



Dorchester, Geo. U. S. A. April 2. 1896.

Sir, J. W. Dawson, Montreal, Canada.

Dear Sir, I acknowledge, with thanks, your courtesy, in responding to my letter, and also in sending me your tract on the correspondence of natural facts with Christian doctrines, I read it twice, carefully, and I simply concede the general similarity you show. On the subject of vicarious sacrifice, I might suggest, that the most important feature of the Christian doctrine, viz. vicarious atonement for guilt, has no analogy in Nature's vicarious sacrifices. Nor may I fully concede that mankind have generally expected a resurrection, or an immortality, or that any thought of it can be proven to have grown out of an innate consciousness of a deathless soul. Man's idea of a spirit world probably grew out of mysterious apparitions or appearances, and suggestions of speculative minds; these with the natural shrinking from death, in common with all creatures, might easily excite a hope of another life, not inherent in nature.

I am not an Atheist; cannot be. I believe in a Supreme Being, the Creator and Ruler of all Creation. I cannot, nor do I desire, to resist the force of Paley's argument. Beside, I confess that the Creator endowed mankind with Reason, and that he has left at least nineteenth of Earth's millions, (and there, ^{from} I presume all) without any other moral guide, and that the highest evolution of Reason formulates from social principles, as a Natural Law, the Golden Rule; and I have

read that the Rule has been evolved and recorded in the religions of various nations. This is the highest Moral Rule of Society, of Moses and Jesus. Cultivated Reason discovers it, ~~it~~ comes to it logically, in searching for the best principles to govern associated lives. That other ideas would occur to cultivated Reason, — man's relations to the Creator, as you would suggest, would be natural and probable, but more than nine-tenths of mankind have had no answer from the Creator, have heard no answer from His messengers, and have found no real answer among themselves. It is often declared, in behalf of the Bible, that it is reasonable to conclude that God would not leave His demoralized and ignorant Moral Creatures without such a Moral Revelation from Himself. But it is too clear that He has left them so without, unless He is interested in damning only a fraction of them. My dear Sir, what answer can you give me to this awful dilemma?

I thank you for your good wishes for my faith in Jesus; my own best wishes for myself, follow yours. The Greatest Question is up in the world, — "What think ye of Christ, whose Son is he?" Before an answer, I want a direct, definite answer to another Question, essentially connected with it. Is the supernatural part of his life story, told in a human looking book, a Divine Truth? If it is, — or to be so, — it should be a subject of evidence, and surely it is reasonable to ask for the proofs. You do not expect to convince unbelievers that the stories of a human book, written in ancient times by nobody knows who, are true, without proof. You don't require it of any other writings.

I asked you, (as my main object in writing to you) if the premises of my syllogism ^(virtually or not) on the Supernatural, were correct. I notice that you do not allude to it in your letter. And your enclosed Tract was written to maintain

These things must be answered satisfactorily, before faith should be asked or required. As I wrote, the supernatural is not impossible, any time, therefore not incredible per se. But the mere human assertion of it, is incredible, and so incredible that we have a right to explain it in any possible way rather than admit it to be a fact, so long as only men claim otherwise. I beg you to answer whether this proposition is or is not correct, or if not, wherein?

The eminent Chs. Hodge published that the only possible proof producible and verifiable, for a supernatural Gospel, is self-evidence, - "it is self-evident." Is it? is a Question that has to be proved; as such, the theory is not yet evidence. It is an assertion, unproved, and is not self-evident to even most believers. Till that theory is first proved, all evidence for the Gospel supernatural, is a failure, on Hodge's own testimony.

Christianity depends upon the proved Divine Inspiration of those 4 writers, unknown to us, and of all the writings in their names, on our pulpits; faith in Christ depends upon their proved inspiration, and not upon their unsupported and supposed credibility. Who has a right to claim for them, what they do not claim for themselves? The belief of millions, for ages, is not evidence; for more millions, for longer ages, believed in the Vedas. That the Epistles do not allude to the Gospels, is an indication that they were not written till afterward. Outside the glamour of faith many things in the Bible, do not seem worthy of God, or religion. And it is not believable that God sent a saving Revelation, and a Saviour, to all men, and not see to it that none died without knowing it - that He allows a 1000 millions to perish, for want of it, while he looks to poor weak men, to take it to them. This is the Christian idea, but to me, it seems bettling.

All these things are in question, so they must be subjects of evidence. I ask, if I ought to believe it all, without proof? No surely. But then what is the proof? the direct proof that the Gospel is a Revelation from God to all this world? I think you are too logical, to ask me to prove for myself, what you cannot prove to me. I have tried it; but I still find it impossible to believe that God has a written Truth & Authority in the world, without a direct proof, or even a claim. I thought it possible for me to be mistaken, and that you might show me the fallacy of my propositions. Perhaps you can if I have made myself clearer. If you cannot, I truly as well despair of finding proofs.

Yrs. respectfully
J. H. Hays

the faith of Atempted Believers, for all thro' you take for granted that they believe the Gospels to be "the word of God written". But the supreme Question of the times is, are they? which Unbelievers are not to take for granted, but to be convinced by proof, before they believe, else faith would be a childish unsatisfactory credulity. It is a reasonable Question. Evidence is necessary to satisfactory faith. A thousand millions of Mankind are Unbelievers. The Christian claim must be a subject of evidence to Unbelievers of intelligence, to show proof to convince them. Direct evidence and clear, for indirect and questionable evidence, is unworthy such a subject & claim. A Professor of Theology said to me, "On this one Question, we must believe before we reason on it." "Faith is the gift of God." "faith must be before reason." Do you say this? Most men will usually reason for what they believe. Would you say to a Bramin, These Gospels are a Revelation from God, prove it for yourself, or you are lost. Would he be unmeasurable to say, - the man who makes the claim, must prove it. You would answer so, when he makes the same claim for the vedas.

Apart from the claim, intelligent men would pronounce the Gospel a human book, of human assertions, better and less extravagant than others, - and this conviction enforced by the impossibility of proving that anything ~~it~~ was impossible for men to produce; and this conviction further enforced by the fact that the writer of the Gospel does not claim to write by the inspiration or authority of God. Now do you say that I ought to believe he was, and ^{that} all his supernatural stories, are the very truth of God, without any adequate proof? must believe too, without proof, that there could have been no additions of the supernatural by Copyists, in those ancient mythical and legendary ages?