion for righteousness. I call to mind Christ's terrible curse on those who did not accept his teaching. It seems to me impossible to escape the conclusion that his passion for righteousness was tainted with fanatical egotism.

Mr. Scambler speaks of the radical nature of Christ's teaching which traced character back to the inner motive and thought. Here he is in error. Such teaching was not radical. It was fairly common and was expressed far better by pagan philosophers than by Christ. For example, Seneca taught, "It is the intention, not the outward act, which makes the wickedness."

If Mr. Scambler wants instances of indecent sacred literature he need only turn to the Old Testament of his own Christian Bible. Why he has introduced the question of the sacred literature of the East I do not know unless it be to create the impression that pagan literature is always a compound of good and bad. This is not so. I defy Mr. Scambler to find in the writings of Marcus Aurelius anything as low as Christ's angry intolerance and his ignoble idea of hell punishment.

Hell plays an important part in the teaching of Jesus. In Luke 16 the rich man is tormented in the flames of hell and vainly seeks the relief of the tip of Lazarus' finger dipped in water. Such was the Jesus notion of hell. It was in keeping with the ideas of his day. Yet Mr. Scambler suggests that such teaching was an expression of love! Jesus, he says, was warning them of the "inevitable result" of wrong doing. But this ignores the fact that the "inevitable result" (tormenting flame) was brutal and untrue.

Christ's ideas of hell are clear and definite. They are in keeping with the ignorance of his age and his fellow men. To argue that these plain words mean something else is but to advertise one's bias. You can make anyone a perfect teacher by such "free" handling.

Mr. Scambler condones the intolerant and crude language of Jesus by assuming that with a "loving heart" he used strong language to people who were "rushing madly over moral precipices to ruin."

The Scribes and Pharisees were merely disbelievers in the claims of Jesus, not people rushing to moral ruin. He further says that my "refined culture" will not allow me to raise my voice in similar tones. Over 200,000 children in this country are being reared in the fear of hell fire. Intimidated by crude fear their plastic minds are taught not to reason on the great questions of life. In Protestant circles the vision of a still greater number is being clouded by unfounded and sentimental religious notions.

Trained in religious circles it seems to me that the best service I can render to the community is to labour to free the young mind from the clouds of supernaturalism which I truly believe blur the

vision of social service. My opponents are priests and parsons. I prefer not to follow the example of Christ and call such "hypocrites" and "vipers." Rather will I approach them with dignity and courage by saying, "Where are the facts for the things you teach?" If I cannot impress them and those who follow them by words of reason I will not resort to abuse. Ignoble methods ill befit a noble cause. Anger unbalances the judgment. I am trying to spread light not heat.

When Mr. Scambler belittles the "cultured refinement" which avoids crude terms such as hypocrite, vipers, etc., I fear the defence of Jesus has led him into strange paths!

I quoted a very drastic admission from the Christian apologist Brace, whom Mr. Scambler used in his first speech. He now supplies you with a passage of the chapter which he claims I missed. The passage referred to by him occurs in a paragraph a page or so further on. Fairly and honestly I gave the admission of Brace. What Mr. Scambler now directs your attention to is Brace's attempt to justify the silence of Christ and the inactivity of Christianity. What is the justification? It is the claim that the condemnation of slavery would have plunged the world into misery; it would have caused bloodshed! A hideous plea it seems to me. Obviously the difficulty could have been surmounted by condemning war as well! The disciples of Christ actually taught "Slaves, be obedient to your masters." In this they fall far below pagan philosophers. Eighteen centuries after Christianity, slavery flourished under Christianity. No indication of the divine is to be found in Christianity's attitude to slavery.

Am I serious in regard to the enslaving of the wives of the clergy? asks Mr. Scambler.

Yes, most certainly I am. From the days of New Testament teaching of wife obedience and early church fathers' denunciation of woman as a necessary evil and the devil's gateway, down to the position of woman in Christian England a few decades ago, Christianity has much to be ashamed of and little to be proud of in the treatment of woman.

In my last speech I said that though religious belief is declining the world is becoming a better place to live in. My friend calls this a sweeping assertion, and deplores the absence of proof. Let me assure him and any other clergyman present that I have no desire to, make sweeping statements without proof. Half time on my platform is always offered to any clergyman who wishes to challenge or test the accuracy of anything I say. I never speak on religion without giving ministers full opportunity to test my statements. For the honour of Christ I wish that Mr. Scambler could make a like offer. That religion is declining I refer my friend to the admissions of religious bodies. That the world is getting better I refer him to the fact that when religion held sway children of four and five years worked 12 to 18 hours a day in pit and factory. Prostitution and drunkenness have decreased. Crime is about one-fourth what it was in the good old religious days, and health has improved.

What comfort can I give to the bereaved?

I shall be very glad to discuss this matter with Mr. Scambler at any time. Here I must refuse to be drawn too far from the subject of debate. If, however, anyone present is desirous of reading the words which I do offer in such cases I will gladly send him a copy on receipt of name and address.

Perhaps by calling my remarks a cheap sneer, Mr. Scambler is attempting to draw attention away from the force of my remarks. I commented on Jesus' simple theory of a Father God. I instanced the case of a breadwinner cut off, and a poor mother left unprovided with a large family. I asked, could you in keeping with Christ's teaching go to such a one and say "God knows best." To,

dismiss such a question as a "cheap sneer" is but to evade giving an answer.

So far I think Mr. Scambler has utterly failed to present a case for the Truth of Christianity. As I pointed out in my first speech, even if it were true that Jesus was a matchless teacher, the fact would only prove his human eminence, and not his divinity. Even if it were true that Christianity has been the greatest regenerating power ever known, the fact would only prove its eminence among human systems. It would not prove that supernaturalism which is the essential claim of Christianity. I again suggest that Mr. Scambler's case rests on two, great fallacies. Christ, I claim, was not a matchless character, and Christianity has an unenviable record. I have selected two main instances: the hell fire delusion and the intolerant attitude of Jesus. I have selected two instances of pagan teaching and asked my friend to match them from the teachings of Jesus. I have asked him to tell us plainly what is wonderful in the life and teaching of Jesus. With such an opportunity afforded him to set forth the superiority of Jesus, my friend, it seems to me, has only been able to repeat the old-time assumptions concerning Jesus, without offering any definite facts and evidence.

He who set out to establish the truth of Christianity has so far failed to show us where Christ surpassed, or even equalled, human standards.



Mr. Scambler's Final Speech

In one thing I perfectly agree with Mr. Langley. "Note Mr. Scambler's reply," he says. If you will do that, I shall be satisfied. When this debate is published, as I understand it will be, you will have an opportunity of weighing the evidence more carefully, and you will be able to determine whether it is I, as my friend implies, or he, who avoids the argument. Remember that I presented the argument—judge whether he has fairly and squarely met it, or merely lightly tilted at it here and there.

You observe, for instance, that he will not give his word of comfort for the bereaved. If you write for it, he will send it to you. Why does he not tell it now? Is he afraid to submit it while I am here, to turn the light of criticism on it? His pretext is that it will draw him too far from the line of argument. It is directly in the line of argument. I introduced the matter in my first speech, and it is his privilege, nay his duty, to follow my lead.

Mr. Langley throws out numerous challenges to debate. If I, or somebody else, will meet him on other nights and discuss other subjects, then he will show what he will do. Why does he not do it now? The opportunity he has so often sought is here. Why does he waste so much time in asking for other debates under other conditions ?

I have heard so much in recent years of Mr. Langley's heroic challenges, and of the fear of the ministers to meet him, that I would like to say that there are many reasons why more of his challenges are not accepted. Ministers are busy men—they are engaged in a great work. I would like to tell you what D. L. Moody said in response to a challenge to debate the merits of Christianity. He said: "The times call for action, not for discussion. Hundreds and thousands of men and women are

dropping into drunkards' and harlots' graves every year. Now let us all join hands and try to save them. I will try to reach them with the Gospel. I will tell them of a Saviour who came to seek that which was lost . . . If there is any merit in infidelity, let your members likewise put it into practice. Let them reach out a helping hand to those unfortunates who are sunk in vice and misery. Then, when they are restored to purity of life, we shall have time to turn aside for discussion."

I am glad Mr. Langley can appreciate the force of logic. You observed that when he was confronted with my first argument in exact logical form, he realized that the game was up, and he dropped my first fallacy, as he called it, and looked for another. Now he tells us that Jesus may have been sincere, though deluded. And now we have this picture—a deluded fanatic the life and inspiration of the Church, of the mightiest moral and spiritual force of the ages. This institution, which is world-wide in its scope, which even now is reaching out into Africa, China, India, and the islands of the sea, building churches and hospitals and schools, owes its source and inspiration to a deluded fanatic. And yet Mr. Langley is supposed not to believe in miracles! Believe it who can!

Mr. Langley claims to have quoted Brace fairly and honestly. Certainly he gave the exact words of Brace, but in such a way as to directly misrepresent the main purpose of the chapter in which it was found. To take an author's candid admission of a difficulty, and use it as a club against his main contention, does not strike some of us as fair and honest.

Because I did not give quotations from Jesus to match two that he gave from heathen writers, Mr. Langley calls attention to the fact with tremendous emphasis. I gave them in my first speech. It will take a lot of words from Mr. Langley to convince this audience that any pagan writers can excel such great statements of Jesus, as "Blessed are the pure in heart," "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness." But I ask you to note that Mr. Langley is drawing a herring across the track. I expressly declined to base my argument on isolated passages, which are always easy to get. He cannot escape that way.

My friend imputes low and ignoble motives to Christ, and defies me to find the like in Marcus Aurelius. I appreciate fully, the great character and teaching of that emperor, but it might suggest a little of the ineptness of Mr. Langley's method of argument to remark that Marcus Aurelius instituted a persecution of the Christians, as any reputable history of the times will tell you. I wonder what Mr. Langley will say to that? I will have no chance to meet what he says and I refer the truth lover to the historians—yes, even those who have written in these days of historical criticism.

Christ called the Scribes and Pharisees hypocrites and vipers. Mr. Langley says he will not follow this example by calling his opponents, the priests and parsons, by such names. That would not be following Christ's example. If he did that, he would be a liar, as he well knows, while Christ spoke the truth. But Scribes and Pharisees were merely disbelievers, not wicked men, says Mr. Langley. As a matter of fact, they were full of all uncleanness, full of extortion and excess. They devoured widows' houses while they made long prayers. If Mr. Langley questions my authority here, he will question his own authority for saying they were disbelievers, and his argument will fall to the ground.

Mr. Langley's remarks concerning such abuses as slavery and wrongs done to the wives of the clergy reveal a strange idea of the necessary principles governing all moral reform, and also of what we are claiming for Christianity. It is no part of our idea that the setting in motion of regenerative forces will achieve the desired results at once. Nor do we seek to avoid the fact that strange and

horrible deeds were wrought in the name of Christ. But as I pointed out in the beginning, I am defending Christianity itself as it came from its Divine Founder. The evils that Mr. Langley fixes on are the evils that Christianity came to cure. There never was any moral reform that did not suffer in the same way by the frailties of its adherents, and that did not further suffer from the taunts of those who cannot distinguish between the true and the false.

The ridiculous statement that religion is declining is still persisted in. Has Mr. Langley any clear perception of what religion is, and of what the churches are and what they are doing? Does he think that a church is like his congregation, except that one is religious and the other is not? Has he any idea of the mighty, far-reaching operations in moral and social reform, and in poor relief and sick relief, that are being carried on by the churches? Has he any conception of the ever-widening work of the churches in the foreign fields—the educational, social, medical, and industrial work that is being done among all peoples of the earth? Many ministers complain of a falling off in church attendance; others rejoice in overflowing congregations. Certainly the world is getting better. I gave some facts and also gave historical proof in my first speech of the relation between vice and the absence of religion in England in Walpole's time, and of the better England that came through the preaching of the Cross. Mr. Langley refers to the pitiful child labour system of an earlier day in England, and by his insidious method of suggestion, without argument and without proof, seeks to attach the blame to Christianity. Does he know that the good Lord Shaftesbury, the emancipator of industrial England, was a sincere and earnest Christian, and that his faith was the mainspring of his reform?

With reference to Christ's teaching on hell, Mr. Langley tries to, make capital out of the pictorial and parabolic form of Christ's utterances. He knows that his interpretation of Christ's teaching is not accepted by hosts of expositors, yet he presents it as though it were the last word on the subject. But why does Mr. Langley avoid the fact itself? What Christ meant by hell was that sin has consequences. Does Mr. Langley believe that? or is he like another Rationalist, whose book he himself gave me, who states that if certain sins are discreetly pursued the consequences may be avoided? Christ will not deceive men so. The gist of his teaching is well expressed by his great apostle—Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

I ask you, in conclusion, to contrast the two systems—Christianity and Rationalism—in their moral emphasis, and ask what the result would be if either system were fully adopted. Haeckel, in "The Wonders of Life," upholds suicide. He advocates the killing of old and sick people. "He admires the Spartan habit of strangling new-born children if they are weakly, and urges its general adoption." Haeckel was an unbeliever. Before this debate Mr. Langley placed in my hands a Rationalist work by Hon. John Collier. In one chapter he discusses the sex question. He says monogamy is a good thing—the best where conditions are ideal. But polygamy may possibly be right, though he opposes it. Divorce should be made easier. The temporary union of men and women—companionate marriage—is in many cases desirable.

If Rationalism became supreme, if Christianity were not true, its ethics no longer binding, its conception of immortal life a fairy tale, then, as Dr. Fitchett says, the churches with all their beneficent offices for the young, for the sick, for the outcast, with their great service to society, their witness for righteousness, their restraining power against vice, would crumble into ruins. Under such conditions no one can doubt that human society would suffer an instant and limitless injury. For grief there would be no consolation, for morality no binding authority. All the disruptive forces of society would gain a new and strange energy.

If Christianity became supreme everywhere, these things would follow: There would not be a liar's tongue, a rogue's brain, a thief's palm in the world. There would be no scolding wives, no faithless husbands, no wrecked homes, no broken-hearted mothers, no fallen women. All social hates would die. The want of the world would disappear. Greed and selfishness would perish. The strife betwixt nations would come to an end.

Here, then, I rest my case that Christianity is true.



Mr. Langley's Final Speech

Mr. Scambler represents me as merely lightly tilting at his argument, and as throwing out challenges assuring you that if he will meet me on another evening I will show what I will do.

The actual position is somewhat different. My friend has based his case for the truth of Christianity on a matchless teacher, a wonderful Jesus. I am meeting his argument by asking a vital question—What is matchless or wonderful in the teaching or character of Jesus?

With this question unanswered, the contention on which Mr. Scambler's case rests becomes a worthless assertion. When he finds it necessary to leave the subject and urges me to outline the substance of my remarks when visiting the bereaved, I can only conclude that my "tilting" is causing him some discomfort.

I have tried not to obscure the main issue by giving undue attention to secondary arguments, but in doing this I have made it clear that if there is anything arising out of this debate which Mr. Scambler would like to fully discuss I am willing to meet him. Yet he attempts to make capital out of my offer! Would it not become him better, would you not feel greater confidence in his cause, if he made me a like offer?

He now seeks to defend Jesus by the plea that the Church is the mightiest moral and spiritual force of the ages. I deny that the Church is, or has been, anything of the kind.

If Christianity is so wonderful, why is it that so many leaders of thought have ceased to be Christians? Why is it Mohammedism makes far greater headway in Africa? Why is it that the more cultured of the Chinese and Indians treat Christianity with contempt?

Not the teachings or character of Jesus, but the "mysteries"—heaven reward and hell punishment—gave rise to the popularity of Christianity. The triumph of the Church came not by preaching the gospel of Love, but by the use of force.

The admission of the Christian apologist, Brace, I gave correctly and without the slightest misrepresentation. You can verify this by referring to page 42, "Gesta Christi," by C. Loring Brace.

I feel confident that when Mr. Scambler carefully re-reads Brace he will deeply regret his reflection on the honesty of my quotation.

In my previous address I pointed out that there was nothing radical in Christ's teaching which traced character back to the inner motive and thought. Mr. Scambler has not attempted to question the correction I offered, but he has made another attempt by quoting "Blessed are the pure in heart" and "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness." I fear his second attempt is no better than his first. There is nothing matchless in these teachings. Centuries before the supposed time of Christ the cry expressed in Jewish psalms was for a "pure heart," and from the same source came the assurance of blessings for the pure in heart. Hundreds of years before in Egypt "a pure heart" was the great requirement in the judgment hall of the god Osiris. In regard to superiority, I think Buddha's noble "Eightfold Path" to happiness excels the saying of Jesus.

I fail to see anything commendable in the teaching, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God." It savours somewhat of sectarian narrowness. In this matter I prefer the wider vision of Marcus Aurelius: "If any man can teach or show me that I do not think or act aright I will gladly change, for I seek the truth by which no man was ever injured, but he is injured who abides in his error and ignorance."

"Seek the truth"! Can we urge anything better? If the Kingdom of the Christian God is founded on truth, the pagan's advice will lead us to it. If it is not so founded, his teaching will lead us to something better.

You are told that Marcus Aurelius instituted a persecution of the Christians. I reply that there is no reliable evidence that Marcus instituted any such persecution.

My friend asks you to remember that he will have no chance to reply to what I say in this matter. I remind him that he has the chance. He knows full well that I am willing to meet him in further discussion. I would remind you that, according to the gospel, it was Jesus who acted as a persecutor by taking a whip to his fellow-citizens.

There is no evidence that the Scribes and Pharisees were men "full of all uncleanness." Mr. Scambler says that if I question his authority here I will question my own authority for saying that they were disbelievers, and my argument falls to the ground. This seems to me to be strange reasoning. We definitely know that the Scribes and Pharisees were not Christians, therefore they were disbelievers in the claims of Jesus. In accusing them of uncleanness, Mr. Scambler is uncritically repeating the accusations of their opponents. These accusations are found in doubtful documents of unknown authorship, and the accusations are so contrary to the historical knowledge which we possess concerning the Scribes and Pharisees that even Christian scholars have found it necessary to suggest that the accusation was intended for another class—the Sadducees!

In regard to the abuses in Christianity, Mr. Scambler ignores a very important fact. The worst crimes in Christianity have been committed by the most sincere believers. The sincere, zealous believer prepared to give up all to follow Jesus has proved a serious menace to society. Zeal for Christ has transformed many a man into an inhuman brute. What, then, is the use of talking about the "regenerating" power of Jesus?

Mr. Scambler admits that the world is getting better, but he denounces as "ridiculous" my statement that religion is declining! The fact remains that the churches admit the decline. To give only one instance: A recent estimate from church sources places 70 to 80 per cent. of the adult population as indifferent to Christian worship.

Mr. Scambler refers to Lord Shaftesbury. But what of the unbelievers like Owen, Bentham,

Paine and Rousseau? Shaftesbury was a Christian with a humanitarian spirit which was similar to that possessed by Freethinkers of that and a previous generation. He found it necessary to complain that he could scarcely remember an instance in which a clergyman had been found to maintain the cause of the labourers.

Mr. Scambler seems to think that he can escape the difficulty of Christ's hell teaching by calling it "parabolic," and by asserting that what Christ meant by hell was that sin has consequences.

He is, I fear, merely bending facts to fit his theory. Only since the moral sense of the race has revolted against the doctrine have Christian apologists raised the partisan plea that Jesus, when he spoke of hell, did not mean hell. But the greater section of the Church still emphatically and very reasonably insists that, when Jesus spoke of hell, he meant what he said. This fact remind me that the followers of Jesus cannot agree as to what Jesus meant by his teaching. Can he who creates such confusion in the ranks of his followers be called a "matchless teacher"?

Mr. Scambler sets Jesus aside and introduces Haeckel and John Collier. He thus again turns from the subject of debate. He tells us of a Rationalist who states if certain sins are discreetly pursued the consequences may be avoided. Haeckel, he says, advocates the killing of old and sick people, and urges the strangling of new-born children "if they are weakly." This sounds bad, almost as bad as the hell punishment idea of Jesus, but I would like to verify Mr. Scambler's assertions.

The reverend gentleman's conclusion is a delightful one. If Rationalism became supreme, evil would overtake the world. If Christianity became supreme, everything would be beautiful.

He forgets that this is a debate, not an advertising contest. We are expected to furnish proof, not "boost."

Mr. Scambler has based his case on the wonderful life, the matchless teaching, the ethical programme, and the regenerating power of Jesus Christ.

I could have replied by furnishing a formidable list of instances where Jesus falls below matchless standards, but I decided to give Mr. Scambler a unique opportunity to set forth the excellence of his master. I have simply asked what there is that is matchless, wonderful or superior in the character and teaching of Jesus.

Three instances of his teaching have been tendered by Mr. Scambler. I have shown that there is nothing "matchless" in any one of these examples.

I have quoted pagan utterances and asked where did the teaching of Jesus reach a like standard. "A herring across the track," cries Mr. Scambler in reply!

I have undertaken to affirm in debate that there is a greater teacher than Christ. Mr. Scambler has remained silent! When pressed for particulars about his master, he turns aside to introduce the "terrible" teachings of rationalists! For his silence in regard to the excellence of Jesus, he urges an objection to, "isolated passages." In regard to Haeckel, he is only too willing to use isolated passages. Asked to, give the best in Jesus, he goes outside the subject of debate and seeks to substitute something bad in Rationalists!

He has based his case for the truth of Christianity on the assertion of a wonderful and matchless Jesus. My main object in this debate has been to show that for such an assertion he can offer no proof. Those of you who are Christians doubtless thought that a minister of the gospel would

welcome the request, "Tell us what is matchless and wonderful in the teaching and character of Jesus." You may have fondly imagined that a soldier of the Cross would eagerly seize the opportunity of proclaiming the majesty of him of whom it is alleged "no man ever spake as this man." You may have thought that a minister would unfurl the banner of the Cross and silence his opponent by the challenge, "Tell me then did ever a philosopher offer teaching such as this?" Instead of this the unbeliever has proclaimed the excellence of the philosophers and has challenged the Christian: "Where did Jesus offer teaching such as this?"

You have followed the debate, you know what has transpired, and you also know that he who cannot substantiate his assertion by facts, fails to establish his case.

End of the Debate

MR. SCAMBLER suggests the following books for any who wish to read Christian Evidences, particularly along the lines followed in the debate.

- ◆ **The Unrealised Logic of Religion** by Dr. W. H. Fitchett
- ◆ **The Fact of Christ** by P. Carnegie Simpson, M.A.
- ◆ **The Historic Jesus** by David Smith, D.D.
- ◆ **The Programme of Christianity** by Henry Drummond
- ◆ **The Campbell-Owen Debate on Christian Evidences**
- ◆ **The Bankruptcy of Rationalism** by T. H. Scambler, B.A.

MR. LANGLEY suggests the following books:

- ◆ **The Churches and Modern Thought** by P. Vivian
- ◆ **Christianity and Slavery** by Chapman Cohen
- ◆ **Why I am Not a Christian** by Hon. Bertrand Russell, F.R.S.
- ◆ **The Historical Reality of Jesus—A Concise Statement of the Problem**
- ◆ **The Sources of the Morality of the Gospels** by Joseph McCabe
- ◆ **The History of European Morals** by Lecky

For further discussion between Mr. Scambler and Mr. Langley see "The Rationalist" for February, March, April, May, and June, 1928.

Thrasher Publications

- Bogard—McPherson Debate** on miracles and divine healing.
Ben M. Bogard (Baptist) and Aimee Semple McPherson (Church of the Foursquare Gospel).
- Calhoun—Kurfees Discussion** on instrumental music in worship.
Hall Calhoun (Christian) and M. C. Kurfees (Christian).
- Falls—Speakman Debate** on miracles today.
Drew E. Falls (Christian) and Lummie Speakman (Pentecostal).
- Falls—Storment Debate** on the coverings of 1 Corinthians 11.
Drew E. Falls (Christian) and Keith Storment (Christian).
- Falls—Welch Debate** on the coverings of 1 Corinthians 11.
Drew E. Falls (Christian) and D. L. Welch (Pentecostal).
- Madrigal—Mayo Debate** on the necessity of water baptism.
Dan Mayo (Baptist) and John R. Madrigal (Christian).
- McCay—Porter Debate** on the communion cup.
G. Earl McCay (Christian) and Rue Porter (Christian).
- Tant—Harding Debate** on rebaptism.
J. D. Tant (Christian) and James A. Harding (Christian).
- Tant—Frost Debate** on instrumental music and societies.
J. D. Tant (Christian) and W. G. Frost (Christian).
- Thrasher—Barr Debate** on the identity of the New Testament church.
Vernon L. Barr (Baptist) and Thomas N. Thrasher (Christian).
- Thrasher—Forsythe Debate** on the church of Christ.
Richard W. Forsythe (Pentecostal) and Thomas N. Thrasher (Christian).
- Thrasher—Garrett Debate** on unconditional salvation and the possibility of apostasy.
Eddie K. Garrett (Primitive Baptist) and Thomas N. Thrasher (Christian).
- Thrasher—Green Debate** on the Christian and civil government.
Ken Green (Christian) and Thomas N. Thrasher (Christian).
- Thrasher—Mayo Debate** on the impossibility of apostasy.
Dan Mayo (Baptist) and Thomas N. Thrasher (Christian).
- Thrasher—Owens Debate.** Everlasting punishment for the wicked.
Lester Owens (Seventh Day Adventist) and Thomas N. Thrasher (Christian).
- Thrasher—Welch Debate** on the formula of words used in baptism.
Thomas N. Thrasher (Christian) and D. L. Welch (Pentecostal).
- Wiley—Miller Debate** on the number of drinking vessels in the Lord's Supper.
Bryan Forgy (Christian) and Thomas N. Thrasher (Christian).



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