

The Reasonable Religion

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CHARLES COKE WOODS



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THE REASONABLE RELIGION

By

Rev. Charles Coke Woods, Ph. D.



Cincinnati:
JENNINGS AND GRAHAM
New York:
EATON AND MAINS

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To My Three Sons,
Edward, William, and Robert

A BEGINNING WORD

THIRTEEN thousand copies of these addresses were distributed over Central California by the courtesy of the Fresno *Morning Republican*. Requests for their publication in book form have come from various sources, including laymen engaged in active business, university students, and ministers of the gospel. Similar requests have come from members of the Los Angeles Methodist Preachers' Meeting, before whom three of the "Addresses" were read as "A Paper," in January, 1911.

By way of illustration, a phrase of current slang expresses the attitude of many people to-day: "Any old thing" will do for a religious belief. "Dowieism," "Tingleyism," "Eddyism," "Spiritualism," or almost anything else seems good enough for multitudes of people. People are after the very best in everything except in RELIGION. When it comes to that, "Any old thing" will do. A nightmare dream, some wild and weird hallucination, or some age-old vagary from the dense darkness of long-forgotten ages—anything will do when it comes

to RELIGION. But with these same people, "Any old thing" will not do when it comes to irrigation, architecture, agriculture, sanitation, and education. People who are so unintelligent and indiscriminate with regard to religion, are intelligent and discerning when it comes to other things. It is high time for a REASONABLE RELIGION. The following addresses seek to show that the essential teachings of the Christian Religion are supremely reasonable. These addresses plead, as their general title indicates, for "The Reasonable Religion." May they forward the cause of Him who said, "Come, let us reason together."

"Let us **REASON** together."—Isa. 1:18.

"As he **REASONED** of righteousness."—Acts 24:25.

"**A REASON** of the hope that is in you."—1 Pet. 3:15.

"Your **REASONABLE** service."—Rom. 12:1.

"If you think strongly enough you will be forced by science to believe in God."—Lord Kelvin.

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The Reasonable Religion

I

Experience and Explanation

If a man doubt, he ought to have a reason for his doubt. If a man believe, he ought to have a reason for his belief. Christianity does not bluff nor "beg the question." On the simple basis of reason alone it would not be difficult to show to a fair mind that it is more reasonable to believe the great essentials of Christianity than it is to doubt them. Are not Christian convictions the most intelligent convictions for a fair-minded person to hold? Are not the things that the Christian mind holds, reasonable things? Is it not really unreasonable not to believe them? Is it not perfectly reasonable to believe some things that lie beyond the reach of reason? He was a wise man who said, "Conceivability is not the limit of credibility." Every day we are trusting experiences which nobody can ex-

plain. The great bulk of our living is more a matter of experience than it is of explanation. Something like that is what Kant meant when he said that "The greatest truths are not thought out, but felt out."

In the most of things we walk by faith more than we do by sight. Even Solomon, who was always emphasizing the importance of a good understanding, says, "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding." He is trying to get us to see that the most intelligent thing we can do very often is to trust where we do not understand. And exactly this is what the common sense of mankind is doing every day. Take a few illustrations, which will make this point perfectly plain:

We trust nature every day where we do not understand. The sunlight is unexplainably mysterious. But nobody calls in question the propriety of trusting the sunlight. With all its mystery we accept its ministry. We are willing to experience the benefit of the sunlight, though we are unable to explain it. We trust in the sunlight, and lean not to our own understanding. This is sanity and a practical necessity.

Who has a satisfactory philosophy of fire? No scientist has found out the last secret, which belongs only to God. "Secret things belong to

God." He reserves enough secrets from us all to keep us profitably puzzling forever. He is good enough and wise enough to hold back a plenty to keep forever alive the soul's sense of wonder. And with this sense of wonder he is always wooing us on to something more wonderful. We must trust the fire to warm us and to cook our food, though we do not understand it. With all its mystery, we accept its ministry. Its usefulness to us lies in our experience of it, and not in anybody's explanation of it.

This line of illustration would hardly be complete without a reference to electricity. Nothing in all nature is quite so hard to understand. But we trust electricity to light our dwellings, to heal certain diseases, and to draw our cars across the city. What we ask is not so much an explanation of it, as that it shall be helpfully and experimentally related to our need. Even here, "Conceivability is not the limit of credibility." We believe far beyond the point where we can understand. And in all of this we do wisely and well.

Now, the credibility of these convictions about sunlight and fire and electricity is perfectly plain. It would be impracticable not to believe these things simply because there is much about all of them that no man can understand. It is a mark of intelligence on our part to hold the practical convictions about them that we do,

even though no man can explain all the mysteries connected with them. Our practical convictions concerning these things in nature are reasonable convictions. It is more reasonable to believe the things we do about them than it would be not to believe them. Keep in mind that that is the great truth toward which we are headed concerning the "Credibility of Christian Convictions."

Again, we trust HUMAN NATURE where we do not understand. If this were not true all practical human relationships would be impractical, if not impossible. Mutual confidence is necessary to commercial transactions. Often a trade is consummated between two men involving thousands of dollars, and yet they have never seen each other. They have simply trusted each other enough to trade.

I post my letter in California to a friend in New York, and go about my other duties without further care or concern about the letter. But an astonishing kind of confidence is involved in all of this, simple and commonplace as it may seem. Who can tell how many clerks, messengers, postmasters, engineers, and conductors—all absolutely unheard of by me and wholly unknown to me, that I have trusted with unquestioning confidence. This looks like a perfectly blind belief, but experience has convinced me that it is the most intelligent conduct

of which I am capable concerning such matters. And my faith is fully justified by the results. I am not so much in need of an explanation in these practical matters as I am of an experience. If the experience is satisfactory I can forego the explanation of the experience. Is not here an easy stepping-stone to the higher matters of the heart? In this case, as in many others, it is far wiser to have trusted before I understood than it would be to have waited to understand before I trusted. Of necessity, I must trust human nature far beyond the point where I can understand it. And in such matters no one calls in question the credibility of my convictions.

My child is stretched upon the operating table. He is stupefied by an ethereal chemical substance to the point of sound slumber. The surgeon's knife cuts close and keen about the vital centers of my boy. To me it is all a baffling mystery. I do not understand, but I do understand enough to trust him who does understand. So Dr. Joseph Parker beautifully remarks that though Abraham went out "not knowing whither he went, he did know with whom he went."

Now, we have found that, as a rule, our convictions are credible with reference to NATURE. We have found it not only necessary to trust NATURE beyond the point where we could

understand, but we have found it practically profitable. We have found many things here that are experienceable, but not explainable.

We have also confirmed the credibility of our convictions with reference to HUMAN NATURE. We have found it consistent to confide where we could not comprehend. In the most of our human relationships this has been the only intelligent procedure. These two steps have made us ready for the third step which will lift us above the foot-hills up to the high Sierras of the soul.

We may intelligently trust the SUPERNATURAL every day where we do not understand. If I can trust a machinist who has made a great machine, why can I not trust a great Creator who has made a great creation? If I was not disappointed in trusting in the lower spheres where I could not understand, what reason have I to think that I shall be disappointed in trusting in the higher ranges of the heart, where I can not understand? I know that my soul feels sure of more truth than my mind understands. I know that I can experience far more than I can explain. In the lower spheres of life I know that the all-important thing has been the experience, and not the explanation. The facts of the forces with which I have had to deal have meant more to me than the philosophy of the forces. And I am ready

to sing with the songful poet this sweet song
of faith:

“I will not doubt, though all my ships at sea
 Come drifting home with broken masts and sails;
 I shall believe the Hand that never fails,
From seeming evil worketh good for me;
And though I weep because those sails are battered,
Still will I cry, while my best hopes lie shattered—
 ‘I trust in Thee!’

“I will not doubt, though all my prayers return,
 Unanswered, from the still, white realm above;
 I shall believe it is an all-wise Love
Which has refused those things for which I yearn;
And though at times I can not keep from grieving,
Yet the pure ardor of my fixed believing
 Undimmed shall burn.

“I will not doubt, though sorrows fall like rain,
 And troubles swarm like bees about a hive;
 I shall believe the heights for which I strive
Are only reached by anguish and by pain;
And though I groan and tremble with my crosses,
I yet shall see through my severest losses
 The greater gain.

“I will not doubt; well anchored in the faith,
 Like some staunch ship, my soul braves every gale,
 So strong its courage that it will not fail
To breast the mighty, unknown sea of death.
Oh, may I cry when body parts with spirit,
‘I do not doubt!’ so listening worlds may hear it,
 With my last breath!”

II

The Spirit of Christianity and the Spirit of Science

ALL truth is of God, and all lovers of God ought to be lovers of all truth. It was the greatest Teacher of truth who said, "The truth shall make you free." Every great truth has had to fight for freedom. Of every great truth it may be said, "This is that which came out of great tribulation." This is as true of Science as it is of Christianity. Every great truth in each has had to climb to its place of power through a baptism of blood.

Let it be said here that there never has been any real conflict between the true spirit of Christianity and the true spirit of Science. Each has set its soul on the truth. There have been conflicts between theories held by Christians and theories held by Scientists. But the theory of any truth and the truth of that theory are sometimes as wide apart as the poles. Theories of Christianity have often been at war with themselves, and it is well for the truth

of Christianity that they were. Science has had to shift its theoretic "Feelers" for the facts a thousand times. Prejudices on both sides have often joined in combat. The conflict has been between the methods and theories for finding the truth. One said it was in the foot-hills, and the other that it was in "the high Alps." One said it was here, and the other said it was there, but the real Christian and the real Scientist has set his soul on finding "the real thing." When that is found both are satisfied. Nothing short of that will quench the fever for the facts. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst," is the principle that applies to every honest seeker after truth. And this is the spirit of Christianity. It is also the spirit of Science.

This short study is to show the kinship between the real SPIRIT of real Christianity and the real SPIRIT of real Science. As to origin, scope, and career, there is no claim of equality. The contention here is that the SPIRIT of Christianity and the SPIRIT of Science are close of kin.

One tendency of the last twenty-five years in particular has been to over-intellectualize everything. Now, a close look into facts and conditions will show that this tendency is not superlatively and symmetrically intelligent. Men do not reach supreme intelligence by

exclusive mental measurements. There is the poetic feeling which finds its way to the truth as swiftly as a sunbeam finds a flower. There is the instinctive search which swiftly and surely finds the goal. Mere mechanical mental processes are painful and plodding. What I plead for is the intelligent recognition of the higher ranges of revelation. What the age needs is to find its way beyond the mere intellectual fact to the great spiritual truth toward which the fact points.

The highest intelligence always takes note of the fact that there is somewhat infinitely worth while beyond the reach of mere mentality. The mockingbird can not explain its music. It does not know music by explanation, but by experience. So we may know a lot of things by the heart that we can never know by the head. Let us hunt the truth by running out on every highway—the Intellect, the Sensibility, the Will, and natural Instinct. But let us know that mere mentality is not the only way that we reach truth or that truth reaches us. Truth may reach us and we may reach truth by the activities of the will. (“He that doeth My will shall know.”) We may reach the truth and the truth may reach us by instinct, intuition, imagination, and poetic feeling. A great artist’s suggestion concerning the work of a student was in one word, “Amplius”—wider. That is

what we all need to-day in our ways of searching for the truth. We need to search for truth in the spheres of the will, in the rhythmic realms of emotion, in the floral fields of imagination, and get as much by purely intellectual processes as possible. This is not a plea for the disuse of any faculty, but for the full use of all.

The Spirit of Christianity and the Spirit of Science are constructive. They came not to destroy, but to fulfill. Neither can be consistent and not seek for some Creator back of every creature. An uncreated creature is unthinkable to them both. Edison said that he wanted to take as many things as he could apart and put them together again. There is the spirit of your true scientist—the taking things apart is only a way of finding out how to put them together again. And the Founder of Christianity said, “I came not to destroy, but to fulfill.”

The Spirit of Christianity and the Spirit of Science both recognize the necessity and ministry of mystery. The balanced mind must recognize the law of limitation everywhere. There is only one absolute Infinite. There can not be two. Paul stated a great scientific as well as Christian truth when he said, “We know in part.” Every Geologist will say that about the rocks. Every Botanist will say that about the flowers. Every Astronomer will say

that about the stars. And if the Scientist must say it about the stars, may not Christian Paul say it about the Soul? If Science must say it about the lesser spheres, may not Christianity say it about the largest spheres?

No fair mind would condemn a lantern because it did not flash its light at once to the end of the journey. It shows clearly here and now a part of the pathway. That is service to be appreciated. We thank Proctor for giving us some secrets about the stars. We thank Paul for giving us some secrets about the soul.

When I see so many patches of blue between rifted clouds, I conclude that beyond the clouds there must be a whole sky of blue. My soul feels the truth that there is more to be seen than it sees. Tennyson was wont to say that Love was as real to him as a brick. Lowell felt the truth of the unseen when he said, "Behind the dim unknown standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."

The close kinship of Christianity and Science is shown by the similarity of their interpretation of Providence. That any intelligent creator of any worthy thing should be interested in his creation, is a self-evident proposition. Science is pleased to call the doings of the Creator and the methods of His creation "the ways of nature." Science says, Nature does thus and so. Christianity means what Science means, only

Christianity means more than Science means. Science teaches that a watch is the product of a watch-maker. Christianity teaches that a world is the product of a World-Maker. Here the attitude of the Christian toward the world and its Maker is precisely that of the Scientist toward the watch and its maker. The Science of Mathematics has its roots in a mathematical mind. Man has not made mathematics. He has only made the discovery of mathematics. When he finds a book full of mathematical figures he knows that some mathematical mind made the book and the figures. The Christian finds the Nature Book full of segments, circles, lines, angles, and proportions. He knows that some mathematical Mind has made this material nature book. The snowflake is constructed with perfect geometrical precision. Water freezes geometrically. When a block of wood or a piece of iron is carved into geometrical proportions, Science says it was done by a mathematical mind. And Science is right. When frost forms geometrically in lines and angles on the window pane, Christianity says it was done by a mathematical Mind. And Christianity is right. Science and Christianity are both right. They see the same truth, but they do not always give the same name to the same truth.

If the Scientist were exploring a new country and should find telegraph wires stretched across

it he would say, "Some workman has been here." When the scientific Christian explores the human body and finds nerve wires stretched through every portion of it, he says, "Some Workman has been here." The evidence in each case is unescapable by any process of sane thinking. The scientific mind discovering a glass eye in a man's head, is sure there must be a maker of glass eyes somewhere. The Christian, with equal accuracy, finding a natural eye in a man's head, is sure there must be a Maker of natural eyes somewhere. Here Christianity and Science are both right again, and there is no conflict between them.

The difference between the Spirit of real Science and the Spirit of real Christianity is in form and not in fact. Science calls the workman Nature. Christianity calls Him God.

Christianity is perfectly scientific when it teaches that God is interested in the smallest things. "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He cares for me." The microscope shows as much beauty in the algæ on a country pond as there is in a landscape garden. No earthly gardener could make that beautiful algæ. Its beauty is proof positive of a Beautifier. "God, the perfection of beauty hath shined." The microscope shows His beauty in the moss. The telescope shows His beauty in the stars. The eye of a fly is as wondrously constructed as St.

Paul's Cathedral. If the Cathedral was made by an architect, the eye of the fly was made by an Oculist.

Christianity is scientific in saying that God has ways of bringing about results that are not dreamed of in men's philosophies. Human workmen are building the Panama Canal. Who built the canal of the Amazon? Human workmen built the dikes of Holland. What workman threw up against the sky the dikes of the Rockies and the Sierras? Science says that Nature heaved these dizzy dikes. Christianity says God did it through Nature.

Lately Science has heard the call of Christianity and is turning its search upon the soul. This is well. But let Science be as fair in searching the soul as she is in searching the stars. Let her be sure that there is something worth while beyond what she sees and knows. In both spheres, and especially in the soul, there is always a larger truth than the one she sees. The credibility of Scientific convictions is not invalidated by necessary mental limitations. The same is true of the "Credibility of Christian Convictions."

III

Who Is God?

As a religious influence some sort of conviction concerning God is well nigh, if not quite, universal among men. Such conviction existed centuries before there could be any world conclave to agree upon such conviction. The conviction has expressed itself from the crudest signs to the finest forms of silken speech. Just as a man is a very different creation from the clothes he wears, so is every conviction different from the form that gives it expression.

In the world-wide light of truth to-day we can plainly see certain distorted convictions concerning God. Some earnest and sincere people have held these convictions to their hurt. It is plain that any great truth and a mere theory concerning that truth may be separated by vast differences.

In this study we are to examine in a plain and practical way some of the leading distorted convictions that have been held concerning God. And we are to see the incredibility of these erro-

neous convictions. The weariness of the world has outworn them because they did not give the world's weariness rest. The world's wickedness turns away from these distorted notions about God because they do not show the way to righteousness. Mankind's sorrow sobs on in its dirge of doubt because these false ideas about God hold up no single torch of hope for its darkness and despair. The attritions of trouble soon wear out that which gives neither help nor hope. Service to the soul is the supreme test of the greatest truth.

Some true idea of the truth is always possible. So the true idea of the true God is possible. Above and beyond all the names of God is the fact of God. Beyond every symbol is the supreme and original reality. That is who God is, the supreme and absolutely real person. God is the supreme source. It will help us to find the credible convictions concerning God by examining a few of the incredible convictions concerning Him. These false convictions have spoilt many a soul and have played havoc with many a heart.

There is the irrational idea of A TYRANNICAL GOD. He is a despot. He rules to ruin and He ruins to rule. Not kindness but cruelty is His chief characteristic. The idea is easily traceable to the darkest days of the unchristian world. Such an idea was never hinted in the

teachings of Christ. It is nowhere to be found in the Bible. If any Christian minds ever held such an idea the Christian mind of to-day is sure that such an idea was never Christian. It is now a matter of sincere regret throughout the most intelligent part of the Christian world that such an idea ever grew like a noxious weed among the fragrant flowers of Christian truth. It is an unbelievable and unpreachable idea concerning God.

Then there is the narrow and distorted idea of a SECTARIAN GOD. Some who hold this notion seem to think that God is pleased because of the mere fact that they belong to one Denomination rather than to another. Many such are sincere, but they forget that it is the quality of a man's character, rather than his theoretical creed, that pleases or displeases God. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." They forget that the Christian's God is everybody's God who will love Him and trust Him. He can not be confined by any creed. He goes far afield to find the lost. He finds love in many a barren land. He is out in the world's wilderness saying, and ever saying, "Whosoever will may come." He is no sectarian God. He is the whole world's God to succor and to save.

Another false idea of God is that He is an INDISCRIMINATE GOD. He generalizes His good-

ness into something in general, but nothing in particular. According to this theory, the good and the bad are both much alike to Him, and there will be little, if any, difference in their destinies. They believe that the wretched assassins of Lincoln, McKinley, and Garfield will arrive at last at the same glad goal as that of their great, good victims. This idea of an indiscriminate God misses the pivotal point in the whole human drama. People who hold this theory do not seem to see that at their own door human society, with all its foibles and limitations, will not allow even here and now the good man and the bad man to have the same social destiny. Would not this common conscience of mankind allot the good and the bad to different destinies hereafter? If we justify the human mind in this social distinction here, must we not also justify in our truest thinking the Divine Mind in a corresponding spiritual distinction hereafter? This is one of the vital points in the human drama that this theory of an indiscriminate God entirely misses.

But you say, "The darkness and the light are both alike to God." That is a true and beautiful way of saying that God is the master of the night as well as the day. Nobody doubts that. But that fine phrase does not say that right and wrong are alike to God. No, they

are not alike even to you and to me, much less to the great good God. Even you would not let a cobra in among your little children as readily as you would a dove. And are we to reckon that God, the infinite-minded, will indiscriminately mix assassins and saints in the life that is to come? Goodness gravitates to its goal as surely as Newton's falling apple. Is it not truthfully and sadly said of Judas that "He went to his own place?" He was not driven by any scourging whip—he went.

God is not a Tyrant. He is not a Sectarian God. And He is not an Indiscriminate God. To intelligence these notions about God are becoming more and more unthinkable. These theories are found to be false when measured by humanity's common sense of fairness. They are found to be false when measured by the consensus of the largest human intelligences. They are all found to be false in the searching light of the Bible.

Now, how far have we come in our reckoning? We have found at least three convictions about God which are now considered incredible. We have found at least three trails which do not lead to the truth about God. Having found this much, let us search for "the true and living way." Let us look at some credible Christian convictions concerning God.

Christianity holds the conviction that God

is a Person. It is wholly ungrammatical as well as irrational to speak of Him as "It." Nobody claiming sanity would say that a clock came by chance. Who would dare to say that the seasonal clock-work of the universe came by chance? The seasons are as timely as the movements of a clock. It is unthinkable that a clock should not have a person of mechanical intelligence back of its machinery. Then must not some Supreme Personal Sanity direct the Seasons?

The three things that chiefly characterize a Person are ideas, feelings, and actions. Your Psychologist would say that they are "intellect, sensibility, and will." These three things are traceable through all the works of men.

Every great musical composition shows the composer to have been possessed of ideas, feelings, and actions. The painter puts undoubt-able proof of these three things into his pictures. In this illustrative particular, let Music and Painting stand for the workmanship of men.

Ideas, feelings, and actions run through all the personal products of men. What Beethoven thought and felt and did are all in his "Symphonies." What Angelo thought and felt and did are all in his "Last Judgment."

But Nature is full of music that no man made or could make. The violinist stretches the chords of his violin to just such a tension

before he can draw forth the music that he wants. But who stretched those marvelous musical chords in the mockingbird's throat? No man did that. But some person did. WHO? Is not the Christian answer the only reasonable one? It is simple, sensible, straightforward. Christianity says that GOD stretched the chords in the mockingbird's throat. Let him disprove it who can.

You say the Painter puts the color in his pictures. Certainly. That is a credible account as to how the color came there. But here is a flower garden. It is full of roses, lilies, daisies, violets, galardias, poppies, and poinsettias, and many other flowers. Color came into these flowers somehow. Who put the color into the picture we were considering a moment ago? Ah, yes; the Painter. Who put the color into these flowers? Who but the flower Maker? And His name is God. Is any other rational answer possible, either about the color in the picture or the color in the flower?

We are tracing here a great truth. That truth is that there are two classes of made things. In a sense one class of things man made. But who made the other class of things which no man made or could make? Somebody other than man, that is God.

If the book on Astronomy which tells about the stars must have a maker, must not the

stars themselves have a Maker? If the book on flowers must be the product of a person, how were the flowers themselves produced? If the lesser thing must have a creator, must not the greatest thing also have a Creator? If every creation must be the product of a creator, must not every created person be the product of a Personal Creator? The Christian conviction about God is that He is a person. Is not this a credible conviction? Is it not a thousand-fold more believable than doubtful? Even so.

It is a Christian conviction about God that He is infinitely wise. He is the source of all truth. He is the source of all true inspirations. In the presence of great problems and great enterprises we feel safe in the hands of great wisdom. We have reason to fear when values of any kind are entrusted to a foolish person. But in the hands of wisdom we are unafraid. A little lad I knew went fearlessly through a dark forest at night when owls hooted and winds moaned, because his father, who knew the way, held his hand. Are we not all like that little lad? Nothing will drive away the fevered fears of life like calm confidence in the All-wise Father. The Christian thinking of to-day is more and more centering around the great truth of God's Fatherhood. It is fatal to all fears to have serene confidence in the All-wise

Father. It is always the supreme act of the highest human intelligence, when it does not know, to trust Him who does know.

The fitting of means to ends is always a mark of wisdom. As the wisdom of a machinist is traceable through every part of a great machine, so the wisdom of the Creator is traceable through every part of His creation. All the wise words that men have spoken about the works of nature have been drawn from the wisdom of God that runs like a thread of Gold through a piece of skillfully woven cloth. Men have put the wisdom into their nature books because God put it first into His Book of Nature. "The firmament sheweth His handiwork." The credible Christian conviction about God is that He is a Person who is infinitely wise.

That He is an All-powerful Person is another Christian conviction about God. If power is put out it must be the output of some power. There is power which works in the wisest ways that is plainly not of men. Whence comes the wind's power, the water's power, the earthquake's power, and a thousand other forms of power? It is the output of an Almighty Personality. "The Thunder of His power who can understand?"

Another Christian Conviction is that "God is love," and infinitely good. It is the conviction of mankind that there must be a supreme

Goodness somewhere. This is certainly the Christian conviction. And are not these Christian convictions about God credible? If we turn away from these convictions, to what shall we turn?

IV

The Voice Supreme

IF God is All-wise, All-powerful, and All-good, as we have seen in a previous study, then He can speak to man if He will, and He will speak to man if He can. It is the nature of mind to communicate with mind. That natural impulse is back of all spoken and written language. In that natural impulse to speak lies the origin of all language. The greater the personal intelligence, the personal power, and the personal love, the more urgent is this impulse, and, as Ralph Waldo Emerson would say, this "Appulse" to speak.

It is unthinkable that an infinite Creator should not in some manner speak some word to His most intelligent creature on earth. It is more reasonable to believe that He does than it is to believe that He does not. At the very root of all educational processes and that which makes human education possible is this speaking down of the higher mind to the lower mind. This is the way the superior minds of science,

philosophy, history, and literature lift up and educate the race. This principle of teaching reaches back and up to the infinite Mind which speaks down to the human mind. That is just what the highest human intelligence would expect. Does not this statement meet that expectation? "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Surely supreme intelligence must speak somehow, sometime.

Every great conviction and every great human cause has its voice. Music, art, literature, science, philosophy; invention, discovery, religion—each has only a few great voices that speak above the clamor of the crowd.

Luther spoke for Protestantism. Lincoln spoke for Liberty. Moses and David spoke for the highest in Judaism. Jesus and Paul spoke for Christianity. All of these were spokesmen for God and for the soul of man.

It would be interesting to notice here the inner voice, "the still small voice." There is such a voice, and Christianity calls that voice God's voice. Some poet has put the truth in song:

"I heard a voice; it spoke unto my will;
A voice which gives my heart sweet joy and peace,
A voice from which I never ask release,
A silent voice—I hear it ever still.

“ It called me from the land of fear and doubt;
It bid me to forsake the base, and feel
The impulse of the pure and true and real;
It led the way when all was dark without.

“ Where'er I go that voice remains my guest;
Still I am but a follower of Him
Who bids me through the voice which speaks within,
To labor well and then in peace to rest.”

God has three great books. There is the book of Nature, the book of Human Nature, and the book of the Supernatural. A careful study of the first two books will help us to understand the third. God speaks in each of these books, but we must be fair and impartial or we shall miss His meaning.

Let us take up first the book of Nature. This ought to be an easy book to begin with, because it is right at hand. We have been scanning the pages of this book ever since we were born. Surely we ought to know something about it by this time. But how much do we actually know? Do we find any mysteries in this book? If we do find any mysteries in this book, do we on that account deny its truth and genuineness? We must consider those two questions together all through this study. We are too sensible to reject the contents of the book of Nature simply because we find mystery there. This book of Nature, in large and easy outlines, has four parts.

There is the part which treats of Minerals. Do we find any mysteries here? Yes, but we need to keep in mind that we find satisfactory ministries here in spite of the mysteries. Here are gems, pearls, diamonds, and precious stones innumerable. Some of these stones are made from wood. They are commonly called "Petrifified wood." There is a great natural factory in Arizona where such stones are made. No man's eye has ever seen the factory's foreman. There is no sound of flying belts and whirling wheels. No thud of hammer nor clip of chisel breaks the stillness day nor night. Are all these processes of making beautiful stones from an old dead tree perfectly plain? Is there anything mysterious about moss agate? What about the topaz, the bloodstone, the moonstone? Has any lapidary explained the make and mystery of the scintillating diamond? We accept the truth of structure, beauty, and utility in all of these. We do not permit the mystery they hold for us to prevent their ministry to us.

In this book of Nature there is the second part, which treats of Vegetables. Here are flavors that delight the taste and beauties that charm the eye. Any mysteries here? Why is one rose white, another red, another yellow, and all in the same air, the same soil, the same sunshine. How does the turnip have one flavor, the peach another, the plum another, the lemon

another, the orange another, and the cherry still another, and all in the same air, the same soil, the same sunshine? There are many guesses, but who knows? Even here is there not some real sense in which "Secret things belong to God?" We never think of objecting to the beauty and fragrance and flavor and nourishment simply on account of the mystery we find in these things. The test in all of these things is not in explaining them, but in experiencing them.

Now we might look at the next part in this book of Nature, which treats of ELECTRICITY. The very word, electricity, is almost a synonym for mystery. There is the telegraph, the telephone, the megaphone, the graphophone, wireless telegraphy, and many other electrical contrivances. We are utterly baffled here with multitudinous mysteries. Still we are sane enough to accept their ministries in spite of their mysteries. Here again it is not a matter of explanation, but a matter of experience. We may have the explanation, but we must have the experience. And we feel, and feel intelligently, that we must have these electrical experiences whether anybody can explain them or not.

Still another part in this book of Nature treats of Animals. In recent years we have been reading authentic accounts of photographs

made by using the lens from the eye of an ox. Any mystery in that? South American butterflies have caught all the glory of the rainbow in their wings. In the cabinet of a great University I have seen the lunar moths which might well awaken the wonder of an angel. It took the ingeniousness of God to make them. No wonder they puzzle the scientist. The snake changes his skin with as much care as a lady does her dress. Who makes our silk? A little worm. No wonder we "worms of the dust" are so fond of wearing it. Did you ever hear of anybody objecting to using silk on account of the mystery connected with its making? Silk is a matter of experience and not a matter of explanation. I have seen a sunfish in a prairie pond guarding off the enemy from the spawn with all the bravery and skill of a human soldier on picket duty. Who gathers all our honey? A little insect. But we do not object to the honey on account of the mystery connected with its making. My conclusion is that this book of Nature is vastly useful and helpful, though there are many things in it which are hard to be understood.

Next we are to look into the book of HUMAN NATURE. It has three parts. One on the Body, another on the Mind, and another on the Soul. How does thought affect the brain? How does the brain affect the thinking? Who can trace

the subtle processes of thinking? But we trust these processes every day as reliable and genuine, in spite of their mystery. Here again we may have the explanation, but we must have the experience.

The next part in this book of Human Nature treats of EMOTIONS. Why does martial music create in us the battle mood? Why does the sight of an old faded photograph of mother touch us to tears? Who has measured the gulfs of human grief? Who can measure the storms of human passion? Yet this realm of emotion holds the sweetest things of the heart. The chapter on love in this book of Human Nature is lyric with all the sweetest music of mankind. No matter how much the mystery, we can never forego the ministry of love. O, my heart, it is the experience and not the explanation that sets my sobbing lips to singing.

One more part in this book of Human Nature treats of the WILL. This power is the executive of the human machinery of the world. Back of the engine's power is the greater power of the engineer's will. Everybody is glad to accept the ministries of the human will. Nobody can explain the mysterious movements of the human will. The same great truth which has met us so often before, meets us here again. Through all this great book of Human Nature it is a matter of practical personal experience,

and not a matter of philosophical explanation. We must experience. We will explain, if we can.

In closing this study we are to look into our SUPERNATURAL Book. It is unscholarly and even foolish to put this book in the same class with the pagan bibles of the world. It can not be thus classed as to its origin, contents, characteristics, or its inspiring effects on the mind of mankind. Max Müller, the scientific expert in the comparative study of the world's religions, deliberately declared himself as follows: "Readers who have been led to believe that the Vedas of the ancient Brahmins, the Avesta of the Zoroastrians, the Tripitaka of the Buddhists, the Kings of Confucius, or the Koran of Mohammed are books full of primeval wisdom and religious enthusiasm, or at least of sound and simple moral teaching, will be disappointed on consulting these volumes." Again this great expert says, "They contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial, and silly, but even hideous and repellent." That is what experts have found out about the so-called "Sacred Books of the East." These books are outranked by the Bible as a dewdrop is outranked by the sea. This will appear further as we look more into the subject. It will specially appear as we examine the Bible's characteristics and its challenge to the intellect of the centuries, a little later on in these studies.

V

What Good Does Doubting Do?

LET us consider a few points concerning the doubter and the Bible. Did doubting the Bible ever do anybody any good? Did doubting the Bible ever do a community any good? Did it ever do a nation any good? Let it be remembered that intelligent, honest inquiry is not doubt. Of all books, the Bible is the Book that courts inquiry. It says, "O, taste and see." That is one way of saying test and see. The Bible says, "Come, now, let us reason together." In the New Testament the appeal is made for "a reasonable service." In another place in the New Testament it is urged that the Christian be ready to "give a reason for the hope that is in him."

The Bible is a reasonable Book. Any just person ought to be very slow in pronouncing against anything which he has not carefully examined. Have you not noticed that the people who have examined the Bible most are always the slowest to pronounce against it and the quickest to pronounce for it? Does any objector to the Bible know that every single figure of

speech in the Book of Isaiah where nature is referred to is in perfect harmony with the fact as it is found in nature? This is a simple matter in the literature of the Bible which anybody can see for himself; but you can not find without hunting, and you can not see without looking. If the verbal form of Isaiah's message is absolutely correct and every reference to nature perfectly accurate, is it not reasonable to believe that the substance of that message is correct also?

Any honest man may find these facts for himself. The field to the facts is open. Here, as elsewhere, the searchers are the finders. But if a man doubt a fact in the material world, is it not apt to have some material effect upon him? If a man doubt a fact in the mental world, will it not have some mental effect upon him? So if a man doubt a fact in the spiritual sphere, will it not have some spiritual effect upon him? Here we ask again, What practical effect does your doubting the Bible have on your every-day living experience? Does it give you comfort in sorrows to doubt the Bible? Does doubting the Bible give you strength to master your temptations? Does doubting the Bible help to clear the skies of your hope? Does doubting the Bible scatter the clouds of your despair? Certainly unbelief on the great points of God and His Word does

not help anybody in any way. The pivotal point here is that a man's personal every-day experiences are closely connected with his belief or disbelief concerning God and the Bible. Is it not more important that we have a satisfactory experience concerning God and the Bible, than it is that we have a satisfactory explanation of that experience?

The doubter's method misses many of the most important points in this whole investigation. Has he noticed that the happiest communities are always where the Bible's influence is greatest? Anybody may scoff. Somebody has scoffed at every invention and at every great discovery, but his scoffing has not been justified. The scoffer scoffed at Washington, Lincoln, and Edison. All great leaders have been scoffed at by the scoffers. The Bible says, "Come and see," but the scoffer will not look. The Bible says, "Listen," but the scoffer will not hear. The Bible says, "Try me and see," but the scoffer will not try it. The Bible says "Come, let us reason," but the scoffer is unreasonable.

Another mistake is made by the doubter. He looks with suspicion on anything that he can not explain. He forgets that the truth of anything does not at all depend on whether he can understand it or explain it. The principle of mathematics which he understands now is

not any truer because he understands it than it was before he understood it, and every principle of mathematics which he does not understand and can not explain, is just as true as if he did understand it and could explain it.

The whole attitude of the doubter is a mistaken one. He is looking into a black space in the sky into which no shining star will ever swim. There is your doubter's principal trouble. He looks chiefly at dark spots and negatives. This will never completely explain anything. But when he can not explain, he refuses to believe. I would rather believe everybody and be fooled, than to believe nobody and be a fool. I would rather follow a reasonable trust, than to blunder along after an untrustworthy reason.

There is a rational trust and this may be sometimes true where there is no rational understanding. I trust the teacher because I do not understand the lesson. I trust the guide in the mountains because I do not know the trail. I trust the engineer and the conductor because I can not manage the engine nor the train. Many things may be genuine and trustworthy far beyond the little point where my reason stops. I have seen the skylark soar away to the sky. When he dived into the upper blue out of my sight, I knew he must still be there. The greatest truths about life, and love, and God are all like that. They are so agile of

wing and their sky sphere is so vast that they fly up and away beyond my sight. There is always a larger truth about God and His dealings with us than the one truth we see. The largest truths lie just beyond our mortal sight.

Another point which it is very important to remember is that there are various kinds or classes of truth. Every kind of truth has some kind of test to match it. There is physical truth; there is intellectual truth; there is spiritual truth. You test music by musical tests; you test chemicals by chemical tests; you test flowers and plants by botanical tests. All this is fair and reasonable, and it is a sure way to find out the truth about all of these things.

But you can not find out the truth about the Bible by putting it into a chemical solution; you can not find out the truth about the Bible by looking at it through a telescope. You can test a star that way, but you can not test the Scriptures that way. You can find out the truth about a man's height by a measuring stick. You can find out the weight of his body by a weighing machine, but you can not find out the truth about his soul by that kind of test. All the different kinds of truth have their proper and appropriate tests. All this is said to remind us that there are certain proper tests for the Bible. Let the doubter be fair in his tests of the Bible.

VI

The Bible's Challenge

THE Bible challenges the intellect of the centuries by its origin. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. They were inspired to write history, prophecy, poetry, epistles. This is affirmed on well authenticated facts. Here is an open field and a fair fight. I declare boldly on the statement of the Bible itself that it originated with the Spirit of God, who spoke to and through the spirits of men. If this claim can not be disproved by undoubt-able facts, then in the estimation of fair minds it must stand. The Bible inspires in men the same spirit which we would expect it to inspire had it originated with God. And this is the claim with which we start this study.

The unity of the Bible challenges the intellect of the centuries. There is not a word in the book of Revelations which might not have consistently proceeded from the writer of Genesis, so far as the spirit of truth is con-cerned. Moses nowhere contradicts the man of Patmos. Isaiah and Paul in every essential

point substantially agree. The teaching of the first Psalm and the Sermon on the Mount are in perfect harmony. The Decalogue and the Golden Rule walk down the ages hand in hand. Here are sixty-five books bound in one book called the Bible. They were written in three different languages. They were written by forty different authors. The period of their composition spanned a space of fifteen hundred years. But many of these writers were of necessity total strangers to the others. Yet the man who writes a thousand years from the time the other one writes, agrees with him perfectly.

Why not apply the principles of intelligence here to account for this unity that we would apply elsewhere? What if I were a telegraph operator and I should receive sixty-five messages from about fifty different men, some from the north, some from the south, some from the east, some from the west, but every one containing the thoughts and ideas of the presidential "Thanksgiving proclamation?" I would reasonably conclude that the presidential mind was the author of these sixty-five proclamations. Well, when I find that the ideas and thoughts of these sixty-five books of the Bible substantially agree as to sin, salvation, and human destiny, I conclude that they all proceed from the mind of God. That is fair reasoning elsewhere. It is fair reasoning here.

The complete candor of the Bible challenges the intellect of the centuries. When it takes up the discussion of any character, it tells the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about that character. It does not "beg the question." It is not evasive. It goes straight to the heart of the truth. The Bible flashes the facts right into the reader's face. It tells the whole truth about Moses, David, Peter, Paul. It says Moses killed a man and hid him in the sand. It says David was guilty of double crime. It says Peter denied his Lord. It says Paul was once a persecutor of Christianity and was "exceeding mad" against Christians. It tells the worst. It tells the best.

The vitality of the Bible challenges the intellect of the centuries. In South America some of the most beautiful flowers bloom best after a storm sweeps over them. That is what the Bible has been doing for these long centuries. Voltaire tried to kill it. Tom Paine tried to kill it. Hume tried to kill it. Ingersoll tried to kill it. But the effect of all these infidel efforts was like the effect of a big bellows blowing its breath into a furnace of coals. It has been torn to pieces page by page. It has been cut to pieces with knives. Its pages have been burnt to ashes.

But the presses teem with tens of thousands more copies of this Book than ever before in

the history of humanity. You can kill a myth. You can kill a fable. Ralph Waldo Emerson said that few books live to be more than a year old. For thousands of books that were "the best sellers" ten and fifteen years ago, there is no demand at all now. They are a drug on the market. They are dead. They did not die of cerebral paralysis. They did not have enough cerebral matter in them to paralyze. They did not die of heart-failure, for there was not enough heart in them to fail. But the Bible is a book whose unquenchable vitality amazes mankind. Such vitality challenges the intellect of the centuries.

The influence of the Bible on mankind challenges the intellect of the centuries. This is a very practical test of its divineness. What kind of influence does the Bible have on men? Test it by its fruit. That is fair. One single phase of the Bible's influence is the growing wonder of the world. The missionary is the pioneer in the greatest forward movements of mankind. And his magic wand is the message of the Bible. Any man who really wants to know the truth may read the record himself and find it to be a fact that the Fiji Islands have been changed under the influence of the Bible from man-eaters to clean, consistent Christians. China is being revolutionized by the Bible. India has heard the Bible's call,

"Awake, thou that sleepest." She is brushing the slumber of centuries from her eyes. The influence of the Bible to awaken the greatest nations of the world is a challenge to the intellect of the centuries.

The Bible has challenged and conquered the intellect of great leaders. William Gladstone called the Bible "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scriptures." His opinion on that subject is worth more than Spencer's or Huxley's or Darwin's. These last were not overstudious students of the Scriptures. When asked what made England great, Queen Victoria held aloft a copy of the English Bible, saying, "This is what has made England great."

Every school-boy knows what an earnest student Abraham Lincoln was of the Bible; that a text from the Bible was the keynote of his greatest speech in Springfield. It is a significant fact that the foremost leaders among us to-day are firm believers in the Bible.

1. The Bible has challenged and conquered the intellect of the greatest scientists. Michael Faraday, Richard Proctor, Lord Kelvin and Henry Drummond, and after a long, dark struggle with doubt and despair, Romanes himself came back with firm faith to God and the Bible. These are matters of reliable record. The records are open to any man who wants the truth.

2. The Bible has challenged and conquered the intellect of the greatest artists. Raphael, Angelo, Holman Hunt, Hoffman and Tissot found the Bible to be the world's greatest book of beauty. It is the picture-maker's Paradise.

3. The Bible has challenged and mastered the intellect of the greatest musicians. Where have the masters gone for their themes? Not to Socrates, nor Plato, nor Spencer, nor Darwin. They have gone to Moses, to Elijah, to David, to Paul, to Jesus. The greatest musicians have all gone to the Bible for their greatest inspirations. They have found their sweetest strains in this splendid symphony of the soul, God's great Book, my mother's blessed Bible.

4. The Bible has challenged and conquered the intellect of the greatest reformers. There is where John Knox found the spirit which led him to say, "Give me Scotland, or I die." There is where Wesley learned his wisdom. It is where Luther derived his invincible courage. The reformers have reformed the people and the Bible has reformed the reformers. Righteousness is our greatest word and war-cry this hour. And we got it from the Bible.

5. The Bible has challenged and conquered the intellect of the greatest writers. And who are the greatest writers? Generalization is easy. Let us name some of the greatest writers. Where did John Milton find the material for

the greatest epic poem in the English language? He found it in the Bible. Where did the greatest allegory in any language come from? John Bunyan drew it from the Bible. Shakespeare drank deeply at the Scriptural fountain. Walter Scott said to Lockhart, his secretary, "There is only one Book," pointing to the Bible. Dr. Henry Van Dyle has written a beautiful book entitled "The Poetry of Tennyson." In the chapter on "The Bible in Tennyson," he opens with this: "It is safe to say that there is no other book which has had so great an influence upon the literature of the world as the Bible." It challenges the literary intellect of the centuries.

There is nothing in the latest findings in the geology and topography of Bible lands that does not confirm the records of the Book. The facts in the Book fit the facts in the physical geography of the country. With every archæological discovery the world of scholarship is growing surer and surer of the Book. Its certainty and incisiveness bespeak the supernatural.

Coleridge said, "The Bible finds me out more deeply than any other book." More than any other book, it is a Book of the soul. That is true with reference to the sorrows of the soul. There are only two kinds of sorrow. There is a hopeless sorrow and there is a hopeful sor-

row. The Bible tells us that "We sorrow not as those who have no hope." No other book is such a comforter of human sorrow. It is the only Book whose light obliterates the darkness of death.

The Bible is the Book of the Soul with reference to the sins of the soul. It says, "The wages of sin is death." No man needs to go far in sin to find that truth scorched deep in his soul. Sin kills. It kills hope, happiness, and holiness.

But the Bible is a Book of the soul with reference to the soul's salvation. It is the only Book that tells how to recover from the wreck and ruin of sin. It tells of a Savior from sin. That story is unique in the world's literature. The more light you pour upon that sweet story, the more the weary world believes it. Yes, my heart, the Bible is the Book of the Soul. It tells of the only cure for sorrow. It names the only Savior from sin. Great Book of God, I will hold thee close to my heart forever. Surely, "The word of the Lord is tried."

VII

No Escape from the Supernatural

A MIRACLE is an act and the result of an act which is out of the ordinary course of nature or human nature. It is the special sign of the special work of the supernatural. In the Christian sense it is something done which could not be done by nature or by human nature. The miracle may use both nature and human nature, but its source must lie above and beyond them both. The source and strength of a miracle must be in the hypernatural or supernatural.

We are to keep in mind that these studies are seeking to show that Christian Convictions are believable. They are more believable than are their opposites. They are certainly more satisfying to the soul than their antipodes. A very simple thing which some people seem to overlook is that no man evades the responsibility of believing something simply because he refuses to believe what Christians believe. If he does not believe what Christians believe,

then he will believe something else. What is that something else? Why does a man believe something else? These are fair questions. They ought to have affirmative and fair reply.

Another point ought to be noticed here for a moment. Disbelief in the higher things of the heart is no sign of superiority. Disregard for the spiritual is not a sign of intellectuality. Disbelief in miracles is no sign of mental and moral superiority. But a number of people who lay claim to so-called "Liberal intelligence," are tinged with that notion. Nor is belief in miracles a sign of mental or moral inferiority. A number of the "smart set" these days seem to suspect that it is. The claim is here made that in the light of the facts it is more intelligent to believe in miracles than it is not to believe in them. It would seem unreasonable if there were not something beyond the reach of reason.

But you say you have some doubts concerning miracles. That is a candid confession. Others have doubted. Have you examined the doubts of others to see whether or not they were well founded? Such an examination might put you back on the path of faith. And that is the examination which we now propose. Let us look the objections to miracles fairly in the face. Christian faith is not afraid of an open field and a fair fight. Perhaps a half dozen

objections might be considered representative of all of them. Let us turn the searchlight on a few of these samples.

Perhaps the first objectors to miracles were the Pharisees. They murdered a Man who is now acknowledged to have been the only perfect Man. They conceded that this Man could cast out devils, but they said that He did it through the prince of devils. Do not miss the point here. The murderers of the Man admitted His miracles. They were forced to believe what they actually saw. They said, "Indeed, a notable miracle has been wrought and we can not deny it." As to His method of performing the miracle, He answered them then and there. And that answer has never been disestablished. It has never been refuted by any foe of His. This objection to miracles is out of date. If one must have an objection, better find a new one. This one has been dead about two thousand years.

Then there are objections which have been called "heathen objections to miracles." They said that the miracles were wrought by some of the gods that filled the air. Again the point stands out that the miracles were admitted. This objection might be modernized so as to say that the miracles were wrought by microbes, or infusoria. That would have a more scientific sound. This fossil objection was a

product of Polytheism, and Polytheism has been dead for centuries and centuries.

There is what is known as the objection of Pantheism concerning miracles. A man by the name of Spinoza was the chief objector. The principal point in his objection was that it did not harmonize with his idea of God. What was Spinoza's idea of God? He held that God is everything and that everything is God. And that is Pantheism. The real intellect of the world has long ago discarded that notion. Tennyson has a poem on "The Higher Pantheism," which is beautifully Christian and infinitely removed from the Pantheism of Spinoza. Tennyson sings:

"Speak to Him, thou, for He hears,
And Spirit with Spirit can meet.
Closer is He than breathing,
And nearer than hands and feet."

There was the skeptical objection to miracles led by Hume. He claimed that miracles were not believable because they were contrary to human experience. But whose human experience was he talking about? Human experience is a broad word. This objector overlooked the fact that one human experience may reach realms of realization that another human experience has not yet reached. An artist reaches experiences in the discovery of beauty which is beyond the ordinary experiences of

men. It is easily possible that one human being may experience things which are not at all experienced by another. For essential egotism, Hume's objection to miracles stands as the masterpiece. It is hardly fair to make his own human experience the supreme gauge of all possible human experience. Such a position is little less than laughable now. One human experience is not big enough to measure all human experience. Hume was trying to measure the sea with his theoretical thimble. But no man's thimble is big enough to measure the sea.

When Hume presented his theory the telephone was not in harmony with human experience, nor the phonograph, nor wireless telegraphy—but nobody finds them “contrary to human experience” now. Real scholarship smiles at Hume's objection to miracles. Modern science and invention have made Hume's theory silly. Hume also confessed that he had not read the miracles of the Bible. Perhaps he had read some others which were “contrary to human experience.” But a man who, according to his own confession, has not seen a thing, would hardly be a reliable witness as to how it looks. A man who had never heard anything would scarcely be a good judge of music. Hume, never having seen nor experienced a miracle, nor having read an authentic account of those who did, is not a competent witness on the

subject. In the language of law his testimony would be "incompetent and irrelevant."

A man by the name of Paulus published a Commentary in 1800. He named it a "Rational Commentary." Well, alchemy was once considered rational, but not now in this day of chemical science. Astrology was once considered rational, but it is not so considered now in this day of Astronomy. Paulus said that Christ did not make bread for the five thousand. He said that Christ did not raise Lazarus from the dead, but that He sharply guessed the exact time when that good man would awaken from his slumbers. Now, anybody can say such things as Paulus said, but nobody can prove them. Paulus' position is neither theological, nor scientific, nor philosophical. It is whimsical and foolish. No modern mind can stand with him.

As we have seen before in these studies, experience is the all-important thing, and not an explanation of the experience. Experience is the great fact to be reckoned with in human life, whether anybody can explain it or not. The first thing the really scientific mind does is to find the fact, and then, as Romanes says, search for the principle behind the fact. Then the scientist will explain the fact, if he can. But if he can not explain the fact, the real scientist is intelligent enough to accept the

fact by faith, and so hold it until he finds an explanation, if one is possible.

All science admits that many things in matter and mind are believable, though the scientist may not be able to explain them. This is precisely the position the Christian mind takes toward the miraculous. The miraculous is a fact, though no one may ever be able to explain the fact of the miraculous. Much of the believable is inexplicable; so, much that is inexplicable in Christianity may still be rationally believable. Even science may be scientific and still leave some things unexplained. So Christianity may still be Christian, though it leave some things unexplained. Not explanation, but experience, is the all-important thing both in science and Christianity. There is always a point in everything beyond which no human mind can explain. It is so about a grain of sand. It is so about a star. It is so about the soul.

We are to keep in mind that we are studying the "Credibility of Christian Convictions." We are searching into the believableness of the miraculous. For one reason, the miraculous is believable because the worst enemies Christ ever had said plainly, "That indeed a notable miracle has been wrought we can not deny." A man's foe does not admit a favorable truth about his enemy unless compelled to do so.

Again, what may be called the gradation of

possibilities makes the miraculous believable. I know there are ranges of physical power far beyond any that I know in my muscles. A Marathon runner can perform physical feats to which I am a stranger in the experience of my muscles. But I must not disbelieve his exploit because it is contrary to my experience. His act is not believable from the standpoint of my feebleness, but it is easily believable from the standpoint of his swiftness and strength.

Carry that idea into the realm of mental achievements. Here is a work of art. From the point of my limitations it is unbelievable as a possibility. But from the standpoint of Turner's or Thorwaldsen's genius, it is easily believable. Here is an actual "Flying machine." A few years ago such a thing was unbelievable. It would be still unbelievable from the standpoint of my mechanical disingenuousness, but not from the standpoint of the mechanical genius who made it.

Carry the idea one step further. Take it over into the spiritual sphere. The Protestant world is largely the product of one powerful personality, that of Martin Luther. He was a spiritual genius, or better, a genius spiritualized. The same truth holds of Dwight L. Moody. These men were spiritual specialists. God specializes in spiritual matters as well as in music, oratory, poetry, art.

Things are believable from the standpoint of power which are not believable from the standpoint of weakness. Things are credible from the standpoint of wisdom which are not credible from the standpoint of ignorance. This is the point I make concerning the credibility of the miraculous. If God can make a universe, He can manage a universe. And He may do it all without my knowing at all how He does it.

From the standpoint of Mozart, music is easy. He goes into musical mysteries which seem miraculous to common people. But Mozart's music is credible enough when I know Mozart. Miracles are believable enough when I know Almighty God. Given the Christ of the miraculous, and it is easy to believe the miracles of Christ.

VIII

Miraculous Faculties

A MAN'S faculties must fit his tasks. Nicodemus was sure-sighted enough to see that. Men do not expect a dwarf to measure up to the height of the giant. We do not expect a man with no voice to sing. We do not expect an unmathematical mind to understand the science of numbers. We do not expect vision of a man who has no sight. In our judgments everywhere we fit the faculties to their tasks. That is the common-sense rule of all mankind. There is a great truth here that is worth seeing. And this truth will help us to understand the believableness of miracles.

It will help us to be reminded that everywhere we expect great things from great faculties. Nicodemus was not able to account for the great things that Christ had been doing merely on the basis of any ordinary human faculties with which he was familiar. He therefore concluded that "No man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with

him." It is as if Nicodemus had said, "The deeds that this man Christ has been doing are too big for any mere human faculties that I know of to fit." That is the way men reason now, and it is sound reasoning.

Take it in the fine arts. We expect a great picture from a great painter. The great picture fits the great painter's faculties. We should be surprised and disappointed with a little unartistic rhyme from Longfellow, Lowell, or Kipling. In all these things we naturally expect the work to fit the faculties of the workman. After the manner of Nicodemus' reasoning, we say, "No man can paint these pictures that thou paintest except his faculties exceed the faculties of the ordinary man." No man can make a great poem, except his poetic faculties exceed the faculties of the ordinary man.

Milton was right when he said that before a man could produce a great poem he must himself be a great poem. That exactly shows the point we are now arrived at concerning Christ and miracles. No man could do the great miracles that He did, except he himself was a great miracle. That is a perfectly fair method of reasoning everywhere else, and it is a perfectly fair method of reasoning with reference to Christ and the miracles which He wrought. Of course, the man who will not believe, will not believe, though one rose from the

dead. All we can do is to give him a thorough-going reason for our faith and then move on.

The same truth may be traced in the mechanical arts. From a man with such wonderful faculties as those of Thomas Edison, we expect great inventions. No man can do such things in wireless telegraphy as Marconi has done, except he be a great electrical genius. Marconi could not do what he does except the secret of electricity be with him. No man unacquainted with such secrets could approach such achievements. This is a fair way to reason with reference to the inventor and his inventions. It is also a fair way to reason with reference to Christ and His miracles. "No man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him."

The same principle runs through all of our estimates in nature. We do not expect the fire-fly to give as much light as the lightning. The lightning flash is too big a fact to fit the fire-fly's faculties. The humming-bird builds a little nest. The eagle builds a big one. The fact of the nest in each case fits the faculties of each bird. The hawk is not expected to sing, but the mocking-bird is. And even here, after the manner of Nicodemus' reasoning, we say of the mocking-bird, "No bird can sing as thou singest except the vocal faculties of the mocking-bird be with him."

So we have found that the reasoning of Nicodemus is sound as applied to the things of men and nature. And in all fairness of mind, we sincerely believe it to be sound as applied to Christ and miracles. "No man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him." The fact in the miracle is too big for the fact in the ordinary faculties of men.

How do we come to our knowledge of history? How do I know there was such a man as George Washington? I know it by human testimony. There is no other possible way for me to know it. It is far more reasonable for me to believe this testimony than it would be not to believe it. It is human testimony that makes the career and character of George Washington believable to me. That is true of every historical personage. My knowledge of history comes by faith and faith alone —faith in human testimony. Did I reject human testimony, the whole sphere of historical knowledge would be excluded from my intellectual equipment and belief.

The same is largely true of astronomical knowledge. Copernicus, Kepler, Proctor, and Newcomb study the stars and then tell the story. They testify as to the distances of these stars and their characteristics, and we know something about these stellar laws. Why? How do we come to this knowledge? We come

to it by believing the testimony of the astronomer.

All the natural sciences are believable because we believe in the reliability of human testimony. The chemist testifies and we believe in chemistry. The geologist testifies and we believe in geology. The botanist testifies and we believe in botany. We might investigate and try to look into all these secrets ourselves, but we are too busy with other matters, so we take the scientist's word for it. And as a rule, experience has shown that to be a safe thing to do. We know something about these wonderful things in nature because we believe in the reliability of human testimony.

We have gone far enough this way to see where our truth is leading us. It is leading us to the larger truth about Christ and miracles. Men heard reliable testimony that He did these great deeds. Reliable men were eye witnesses of many of the miracles that He wrought. He opened the eyes of the blind. He unstopped the ears of the deaf. He cured mortal maladies. He raised the dead to life. And many other mighty works did He do. His very enemies said, "A notable miracle hath indeed been wrought, and we can not deny it."

The most reliable of His friends said the same. About five hundred witnesses testified that they saw Him after He had been crucified

and that He was alive again. Tens of thousands of the most intelligent men and women of the world since that have testified that they believed in the reliability of these testimonies. Why not believe these testimonies? Are not the witnesses as reliable as those who tell us about George Washington, Cæsar, Napoleon? Are not these witnesses to the master miracle, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as trustworthy as Copernicus, Kepler, Proctor, Newcomb, when they bear testimony about the stars? Why do you believe Linneus' testimony about the rose any more than you believe Paul's testimony about the resurrection? Was not Paul the greater man of the two? From the standpoint of personality and intellectuality and reliability, Paul's testimony is more reliable than that of Darwin or Spencer or Huxley or Tyndall, or of any other man of history or science. I believe the testimony of the historians. I believe the testimony of the scientists. I believe in the testimony of the Christians. I believe in the resurrection of the dead. On the best possible testimony, I believe that Jesus Christ died and that He arose again from the dead.

I exult with Paul, "O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory?" The greatest truths of human history are established by valid human testimony. The greatest truths of science are established by human testimony.

So also are the greatest truths of the miracles established by valid human testimony.

A false claim concerning a true thing does not invalidate the truth. Almost everything good has been counterfeited. But no amount of amalgam can invalidate the worth of pure gold. As might be expected, false claims have been made concerning the miraculous. Designing people have played on the credulity of the innocent and unsuspecting. The miraculous has been claimed where there was only fraud. Jugglery and tricks have been palmed off on people for miracles.

Counterfeit coin has been passed for real money, but we still believe in the reality of money and in the value of real money. So the Christian mind still believes on the evidence of most valid human testimony in the reality of miracles, and in the value of real miracles. The discovery of the spurious only enhances our appreciation of the genuine. We doubt the false and more firmly believe the true.

Mechanical mastery makes miracles believable. If a clock-maker can construct and start a clock, there is nothing strange about his being able to stop it. Did not God make the sun? We are not believing that anybody else did. But if God made the sun and started it, why should any reasonable person stagger at the fact that "He made the sun stand still on

Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon?" God might very wisely do something out of the ordinary, even though an ordinary person might not expect it. God is an extraordinary God. The whole world is slowly finding out that fact.

Then there is a natural clue to many of the miracles. For this reason the miraculous is believable. What about turning water into wine? Is that incredible? But that process will be going on all over California next spring. Some strange power in the life of the grapevine will change water into grape sap, then into grape juice. Because we are familiar with the phenomena connected with the fact, we do not wonder at it. But is any man sure that the same power which changes water into wine gradually in a California vineyard might not make that same change suddenly in the interest of humanity at a wedding in Cana of Galilee?

Could not the same power that multiplies the fishes by natural processes in the sea, multiply them by supernatural processes in an emergency with a hungry crowd in Palestine? Can not that power which multiplies the grain of wheat a hundredfold in a California wheat-field by natural processes, multiply five loaves of bread suddenly to feed a hungry multitude in Palestine? Does not all this point out the rationale of the miraculous?

IX

Let Us Pray

A WORLD of prayerless human beings would be incredible. The instinct of communication is universal. A non-communicative mind is an abnormal mind. Thought, feeling, desire, seek to express themselves, and to express themselves to another. Prayer is a plea for help. It may be a plea to nature, or to human nature, or to the Supernatural. In the Christian sense, it is a plea made to God.

The Christian does not pray to a theory, nor to a creed, nor to an impersonal force. The Christian addresses his prayer to the Infinite Person. The evidences of God's personality are ample and overwhelming. If some person lights the lamps in the cathedral, then some Person lights the stars in the sky. If an intelligent person is needed to paint the picture of the landscape, then an intelligent person is necessary to the creation of the landscape. A world without a God to make it would be as unthinkable as a wagon without a man to make

it. Man makes his supreme plea to the supreme Person—God.

Personal communication between persons is an every-day experience. If God is a person and a man is the person He has created, then it would be in harmony with everything we know that they should mutually desire communication. Christianity calls this communication on the part of man, prayer.

It is well to keep in mind that mystery is connected with every method of mental and moral communication. If anybody can explain any of these methods of communication, well and good. But we must have the experience of communication, whether we have the explanation or not. There is more profit in the practice of prayer than in the philosophy of prayer.

Take the literary method of communication of person with person. How it is that the epistle, the poem, the book can convey sentiment and thought to the reader, none can tell. By this method Milton, long dead, spoke to me, who am alive. By this literary method Milton conveys the thoughts and sentiments of his mind to my mind. Any of us may have the experience. None of us may have the explanation of the experience.

Take the mechanical method of communication between persons. It is a matter of experience and not of explanation. The telegraph wire

carries your message to your friend a thousand miles away, and brings back his response in a few moments or hours. No man can strip the mystery from this process. One man wires his prayer to another and the other man wires back the answer. Marconi has made the mystery bring his secret closer still by his wireless telegraphy.

If one man can communicate through invisible ether by means of wireless telegraphy with another man a hundred miles away, it would be strange if a man might not talk through space to his Maker. If a man may talk through a telephone to a friend, then why may he not talk through space into the ear of his Infinite Friend? He is not far from every one of us. Space is no barrier to His speech. He is always close, "Closer than hands and feet."

It is said that a phonograph is kept in London into which Robert Browning once spoke. Old friends go to that phonograph to hear the poet's voice. From the foregoing considerations and from many others that might be adduced, it is plain that prayer is practically reasonable and reasonably practical. It is a reasonable conviction to hold that the listening ear of God may hear the speaking soul of man.

Take the purely spiritual method of communication between person and person. It may be by a word, a touch, a look, an atmosphere.

Who can tell how? In the final analysis all communication is spiritual. Like can correspond with like. God is a spirit. Man is a spirit. Would it not be unaccountably strange, and certainly abnormal if these Spirits did not communicate with each other? Spirit can communicate with spirit. Therefore communication is possible and practicable between God and man. Does not the calling voice of God prophesy the answering voice of man? God's voice may speak in whispers, or it may shout in thunders. Does not the poet tell the truth we all have felt?

“One great Voice august
Is speaking always in this world of men;
Speaking direct—no need of word or pen—
Mystic, and yet so clear!

Do you hear a Voice
Calling sweetly, softly through the years—
Through the wrong and sorrow, through the tears
Of a wasted life?

'Tis the Voice of God
Sweet, appealing, as in Eden's grove;
Sternly warning in His righteous love,
'Tis the Father's Voice.

Aye, the Father's Voice,
Calling ever, always through the years,
Through all wrong and sorrow—through all tears—
Calling children home!”

Prayer is the doing of something by man which leads to the doing of something by man's Maker. God is constantly doing certain things because men do certain other things. A man plants an orchard, but God makes it grow and bloom and bear fruit. God made the orchard grow there because the man planted it there. Man plants the waste places with wheat and corn. And because man plants the waste places God grows harvests in the waste places. As a rule God does not grow the harvest unless man plants the seed. If man will do this, then God will do that. Here is a law of the conditional which we have all caught sight of. This law is easily traceable through the material world.

The law of the conditional is also traceable in the mental sphere. God furnishes ample material for our mental growth. But we must meet the conditions of that growth. There is nothing arbitrary about it. It is as plain a law for mind as gravitation is for matter.

This law is seen in the spiritual sphere. Because I take material food God makes it nourish my material body. Because I take truth into my mind He makes it nourish my intellect. Because I take His life into my life and because He lives, I live. The bud grafted into the tree's trunk partakes of that tree's life. My living spirit grafted into God's living

Spirit makes me partaker of His life. Once more we are to notice that all of these processes are matters of experience and not of explanation.

Thus it is that the central principle of prayer runs through all the spheres of matter, mind, and spirit. Herein is where the perfect wisdom shows. Man lives in all of these, and therefore prayer must operate in all of these. If God does anything for man, why should He not do it by the principle of prayer as well as by any other principle? Manifestly the operation of His power on any principle would be mysterious. That grows out of the greatness and perfection of His plan. Some little scheme might be thoroughly sifted, but not this. This principle of prayer is made to fit into all conditions and all climates and into all the ranges of human experience everywhere. Though no man may know the power of prayer by philosophy, any man anywhere may know its power by practice. Prayer is too big for explanation; it is just the right size for experience.

It has been well said that because there is a dependent there must also be an independent. There is this side, therefore there must be the other side. And the other side is there, whether I have seen it or not. I can see some points plainly on the practical side of prayer, but I must not be baffled if I can not compass the

philosophy of prayer. Through the practice of prayer I can experience the power of prayer.

We can never make permanent spiritual progress without prayer. Our prayers are the footsteps of the soul by which we walk to God. A graphic picture of the soul's struggle is in the following lines:

“O, long and dark the stairs I trod,
With stumbling feet to find my God.

“Gaining a foothold bit by bit,
Then slipping back and losing it;

“Never progressing, striving still,
With weakening grasp and fainting will.

* * * *

“Then came a certain time when I
Loosened my hold and fell thereby.

“Down to the lowest step my fall,
As if I had not climbed at all.

“And while I lay despairing there
I heard a footfall on the stair,

“In the same path where I, dismayed,
Faltered and fell and lay afraid.

“And lo! when hope had ceased to be,
My God came down the stairs to me.”

X

The Christ Who Is God

"AND His name shall be called Wonderful." Now after more than nineteen hundred years of human history since He came, does anybody think that He was misnamed? Why should anybody think that Homer was misnamed poet? Is there any reason for thinking that Plato was misnamed philosopher? Does anybody think that it was a misnomer for Mozart to be called musician? But Homer and Plato were born long before Christ was born. Mozart was born long after Christ was born. Why does no one think that Homer was misnamed?

The answer is that the after facts of poetry and the history of literature have made good Homer's claim. Why does no one think that Plato was misnamed? The answer is that the after facts of philosophy and the history of philosophy have made good Plato's claim. No one contests the claim that Mozart was a musician. Why does no one contest that claim? Simply because the facts of musical history completely support that claim.

On the same fair principle of reasoning, no one can now contest the claim of Jesus Christ. Why can no man reasonably contest Christ's claim? Because the facts of Christian history completely support that claim. It was perfectly fitting to call His name "Wonderful."

A Christless world would be a world uncured of its cares and its crimes. It would mean the universal reign of red-handed ruin. No rewards, nor reunions, no resurrection unto everlasting life. A Christless world would be a world from whose sky the stars and the sun have been swept away. It would be a world whose fields were denuded of flowers and frozen over with eternal frosts. A Christless world would be cold, cheerless, dark, and dead.

"What the sun is to that flower, Jesus Christ is to my heart." That was the sweet and beautiful creed of Lord Tennyson. And that has been the experience of millions of the world's best men and women since Jesus came.

Take Christ out of the calendar and we would not know what year we were living in, or how to date our Christmas greetings to our friends. It would disarrange and confuse all the records of history and utterly change the map of the world. It would even bewilder all commercial reckoning to take Christ out of the calendar. But, thank God! until some man of the night can pluck the sun out of the sky,

no man can take Christ out of the calendar. However divergent our views may be on many things, we all agree in this, that Christmas comes in December, in the year of "Our Lord."

His was a wonderful name because His was a wonderful nature. No name that has been on the lips of men has had such influence as the name of Jesus. Do not let that statement pass without examination. Examine it in the light of the four great points in human experience.

With reference to the sins of men the name of Christ has been wonderful in its influence. That name stands utterly alone in relation to this sphere of human experience. No thoroughly informed person would think of putting any other name alongside of it. The greatest reformers and the greatest leaders of mankind have persistently declared that they have experienced forgiveness of sins through faith in that name. And who is he that can intelligently call in question that confession, seeing that the people who made it were persons of unimpeachable character?

Christ's name has been "Wonderful" in its influence to soothe the sorrows of men. It would be impossible for an unreality to have the comforting influence of the name of Christ. When sorrows come in like a flood, that name changes our sobbing into song. It sweetens

our disappointments to know that they may indeed be "His appointments." When the "little white hearse" came to our door, it was unspeakably sweet to hear Him say, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." And how could our hearts have ever rallied again had we not heard Him say so often above the sleeping dust of our sacred dead, "I am the resurrection and the life." It must be admitted that the name of Jesus has had, and to-day has more than ever before, a matchless influence to soothe the sorrows of men.

The despairs of men—what an influence the name of Christ has had to dispel human despair! Sometimes a cloud of utter darkness has hovered over the heart. The night was long and lonely. Wearied almost unto death, we have waited and watched for the morning. It really seemed as if daylight would never come again. Then this "bright and morning star" shed His splendor on our souls.

How wonderful has been the influence of Christ's name on our thoughts and feelings about human destiny. "Though a man were dead, yet if he believe in Me, he shall live again." Simple belief in those brave words has brought many a man to his feet again. The whole question of destiny was only a vague guess till Christ set His heel on the neck of death and snatched the key from the grave.

Till He did that death had been nothing but a terrible tragedy. Since that many a timid soul has gone singing into its soothing shadows.

Christ is called the Counsellor. Have wiser counsels than His ever been given to the world? Surely no one who is thoroughly informed would think of ranking with his counsels those of Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius. There is a sweeping and practical pungency about the counsels of Christ that easily set them off in a class by themselves. They are so broad as not to miss any vital point of human interest. The counsels of Christ are unmistakable concerning honesty. They are supremely wise concerning marriage and the home. He has pointed out the neighborly and brotherly relationships of men in a wider and wiser way than any other known to human history. In His parables and in His Sermon on the Mount is compressed the wisdom of the ages.

Isaiah was right. Jesus was and is "The Mighty God." Not mighty like Zeus or Thor of Hercules or some great human Samson, but mighty with the mightiness of God. It would be blasphemous hyperbole to call even Christ "The Mighty God" were it not true. But who could forgive sins but the Mighty God? Who could raise the dead to life again save the Mighty God? With squinting eyes, a man may strive to look the noonday sun in the face

and then deny the splendor of that sun, but such denial is of no avail.

The man who denies the Godship of Jesus Christ in the face of the splendor that He has shed across the world, is simply not intellectually aware of what he is doing. To treat any other truth like that would unfit such a man for trustworthy investigation in any sphere of human thinking. His findings in history or science or politics or philosophy could not be safely depended upon. A man who defiantly flings his fist into the face of facts may be a fierce fighter, but he is neither a safe guide nor a true teacher.

A man who can disbelieve in the divinity of Jesus Christ in the face of His character, His influence, His inspiration to mankind, His life, His miracles, His death, His resurrection; a man I say who in the face of all these facts can disbelieve in the essential divinity of Jesus Christ, can fling defiance in the face of other authentic history and deny the essential statesmanship of Oliver Cromwell, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln. Even the callous centurion who stood by His cross cried out, "Truly, this was the Son of God."

"And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father." Did Christ have any natural children? Then in what sense was He the Father?

Certainly not in any natural sense. But He is "the Everlasting Father." Here is a claim of fatherhood made for Christ. And did He not Himself confirm that claim when He said, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father?" Surely it takes more than the Darwinian theory of Evolution to account for Christ. It takes more than high-sounding human names to discredit Isaiah's claim for Christ. And it is only a superficial shift to say that Christ was a wise and good man—the wisest and best who ever lived. A wise and good man does not claim to be God. But Christ claimed both. He is therefore the prince of human frauds, or He is the Prince of Peace, the Savior of the world.

Robert Browning is confessed by all competent judges of literature to have been one of the greatest poets of the world. It would be interesting to know what this great representative mind thought of Christ. He was, like Tennyson and our own Richard Watson Gilder, a devout Christian. These great souls, who were also great seers, firmly believed in the Godship of Jesus Christ. To them the denial of His divinity would have been nothing less than nonsense. In Browning's great poem entitled "Christmas Eve," he puts his confession of faith in Christ. This is universally considered to be one of the finest religious poems in English literature. In this he prays

for a rationalizing German professor at Gottingen. Hear the poet pray:

“When thicker and thicker the darkness, fills
The world through his misty spectacles
And he gropes for something more substantial
Than a fable, myth or personification,
May Christ do for him what no mere man shall,
And stand confessed as the God of salvation.”

He is the “Prince of Peace” because He brings to the world the principles of peace. He brings peace by the truth and not by a theory. He is not a talker of platitudes. No preacher was more plainly practical than He who came to beat swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks.

We have our national “peace societies” now because He came. Every “peace commission” is a practical tribute to this glorious “Prince of Peace.” He comes to bring peace to the individual soul and peace to society. It is more important to find the experience of this peace than it is to find an explanation of it. I may have the experience. I may be happy without a well-defined philosophy, but I can not be happy without the experience of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

XI

Light Through the Cypress Trees

NO MAN can explain the resurrection. And if God were to explain it, man would need a new set of faculties to understand the explanation. It can be shown that the belief in the resurrection is a reasonable belief. It can be shown that the Christian conviction concerning the resurrection is a credible conviction. That is the purpose of this essay.

"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" That is the question that Paul put to Herod Agrippa centuries ago. In his first letter to the Corinthians he gives a simple illustration which furnishes a key to the credibility of the resurrection. As an illustration it is simple enough for any child to understand, but as pointing out a process it is profound enough for the faculties of any philosopher. Paul follows the example of Jesus by throwing light on one mystery by pointing out another.

Paul anticipated all these painful questionings as to the process. He is writing this in that letter to the Corinthians: "But some man will say, 'How are the dead raised up?' And with what body do they come?'" How natural is that question to the modern mind. It is as fresh as if it had been first propounded yesterday. But he makes short work of the reply: "Foolish one, that which thyself sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it hath pleased Him to give each seed a body of its own." He is simply saying in this fine figure that God is able to do as wonderful things with the human body that is laid in the grave as He is with the grain of wheat that is laid in the ground. We have seen Him do these wonders with a grain of wheat. We have seen the dead and empty kernel and we have seen the new and beautiful body that God gave it. This ought to make it easy for us to believe that He will give us a body "like unto His own glorious body." The farmer works out his practical belief in the resurrection of the wheat. He does not puzzle about the process. If we stop to quibble over every process we will soon have no process to quibble about. The farmer may not have any philosophical knowl-

edge of the wheat's resurrection, but he has a working, practical knowledge, which is far better. The apostle's citation to the resurrectional processes in nature makes the conviction concerning the resurrection a credible conviction.

The resurrection is credible from the stand-point of personal identity. Personal sameness does not consist in material sameness. It is now a familiar physiological fact that our physical bodies, as to the material that constitutes them, are thoroughly changed every few years. But my personal identity persists in spite of all these material changes. Personal sameness consists in the sameness of purpose and plan in the personality, or the individual thing. Fifty years ago a lad stuck a willow twig in the ground. The lad is now sixty years of age, but he insists that he is the same person who stuck that twig in the ground. He further insists that the large and beautiful willow tree is that same little twig larger grown. There has been a great change in both, but the individual identity of both is perfectly preserved.

It is said that hitherto a queer custom has led the custodians of a certain temple in Japan to renew the entire structure every ten years. Little by little the work of renewal is constantly going on. Every new part is exactly like the

old part which it replaces. We are told that this has been going on for a thousand years. If you could see a photograph of that temple taken a thousand years ago and another photograph taken to-day, both pictures would show the same purpose and plan in the structure. No proportion, no carving, no tint changed. The purpose and plan of the structure remain unchanged. The architectural law about which the structure is built determines its identity. So the human body may be completely changed and yet retain intact its identity. Can not He who gave the soul one body, provide it with another if He choose? It is not at all an incredible conviction that He will.

The resurrection is credible from the viewpoint of changes which we already know take place in matter. Almost all changes in matter would seem incredible, were we not familiar with the phenomena attending them. If we were not familiar with the fact that a block of ice can be changed to fluid, then to vapor, then to invisible steam, and then separated into two distinct gases, such changes would seem incredible. But being familiar with the fact the attendant mystery is forgotten. Recent experiments with condensed air have brought to our attention certain conditions which for centuries seemed incredible and impossible.

It is a fact familiar to the growers of roses

that material corruption of the most loathsome kind is transmuted by the life force of the rose into that exquisite fragrance known as the attar of roses. Such a change in matter appears incredible enough until the fact is forced into our experience through the senses.

Some writer tells of a man who moved the remains of his friend's body from one cemetery to another. The body had been deposited in a vault. Only a handful of black ashes was visible in the casket when it was opened. What could a chemist do with this handful of black ashes? He could change it more or less completely into heat and light. He could change the heat into electricity, then into light. This light could be flashed out into space at the rate of 190,000 miles per second. The electrician could take this handful of ashes in the form of electricity and flash it through wires around the world. These chemical changes ought to make it easy for us to believe that Christ can "Change this vile body and make it like unto His own glorious body."

Resurrection is credible from the standpoint of historical fact. It is as historically certain that Christ arose from the dead as it is that Julius Cæsar did not. This historic fact has stood the heat of the critic's crucible for centuries. The miracles of science are making it easier every day to believe this greatest miracle

of history. Hard things are becoming easier and easier to believe. Incredulity in the face of a fact is only folly. The light that streams across the graves of our dead makes it plainer and plainer that "God standeth in the shadow keeping watch above His own."

What practical meaning has this faith for us who sit in the shadows of grief and the grave? In the first place, it means HOPE. We may not all have the same Easter theory or the same Easter theology, but we may all have the same Eastertide hope. From no other source can the spent torch of hope be relighted. All earthly lights have gone out at the grave. At the grave the beauty of art has faded. The music of poesy has hushed. The tongue of eloquence has stammered out its despair, saying, "Death ends all." In the fogs of the grave's mystery the eyes of science have gone blind with tears. Philosophy only writes an interrogation across the death-mound of our own beloved dead. Agnosticism moans out its misery, saying, "Whether in mid-ocean or among the breakers of the farther shore, a wreck must mark at last the end of each and all." Leave Christ and His resurrection out of our reckoning, and all of our songs of hope must hush at the edge of the grave's dark. No earthly light has ever yet survived that sullen shadow. Christ alone went through death's tunnel with His torch undimmed.

Death has baffled all the world's curative agencies. The highest earthly skill must stand back when death enters. I would have slain death when he came for my mother, but he parried the blow of my sword. I would have felled him dead when he came to pluck the fairest flower in the family garden, but he fled like a black bat of the night. It moved him not that his blow broke my heart. Death is cold, cruel, heedless, heartless. Can anybody kill death? That is what my heart needs to know. Can Christ kill death? Authentic history says He can. Springtime says He can. Eastertide says He can. A resurrected Lazarus says He can. He has drawn death's sting. Death is dead. Christ has killed death and carried off the keys.

If there is some power that can change a destructive force into a constructive force, then death may be defeated. Death is destructive. Life is constructive. Plant life in my garden takes up dead matter and weaves it into the fairest forms of organic beauty. It is plain that plant life in my garden defeats death. If God comes to my garden He may come to my grave.

The mockingbird ceases his singing long enough to seize and swallow a butterfly. That is the only way a butterfly could be made into music. The mockingbird's life has lifted the songless butterfly into the sphere of song. The

butterfly life had to die to reach the mockingbird life.

“Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress trees;
Who hopeless lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marble play;
Who hath not learned in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That life is ever lord of death,
And love can never lose its own.”

The highest and best will triumph at last. That is the meaning of the risen Christ. This is the golden stairway of hope up which He would lead our staggering feet. It is the highest and holiest hope of the heart.

XII

Facing the Future

"The tissues of the life to be
We weave with colors all our own;
And in the field of destiny
We reap as we have sown."

A FRIEND of mine, a soldier, had a dream. He thought his company was on the march and had reached a certain place in the country. In his dream he could see the old, weather-beaten fence on one side of the country lane, and the little persimmon grove on the other. It was all as plain to him as if it had been a waking fact. The next day in really marching by that place my friend was surprised to find many features of the real scene exactly as he had seen them in his dream.

Now, our present and our future are somewhat related, like my friend's dream and its fulfillment. Much of to-day will reappear in the march of real life to-morrow. And some of the things that look small to-day will look surprisingly large to-morrow. Our present con-

duct is constantly projecting consequences into our future. The thoughts that we think to-day will be living things to-morrow. Eggs are being brooded to-day from whose broken shells living things will spring to-morrow. Thoughts that are brooded to-day will break into deeds to-morrow.

A traveler returned to this country from India with a few small serpent eggs. He brought the harmless looking things from the tropics to show to his friends. The reptile that laid these eggs was venomous enough, but the eggs themselves appeared to be perfectly harmless. The traveler put them in a box in his library and forgot all about them. One day he was startled to see, on entering the library, several of those dangerous and poisonous serpents crawling over the floor. They were among his books and on his writing desk.

The serpent eggs which he had brought home to show his friends had hatched. We must all have a care about the kind of eggs that we hide away in our hearts to hatch into living things to-morrow. Let us not cherish in our present thoughts that which we do not care to have spring into action in our future. We are sowing to-day the harvests of to-morrow. My pen is already wet with the ink with which I must write my record to-morrow.

My future is to be stained through and

through with the colorings of to-day. That is the thought which I need to turn over and over again in my mind till it takes firm hold on my life. The key of my present will unlock the door of my future. The acorn to-day will be the oak to-morrow. The embers that smoulder to-day will break into full flame to-morrow. The breeze of the present will be the whirlwind of the future. Therefore it ought to give me solemn pause when I hear God saying, "He that soweth the wind shall reap the whirlwind." But it is a glorious truth that he who soeth golden grains of good shall reap a harvest of happiness.

There is another fact we need to notice about our future. It will come to us gradually. Whether it will bring weal or woe, it will not come with its full weight at once. The God of the future is so good that He will give us lesson by lesson and load by load. Concerning the past, there has not one word of all His good promise failed. Then why should we be fearful about the future? The wise and good human teacher of our child gives lessons and responsibilities according to the capacity of our child. How foolish and unfounded is our fear that God will be less wise and good with us than the human teacher is with our child.

There is still another fact about the future of all who do right. To all such the future is a

kind of storehouse into which present treasures are placed, and which will be more fully possessed in the afterwhile. It is as if we were on a journey, and we send some precious things on before us to await our coming. We may forget for a time that we sent them on ahead. But we shall be reminded of it all on our arrival. That nurse who was so kind to the poor suffering man in the hospital did not know that she was laying up treasure for herself in the folds of the future.

She was giving up sleep and rest, but she was to get back all the good that she gave up and more. She was not aware that the sufferer was possessed of great wealth. But after some years, when the patient had been long away from the hospital and the nurse was growing feeble with much serving, the rich man willed to her a large sum as an expression of his gratitude to her for her kindness in the days gone by. She gave the best she had and the best came back to her.

Once more we ask, "What of the future?" And the answer comes telling us that the future for the human soul is interminable. The pull of an endless future has a wonderful power over human life. The lure of the future has led many a soul on to the summits who otherwise would have stopped in the slough of despair. When the future has no power at all on a man's

life, he is apt in some despondent moment to stop short by suicide.

But why do we believe in the future? Why do we believe in the interminable perpetuation of life. Is there a deep-rooted reason for such belief? Let me remind you here that there are reasons which may not be mathematical reasons. They may be just as good as mathematical reasons. It is a mistake to assume that all reasons are assignable or expressable. We have all some reasons for things which we feel, but never express. And I am calling your attention here to a point that is often overlooked.

That point is that an unexpressed reason may be altogether as reasonable as one which is expressed in the clearest and strongest words. Ask a little child why it loves its mother. It feels that reason. But it is quite probable that it can neither comprehend nor state it. There are reasons for many things which can not be stated, but such reasons may be real and well-rooted nevertheless. When I ask, therefore, why we believe in a future life, in all fairness it ought to be remembered that we may feel intelligent reasons for such belief which we can not intelligently express.

"The gift of God is eternal life." Is not that statement itself the very best reason for believing in the immortality of the soul? If temporary life is the gift of God, why may not future life

also be the gift of God? The wonder begins with the fact that God gave us life at all. If, under the difficult conditions here, God can give a man life for seventy years, I see no reason why, under improved conditions, God may not give him life for seventy centuries or for any number of centuries.

In the fact that God gives temporary life, I see the reason why He may give eternal life. In the fact that He gives me life at all, I find the reason for the larger fact that He may give me life forever. Of all the things that God has started, the human soul may be one of them which it pleases Him never to stop. I believe the gift of God is eternal life because God says it is. And surely nobody will be foolish enough to say that this reason is not a good one.

I believe that the gift of God is eternal life because of my instinctive desire to live forever. I have called this an instinctive desire. It is not acquired, so far as I know. I do not remember when I did not have such desire. It was born with my birth. It has grown with my growth. It has enlarged with my enlarging life. I am sure that it would take something in the nature of hopeless tragedy to entirely remove such desire from my soul. This desire threads its way through all the tangled thickets of doubt. It persistently pushes its way through the stifling shadows that sometimes fall across

my way. Now, such a persistent longing for the perpetuation of life is significant of something beyond the temporary desires of flesh and blood. It is normal, and has its roots in nature.

Other instinctive desires of lesser import find their legitimate fulfillment. What does the organic structure of the eye mean? What does the optic nerve's desire for light mean? It means that there is light and that the desire for light will find its fulfillment. What does the organic structure of the ear mean? What does the auditory nerve's desire for sound mean? Does it not mean that as a part of the same purpose and plan, sound has been provided? The olfactories call for scents and fragrances. And provision is made for the fulfillment of that desire.

Appetite and taste call for flavors and foods. And these instinctive desires are amply met in the abundant provision of nature. The tactful nerves desire something substantial to touch, and there are solid substances everywhere. If these instinctive desires of flesh and blood are provided for by such a perfect plan of unfailing fulfillment, what glorious fulfillments may we not expect for the instinctive desires of the soul? If the less important is so carefully cared for by the All-wise Providence, we can not think that the most important desires of the soul will be left to go uncared for.

He would be a strange artist who would take more pains in painting the picture of a shrub than he would in painting the picture of the Sequoia. A strange sculptor would be he who would expend more skill and attention in carving a stone for a door-step than for a Phidias masterpiece. He would be an inconsistent musician indeed who should bring his finest musical faculties to bear in the singing of a ditty and should be careless in the rendition of Handel's Messiah. No, all the highest workmen strain their faculties in the farthest reach for the highest and best.

God is infinitely better than the best of all of these. He cares for the least and He cares for the greatest. He cares for the lowest and He cares for the highest. His loving interest traverses the farthest ranges of my soul's need. I love to live. I would love to live forever. God gave me both of these loves. Neither one will be thwarted or unfulfilled if He has His way with me. For "The gift of God is eternal life." Be glad, my heart, and thankfully take this great, sweet gift of God.

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