SIMPLE

TRUSTING

FAITH

By W. Carl Ketcherside

MISSION MESSENGER

139 Signal Drive St. Louis. Mo. 63121

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Preface

(From the Dustcover)

This book was not written to create an argumentative situation with those who are gracious enough to read it. It is not a lawyer's brief to be presented formally to a jury of peers, but a sharing with others of the simple faith, which is the hope of one man's life.

The author knew what it meant as a boy to pad barefooted along country lanes shaded by trees, which created cool tunnels with their interlacing branches above. And in such an environment he came also to walk by faith in a God who was in heaven, and yet not remote from the earth which He had made. Now, in the asphalt jungles created by that state, which is called growing civilization, there has arisen the need for examining again the grounds of such belief to determine if they are adequate to a mature person in a more sophisticated age.

Not only will you read the author's conclusion but you will also be treated to the reasoning by which he arrived at it. That rationalization may not always appear logical to you, and the conclusion may be divergent from your own, but the book is not intended to be a profound treatise. It represents the reflection of a plain man and makes no pretension of scholarship or erudition. It re-states the faith of a one-time country lad caught up as a man in the whirling vortex created by an urbanizing culture.

It is not the contention of the author that everything new is bad, and everything old is good. Rather than either of these views, he holds that there are certain values, which are unchanged and changeless, and that it is these, which form the solid rock to be gripped by the anchor of hope. The boulders dislodged by doubt and rolled along the bed of the turbulent stream of modern thought may provide subjects for dialogue but not a foundation for a stable life.

If the reader is motivated to give earnest heed to the things, which God has spoken and to examine his own life in the light of what has been revealed, the prime purpose of this little volume will have been achieved.

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Chapter 1
About The Title

When I was a boy our family lived on a farm. We were only a quarter of a mile from the cultural center of the rural community which was represented by a frame schoolhouse and frame church building, both sitting on an acre of ground which had been conveyed by an early settler to be used for educational and religious purposes with a clause in the deed that if it ever ceased to be so used it would revert to the heirs and assigns of the donor. It was my good fortune to be selected as janitor for both buildings, a task for which I received six dollars per month from the school board and two dollars per month from the church treasurer.

In memory I can still smell the sweeping compound which I sprinkled upon the pine floors to allay the dust, and I can still see the shed on the back of the lot with one side filled with corncobs to be used for kindling and the other side with coal to be used for fuel once the fires were started. We were a simple people of humble tastes and the facilities for teaching during the week and for corporate expression of praise on the Lord's Day were very limited. There was a general feeling that scholars should not be pampered and that "frills and fancy fixin's" were out of place in the worship of the lowly Nazarene.

The meetinghouse was a stern box-type structure without steeple, but with a belfry, because the bell had to be rung each first day of the week, even if all of the worshipers were already present. It acted as a signal that the service was ready to begin and no one would have thought of commencing until the dangling rope had been pulled at least ten times. There was a concrete porch in front, which served as a convenient place for the men to pause and discuss current weather and crop conditions. During the week it became an outdoor dining area for the schoolboys who could lay out upon it their sandwiches of cold biscuit and colder bacon while the boiled eggs rested on the lid of the syrup bucket, which served as a lunch pail.

There were two entrances to the meetinghouse, one for women and girls, and the other for men and boys. Little boys lived for the day when they could be free from the clutch of their mothers and could sit on "the men's side." The seats had been made by a neighborhood carpenter, cynically referred to as a "wood butcher." Those who sat in them for long came to realize how pitifully meager must have been his knowledge of human anatomy and posture. They also looked forward eagerly to the opportunity of standing for prayer. Several of the seats were shortened on each side of the stove, which was a large one. When it was glowing red on a cold day it was noticeable that the one or two obdurate sinners in the community sat farthest from it since it gave obvious and forceful illustration of the fate awaiting them as described from the speaker's platform.

That platform was not large but it was covered with a piece of Axminster rug which had been donated by a family at the time of their removal from the community and who wanted to give the congregation something by which to remember them. The speaker's stand was painted a drab gray to match the seats. This was known as 'lead color' and it was easiest mixed in that day before various hues and tints became popular.

The worshipers dressed for meeting in quite simple fashion. Each of the women had a "Sunday dress" of black, which was also worn to funerals. The older ones wore a stiff bonnet made on the same lines as the limper ones worn while working in the garden on weekdays. The men wore a clean pair of bib overalls with a colored hickory shirt. No one owned a white shirt, which was locally called a "biled shirt" because such an item required boiling in the huge iron wash kettle in order to remove the soiled appearance created by dust and perspiration. In any event a white shirt soon became yellowed after being subjected to the strong homemade lye soap, which gave out a pungent odor even when the huge chunks were lying on the shelves in the smokehouse.

By modern standards the services would be sneered at because of their casual and informal nature. They always began with a song announced by the leader, with the congregation making up in volume and enthusiasm what they lacked in harmony and musical finesse. Several hymns were sung, followed by a scripture reading and prayer, after which the Bible study was led by one of the men, generally an elder, and then the Lord's Supper was observed. The entire congregation marched forward during the singing of a hymn and laid the contribution, a free-will offering, upon the table. Little children were permitted to go forward and put in a penny with the same concern that their parents put in their dimes and quarters. Occasionally someone who had been to the city to work returned and put in a five-dollar bill. Such sums were thankfully received at the same time they aroused suspicion as to the giver's life while he was away from home.

Since I have grown I have traveled in many parts of the world and have spoken to thousands. I have visited famous cathedrals and have gazed at shrines regarded as sacred by various peoples. I have heard famous theologians and listened to renowned choirs. But I am not sure that I have found a way of spiritual life more satisfying than that I knew when I was a country lad. Then there was no discussion of the relative value of faith and works. It was taken for granted that the child of God would exhibit both. One did not share with a sick neighbor because it was his duty but because it was a part of his own life. "If one member suffered all of the members suffered with him." Charity drives were not necessary because the persons whom you would solicit were already over where the emergency existed doing their best personally to help out.

There have been great revolutions and upheavals in thought and behavior patterns. The industrial and technological advances, which have been made under the impetus of scientific research, the ushering in of the Space Age with its thrilling and challenging potentials—these have combined with other factors to change us from an agrarian society and a rural populace to an urban society. Life is no longer simple but complex. Existence is not a mere struggle for survival against the forces of nature in our affluent culture. And the result is seen in our contemporary worship habits.

Housing projects and subdivisions now cover the land which a few short years ago was the haunt of rabbits and quail. Conformity is the rule in everything but the religious structures in suburbia. In these the architects allow their inventiveness to run wild and some of the results are bizarre and strange. It is as if those who dwell in deadly sameness during the week must find respite in something different on the first day of the new week. Sermons are carefully prepared to really say nothing when it appears that something is being said. The audience no longer consists of participants but of spectators. Frequently they draw nigh to God with their lips and honor him with their mouths but their hearts are far from him.

There is a tendency under these circumstances to look with supercilious disdain upon the lives and habits of our parents and grandparents. We speak with condescension of their lack of formal education and of the meagerness of their thinking. We tend to pity them because they were unworldly and otherworldly. But there was a peace and serenity within them, which has escaped us in these days. I cannot help but believe that it came because they lived very close to God. They came to Jesus as a personal friend and they never doubted that he knew and understood both their joys and trials.

When I was casting about for a title which would define, as well as designate my purpose in this little volume I thought again about some of the "invitation songs" which were sung as the congregation implored their friends and neighbors who were unsaved to come to the cross of Christ. One of these songs lingers in my heart unto this day. It was entitled, "Will You Come?" The chorus is as follows:

O happy rest, sweet happy rest,
Jesus will give you rest;
O why won't you come in *simple trusting faith?*
Jesus will give you rest.

I have come to the conclusion that rest can only result from simple trusting faith. No other kind of faith can produce it. It is only when men repent and become as a little child that they can enter the kingdom. To those who could criticize this personal witness as being childish, I merely say that I prefer to think of it as child-like. As the apostle said, "We also believe and therefore speak."

Chapter 2

God Is

"But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews devotes that section of his epistle, which comprises chapter eleven to a roll-call of the faithful who lived in the ages preceding the advent of Jesus. Among these was Enoch, the father of Methuselah. Of him it is affirmed, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death: and was not found because God translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (verse 6).

The original Greek term rendered by our English word "translate" simply means "to transport to another locality or place." During his lifetime Enoch pleased God to such an extent that God allowed him to escape the pangs of death. He was transported directly from this world to the next without experiencing the separation of the spirit from his body. And this was the result of his faith in God.

The example of Enoch provides an opportunity for the author to point out the impossibility of pleasing God without faith, and to show the minimum requirements of faith demanded of those who come to God. The entire context demonstrates that faith involves a firm trust or confidence in God, and this must begin with the acceptance of God's existence, that is, the fact of his being. However, the faith that pleases God cannot stop with a mere intellectual assent to his existence. It must recognize the personal concern of God for those who are concerned with him and who demonstrate that concern by seeking after him.

In spite of the fact that rewarding faith must begin with an acknowledgment of the existence of God the sacred scriptures nowhere devote time or space to presenting direct proof of it. The Bible starts with the simple declaration, "In the beginning God," and speaks of him as a functioning being performing the majestic act of universal creation. We believe that the absence of such proof from the Bible is attributable to at least two factors.

1. *The nature of its content.* The Bible purports to contain a divine message addressed to man in that form of communication best adapted to his understanding. To find much of it devoted to proving that the author really existed would be like receiving a letter from an earthly parent who spent half of his epistle in affirming his existence and identity. Such a course would create more doubt and suspicion than faith.

It is obvious that the character of the author will be revealed in his writing. One who is human cannot write a divine narrative and one who is divine would avoid those pitfalls, which would identify a narrative as human. If we have a document, which attests that it is from a divine source, and if internal evidence indicates it could not have been produced by human power or ability, we must assume the prior existence of God as its author. This is exactly the basis upon which the Bible begins. It is the logical manner in which a revelation from God should begin.

2. *The nature of revelation*. Our word "revelation" is a translation of the Greek *apokalupsis*. This word signifies to unveil, uncover, lay bare, or make naked. When that which has previously been hidden is uncovered it is said to be revealed. If it is tangible it is perceived by the senses, if it is intangible it is comprehended by the mental faculties. The thoughts and purposes of God are uncovered for us by the words of Holy Scripture. Thus these scriptures are a revelation of the mind of God.

Man is a rational being and God will not deal with him in such a manner as to offset, stifle or discourage his reasoning powers. To do so would be to treat him otherwise than as a man for it is his rationality which distinguishes him as a *human* being. For his own mental development and stability man must exercise the domain or faculty of reason. This requires taking cognizance of those things, which can be perceived by the senses and properly analyzing them in their relationship to the rest of the universe.

Simple reasoning involves the combination of two known or accepted facts in such a manner as to arrive at a third or new fact, called a conclusion. This enables one to arrive at concepts of those things that are intangible, from observation of those that are tangible. The unseen can be concluded from the things that are seen. The revelation of God only uncovers for man what he cannot discover for himself.

Man can arrive at a satisfactory conclusion concerning the existence of God without access to direct verbal revelation. From personal experience as well as from the testimony of history man has been made aware that there are definite limitations upon his own power of creativity. There are bounds beyond which he cannot proceed either individually or collectively. Results achieved and established above and beyond these bounds are, therefore, attributable to super-human power. Now that which is superhuman we regard as divine. The word "divine" is the term we use which indicates that which belongs to, or proceeds from deity. By observation of the phenomena related to the created universe it will be seen that certain characteristics manifested are superhuman in nature and can belong only to a divine being. It is this fact to which Paul alludes in Romans 1:18-20.

> "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them: for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhood: so that they are without excuse."

It will be a worthwhile project to analyze this remarkable statement and determine what is implied in its content.

1. Heaven is interested in and concerned about the affairs of men on earth.
2. Man is a responsible being and accountable to a power outside of, and greater than himself.
3. God is not neutral as relates to the behavior of men but actually expresses his displeasure with their irreligious and unjust actions.
4. This characteristic of God may be ascertained by observation and study of his created universe.
5. Intangible and invisible things may be reasoned out clearly from things that are made.

6. Since men have access to source material from which they have opportunity to learn about the nature and attributes of God they are without excuse for ungodly conduct in the divine presence.

The wrath of God is the divine displeasure with or indignation against the behavior described. Such behavior is an offence against the majesty of God and destructive of the spiritual, moral and ethical ideas incumbent upon those who are his creatures. It is designed to convince those who deny the existence of God of his personal being. For rational beings to engage in the kind of life here described indicates a doubt of the existence of God or of the divine nature, which cannot tolerate that which is ungodly or unjust. If they cannot be convinced otherwise punishment must be meted out which will leave no question.

The word "ungodliness" is from a term, which implies impiety, irreverence, or lack of respect for deity. Such an attitude may manifest itself in neglect of worship and homage as well as in overt acts and declarations. One need not blaspheme the name of God in order to be ungodly. To withhold from God the honor that is due him will place one in this class.

"Unrighteousness" relates to iniquity toward men. It means unfairness, inequity, or injustice. These two cover the whole scope of our responsibility. Jesus declared that the first and greatest commandment was to love God, and the second was to love one's fellowmen. He affirmed that all the law and the prophets were suspended from these and were thus dependent upon them. Just as love for God and man embraces all of God's commands, so ungodliness and injustice comprehend the full gamut of human wickedness.

The expression "hold the truth in unrighteousness" is misleading. To the extent men hold the truth they are righteous, and unrighteousness exists in proportion to their refusal to hold and be governed by the truth. The correct idea will be ascertained when it is remembered that the word translated "hold" had two meanings. It literally means to hold down and men hold things to maintain or keep them in possession, or to hinder or restrain them. This last is the clue to the meaning in this instance. The truth is held back or hindered by the impiety and injustice of men.

There is no excuse for conduct, which deters or hinders the advancement and dissemination of truth. Those who are guilty of such behavior cannot plead ignorance of God. "That which may be known of God is manifest to them." The apostle speaks primarily of those in the pagan world. The Jews had an advantage in the fact that the oracles of God were committed unto them (Romans 3:2). They were entrusted with the sacred writings. God revealed himself unto them through the word, but he manifested himself to all men through the world.

Not everything can be known concerning God. There are some things beyond the horizon of human perception. The apostle does not imply that those without a special revelation can know as much about God as those who have such revelation, but there are many things that can be known. The existence of God, the power of God, the nature of that power, the attributes of God, the divine wisdom and mercy and justice – all of these can be deduced from application of the rational powers to the created universe. What one can learn, he is obligated to learn. The purpose of the apostle is to demonstrate that enough may be known concerning God as to leave men without an excuse for impiety and iniquity. It is not essential that one have a knowledge of the specific requirements of

God in a verbal revelation in order to know the nature of God. All nature bears testimony to the divine existence.

It is asserted that "the invisible things of God from the creation are clearly seen." The "things" here mentioned are the traits or characteristics of God. No one can perceive God by the senses. The attributes of God are not discernible to the eye and cannot be discovered by physical sight. But the creative activity of God made available to man a great storehouse of investigative material. This can be seen. It is visible and as man reasons upon it the invisible factors in the character of God are made manifest. These are specified by Paul as eternal power and Godhood. They are uncreated but are understood by what was created; they are intangible but are understood by the tangible. One reasons from the known to the unknown; from the seen to the unseen. All acquisition of knowledge is conditioned upon proper usage of the knowledge already possessed. One must have a foundation upon which to build.

In view of the fact that the invisible traits of God are understood by the things that are made, we need to determine the rational processes by which we arrive at justifiable conclusions concerning the nature of God. It must be noted that there are three different things involved: power, eternal existence and deity. All of these it is affirmed can be reasoned from the visible manifestations in creation.

1. Creation is obviously an effect and for every effect there must be a cause and this cause must be adequate to produce the effect.

2. The effect, which we call creation, is so intricate and complex and interdependent in its various relations as to preclude its having come into existence by a mere fortuitous concourse of atoms.

3. The only alternative is to conclude that the effect is the product of an intelligent designer who possessed the ability to conceive the universal plan and execute it, as well as maintain it. This involves both originating and perpetuating power.

4. While it is justifiable to speak of the "great first Cause" as a designation for an intelligent being, it is not justifiable to use the expression if it is implied that creation proceeded from, or is maintained by, a non-intellectual source, for such source is not adequate as a cause to produce the known effect.

5. Since matter does not, and cannot, possess intelligence, the cause which produced the universe must be personal and the power exerted in the creative process must be personal force or energy properly guided and directed to achieve the desired end.

To this rational process various objections are filed by those who will to believe that the universe of which they are a part is not a product of personal might or power intelligently applied to achieve a previously designed purpose. We are obligated to notice some of these and to file a reply to them.

1. The objection is made that it is a purely arbitrary conclusion that the universe is an effect, and that if it were it cannot be proven with such certitude as to be made a basis for further rationalization.

This objection, if sustained, would render all human experience invalid as a criterion and make a mockery of all human rationalization. All of our actions in the present, our predictions as to the future, as well as our interpretations of the past, are predicated upon the basis of causation of which mankind universally has an intuition. Upon this basis men

have sought to account for the universe in all ages and places. It has universally been regarded as an effect by philosophers and peasants, by savants and savages. The fact that some have regarded it as a supernatural production and others with a superstitious premonition only serves to accentuate our contention that all alike agree that it is an effect, and what they have tried to do is to isolate and understand the cause.

There are two groups of modern thinkers who are specifically concerned with denial of the postulate of an intelligent and personal prime cause – evolutionists and atheists. Yet the universe is here and they are a part of it. They must either ignore it or seek to explain it. Man cannot consistently ignore that of which he is a constituent part, and these groups are compelled to try and account for the present constitution of the universe. In doing so, both have been forced to join the mainstream of human thought and regard the universe in its current state as an effect, for evolution is simply the theory of a cause leading to the effect which we observe and experience. That which is universally admitted should not require proof seeing there is no one to whom it needs to be proven

There devolves upon one who presents a chain of reasoning from which he draws a conclusion, the obligation to substantiate and validate each link as he proceeds. For that reason one may justifiably take the time and make the effort required to establish that the universe is an effect. This may be done by application of the following truth.

Any result which is observable or acknowledged, and which was achieved by an obvious relation and connection between those forces or principles operating in such a manner as to bring into being the said result, implies cause and effect. The acknowledged result is proof of the power of such forces or principles to produce it.

Our entire universe has been demonstrated to be one great system of causes and effects. On this basis we make application of all the discoveries of science. Our welfare, happiness, and even our very existence are contingent upon our conclusion that like causes produce like results, when there is no interference of secondary causes. This one great system operates as a unit, so that the multiplicity of causes producing a multiplicity of effects, constitute, in the aggregate, one great effect, interrelated, coordinated and harmonious. We must conclude that, if the whole universe is a system of causes and effects, and if these, in combination, form the universe into one great effect, there must be a cause possessed of the potency to produce the universe, and this one cause is responsible for this one effect.

It seems that there are but two ways by which the force of this can be evaded. One might deny the whole concept of causation and attempt to throw out of the court of human opinion all reasoning conditioned upon it. But to do this would make all history invalid, render all scientific application impossible, and bring utter chaos to the whole realm of thought. Such irrationality need not be noted except to point out its ridiculous aspects.

The only other alternative would be to deny the unity of the universe and to argue that the functions of the powers producing the effects are not harmonious and sustain no relationship to each other in such a manner as to make one great unified whole. To this we reply that the scientific approach is based upon the postulate that there is a regular and invariable connection between the forces and their results, and between all of the forces as a coordinated system and all of the results as a coordinated system. Each cause is related to every other cause and each result to every other result and all are related to the whole. The conclusion must be that all power has a common source, and this common

source of power is adequate to produce the universe as a whole, and is the very basis for every secondary cause and result in the universe.

2. The objection is made that one cannot possibly deduce an intelligent cause from a study of natural creation. It is urged that research can only disclose a relation between physical causes and results, all directly related to and concerned with matter, its properties and characteristics, and there is no logical connection by which an intelligent Cause can be apprehended or predicated.

This objection might have some validity (although we question it) if everything of a material nature was isolated and separated from all else, but it breaks down when it is observed that there is a correlation of the forces of nature into a harmonious and functioning whole, and that such a systematic or methodical process is essential to the preservation of nature itself and without it nature in all of its forms would be extinguished and perish. Even the most ignorant observer of nature sees evidence of adjustment and adaptation which proceeds according to law and gives indication of having resulted from plan and forethought.

The eye would be useless without light and the highest function of light would be abrogated without the eye. The eye is adapted to light and light is adapted to the eye. It is quite impossible for one to create the other. The eye could not make a single tallow candle yet it can penetrate what otherwise would be darkness and envision what otherwise would be hidden when a candle is lighted. It is evident that the light was made for the eye and the eye was made for the light, and the purpose of both must have been known before either came into existence.

The element in which an object, an organ, or an organism must exist and function must always be present before the organ or organism, which depends upon it for being can exist. Thus the earth was made before plants, water was made before fish, and atmosphere before animals or man. So light also preceded the eye. And all of this indicates design – rational design.

The close inter-relationship between animal and plant life is so striking as to cause even the most skeptical to think in terms of design. In some instances the plant depends upon an insect for its continued existence through pollenization while the insect depends upon the plant for its food supply. In such cases the plant is peculiarly designed so that as the insect secures his nourishment he automatically becomes laden with pollen. Moreover, the plant is particularly adapted to a specific species and this species is so shaped as to fit the plant. The bumblebee has a hairy body, which is so rounded that it fits the bell of the foxglove flower almost perfectly, and the honey can only be obtained by contact with the arched stamens and the style, which are placed ideally to insure maximum coverage.

Some flowers have traps, which automatically close when an insect is within. The struggle of the prisoner to escape causes him to become coated with the pollen before the gently relaxing petals open to allow him to escape. In other plants the insect upon entering must cross a barrier of sticky material, which assures that he will secure a good share of the pollen. One type of orchid deposits its insect visitors in a bath of water so that as they crawl out the precious substance clings to them. In another flower there is a sensitive spot on the stamen. When the insect touches it a spring release causes the stamen to react in such a manner as to release a shower of golden dust. I have long thought that anyone

who considers the remarkable fig-wasp would be forced to acknowledge the presence of intelligence and design in creation.

In the mineral field science has broken down various compounds and identified more than a hundred elements. These combine in various proportions according to certain laws to produce various substances. In many instances one of the elements has a greater affinity for another than the one with which it combines, but a combination with the affinity partner would create a destructive substance. For example, let us consider water, a substance, which is absolutely essential to plant and animal life. It is composed of two gases, hydrogen and oxygen, in mathematical proportion of two parts of the former to one part of the latter. Hydrogen manifests a greater affinity for chlorine than it does for oxygen, but the governing principle affecting the universe sublimates this and compounds it with oxygen.

If the balance were disturbed to the extent that a union was formed of two parts of hydrogen and two parts of oxygen the result would be hydrogen peroxide and life for all breathing creatures would cease. Nitrogen is a gas, which constitutes almost four-fifths of the atmosphere by volume. Water and atmosphere come in contact with each other constantly, but if hydrogen, nitrogen and three parts of oxygen were to combine the resultant compound would be nitric acid and again all life would end on earth.

Yet, nitrogen in the form of protein is important to the proper constituency of animal tissue. Accordingly, bacteria in the soil act upon it to convert nitrogen taken from the atmosphere into nitrate, which is a form adaptable to the need of plants and fitted for their absorption of it. Animals eat the plants and man eats both plants and animals, and thus obtains the protein. Nitrogen is taken from the atmosphere and converted for use as plant food; man takes the plants and converts them to human diet, and thus the protein is derived. Such synchronization is not the result of mere chance nor can it be.

The postulate that there is an intelligent cause responsible for the universe is seen to be valid because it is not based upon mere matter, but upon the manipulation, arrangement and function of an intricate and inter-related system of physical entities. It would seem ridiculous to assume that such organization could result without an organizer. To believe such a thing would make one far more credulous than to acknowledge faith in an intelligent designer and creator. The universe is the result of a demonstration of personal power both in origin and maintenance.

ETERNAL POWER

It is affirmed by the apostle Paul that not only can we determine God's power from what has been made but also that his *eternal* power is manifested. There are two Greek words, which are sometimes translated "eternal." One is *aionios*, the other *aidios*. The first applies specifically to duration undefined, the second to permanence and unchangeableness. It is the second of these which the apostle uses in Romans 1:20, with which we are now concerned. Whereas "power" accounts for the origin of the universe, the fact that it is everlasting accounts for the continuance or maintenance of that which has been created.

To one who accepts the universal concept of causation it will at once become apparent that the universe as a whole and as one unified system, must have resulted from one prime cause, and that this cause existed prior to all creation, and the power exerted in producing the universe was, therefore, an uncreated power. To that which is uncreated

and which may exist apart from and independent of all secondary causes, we give the designation "eternal." Upon this basis the ancients regarded God as "The Eternal."

The continuity and preservation of the created order requires a demonstration of the same power as was requisite for its origin. It is impossible to account for the uniform and constant operation of the material universe simply by reference to the laws of matter and motion. The primary cause must be something more than mechanical; otherwise we would have to conclude that an endless progression of motions has been communicated from matter to matter without any first mover. Our very reasoning about "laws of motion" must proceed upon the basis that matter is inert. There was a power outside of, and superior to all of the force manifested in the universe, which placed in motion the entire system. The fact that it has continued in constant operation is evidence that the same power sustains it.

Chance can no more govern the world than it could make the world, and to argue that the world was brought into existence by chance, that it is a mere fortuitous concourse of atoms, and that subsequently chance imposed laws upon nature by which it was forced to act with regularity and uniformity, is to argue that chance operated in such fashion as to put an end to chance. That which operates by law cannot operate by chance and while it might be argued by the unlearned that a single and detached law might be discovered or imposed by chance, it would be ridiculous indeed to suppose this with regard to an intricate system of laws requiring meticulous synchronization

All human experience would lead us rather to conclude that, without an intelligent power to repair the decays of nature and restore it with frequency, chance would be much more likely to destroy the world than to create it. Any machine left to itself deteriorates and any system without intelligent direction tends to distortion and dissolution. If the majestic planetary system simply happened by chance and is maintained by the same chance, which produced it, that chance has acted with certainty and design. But that which so acts is not chance at all. If the solar system, by mere chance, were to be disturbed until the sun came but a few degrees nearer the earth all life on our planet would go up in a ball of flame, if it moved a few degrees father from the earth the result would be a shroud of ice many feet thick.

That which is indebted for its very existence to power is wholly dependent upon the power that made it. If it could not have existence originally without application of power, it cannot continue in existence without that power. If it be argued that originally it was conceived and created by power but that subsequently it is controlled by "laws of nature" this simply means that the power which made it now governs it by principles imposed. It matters not whether such laws were announced as specific precepts or whether they proceed from certain ingrained characteristics, their origin and result are the same. There can be no principle of self-subsistence in the world independent of its cause. The permanence of universal functions argues the perpetuity of divine power. The government of the world requires such wisdom and power, as no other being besides its Maker could possibly possess. The world is either governed or it is not. If it is governed, it must be governed by the Creator. The existence of the world is a testimony of *power*. Its continuation bears witness that this power is *eternal*.

To one who accepts the declarations made in the Bible as valid, these things present no problem. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews declares that the Son of God "upholds all things by the word of his power" (1:3). All things were made by the power of

his word; all things are maintained by the word of his power. In Colossians 1:16, 17, it is said, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." The original word translated "consist" literally means "to stand or hold together." Thus these remarkable verses affirm that the creation and preservation of the universe are invested in the same being. The one who brought all things together in creation holds all things together in perpetual recreation.

The ancient psalmist, recognizing that the forces of nature combine to prove the eternal power which brought them into existence, urges them thus, "Praise him, sun and moon: praise him all ye stars of light. Praise him all ye heavens, and ye waters that are above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord; for he spoke the word and they were made; he commanded, and they were created. He hath made them fast for ever and ever; he hath given them a law which shall not be broken" (Psalm 148:3-6).

This one passage expresses the following concepts: (1) Creation was the act of God and was accomplished by the power inherent in the divine being; (2) The instrumentality of creation was the word of God; (3) The creative power is identical with the sustaining power; (4) The universe is maintained by law and the law of maintenance is also of divine origin.

GODHEAD

The apostle affirms that from nature, that is, the things that are made, one can come to know three traits or characteristics of God, as follows: (1) power; (2) undiminishing or permanent force or energy; (3) divinity. This last is expressed in his word "Godhead," which might better be rendered "Godhood," as embracing all that is generally attributed to divinity. However, without becoming too technical we need to be very careful that we understand exactly what can be learned about the nature of God from reasoning on the things created, and the limitations beyond which, nature cannot go as an instructor.

A good place to start is with the two uses of the word "Godhead" in the scriptures. These occur in Romans 1:20 and Colossians 2:9. The careless student might conclude that they mean the same thing; while the indifferent student, upon ascertaining that they are derived from two divergent terms, might argue that this made no difference.

The fact is that the word used in Romans 1:20 is *theiotes*, while that in Colossians 2:9 is *theotes*. Neither of these words is found at any other place in the sacred scriptures. Richard Chenevix Trench, Archbishop of Dublin, in his "Synonyms of the New Testament" asserts that these two do not have the same origin, and that, "there is a real distinction between them, and one which grounds itself on their different derivations."

Briefly, the distinction is as follows. In Romans 1:20 the apostle is speaking only of "that which may be known of God" by considering his creative work. Nature can reveal much to us about God and thus we can *know about* him. We can know enough about him that we are left without excuse. But we cannot *know* God in a personal sense except as he is revealed in the person of his Son. We can learn of the divinity of God, his majesty, glory and might, from a study of creation, but we cannot know him in the intimacy of personal relationship except through Jesus. Perhaps the distinction between "divinity" and "deity" may express the difference.

The "Godhead" which we can deduce from our observations of and rationalizations

about the created universe is related to the majesty exhibited in creation. It is of this the psalmist exclaims in his familiar words, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world" (Psalm 119:1-4). There are some things in which this passage is very important to our study. An analysis of it will be quite revealing. While we cannot be exhaustive in our treatment of the verses we would like to mention a few salient points.

(1) The planetary system is the result of God's creative power and is a source of glorification for him.

(2) The heavens convey knowledge and proclaim the wonders of God's power.

(3) The declaration is not made in articulate language and no sound is heard.

(4) The glorification of God is universal in scope as the planets can be observed throughout the whole earth.

This brings us to the point where we may summarize our conclusions about God and detail those things we can know by the application of our reasoning faculties to the created things around us.

1. God is the first cause of all things and thus is uncaused and uncreated. He is self-existent as a being and is an intelligent designer as recognized in the intricate synchronization of natural forms.

2. God is personal as evidenced in the creation of man. The capacity to know and to love can only logically be accounted for on the basis that man is a product of a creator who has the same ability. It is obvious that the creator must possess a personality far superior to ours; otherwise he could not commit to others what he does not himself have.

3. God is spiritual, and is unlimited and unconfined by time or space. He suffers no restrictions and is infinite or unlimited.

4. He is immutable. In view of the fact that God possesses all things good and is perfect, he cannot acquire a perfection nor lose one. One who experiences perfection in the absolute can find nothing to adopt, else he would not be perfect, seeing that he lacks something. By the same token he cannot be divested of any attribute or quality that he possesses and remain perfect.

5. He is eternal, as we have previously shown.

The minimum of faith essential to coming to God is a belief in his existence coupled with the conviction that He is interested and concerned with us as persons and that He manifests this concern by rewarding those who seek him diligently. "Faith is a firm confidence as to things hoped for, a firm conviction as to things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

Chapter 3

My Personal Apology

Our word "apology" is an interesting one. It is not a translation but a transliteration of the Greek *apologia*. In our day it is frequently used to designate an expression of regret for some improper or injudicious remark or act. This was not its original sense at all. Instead, it referred to a statement, either oral or written, in justification or defense of one's conviction about a matter under challenge.

In its early days Christianity became the butt of attack by pagan philosophers and politicians who were masters of the art of ridicule. Many of these were brilliant men in positions of authority in heathen schools and governments. But there were also men of ability who wrote in behalf of the faith, and the second and third centuries of the Christian era produced some noble apologists. From their replies we can ascertain the charges made against the followers of Jesus, and can determine how these accusations were countered.

We shall introduce here only one of the apologists who is especially interesting because of the format of his presentation. Minucius Felix was originally a Roman orator and rhetorician. When he was converted to the Christian faith he directed all of his talents toward the defense of that which he once hated. His learned treatise was probably published about 210 A. D. Following the best style of that day it was in the form of a dialogue between Caecilius, a heathen, and Octavius, a Christian, with Minucius sitting as moderator between them.

Caecilius, during the course of his remarks, produces all of the current arguments in defense of polytheism, and makes all of the charges then in vogue against Christianity and the persons who had embraced it. In behalf of the various deities who were alleged to inhabit the summit of Olympus it was urged that history revealed that the gods had not only protected those who faithfully devoted themselves to their worship, but avenged them of their enemies who unjustly attacked them. It was argued that miracles had been wrought through their power and those who possessed a special dispensation to divine had foretold events which had subsequently come to pass. Caecilius also affirmed that a Supreme Deity had always been revered and worshiped in conjunction with many gods, and that there had ever been one who was regarded as the chief of the gods.

Against the Christians various charges were hurled. They were accused of having deified a publicly executed malefactor, the chief witness against, whom were his own countrymen. It was urged that they demanded a blind faith as opposed to a rational system of philosophy; that they invited the illiterate, sinners and criminals into their society; whereas, only the instructed and pure of heart were initiated into the heathen mystery cults; and that the various Christian sects were intolerant toward each other, exhibiting animosity toward those who professed to be followers of the same God. Caecilius also pointed out the poverty and persecution, which dogged the steps of the Christians and attributed this state to the weakness of the one whom they worshiped.

Caecilius further indicted the Christians as a desperate and unlawful faction composed of those who sought to import a religion from a provincial territory and impose it universally in ruthless disregard for the gods of other people. He declared that they heaped contempt upon all other deities than the one they worshiped, scoffed at their priests and derided their temples and sacred places.

Throughout the lengthy harangue, Octavius quietly listens without interrupting or heckling his accuser. At the close of the charges he speaks calmly to the chairman, Minucius, and informs him that he will endeavor by a clear statement of truth and fact, to exonerate Christianity from the foul aspersions cast upon it by Caecilius. He begins by admitting the truth of the charge that Christians held in contempt the gods of the heathen. He declares that such gods are but the creations of men and are helpless, and that all worship of them is vain. Here is part of his rejoinder.

The mice, the swallows, and the bats, gnaw, insult, and sit upon your gods; and unless you drive them away, they build their nests in their mouths; the spiders weave their webs over their faces. You first make them, then clean, wipe and protect them, that you may fear and worship them. Should we view all of your rites, there are many things, which justly deserve to be laughed at – others that call for pity and compassion.

After this introduction, Octavius proceeds to deal with the reasons for his faith in a logical and systematic fashion. In doing so he shows that the apologetic for one God was equal to the presentation of any of the philosophers in his day. Making his appeal to common observation and knowledge, he points out that man differs from the lower orders of animals, chiefly in this, that the beasts of the field are created prone to the earth, bent downward by nature, and contemplating always that only which will fill their bellies and satisfy physical needs. But man was created to be erect and upright, capable of looking abroad and of contemplating the heavens, possessed of rational powers, of conscience and a moral sense, all of which are calculated to lead him to knowledge of God, which, in turn, make him want to ascertain the will of God and please him. He proceeds to deny atheism as an absurdity, and postulates the need of a great first cause as dictated by the clearest light of reason and conscience. You will appreciate his approach in the following magnificent sentences.

When you lift up your eyes to heaven and survey the works of creation around you, what is so clear and undeniable, as that there is a God, supremely excellent in understanding, who inspires, moves, supports and governs all nature. Consider the vast expanse of heaven, and the rapidity of its motion, either when studded with stars by night, or enlightened with the sun by day; contemplate the almighty hand, which poises them in their orbs, and balances them in their movement. Behold how the sun regulates the year by its annual circuit, and how the moon measures round a month by its increase, its decay, and its total disappearance. Why need I mention the constant vicissitudes of light and darkness, for the alternate reparation of rest and labor? Does not the standing variety of seasons, proceeding in goodly order, bear witness to its divine author? The spring with her flowers, the summer with her harvests, the ripening autumn with her grateful fruits, and the moist and unctuous winter, are all especially necessary. What an argument for providence is this, which interposes and moderates the extremes of winter and summer with the alloys of spring and autumn–thus enabling us to pass the year about with security and comfort, between the extremes of parching heat and of cold? Observe the sea and you will find it bounded with a shore, a law which it cannot transgress. Look into the vegetable world, and see how all of the trees draw their life from the bowels of the earth. View the ocean, in constant ebb and flow; and the fountains running in full veins; with the rivers perpetually gliding in their wonted channels. Why should I take time in showing how providentially this spot of earth is cantoned into hills, dales and plains? What need I

speak of the various artillery for the defense of every animal – some armed with horns and hedged about with teeth or fortified with hoofs and claws, or speared with stings, while others are swift of foot or of wing? But, above all, the beautiful structure of man most plainly speaks of God. Man, of stature straight, and countenance erect, with eyes placed above like sentinels, watching over the other senses within the tower?

Having shared with you this much of the speech of Octavius in reply, I feel it would be unfair not to let you further read his answer to the charge that Christians were generally poor and despicable, and often persecuted and held in contempt by the more sophisticated members of society.

That the most of us are poor, is not to our dishonor but to our glory. The mind, as it is dissipated by luxury, so it is strengthened by frugality. But how can a man be poor, who wants nothing, who covets not what is another's, who is rich towards God? That man is rather poor, who, when he has much, desires more. No man can be so poor as when he was born. The birds live without any patrimony; the beasts find pasture every day, and we feed upon them. Indeed they are created for our use, which, while we do not covet, we enjoy. That man goes happier to heaven, who is not burdened with an unnecessary load of riches. Did we think estates to be useful to us, we would beg them of God, who, being Lord of all, would afford us what is necessary. But we chose rather to contemn riches than to possess them, preferring innocency and patience to them, and desiring rather to be good than prodigal. Our courage is increased by infirmities, and affliction is often the school of virtue.

There are certain things, which we may deduce from the foregoing and other Christian documents of the same era. Let us mention a few of them for your consideration.

1. The Christian concept has encountered opposition ever since its introduction into the world. Because of its conflict with "the wisdom of the age" it has been attacked repeatedly by the materialistic philosophers of every generation.

2. The early Christians did not flinch from their attackers but faced up courageously to the onslaught. They welcomed every examination of the basis for belief and heeded the admonition to be ready always to give an answer to those who queried them about a reason for their hope.

3. They were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for conviction, holding a firm trust that they might accomplish in death what they could not in life. It was this, which prompted Tertullian (about 200 A. D.) to close his apology, which was addressed to the emperor and his counselors, in the following words:

> "But do your worst, and rack your inventions for tortures for Christians. 'Tis all to no purpose; you do but attract the notice of the world, and make it fall the more in love with our religion. The more you mow us down the thicker we spring up – the Christian blood is the seed you sow; it springs from the earth again and fructifies the more. That which you reproach in us as stubbornness, has been the most instructive mistress in proselyting the world – for who has not been struck with the sight of what you call stubbornness, and from thence prompted to look into the reality and grounds of it; and who ever looked well into our religion that did not embrace it? and whoever embraces it (on proper grounds) that was not ready to die for it? For this reason it is that we thank you for condemning us, because there is such a happy variance and disagreement between the divine and human judgment, that when you condemn us upon earth, God absolves us in heaven."

4. It will be noted that the charges directed against Christianity in our twentieth century are not new, but are simply those of the second century introduced in a different garb. A careful analysis will show that not one novelty has been urged by modernistic skeptics. It would appear that neo-paganism has simply borrowed a leaf from the book of more ancient philosophy and revised and amended its content to meet the more refined age in which we live.

5. The weaknesses and frailties of the Christians are still urged as objections to their profession. The spirit of antagonism evidenced in sectarianism and factionalism is still a hindrance to the cause of Christ in our day. It would appear that the heathen in all ages expect more fruit from the Christian tree than do its branches. But sad as the derelictions of Christians may be, it remains that these are not the result of following Christ, but of refusing to do so. And the condemnation of the hypocrisy of his professed followers is an indirect testimony to the purity of Jesus.

Perhaps I should apologize for offering my own apologetic. It is that of a plain man and not of a philosopher. There will be nothing profound about it and it will undoubtedly be rejected by many because it will be presented in the common language in which a simple believer must communicate his thoughts. There will be nothing new or startling about it and it will serve only to recall that which has often formed the foundation for the meditation of most of us in our quiet hours.

I believe in God. There are reasons why I believe. I have pondered them over and over. These reasons appear to me to have validity for my own life and thought. I offer them for consideration because I have personally considered them and they have relevance in the formation of my approach to life. I shall mention five different items. Four of these will be positive; the fifth will be negative. The last will be devoted to a discussion of the inadequacy of an alternative to faith.

1. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE IDEA OF GOD

The idea of a supreme being has been a vital factor in the thought of every nation in the world. As far back as the history of mankind reaches into the remotest annals of time, this has been the case. And the idea of God has not been a fleeting thought or a wandering vagary in a few more enlightened minds. It has been the dominant factor in the formation of the varied cultures. It has been the thing to which men gave their allegiance when all else failed, the one belief, which could not be banished permanently from the human heart. Religion has been the regnant principle, which molded the laws, shaped the lives and conditioned the attitudes of every race, tribe and tongue.

Whether a people were considered primitive or advanced in civilizing influences, they had in common a belief in deity, and this promoted religion, which, in turn, prompted action and conduct compatible with it. The American Indians, who roamed the vast plains or lived among the forest trees, believed in a Great Spirit and contemplated a happy hunting ground where hunger and hardship would come no more. The Aztecs of Mexico, and their Toltec predecessors, sought to propitiate their gods with human sacrificial victims. Barbarous as this appears to us in a more enlightened age, it betokens the fact that deity was regarded as deserving the best that man could offer, and thus shows a strange paradoxical regard for human life even by those who so often sacrificed it.

Long before the Romans pushed their way northward into Europe the savage tribes, which inhabited the area worshiped gods and poured out libations unto them. They glorified and deified their heroes who were credited with real and mythical exploits. Regarding immortality as being the reward for valor alone, they considered that the bodies of the brave after being purified by fire would again be invested with their spirits and conducted into the great banquet-hall of the gods for an eternity of feasting and rejoicing.

The Romans borrowed many of their own deities from the Greeks, so that the gods of the Greeks have exact counterparts in the Roman pantheon. The fertile imagination of the Greeks peopled the universe with so many gods that the poet Hesiod said there were actually thirty thousand of them. The Persians had their supreme being, Mithra, and under him the two inferiors, Oromasdes and Ariman, the gods of good and evil respectively. The Babylonians worshiped Bel and Nebo, and the Assyrians before them had their deities.

It is impossible for anyone to write the history of an ancient nation without devoting a great deal of space to religion. So interwoven is religion with the customs, laws, habits and events of every tongue and tribe that a recital of its events is actually a recounting of the impact of its religion upon the life of the people. Even the professed atheist who derides the idea of a supreme being, and who denounces religion as an opiate of the people, must admit that the idea of God is as universal as mankind.

When such a skeptic writes a letter, if he puts down the name of the weekday or the month, he often is forced to use the name of a heathen deity; when he puts down the year he pays tribute to the entrance of Jesus into the world. The poetry he reads is replete with allusions to the gods of the ancients or to the words of the sacred scripture. If you were suddenly to remove every reference to religion or every quotation related to it, the literature of the world would become threadbare. The masterpieces of writing and speech would disappear.

If the idea of God had occurred only among barbarians and savages, one might conclude that it was a superstitious notion conjured up by the rude and uncultured. Or, if the idea was found only among the more enlightened he might reason that it was an outgrowth of the intellectual faculties, an invention to meet the need for explanation of certain intangibles. If the idea were limited to a certain clime in a certain age it could be argued that certain factors of environment, created by time and place, necessitated the concept, and it was devised because of this. Admittedly, no such reasoning could be justified but it might be more easily indulged.

But the truth is that all people, tribes and tongues, have believed in a supreme being. This has been as much a part of their existence as the eating of food or propagating the species. And it would seem to be instinctive as the satisfaction of hunger or breeding to produce offspring. Just as you could not find a race of people who did not eat to sustain life so you could not find a race that did not believe in a deity. Can it be possible that this one deep longing and hunger for companionship with a supreme being, felt by all men everywhere, is the only passion without provision, the one desert of disillusionment without a single oasis? Would man create a desire to cruelly torment himself and perpetuate a myth with which to tantalize his own person? And if one man would do so, would all men do it? Would they do so simultaneously in a universe where many of them had no communication with any of the others?

It may be argued that many of the aboriginal nations were superstitious in matters of

religion, and this is true. But it cannot be argued that they were not sincere. In their ignorance the *object* of their faith was misdirected, but the *effect* was not. Their conduct was consistent with what they did believe and they were held in check by what they held in awe. Their government, their customs, their cultures, were an outgrowth of their religion. How may we account for a universal belief in God if there was no God of the universe in whom to believe?

2. THE ANTIQUITY OF THE IDEA OF GOD

It is an interesting fact that when one goes back as far as historical research permits he finds that every nation had its traditions concerning creation, the primeval state of man, the origin of sin, the deluge and kindred matters. Concerning the origin of the existing natural order there is a remarkable agreement among the ancient Babylonians, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Assyrians and Greeks. All of the traditional views begin with a chaotic condition, all hold that light was created first after the chaos, all agree that with the coming of light, orderly development followed, all concur in the placing of the sun, moon and stars as regulatory bodies in the heavens.

We are limited in our examination of the veracity of a people to the evidence at hand. For this reason we cannot go beyond the bounds of recorded history. But the earliest such records show that all the nations already field traditions, which they believed and accepted as coming down to them from the very beginning. In fact, the recording of these traditions lest they become lost or forgotten actually gave rise in some instances to the inception of permanent records among them. We may express doubt as to the accuracy of the traditions but we cannot deny the existence of them. Since they did exist and were regarded as traditions and since they are beyond the pale of possibility for accurate evaluation it would seem the role of wisdom on our part not to be arbitrary in our pronouncements. How do we know that they did not possess adequate and credible evidence to support them in a belief so universal?

Of course it is generally urged that, in spite of the agreements we have mentioned, there were also divergences as to detail and various disagreements in the traditions. This is correct but instead of it disproving the traditions or weakening the fabric of agreement woven from them, it does the opposite. A tradition is "a handing over or a handing down." It refers to that which is handed down from one person to another, or from one generation to another. It is recognized that in all transmission of thought from one generation to another discrepancies arise. Men are not accurate either in speaking or hearing, and these inaccuracies are thus perpetuated. Where there is deliberate collusion and individuals conspire to make their stories conform this does not occur in written records.

Of one thing we can be sure, that the stories credited to ancestral origin are traditional and genuinely so. This does not prove the basis of the tradition to be factual but it does demonstrate that succeeding generations deemed it of sufficient value to pass on to their posterity. Having determined that accounts are genuine traditions, our task is to ascertain the element, or elements, basic to all of them, and we will then know the core of the original, free from the later modifications and amendments created by passing time.

Traditions must have a beginning and that beginning must either be in fact or in supposition. In the case of the traditions to which we allude it can be said that those who received them believed implicitly that they accounted for the origin of the earth and of

mankind. This indicates that those who conveyed them also accepted them and transmitted them as factual. It would appear that the antiquity of the traditions would be strong evidence for the existence of God and the creation of the material universe.

3. NATURE AND GOD

For a great many centuries men have pointed to nature as demonstrating the existence of God. In our previous chapter we cited the statement to this effect as made by the apostle Paul to the Romans. Other writers of the scriptures, both old covenant and new, have made the same appeal. In addition to these, great thinkers through the centuries have regarded the natural realm as an effect, which demanded a supernatural and intelligent personality as essential to its origin.

Any attempt to explain the universe by eliminating God does not solve the problems or answer the questions. It increases both. It is as if an inventor created an intricate lock mechanism for a huge safe containing untold wealth, and provided the proper combination for access, only to have those in charge of the safe throw the combination away to experiment blindly with millions of possibilities in an attempt to gain entrance to the treasure. It is useless for those who reject God from their thinking to argue that their intellectual integrity is at stake for one must be much more credulous to accept their substitute theories than to believe in God.

Some men are so foolish as to think that God can be discounted and they themselves be considered as honest doubters. This is not the case at all for the mind cannot continue as a vacuum. Man is so constructed as to require faith. All business and economic progress is based upon this principle, and in transacting our daily affairs we actually and practically "walk by faith and not by sight." The same thing is true in our attitude toward the world and ourselves. In the final analysis the choice is not between faith on one hand and doubt upon the other, but between rival systems of faith. It is not a question of whether we shall believe or not believe, but simply one of what (or whom) we shall believe.

Since the question is one of divergent forms of faith, it is obvious that the same criteria must be applied to the form of faith, which denies God as to that which accepts Him. It is here that the "unbelieving believer" fails to measure up. He is like a merchant who has two sets of scales; one to use in purchasing, the other in selling. Or, like a man with two "yardsticks" of different lengths. When the same rigid tests are applied to the alternatives offered for God in creation, as are applied to the concept of God, it will be found that what is called honest doubt is not honest at all.

Men talk about having an open mind and infer that such a mind is one, which settles on nothing. But there are absolute truths and upon these the mind is designed to close and retain them as foundational or axiomatic to the rational processes. On the farm where we lived we had a gate, which insisted on swinging shut while we were trying to drive through to the field, so we propped it open with a chunk of wood. At the end of the season when we tried to close it we could not do so because the hinges had rusted and no longer allowed the gate to function. An open mind is not always a flexible one especially when it is kept open by an arbitrary prop. Some minds stay open because they cannot be closed and everything goes through while nothing worthwhile is retained.

It has long been a feeling of ours that the majority of those who live closest to nature have an abiding trust in God. There are exceptions, of course, but generally speaking, men who wrest a personal living from the soil feel a sense of nearness unto God. This

may prove little, or nothing, about the subject at hand, but the humility which comes from a recognition of one's inadequacy to make anything grow, coupled with the thrill of creativity as a partner of unseen forces, produces a feeling of relation to and reliance upon the Creator of the universe. Who should have a firmer trust in God than one who works directly with the elements He has made and the forces He has set in motion.

There was a time when mention of this fact was countered with the reminder that those who worked the soil were less educated and unsophisticated. That day is past and modern skeptics can no longer make it appear that "the greater the ignorance, the greater the faith." The argument was not even valid in the days of restricted educational facilities in rural areas, for there have always been men like Sir Isaac Newton, to affirm, "The whole diversity of created things could have its origin only in the ideas and the will of a necessarily Existing Being."

We rejoice at the new discoveries in the physical realm. It would seem obvious that, if God exists and created all things, the deeper we penetrate into a study of the result, the more we will come to appreciate the cause behind it. The true believer welcomes all objective research and thrills at every scientific breakthrough. A few years ago we were limited to a study of the atoms in the world, now we can study a world of power in each atom. There is no danger of displacing God by learning more about Him and how He works. The God of the ages will command the Space Age, as he did the Stone Age, the Iron Age, the Machine Age, and even the Dark Ages.

If it was essential to postulate God in order to explain the presence of universal power, how much more essential is it to rest upon God as the explanation of atomic energy. It is hardly conceivable that the power, which exists in the atom was self-generative, and to argue that such could happen would involve interminable guesswork as to what "triggered" it originally. The power to pull the trigger must reside in someone or something before it is applied to the trigger and this destroys the very idea of self-generation by conditioning it upon application of existing force. Since it is the nature of energy unconfined to expend itself, and since the power brought to bear in order to confine it must be greater than the energy, how can we account for energy being confined to the atom

It is our own conviction that the natural realm argues the existence of God on the basis of two things: what has happened and what has not happened. The universe is here. We are a part of it and so conditioned that we can hardly continue in it without seeking to account for it. We must seek an explanation for what we see and experience. But our investigation has led us to discover potent chemical forces, which would destroy the universe itself except that they are kept in intricate balance. To us, the most satisfying explanation is that of a personal and intelligent being "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you all."

In our previous chapter we spoke of design in nature and reasoned that this presupposed a designer who was intelligent. The highest expression of mind and the greatest demonstration of mental ability, is to take a number of unrelated physical things which are unconscious, and set them in such relationship with each other as to make them function in unison and serve the purpose of conscious design. Being wholly unconscious of relationship, function, design or purpose, such unity in consistent function can only result from an intelligent consciousness acting purposefully upon such things.

This can be demonstrated by such simple objects as the alphabet blocks with which little children amuse themselves. The blocks are simply material composed of wood or

plastic and are wholly unconscious of any relationship to each other. The letters of the alphabet imprinted upon them are visible symbols, which have come to be accepted as representative of certain speech sounds. If we enter a room and find the blocks arranged in such a fashion as to spell out a simple sentence such as, “See the cat and dog,” we immediately arrive at the conclusion that someone possessed of mental power has consciously arranged them thus. We know that neither the letters nor the blocks have power to arrange themselves so as to convey thought and we also recognize that the law of probabilities precludes the possibilities necessary for the blocks to fall into line and into the required sequence when casually tossed into the air. We have no hesitancy in concluding that personal conscious power was brought to bear upon them and arranged them to conform to design.

But such an illustration is far too simple to even approximate the complex relationships in the physical realm. Let us suppose that we go by a printing shop and see the fonts of type with thousands of upper and lower case letters. The next day we pass that way again and find the letters now composing a masterpiece of literature. Will we not know that an intelligent power has created the masterpiece? Could there have been “A Tale of Two Cities” without the mental direction of Charles Dickens, or a ‘Pilgrim's Progress” without the conscious effort of John Bunyan? Could “The Gettysburg Address” have formed itself without the mental genius of Abraham Lincoln?

Think of the seven notes in music. Each of these is a symbol for a tone, which is merely a vibration in the air. The note, the tone and the air are all unconscious. But the marvelous genius of Bach or Beethoven could arrange the tones in such a manner as to create music to thrill the hearts of men and women in all generations. The mind of Handel is indelibly stamped upon the Hallelujah Chorus. In the same fashion the mind of God is imprinted upon the universe and “the singing of the spheres” is a composition of supernatural genius intelligently directed. The world of nature is the result of personal creativity as certainly as was Longfellow’s “Psalm of Life” or Whittier's ‘Snowbound.’”

4. HUMAN NATURE AND GOD

Physically, man is an animal. His body is composed of bones, muscles, sinews, tissues, veins and blood, as are the bodies of other animals. But if there is a difference between man and the other animals we need to know what it is. The fact that others are called “lower animals” indicates that man is higher and more majestic. What is the difference? Sometimes man is called “a thinking animal.” Sometimes he is called “a religious animal.” This implies that other animals are not rational, that is, they are not capable of reasoning, so they are not capable of worshiping or reverencing a higher being.

There is some quality in man, which makes it impossible for him to be satisfied with material things. A hog can fill his stomach and lie down without a care. But man can dwell in a state of luxury and still be restless. His stomach may be full but his heart and life may be empty. There is a yearning deeply imbedded in the human personality which no earthly companionship can ever fully satisfy. The spirit of man reaches out for the source of all life. Not long ago we took some flowers in for the winter and placed them in the basement not too far from a small window. It was not long until every plant was bending toward the sunlight, which filtered through the glass. In the same fashion the soul reaches out its invisible tendrils toward the Sun of righteousness.

The ancient psalmist said, “My heart pants for God as the hart pants for the water

brook." The picture we conjure up is that of a deer relentlessly pursued by dogs or wolves. The frightened creature runs with tongue hanging out and body dehydrating because of perspiration, while the throat becomes dry and constricted due to the rigors of the chase. But finally respite comes at sight of a brook of clear, cool water, which serves to revive the flagging energy. The animal is so constructed as to require water to survive and water is to be found in every part of the earth. The longing finds an answer and the need is met.

It would be incongruous indeed if provision were made for every need of man except the highest and noblest. The testimony of millions will show that there is no void or vacuum at the summit of human desire and longing. They have not reached out into emptiness but have found a response to their cries. The hungering soul is fed. The thirsty heart is refreshed. The lonely are comforted with the thought of companionship, which is real, though unseen.

Inherent in mankind is a sense of justice which demands that wrongs be righted, that inequalities be adjusted, and that ruthless oppression be punished. This has driven men to defy tyrants at the cost of life, to plead for recognition of human rights and to establish courts of equity. Still there is a constant sense of futility in the attempt to secure absolute justice in this life. Man has an ideal, which he has not been able to reach. He is cognizant that there are shortcomings in any system, which he creates.

There are no judges able to read the hearts of men or to determine actual motivations. Any attempt to set up a scale of responsibility ends in failure. The judges that are appointed sometimes fall victim to their own cupidity and are not free from taking bribes to thwart the demands of justice.

Is the principle, upon which man proceeds – that every crime deserves punishment – a valid one? If it is not, then a criminal is as guiltless as a just person, and in the final analysis there is no such thing as crime. Against this form of theorizing the whole experience of the human race cries out and every law lifts up its voice in protest.

If the principle is valid, who will bring justice to attainment? Who will deliver to the dock the greedy and rapacious who have trampled roughshod upon the poor and helpless and exploited them in their insane attempts to command power and wealth and bask in luxury? Who will avenge the millions of widows and starving orphans who have been bereft of their husbands and fathers by warmongers who have literally waded through the warm blood of those innocent ones whom they have slaughtered?

Who will repay the callous-hearted who have herded men into gas chambers by the millions and have snuffed out human lives as carelessly as they would extinguish the flame of candles on a birthday cake? Who will exact retribution for the blood of martyrs burned at the stake, or flayed into ribbons of bleeding flesh at the gibbet, or reduced to insensibility on the rack?

Will there be no final vindication of the life of idealism or the cause of righteousness? Will the future be simply an increasing and eternal struggle to determine the validity of the two opposing concepts that might makes right or that right makes might?

Is there no umpire in the struggle of life, no ultimate referee? Will there be no final whistle blown to announce the end of the conflict? The very history of mankind cries out for a decision which will be universally pronounced upon what the poet calls "man's inhumanity to man" which he says, "makes countless thousands mourn."

Shall those who have fattened themselves upon their fellows and wallowed in the pens of their own swinish greed have no day of slaughter? Will the books never be closed and no trial balance ever taken? Surely there must be a Judge and a judgment day; else life itself is meaningless, useless and purposeless.

There is another aspect of human existence, which we must not overlook. The deep longing to live forever argues that the grave cannot be the end of human destiny. In a hundred subtle ways the concept of the better life beyond intrudes itself into our thinking. It is the source of the purest hope, which sustains man in a world, which is often filled with problems, which defy solution. All of us have had the experience of working late to meet an examination or to complete a project, only to have the solution escape us. We have comforted ourselves with the thought that after a night of sleep we may arise to a new day when the answer may become plain.

We struggle throughout life's day for the real meaning of existence. When we have some of the data of experience collected until we can begin to understand the purpose of life, we find ourselves powerless to hold our eyes open and we drift off into the dreamless slumber called death. Is there to be no awakening to a fairer day when faith can be realized in sight?

Those whose bodies are wracked with pain through a great part of their earthly sojourn, or whose limbs are crippled and distorted so as to defy normal use, sigh for a world where pain is banished and "the crooked will be made straight." Fathers and mothers who see the lives of their children warped by sin and who behold the tragic fruits of excess and immorality pray for a world where sin cannot enter and all that defiles will be debarred. Those who follow the caravans which wend their way to the silent cities of the dead, whose frames shake with sobs and whose cheeks glisten with tears, longingly look for a day when all tears will be wiped away and there will be no more sorrow, separation or death.

There is in most of us a rebellion against the philosophy that the intellect which can probe the secrets of space, discover the power of the atom, and direct the channels of electronic skills, can be rudely extinguished forever by a drunken and irresponsible driver, or by a crazed dope addict with an assassin's blade. Even those who ridicule the thought of a life beyond, find themselves, when really confronted with the death of a loved one, in an inner turmoil, which cannot resolve itself by the forced thought of utter oblivion.

A classic example of this fact is found in the case of Robert G. Ingersoll. After years of lecturing against Christianity for a fee, and of scoffing at the Bible and the church, the renowned orator found himself called upon to speak at the funeral of his brother. As he gazed upon the casketed form of one whom he described as "a brave and tender man," his eyes filled with tears he could not hide and finally he bowed his head upon the coffin in uncontrollable grief. It was only after a great struggle for composure that he read the funeral oration, which contained the following memorable words:

"Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word; but in the night of death hope sees a star and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing."

The star of which the noted infidel spoke is the glimmering light of eternity inherent in the human personality from the beginning; the rustling wing is that of the celestial mes-

senger of hope come to conduct the faithful to a better clime. Victor Hugo said, "The thirst for the infinite proves infinity."

5. THE FUTILITY OF REASON WITHOUT GOD

There is either a God or there is not. Every nation in history has paid tribute to a belief in deity. This belief has been so predominant as to affect the laws, customs and cultures of the nations. It is a universal belief and it is also one, which is as old as the written records of these nations. The earliest of those records affirm that they are but written accounts of tradition alleged to have originated in the beginning.

Such traditions either have a basis of fact or they do not. Man either derived the idea of God from tradition from the beginning, based upon fact; or from the external testimony of nature; or the internal and inherent principles which are a part of the human personality and being – or the idea is the product of his own reasoning.

It is this last upon which the atheist depends for an answer. But if this be true it is evident, according to its advocates, that man's reason has worked a universal deception and cannot be trusted at all. Would one place any confidence in an international counterfeiter who had palmed off his nefarious and worthless creations upon the most learned of all nations?

The idea of God exists. It is as old as mankind. If that idea is purely the result of reason and reason is so deceptive how can the atheist know that he has not been deceived, and that his reasoning has not led him into a blind alley?

We have no intention to derogate reason or its powers, but reason is the means by which we test and measure theories to determine whether they are true and factual. It is admitted by all, that human reason is imperfect because no one has all of the data at his command. Is there no perfect Mind in the universe by which reason must be measured?

The Bureau of Standards in our national capitol maintains the perfect ounce as the basis of weights and the perfect inch as the basis of length. There is an observatory, which constantly corrects time to offset deviation in official clocks. If one did not know what constituted a straight line he could not identify or designate another as crooked.

We believe that the very nature of reason demands that there be a Mind that is perfect and that where there is science there must somewhere be omniscience as the final arbiter. Jean de La Bruyere said, "The very impossibility in which I find myself to prove that God is not, discloses to me His existence."

Chapter 4

God Has Spoken

We have long been aware that when one accepts the truth that *God is*, and thus concedes that there is One who *is God*, he will be led to expect that such a Being will reveal his thoughts and ideals to the rational beings whom he has created. Indeed, one might well believe that a non-communicative God would not be God at all. There are certain aspects of life which rational beings long to know and which could only be ascertained by revelation from an omniscient being. To withhold such information when it could be given would be cruel, and since God could provide the information and it is his nature to be good, it is not presumptuous to expect him to do so.

Laying aside, for the moment, the claim of the sacred scriptures to contain a revelation from God, let us turn to the scientific method of arriving at a knowledge of a fact or truth. This requires that we move from the realm of what could be to the realm of what is or has been. The three steps are those of possibility, probability and certainty. If a thing is deemed impossible because of the nature of the subject this will at once eliminate the other two steps from consideration. This is not the case with probability, which is a relative term. The degree of probability will be increased or diminished by certain factors, which are so generally recognized that they are actually designated "laws of probability."

To demonstrate that a thing is possible does not argue that it is probable; to prove it is probable does not argue for its certainty. To establish possibility removes it from the realm of the “cannot be” to that of “could be”; to establish probability advances it one more step to “might be.’ It is still another important step to the domain of “is.” Those who begin with the admission of the existence of a personal God will have no difficulty with the question of possibility for it would appear to be a necessary corollary that “with God all things are possible.” However, we shall assign the reasons for our personal conviction that it is possible for God to communicate the divine thoughts and will.

All reasoning for the acquisition of knowledge must proceed from the known to the unknown. Whether in mathematics or philosophy we must begin with the recognized factors. Man, as a creation of God has a mind with which to think and the ability to convey his thoughts. It is unthinkable that, in his creation of man with such ability, God exhausted his power. To argue thus would be to contend that God created himself out of existence, and in the process made man a God. He who possesses the whole power of God is God, and if man exhausted the power of the Creator and appropriated it to himself, this would be in contravention of reason, which affirms that the creator must be superior to the created and exist before it.

Since God could not bestow a power that he did not have, and since such power could not be exhausted in the process, the fact that man is possessed of the organs and faculties of communication, demonstrates that it is possible for God to convey thought and to communicate his will to other intelligent beings. Although our immediate appeal is not the scriptures, it is not inappropriate just here to point out that they do not oppose the scientific method, but rather endorse it. Thus we have the ancient prophet asking, “He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?” (Psalm 94:9). It may be just as appropriately asked, “He that made the tongue, does he not speak?”

The nature of God and the needs of mankind constitute an argument in favor of the probability of God having spoken to the human family. God has exhibited himself as being kind, benevolent and loving. He is eminently good and has shown this by blessings bestowed upon the human family. He is called God, which is but a form of the word "good." He is the Good One. It is a remarkable feature that mankind in primitive simplicity so referred to and described the Creator, and the Creator acknowledged the designation. The earth owes its existence to goodness. In spite of the wisdom and sagacity, the power and might, exhibited in the creation of the material universe, the Creator was not described by a word or words that indicate these. Although possessed of both omnipotence and omniscience, it is said, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This world was a product of goodness in a pure and untinctured state.

We have previously affirmed that God has provided those things essential to the existence and happiness of man. He created an environment, which forms a natural habitat for mankind. He has supplied the means for satisfaction of every urgent desire. Man is capable of curiosity out of which research and investigation grows, and yet he is limited in what he can ascertain through his own powers of study. The primary intellectual urge is to know of his origin and destiny. He cannot go back beyond the first man, he cannot pierce the veil of the future beyond his own death. It is evident that he must receive any information as to these two matters from the Eternal One.

Nothing else challenges man in his thought processes to the extent that his origin and destiny do. One of the first questions of importance asked by the child is, "Where did I come from?" Equally important is the query as to where we go when we die. The child is an incipient philosopher for these questions are at the basis of all philosophy. It is not probable that one who was good would withhold from man the information so necessary for wellbeing and freedom from anxiety, and we must conclude that a benevolent God would without doubt reveal the truth about these things.

The highest form of communication between rational beings is speech. Having suggested that the nature of God and man constitutes an argument in favor of God's having spoken, we now urge that the nature of speech is another such argument. Man is able to speak. He can employ the organs of speech in such a fashion as to convey his thoughts. The act of speaking is a responsive and repetitive process. No man speaks who has not been first spoken to. If one were born under such circumstances as to be immediately secluded from human society he would not be able to speak.

Children speak the language of the family into which they are born. This is so obvious that no one questions that a child born into a family where German is spoken will speak the German language, while one born into a home where French is spoken will speak that language. Since man speaks, it is highly probable that he does so because he was first spoken to. Since the Creator preceded the creation the first man could have heard only his voice.

In conformity with this, Moses records the fact of God speaking before anything is spoken by man, and when man does speak it is in response to God. Every period of creation is introduced with the expression, "And God said," but it is only when we get to Genesis 1:28, when human beings have been created, that we have the expression, "And God said *to them*." The rest of the creation was governed by instinct, but man as a rational being must be governed by instruction.

The difference between rational and non-rational creation is another basis for contending for the probability that God has spoken. Of all created beings man is most helpless at his entrance into the world. At birth he has no knowledge of life and no power to use any instinct available unto him. He cannot defend himself nor hide from his enemies. He has no protective coloration conformable to his surroundings to conceal him from those who would destroy him. He cannot forage for his own food nor secure his own drink. He possesses no power of locomotion. He cannot discern color. He is born without a thought or a habit. He is dependent for survival upon the interest of other rational beings.

What is true of a human infant in one place is also true of human infants universally. We know it is true of those of three or four generations previous to our own and have no reason to doubt that it has always been true. In view of the need of the human being for the instruction of another interested and rational being in order to survive, it would seem that the first man in the infancy of the race, received such communication as was essential to his wellbeing from the Creator.

Further, it would appear that a communication given by God to man would be preserved insofar as it was of interest to the whole race. A number of factors may be urged for such a conclusion. We cite but a few of them.

1. Reverence for deity would prompt those to whom God spoke to hold as sacred any word received from him. Certainly if it is the tendency of men to treasure the words of great leaders and enshrine them in permanent memorials they would be even more concerned in guarding the word of God.

2. The generation receiving the communication would manifest every concern for transmitting it to succeeding generations as proof of the existence of God and his direct concern for their fathers. No one to whom God has actually spoken would fail to convey the message to his heirs.

3. The need for guidance from on high would not be limited to one generation and the same consideration which provoked the message originally would continue to demand its repetition. Since God does not do for man what he can do for himself, or what another man may do for him, the communication once given would be continued by men.

4. Divine providence would operate to preserve the oracles of God, for the same power which gave the message originally could act to maintain it, and would do so because of the same need which prompted it in the beginning.

This being true, we should be able to locate a communication purporting to be from God, and bearing such marks as would validate its claims. Is there such material known to us? Every reader will immediately think of the Bible in this connection. Here is a collection of writings designated as “holy scriptures” and demanding the attention of mankind by its claim to be of divine origin. Is the Bible the kind of Book one would expect from God? If we draw up a compilation of requirements, which must be met by any volume claiming to originate with Deity, will the Bible meet the criterion thus established?

1. A CENTRAL THEME

It will be agreed by all who believe in the existence of God, that if he intended to personally interrupt the onward flow of human history by a divine breakthrough in which the happiness and well-being of the human race was involved, he would point forward to it prior to its advent, and backward to it after its occurrence. That is, he would prepare mankind in advance for such an event, and ever after relate men to it. The nature of the revelation would be affected by whether it occurred before or after such divine visitation.

This is precisely the design of the Bible. It affirms that in Jesus of Nazareth dwelt all the fullness of Godhood bodily (Colossians 2:9). We use the word "Godhood" in place of "Godhead" as in the King James Version, for the simple reason that the term signifies all that is involved in Deity. Just as "priesthood" encompasses all that is related to the functioning of priests, and "manhood" embraces all that is related to the state or character of being a man, so "Godhood" includes the state or character of being God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."

The self-revelation of God would obviously be the median line in history for all revelation from God. The Bible is eminently faithful to this requirement. "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" (Hebrews 1:1, 2). God hath spoken! This is the most important statement ever made. It assumes the existence of God and affirms the communication of his will to men.

Revelation, as to time, is divided into two eras – time past, and these last days. As to agency, it involved the prophets then, and the Son now. As to nature, it was originally in many parts at various times, now it is complete.

The prophets laid the groundwork for the prime event in history. They informed the world in advance of where, when and how the divine-human encounter on a personal level would take place. The first national prophet of the Israelites was Samuel, which accounts for the statement of one of the eyewitnesses of Jesus that, "All the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days" (Acts 3:24). The same witness said upon another occasion, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).

The apostles universally pointed men back to the cross as the hope of salvation. "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23, 24). In the matter of design the Bible is manifestly the kind of volume, which God would produce.

2. ADAPTED TO NEEDS

Again, it would appear obvious that any revelation from God must be adapted to the need of mankind at the time and in the place when given. The nature of the revelation at any given period would thus be defined and affected by the condition of those to whom it was vouchsafed. The world of mankind is composed of individuals and it passes through the same stages as do the individuals. The world has its infancy, childhood, adolescence and maturity. One does not communicate with mature men as he does with children.

The Bible is faithful in this respect. It actually presents the relationship of God to mankind in four dispensations – a patriarchal, a legalistic, a preparatory, and a mature state. In each age the revelation is given just as would be expected under the circumstances then prevailing. Each era becomes a foundation for the one succeeding it. The fact that God has so ordered his revelation has become the occasion for criticism from careless and casual thinkers. These have frequently objected to some things in the old covenant scriptures as childish and puerile, and unworthy of God. But the very word "childish" contains a clue to the reason for these things.

If a grown man stoops down to talk upon a level with his little son, and uses object lessons which appear to be trivial to mature observers, we regard this condescension upon the part of the father as an act of understanding love. If a parent insisted upon trying to teach a two-year-old child from a textbook on trigonometry and calculus instead of with building blocks we would conclude that such a parent was mentally unbalanced. On the same basis we must not expect God's revelation in the childhood age of the world to be upon the same level as that in these last days.

All learning is done upon an ascending scale, using the knowledge previously gained as a stepping-stone for acquisition of additional information. Consequently all systems of instruction must recognize the need for conveying facts in conformity with this natural law, beginning with the elemental features and progressing to the more complex. As the creator of rational beings, God understands the heart and mind of man and adapts his communication to their nature. The ancients declared, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways" (Psalm 139:1-3).

That God has proceeded according to the universal law of instruction is evident in one passage, which censures those who did not progress in knowledge as they should have done. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Hebrews 5:12). The original word for "first principles" literally referred to the letters of the alphabet and can be translated as the A, B, C's. In this place it refers to the old covenant scriptures as constituting the elemental revelation from God.

3. UNIFORMITY OF WITNESS

If there are two systems of revelation adapted to the needs of mankind in succeeding ages, both professing to be of divine origin, the latter must consistently recognize and respect the former and defend its authority for the age to which it was given. Any attempt to reflect upon the origin and validity of the previous revelation would result in one of three conclusions: the first was not of divine origin, or, the second was not of divine origin, or neither of the two was of divine origin. God would not undermine his own authority and no revelation given by him would do so.

In this respect the Bible passes the test required of a compilation purporting to come from the same divine author. The system of religion and the scriptures regarded as sacred among the Jews, are both represented as being divine in the new covenant scriptures. Jesus attests to the divine origin of the Jewish system, and every writer in the new covenant scriptures who has occasion to mention the preceding dispensation recognizes the hand of God at work.

In the matter of primacy, Abraham was recognized as the father of the race, and Moses as the lawgiver. In John 8:52-59 is recorded a clever attempt of scribes and lawyers to trick Jesus into a conflict with what was known about Abraham but he resolved the controversy by saying, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad." The implication was quite plain that if Abraham was glad about the coming of Jesus on the basis of the meager testimony available unto him, those who professed to be his children should have been overjoyed when the Lord came.

In Acts 3:12-26, Peter made a speech to a multitude which assembled after a lame beggar, who was a public character, had been made to walk. The speech resulted in the arrest of Peter and John and their incarceration in the common jail. During his remarks the apostle affirmed of his hearers, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."

In Galatians 3, the apostle Paul actually hinged his masterful argument on justification through faith, upon the authenticity of the old covenant scriptures. "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (verse 8). The same thing is true in Romans 4:3, "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." There can be no question of the attitude of the new covenant writers toward the origin of the promises unto Abraham.

What was true of the father of the patriarchs was equally true of the man who stood at the threshold of the legalistic age. Jesus said, "And as touching the dead that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" (Mark 12:26).

Nothing is clearer than the consistency with which the writers of the new covenant scriptures assign the old covenant scriptures to the power and the implementation of the Holy Spirit. Those scriptures were divided into the law, the psalms, and the prophets, and all of these are ascribed to the instrumentality of the Spirit.

Peter affirms that no prophecy of the old covenant scriptures was the result of mere human interpretation of events or trends. The message did not originate with the messenger. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). In harmony with this he asserts that it was the Spirit of Christ in the prophets, which "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:11).

In Acts 1:16 Peter affirms that a certain scripture had to be fulfilled, having been given by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David. He then declares, "It is written in the book of Psalms" (verse 20). This is important to notice. It gives the divine agent of revelation – the Holy Spirit; the human agent for transmission – David; the method of revelation – oral speech; the means of preservation – writing. In a few words purely incidental to a narrative we have provided for us the whole scheme of revelation. The fact that it is incidental, and thus undesigned, makes it all the more valuable.

It is hardly necessary to multiply the examples from the new covenant scriptures in which the validity of the old covenant scriptures is asserted and upheld. The reader can seek these out for himself. However, we would like to mention a point of interest, which, although it approaches the matter from the negative aspect, is very significant. Critics of the Bible have meticulously investigated every word of both the old and new covenant

scriptures. Many of these critics have been prejudiced against the Bible. They have approached their research with pre-conceived notions adverse to the authorship and authority of the Book.

These men have listed any minute discrepancy in testimony, and mistakenly branded it as contradictory. We can be certain that if they could have located one place where they could turn the scriptures against each other it would have been grist for their mill and they would have kept it grinding incessantly. But the old covenant scriptures purport to be a message from God pointing forward to the coming of a new covenant, and the new covenant scriptures purport to be the fulfillment of the old, and affirm over and over again the divinity behind them. The critics are thus forced to use their inventive ability and imaginative quality to make any case at all, which will appeal to the credulous reader.

4. WORTHY MOTIVATION

If it is concluded that God created man as a rational being, and that the purpose in doing so was to provide for mutual delight in each other of the creator and the created, it would appear reasonable that any communication directed toward the latter must proceed from a motivation worthy of the creator. Any selfish and unworthy motivation exhibited would lay the communication open to serious question as to its origin. If, upon examination of the scriptures called "sacred" there should appear a trivial and insignificant reason for the message contained in them, our intellects would rebel against acceptance of the information as coming from God. A divine communication should manifest the following characteristics:

1. It must uphold the majesty of the infinite and the splendor of one who is the object of all glory, honor and praise.
2. It must exhibit that grace which is an expression of God's goodness and which enables him to bestow benefits upon those who are undeserving and unworthy. Since we can plead no merit of our own, a communication from God must proceed from that attribute which imputes merit, else the communication would either be impossible or worthless.
3. It must, as we have previously suggested, take into account the nature of man, including his circumstances, needs and ability, and be couched in such language as to convey divine thought in terms that are understandable and comprehensible.
4. It must proceed from such motivation as transcends all other purposes, means and causes, and which is of such nature that all abuse of it by unworthy men can never permanently damage or finally destroy its value. The motivation must be as eternal as God himself.

The highest motive from which intelligent beings may act is love, and the Bible constantly holds out to us that it was this, which prompted God's action in behalf of sinful and undeserving mankind. Since the word means so many things and covers so many categories in our day it is well to mention that the love (Greek *agape*), which motivated God was not mere sentiment or affection. Although no one can define this love, or confine it to mere terms, a working description of it may be, "That active and beneficent good will which stops at nothing to achieve the good of the beloved object."

This love is never passive, and once appropriated by a rational being, creates a responsiveness, which manifests itself through that person. It thus becomes a dynamic, which can truly save the world. John declares that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16), and again, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

Paul declares that it is the one absolute, without which nothing else is valid, and while faith, hope and love are abiding principles, the greatest is love. It is twice affirmed by John that "God is love." Any elaboration upon this matter would be simply repetition of that which the earnest student may read for himself in the scriptures, and is not necessary here.

We accept the scriptures as being a revelation from God. They meet the criteria for such a revelation and bear a stamp of their origin in the form of internal evidence upon themselves. It is our conviction that God has spoken to man, revealing or uncovering for man what he could not discover for himself. We regard the Bible as containing that revelation and it is authoritative, not because of its beautiful literary composition, but because it is the word of God.

Chapter 5
The Word Made Flesh

Man is so constituted that he learns best by demonstration. Since God formed him thus it is but natural that he would accommodate his revelation to this trait. We should not be surprised that, in addition to what we may learn of God through creation and verbal revelation, we have His Son sent down to share our lot and allow us to experience a personal relationship with the Father. Jesus said, “And he who sees me sees him who sent me” (John 12:45). Again, he informed the disciples, “If you had known me, you would have known my Father also, henceforth you know him and have seen him” (John 14:7).

One of the most challenging statements ever written was penned by John in these words, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (1:14). “The Word became flesh.” Who was that word? How did he become flesh? In what sense was he full of grace and truth? To answer these questions is to probe the very secret of eternal life. Let us look at the context of the statement.

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The translators have capitalized the term "Word" indicating that it should be considered as a proper noun. This is not the designation of a mere thing but the name of a personal being. John actually wrote in Greek and he uses the term “Logos.” This has been translated by “Word” in our English vernacular. Who was the Logos? That he was with the Father from the beginning and that this extended beyond creation and preceded it is evident. “By him all things were made and without him was not anything made that was made.” This certainly implies that the Logos was uncreated and was the agent of all creation.

Among the Greeks the word “logos” did double duty. It was the term for both “reason” and “word.” There is a danger that we may, because of our modern connotation of the term, regard reason as a mere process by which we take cognizance of the world about us, and inductively or deductively reach certain conclusions by which we regulate our lives and conduct. There is nothing wrong about this, but it may betray us into placing limitations upon the term which are unjustifiable and which may operate in such fashion as to obscure a greater and more precious perspective. Reason can never be divorced from personality in a conscious being. If it be true that “as a man thinketh in his heart so is he,” reason makes the person what he is. It is creative!

Thus, it is more nearly correct to say that reason is power rather than a process. The latter is simply a demonstration of that power in one aspect, the formulation of concepts from perception and observation. We must distinguish between power and its manifestation. Just as each man is what he is because of reason, so God is what He is because of the divine mind. Man is limited by time and space, but God is not. The attempt of modern science to conquer both is really an attempt to become like God. Although many researchists who seek to extend life and penetrate space, deny the existence of Deity, their very efforts are unrecognized attempts to attain the divine.

Those who are in the flesh and are by nature subject to spatial and temporal restraints hardly conceive of the manifestation of personality except by the presence of the body. But this may confuse the person and the form which is simply an adaptation given because of the environment in which the person dwells. And there is ever the tendency to think of God as a man and to restrict Godhood by the chains, which bind manhood. Sober thought will convince us of the folly of such rationalization and will free us to recognize that the divine Reason (Logos) may be manifested in two persons, or expressed aspects of Godhood, at the same "time." Deity is not subject to the restraint of time.

It is impossible for man to express his ideas without words. It is even impossible to think without words. The term "embodied" is very appropriate since words are the bodies of which ideas are the soul or spirit. As the body without the spirit is dead so a word devoid of an idea is also dead and powerless. The expression of the divine mind must also be in the word – The Word. But the very being of God is invested in such expression and thus The Word is not merely a vehicle of divine thought but the personification of divine being. The Greek "Logos" is admirably qualified because of its historic and philosophic emphasis to express the message of the Spirit with reference to the Son of God. Time and space, the two forces against which we always struggle, will not permit us here to detail that emphasis. We must trust our readers to accept the wisdom of the spirit in this choice and proceed from there.

"In the beginning was the Word." John is not saying that the Word began with the beginning of the world. Instead he is affirming that when the world began the Word was already present. The Word preceded the creation, thus was uncreated or self-existent. The Word is not a consequence, but a Cause; not a result, but The Source; not a production, but The Author.

"And the Word was with God." This indicates association and intimacy. It reveals a relationship, which portrays sharing elevated to its highest degree, sanctified by divine nature. So close was the relationship it was as if God communed with His own mind. Thus we gather that the Word was with God in purpose and intent, in plan and perfection of plan.

"And the Word was God." Students in depth have found this a perplexing statement and many have stumbled over it. Some cultists with special theological axes to grind have taken advantage of a peculiarity in the Greek to warp the passage so as to lend some credence to their own mistaken views. A part of the difficulty lies in the difference between the way Greeks used a noun in a sentence and in the way we use such a special form in modern English. Generally when a Greek employed a noun he preceded it with a definite article. We would expect to find *ho theos* used here, as *theos* was the word for God, and *ho* was the definite article.

But the article was not used in this case. When the article is not employed the noun becomes primarily descriptive. It is apparently the intent of the Spirit to convey the idea that the Word is not identical with God. There is a distinction as to person as shown by the clause immediately preceding, but the Word possesses the same nature, character or essence as God. Whatever was required to constitute Deity was to be found in the Word. The attributes of Godhood were attributable to the Word.

"All things were made by him." To this is added "And without him was nothing made that was made." The universe owes its existence to the Word. He is the divine creative power or energy personified. If it be true that all things, without exception, were brought

into being by his agency, it is easily seen that his pre-existence must be admitted, and he is in the realm of the uncreated. This must be accepted by faith. "Through faith we understand that the world was framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

"In him was life and the life was the light of men." The Logos was living. But there is more to it than that. Life is being but it is more than mere being. It is existence but it is more than mere existence. It is more than extension of existence or duration. Eternal life is the life of the Eternal One, and this life was in the logos and it was the light of men. It revealed that which previously was shrouded in mystery. The minds of men were thus free to penetrate the truth of ages because the true light, the real light, had come at last. And the darkness in the universe could not extinguish that light.

Now we come to verse 14. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." The Logos became flesh. The creative Word who brought all things into being as the very pronouncement of God, the controlling Reason who regulated the universe as the very Mind or Spirit of God, now breaks through the flesh curtain which had separated pure Spirit from the material and thrusts himself into the historic continuity of human existence. This was a concept undreamed of by all of the heathen poets and philosophers.

The word "flesh" cannot be explained away on some higher or more elevated plane than we usually think of it. It is a translation of *sarx*, the word for our human nature, frail, subject to temptation and desire, "He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7, 8). This is almost too staggering for us to grasp or accept when we contemplate its full implication. God was unwilling to dwell aloof or in isolated splendor away from man. The Creator subjected himself to the state of the created. He involved himself directly in our predicament. God stooped down to minister and to save, and by this one act of intervention forever glorified such bending down for such a mission.

This is the basis of the Christian concept. It is not a philosophy, a ritual, a code of laws or a religion. It is a fact, a historical fact. Something happened toward which all of the past had pointed and toward which all of the present still points. The broken threads of human existence were gathered up in a moment, the hopes and ideals of the world were brought into focus. The problems of the ages were summed up and the total was found to be the correct answer.

The Word became flesh and the seed of the woman was born who was to tread upon the head of the serpent and deprive him of his power over those who were all of their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death.

The seed of Abraham arrived through whom all the families of the earth would receive a blessing. "Now the promises were made to Abraham and his seed. It does not say, 'And to seeds,' as if there were many, but rather 'And to your seed,'which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16).

The Shiloh, the great Peacemaker, predicted by the aged Jacob as he prepared to die, entered the world and the gathering of the people unto him began as he had said.

The branch of Judah came forth as a root out of dry ground and the Lion of the tribe of Judah was introduced to the world.

Bethlehem of Ephratah, small and inconsequential, now became a place, which the world would never forget.

The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, once an area viewed with contempt, now were made ready to see a great light where once the people dwelt in darkness (Isaiah 9:1, 2).

It was as if all the rivulets running down the side of the mountain of prophecy now converged into one, and became a mighty flowing tide carrying everything before it.

"The Word was made flesh . . . and we beheld his glory." This places the personal advent of the Word in the flesh where all historical events belong, which are to be accepted as fact by succeeding generations, the realm of testimony. Testimony must be furnished by witnesses, and witnesses must present that of which they have direct knowledge through experience. Those of us who live now do not *know* that Jesus lived upon the earth, but we *believe* that he did. That belief is based upon testimony.

There are certain criteria, which witnesses must meet, and certain rules for admissible evidence, and when the witnesses and the evidence fulfill these requirements, honest men must accept the testimony as factual. To do otherwise would be to reject the only basis upon which we can accept any event as having happened before our day.

We have the testimony of certain persons that Jesus lived on the earth and that he presented to them convincing proof that he was the Son of God. There are enough witnesses to establish the truth related to the fact, for "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." A fact is a fact whether there are witnesses or not, but belief in that fact requires witnesses. Though a plurality of witnesses is all that is sufficient to establish a case, the more witnesses there are the stronger the faith may become in the fact.

The witnesses for Christ were qualified for their special task. They were humble tradesmen or simple workingmen who had no theological philosophy to promote. They were singularly free from all preoccupation with ideas and systems, which would require defense, and were capable of receiving the impress of facts. They were alert, observant and quick to respond. They did not speak the language of the schools but they could tell a plain tale of what they saw in language, which was forceful by its very simplicity. They were willing to live in, and if necessary, to die for it as proof of that belief.

Moreover, they were trained as witnesses. They were chosen, called and qualified as witnesses. Their task was not to develop or define a systematic theology, but simply to tell of their relationship to a person, and they were constantly with him for well over three years. When one of their number defected and committed suicide they enunciated the qualifications for his successor in these words, "So one of the men who have companied with us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us – one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection" (Acts 1:21, 22).

In Luke 24:48 Jesus told them that they were witnesses of the things, which had happened; in Acts 18 he declared, "You shall be my witnesses in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." In Acts 2:32, they said, "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses," and they repeated it in Acts 3:15. In Acts 10:40 one of them testified that God raised Jesus "on the third day and made him manifest, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."

When an event becomes a matter of testimony one who was not present cannot logically deny the event. In order to do that, he would have had to be present and examine the

alleged event at the time. After that his only recourse is to deny the testimony. But one cannot do this arbitrarily unless he admits to being deeply prejudiced and inconsistent. He must examine the testimony and reach an unbiased opinion or belief based upon it.

With reference to Jesus it is admitted that there are those who testified to having been with him both before and after his resurrection from the dead. There is a sufficient number of such witnesses to satisfy any impartial court of law. To deny the fact of Jesus one has only three alternatives, but none of these can eliminate an examination of the testimony. He may present proof to show that the character of the witnesses is such as to render their testimony worthless; or he may show that the witnesses were not sufficiently acquainted with the fact to which testimony is given; or he may show that the testimony of the witnesses is contradictory and thus self-invalidating.

1. *The character of the witnesses*. As stated before, the chosen witnesses were humble and rugged men. They were not taken from the extremely poor nor selected from the rabble. They were engaged in their several occupations and supporting themselves when they were called.

They were accustomed to observe the flow of events around them and were articulate enough to describe what they saw. They were not prejudiced in favor of the resurrection of Jesus but were hard to convince. When they were first apprised of the fact they did not believe it. When Jesus appeared among them "they were startled and frightened and supposed they saw a spirit" (Luke 24:36). It was necessary for him to talk with them and calm them with the words, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39). In spite of this they still disbelieved and Jesus had to take food and eat it before them.

One of those who was not present at first would not accept the word of the others. He made a positive declaration that he would not accept the fact of the resurrection unless he had personal proof of it. This was no indication of doubting and he has often been maligned as "doubting Thomas." He simply demanded evidence and in such fashion as to remove all question. When confronted by Jesus and invited to thrust his finger into the nail prints in his hands, and his hand into the spear wound in his side he was convinced immediately of the identity of Jesus and of the fact of his resurrection.

Since the testimony of the witnesses is before us it is evident that it must be true or false. Either these things happened or they did not. If they did not happen it is quite obvious that those who said they did were either deceivers or deceived. It can be argued that they were not deceivers from the nature of the testimony.

The one thing a forger or deceiver dreads most is investigation and close scrutiny. For this reason he always writes in generalities and avoids minute details. The more he connects his account with particular persons and places, and with specific dates, times and events, the more liable is he to detection of the fraud which he seeks to perpetrate. This is especially true if his work is to be circulated during the lifetime of those mentioned and in the places to which he refers.

To be meticulous in such documentation would serve to provide the cross-examination with every conceivable advantage. If there were in existence those who opposed the purpose of the narrative all they would need to do to throw suspicion upon it would be to summon those to whom reference was made and prove by them that what was alleged did not transpire, or by showing grave discrepancy between the testimony and the facts of

history and geography, to demonstrate that the witness was unfamiliar with time and place, and not to be trusted in other details.

So widely accepted is this that it is said, "Generality is the cloak of fiction." Accordingly, when a writer who purports to give a record of historical fact supplies many details related to time, place and person involved, it is an assumption that he is stating facts and has no fear of scrutiny or examination. This is especially true when it is known that the writing was in general circulation during the lifetime of those mentioned therein. Truth fears no investigation and can provide minute details without hesitancy.

This is the very method employed by the writers who have recorded the facts related to Jesus of Nazareth. Consider, for example, the scrupulous details provided with reference to the forerunner, John the Baptist. We are given the name of his father and mother, the priestly status and course of the former, his occupation at the time when he was given information about the forthcoming birth of his son, and even the spot where the messenger stood while giving the information.

Even more impressive is the documentation relative to the time when John gave his announcement. We are told that it was in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, and are supplied the names of the governor of Judea, the tetrarchs of Galilee, Itruraea, and Abilene. For good measure we are also provided with the names of Annas and Caiaphas, who were said to be high priests. This last is most interesting, because at that time, according to history, the Jews recognized Annas as high priest, while the Romans with their occupational forces had deposed him for obduracy, and dealt with his son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas, in his stead.

As another case in point, consider the account of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus is identified by his relationship to two sisters, and one of these is further identified by a public act performed. The name of the village is given, its distance from Jerusalem, and also the name of one who volunteered to accompany Jesus on his mission. The time of death is given as is a description of the grave and the method of closing it. We are told that many Jews were present and told why they had come and what they said and did. In the actual coming forth of Lazarus his condition is described, and the need for those about to release him from his winding-sheet.

The narrative does not stop there. It continues by relating the effect upon the Jewish observers, some of whom believed while others hurried to report the happening to the Pharisees. We are even told that these summoned a meeting of the council, and one of the speakers is named and a record of what he said is preserved. The continuing interest of the Jews in Lazarus is mentioned and the fact that many came to Bethany out of curiosity to see Lazarus, so the chief priests plotted his death because "on account of him many of the Jews were going away believing on Jesus."

In view of the fact that this was written and circulated at the time when many of the people of Bethany, or their children, were still living, and many of the Jews survived, it is obvious that if there were any untruths the entire account would have been discounted and discredited long since. Apparently the writer was not in the least afraid of close study of what he wrote, even by the principals involved.

Another point worthy of consideration is the fact that the writers, even though aware that the nature of the material was startling and extraordinary, made no attempt to convince the readers of the truth of the statements. It is noticeable that when men anticipate doubt and questioning they seek to bolster their message with proof drawn from various

sources. But those who wrote about Jesus did so on the basis that what they set down for perusal was generally known and their only purpose was to present a straightforward account so that the facts might be preserved.

Even in dealing with some of the greater miracles there is no effort to explain or account for what would seem inexplicable, no attempt to answer in advance the caviling and ridicule of skeptics, or to anticipate objections. Indeed the apostolic testimony is as noteworthy for what it omits as for what it included and the restraining hand of the Spirit was as evident as the permissive power. We must not forget that "the fame of Jesus was spread abroad throughout all Syria. . . . And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond Jordan" (Matthew 4:24, 25).

If the writers had been attempting a deception their approach would have been altogether different. They would have presented arguments calculated to reinforce and strengthen their narrative and to make the things they recorded appear plausible. The apostolic witnesses relate the most astounding events in matter-of-fact fashion, assuming they are already generally known and need only to be casually mentioned, in order to be called to mind.

We must remember that the enemies of Christ did not even attempt to impeach the character of the witnesses nor did they deny the facts to which they testified. It would seem incredible that twelve men would band together to perpetrate a hoax, which would fool the most intelligent people of the earth for twenty long centuries, and yet never be discovered by those who lived at the same time as themselves. Even more astonishing is the fact that all of them were so convinced of the truthfulness of their message that they were willing to die rather than renounce it.

We are aware that such willingness does not establish the truth of a proposition but it does show that those who died for it believed it was true. If it is true that "seldom for a righteous man will one die," it is equally true that "seldom for a right principle will one die," and not at all for what he believes to be a palpable untruth. We do not believe that at this late date the character of the witnesses can be impugned and their testimony discredited upon the basis of their reputation.

2. *Acquaintance with the facts*. If it can be shown that even though the witnesses were men of veracity, they had no adequate knowledge of that to which they testified this will at least cast doubt upon the validity of that to which testimony is given. A witness must be qualified as well as honest, conversant with the facts as well as upright in demeanor. With reference to the resurrection, which established the claims of Jesus to be the Son of God, we have the obligation to enquire if the witnesses had sufficient access to Jesus as to enable them to know without question that he arose from the sepulcher.

Let it be recalled that for one to be ordained as a witness of the resurrection he had to accompany the body of witnesses "all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from among us" (Acts 1:21, 22). Such a person would be so thoroughly acquainted with the person of Jesus that it would be highly unlikely that he would not recognize him, or that he would mistake another for him. He would be able, given proper exposure to his person, positively to identify him when he saw him. The point, which immediately concerns us, then is whether or not the witnesses were given ample opportunity to observe the one who claimed to have risen from the dead so as to make immediate identification possible.

This would involve the number of appearances before the witnesses, the time and nature of such appearances, and the opportunity provided for scrutiny and observation.

a. Jesus appeared to both men and women. If he had appeared only to the latter it would have been argued that they were emotionally upset by his death and victims of an overwrought imagination.

b. He appeared to individuals and to groups, the largest number being in excess of five hundred.

c. He appeared in a garden, in closed rooms, on the open road, at the seashore, and on a mountain.

d. He appeared at an early morning hour, during the day, as dusk was closing in, and at night.

e. He conversed directly with the witnesses and ate and drank with them.

f. He summoned them by name, identified himself and invited inspection.

g. He referred to his past associations and called attention to communications made prior to his death.

h. He ascended in their presence, and they were confronted by celestial beings who called him by name and predicted his return at a date yet future.

i. He later appeared to Saul of Tarsus who was so convinced of his presence that his entire life was transformed.

Some of these witnessed his death, observed his burial, inspected the tomb after his resurrection and provided a description of what happened in his various appearances. There is no logical way to account for their testimony except upon the basis of fact unless one can prove collusion and deliberate hoax. Such proof will need to be conclusive and must be documented in order to offset what appears to be a straightforward account.

3. *The only other alternative is to show that the testimony is of such contradictory nature that the witnesses rebut each other and render what is said incredible*. The written account of the witnesses has been available for nineteen centuries and has frequently been under intense attack, yet it has always survived. It must be remembered that, if a number of witnesses testify to a certain fact, the question to be ascertained by their testimony is whether or not they agree in establishing the truth of that fact. That they may arrive at their conclusion from different angles, or that one may add incidentals which another omits, or that the various points of proof do not appear in the same sequence or in chronological order is inconsequential in the final summarization and analysis.

I have examined the testimony of the witnesses and I find no discrepancy, which invalidates the conclusion that Jesus is the Christ. All agree that he lived, that he was crucified and that he was raised from the dead. The various accounts of such matters as the inscription on the cross have no bearing upon the fact that one was nailed to that cross, and that he was identified as Jesus of Nazareth. I find no trouble in believing that "the Word was made flesh" or of placing my hope in him. I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. I believe that he is the Son of God.

Chapter 6

The Virgin Birth

In simple trusting faith I accept the accounts of the virgin birth of Jesus as factual. There is nothing within my rational constitution, which recoils from the thought that he was begotten in Mary by the Holy Spirit and born of her body in so far as the flesh was concerned. I do not find myself inclined to speculate about how this could be or how it was accomplished, nor do I feel obligated to account for the means in order to accept it. When men talk about the impossibility of accepting this intellectually, they speak of a type of intellect, which I do not possess.

I see no reason for training my feeble intellectual powers to be skeptical of everything they cannot immediately grasp or fully explain. Intellect need not be opposed to faith and it is dangerous to regard it as being so. On this basis some have even come to doubt their own existence or the reality of the world in which we are placed. My faith does not preclude my intellect in that area where it operates. It is a function of that intellect making possible its outreach into unexplored vistas, and even into regions, which cannot be analyzed because of human limitations. I do not hamper or cripple my intellectual powers by proceeding upon the basis of faith. Instead, I enhance them.

It is argued that the virgin birth is contrary to our scientific findings and must be rejected either because it cannot be subjected to scientific criteria, or because it contradicts all that is known as a result of the application of such criteria. Actually this is based upon a presupposition as I shall show in my next chapter, and I simply do not acknowledge the validity of that presupposition. To say that our advanced "scientific knowledge" will not allow us to accept a thing is to speak unscientifically. Science is knowledge. The word is from the Latin *scientia*, to know. As we employ it, the term denotes knowledge according to system, or knowledge properly classified.

Science embraces the branches of knowledge of which the subject is ultimate principles, or facts as explained by principles, or laws arranged in natural order. To talk of "scientific knowledge" is the equivalent of saying "knowledge knowledge." It is obvious that man has not exhausted the field of knowledge, or all experimentation would immediately cease. Therefore, there are areas to which knowledge does not extend. Anything within those areas, or in areas outside the realm of investigative procedures used by science, would be in the domain of imagination, speculation or faith. About such things science could only theorize.

The individual who accepts the idea of a divine being upon what appears to him to be valid evidence of the existence of such a being, and who further accepts the idea that this being has revealed his thoughts will act upon faith with regard to the matters covered in that revelation. Another who rejects either the idea of a divine Being, or a revelation, or both, will proceed upon the basis of speculation, theory or opinion in reference to such matters. This is not the same as saying that science is opposed to faith. The most that can be said is that the scientist, acting upon the basis of previously accumulated data, doubts the possibility of the virgin birth. This points up two important factors. One is the limitation of science, which makes it impossible for science to dogmatically deny that which is accepted upon faith. The other is that those things, which lie within the scope of the di-

vine, are not subject to the scientific experimental process. To argue against the *possibility* of the virgin birth is to reduce it to the domain of the natural. If supernatural power operates in such a situation it is not impossible at all. To doubt the virgin birth is really to deny the possibility of supernatural power in the universe.

The birth of Jesus has always been a problem to those who view the universe from a purely natural standpoint. Certainly the one person who would be most concerned about the virgin birth would be the virgin selected to bear the child. The one who would be most skeptical would be the man to whom she was engaged. And in the individual encounter of the divine messenger with these two we find all of the questions, but we also find the answers!

The angel first sought to quiet the fears of Mary and then said, “You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.” The natural question was, "How can this be, since I have no husband?" In her simplicity Mary was fully aware of the impossibility of pregnancy without impregnation. The answer of the angel was, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." Then came these words, "For with God nothing is impossible."

This forever placed the matter in proper perspective. The question after centuries have gone by, is still, “How can this be?’ Some have denied absolutely that it could be, some have tried by devious means to supply a man in order to make it rational. One of the most frequently quoted statements in our day is that of a theologian who writes, “The birth stories, are to be sure, most improbable . . . for this reason, the simplest thing to believe may be that Joseph was the natural father of Jesus.” He concludes that if this is not the case, “Jesus must have been the child of a German soldier. After all the claim develops, such is the experience of many girls near military camps.”

As to Joseph, the record is quite clear. We are told, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.’” Thus the two persons most vitally concerned in the event were satisfied with the divine explanation.

MYTHICAL ACCOUNTS

In recent times those who would deny the truth of the record of the virgin birth of Jesus, have sought to strengthen their case by affirming that many religions of the world outside of Christianity, have their traditions of a virgin birth, and the history of most primitive peoples is replete with mythical accounts of the union of gods and mortals. The implication is that the narrative contained in the new covenant scriptures also constitutes the folklore by which a simple and superstitious peasantry sought to give meaning to their belief.

There are some facts, which should not be overlooked, however, by those who are concerned with arrival at truth. The first is that many of the myths contain within themselves the grounds of their own refutation. A close examination will show that a great number are not actually related to virgins at all.

One of the frequently cited cases is that of Romulus and Remus, reputed to be the sons of Mars, god of war, and Rhea Silvia, a Vestal Virgin. If these legendary twins ever existed, they were conceived in illicit intercourse, and the legend takes note of this by recounting that they were thrown into the river Tiber because of their mother's sinful alliance. To compare this with the incarnation in the gospel records appears somewhat ridiculous.

The nature of the so-called "miracle births" in mythology is enough to prove that there is nothing divine involved in them, but that they were inventions of depraved human imagination. Every form of sexual deviation is connected with them, and many of the stories reek with licentiousness, animalism, and effeminacy. Frequently they are couched in language descriptive of brutal and insensate orgies, and invest the gods with every type and kind of human debauchery.

It was characteristic of many rulers greedy of power to claim affinity with the gods and thus enhance their ability to prey upon the ignorant and superstitious masses. Apollo seems to have been a popular claimant as a sire, with Pythagoras, Plato and the Roman emperor Augustus, all alleging him as father. Alexander the Great propagated the opinion that he was begotten of a god who approached his mother in the form of a serpent, although more accurate history makes him the son of Philip of Macedon, and of Olympias, a princess of Epirus, and places his birthplace at Pella, the capital of ancient Macedonia.

It is worth noting that in all of the myths the purpose of "miraculous births" was to exalt men to the stature of gods, while in the gospel records the incarnation was to empty one of equality with God to take upon himself the form of a slave, made in the likeness of men. Before Alexander died he ordered the Greek cities to worship him as a god, but proved he was a man by dying. Jesus proved that he was a man by dying, and the Son of God by the resurrection.

It appeals to me as a matter of common sense that, in the final analysis, the validity of the scriptural account of the conception and birth of Jesus cannot possibly be affected by recounting the "miracle birth" stories of myths and legends. One who is prejudiced against acceptance of the virgin birth may seek to find comfort for his antagonism by citing the similarities, remote in nature as they are, but this proves nothing pro or con about the factuality of the birth of Jesus. There is hardly a facet of authentic history that has not been duplicated either before or after the event, by fanciful myth.

But the historicity of an event cannot be invalidated by the citing of legendary similarities. The myths serve only to prove the scope of human imaginative powers. The science fiction writers two generations ago were producing such wild tales of the conquest of space that children were forbidden to read their far-out speculations. Now their grandchildren watch on television the launching into orbit of vehicles, which make the stories of yesteryear laughable because of their simplicity.

That Jesus of Nazareth lived on earth is an established fact. The circumstances of his advent were carefully and meticulously investigated by a physician, who interrogated the eyewitnesses, and who then set down his findings and addressed them to a Greek political ruler. Many who lived in the century following the birth of Jesus accepted without question the testimony as given. That testimony is either true or false. But the truth or falsity of it can never be affected by any imaginative or speculative accounts preceding it, regardless of any apparent likeness.

No act of history or fact of testimony can ever be proven false by the mere citation of multiplied cases known to be spurious. Doubt may be cast upon all by association, but doubt in itself disproves nothing. It serves to show the lack of logic upon the part of one who confuses doubt with proof, when doubt itself exists because of lack of proof, or because of lack of study or examination of existing proof.

THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH

At this juncture we come to the place where we must note a prophecy concerning the birth of Jesus as recorded in Isaiah 7:14. Honesty and candor in interpretation force us to study this in spite of the fact that we may differ with many scholars whom we greatly love and respect. We could simply ignore the passage and make no reference to it and thereby escape the wrath of some and the misunderstanding of others, but this appears to be unfair. We will risk any repercussion.

The King James Version reads, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The Revised Standard Version reads, "Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel." This version has a footnote reading, "or virgin."

I concur with the Revised Standard Version rendering. This is not because I do not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, but because I do. I believe that the birth of Jesus was absolutely unique. He was the only person in the history of the world who was born of a virgin.

To me, it seems quite clear that the prophecy of Isaiah has a two-fold application, as is true of so many old covenant prophecies. It has both a primary and a secondary application. The primary application was to be immediate. It was to happen shortly after the utterance of the prophecy. The secondary application was remote and in the future. It was to take place after many centuries had passed.

To shorten our approach to the matter, let me state that I believe that the son to whom direct reference was made was Isaiah's own son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz. He was not born of a virgin. The secondary application was to Jesus. He was unquestionably born of a virgin. We only ask for an impartial and unbiased examination of the scriptures directly related to both births. We crave your patience while we first investigate with you the information furnished in chapters 7 and 8 of Isaiah. If nothing else is accomplished we will share in a good lesson in Bible history.

The contextual background for this lesson goes back several hundreds of years prior to the time of Isaiah. The people of God had divided into two kingdoms during the reign of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon in 975 B. C. Ten tribes revolted and set up the kingdom of Israel, later establishing their capital at Samaria. Since this was in the tribal inheritance of Ephraim the kingdom was frequently referred to as Ephraim. The remaining two tribes of Judah and Benjamin maintained their capital at Jerusalem. Their kings continued in an unbroken line from David of the tribe of Judah.

In 759 B. C. Pekahiah was completing a two-year reign over Israel in Samaria. One of his captains, Pekah the son of Remaliah, conspired against him with a band of more than fifty men from Gilead, and assassinated him in the royal palace, and after this military coup Pekah installed himself as king.

In the seventeenth year of the reign of Pekah, in 742 B. C., Jotham the king of Judah died and was succeeded by his twenty-year old son Ahaz. Isaiah was living at the time and was active as a prophet in Jerusalem. The kingdom of Syria, which joined Israel on the north, with its capital at Damascus, was governed by Rezin.

As soon as the young Ahaz came to the throne of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the king of Israel, entered into a plot to besiege Jerusalem and destroy the dynasty of David and install a foreigner, the son of Tabeal, in place of Ahaz. They reckoned without the fact that God had made a covenant with David that he would never lack a descendant to sit upon his throne. But as soon as the news reached the palace in Jerusalem that the kings of Israel and Syria were preparing to march against the city, Ahaz and his advisors were so frightened that they literally quaked.

At this time Isaiah had one son, whose name was Shear-jashub. God told Isaiah to take his son and go up to meet Ahaz and reassure him. The very name of his son was a sign of God's protective care, and that name had been purposely given. It meant, "The remnant shall return." Shear-jashub had been so named to comfort Judah with the thought that they would not be exterminated.

Ahaz was inspecting the water supply of Jerusalem, probably in preparation for an anticipated siege, and Isaiah and his son met the king at the conduit of the upper pool along the Fuller's Field highway. Isaiah informed Ahaz that he should remain calm and not be scared of "the two tails of these smoking fire-brands." This designation of Rezin and Pekah indicated that they were but two flaming sticks and that God could easily extinguish them. Isaiah pointed out that they would not succeed in overthrowing Ahaz because he was protected by the promise to David and God had revealed concerning the prophecy, "It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass."

The prophet went on to predict that Damascus and Syria would be rendered helpless and that within a period of sixty-five years the ten tribe kingdom would be destroyed until it could no longer even be counted as a people. Apparently the young king was too frightened to trust in this prediction, because Isaiah said, "Do you not believe? It is because you are not stable," that is established in and trusting the promises of God. In order to produce faith God requested Ahaz to ask for a sign that Isaiah was indeed conveying a divine message.

Isaiah said to the king, "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." This simply meant that Ahaz was free to request any phenomenon, which could be demonstrated in the created universe. He could ask for divine assurance through any kind of a sign, which would indicate God's faithfulness to His covenant promises.

But Ahaz, who had been worshiping heathen gods and burning incense unto them in the high places, suddenly turned very devout and replied, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." And the prophet said, "Hear then, O house of David. Is it too little for you to weary men, that you worry my God also?" Ahaz had refused to listen to the counsel of Isaiah and his son, and now he stubbornly refused to ask a sign of God to confirm the promise that the king of Syria and the king of Israel would be destroyed and the theocracy would continue to govern through the house of David.

Then the prophet uttered the prediction with which we are especially concerned. "Even though you refuse to ask for a sign, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel . . . For

before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted."

I submit that this sign to Ahaz that God will destroy the two kings who were a threat to Jerusalem is as plain as language can make it. A young woman would conceive a son who was to be a sign to Ahaz and Judah, and before that child reached the age of accountability the enemy lands were to be divested of their kings. In spite of the plainness of the passage many have been so conditioned by their previous teaching that they will not be able to see it without meticulous explanation. We ask the indulgence of our readers as we make a detailed exegesis.

1. This sign was given to Ahaz at a time of apparent crisis. It was to prove to him that God would not allow the seed of David to be displaced or replaced by a usurper, like the son of Tabeal. The sign was given to Ahaz for it was he who refused to request a sign. It had to be something that he could see in his day, else it would not have been a sign to him as promised.

2. A young woman would conceive and bear a son who would be a sign to God's people that God was with Judah and Jerusalem and that the conspirators against them would not succeed. His name was to be called Immanuel, which means "God with us," that is with the house of David, as opposed to Israel and Syria. This was in accord with the promise which God made to David, "I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom . . . I will be his father, and he shall be my son . . . I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever and his throne will be established forever." What was to happen to the conspirators within the period of infancy of one child would be proof that God was not slack concerning his promise!

3. Concerning the child it was said, "He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good." Curds and honey were eaten in time of peace and plenty. God spoke of Canaan as a land that flowed with curds and honey when he wanted to illustrate the wealth and productivity of it. But at the time Isaiah made this prediction Rezin and Pekah were marching toward Jerusalem to lay siege to the city. Ahaz was frightened at the thought of the coming calamity, but the prophet declares that instead of privation, starvation and hardship, a child conceived at that time would eat the very best of foods by the time he reached the age of accountability.

Nothing could be more indicative of the coming failure of Rezin and Pekah than to predict that the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be feasting on the richest diet in the next several years in spite of their attempted siege.

4. Ahaz was informed that before the time when the son borne by the young woman was at the age of discretion, "the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted." A child conceived in 742 B. C. would not be born until nine months later, or about 741. In 2 Kings 16:5 we learn that the siege against Jerusalem in 742 B. C. was unsuccessful. In 740 B. C. (when the child would be about a year old, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria captured Damascus, carried the people into exile and killed Rezin. The next year, 739 B. C., Hoshea made a conspiracy against Pekah and killed him in Samaria. At this time the child would be about two years old. The two smoking tails of firebrands were to be extinguished before the child was able to choose the good and refuse the evil.

Even before Pekah died Tiglath-pileser swooped down upon Israel and carried away the inhabitants of a great part of it including Gilead, Galilee and Naphtali. You may read

of this in 2 Kings 15:29. The two kings were gone and the land deserted before the child was much more than two years old.

5. We must remember that Isaiah also predicted the breaking of Ephraim so the kingdom could no longer be called a people. After Hoshea assassinated Pekah he reigned six years before Shalmaneser, then king of Assyria, tired of his rebellion against the imposed tribute, came up and laid siege to Samaria. The siege lasted three years until 721 B. C. when the city fell and Israel was carried into exile because of their idolatry.

IDENTITY OF THE CHILD

Now we come to the most interesting part of our narrative--the identity of the young woman and the son who was given as a sign to Ahaz and Judah. We believe that the context shows that the young woman was the prophetess, that is, the wife of Isaiah and that the son whom she conceived and bore as a sign was Maher-shalal-hash-baz, the second son of Isaiah.

In order to guarantee that this sign would be understood by future generations as well as the one then in existence, Isaiah was instructed to take a scroll and write in it, using common letters that could be understood by all, "Testimony concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz." This name means "The spoil speeds; the prey hastes" (Isaiah 8:1). The indication was that God would speedily spoil the conspirators and haste to make them a prey to divine vengeance.

After penning this testimony Isaiah called two witnesses to attest it with their signatures, so it could be proven in the mouth of these two that the testimony was written before the child was conceived. After the testimony was duly certified Isaiah went in unto the prophetess, his wife, and she conceived and bore a son, exactly as it had been foretold to Ahaz. When the child arrived the Lord told Isaiah to call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz, "for before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria." We have already learned that the child was not over a year old when Tiglath-pileser despoiled both territories.

But what about the name Immanuel? It was distinctly said that the young woman who conceived and bore the child shall call his name "Immanuel." The answer lies in the fact that this was a prophetic term used because of its meaning. The literal name of the child was Maher-shalal-hash-baz, but he was called "Immanuel" because his birth was a sign that God was with Judah and the house of David. Later the same could be said about Jesus. Although he was referred to as "Immanuel" his literal name was Jesus, but his advent signified that God was with mankind in a new and unique way.

Let us see if this can be substantiated with reference to the first child. It is significant that the word "Immanuel" occurs in the King James Version only twice as a proper name. Once is in Isaiah 7:14 where the name was to be given to the son borne by the young woman, and the other is in the same context, in Isaiah 8:8, in the chapter dealing with the birth of Maher-shalal-hash-baz. But it also occurs in the same chapter in its translated form. The first occurrence (8:8) is one of the most interesting in the word of God.

In 8:5 the Lord tells Isaiah that the people of Israel had refused the waters of Siloam that flowed gently and rejoiced in Rezin and Pekah, who were firebrands and revolutionaries. Siloam was a small stream and pool, which helped Jerusalem to survive by furnish-

ing water for the inhabitants. But the people of the northern kingdom had turned away from the city where God had written His name and now placed their trust in men.

"Now therefore, behold the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria and all his glory." The waters of the Euphrates were wide and turbulent, and unlike the water of Siloam. Since the ten tribes had shown a preference for such turbulence God promised them that he would send the fierce nation from the region of the Euphrates and the army would be like a river at flood stage. "He shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks, and he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even unto the neck."

All of this came to pass and the armies of the Assyrians inundated the land of Syria and the land of Israel, and flowed over into the land of Judah. There they were halted by the direct action of God and returned to their banks. The land of Judah is referred to as that of Immanuel in verse 8. God was with Judah but he was not with her attackers.

In verses 9 and 10 the conspiring nations are challenged to associate together, far countries are urged and challenged to gird for battle, and all are told to counsel together, but still it would come to nought. "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear all of ye far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel and it shall not stand: for God is with us (Immanuel)." This coincides with the promise to Ahaz about the conspiracy, "Thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass" (7:7).

What did Isaiah do with the scroll, or testimony, which he had written? He was told to "Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples" (8:16). This meant that in the presence of those who had been taught concerning God's purpose as demonstrated in the son born to the young woman, he was to roll up the evidence which had been signed by Uriah and Zechariah, and he was to place a seal upon it.

Isaiah then declared, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts who dwells on Mount Zion" (8:18). The children whom God had given Isaiah were Shear-jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz. When Isaiah was sent to reassure the frightened Ahaz he was told to take his first son with him. The very name of this lad should have strengthened the king, but when he doubted, another son was promised who would be a definite sign from the Lord. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you (Ahaz) a sign; Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and his very name will mean that God is with us."

God promised a son as a sign to Ahaz and Judah. After Isaiah had carefully inscribed a roll with this information he went in unto his wife and she conceived and bore a son. Isaiah then positively declared that he and the children, whom God gave him, were signs and portents in Israel. We fail to see how it could be made any plainer that the son of the prophet was the sign given to Ahaz and Jerusalem.

What purpose was to be achieved by preservation of the sealed and attested witness concerning the son who had been promised and the destruction of Syria and Samaria before the child came to the age of discretion? The answer is plainly given. It was to be a constant reminder in time of national danger to rely upon the Lord instead of upon other advisers and counselors. The common tendency of people when rumors of attack were rife was to consult spirit mediums or necromancers and seek to learn from the spirit world what was going to happen. Instead, Israel was to turn to the sealed teaching and testimony as a sign that God would not desert Judah.

"And when they say to you, 'Consult the mediums and the wizards who chirp and mutter,' should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the teaching and to the testimony! If they do not speak in harmony with this message it is because they are unenlightened" (Isaiah 8:19, 20). The context plainly shows that the teaching and testimony consisted of the scroll relating to the birth of the second son of Isaiah.

We do not believe that the young woman who conceived and bore the son who was to be a sign to Ahaz was a virgin. She was the wife of the prophet and had already borne one son, Shear-jashub, who was a sign and portent to the house of Jacob.

A great many students have been betrayed, by their zeal to defend the virgin birth of Jesus, into adopting an interpretation, which will make for two virgin births, and thus destroy the uniqueness of the birth of Jesus. All of these overlook one prime factor. In the case of Jesus, the nature of the birth was essential to establishing his deity and thus of fulfilling God's purpose.

But in the case of the sign given to reassure Ahaz, the nature of the birth had little to do with the reason. The question concerned the time element involved in destroying two kings who were plotting to overthrow Ahaz and set up a usurper in Jerusalem. The sign was not *how* a child was to be conceived and born, but the fact that a child conceived at that time would eat the bread of peace and prosperity rather than the scraps of siege and famine, and that by the time the child would attain the age of discretion the hated land would be forsaken of both her kings.

In the sign, which God promised directly to Ahaz miraculous conception and a virgin birth were not requisite to the divine purpose at all. The manner of conception was not the issue but the swift and speedy vengeance of God upon cruel conspirators before a child grew out of its infancy.

I am firm in my conviction that Jesus was born of a virgin and was the only person in all human history to be so born. There were not two virgin births, one in the days of Ahaz and another in the days of Herod the Great. I would believe in the virgin birth of Jesus if Isaiah had never lived or written. Unfortunately, a great many who are so influenced by tradition and emotion that they have not taken the time or trouble to investigate in depth, rush to the defense of the language of a prophetic statement and hinge their whole theory of inspiration upon a single English word used to translate a Hebrew original. It is thought that this is being true to God in defense of the virgin birth.

In reality this is probably an exhibition of lack of faith. To chain God to a translation in the days of Isaiah and deny that He has a right to make another application of His language or to infuse the body of prophecy with a secondary and greater application does not commend itself to me personally as being a demonstration of faith in either the power of God or the wisdom of God.

I happen to believe that the same Spirit, which spoke through Isaiah also spoke through Matthew and Luke. I do not doubt the ability of God nor question His right to take any message that He has ever delivered and invest it with new meaning to accomplish His purpose. It can be proven beyond doubt that this procedure was actually followed with most of the prophecies, which came to be applied to Jesus. Many of these had an original and limited application, but were given a new and broader application when referred to Jesus. We cannot refer to all of them but we will suggest a few.

1. Matthew says that Joseph, Mary and Jesus, remained in Egypt until the death of Herod that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, “Out of Egypt have I called my son” (Matthew 2:15). This is a quotation from Hosea 11:1, which directly related to the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. No one who read this prophecy in the days of Hosea would ever dream that it was even remotely related to bringing Jesus back into the land of Palestine to reside in Nazareth. We would never have made this secondary application without the explanation as given by Matthew.

2. When Herod sent and slew the children in Bethlehem, Matthew writes, “Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not” (Matthew 2:17, 18). Actually, Jeremiah originally had no reference to the slaughter of the innocents.

Ramah was the headquarters in Palestine for the king of Babylon. There he assembled the exiles for deportation to a foreign land beyond the Euphrates. The lamentation and bitter weeping of these displaced persons reminded the prophet of the sorrow of Rachel who died in childbirth and was buried along the road near Bethlehem, after giving birth to her second son whom she called Benoni, “son of my sorrow.” When the children were slain at Bethlehem the wails were so loud it was as if they could be heard in Ramah, and as if Rachel were once again screaming in anguish for her loved ones.

3. Again Matthew declares that Jesus lived in a city called Nazareth, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.” Of course this expression is not found in our old covenant scriptures, although Matthew says it was spoken by the prophets (plural). The word *Nazareth* is from the same Hebrew root as the word for “branch” and the allusion here is to the words of Isaiah (11:1); Jeremiah (23:5); and Zechariah (3:8), etc.

4. When David prepared to build the temple and was restrained from doing so by Nathan, he was told that God would raise up his seed, and “he shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (1 Chronicles 17:12, 13). David summoned Solomon and directly applied this prediction unto him (1 Chronicles 22:9, 10). Yet Peter said on Pentecost, “Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne, he seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:30, 31).

5. Of just as much interest is an application made in Hebrews 2:13 of the words of Isaiah about his sons, Shear-jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Isaiah said, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me are for signs and portents." The writer of the Hebrew letter drops the latter part of the sentence and makes the remainder applicable to Jesus and the saints. “Behold I and the children which God hath given me.”

The higher critic will point to these places as indications of the arbitrary manipulation of scripture in order to justify a theory or bolster a supposition. But it must not be forgotten that the critics also frequently have a presupposition, which they seek to establish and they are not above assigning motives to Biblical writers without proper grounds for so doing.

To one who believes in divine prescience and recognizes the right of God to interpret revelation, as I do, no problem is presented at all. The simplest statement may have a deeper meaning than man could ever imagine and God can reveal that deeper meaning as well as the original message. I refuse to limit the meaning God attaches to a statement by my understanding of it.

The real problem with the virgin birth has never been the virgin birth at all. Rather it has to do with the nature of the God in whom one believes. If one recognizes God as omnipotent and omniscient as I do, the virgin birth presents no difficulties. Nothing is impossible to the God whom I serve. As the author of all life and the ruler of all nature he can bring human life into existence by any means commensurate with his purpose. I believe that he has done so by four different means: direct creation from elements previously created; from a part removed from a human body by divine surgery; by natural reproduction; and by impregnation of a human ovum through agency of the Holy Spirit. I think that a great many in our day who rebel against the thought of the virgin birth because of what they term "the intellectual barrier," do not stop to analyze the relationship of their doubt to either the antecedents or consequences. The only way by which a divine personage could enter the realm of humanity and actually partake of human flesh would be by a miracle. If the fullness of deity was to dwell bodily in Jesus he could not be simply a product of a natural procreative process. If he had both a human father and a human mother he was no more the Son of God than any other person. The divine Sonship is clearly predicated upon divine begetting. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Almighty will overshadow you, therefore the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

It will be obvious, I think, that the views, which we have expressed indicate that as respects the virgin birth, at least, we concur with the rendering of the Revised Standard Version. Because of the prominence of the attacks made upon this particular version on the very point at issue in this thesis, there needs to be some clarification.

I have no favorite version. I use a great many of them, and one of my favorite methods of study is to open up a number of versions to the same passage and examine them all. I am not at all interested in defending one version against another but I am solely concerned with an unprejudiced attempt to arrive at the truth revealed by God. There are some weak spots apparent in all of the translations, which it is hoped, may be corrected in future attempts at revision.

We believe that the context of Isaiah 7:14, coupled with the announced purpose of the sign to Ahaz favors the rendering "a young woman." We believed that way before the Revised Standard Version was published. We honor the translators for the footnote reading, "Or virgin." No doubt this was added because, in spite of the context, it must be admitted that the Hebrew *almah*, used seven times in the scriptures, generally implies a virgin.

Too, the Septuagint Version with which the translators were quite familiar, used the Greek word *parthenos* in Isaiah 7:14. But it is significant that in every instance in the new covenant scriptures where the birth of Christ is unmistakably under consideration, the Revised Standard Version is true to the idea of a virgin birth.

"When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18).

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (Matthew 1:22, 23).

"When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus" (Matthew 1:24).

"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1:26, 27).

With these plain quotations before us, for one to affirm that the Revised Standard Version *denies the virgin birth* is a demonstration of rather audacious ignorance or of a willful intent to deceive. Surely those who make such claims must rely upon the hope that those who listen to them will never read for themselves. And they may be right!

While I am not a particular defender of this version of the scriptures as opposed to others I must confess that I have never found it in any sense prejudiced against the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Instead, it upholds that teaching without doubt or quibble. I agree with its translation, both in the original prophecy and in the application as made to Jesus.

The direct connection between the prophecy of Isaiah and the birth of Jesus is easily understandable. Isaiah was to give a sign to Ahaz in a time of crisis that God was with the family of David and would not permit his kingly covenant to be abrogated by the designs of men. Jesus was the natural inheritor of David's throne and was destined to sit upon it as an heir of David, so a prophecy related to the preservation of that throne was applicable to Jesus who was proof from heaven that God was with us.

I have read a great many books by those who would cast doubt on the possibility of the virgin birth. I have earnestly sought to understand their position and motivation. But each time I have returned and read the scriptural account once more, and the more I read it the more steadfast does my faith become. I accept the virgin birth of Jesus as a fact and reality and it is very precious unto me. I am grateful that when He decided to visit us and share our lot that He passed through every phase of our personal experience, embryonic, foetal, and otherwise. I am thrilled that, as a babe, he entered the world as I entered it, gasping for that first precious breath of air that spelled life on our planet.

And I am pleased that he was a firstborn son and that his tiny body caught up in the convulsions and throes of the expulsion process called delivery, paved the way for the sons and daughters of Joseph who followed. I accept the truth that the mother who bore him knew the ecstasy of divine union before she experienced the paroxysm of physical and sensual orgasm. I acknowledge the validity of the virgin birth and I believe in the one who entered our sinful world through this medium. To me he is the Son of God, and my blessed Savior. I love him with simple, trusting faith!

Chapter 7

The Case For Miracles

Did Jesus of Nazareth once feed a throng of five thousand men, besides women and children by direct multiplication of five loaves and two fish? Did he later repeat the action with four thousand men plus women and children? Did he calm the waves of the Sea of Galilee with a spoken word? Did he raise the daughter of Jairus, the young man of Nain, and Lazarus of Bethany, from the dead?

Are these legends, which grew up as men told about his activities? Is the language employed in the realm of myth? Must we strip it off and seek for the kernel of fact hidden within it?

In simple trusting faith I accept the accounts as historical and factual. I am quite content to discuss them as genuine miracles. Miracles have to do with demonstrations of power and the God whom I serve is unlimited in power. That is why the word “miracles” is used for our benefit. There are no miracles with God for what appears supernatural to us is merely natural to Him. There can be no power above or beyond the source of all power. Nothing is “super” to one who is over all. But since the terms related to miracles are employed for our benefit perhaps we should seek to understand those terms for by doing so we can learn something of the nature of miracles.

The first word we shall note is “wonders.” This has to do with the effect of the miracle upon the beholder. The act performed is strange and excites amazement. Here the effect is put for the cause and the act is termed a wonder, although it should be remarked that the original is always translated in the plural. The astonishment betokens both the nature of the act and the limitations of the one so affected. Certainly the arousing of amazement is not the chief aim, perhaps not even a lesser aim, of the miracle but it can be used to testify of the nature of the act. It provides another way by which God’s strength is exhibited in our weakness.

It is possible that we have lessened the force of “wonders” by our common usage. We say that a man who remodels an old house "worked wonders" with it; or that a woman who designs her own dresses “worked wonders” with the material. In such cases the result is a matter of skill rather than of power, and it is extraordinary because of aptitude rather than supernatural endowment. We are prone to mistake commendation and approval for the sense of awe and amazement with which men view a real miracle.

Let us take a miracle of Jesus for an example. When he came to Capernaum upon one occasion the news rapidly circulated that he was at home. People came from every quarter in such numbers that they filled the house and barred the way to the door. Four men carrying a paralytic could not get close so they lifted the cripple to the roof, removed a sufficient number of tiles and let him down in the immediate presence of Jesus. Upon beholding this demonstration of their faith Jesus at once declared that the man's sins were forgiven. Some of the scribes were present and these questioned in their hearts if Jesus was not guilty of blasphemy by assuming the power of God to forgive sins.

Jesus pointed out to them that it was much easier to tell a man his sins were forgiven than to tell him to arise and walk. The bystanders could not tell whether one had succeeded in forgiving sins but they could immediately detect any failure to cure his infirmity. Jesus then rested his power to forgive sins in a physical demonstration and instructed the

man to take up his pallet and go home. Immediately the man arose, took up his pallet and walked out in the presence of them all. It is written, "So that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this.'" It was such an effect, which caused the word "wonders" to be used.

It may be argued that there is nothing in such an effect, which indicates supernatural power, and this is correct when the term is used by itself. One who has dwelt all his life upon the plains may feel a sense of awe when he first surveys the lofty snow-covered peaks of a lordly mountain range. Another may have the same sensation when he stands upon the ocean beach and sees the rolling swells foam themselves out in breakers at his feet. In many such experiences we may say, "We never saw anything like this." For this reason it is well to remember that the word "wonders" never appears as a designation of miracles by itself. Every other term is used upon occasion without an accompanying expression but "wonders" is always employed in conjunction with others.

The effect upon the observer is not the primary purpose of the acts. They were not done simply to startle, frighten or amaze the onlookers. The fact that they did so indicates that they were outside the realm of previous knowledge of those who beheld them, and could be measured by no law with which they were familiar. Thus they were calculated to secure attention to the message upon the part of those who saw and who gathered close to those who performed the acts. (Cp. Acts 3:10, 11).

SIGNS

Those who go forth on a mission representing a sovereign are expected to produce the necessary credentials to validate their authority. One who claims to represent a natural realm requires only natural certification; one who is an envoy of a supernatural power must exhibit supernatural credentials. The word "signs" is thus employed to designate miracles, which are demonstrations to prove the divine mission of one who performs them.

Since men in the ages prior to Christ were dispatched as representatives of God we would expect God to grant them the power to perform such acts as would prove their claims to be legitimate. A good example is found in the case of Moses. After he had been in the land of Midian for forty years God prepared to send him back to Egypt to deliver His people. He had to establish himself both in the eyes of the Israelites and of Pharaoh. Accordingly it is said, "Then Moses and Aaron gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. And Aaron spoke all the words, which the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed."

God knew that Pharaoh would demand supernatural proof that Moses was sent as his ambassador so we read, "And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'When Pharaoh says to you, Prove yourselves by working a miracle, then you shall say to Aaron, Take your rod and cast it down before Pharaoh that it may become a serpent'" (Exodus 7:9).

The apostles were ambassadors of Christ and God made his appeal through them (2 Corinthians 5:20). For this reason the apostle writes, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works" (2 Corinthians 12:12).

When Jesus cleared the temple of commercial hucksters and moneychangers on the basis that they were desecrating his Father's house, the Jews said to him, "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" (John 2:18). Upon one occasion the Pharisees and Sadducees came to test him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. He reminded them that when it was evening they predicted fair weather because the sky was red, and when it was morning they predicted stormy weather when the sky was the same color. He said, "You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times."

This is an interesting criticism. These men had learned from observation that the face of the sky betokened certain conditions, but they were not as careful in their evaluation of history, else they would have seen the prophecy of God being fulfilled in their day. The oracles of God, which they diligently studied, had come as a revelation from heaven and constituted a sign of God's purpose, but their lives were not ordered by it.

When Jesus declared that "an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign," he did not imply, as so many think, that they were evil *because* they asked for a sign. But they had God's revelation, which they ignored and thus were guilty of evil and adultery contrary to God's law, which was a sign unto them. To ask for a sign from heaven while trampling under foot the covenant of heaven was gross hypocrisy. Thus Jesus said to them, "It is Moses who accuses you, upon whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me" (John 5:46).

Of those who reject the miracles of Christ we have a perfect right to demand that they specify the kind of proof one would need to present who claimed to be the Son of God sent down from heaven. Granted that one came who professed to be from heaven, what credentials would be demanded of him? Would it not be necessary for him to do such things as man, unaided by direct divine endowment, could not possibly do? Would not his acts have to be such as transcended all human experience? To reject the miracles of Jesus because they are incredible when measured by human performance is ridiculous. It is this very quality which makes them valid for the purpose for which they were intended.

MIGHTY WORKS

Our word "dynamic" comes from the Greek *dunamis*, which also gives us our English words dynamo and dynamite. This is the word which is translated by "miracle" in Acts 2:22; 19:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28; and Galatians 3:5. It is rendered "wonderful works" in Matthew 7:22, and "mighty works" in other places.

Dunamis signifies inherent power, that is, the power, which belongs to a person or thing by reason of the nature of that person or thing. All power is of God and the performance of those works or deeds, which are beyond the ability of the one who does them, signifies that he is endowed of God for such special work.

It is sometimes argued that since all nature is a source of wonder to the one who beholds it, and is a demonstration of divine power, there is no such thing as a miracle. All is either miracle, or nothing is. It is true that there are many forces in operation about us, which we cannot understand or measure. We are caused to wonder at the power, which we call gravitation, an arbitrary term we have coined to designate something we do not comprehend, and the same is true with electrical energy and magnetic force. By observation and experiment we have learned that these proceed by what we call "laws" and we can define those "laws" and anticipate action and reaction in harmony with them.

Even those who are not versed in knowledge of energy are fully aware of the marvels of the commonplace. The planting of a tiny seed is the prelude to a bursting forth of a beautiful flower. A small acorn develops into a stately oak. A black cow eats green grass and produces white milk with yellow butter in it. Various kinds of animal life eat the same substance, yet it is converted into hair, wool or feathers depending upon the kind of animal or bird. Even the process of human procreation and birth has much about it to produce awe in the heart of one who meditates upon it.

Since we are all directly and constantly involved in and with phenomena which are mysterious it is reasoned that we have no right to separate or set apart certain events or incidents and label them "miracles." Those who seek a reply for this are often trapped by their own desire for distinction into the hasty conclusion that what we call natural is not wonderful. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The multiplication of fish by the spawning process so that two can produce enough to feed a multitude, or the increase of grain a hundredfold from the seed implanted in the soil, is as much a demonstration of divine power as the act of Jesus in feeding the throngs in his day. It is not that one is less a mighty work than the other; it is simply that one is different from the other.

In one case there is the constant manifestation of power to all men everywhere. In the other there is a specific breakthrough for a definite purpose. One has as its chief design the constant sustenance of life; the other has the added purpose of being a sign leading to faith in the one who intervenes.

This will be a good time to point out the fallacy involved in saying that a miracle is *contrary* to the laws of nature. In the first place the expression "laws of nature" may be without foundation in fact. If it means that God drew up or designed certain codes or well-defined rules by which to govern nature we know of nothing, which indicates it. God, who made the universe, controls it by the constant application of the same power, which formed it. He upholds all things by the word of his power. By him all things consist. He is a God of order and consistency and his power is applied with such regularity and continuity that it appears unto us as if it were being channeled by well-defined legal actions or axioms. We speak of "laws of nature" as another, and human way, of expressing the divine will. It is that will which we see operating.

Miracles are not contradictory to "the laws of nature" for this would make them contrary to the will of God. They are simply applications of divine power upon a higher level or plane. The power of God operates upon three such levels, and we designate them natural, providential and supernatural. When an aircraft which has been flying at ten thousand feet is ordered to fly at fifteen thousand feet, it does not contradict its flight at a lower level, for the levels are parallel and do not bisect each other. It does not alter its goal or destination.

When Jesus restored the withered hand of the man on the Sabbath, he was not acting in violation of nature. This was exactly what the physicians would attempt to accomplish by use of natural skills and remedies. It was the crippling condition, which was contrary to nature. God made man to employ all of his members and functions. This is the normal state, when one is unable to use an arm that is abnormal. Thus Jesus was acting in harmony with the natural and not in opposition to it.

The temporary suspension of a "law of nature" by exertion of a superior force or power is not a violation of the rules of nature for there is an obvious law to govern all laws – that when a greater power is brought to bear the lesser must always give place. In the old

covenant scriptures we have the case of the man who borrowed an axe and while chopping near a stream the head of the axe flew off and into the water. The prophet stretched his rod over the water and the axe floated up and on the surface. The law of gravity was temporarily suspended or reversed, but this was not the violation of the law. The authority, which provides or prescribes a law, may make application of that law to accomplish good, which should be the purpose of all law.

The turning of the water into wine was simply increasing the tempo of nature. All wine results from water, which has been drawn from the soil into the globules or containers called grapes. It is then extracted and allowed to condition itself by fermentation. Jesus accomplished in a moment what otherwise required several months but the natural process and the miracle produced the same result, so one did not act contrary to, or in opposition to the other.

Since this little volume is designed to be a testimony of personal faith, it is essential that we devote some attention to those who object to miracles as impossibilities or absurdities. One cannot ignore the attacks and be honest with himself. Faith is not strengthened by closing the eyes but by opening them. If the shield will not quench the fiery darts it is of no value. The user cannot employ a shield properly by hiding it from the arena of conflict. The shield of faith was not intended for a museum but for the battlefield.

Perhaps the most influential antagonist of miracles was the Scottish philosopher, David Hume, who was born in Edinburgh in 1711. His writings were accepted with tremendous joy and acclaim by the skeptical world. It is not too much to say that a great deal of the opposition to miracles in our own day is simply a repetition of his arguments. Perhaps one thing that has encouraged the popularity of his views is that, once adopted, all need for examination of the Bible and its record of miracles is rendered unnecessary. This approach will commend itself to those who wish to doubt without taking the trouble to personally investigate the evidence. All they need to do is to assume the postulate of Hume and all need for examination is rendered useless. The position of Hume is summarized in the statement, “No conceivable amount of testimony can prove a miracle.”

A summary of his argument can be gleaned from the Encyclopedia Britannica, which records it in these words:

Our belief of any fact from the testimony of eyewitnesses is derived from no other principle than our experience of the veracity of human testimony. If the fact attested be miraculous, there arises a contest of two opposite experiences, or proof against proof. Now, a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and, as firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as complete as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined; and if so, it is an undeniable consequence, that it cannot be surmounted by any proof whatever, derived from human testimony.

Mr. Hume has been acknowledged as one of the most ingenious writers who has ever entered the lists to contest against miracles. Dr. George Campbell, of Aberdeen, who was a contemporary of Hume, and who wrote “A Dissertation on Miracles,” in reply to his thesis, said, “The Essay on Miracles deserves to be considered as one of the most dangerous attacks that have been made on our religion.” The reader who is interested in historical aspects will find it interesting to read the letters exchanged by these philosophers. They are models of courtesy and restraint when one considers the explosive atmosphere in which they were written.

Our own approach will be rather simple. I am not a philosopher and do not possess the ability for deep philosophical penetration. It is obvious that if one admits the premises of Hume his conclusions will follow. But we believe there are some fallacious assumptions, which, once recognized, will demonstrate the emptiness of his attack.

For instance, what is meant by the expression "Our belief of any fact from the testimony of eyewitnesses is derived from no other principle, than our experience of the veracity of human experience"? This is the foundation of the whole structure of attack on miracles. Miracles are regarded as contrary to experience and for that reason are opposed to the very grounds or bases of evidence, and thus are destructive of themselves by negation of the evidence.

Hume declared, "The very same principle of experience, which gives us a certain degree of assurance in the testimony of witnesses, gives us also, in this case, another degree of assurance, against the fact which they endeavor to establish; from which contradiction there necessarily arises a counterpoise, and mutual destruction of belief and authority."

To what experience are miracles contrary? It is not enough to say they are contrary to *personal* experience for the question under consideration is the testimony, not of our own senses, but of eyewitnesses. Moreover, the thesis of Hume is that they are contrary to our experience of the veracity of human testimony. This is the experience upon which all faiths must rest according to the philosopher; therefore, it is this experience to which miracles must be opposed if the credibility of miracles is to be destroyed.

But this is a little absurd. The very discussion about miracles arises because men have testified that they have observed or experienced such. If there had never been an allegation that miracles occurred there would have been no well-designed opposition to them by Hume and others. That miracles have been a historical fact has been made a part of human testimony. To deny that testimony without showing its invalidity due to the character of the witnesses, or the nature of the testimony, is not to destroy miracles, for they are untouched by such a procedure. Rather it is to destroy our experience of the veracity of human testimony, the very foundation claimed for the skeptical superstructure.

Is it a fact that our belief of testimony is founded upon our experience of its veracity? We think not, and if we are correct, the opposition falls because of a fallacy in its main support. All we need to do to show its utter weakness is to demonstrate that there are those whose experience is at a minimum and yet who act upon testimony given, in full belief. No better example can be given than that of a little child. Without experience of the veracity of testimony it proceeds upon faith. The child abstains from that which it is told is harmful or poisonous; it partakes of that which it is told is helpful. It accepts this testimony without previous experience. Indeed, as it grows older and has increasing experience, it comes more and more to doubt the veracity of human testimony, so when it has the least experience it has the greatest trust in human testimony, and when it has the greatest experience it tends to have a lesser degree of trust in it.

The predication of Hume fails also upon another count in his assumption that a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature and is, therefore, contrary to experience. We have already shown that a miracle is not a violation of the laws of nature. It may be a deviation from such laws as we know, but it is actually in harmony with the nature of the law, which regulates the laws of nature, that is, in the application of a superior power or force that which is lesser must give place. So far from this being contrary to the laws of nature it is actually basic to the harmonious functioning of nature.

How can a miracle be *contrary* to our experience? That it may be outside the range or scope of our experience can readily be granted, but this is vastly different from saying it is opposed to our experience. A dweller in the tropics who has never experienced freezing temperatures or seen a snowfall cannot say that a land of ice is opposed to his experience. It is simply beyond it.

For the miracle of feeding the five thousand to be contrary to one's experience he would have had to be present and witnessed that the fish and loaves were not multiplied and no food was distributed to the hungry multitude. For the miracle of healing the withered hand to be contrary to one's experience he would have had to be present and observe that there was no change wrought in the cripple. One would need to experience the opposite of a miracle for that miracle to be opposite to his experience.

Our experience can never be made the criterion for measuring the validity of any claim, which lies outside of, or beyond it. To be a universal measure our experience would need to be absolute and unlimited, otherwise that which lay beyond its limitations could be factual without our being able to determine it. In order to exclude the possibility of miracles performed by God one would need to make himself God.

Perhaps we should turn from the skeptical criticism to the more modern attack of "rationalists," although there is clearly a case of mistaken identity here, for no one could be more irrational in many areas. We live in an age when many have assumed that the record of miracles in the Bible has no relation to historical fact. Their thesis is that Jesus did not claim to perform miraculous acts and the apostolic writers did not write an account of anything deemed to be supernatural. Their idea is that men constructed an image of Christ in their minds and then interpreted what they read to give body to this image. In this fashion they could retain the moral qualities of Jesus and the integrity of the scriptural accounts and place the responsibility for misinterpretation upon those who sought for the wonderful and supernatural.

It is at once apparent that those who thus reason have surrendered the divinity of Jesus and yet want to maintain his right to respect because of his superior human qualities. Only the superstitious would invest him with supernatural power. There is a difference between this approach and that of the more recent "mythical" school of thought and we shall make brief reference to that a little later. The rationalists who sought to hold on to the accounts of Christ have had to face some serious problems. Something had happened and a record had been made of the event. That record indicated a demonstration above and beyond the naturalistic realm. Accordingly, in facing up to the record, a great deal of maneuvering was required to explain away that which was so apparent. Gradually there evolved a rather elaborate scheme of interpretation. In this the scriptures were bent and twisted in a ridiculous fashion.

A good example is the taking of the coin from the mouth of a fish, at the instruction of Jesus, in order to pay the tribute assessed. Peter encountered the tax collectors at Capernaum who enquired about the half-shekel tax. When Peter called this to the attention of Jesus he asserted that he ought to be exempt, but said, "However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel; take that and give it to them for me and for yourself" (Matthew 17:27).

According to the rationalists Jesus was simply telling Peter to return to his old occupation long enough to catch enough fish to pay the tax for the two of them. The Lord was

supposed to have smilingly implied that Peter knew that the mouths of fishes contained the answer to all problems related to tax payments and other expenses. He used the expression as we say "straight from the horse's mouth," to indicate the authenticity of our source of information. This is the way in which men of intellectual brilliance seek to evade the power of the Son of God.

In the case of the turning of water into wine we are told that Jesus merely supplied additional wine when he learned from his mother that the celebrants at the wedding had exhausted that provided by the host. But the one who records the event declares that this was the first of his signs, that in performing it he manifested his glory, and as a result his disciples believed on him (John 2:11). Of course this would be absurd if Jesus had just sent the servants out for additional wine. Nor must we forget that it made such an impression that it was used to identify the place later on (John 4:46).

One of the most ingenious artifices is that used to explain the feeding of the multitude. It required no multiplication of bread and fish. It is assumed that those present would not be so foolish as to make no provision at all for the journey and that many had food, but when they halted, instead of bringing forth what they had, those who had provided for themselves selfishly refrained from bringing it out lest they be forced to share with the others. Jesus and his disciples, beholding this attitude, immediately began to share their food with others and the multitude seeing this demonstration of generosity did the same, with the result that there was more than enough for all, and an excess was gathered up. It is said that the real transformation took place in the hearts of the men and women and not on the bread and fish. The subsequent references of Jesus to the event make such rationalization wholly untenable and a little bit ridiculous.

It hardly seems necessary to go through the whole list of miracles. The man at Bethesda was not really a cripple but a psychiatric case who had convinced himself that he could not walk, and gloried in the pity of the multitude. When Jesus confronted him with the question of whether or not he really wanted to be healed he was jerked back into a world of reality and arose and started homeward. Jesus did not walk on the water but on the shore and it just appeared to those in the boat that he was walking on the water. All of these are the concoctions of men who have long ago denied the power of God or his Son and must now devise some means of explaining away the accounts of that power. It is one thing to seek a way of explaining God's revelation, and a wholly different thing to explain God's revelation away.

To one who regards the revelation as a whole such piecemeal and derogatory attempts bring only contempt for the kind of scholarship, which must resort to such tactics. It is in no sense of arrogance that we suggest that one who must operate by simple child-like faith will find it far easier to harmonize the scriptures than those who must expound them in such a manner as to disprove the very thing, which they were written to prove. "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and that believing you might have life through his name."

In more recent times we have been treated to the term "myth" as applied by some existential writers to the scriptural accounts. Foremost among these is Rudolf Bultmann whose "Kerygma and Myth" was translated into English in 1953. Unfortunately the use of the word "myth" creates a barrier to the proper understanding of what Bultmann and others were talking about and tends to preclude a careful analysis of their theory. Most of

us have been conditioned, when we hear the word, to think of the stories of gods and goddesses and their misbehaving. But this is not the sense in which these theologians and philosophers employ the word.

Basically they refer to the distinction, which they profess to see in the personal witness to the Christ and the language and cultural style in which that witness is couched. It is alleged that men in our day think of the world in a scientific and technical way and express themselves in a form of exactness produced by our culture. On the other hand, the apostles and their contemporaries lived in a day, which preceded our scientific age and they wrote in the thought forms of their own age. It is not alleged that they invented their descriptions or that they were the results of vivid imagination. On the contrary they believed that there was an unseen realm peopled by invisible beings, angels or demons, and that these invaded the world, and they wrote out of belief of such as a reality.

It is argued that man can no longer accept the idea of what is called a three-story universe, with a spatial heaven above and an underworld beneath, and the earth containing man in the middle. For this reason he cannot longer concur in the idea of actual demons or angels. But since these were accepted in the day when the scriptures were written they must be regarded as the honest attempts of men writing to express themselves to the people of their time. These forms are called “mythical” and Bultmann proposed a divesting of the message – the kerygma – from these forms. This was translated into English by the rather cumbersome term "demythologizing."

It will at once be seen that most of the miracles would be purged in such a program. The casting out of demons, the feeding of the multitudes, the temptation in the wilderness, all of these would be eliminated. Of course the question is always posed, “What do these mean to mankind in our day? Suppose they were all given up, what would we lose?” Actually, this is not the real question at all. If we were to start giving up all that has happened in the past which seems to have no direct relevance to our lives we would strip history of a great deal of interest. But who is to determine what is significant in the past and what is not? Suppose that we should discard something as “myth” in one generation, which would be found not to be myth by the next generation.

The real question is one of the authenticity and genuineness of the record and that is not to be determined by caprice or disposition. In the final analysis, nothing that has ever happened is without relevance. Everything has its antecedents and consequences and these in turn have theirs. For this reason we reject the thinking which sorts out events and scraps the accounts in the Bible on the basis of what prejudiced individuals want to dispense of or retain. We believe the miracles are vital as proof that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. We accept them without reservation. We defend them without hesitancy. Our motto in such matters and all others is, “Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.”

Chapter 8

The Blessing of Eternal Life

I believe that eternal life dwells in the children of God now and that it is our most precious possession in the world. Life is produced by and proceeds from life. All life originates with the author or source of life. The author of life is the Eternal, the uncreated one. “For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light do we see light” (Psalm 36:9). “He himself gives to all men life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:26).

The Greek language was rich and full. Our own English language, which has had to borrow from so many sources, is rather poverty-stricken by comparison. Thus we have to use the one word “life” to express the thought contained in a number of Greek words, and because this is the case we frequently overlook or do not grasp important distinctions. It is difficult to distinguish between persons who all wear identical cloaks.

The problem is augmented by the fact that in classical Greek one of these words had princely status while the others were inferior in rank; whereas, in the scriptures, one of the inferior terms has been elevated and the others suffer somewhat by comparison. This is further complicated by the fact that death, which is the natural antithesis of the inferior in classical usage, becomes the antithesis of the other in scripture when a moral element is included. Surely this offers a fruitful field of research for the thoughtful and discerning student.

The word *pneuma* is rendered “life” only once in the King James Version, in Revelation 13:15, but since in most versions and revisions it is translated “breath,” it can be eliminated from further consideration in this study. The word *psyche*, which is generally translated soul, heart, or mind, is also rendered life forty times. It is translated by "soul" 58 times. It literally refers to the animal life, as an examination of all the passages in which it is contained will readily demonstrate.

By projection it can also refer to personality as W. E. Vine points out in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words. In Luke 9:24, the term “his life” occurs twice, but the next verse says, “For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?” The expression “his life” is thus equated with ‘himself.” Since we will be talking about something transcendently greater than animal life, or even personality, we can now dismiss this word also.

This leaves the two principal words, *bios* and *zoe*. Concerning the first, even the casual reader can ascertain from such a source as Young’s Analytical Concordance that it is used for, either the manner, means, or period of life. It has entered the English language in such forms as biography, the history of a person’s life; and biometry, a calculation of the probable duration of human life. In the new covenant scriptures it is used in all these senses of meaning. An example is found in John 3:17, “If anyone has this world’s goods (bios) and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?” Here it is used for the means of life, for James points out that the things called “goods” are needful for the body (2:16).

An example of *bios* when used in relation to the improper manner of life occurs in 1 John 2:17 when we read of “the pride of life,” and an example when used with reference to a proper frame of life is found in 1 Timothy 2:2, where we have the expression “a quiet and peaceable life.” One of the best illustrations of the usage in connection with the peri-

od or duration of life occurs in 1 Peter 4:3, "Let the time that is past suffice for doing what the Gentiles do." The King James Version follows the manuscripts which use the term "the time past of our life."

The word with which we will be primarily concerned in this connection is *zoe*. It has also come into our vocabulary in combined forms such as zoology, zoometry, and in its transfer has come to mean, primarily, that which has to do with animals. This is unfortunate since it places a great limitation upon the term, which is not characteristic of its Biblical usage.

In the word of God *zoe* is used of life as a principle, not merely as animal existence. Thus, the first time it is translated "life' in the new covenant scriptures is in the familiar words of Jesus, "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matthew 7:14). The last time it appears is in Revelation 22:19, "And if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which is described in this book."

When we speak of life as a principle, we are not referring to a mere principle of animation, or of power or mobility. When Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly," he was not speaking of mere physical existence. Actually, many of those who accepted him, shortened their lives on earth because they were killed for the faith. The life of the Christ is not the life of the calendar. It is a quality of existence, not quantity. It is not length of days, or days of length, but depth of love. I like to say that the abundant life is not mere duration, but dedication; not just time, but trust; not simply continuation, but consecration.

If you will bear with us we would like to share with you some of the results of the work done by Richard Chenevix Trench in his book, "Synonyms of the New Testament," which has gone through many editions since it was originally published in Cambridge in 1854. The author was Professor of Exegesis and New Testament at King's College, Oxford, when he wrote his memorable study. He points out that the true antithesis of *zoe* is *thanatos* (death), but that this is true only so long as life is physically contemplated. When a moral element is introduced and life is regarded as the opportunity of living nobly or otherwise, the antithesis is not between *thanatos* and *zoe*, but between *thanatos* and *bios*.

Trench shows that in the classics *bios* is the ethical word, but in the sacred scriptures this is reversed, "for no one will deny that *zoe* is there the nobler word expressing as it continually does all of the highest and best which the saints possess in God." He accounts for this by saying that only revealed religion connects death and sin in an inseparable manner, and thus automatically places life and holiness as their opposites. Where death exists, sin was there first, and life is proof that sin has never been present, or has been conquered and driven out. Where life (*zoe*) exists in an absolute sense holiness must exist in the same degree.

That will account for the fact that revelation points out that God has life in himself. He possesses life as a divine nature. It is not derived or acquired. No sin has touched or affected God. Thus his holiness is absolute, untouched or untinctured. He can say, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." To have life is not to multiply the number of heartbeats nor extend the period of breathing, but to become a partaker of the divine nature. When one becomes a partaker of this nature he becomes a partaker of eternal life, for eternal life is simply the life of God. It is our intention to state the case for the present possession of this life in

systematic fashion so that all may see and understand, and also become aware of the grandeur and majesty of this promise of eternal life.

1. The Father has life in himself and has granted the Son also to have life in himself (John 5:26). An examination of this passage will show the importance of the two little words "as" and 'so." They convey the idea of equality in degree. If one can determine the degree of the first, expressed by 'as," he can at once know the degree of the second as expressed by "so." Thus the Son has life even as the Father. "In him was life and the life was the light of men."

2. This life, which was with the Father from the beginning, was manifested in Jesus. It was embodied, and the apostolic witnesses had audible, visual and manual contact with it. "The life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us" (1 John 1:2). That this was not merely the physical life of Jesus is evident in the fact that it was the eternal life which was with the Father, and further that it was proclaimed as something in which men might become participants. Those who heard the proclamation already possessed physical life, as did the witnesses to whom the eternal life was manifested.

3. Men became possessors of eternal life on the basis of faith in Jesus as the Son of God. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14, 15). There is a difference in believing a person, or even believing on a person, and believing in him. One may believe on another by merely accepting the testimony concerning his existence. He may exercise such faith from a distance or as a remote experience. But to believe in one involves commitment to and identification with that one. Such belief in Jesus guarantees that one enter into life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

4. Because the exercise of faith in Jesus make one a believer in him, and since such belief is the key to eternal life, it is God's will that all who thus believe should have such life, the life of God himself. "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40). There are those who interpret this verse to mean that eternal life is future. They emphasize the word "should" and make it appear that this is merely the intention of God and that eternal life cannot be ours until after the resurrection. In a sense, this is true, for our complete enjoyment of eternal life cannot be ours during the time when we suffer in the flesh. But there is a difference between possessing a thing and being fully able to enjoy it. If a child is given a bicycle while in the hospital he has it but he cannot fully appreciate it because of present limitations.

5. In the same speech to which we have just referred Jesus plainly says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47). Again, he says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests on him" (John 3:36). Eternal life is the present possession of the believer. The only ones who do not have eternal life are those who do not obey the Son and upon whom the wrath of God dwells.

6. If our previous reasoning is correct, it is obvious that believers have passed from death to life, for one cannot have eternal life and abide in death. That we are not mistaken is apparent from the words of Jesus. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has

passed from death to life" (John 5:24). The condition here stated for crossing the frontier from death to life is to hear the word of Jesus and believe God who sent him.

But there is a tangible way by which one may know he has made the passage. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death. Any one who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:14, 15). We cannot wait until we are raised from the dead to love the brethren, but when we do love them we pass from death into life. We know this is life eternal because "no murderer has eternal life abiding in him," and if one who loved did not have eternal life, in this regard he would be no better than a murderer. It would be foolish for the apostle to declare that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him, if no one else has either.

We must not mistake what is here said for love of some of the brethren, or for those brethren who agree with us. Nor must we think of love as a patronizing, condescending attitude for those who differ with us. That is not love in sincerity but in hypocrisy. The real test of the love that takes us from death into life is not whether we will put up with our brethren in life but whether we would be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren. This is the criterion of the love that is under consideration. "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

Love is not something to be casually mouthed by those who would appear generous and benevolent because they are caught on the scriptural hook. It is a genuine willingness to die for another because, in the final analysis, brotherhood is of greater value than mere physical existence. Life without such love is not worth living because it is not eternal life at all.

7. Since eternal life is not mere duration or continuation of existence it becomes necessary that we determine just what it is, and there is no other place from which we can glean such information than from the scriptures. Before we go any farther we can affirm that eternal life is a relationship. It is a personal relationship, a human-divine relationship made possible by the fact that Jesus emptied himself and took upon him the form of a slave by coming to share our lot. When we enter that relationship we enter into eternal life, for the relationship is life in Christ.

Jesus defined eternal life as knowing the Father and himself. "And this is eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Because of our association of the word "know" with the mental perception that enables us to grasp certain facts, there is a danger that we will regard it in a limited sense and think of it merely as acquiring an intellectual concept of the Father and Son, that is, to know about them through the reading of the testimony that has been provided. It is true that the Greek term is thus used. It is employed with reference to "the servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will" (Luke 12:47); for the universal awareness that Ephesus was the temple-keeper of the goddess Artemis (Acts 19:35); and for acquaintance with the law (Romans 7:1).

But it is also used in a much greater and deeper sense. It signifies the entering into a meaningful relationship with its object. It refers to such intimate unions as that of marriage. Indeed, the very first time the word appears in the new covenant scriptures it has this meaning. Joseph, who was engaged to Mary, was informed of the fact that she would bear a child begotten by the Holy Spirit. "When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the

angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus" (Matthew 1:24). When Mary was informed of this impending event she asked, "How can this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34). The word "know" implies a close and intimate relationship, which is creative, producing new life.

Nothing is clearer in the scriptures than the fact that we must enter into a spiritual bond or union with Christ, which is as close as the physical union, which constitutes marriage. After speaking of sexual congress by which a man becomes one body with a woman, the apostle continues, "But he who is united with the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1 Corinthians 6:17). It is this absolute and unrestrained surrender to God and His Son, which constitutes eternal life. One who embraces Christ in glad and complete involvement dies to self and Christ becomes his life. "For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then you will also appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:2, 4). Christ is our life, but Christ is eternal, so the life we share in Christ is eternal life.

8. Eternal life is abiding in the Father and in the Son. It must be noticed that it is abiding in both. One cannot deny the Son and have the Father, nor can he deny the Father and have the Son. "No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also. Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he has promised us, eternal life" (1 John 2:23-25). Our abiding in the Son and Father is contingent upon that which we heard from the beginning abiding in us. That which we heard from the beginning was the eternal life, which was manifested, seen, heard and proclaimed unto us. It was eternal life as exhibited in the Son. So long as the Good News remains in us as a vital part of our spiritual existence, we have eternal life for that life is the result of the acceptance of the glad tidings.

9. Eternal life is vested in the Son of God. One who has a living relationship with Jesus has eternal life. "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son has not life. I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:11, 12). "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

We believe that the things we have cited definitely support the view that eternal life is a relationship with God and Christ, and that we have eternal life now. John plainly declares that he wrote his epistle so we would know that we have eternal life. To explain the scriptures in such a manner as to deny this would be to array the word of God against itself.

In spite of these there are certain statements, which make it appear that eternal life is yet future. One cannot be honest and objective and not face up to them. We shall list a few of them.

1. Eternal life is said to await dispensation in the day when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. Until that day some are said to be storing up wrath while others seek for something better. Of these last it is said, "For he will render to every man according to is works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life" (Romans 2:6, 7).

2. Eternal life is described as a harvest to be reaped from what is sown in this life. "For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Galatians 6:8).

3. Eternal life is said to be something which we lay hold upon in the future. "Thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future; so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed" (1 Timothy 6:19).

4. Eternal life is said to be our lot in the age to come and that age is contrasted with this time or now. "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecution, and in the age to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29, 30).

5. Eternal life is declared to be the hope of the elect. "In hope of eternal life which God, who never lies, promised ages ago" (Titus 1:2). "So that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life" (Jude 21).

It would appear from these passages that eternal life is yet future and has no reference to our present state except in hopefulness and expectancy. But the scriptures are not contradictory. There are too many passages, which plainly state that we now possess eternal life and we cannot simply toss them aside. We must seek for that harmony which comes to light with better understanding.

Fortunately we have a parallel in the teaching concerning the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven. John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles all taught prior to the death of Christ, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Later, Paul wrote to the Colossians that God "has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (1:13). John declares that Jesus has "made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father" (Revelation 1:6).

In spite of this, we are informed by Paul that inheritance of the kingdom is contingent upon our resurrection from the dead and the spiritual and imperishable bodies to be received in conjunction there-with. "I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (1 Corinthians 15:50). Peter tells us that our call and election must be confirmed with zeal, "so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

The perceptive reader will immediately recognize that there is a sense in which we are now in the kingdom and sharing in its blessings, but there is another sense in which we have not inherited the kingdom, being inhibited by the flesh. The same things hold true with reference to eternal life. We know that we have eternal life for at least one of the apostolic epistles was written to establish this very fact. Yet there is a fullness of this life, which we can never experience so long as we are in the body, subject to limitation of time and space, and victims of suffering, pain and physical deterioration.

Death is separation. Life is union. Eternal life is union with the Eternal One. "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to his Son. . . . And this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life, he who has not the Son has not life" (1 John 5:9, 11, 12).

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Chapter 9

The Last Word

Once upon a time, more years back than I like to contemplate now, I was a simple country lad, intrigued with all of the manifestations of nature. Ours was a family steeped in poverty and although I did not realize it, I was what the social workers of today call an underprivileged child. Unable to have those toys and playthings, which cost money, we devised and constructed our own crude ones, and since I was of a more serious disposition I found pleasure and thrill in observation of the commonplace.

There were days when I lay on my back in the orchard watching a hawk or an eagle floating effortlessly in the sky upon a thermal current, and other days when I lay on my stomach on the creek bank watching a snake writhe his sinuous way across the flat rock projecting over the clear stream. Both were marvels to me before I knew that they had challenged the thinking of wise men for generations, and I shall never forget when I first read in Proverbs 30:18, 19, "Three things are too wonderful for me, four I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a maiden."

There were occasions when God seemed very near. This was especially true on cold winter nights when the crisp snow crunched under one's step, and the thousands of twinkling stars seemed to shimmer so much closer to earth. It was also true when spring came with its resurrection of buds and blooms, and its promise of rebirth. There was no question about the existence of God. It was blasphemy in our ears to hear one even profane the sacred name with oaths or cursing. Each time we sat down at the table we asked him to bless our meager fare. It never occurred to us that he might not hear.

Later, in that crucial period through which a boy passes as he wrestles with his own soul while he climbs the steeps toward manhood there were times of fleeting doubt. How do I know that God really exists? Do I believe as I do simply because I have been taught to do so by my parents, and how can I be sure they are right about God, seeing that my increasing knowledge proves that they have been wrong about so many other things?

Those were times of mental agony and intellectual suffering but I know now they had to come. They were essential to the development of a mature faith and personal conviction. After all, an infant learning to walk regards every wrinkle in the rug as a hill and every chair as a mountain. And the intellectual infant who stumblingly leaves the mental protection of his parents, like the physical one who fearfully leaves their arms, may exaggerate the obstacles in his path.

I am now at the place where I can assess realistically the values by which I would like to die as well as those by which I propose to live the days remaining on the earth. Strangely enough, I find myself thrown back upon the resources of the same kind of faith, and trust, which I knew as a child. The difference lies in the fact that then it was compulsory but now it is by choice. Then I was driven to it by sheer lack of knowledge, now I am dependent upon it because of the knowledge of how much I shall never know of myself.

I am not willing to conclude that all of the apologetic approach of the past must be discarded. To me some of it, at least, seems to be valid and worthy of consideration. And yet I realize that it may not speak as meaningfully to others as it does to me. For that reason I have not written to persuade or convince others, but rather to testify of my personal convictions and to explain why I hold them. I will not provoke discussion with those who disagree.

I have not concerned myself with being either theologically or scientifically profound because I am not qualified to be either. It was my hope, as I began to write, that I could explain the faith of a plain man so that common folk would read with understanding. If I have failed in this my real purpose and mission have been thwarted.

It may well be that the very simplicity exhibited will appear to be radical in a sophisticated age, but it seems to me that a disciple of the Son of man will always appear so to the sons of men in the generation of his sojourn among them. The word 'radical" means "root," which explains why it appears in our word "radish." A radical may be one who insists on getting to the root of things and it is regrettable that the term is now applied almost exclusively to one who seeks to "uproot" existing conditions.

I must plead guilty to being a radical in the best sense of the word. I firmly believe the universe is *rooted* in the creative power of an intellectual Being to whom we are responsible. It is this, which gives meaning, purpose and direction to life. The thought of His watchful care and concern brings inner serenity and tranquility in life and provides hope of existence beyond the portals at the end of the road.

Mine is a living faith. God lives, Christ lives, and the revealed word is a living word. Because of this I also live. Life is a reality and in this reality I am a partaker of the infinite grace and of ultimate being. The sting of death has been extracted by the forceps of faith. The bondage of fear has been lifted by the resurrection. Even while tied to earth by the umbilical cord of the flesh through which I am sustained, I know that the time will come when I shall be delivered into that fuller state of being for which we are destined. And the throes of death will really become the pangs of birth.

I find myself with a great deal of compassion for one who cannot believe. It is the same kind of feeling I always experience when I meet a blind person tapping along the sidewalk with his white cane, and never knowing what lies in his path ahead. I am sure there must always be an inner sense of fear and dread despite the studied attempt to appear normal and carefree.

We were made to believe and we could not long survive in an utterly faithless world. If we convince ourselves that we are merely combinations of minerals and chemicals and gases, produced by the earth and doomed to return to it, to be absorbed into nothingness, the earth will be nothing but a whirling prison, careening madly through space until all of its inhabitants are blindfolded and led into the death-chamber. Our very homes will cease to be islands of love and understanding and become cells of hopelessness on death row.

But if we believe that Jesus lived and died and rose again, the earth is placed in proper perspective. It is not a grim dragon breathing volcanic smoke and fumes, and opening up its waiting jaws to swallow us. Instead, it is the rest stop on a longer journey, sometimes dirty and uncomfortable as rest stops often are, but holding forth promise of the more glorious day ahead when the journey is completed.

And so I have come full circle, from childhood faith to childlike trust, and I am thrilled to have made the trip. I would not want to go back over the route again, bestrewn as it is with rusty mementoes of my failures, but I am happy that I have come the distance and can rest under the tree whose shade I welcomed and whose fruit I plucked when life was less hectic and responsibilities were fewer. And I know of no better words in conclusion than these, which I have borrowed from a far nobler pilgrim than myself:

"For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." To him be all praise!

Note from Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter

July 3, 2010

I purchased a used copy of W. Carl Ketcherside's *Simple Trust Faith* on January 3, 1969 from a little used bookstore that Dr. Jack Cottrell and Dr. James Smith had set up in a corner of Dr. Cottrell's office at the Cincinnati Bible College and Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio where I earned my B. S. in Bible in 1970. Ketcherside's book impressed me because it presented the evidence for Christian Faith in a form easily accessible to the average reader. He examined the evidence using basic everyday logic to establish a credible basis for the basic doctrines of the Christian Faith.

I had started my college career at Indiana University where I was studying philosophy, an all time favorite subject of mine. The simple trusting faith in Christ and His Word which I had been taught by the saints at the Pleasant Ridge Church of Christ not far from Rising Sun, Indiana was severely challenged by my classes in ancient history and philosophy, as well as the current scientific theories in the physical and biological sciences. I transferred from IU to CBS under the encouragement of Brother Jack Howard, who had been my preacher when I was a teenager.

It was my great privilege to study under Professor George Mark Elliott, professor of Theology and Apologetics, when I was a student at the Bible College in Cincinnati. His apologetics course entitled, "Revelation and Inspiration, Apologetics 235," introduced me to the basic issues involved in establishing the validity of a Biblical Faith. He helped me to understand that Faith was based on reliable testimony. His life and teaching combined a deep devotional life with untiring scholarly diligence.

It was during this time of my life that I read W. Carl Ketcherside's *Simple Trusting Faith.* Recently I discovered that it had been reproduced as an unformatted scanned document on the Internet. I decided to reformat that document into a more readable e-book PDF format. If you want a nice bound copy for the convenience of a traditional bound book, I suggest taking the PDF file to Staples or Office Depot. They can make a very nice spiral bound copy with plastic covers.

I should note that Brother Ketcherside used a lot of relative clauses beginning with "which." It was his custom to leave them unpunctuated. I have chosen to add the comma according to modern standards and for clarity.

I send this timeless volume adrift on the Internet with a prayer that it will help young people throughout the world to establish a "simple trusting faith" in Our Lord Jesus Christ, Savior of the World. I was unable to keep the original pagination.

I am not sure of the date, except that it was written sometime before I purchased it in 1969.

On the next page is a note from the editor of the Online Digital Copy, which provided me with the text for this edition. The original hardback had 148 pages.

Publisher's Note

This book was produced by optically scanning the original publication by the same title. In addition to the correction of typographical errors and the modification of one verb tense to convey the meaning clearly intended by the author, we have made formatting changes in such things as page layout and block quotations. We have also included as the author's preface, the text, which appeared on the back of the dust jacket of the original publication.

Sometime after optically scanning the original text, we invited Matthew "Matt" Hagan, an honors graduate of Walton Senior High School in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, to read the typescript orally with us as a means of encouraging his faith and, in the process, detecting scanning errors in the text. He was to enter Florida State University in the Fall of 1991 with a full academic scholarship and we were concerned that he be prepared for that environment. Shortly after completing his first year at FSU, and prior to completing our reading of this book, his life was ended abruptly as the result of a swimming accident. One of the last college essays he wrote was in defense of his faith. It is to his memory that this Signal Hill Edition of *Simple Trusting Faith* is dedicated.

In occasional correspondence with Carl Ketcherside, as in our last telephone conversation, in the fall of 1988, in which we informed him that several of his works had been produced in electronic form on CD-ROM, he expressed the desire that his writings enjoy unrestricted replication and distribution to all who would read them. In keeping with that desire, the electronic database used to create this book is available to anyone wishing to use it in the further dissemination of its contents.

-- *Bob D. Lewis, Managing Editor, Diversity Press* (1996)