

IN RETROSPECT: AN APOLOGIA

A bit of personal history is in order here, I think, by way of introduction.

I made the confession of Christ and was buried with Him in baptism in a little Christian Church in South Central Illinois, when I was only fourteen years old. At that time I began to read and study the Bible for myself, and not so long thereafter, to teach in the local "Sunday School." And throughout the intervening years my life has been devoted largely to studying and teaching this Book which is not only the religious basis, but the moral basis as well, of our entire Western civilization.

During the early years of life it was my privilege to sit under the tutelage of a generation of Christian ministers and evangelists who knew their Bibles, and knew them "from cover to cover," one might say without the slightest exaggeration. They knew how to "rightly divide" the Word of truth. It was also my privilege to collect in my library, and mentally and spiritually to feed upon, books of sermons and dissertations by these men, and by their predecessors, the founders and pioneers of the nineteenth-century movement which had for its ideal the restoration of the New Testament pattern of the local church of Christ. From this early homiletic and theological literature, I gained an understanding of the Simplicities of the Bible, especially of the Plan of Salvation as embodied in the facts, commands, and promises of the Gospel—in a word, an understanding of those things essential to the regeneration, sanctification, and eternal redemption of the human being—which has served me, throughout my whole life, as a bulwark of personal faith and an antidote to the vagaries of Biblical criticism, theological speculation, and scientific theory.

GENESIS

Incidentally, a volume of these sermons and dissertations of the pioneers has recently been republished, under the title, *Biographies and Sermons of Pioneer Preachers*. This volume is a reprint of an earlier work edited by W. T. Moore, which was entitled, *The Living Pulpit of the Christian Church*. The recently issued edition may be obtained from its editor, B. C. Goodpasture of the *Gospel Advocate* publishing house, Nashville, Tennessee. I commend this volume heartily to all ministers who have bogged down in the morass of human speculative theology and creedism. I commend it to all who may be seeking nourishing spiritual food: too much thin soup is being dished out from the modern pulpit.

Later in life—in my forties, to be exact—the opportunity of entering a secular university, while at the same time serving a local church as its resident minister, presented itself. I decided to take advantage of this opportunity. And because there was so much talk everywhere, at that time especially, about alleged “conflicts” between the Bible and science, on matriculating at Washington University, St. Louis, I decided to take every course in the different curricula that might be basically irreligious in content; that is, irreligious to the extent of challenging the subject-matter of the Bible or the fundamentals of the Christian faith. I wanted to know for myself. *It was, and still is, my conviction that no one need be afraid of truth.* What I am trying to say, without giving the appearance of boasting—for the one kind of snobbishness I detest the most is intellectual snobbishness—is that I set out deliberately to make, for my own satisfaction, as thorough an investigation as possible, of all those phases of human learning that have to do with the problems of Biblical interpretation and with problems of religious faith and practice generally. With this end in view, I enrolled in several courses in the sciences (of geology, biology, anthropology, and psychology in particular); in a considerable number of courses in Eng-

AN APOLOGIA

lish (including Anglo-Saxon, Chaucer, English poetry, the English drama, the English novel, etc.); in many courses in philosophy, including several seminars; in courses in ancient, medieval and modern history, and in the history of the Jewish people; and along with these, courses in Greek, Latin, French, and German. Three of these courses stand out vividly in my memory: one was an anthropological course in "human origins"; a second was a lecture course in the theory of evolution (biological); and the third a course entitled "The Evolution of Magic and Religion." The instructor in this last-named subject had one of the most erudite minds I have ever encountered. I found the course content, however, to be wholly speculative, that is, without benefit of any *external* evidence to support it.

It was my privilege to spend some ten years at the University, attending classes most of the time through winter and summer terms without a break. At the end I received my Bachelor's and Master's degrees, with the major in philosophy and minors in English and psychology, and was awarded the Phi Beta Kappa key. But I decided that having come this far, I should not abandon the quest for knowledge at this half-way point. Hence I transferred to the department of ancient languages, specializing in Greek and Latin, because I had reached the conviction that competence in philosophy (and in Biblical exegesis as well) requires a background of knowledge of the ancient languages. In this area of study, I spent many delightful hours in the study of Greek art and architecture, and as many rewarding seminar hours in reading (in the original) the Greek and Latin poets, dramatists, orators, historians, and philosophers. During this time I enjoyed the privilege also of taking courses in Scholastic philosophy at St. Louis University: these courses in medieval thought I found to be especially helpful, not only in their content, but especially in their disciplines. I was finally granted the doctor of philosophy degree by Washington University, with the

GENESIS

major in the Classics and the minor in philosophy. I had accumulated many more credit hours, by this time, than were required for all these degrees.

I do not present these facts here for the purpose of being critical of either of the higher educational institutions which I have named: certainly their scholastic standing is unimpeachable; their credits are accepted anywhere in the world. As for professional attitudes generally, I have found, in my association with college professors in various educational institutions, that almost uniformly they try to be intellectually honest and fair; only a small minority are guilty of taking advantage of their position to "sell" (propagandize for) agnosticism, or to "brainwash" their students with the insipidities of atheistic naturalism or humanism. As for my studies at St. Louis University, I have never ceased to be thankful for the intellectual discipline which I got from them. It is now my conviction that Scholastic philosophy is the only genuinely Christian philosophy that has ever been formulated; and that it is a priceless heritage, not only of what is known as Greek and Roman Catholicism, but also of what is known as Protestantism. These studies equipped me with a truly constructive background of thought against which many of the fallacies of our present-day *scientism* are shown up in their true colors. As a matter of fact, true science, in order to arrive at any degree of certitude, is compelled to use—and does use, oftentimes without realizing it—the discipline of metaphysics.

Nor do I present these personal matters to give the appearance of "glorifying" myself. Nothing is farther from my motives here. Indeed, I write with deep humility, for the longer I continued in school, the more I began to realize how little I knew. I try to impress the fact on my classes now that we actually do not live by knowledge, but by *faith*. (Even a so-called "law" in science is just a statement of very great probability: the assumption that it will *al-*

AN APOLOGIA

ways hold good is essentially an act of faith, else the man who makes it is presupposing his own omniscience.)

The fact is that I have presented the foregoing personal data for one purpose above all others, namely, to refute a notion that has come to be all too prevalent in higher educational circles in our time. I refer to the view that holds in contempt any effort on the part of anyone who, lacking extensive academic training, would venture into print in the field of Biblical exegesis (in the language of the seminaries, "systematic theology"); or stated conversely, the view that one who has had sufficient academic preparation cannot possibly cling to the traditionally accepted Biblical teaching concerning the inspiration of the Scriptures and the Deity of Jesus (including, of course, the doctrines of the Virgin Birth, the Miracles, the Atonement, and the Resurrection). I am presenting this data to declare with all possible firmness that anyone who has spent his life familiarizing himself with the content of the Bible itself, and in particular the simplicities of the Bible, can—and will—explore the areas of human knowledge and continue to accept the content of the Bible unreservedly as what it purports to be, namely, the Spirit-inspired record of God's progressive revelation of His eternal purpose for the world and for man. The very unity of the subject-matter of the whole Bible is proof in itself of the over-all inspiration of the Spirit in the giving of this Book—the Book of all books—to man, for his moral and spiritual guidance. Only by *arbitrarily* totally disregarding the Bible's own claim of having been specially communicated by the Spirit through the instrumentality of inspired men can one lose himself in the maze of theoretical criticism, conjectural "science," and speculative "theology."

As the net result of almost fifty years of combined ministerial and educational experience, I am prompted to make the following observations at this point, by way of introducing the content of this textbook:

GENESIS

1. The first half of the present century was truly one of the most shallow and superficial periods in the whole history of human thought. The dominance of the methodology which goes under the name of Positivism made it such. Positivism is the assumption that knowledge must be confined to "observable and measurable facts." One can readily see that implicit in this question-begging dogma is the ambiguity of the little word "fact." Just what is a "fact"? How can it be proved to be a "fact"? Positivism is a kind of wilful ignorance, an earlier version of Popeye's "philosophy," "I yam what I yam." As some wag wrote in days gone by—

There was an ape in days that were earlier;
Centuries passed, and his hair became curlier;
Centuries more, and his thumb gave a twist,
And he was a man, and a Positivist.

I am happy to take note of the obvious tendency in both present-day science and philosophy to return to sanity in thinking about the meaning of the cosmos and of man's life in it. After all, the three greatest problems of life are these: What am I? Whence came I? and, Whither am I bound? That is to say, the problems of the nature, origin, and destiny of the person—the problems of freedom, God, and immorality, respectively. These are of infinitely greater significance than the problem as to whether a man should build a fall-out shelter for his physical protection in these dangerous days. Obviously, neither a hydrogen bomb nor a death ray could affect the destiny of the human soul.

2. The alleged "conflicts" which we heard so much about in the nineteen-twenties and the nineteen-thirties were largely controversies over straw men (that is, false or non-existent issues) which were set up by fanatical protagonists on both sides. In my college work I did encounter now and then a professor who would go out of his way to cast aspersions on the integrity of the Scriptures. I soon discovered that those teachers who would pick out segments of

AN APOLOGIA

the Bible for the purpose of holding them up to subtle innuendo or outright ridicule, invariably demonstrated only their own misunderstanding of what they were talking about. *Their skeptical—at times scornful—attitude was the product of their own sheer ignorance of Bible teaching.* I must admit, too, in all fairness, that I have listened to dissertations on scientific subjects from the pulpit by men who displayed—by what they said—a correspondingly abysmal ignorance of the science which they were anathematizing. No wonder there was so much talk about “contradictions,” “conflicts,” “discrepancies,” etc.!

3. I have discovered that there are many secularly educated persons who criticize what they call “Christianity,” when as a matter of fact they are not criticizing Christianity at all, but are criticizing the institutional misrepresentations of Christianity which have always flourished in our world. They seem to be oblivious, however, of their failure to make this distinction. To discover what Christianity is, one must go back, not to Westminster, nor to Geneva, nor to Augsburg, nor to Rome, nor to Constantinople, nor even to Nice and the Nicene Creed—one must go back all the way to Pentecost, A.D. 30, the birthday of the church—back of all human theological speculation (Christian doctrine corrupted by Greek philosophical terms and phrases) to the teaching of Jesus and His Spirit-guided Apostles as embodied in the New Testament. Christ and Christianity must not be blamed for the superstitions and misdeeds of institutionalized Christianity.

4. I have discovered also that there are many secularly educated persons who actually will *not* to believe. I recall the words of Victor Hugo: “Some men deny the sun: they are the blind.” In this category, of course, we find the materialistic scientists, the so-called “naturalists” and “humanists,” the positivistic (self-styled “pure”) psychologists, et cetera. I find too that there are theological seminarians who are still living in the post-Victorian age, still clinging

GENESIS

to the outmoded hypotheses of German Biblical criticism (theories that were the offspring of the Teutonic analytical mentality which seemed never to be able to see the forest for the trees), still attempting to measure every phase of the cosmic or personal enterprise by the evolution dogma, and still victimized (and that willingly, it would seem) by the output of what has been called the "ideological junkshop" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These persons are representative of the type of "intellectual" whom Shakespeare describes as "man, proud man," who

Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep.¹

It will be recalled in this connection that Jesus, knowing too well that there have always been, and will always be, persons who are wilfully ignorant, reminds us of the futility of "casting pearls before swine" (Matt. 7:6). "If the blind guide the blind," said He, "both shall fall into a pit" (Matt. 15:14, Luke 6:39): that is to say, their blindness will not be the cause of their staying out of the pit, but the cause, rather, of their falling into it. (Cf. Isa. 6:10, John 12:40, Rom. 11:25, 1 Cor. 1:23, 2 Cor. 3:14, 2 Cor. 4:4, 2 Pet. 1:9, 1 John 2:11, etc.).

Do not misunderstand me. I have no quarrel with true science. Indeed science has been a great blessing to mankind in ways too numerous to mention. No sane person would oppose the scientific quest for truth. As a matter of fact, what is human science but man's fulfilment, whether wittingly or unwittingly, of the Divine injunction to the human race at the Creation: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon

AN APOLOGIA

the earth" (Gen. 1:28). Is not science the story of man's progressive conquest of his earthly environment?

I simply deprecate the apotheosis of science into a kind of "sacred cow." I deplore the spirit that would dethrone God and deify man in the specious name of "scientific humanism"—the chest-thumping bravado so well expressed by Swinburne (I think it was) in the nineteenth century, "Glory to man in the highest, for man is the master of things." Man's greatest delusion, it has been rightly said, is the delusion that his existence depends on himself, that he himself is the ultimate principle of his own origin, nature and destiny. Besides, the greatest scientists of all ages have been humble and reverent men—men who have stood in profound awe in the presence of the Mystery of Being. As Francis Bacon has written, "A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion."

5. The older I grow and the more I come in contact with the present generation, the more amazed I am at the utter ignorance of the Bible which prevails on every hand, not only in circles that are dominantly secular, but even among professing Christians themselves. I am reminded here of what Mary Ellen Chase has written, as follows:

The Bible belongs among the noblest and most indispensable of our humanistic and literary traditions. No liberal education is truly liberal without it. Yet in the last fifty years our colleges have, for the most part, abandoned its study as literature, and our schools, for reasons not sufficiently valid, have ceased to teach it, or, in many cases, even to read it to their young people. Students of English literature take it for granted that a knowledge of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, and the *Divine Comedy* are necessary not only for the graduate schools but also for the cultured and civilized life, as, indeed, they are; but most of them remain in comfortable and colossal ignorance of

GENESIS

a book which antedates Dante, and in large part, Virgil, by many centuries, some of which was written before Homer, and all of which has contributed more to the humanistic civilization of the Western world than have the so-called "Classics."²

Clyde T. Francisco writes in similar vein:

It is a tragedy of modern civilization that through schools and colleges students are taught to appreciate the beauty and sublimity of the works of Byron, Shakespeare, and Browning, but are left completely uninformed on the greatest literature the world has ever known, just because it is in the Bible. If it were anywhere else, the literary world would bow before it.³

Indeed one would not be missing the mark to ask: To what extent is the Bible itself taught in our day and age, even in those institutions which go under the name of "church schools," "Sunday schools," "Bible schools," etc?

A press story appeared recently, in a local daily newspaper, which I am moved to reproduce here, because it speaks so eloquently to the point at issue. It went as follows (under the by-line of "G. K. Kodenfield, AP Education Writer"):

Washington—A test on the Bible was sprung on five classes of college-bound 11th and 12th graders in a public school.

Some thought Sodom and Gomorrah were lovers; that the Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luther and John; that Eve was created from an apple; and that the stories by which Jesus taught were parodies.

Eighty to 90 per cent of the students could not complete such familiar quotations as: "Many are called, but few are chosen"; "A soft answer turneth away wrath"; "They shall beat their swords into plow-

AN APOLOGIA

shares"; "Pride goeth before a fall"; and "The love of money is the root of all evil."

All this happened in Newton, Mass., and English teacher Thayer S. Warshaw decided to do something about it. He arranged for two of his classes to study the Bible—not as a religious book, or even as literature, but as a source book for the humanities.

Teaching about the Bible in public schools can be a tricky business, particularly since the Supreme Court decision on school prayer.

But Warshaw, reporting his experience in the February issue of "The English Journal," believes it is essential.

"The Bible is indeed a religious book, but it is also a part of our secular cultural heritage. To keep it out of the public schools because it is controversial and because the public cannot trust the good sense of both the teacher and the pupil to treat it as a part of the humanities is a simple but questionable judgment," Warshaw wrote.

"A knowledge of the Bible is essential to the pupil's understanding of allusions in literature, in music, and in the fine arts; in news media, in entertainment, and in cultural conversation.

"Is he to study mythology and Shakespeare, and not the Bible? Is it important for him to learn what it means when a man is called an Adonis or a Romeo, yet unimportant for him to be able to tell a Jonah from a Judas?"

Warshaw first convinced his pupils of their need for a study of the Bible.

He assigned the reading of a few short stories which made no sense to them because they couldn't understand the Biblical allusions.

He showed them some political cartoons with Biblical references which left them in the dark.

GENESIS

The clincher was the quiz on which they fared so poorly.⁴

The courage of this English teacher is to be commended. It must be admitted that recent decisions of the Supreme Court have served the cause of irreligion and sheer secularism by catering to a small minority of fastidious self-styled atheists and agnostics. As a matter of fact it was never the intention of the Founding Fathers to put the state in a position of hostility to religious faith and practice. (We recall in this connection the action of a biology teacher in an Eastern high school who had the praying mantis removed from his laboratory lest the presence of the insect offend the sensibilities of the honorable Court.)

I doubt very much that any person has the right to be called "educated" who allows himself to remain ignorant of the content of this, the greatest of all books—the greatest collection of "human interest" documents that has ever been given to mankind. For this reason, I am convinced that secularly educated professors, no matter how learned they may be in their respective specialized fields, do not have the proper background for setting the standards for Bible colleges, for any kind of college that functions to train men for the ministry of the Gospel of Christ. Hence, I welcome the rise of the newly formed Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges.

One must actually live with the Bible in order to appreciate it. Cf. John 6:63, the words of Jesus: "It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life." Again, the words of Jesus in John 8:31-32: "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Or, the words of the Apostle Paul, in 2 Cor. 3:17—"where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Or the powerful affirmations of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 12: "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any

AN APOLOGIA

two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." Only those who study the Word of truth, who digest it and assimilate it into the very fabric of their lives, can truly appreciate both the simplicity and the sublimity of this Book of books. Those who do not "hunger and thirst after righteousness," that is, after the knowledge of God and of His way of doing things, are missing—tragically missing—so very much, so very much of that which makes life worth living, of that which gives it meaning, zest, order, and hope! And the tragedy of it all is that they are utterly oblivious of the fact of their great loss!

6. Furthermore, I should like to testify that I have found little or nothing in science or in philosophy that would serve to negate the fundamentals of the Christian faith. *As a matter of fact, I stand ready to defend the thesis anywhere, at any time, that there is greater harmony today between scientific theory and Biblical teaching than at any other time in the history of human thought.* I shall try to show that this harmony is apparent especially in the book of Genesis.

7. I have written this textbook for use by students in our Bible colleges, and for all Christians who may find it helpful; indeed, for all persons who may be seeking a constructive study of this over-all problem of the relationship between the Bible and science. I have striven throughout for simplicity and clarity. I know of nothing that has been a greater detriment to the Church, and to the spread of the Gospel, than theological "gobbledygook": this I have studiously tried to avoid. It takes no great measure of discernment to see that creeds, confessions, and theologies formed by churchmen are many times less intelligible than the Scriptures themselves. All one has to do, to realize the truth of this statement, is to try to "plough through" the writings of such contemporary "theologians" as Barth,

GENESIS

Brunner, Niebuhr, Tillich, et al. If men had to master the "systematic theology" formulated by these men (or by their predecessors in Christian history) in order to be saved, I am sure that both Heaven and earth would have been depopulated of saints long, long ago; that indeed Christianity would have died "aborning." As a matter of fact, the apostasies and sectism prevalent throughout the history of Christendom have been due primarily to the corruption of apostolic teaching by terms derived from the Greek philosophical systems and from the pagan mystery religions. Had churchmen adhered to the apostolic injunction to "hold the pattern of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13), that is, to call Bible things by Bible names (1 Cor. 2:12-14), it is quite likely that the history of Christianity in the world would have been written in far less tragic terms. (Is it not a notorious fact that the professional "theologians" brought about the disunity of Christendom with their conflicting speculations? On what basis, then, do we expect their breed to effect the reunion of Christendom through present-day "ecumenical" movements?) I have never been able to convince myself that the Almighty is interested in the jargon of the seminaries.

I wish to acknowledge, with sincere thanks, the permissions which have been granted me to use the various excerpts from other works that will be found in this textbook. The names of publishers and authors who have been kind enough to grant these permissions are given, either in the List of Specific Abbreviations at the front of the book, or in the added Bibliographical Data at the end of each Part. In a very few instances, I have not been able to identify the publisher: in building a file over several decades I have neglected to attach this bibliographical data occasionally, and inadvertently. The excerpts themselves, however, are authentic.

Finally, it will be noted that quotations which appear in this text are from the American Standard Edition of the

AN APOLOGIA

Revised Version (A.D. 1901). A letter from Thomas Nelson and Sons informs me that permission is no longer necessary to quote from this Edition. I have used it, rather than the Revised Standard Version, largely for its accuracy. In my opinion, the Revised Standard Version tends to become more of a paraphrase at times than a translation.

C. C. C.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA

- 1) Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, II, 2, 117 ff.
- 2) Mary Ellen Chase, *The Bible and the Common Reader*, p. 9. Macmillan, New York, 1944.
- 3) Clyde T. Francisco, *Introducing the Old Testament*, pp. 3,4. Broadman Press, Nashville, 1950.
- 4) From *The El Paso Times*, March 5, 1964.