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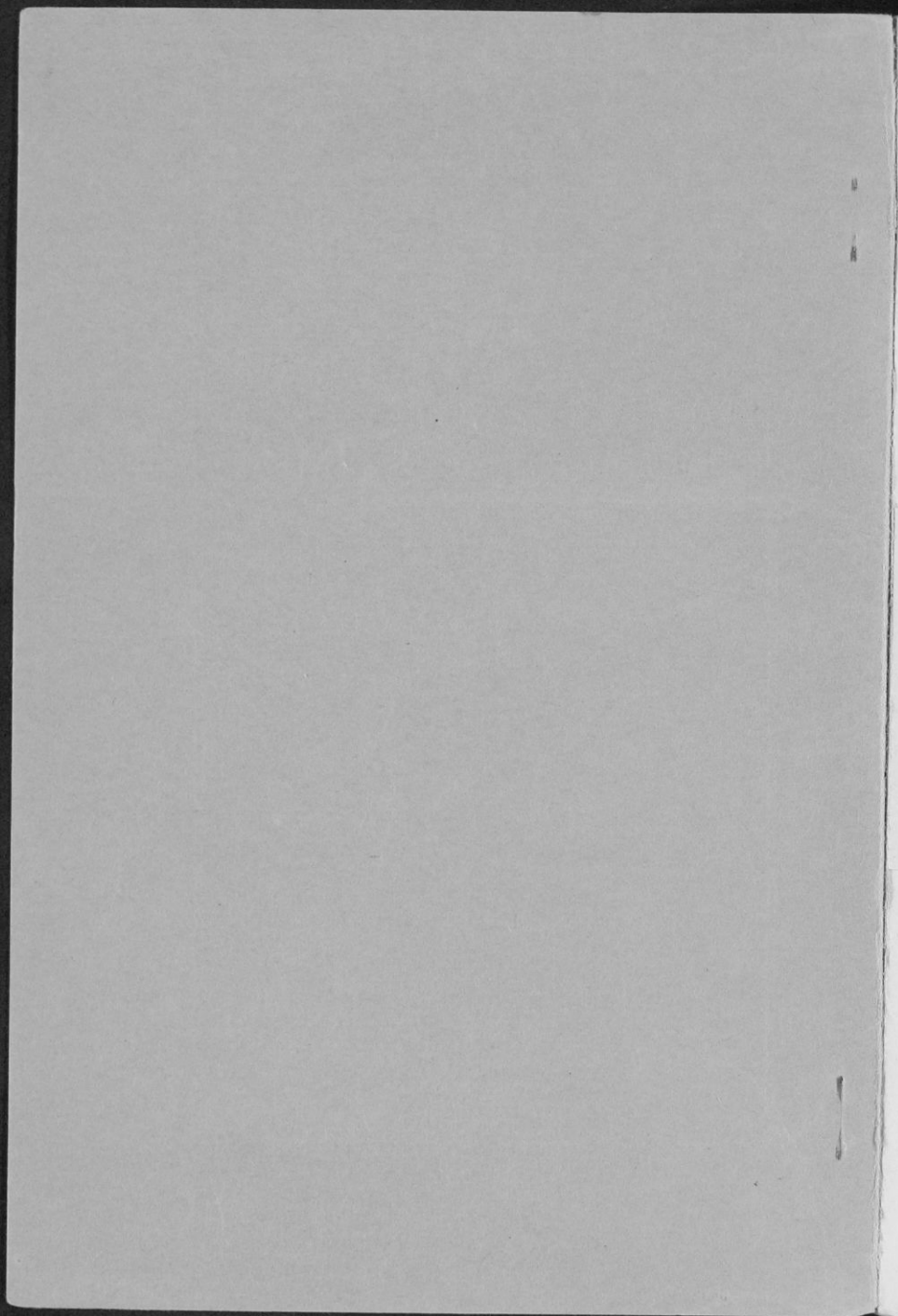
Difficulties of Faith

BY THE
REV. SELDEN P. DELANY

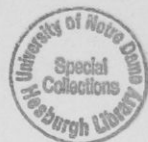
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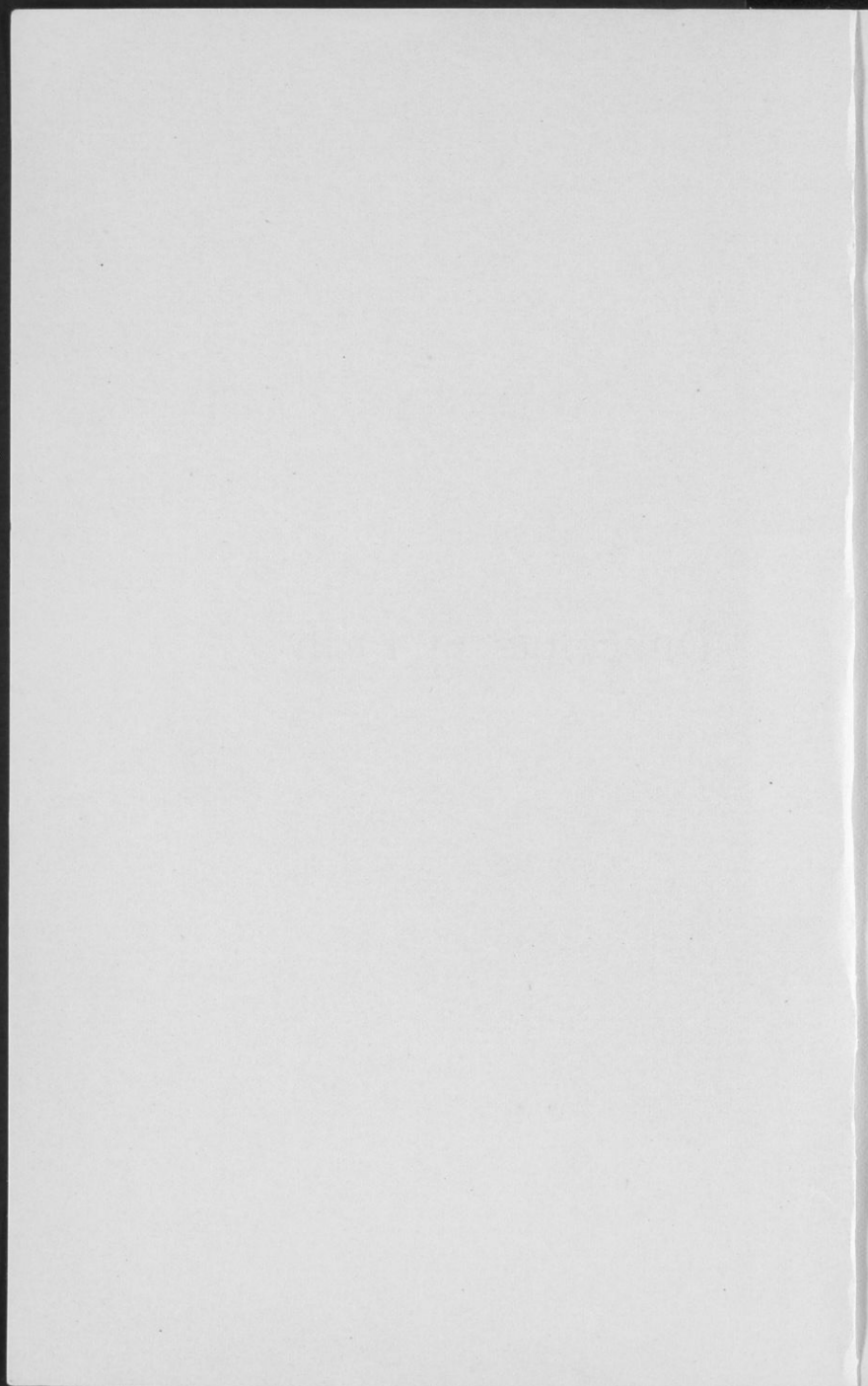
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THE BISHOP OF FOND DU LAC

Milwaukee, Wis.

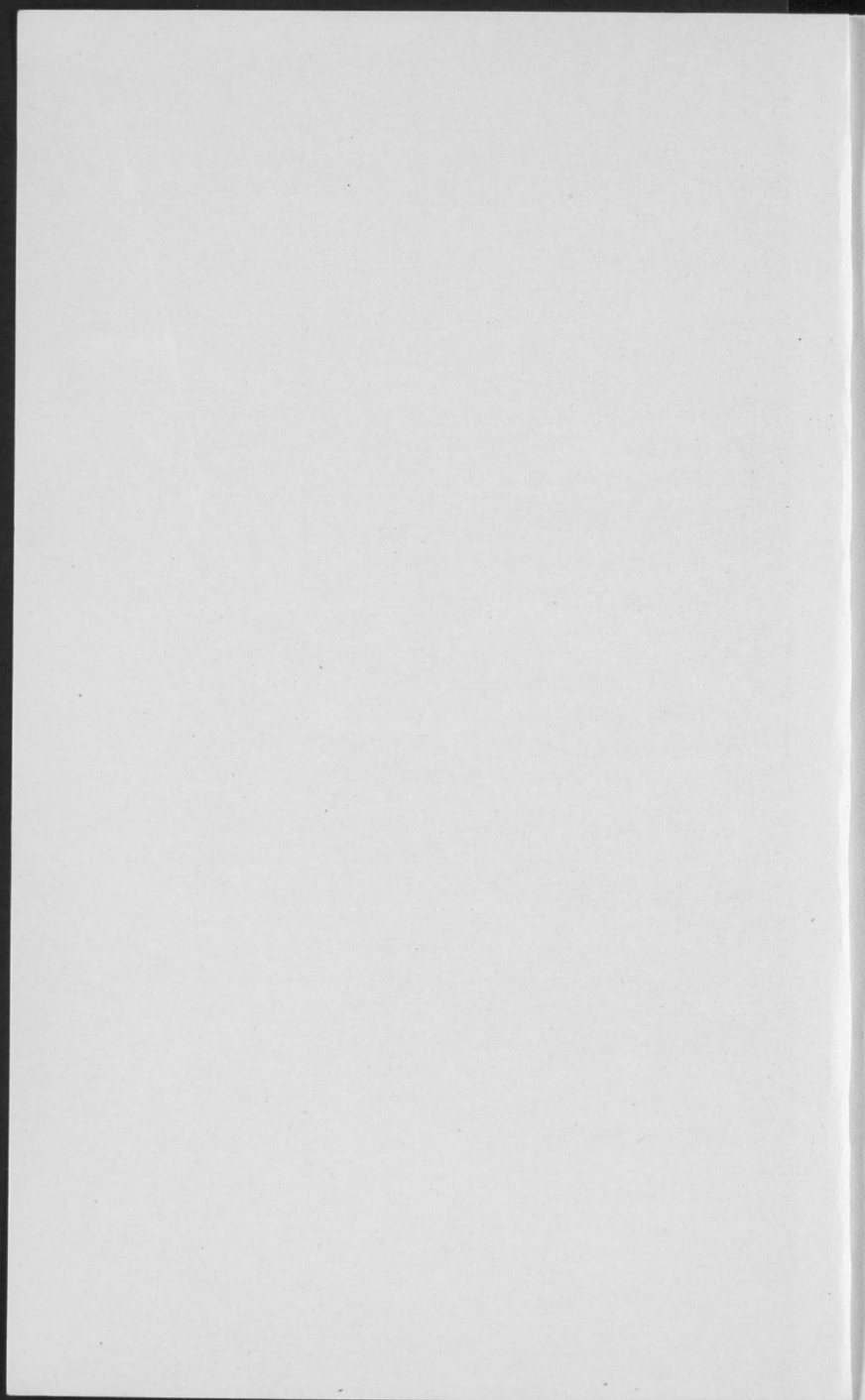
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PREFACE.

ALL loyal Churchmen believe our Church has a great and noble mission. We have inherited an Apostolic Ministry, and a Liturgy in which is enshrined the Catholic Faith. Amidst the upheavals of sectarianism, the Church stands firmly resting on the ancient foundations. She has no quarrel with the facts of science nor fear of modern biblical historical research. The Living Rock on which she securely rests is Christ. His Presence within her is the source of her strength and life. She ministers in His Name and He acts through her. She has a great mission in our country, and everywhere her loyal sons are arousing themselves to a forward movement.

What we need first of all, is, on the part of Churchmen, a better understanding of one another, a larger and more tolerant spirit and better unity of action. The series of tracts, of which this is one, was written in this irenic spirit, and by an appeal to Scripture, it sought to unite the conservative Churchmen of all schools. If our Church was only more united, what could not God work through it? All who sincerely love our Lord will strive in all the ways they can to promote this unity and trustful Christian fellowship.

But next to this, it is necessary for us to make an aggressive movement on the worldly, the unbelieving, the indifferent. Of these, however, not a few stand not far from the Kingdom of God. There are many kept back from an open profession of Christ by some inherited prejudices, some old objection clogs their action. They have been made the victims of magazine and newspaper articles, or the sarcasms and rhetoric of popular orators. But within the heart of man there is a desire for truth and a witness in conscience for God. And as it is the duty of every Christian to be a missionary for Christ, it is the duty of all such, to reach out a loving hand to those about them. It is believed this tract will enable them in part, to perform this duty.

If our clergy would get hold of those outside their congregations, there is no better way than to follow the example of our fishermen on the banks of Newfoundland. When lying at anchor and preparing for their catch of fish, they do not merely bait their hooks. They throw over baskets of bait and bait the ground about their boats, and thus attract the fish. It would be following this excellent example, if we gave away large numbers of a tract like this to our people, with the request that they, with prayer, would read and then give them to non-churchgoers or non-communicants.

C. C. FOND DU LAC.

INTRODUCTORY.

WHEN a man tells you that he has never found any difficulty in the Christian religion, you may safely conclude that he is either a simpleton or a saint. He is much more likely to be the former than the latter. Most of the saints found many difficulties, and are recognized as saints mainly because they overcame them. There have been a few saints, however, who have never known a difficulty, whose path was always bright and straight and clear.

Most of us are neither simpletons nor saints. Therefore most of us have experienced difficulties in believing the Christian Faith. Some there are who have been prevented by such difficulties from believing it at all. Perhaps the difficulty was caused by some incident or teaching in the Bible, perhaps by some doctrine or practice of the Church, or perhaps by some painful experience in one's own life that could not for the moment be satisfactorily explained. It left us in darkness; our faith grew weaker; and God seemed far away.

SPECIAL CAUSES OF DOUBT TO-DAY.

There are perhaps special reasons why difficulties

of faith should be common at this time. The age in which we live has often been called an age of doubt and scepticism. Whether there is more scepticism to-day than at other periods in the world's history, it would be hard to say, but it certainly is true that scepticism is a prominent element in the intellectual atmosphere at the beginning of the twentieth century. We may trace a good deal of it to certain conditions which are peculiar to this age. The whole modern theory of evolution, for example, which came in with Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1860, has greatly changed our conception of the external world, and has naturally brought in its train some difficulties to the Christian believer. Then again the modern critical study of the Bible has led to results that have changed many of our opinions about the Bible, and has unfortunately led many to suppose that the foundations of their religion have been proven insecure. As a matter of fact, the fair critical study of the Bible can never unsettle the foundations of the Christian religion. Another cause of much modern unsettlement is to be found in the increase of materialism and commercialism, due partly to the great inventions and discoveries in the world of matter that have been made in recent years, and partly to the opening up and development of vast material resources in America and other new countries.

TWO KINDS OF DOUBT.

The sceptics of to-day may be divided into two

very distinct classes. In one class are those who glory in their scepticism, and whose attitude toward Christianity is one of scorn and derision. They never help in any of the Christian work that is being done in their community, and rejoice to detect any sign of its weakening or failure. They are never to be seen in a church, except at a funeral, and then they go not to honor God, but to pay their society-demanded respects to the memory of one of His creatures. The other class is quite different. It comprises those who really wish to believe, and are saddened by the doubts which prevent their believing. They frequently go to church, and do much to assist Christian work by taking a friendly interest therein and giving it their financial support.

THE CLASS DEALT WITH HERE.

In this series of papers, I am dealing only with the latter class—with those who wish to believe, but are held back by intellectual difficulties, as well as those who do believe but are tempted because of their difficulties to give up their faith. I never could hope to be of any help to those who glory in their unbelief, nor to convince those who do not want to be convinced. The desire to believe is always a requisite for Christian faith. It is impossible to make a man believe anything that would affect his way of living when he does not wish to believe it. If he finally does believe you may be sure his desires have changed and that he is longing to believe. There is a saying that "a woman convinced against her will, is of the same opinion still."

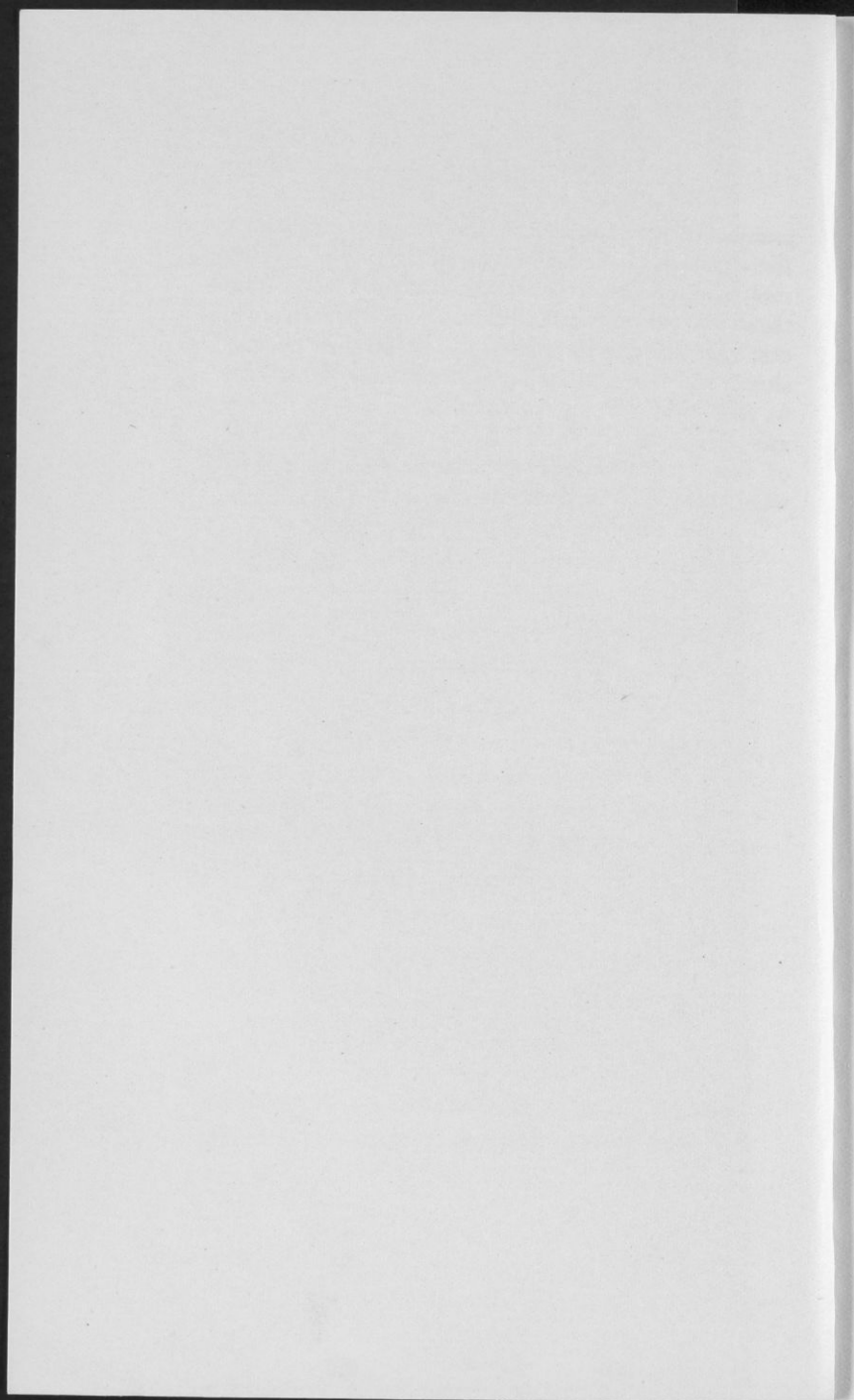
But surely women have no monopoly of that characteristic. It may be laid down as a postulate of Christian apologetic that only those who make the initial act of the will and really wish to believe can come ultimately to the fulness of Christian faith.

DO WE WANT LIGHT?

The preliminary question that must be answered before we can come to the consideration of any of the difficulties of belief is, Do we want light? Are we ready to try to live up to that light when we have it? The story is told of one of our Bishops, who has lately passed to his rest, that he was once asked by a business man, who was a thorough man of the world and an unbeliever, whether he really believed that Jesus Christ lived, and died on the Cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. The Bishop assured the man that he did most certainly believe it. The business man replied that he had often wished he could believe it all. The Bishop then made an astonishing request. He asked the man if he would say, every day for two months, the following prayer: "Oh, possibility of Jesus Christ, give me light." The man agreed to do so. A few weeks later they met, and the Bishop asked if he had kept his promise. The man replied: "I said the prayer every day for about a week, and then I found I did not want light, so I stopped."

St. John wrote these words in his Gospel: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that

practiseth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." If we really want light, then no matter how black and thick may be the cloud of doubt that enshrouds us, our eyes will soon be made glad by the glow of sunshine, and the cloud will roll away, leaving us face to face with the Light of the world, in His glory and His beauty. There cannot long be difficulties of faith for those who are seeking God with their whole heart. "They who seek shall find."



CHAPTER I.

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

THOUGH prayer is one of the simplest and most universal of religious practices, there are many people who find difficulties in believing in it, and many even who claim the name of Christian sometimes doubt whether God really hears and answers the prayers of men. It is not surprising, therefore, that serious objections have been urged against prayer. They have been urged from the standpoint of science, of theology, and of practical experience. I will try to meet, in this paper, the chief objection under each of these three heads.

THE REAL REASON FOR PRAYER.

Before taking up these objections, let me say that there are many things about prayer, as about everything else in the Christian religion, that we do not fully understand, difficulties that often baffle our intellects. Probably

if we were inventing a religion of our own it would never occur to us to make prayer a necessary part of it. The religion of Christ, however, was not invented by men. We believe in prayer, not because men held a convention and discussed the matter and came to the conclusion that prayer was a reasonable practice. We believe in prayer because God has told us to pray. The teachings of Christ are full of commands and exhortations to pray. We can read scarcely a page of the Gospels without being bidden to pray, either by the words or the example of our Lord. He, the Son of God, found it necessary to spend whole nights in prayer. We see Him on His knees at midnight on the dark, lonely mountain. He has thus left us an example that we should walk in His steps. This is the only defense of prayer necessary for any of His faithful followers to-day. Christ, who was the Truth, told us to pray. We may not understand why. It is our duty and our pleasure to obey.

And yet if our Lord has bidden us to pray, it must be a reasonable practice, and one which can be defended intellectually against all objections. Let us see then what may be said in

reply to the three chief objections that are urged against prayer to-day.

INTERFERENCE WITH LAW.

The objection is sometimes made from the point of view of science that prayer is unreasonable, because the universe is governed by fixed laws, and we have no right to suppose that those laws will be interfered with in answer to our prayers. Now of course it is true, to state it a little more accurately, that the natural processes of the universe do work in certain regular ways, to which we have given the name of laws. But we must not make the mistake of leaving man out of our calculation. The rainfall is according to certain laws, and yet men sometimes make it rain by exploding dynamite. The water in our great rivers flows according to certain laws, and yet it is more productive now than it was in the days of the Indians, because men have brought it under such control that it runs their factories. The activity of man is a very important factor in the physical changes that take place in this part of the universe. It is by fixed laws that the water-power of a river is converted into the motive power for machinery; but that does not mean that man has noth-

ing to do with the manufacture of paper or furniture. His interference with the natural operations of the river is the real cause of the manufacture of paper and furniture. Now prayer is only one of the many ways by which man may interfere with the ordinary operations of God's world. It is one way of corresponding with God's purpose. Prayer, according to God's promises, sets His activity in motion. It is just as reasonable to suppose that God intends to give us whole classes of good things for soul and body, but will not give them to us unless we pray for them, as it is to suppose that whole classes of good things are stored up for us in nature, but will not be given to us unless we use our wits and our hands to secure them.¹

WHY PRAY IF GOD IS ALL-WISE?

Another objection to prayer, and this time from the point of view of theology, is that if God is just, all-wise, and a loving Father, He would do justly by us and give us what is best for us and what we deserve without our praying for these things. Yes, "our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things" before we ask Him, and yet He wants us to

¹ See Dr. Gore, *Prayer and the Lord's Prayer*.

pray for them nevertheless. This is because the real purpose of prayer is not to change God's will, but to conform our wills to His, to educate us into right relations with God, and to train us for an eternity with Him. Through the school of prayer we gradually learn to say "Thy will be done," and to pray for what we ought. We learn through a lifetime's experience of prayer to desire the right things. If you wished to educate your child in music, you might make him learn by rote a list of the masterpieces by the great composers, and then whenever he heard anything played he would know whether or not it was classical. Would it not be wiser to make your child take music lessons and learn through long and hard experience to love what is true and beautiful and enduring in music? So through the discipline of prayer, God teaches us to seek first the things of His Kingdom and to love what He loves.

THE PROBLEM OF UNANSWERED PRAYER.

The objection from practical experience runs thus: "As a matter of fact, many prayers are made that are never granted." Let us thank God that it is so. If God granted all that

is being prayed for at this moment, the world would be turned "topsy-turvy" and His Kingdom would never come. Did you ever stop to think why a wise father refuses to grant his little boy's touching request for his razor, or why a loving mother, when her child has typhoid fever, denies the child some simple food it is crying for? It is for the same reason that God in His wisdom and love does not give us everything we ask for but only what is best for us. The condition of all true prayer is, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

CHAPTER II.

THE NECESSITY OF WORSHIP.

THE Christian Church has always taught that it is our duty to go to church and worship God at least on every Sunday and Holy Day of obligation. It is a breach of our duty towards God and therefore a sin, if on these days we do not go to church at least once, provided we are in health, and no more important duty prevents us.

Many have experienced a difficulty on this point. Why should Almighty God want our praise and worship? Why cannot He get on just as well without them? What difference can it make to Him, the eternal and infinite God, whether one insignificant human being goes to church or not? Do we not make our God into a puny man, a man full of vanity and love of approbation, when we assume that He craves our adoration? These are fair questions

and questions of great practical importance. For, if God does not want our worship, we ought to sell our churches or at least convert them into art galleries or schools, and then divert to some other more useful channel the vast sums of money we now spend in maintaining a beautiful and reverent worship.

GOD WANTS OUR WORSHIP.

The Christian may boldly make the assertion that a blow is struck at the sovereignty of God by every child of man who refuses or neglects to worship Him. God brought every one of us into being and He made us for Himself—to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him forever. Therefore He wants each one of us to grow in the knowledge of Him, to show our love for Him, and to become more ardent in His service, by engaging in frequent and regular acts of worship. It is no more vanity and love of approbation for God to desire our adoration than it is for a human father to desire some recognition and respect and gratitude from his children. God has made man in His own image and likeness, and therefore we must believe that the human relations of children toward their parents are but reflections of the

ideal relations we should strive to maintain toward our heavenly Father.

In the older Jewish dispensation, God gave careful and minute directions as to the temple, the altar, the sacrifices, the incense, the priestly vestments, and all other details connected with divine worship. In the Christian dispensation God took the Apostle John to the mount of spiritual vision, whence he might see the ideal Christian worship as carried on in the courts of heaven. This he has wonderfully and graphically described for us in his Apocalypse, the Book of the Revelation. Had worship been of no consequence in God's sight, would He have given so much space to it in the inspired writings of the Bible?

WE NEED TO WORSHIP.

Of course God is sufficient unto Himself, and could get on easily enough without our worship. It is probable that the reason why He has commanded us to worship is not so much because He needs our worship as because we need the worship of the true God in our own lives. Without the regular, habitual practice of public worship we should become thoroughly godless, profane, selfish, and soon

grossly immoral. To come face to face, at the beginning of every week, with our divine Creator and Ruler keeps **God** in our lives, makes us continually conscious of our moral obligations to Him and to our fellow-men, and reminds us that in this life we are on trial, preparing for an eternity of weal or woe, and must one day stand before the Judge of all the earth and give an account of ourselves. In the long run, the man who is a sincere and faithful worshipper of God, and the man who persistently neglects to go to church, will develop characters of a very different kind. This then appears to be the chief reason why God has commanded us to worship Him, because He knows it will have an uplifting and purifying effect in our lives. There is an ineradicable instinct in human nature to worship something. If men do not worship God, they are generally found bowing down before the almighty dollar, or the great god Mammon, or the deceits of the flesh, or Satan himself.

THE POSITIVE COMMAND OF CHRIST.

But someone might ask, When did Christ definitely and explicitly command us to take part in any act of worship? The answer is

simple. Not only did He command us but He instituted the very service, the act of worship itself. In the night in which He was betrayed, He took bread and wine and established the Christian sacrifice, the highest act of Christian worship. He gave at the same time the universal command, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Call it what you like, the Lord's Supper, the Holy Eucharist, or the Mass—it is our Lord's service and the one obligation of worship which is laid upon all Christian people by divine command. The Church has from apostolic times celebrated the Eucharist every Sunday, so that all the faithful on every Lord's Day might carry out this simple and touching request of their dying Lord. Ever since then the sincere followers of Christ have never grown tired of obeying His command. They have joined in the Church's Eucharistic worship, not as a burden and an obligation, but as a privilege and a joy.

CHAPTER III.

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT.

A SPECIOUS attack is to-day being directed against Christianity along the line of heredity and environment. It is said that what we are is entirely determined by our ancestors and surroundings. Therefore we cannot be held responsible for what we think or say or do, for that was all mathematically determined before we were born, and was as inevitable as the speed and orbit of a planet. This attack has thus been tersely stated by one of the most popular of the modern opponents of Christianity, Mr. Robert Blatchford:

“Man is what heredity and environment make him. Heredity gives him his nature. That comes from his ancestors. Environment modifies his nature; environment consists of the operation of forces external to his nature. No man can select his ancestors; no man can

select his environment. His ancestors make his nature; other men and circumstances modify his nature."

CONSEQUENCES.

If this position is true, then man is not responsible for his sins. Therefore the murderer ought not to be punished but only pitied. We should, however, lock him up or, if necessary to protect our life and property, hang him, just as we would lock up or shoot a mad dog that was chasing our children, or try to destroy an insect that was stripping the foliage from our elm-trees. Furthermore the advocates of this view of human nature tell us that the Christian method of trying to reform the sinner is all wrong. We should, according to them, simply put him in prison, and then do our best to correct the environment that has produced him, so that no more of his kind may be produced.

I have tried to state fairly the argument advanced by our opponents. I will now endeavor to set forth what is to be said on the Christian side in reply to this attack.

INFLUENCE OF HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT.

I am glad to be able to begin by admitting a great deal of our opponents' argument. It is

true that heredity and environment do contribute much to the making of us all. A child born of gypsy parents will have a strong tendency to roam about and to steal whenever he gets a chance. A child brought up in a greasy hovel, amid filth and rags and rum, has a battle to fight that is quite different from that of the child brought up in a home of luxury and refinement. Heredity and environment are important factors in our development, but they are by no means determining factors. Children born of the most diligent and steadfast parents have sometimes grown up to be roaming vagabonds. Drunkenness is surely not confined to the slums or the homes of the poor. Plain, downright theft has been known to exist among the most refined and sensitive millionaires. With wearying frequency our daily newspapers become filthy with the scandalous lusts of some eminent capitalist and philanthropist, whose environment seems not devoid of earthly comforts.

EACH INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBLE.

We have now come to the heart of the whole matter. What we are and what we shall become depends upon our own wills, aided, if we

seek it, by the grace of God. An Englishman, John Bradford, once saw a murderer being led to the gallows, and exclaimed, "There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford." It is an indisputable axiom of human experience that it is within the power of every man, whatever may be the bundle of possible tendencies he has inherited, to determine which of these tendencies are to be woven into the permanent texture of his makeup. We all have known brothers or sisters, or even twins, who have inherited the same nature from their parents and ancestors (it is important to remember that we have thousands of ancestors) and then have developed, by their own initiative, entirely opposite characters. While we are growing up, it is ours to decide whether we will choose the sottishness of a grandfather or the sobriety of a father, the gentleness and kindness of a great-grandmother, or the maliciousness of a grandmother.

THE STRUGGLE WITH ENVIRONMENT.

In a similar way it is within the power of everyone to determine whether he will find in his environment "stepping-stones to higher things" or be vanquished by his environment.

It is the same environment, the water, that makes it possible for the drowning man to drown and the swimmer to swim. It is the same kind of a farm-house that produces an Abraham Lincoln and the empty-headed loafer of the country store. What someone has well called the "eternal heroism of the slums" has given us many a saint and many noble leaders of men; while it has often happened that the palaces of wealth or the simple, well-ordered homes of the middle class have sent forth men and women who have been a disgrace to society.

What we are and what we shall become depends not upon our heredity and environment, but upon our own wills, upon the way we make use of our opportunities, the way we grapple with our own natural tendencies, the way we utilize our surroundings—above all, upon how much or how little we call to our aid the all-powerful grace of God.²

²See Fr. Waggett, S.S.J.E., on "Science and Conduct," published as *Pusey House Occasional Papers*, No. 4.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

THE Fatherhood of God is one of the basic principles of the Christian religion. Many sceptics tell us that this is an unreasonable belief. They point to all the suffering and pain and death in the world, the wars, the famines, the pestilences, and great catastrophes such as floods and earthquakes, and ask us how in the face of all that we can still believe that God is a loving Father, who cares for and watches over all His children. How then can we reconcile the suffering in the world with the love of God?

THE USES OF PAIN.

A good deal of the pain in the world is directly useful as a danger-signal. The red-hot stove burns the child's hand and warns him to keep away from it. A sharp pain in the lungs warns you that you may have pneumonia and had better send for the doctor. Another use of

pain and suffering is that they bring many people to their senses, and prompt them to give up a life of sin. The holiness of God and the horror of sin and the issues of eternity often take on new aspects to a man when he is lying flat on his back in the hospital. Many a soul owes its conversion to a long and painful illness. Furthermore, do we not know of many noble characters that have been developed by sorrow and loss, by disappointment of cherished plans, or by a life of unending pain? If pain and suffering were eliminated from life, many of the fairest flowers in the garden of human nature would never bloom at all. It develops sympathy. It binds men together. It is the highest expression of love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

IS SUFFERING AN EVIL?

But why do we consider suffering an evil? Is it not because we don't like it? But that is no criterion. Many things we dislike are very good for us, indeed. Perhaps your boy does not like to go to school; he would rather spend the day in play. You make him go to school because you know it is good for him. None of

us liked to go to the dentist; but after he has gotten through torturing us we realize that it was good for us to go. Pleasure makes us happy and brings on smiles and laughter; pain makes us sad and brings on tears and crying. But we have no right to say that one is a good and the other an evil. They are simply different sensations. The fact that we prefer one to the other does not make it better than the other. Sometimes it is better for us to laugh and sometimes it is better for us to weep.

IS DEATH AN EVIL?

Most people pretend to be horrified when they hear of some great loss of life, as in the sinking of a ship, the eruption of a volcano, or the slaughter of a battle. The question is asked, how can a loving God allow so many people to be slain at once? If God suddenly transported a million people from Europe to America, He would not be accused of injustice and cruelty. Why should He when He suddenly transports a multitude from this world to the spiritual world beyond? But the grief of their families and friends left behind? That is simply the question of suffering which I have just been considering. The fact of the matter

is that we must die sooner or later, anyhow. A few years, out of the eternity we are to live, will make no great difference. If our Heavenly Father sees fit to take us all home at once, instead of allowing us to struggle on, some twenty, some thirty, some forty years longer, we ought not to complain. We could call death an evil only if we were sure that there were unhappiness in store for us on the other side of death; or, granted that there is unhappiness, if God had never made it possible for us to escape that unhappiness.

As for the universal carnage that has been going on in the animal world since the appearance of life on this planet, no charge of cruelty can be brought against Almighty God by those of us who eat flesh meat at our meals. If it is wrong to kill animals, then we should all become vegetarians. But what if vegetarians attack us with the charge of the cruelty of God? To convince vegetarians of anything, I give up as a hopeless task.

THE CROSS IS THE KEY TO THE MYSTERY.

Nevertheless we may say that the suffering and pain of the world would prove a great obstacle to belief in the goodness and love of God,

if God had forever remained aloof from the human race. But He has come into our midst. He was made man, when, nineteen centuries ago, He was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary. Jesus Christ has entered fully into the painful experience of our race. He has shared our sorrows, our sufferings, our pain, our disappointment. He, too, has gone through the valley of the shadow of death. When we gaze at the cross and realize that He who hangs there is our God, we learn that there is a meaning in suffering and pain, and that they are not the evils we supposed them to be. They are the greatest of blessings. They are purifying and remedial spiritual agencies. They are the strength of virtues. They are offerings dear to God. They are expressions, when born in conformity with His Will, of love. United to His sufferings they invoke blessings on the Church. New life ever requires a preceding death, till death itself swallowed up in victory shall die.

CHAPTER V.

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SIN.

IT HAS always been the teaching of Christianity that we are responsible for our sins, and therefore are to be blamed for them. The whole Christian doctrine of the punishment of sin here and hereafter is based upon this principle.

Some of the men who are attacking our religion to-day have tried to prove that this teaching is false. God, they say, not man, is responsible for man's sins. They claim to have arrived at this conclusion by the following syllogism: God made the human race. One is always responsible for what one makes. Therefore God is responsible for the sins of the human race. This seems at first sight a plausible argument, and has no doubt perplexed not a few Christian believers.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT ONE MAKES.

Now let us look into this argument a little more closely. Is one always responsible for what one makes? Surely it depends entirely upon what the thing is that you make. If you so build an electric car that soon after the passengers are killed by an electric shock, you are responsible for their death. If you build a bridge and a train load of people are dashed to death by the bridge giving way, you are responsible. But it is very different if the thing made is a human being. Surely no one would hold that a man could be put in prison because his son had committed forgery. And yet the father brought the son into existence. Why is he not responsible for the sins of his son? Because the son, like every other human being, has free will. For the same reason God is not responsible for the sins of men. He created them with free will and they can therefore choose whether they will sin or refrain from sinning.

THE NATURE OF FREE WILL.

Man is responsible for his own acts. This follows necessarily from God's gift of free will or the power to choose. Some disbelievers in

Christianity, however, say that even then "the blame must be God's, for He gave man a power of choice that would choose evil." The word "would" misrepresents the whole issue. If God gave us a power of choice that would *necessarily* choose evil, He would be responsible for our sins. But that is not the kind of a choice He has given us, as we all know very well. A young man whose companions are tempting him to enter into a vile place, may say "Yes," or he may say "No." God has given us a power of choice that might choose evil or that might choose good. That is the meaning of free will. A power of choice that must necessarily choose evil would not be free will any more than a stream flowing down hill would be the same as a man walking up hill. In endowing man with free will, therefore, God is not responsible for the sins of men, but only for the possibility of their sinning.

WHY DID GOD MAKE MAN ABLE TO SIN?

This lays us open to another charge. It is sometimes asked, If God was almighty and fore-knew the danger of creating a being that should have the power to sin, why did He not make man so that he would be incapable of sinning?

The answer to this is simple. Because God did not care to make that kind of a man. God wanted children who would love Him and serve Him of their own free will and not because they were slaves or machines. I fancy no mother would take much joy in children who had always been imprisoned in a cage, and who, at one signal, would say, parrot-fashion, "I love you, mother, I love you, mother," and at another signal would kiss her and throw their arms about her neck, somewhat after the manner of a trained dog sitting up on his haunches and giving you his paw.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.

God might have evolved a race incapable of sinning, but there would have been no place in such a creation for the practice of virtue. For there would be no virtue in doing right unless one had the power of doing wrong if one chose. For example, we do not attribute virtue to clocks, no matter how correctly they keep time. Without the capacity to sin, man would be little different from a clock. If God had evolved such a race, without the capacity to sin, there would have been no such thing as heroism, nor self-sacrifice, nor the beauty of holiness. Man

would forever have remained an animal, and history would have moved forward to no goal.

WHERE THE RESPONSIBILITY LIES.

Seeing the consequences of failure are so great as Christianity represents, would it not have been better for God not to have created at all? The answer is that God who alone can see and measure the whole final result, saw that more good would be the result, though many might be lost, than if He did not create. He was, therefore, right in creating. If He is responsible, as it is admitted He is, for creating beings capable of losing their possible end, He has met it by becoming a propitiation for us by the shedding of His own Blood on Calvary and by providing a way of escape from the consequences of sin; a way so simple, so easy, so loving, that if a man does not accept it when made known to him, the fault is his own.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE.

SO FAR we have been dealing with what might be called speculative difficulties in religious belief. We come now to certain Biblical difficulties. As most of them have their root in certain erroneous ideas about inspiration, it will be necessary to take up that subject first, and get clear in our minds what we mean by the inspiration of the Bible.

MISTAKES ABOUT INSPIRATION.

Certain mistaken notions on the nature of inspiration were very common among Christians in the past, though they never received expression in the creeds or other authoritative formularies of the Church. Such notions are still very widespread among the masses of uneducated and illiterate Christians. Those who take any pains to inform themselves about religion are rapidly coming to a clearer view of

the meaning of inspiration. The Church has never spoken in favor of any view of inspiration, but has simply declared that the writers of the Bible were inspired by God, and that therefore the Bible is the Word of God.

According to the mistaken notions to which I have referred, God was supposed to have inspired the writers of the Bible in some mechanical way, so that every word, even every mark of punctuation, was directed by God and therefore the Bible could contain no error in science or geography or history. Naturally this view of inspiration was certain to create many difficulties. One does not have to study the Bible very thoroughly to discover that the writers do sometimes make errors in their historical facts, or make conflicting statements, or are far behind the children of our public schools in their knowledge of natural science. Such discoveries would soon upset anyone who held the old view of verbal inspiration.

A MORE REASONABLE VIEW.

A more reasonable and satisfactory explanation of the nature of inspiration is that which was held by many of the ancient fathers of the Church, and is taught by most of the enlight-

ened Christian scholars of our own day. According to this view, God inspired certain men to write various kinds of literature for a spiritual purpose—some to convey His revelation of truth to the world, some to narrate the history of His dealings with men, some to write poetry and drama and fiction that would stimulate and fill men's souls with spiritual power, and some to teach the nation righteousness. He employed for this great purpose men who were thoroughly human, who were subject to the limitations of their time and nation. Their knowledge of geology and geography and astronomy and ethnology would be simply the knowledge current in their own day, and not the knowledge of modern science. They would have to compose their history from documents and traditions they found ready to hand. They were inspired for a spiritual purpose, not to teach scientific truth, nor to write infallible history, though their history will stand the test of investigation as well as any other histories of their time. The Sign of their inspiration is to be sought for in the unity of purpose and spiritual teaching that binds the whole Bible together and shows it to be the work of *one* mind though

composed by many men writing in different centuries. The underlying typical meaning which runs through it all in an orderly and connected manner, describing Christ and His Church, shows the writers to have been unconsciously influenced by a mind *other than their own*. The unfailing vitality and soul stirring influence of the Bible lifting men's hearts to God, show us *God to be that Mind*.

OTHER MEN INSPIRED.

There can be no doubt that God has often inspired other men than the Biblical writers and in all ages of the world's history. The latter were aided in the expression of such truths as they had been enlightened to perceive. The process of inspiration or aid may be the same in both cases, but the character different.

In respect of the latter, the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures is unique. Believing as we reasonably may in the aid God gives men in other writings, we may easily believe in the pre-eminent inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. For it is certified to us, as we have seen, by its composition and character, revealing a hidden author, and by the authority of the Church

their guardian, declaring that the Books she has collected into the Bible are inspired to reveal the mind of God, and that the hidden Author is the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER VII.

THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION.

THE theory of evolution is an attempt to explain how the world has arrived at its present stage of development. It is as yet only a theory, and has not been completely proved; but it has obtained very wide acceptance among scientists. According to this theory, the world was not created suddenly, and as it is to-day, but has been slowly evolved through long stages of development. Our solar system was once in a nebulous condition, such as astronomers now discern in the universe. It was without regular form. Along with its primal motion came light, for, as we know, light is motion. The cosmic gas broke up through its motion into rings, and by the law of gravitation, the rings breaking up, formed into spherical planets. Gradually the earth was formed. In some way, it may be by the breaking up of the

ring about it, the moon was formed. Through long ages a crust was gradually formed on the earth's surface. By the convulsions occasioned by its shrinking, mountains were formed. The waters were gathered into their place. The dry land appears. By action of fire and water the development continues. The earliest lower forms of vegetation appear, to furnish food for the subsequent or concurrent life of fish and reptile. With the change of atmosphere the sun appears. Then comes a development of the animal life from the lowest forms, after the manner of the jelly fish, and then, after a long period, out of the lowest kind were gradually evolved vertebrate animals and the four-legged ones, and finally man appeared. He had been developed by the struggle for existence and other impelling causes, out of the dust of the earth.

While evolution does not show us the origin of things, it reveals to us a progressive action in nature to a climax. It is like the unfolding of the plot of a great drama. It were as reasonable to suppose that one of Shakespeare's plays could be made by the shaking together of a million of letters of the alphabet, as to believe this

ordered drama of the universe could be developed up to man without an underlying intellectual energy.

GOD THE CREATOR.

The theory of evolution is not at all in conflict with the belief that God is the Creator of the universe. The Christian faith does not say how God created the universe, but merely that He did create it. We are left to find out for ourselves what was God's method of creation. We may well believe that He used the method of evolution. Indeed the method of evolution would be more to the glory and credit of God than the method of immediate and special creation. A man would be a maker of flour whether he ground it out in the old way, between two millstones, or constructed a modern flour mill and then put wheat in at one end and took bags of flour out at the other. Only we should consider it much more to his credit if he used the improved process. So it gives us a higher notion of God and makes Him more of a present force in His world, if we think of Him as creating the world through the process of evolution than if we think of Him as building it as a carpenter builds a house.

THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION.

A much more serious difficulty is the supposed conflict between the theory of evolution and the account of creation given in the first and second chapters of the book of Genesis. This account tells us that God created the heavens and the earth and all that therein is in six days. It gives us a definite order of creation. It tells us God made man out of the dust of the earth. The solution of this difficulty is to be found in a true view of inspiration. The writer of the Genesis account of creation was not inspired to teach science, but to teach religion. He simply took the story of creation which was current in his own day, and revised it so that it would teach true views of religion. The traditional accounts of creation which were then current, as we learn from the old Babylonian and other Semitic accounts that have come down to us, were polytheistic, that is, they attributed the creation of the world as it was to thousands of different gods. They were in other respects very much the same as the Genesis story of creation in our Bibles. The Biblical writer probably compared these traditional accounts and then wrote his own version, in

which his chief concern was to bring out the great spiritual and religious truths that the one true God was the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and that He created man as the crown of creation after His own image and likeness, and endowed him with an immortal soul. In his knowledge of geology and zoology and physiology, he was a writer of his own time. If he had been inspired to teach true views of science, he would have begun with a treatise on protoplasm, and his writings would have been consigned to the dust heap as the ravings of an insane mind. His writings have endured because he was inspired by the Spirit of God to teach the men of his own time and the men of all times the foundation truths of revealed religion.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FALL OF MAN.

CHRISTIAN believers have sometimes been troubled by objections that have been urged against Christianity on the subject of the Fall. These objections may be summed up in two. One is that the story of the Fall, in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis, is unhistorical; and the other is that the human race has not really fallen at all, but has gradually progressed from a very low stage to a higher stage of development. Let us deal with these two objections separately.

THE STORY OF THE FALL.

The truth of Christianity does not in any way depend upon the story of the Fall being an account of real facts. It does not make the slightest difference in our religion whether the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Life, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, are historical

realities or only allegorical pictures. The writer was not inspired by God for the purpose of writing history, but to teach certain spiritual and religious truths. The story of the Fall is valuable for us and will remain valuable for all time, because it teaches the great truths that God created man righteous and not sinful, that he became sinful through his own free will by disobeying God's commands and yielding to the temptations of Satan, and that the human race, at the very beginning, fell from the original righteousness in which it was created, and therefore parents always hand on to their children a fallen nature—that is, a nature which has in it a tendency to sin. These are the essential truths in the narrative of the Fall, and the Church stands ready to vouch for their truth till the end of time. It does not take away from their truth if the story is found to be allegorical, any more than it takes away from the truth of the spiritual principles set forth in the parable of the prodigal son when we say it may not be historically true, but only a parable.

HAS THE HUMAN RACE FALLEN AT ALL?

But is the theory of the Fall of man really true? Has the human race as a whole fallen

below the high standard of its first estate, fallen away from the high ideal God has always held before His children, or did God create man in a very low and imperfect condition, in the hope that after thousands of years he might improve and finally arrive at perfection? This question cannot be answered by historical research, because there are no records which go back to the infancy of the race. It can be answered only by an appeal to religion and by an appeal to common sense.

THE APPEAL TO RELIGION.

The appeal to religion forces us to admit that the theory of the Fall of man is true. The religions of all primitive peoples teach that the earliest periods were the most perfect, that far back in the childhood of the race was the realization of perfect innocence and bliss. The traditions of Greece and Rome told of a golden age, far back in the past. The ancient poets of Persia, India, and China all sing of a sacred spot, provided with trees and watered by streams, which existed far back at the beginning of human history. This universal tradition might not be conclusive by itself. But it means a great deal when we consider that it is cham-

pioned both by Judaism and the Christian Church.

THE APPEAL TO COMMON SENSE.³

The appeal to common sense and common experience leads us to the same conclusion. We all know what is meant by the phrase, "very few men are really manly." But we should be talking nonsense if we said, "very few horses are really horsey." Now why is this? Because we have no notion of a perfect horse, below which all horses have fallen; but we have a notion of a perfect man, and from this high level man has fallen. If you found a man beating his wife, you might go to him and slap him on the back and say, "be a man." But if you found a dog chewing your cat to pieces, you would hardly slap the dog on his back and say, "be a dog." Every dog is a dog, and cannot, if he tries, become more of a dog; but not every man is the man he might be. Only through Christ and the power of His religion can he rise from his fallen state and become the man God expects him to be. The inner con-

³ For the argument here, see "Why I Believe in Christianity," by Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in the collection of papers called *Religious Doubts of Democracy*, edited by Mr. George How.

sciousness of every one of us tells him that he was meant for better things, that he has fallen away from a high ideal, and that nothing short of perfection is his goal. And yet nowhere do we find human nature fully developed without some tendency to sin, except in the Divine Son of Mary. The only satisfactory explanation of these facts is the Christian doctrine of the Fall.

CHAPTER IX.

MIRACLES.

ONE does not have to read far in the Bible before one comes across some miraculous event. By a miraculous event, I mean an event which is out of the ordinary course of nature or history, and which is attributed by the Biblical writer to the direct intervention of God. An event of this kind ought not to cause any difficulty to one who really believes in God as an all-powerful and infinite Being. The real difficulty to the man of faith is that there are so few miracles, not that there are so many. But unfortunately there are many whose faith in God is very weak. They are the ones who find it difficult to believe in miracles. They are the ones who have attacked the miracles in the Bible, and worked out what they call philosophic or scientific objections to miracles.

THE OBJECTION TO MIRACLES.

We are told by such people that miracles

cannot happen because the world is governed by laws, and a miracle would be the suspension of those laws, and that could not be because there is no credible instance on record of those laws being suspended. This is a most excellent example of arguing in a circle. It is as if you had a pair of shoes which had been made for you, with his own hands, by a great shoe manufacturer, and when your friends told you that that manufacturer never made a pair of shoes with his own hands, and you produced your shoes as evidence to the contrary, they simply smiled and said you must be mistaken because he never made a pair of shoes with his own hands. If we say miracles are theoretically possible, those who do not believe in them say, "Yes, but there is no evidence for them." When we take all the records of the human race and say, "Here is your evidence," they say, "But these people were superstitious, they believed in impossible things."

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

A great deal of the difficulty about miracles would vanish if people would only take more pains to define what they mean by miracles before they talk about them. A miracle is simply

an event in which God, for a spiritual purpose, alters the ordinary course of nature. There ought to be nothing strange or preposterous about that.

We have often seen a fly trying in vain to get through the window-pane into the bright sunlight outside. Again and again it beats against the pane in a wild effort to escape. It cannot get out because it is a law of nature that a fly cannot go through glass. But suppose you take pity on the fly and open the window and take the fly in your fingers and set it free. What have you done? You have altered the ordinary course of nature. If the fly could think, it would say you had performed a miracle. If a man can alter the ordinary course of nature for the sake of an insect, is it unreasonable to believe that God has often altered the ordinary course of nature for the sake of the human race?

MAINLY A QUESTION OF EVIDENCE.

The real question about the miracles of the Bible is not whether they could have happened, but whether they did happen. No miracle is too wonderful to be true to one who really believes in God. Take for example, the well-

worn illustration of Jonah and the whale. There is no difficulty in believing such a miracle. God could easily enough prepare a sea monster that could swallow the Chicago Auditorium. The question is simply one of evidence. Is the Book of Jonah meant to be a history, or an imaginative tale? It makes no difference to the truth of Christianity which of these two theories of the book is true. A scholarly study of the Bible does undoubtedly teach us that some of the events which look like miracles were not really recorded as actual history at all. We must examine the evidence for miracles exactly as we would the evidence for any other historical facts. An examination of the evidence for the miracles in the Bible will assure us that all of the miracles that are vitally connected with the truth of the Christian religion are as credible as any other facts of history.

One of the greatest of the Christian miracles comes constantly into the daily life of all of us. It is brought to our attention every time we write a letter or transact any business where it is necessary to write down the date. That miracle is that the whole civilized world bases

its date upon the day of the birth of a Syrian Carpenter who died a criminal's death at the early age of thirty-three.

CHAPTER X.

THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

WE NOW come to the very core of Christianity. I am sure that in the heart of America we do not need to enter seriously into the question whether there is any such historical character as Jesus of Nazareth. Our everyday life, our speech, our morality, our literature, our whole civilization, in fact, are so permeated by His teaching and influence that one would hardly be treated seriously who maintained that Jesus Christ was only a myth, an ideal character constructed from some still more ancient legends and traditions. Yet there are some difficulties connected with this foundation fact of Christianity which it may be well to consider. Perhaps we can deal with them better if we first have before us a clear statement of the Christian faith on the subject of the Incarnation.

THE INCARNATION.

In her teaching about Jesus Christ, the Church has always held that He was the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father; that He took man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of her substance, without a human father; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided. In other words, Jesus Christ is truly God and perfectly man, and in Him is only one Person, but two distinct natures, the human and divine.

OTHER INCARNATIONS.*

IT is a difficulty to some people that there are other incarnations believed in by other religions—that there are many myths parallel to the Christian story. No doubt there are, but does that prove that Christ is not the Incarnate Son of God? It ought, on the contrary, to be one of the strongest evidences for the truth of Christianity. For it shows that all over the world there has been a desire to believe

* See Mr. G. K. Chesterton's paper on "Christianity and Rationalism," in *Religious Doubts of Democracy*.

that God has come to be with us, to take our own nature upon Him and share our trials and sorrows, set us an example of a perfect life, and reveal to us the truth that we cannot find out for ourselves. It means simply that men are everywhere reaching out in the darkness for Christ. To say that these stories of Pagan incarnations disprove the truth of Christianity would be the same as to assert that because a certain thing has impressed millions of people as likely or necessary, therefore it cannot be true. It would be like arguing that because the story of Helen of Troy causing the Trojan war was mythical, therefore men never did fight for a beautiful woman.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST.

Some people find it difficult to believe the story of the Virgin Birth of our Lord. If you ask them why, they will tell you that for a man to be born of a virgin would be a miracle, and they cannot believe in miracles. But does not the same difficulty confront us in respect of the beginning of our race? How came into being the first man or the first woman? They could not have come from some antecedent pair.

They must have come in some other than the now common way.

A saying of Professor Huxley may here be acceptable to some minds: "The miracles of the Church are child's play to the miracles (he means marvels) I see in nature. Resuscitation from apparent death and virgin procreation are ordinary phenomena to the naturalist." The birth from a virgin was, therefore, to this scientist not an impossibility.

But the fact is that the Virgin Birth of our Lord cannot be objected to on the ground of its being a miracle or an invasion of the ordinary course of nature. The birth of an ordinary man of a virgin would be, but the birth of Jesus Christ was not of that order. For Christ, according to His own statements, was a pre-existing person. He plainly stated that before Abraham was, "I am." He prayed the Father to glorify Him with the glory He had with Him before the world was. He claimed to have come down from heaven. Now there is no known law of nature that requires a preëxisting person to be born into this world with a double parentage. Experience furnishes us with no instance of this kind. The coming of our Lord

by a single parent violates, therefore, no known law of nature. It cannot therefore be classified as a miracle or a violation of nature's laws.

On the other hand, the only way consistent with known laws for a preëxisting person to take our nature and unite it to his personality would be to take that nature by way of a single parentage. For it must be remembered that "nature" and "person" in God and man are distinct and separate things. The doctrine of the Incarnation is that the Son of God united to His Divine Nature our human nature. The human nature is united to the Divine Nature by union to His one Person. So while there are two natures, there is only one Person or "Ego" behind them. Now if Christ had been born as an ordinary man is, there would have been, according to the universal law, a human nature and a human person. Not man's or human nature only would have been born, but a man with a human personality. Now, as it was God's purpose to unite to His divine nature, human nature without a human personality, the only way it could be done was by His being born in other than the common way. If He had been born by virtue of a double parentage,

a miracle would have been required to eliminate the human personality. So while the virgin birth for a preëxisting person to take our nature requires the violation of no known law, the Incarnation, as known by us, if there was a double parentage, would require a miracle.

Concerning the Virgin Birth we have the best evidence that it took place. We have the testimony of the Apostles that Christ rose from the dead and ascended. It is certainly probable that one who had such a supernatural exit from this world would have had a supernatural entrance into it. This supposition is confirmed by the prophecy of Isaiah that a virgin⁵ should conceive and bare a son; and by that of the prophet Jeremiah that the Lord hath created a new thing, "a woman shall compass a man," as something it required God to create, and as a new thing. It is confirmed by our Lord's own testimony to His preëxistence and coming down

⁵ When the Hebrew Bible was translated, two centuries before Christ, into Greek, the Jewish translators rendered this word of Isaiah by "virgin." Two centuries after Christ they changed it to "a young woman." The word is used of Rebecca before her marriage and of Miriam, the maiden sister of Moses, and in the four other places in which it is found in the Old Testament, "there is no reasonable ground," says Liddon, "for thinking that any but unmarried women are meant."

from heaven; by that of St. Joseph, who said, as recorded in St. Matthew, he was not His father; by that of the Blessed Virgin herself, whose account of the Child's birth is given in St. Luke's Gospel. It was the teaching of St. John and St. Paul. St. John tells us that the Word was made flesh; and St. Paul tells us how, viz., "that He was born of a woman," which is meaningless unless it implies the Virgin Birth. We have also the universal belief coming to us from the earliest days of Christianity that our Lord was born of the Virgin Mary. Such a belief could not have sprung up without any basis in facts. If it had not been true there would have been at least one voice raised in protest.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

That Christ is God is, of course, a very startling belief, but with its truth Christianity stands or falls. The theory has been propounded by Unitarians that Christ was not God, but, an inspired man—a teacher sent from God. Unitarianism is not a very logical or rational system. Its theory is overthrown by the fact that ninety-nine hundredths of Christ's followers have regarded Him as God and given Him

divine honors. We cannot suppose that after God had delivered the world, by means of the Hebrew race, and His severe punishments for it, from the sin of idolatry, He would have sent a Teacher, the result of whose teaching was to lead the world back into the sin of idolatry. For if Christ is not God, most Christians are idolaters. Christianity is then not progress, but retrogression, and its worship of Christ sinful.

Christ then was either God, or a mere man. If He was a mere man like the rest of us, then we do not need to believe what He taught, nor do what He commanded. If He was a mere man, then He is not the One Mediator between God and men. If He was a mere man, then we are driven to the conclusion that He was the most brazen-faced impostor that ever lived. For He claimed over and over again that He was God. He claimed to speak with Divine authority. He said things that the best of men could never say without a blush, such as "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." He prophesied that at the last great day of judgment all the nations would be gathered before Him, and He would judge them and determine their eternal destiny.

Fancy any man to-day making such a claim. If Jesus of Nazareth was not God, He was either a poor, deluded fanatic, or a deceitful impostor. Can we charge Him with being either of these in the face of the universal approval He has received from the modern civilized world? Surely not. The civilized world to-day regards Jesus as a prophet of keen insight and undoubted sanity, and also as the moral ideal of Humanity. Therefore by the testimony of the civilized world He must have understood Himself and He must have been God as He claimed to be.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ATONEMENT.

IT IS the teaching of Christianity that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, by His death upon the Cross, made an atonement for the sins of the whole world, and thus made it possible for God the Father to forgive the sins of all those who truly repent. This teaching has often caused difficulties. There are many who cannot see why it was necessary for God the Son to come on earth as man and die an ignominious death upon the Cross. How could it be just or reasonable for God to forgive the guilty because the innocent has suffered? How could it be just for God to forgive the guilty because a third person begged his pardon? Let us see if we can answer these questions and still hold the Christian doctrine of the Atonement.

A PENALTY FOR SIN.

Why then could not God have forgiven man

for his sins without Himself suffering? Because He is the moral Ruler of the world and therefore cannot overlook sin or treat it as if it were virtue. God must demand that some act of repentance be made, some act of submission, some penalty be paid, some punishment suffered before He can forgive sin. How long would our government stand if it treated the vicious and criminal in the same way as the decent and law-abiding? The government must punish sin and crime. What should we say of parents who never punish their children when they misbehave, but simply received them with open arms and hastened to assure them they were forgiven? Ignorant savages who beat their children with clubs every day, would be less cruel to their children than they. For the same reason, if God forgave sins before a sufficient act of submission and penalty had been paid, He would at once cease to be the moral Ruler of the world.

AN INFINITE PENALTY NECESSARY.

Man alone could never pay the penalty for his sins, because sin is an offense against the infinite God, and therefore deserves an infinite punishment. An infinite penalty must be paid

before it could be forgiven. Man being finite, could never pay an infinite penalty. Only infinite suffering and love could atone for the infinite offense of sin against the Divine Holiness. To meet our great need, God the Son, with wonderful love, came among us and was made man. He took the human race into eternal union with Himself, and became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Thus when He offered Himself upon the Cross a sacrifice for the sins of men, it was the human race which paid the penalty; but it was also God the Son who paid it and gave it its infinite value. The Cross was the crowning effort of humanity to make satisfaction for sin. Because He who died upon the Cross was God as well as man, the effort was successful and efficacious.

NOT INJUSTICE, BUT LOVE.

It is perfectly true that it would be unjust and unreasonable for God to forgive the guilty because one innocent human being had suffered and had begged for our pardon. If your son injured your daughter, it would not be just for you to forgive him because another son was willing to be punished in his stead. But how can there be any injustice when the innocent

One who suffers and begs for our pardon is not a human person but the eternal Son of God? Instead of being injustice it is a marvellous act of love. God Himself comes and suffers for us that we may be forgiven. If Christ were not God then the atoning merits of the Cross would vanish into nothingness, and it would have been immoral and unjust for God to make an innocent man suffer for our sakes. As Christ was God, the Cross stands out as the greatest act of perfect self-sacrifice in all history.

WE MUST BE UNITED WITH CHRIST.

Still our moral sense does tell us that we cannot be benefitted by the Cross of Christ without some effort on our own part. It is not reasonable to believe that a transaction in the dim and distant past can have any vital effect upon us in the twentieth century, unless we can come into some actual connection with it. So the Church has always held. Accordingly it has been the constant teaching of the Church that the Cross of Christ can do nothing for a man unless he is sacramentally united to Christ by Baptism, and preserves that union by faith and obedience, by living a sincere and earnest Christian life. These are the members of the

Body of Christ, and if the Head is saved, the members will be saved with Him. They are the branches of the true Vine, and if the branches abide in the Vine they will have everlasting life. All others are simply outside the Christian covenant. All we can do with them is to commit them to the uncovenanted mercies of God. All we can positively assert in regard to them is that God will deal with them in perfect wisdom and justice and love.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

THE difficulties in regard to the Resurrection are almost all concerned with the question of evidence. It is urged by unbelievers that the fact of the Resurrection is so unusual and impossible that it would require the strongest kind of evidence to make us believe in it, whereas the only evidence we have is in the New Testament, and that is claimed to be insufficient.

EVIDENCE OUTSIDE THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Now it certainly would be strange if such a remarkable fact as the Resurrection of Christ had made no impression on the time in which it took place. If it were simply known to us because certain writers of the first century had recorded it, and it had never produced any striking effects upon the subsequent history of the world, we in the twentieth century would be foolish, indeed, to believe in it. But is that

the case? Most certainly not. For here is a fact that has brought about the most tremendous results. It has revolutionized the morals, the beliefs, the literature, the civilization of the world. The most long-lived, the most powerful, the most miraculous institution in all history—namely, the Christian Church, is the direct effect of this wonderful fact of the Resurrection. No evidence outside of the New Testament? Why, the whole history of Christendom is the evidence. No impression on the age in which it happened? Why, it converted the whole Roman empire, and finally purified even the throne of the Cæsars.

There is scarcely one of us to-day who believes in the Resurrection solely because he read about it in the Gospels or the Epistles of St. Paul or the Acts of the Apostles. We believe in it because we were taught it at our mother's knees, or because as little children we were told about it by the only organization now extant that goes back far enough to tell us what did happen in the first century. The church bells ringing throughout the world on Sunday are a witness that something happened on that day equal in importance to that of Sinai by

which the Sabbath was established. The belief in the Resurrection has been handed down from fathers to children as a continuous tradition for nineteen centuries, and of that the observance of Sunday is a living witness.

THE BELIEF MUST BE ACCOUNTED FOR.

How then did this belief in the Resurrection of Christ arise? That is the real question to be settled. The burden of proof rests entirely with the unbelievers. It is not for us Christians to show why we believe in the fact of the Resurrection. It rests upon unbelievers to account for the continuous and widespread belief in this fact—a belief which has changed the face of the world. How did it gain support in the first place? There must have been some one who began to preach it for the first time. How did he get people to believe in him? People would not believe in such an extraordinary tale without being convinced of its truth. In the days of the first apostolic preaching of the Resurrection, people had ample opportunities to investigate for themselves and establish the truth of their claims. If the dead body was still in the tomb, or had been stolen by the Jews, it was a simple matter for the

enemies of the apostles to refute their claims. If the apostles had stolen the body, then we are confronted with the strange predicament that the founders of the one religion which has made truthfulness a virtue were the basest of liars, and that most of them laid down their lives for what they knew to be a falsehood. They knew that they saw no mere disembodied spirit or ghost, for they handled Christ's Body and saw that it had flesh and bones as a spirit has not. They touched the wounds in His Hands and Feet and Side and identified the risen Body with that which hung on the cross and was laid in the tomb. They received from Him new and important doctrines during forty days, and so the Resurrection was a certified reality. They proclaimed the fact of Christ's Resurrection at once and so it was not an after-thought or mythical growth. The people who had every opportunity to investigate the facts believed in large numbers and a great number of the priests became obedient to the faith. By the Resurrection the apostles were turned from cowards into heroes, and were filled with a faith in Christ that overcame the world.

If a man told us to-day that an expert

swimmer had succeeded in swimming across the Atlantic from New York to Liverpool, and that he had done it in ten days, we should not be likely to believe him unless we saw it with our own eyes. Neither would any considerable number of people in the days of the Apostles believe that Christ had risen from the dead unless they were convinced by what they saw with their own eyes. The rapid, persistent, and triumphant growth of the belief in the Resurrection is a phenomenon that cannot satisfactorily be explained in any other way than by assuming that it was based upon an actual historical fact.

The following quotation from Archbishop Alexander, the Primate of All Ireland, states the case in a cogent manner: "It is impossible to account for the existence of the Church, without a belief in the Resurrection on the part of the primitive witnesses. It is impossible to account for that belief without its being founded on reality. As the Church is too holy for a foundation of rotteness, so she is too real for a foundation of mist."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DARK SIDE OF CHRISTIANITY.

THOUGH the great purpose of Christianity is to bring light and joy and hope into the world, there is one side of it which is dark and gloomy. In this respect it is not unlike the family physician. His work is to make us healthy and sound and happy, but he often has to give us unpleasant medicines, he occasionally must advise a serious surgical operation, and now and then he must break to us the sad news that one we love has at last reached the end of the journey. Likewise Christianity must speak to us of sin, its malignity and power, its remedies, and its penalties. If this darker side were left out, it would not be a religion adapted to the real needs of human nature. However, many do try to leave this darker side out of their religion, and it presents difficulties to some others who would like to leave it out if they dared. Space will permit me to take up only

two of these difficulties, namely, Satan and hell.

IS THERE A PERSONAL DEVIL?

A personal devil does not mean a being with horns and a pitchfork, gaily bedecked in red, after the manner of the pictures that thrilled us in our childhood or the figures that appear behind the footlights. It means simply that he is an individual with a consciousness and will and not merely an influence or a tendency. Satan is a fallen angel. It is nothing unreasonable to suppose that God should have made angelic beings as well as men and in the Holy Scriptures He tells us He has done so. Nor is it unreasonable to believe, as He has also said, that as there are good and bad men, so there are good and bad angels. God did not make them bad, but they made themselves bad. Satan is only a leader among them. They can tempt man, but their powers are limited. They cannot read the thoughts of man. They are continually baffled by their ignorance of God's love and experience of the action of divine grace. When speaking of Satan, we sometimes mean him, more often the bad angels taken collectively.

But then what is the advantage of these evil

angels? There is really no advantage at all but a great deal of disadvantage. We must, however, take the world as it is, and the Christian religion as it is. We must take the one with its earthquakes and volcanoes and diseases and microbes, and the other with its trials and sorrows and temptations. We did not make either. Satan is in the world and the Christian religion tells us how to overcome him. There is a great advantage in believing that Satan exists, just as there is an advantage in knowing that a robber has entered your house. You may then be able to vanquish him before he gets all your treasures.

WHY DOES GOD SUFFER SATAN?

But why does Almighty God allow Satan and other evil angels to live and keep up this constant warfare against the Kingdom of Light? May we not say it is because we are now in a stage of trial and probation and it is necessary to strengthen our spiritual nature, as well as our bodily nature? Resisting diabolic influences strengthens the one, just as bearing pain strengthens the other. At the last God will cast Satan and his angels out, and take from them all power of doing harm. Christ

through His Church will finally conquer Satan and his kingdom, and keep them in subjection forever. It is impossible to accept Christ as our Teacher and then refuse to believe that Satan exists.

WHAT ABOUT HELL?

It is true that we hear less about hell from Christian pulpits to-day than we did thirty or forty years ago. Is it because we have discovered that hell is a myth? Not until we throw over the whole teaching of Christ can we say that. We may say, if we like, that the fire and the worm that our Lord spoke of as among the torments of hell are figurative expressions. That has been considered as allowable opinion in the Church from very early times. But Christ, in no uncertain terms, has taught that there is a hell in the sense of eternal separation from God, and everlasting punishment. No juggling with words can get rid of the plain statement that "the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal."

WHY NOT PREACHED MORE?

Why, then, do we hear so little about hell in the preaching of to-day? It is largely because

it was overdone a generation ago, and was often preached in such an unreal and false way that it became associated with cant. It is also because it is more in accord with the spirit of our times to win men by holding before them high ideals than by trying to frighten them into the path of virtue. But no Christian preacher or teacher is "declaring the whole counsel of God" who does not teach plainly and fearlessly the doctrine of everlasting punishment. The soul that dies in unforgiven mortal sin will go to hell. Either that is true or the whole Christian religion is false.

Of course no one pretends that this is an easy doctrine to accept. It is, indeed, full of difficulties. But the question is, what has God revealed? It is far better to believe this doctrine on the divine authority of Christ and the Church, even though we cannot fully understand it now, than it is to make our own little minds the measure of divine truth. It is better to believe in truth which we do not understand than to believe in error which we do understand.

INFLUENCE OF THE DOCTRINE.

It has certainly been of help to many ear-

nest Christians to remember that they might lose the prize of their high calling and be cast-aways. It stimulated St. Paul in his magnificent upward course. It has kept many a soul from wasting his talents. It has been like a wall of protecting fire around the sensually assaulted. It has aroused the lukewarm as with a trumpet call. The thought of the eternal shame and loss has again and again been the saving of many a soul.

THE JUSTICE AND MERCY OF GOD.

Why, it is asked, should the punishment inflicted be so severe? The answer seems to be that it is a punishment the guilty and neglectful inflict on themselves. God has offered us in Christ, an elevation in being and such a union with God in bliss, as shall secure us in a sinless state and consequent eternal happiness. It is an end proffered to us, a prize set before us. It is not a natural end like immortality, but a superadded gift. Being such, man by natural goodness cannot attain it. For no supernatural end can be obtained by natural means. The only revealed way of obtaining it, is by union with the God-Man Jesus Christ. How easy, how loving has He made it! When

we think of what God has done, in coming and dying for us, what could we ask Him to have done more? What terms could be easier—what offers more generous and wide? In the Cross we have the Mercy of God extended freely to us. In the sacraments we have His grace extended to us. If now we deliberately reject that loving mercy and refuse to accept Christ's terms of salvation, we cannot claim a share in that mercy hereafter. We cannot reject it and have it, too. It is now or never. And if we reject it now, we cannot complain that we miss the end offered us in Christ and are finally rejected and left without in the eternal darkness. If now rejecting grace in the day of grace, hereafter we shall be unable to repent, because the grace will be wanting wherewith we may do so. Rejecting grace now, we shall eventually lose all spiritual life and become in kind like the beasts. God, however, will eventually triumph over all sin, for He will so gather the saints into Himself that they will be secured from all temptation, and the others, having no grace wherewith to repent, will also be unable, any more than the animals, to sin by rejecting it. Goodness will triumph.

The present creation is moving on to its

great climax. Out of it God is evolving a new spiritual everlasting one. In it, some by corresponding here to the environment of the Church will obtain a place, and others by their own neglect will miss it. The condition in each will be eternal. The one state is Heaven, the other is Hell. It lies with each person to decide which for himself it will be.

“Each soul at goal of that way it wended”—
when man’s trial is past.

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