

FAITH:

ITS TRUE POSITION IN THE LIFE OF MAN.



A DISCOURSE,

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By S. M. WOODBRIDGE,

*Professor of Church History in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed
Church at New Brunswick, N. J.*



μη̃ υ̃περηλοφρόνει, ἀλλὰ φοβοῦ.



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“ And thou standest by faith.”—ROM. xi. 20.

SOME of you may have met with a Mohammedan legend, wrought out in a form of no little beauty by an English poet, of a spirit who for some minor offence had been banished for a time from Paradise, and who during the period of his exile came to dwell upon this earth. While sojourning here, he became the witness of an instance of oppression so fearful that he determined to carry the case to the throne of Allah, and make an appeal against the merciless oppressor. But how was he to find his way to that throne? He discovers a column by which he is assured it stands, and he determines to follow it in its ascent into the heavens until he shall attain to the dwelling of the great judge. With swift wing he begins his flight, but ever as he ascends the mighty pillar stretches beyond him, still upward, piercing the infinite heights; his efforts are vain, discouragement creeps over his heart, his wearied wings droop, he sinks like a wounded bird to the earth. At length hope revives again, and now he determines to descend into the deep, if perchance he may find the dwelling-place of Allah there. Downward with swift wing he plunges; again the periods of time cease to be counted, and still the shaft of light shoots far away out of sight into the abyss, down into infinite depths, and, sorrowing and despairing, the searcher makes his way back to our world. But now the tidings reach him that those angels who fell from their first estate are acquainted with a word which, as an all-powerful talisman, will open the gates of light, and that there is one of these angels who can be visited by the inhabitants of this world. To this angel the spirit finds his way, sees in the mist of darkness a form upon whose face rest the marks of an infinite sorrow, demands of him the

powerful talisman. The wondrous word is breathed forth, and that word is *Faith*. With speed the joyful spirit emerges from the gloom into the light of day, ascends toward the blue heavens, utters the talismanic word faith, and lo ! in a moment the throne stands revealed.

The whole substance of this conception is borrowed from Christianity, as indeed are all the great things of Mohammedanism. The very Allah of the Moslems is but the Eloah of the Old Testament, divested, alas ! of some of His most glorious perfections ; and always has it been held as a fundamental doctrine among Christians that he who cometh to God must *believe* ~~that~~ He is, and that He is a rewarder of such as diligently seek Him. Before Homer or Hesiod wrote, the prophets of Israel had said : " If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there." Say not in thine heart who shall ascend into heaven ? or who shall descend into the deep ? for the word is nigh thee in thy mouth and in thy heart. With Christianity, faith is more than any talisman ; it not only moves mountains, and summons into view the heavenly kingdoms, but it binds the soul in living union to the Son of God, and brings it to the embraces of the Everlasting Father. Every reader of the Holy Scriptures knows the high place faith is made to occupy by Jesus Christ, and by His apostles and prophets ; indeed, it is so interwoven with the whole system of the revelation of God to man, that for us both must stand or fall together. That faith as a principle should therefore be assailed by the enemies of Christ need not surprise us, for the destruction of faith in a man is, in effect, for him the annihilation of the objects which it discerns, even as the destruction of the sight is for the man who suffers it the annihilation of the light itself.

I desire to set before you to-day the true position of faith in our whole life here, believing that if you have right views upon this one subject you will have over you a shield through which no weapon of infidelity can possibly pierce, that you can walk amid the perils of these and of all times with safety, and though

your path should be through the fires, they will not kindle upon you. 'Thou standest by faith.' Paul wrote the passage to the Gentile Christians, who had been ingrafted into the Church of Christ in place of the Jews who for unbelief had been rejected, but for all ages, and to every man, it remains true, *thou standest by faith*. It is not my purpose to discuss any speculative objections of infidelity in this discourse, but there is one dangerous error which is so manifestly extending its destructive influence, unconsciously to most, in our land, and especially among our young men, that it demands special notice, and this notice will prepare the way for the consideration of the subject before us. I refer to the doctrine of the positive philosophy; that there are three ages of mankind, as there are in the life of every individual: first, the age of childhood, that is of faith, of credulity; second, the age of youth, that is of inquiry, of reason, of philosophy. Then follows the age of manhood, that of knowledge, when mankind accept nothing which is not demonstrated, analyzed; nothing which does not come within the scope of the intelligent faculties, nothing which cannot go into the crucible or under the microscope, or in some way be taken to pieces and thus subjected to empirical investigation. In this age of manhood, knowledge takes the place of speculative philosophy and of faith.

Let us now proceed to consider

I. THE POSITION OF FAITH IN OUR ENTIRE LIFE HERE.

II. ITS POSITION SPECIALLY IN OUR RELIGIOUS LIFE.

I. What, then, is the position faith occupies? It is evident you would not have come to this chapel to-day without faith. You had faith that the building was here, that it would be opened for service, and that the service would be conducted. This was not knowledge, for knowledge has in it always the element of certainty, and many events might have occurred which would have prevented the service; and besides, knowledge never penetrates one hand-breadth into the *future*. You believed, and

therefore came. If you had not believed you would not have come. Your return from this sanctuary must be founded on faith; you cannot take one step except in faith. You must confide in the solidity of the earth you tread on, and in the strength and obedience of the limbs which sustain you, and in the guardianship of human law to protect you.

All the *industries* of life are based entirely on faith. The farmer sows his seed in faith; he does not know that one grain will spring up; the drought may kill, or the rains cause it to decay, or if it spring up, the insect or the worm may devour it. It is plain that if the farmer had not believed he would not have sowed his seed. All the industries of life regard the unknown future and the unknown present as well; all believe that nature's laws will remain permanent, partly from the evidence of the past and partly from a natural confidence which does not reason; nevertheless, in any case it is *faith*. The *mercantile* operations of the world are founded on faith. The insurers of life and property have only the testimony of two or three witnesses, perhaps not even of one survivor, that the vessel upon which and upon whose voyagers they pay their many thousands has been wrecked or consumed with fire. All *historical knowledge*, so-called, is based entirely on faith. We have never seen the events nor the great characters which make up the past—Alexander, Paul, Augustine, Charlemagne. We have never seen the authors whose thousands of works fill our libraries. The whole of this vast history which makes the past of any interest to us, which makes any past at all for us, must be received entirely on faith. Nearly all our books of *Natural Science* are built up on faith. We approach, for example, the author of some famous volume upon this subject, and say to him, "We perceive that in your book you refer to South America and Africa; have you ever visited these countries?" "No," he replies, "that is by no means necessary. I have the records of reliable men." "But how do you know they are reliable? Can you read their hearts? You refer to Sir Isaac Newton and La Place, have you ever seen

these men or verified their experiments?" So entire is his faith in the truthfulness of these men and of others that he proceeds as confidently to build up his system as if he had been an eye witness of what is now transmitted to him by their records. And thus it is, if you strike out of the greatest volume of science all that is necessarily accepted from the past, all cumulative information which can be received by faith alone, and leave only the residuum of the man's personal knowledge, you find it shrink into a little tract, and that meaningless for want of historical connection. Nor have we yet reached the end, for even this little *residuum* of knowledge is based altogether on faith—on faith, namely, in the truthfulness of man's faculties. Your knowledge is only that which you perceive with your senses and other powers, but back of all that you must have faith in these faculties, otherwise you will not use them. You *confide* in them, and upon the ground of that confidence you act, and assert that you know. The results of the overthrow of the principle of human faith would, therefore, be the cessation of all the industries of the world, the downfall at once and forever of all history and all learning, the abolishment of all libraries, the reduction of all accumulative science to a paltry handful of experiments, and even these to be received only by the man who performs them, or the few witnesses who may stand by, but who can communicate nothing to others. The destruction of the principle of human faith would be an arrest put upon all social progress; there would be no future, no hope, no reliance on one's own powers, and of course on those of any other man's. We have an illustration in the scene that follows the shaking, or even the suspicion of the insecurity of the ground of commercial confidence. The whole nation feels the shock—the world feels it. How infinitely more terrible would it be if you struck the entire principle of faith out of life here! What imagination can picture the scene of horror? Instead of faith, therefore, being, what some would make it, a thing of minor importance and the peculiar possession of childhood, it enters entirely into our life—

it is the very atmosphere which we breathe; we live and move and have our being in it; it is the grand power that moves the world of mankind in the first ages and in all ages. It is the necessary condition of activity, and of progress in art or science, and in all plans for the improvement of the race. Hence it is that the liar who assails this human confidence is justly regarded as the enemy of mankind, because he strikes at one of the necessary foundations of society, and the last stain of dishonor cast upon any man is want of confidence in his word and character, as all over the world it is the glory of a man that you can trust him without fear. Now, the perversions of faith, the fact that men deceive and are deceived, that they believe in error, no more affects the principle, than the perversion of any faculty affects its necessity or its proper use. Surely no man would cease to use his ear, nor deny its usefulness, because he had misunderstood the words of a friend, nor repudiate the reason because it had assented to a wrong judgment. How often, soever, men may be led astray in the search after truth in nature or among men, they still come back to faith that truth is somewhere, even if "hidden in a well." We may be told, you are here confounding the objects of faith with those of knowledge. Not so, my friends; we are distinguishing between them. We are simply giving to Faith her own possessions, which knowledge has too long usurped; and it is quite time the distinction should be made, when men are using the treasures they have stolen from her treasure-house for her utter destruction. In ordinary times it could matter but little, but not now can we allow positivists to take one shoe-latchet from the possessions of faith—not now, when these men are seeking to rob us of our all, even of our final Rock of confidence, and to convert this universe, blazing with divine glory, into a vast mausoleum or house of death, and the constellations into funeral lamps to light us to the grave; to put out every light of hope, and every inducement to progress; to make all action a struggle for life, in which blessed is the animal who is the strongest, and woe to the poor beast who is the weak-

est. Thomas Carlyle employs language not one whit too strong when he represents the heavens and the earth to the atheist as the two jaws of a devouring monster closing over him.

Monstrum horrendum ingens cui *lumen* ademptum.

As the glory of the universe is gone with the departure of God, so is the glory of the soul gone with the departure of faith. We would be willing to leave the subject here, and appeal to every auditor, who are right? The men who deprecate faith, who seek to tear her from her throne and trample her in the dust; or Jesus of Nazareth, who exalts her as the queen of all the graces, and proclaims faith to be the *central power* in the soul and in the life of man?

II. Let us now consider the position of faith in religion. No distinction has been made hitherto in this discourse between the different kinds of faith, because the substance of all kinds is the same, namely, *confidence*. A brief investigation will convince us that in all the faith which enters into our life, it accepts nothing but upon what seems to be sufficient testimony; and we easily discern three kinds of evidence upon which we are constantly, often unconsciously but always necessarily, believing and acting.

1. The *historical*, by which we receive the records of the past, and without which we are cut off forever from the past, as much so as individually we should this day be severed from our former life if memory were destroyed. How do we know that Alexander the Great ever lived? His name and influence pervade all the later Grecian history; there are cities called after him; the mighty impulse he gave to literature remains; the downfall of Alexander, as a historic personage, would be the downfall of ten thousand other historic incidents, and would shake the faith of mankind in all the records of history. How do we know that Plato ever existed? We have the Platonic schools, the Platonic literature, the Platonic dialogues, the mighty influence of the man seen in all succeeding philosophies, in shaping thought or in ex-

citing antagonisms. These imperatively demand a historic origin. Great ideas originate in individuals, not in schools. An attempt to prove that the disciples of Plato invented their master would simply excite the derision of the world. How do we know that Jesus Christ ever lived among men? We have His institutions, His society numbering now about three hundred and fifty millions, His order of preachers, His baptism in the name of the Trinity, His holy supper with its simple bread and wine, a Christian literature pouring like a river through the centuries and traced up to its professed source, His sayings, the most striking and altogether remarkable ever known on earth. All these things and others demand imperatively a historical origin, and no *a priori* assertions, and no reasonings of men, can make them converge anywhere else than upon a living historic person. There is this difference in the power of the historic evidence of Christianity, namely, it has so accumulated by the researches of its subjects that if it were overthrown, it would in effect carry down with it all the history of the world; it can only be destroyed by the common destruction of all the foundations of historic faith. Yet we must never suppose that this evidence, powerful as it is and unanswered as it has been, can in any case support the Christian religion. If these testimonies were all, Christianity would die out of the world in a century.

2. Another kind of evidence equally discernible is the *rational*, that is, the evidence which springs from reasoning upon the facts connected with the history or the system. Through all our life we reason, even as we believe, constantly, yet often unobservant of the processes of our mind; we do not cross the street, nor sit down, nor rise, without a mental process and conclusion. We accept as true the inductions and deductions of the mind, and the results of *correct* reasoning are felt to be as certain as the facts upon which they are based. For example, as applied to Christianity, we see a religion originating with a poor Jew, going forth according to his prediction, itself most improbable of fulfilment, to take possession of the world by the mere force of its teachings.

It is professedly the universal religion, and its purpose is to gather all the nations into one great brotherhood, and to make every man a son of God. That its disciples were illiterate and uninfluential speaks all the more forcibly for its *moral* power. It has opposed to it the natural and long-cherished inclinations of the human heart; the mighty passions which had ruled the world; the tremendous power of human government when Force was concentrated, personified, deified in the Empire of Rome; the gathered wisdom of mankind in those systems of philosophy which have made the name of Greece illustrious; and the art also in which the beautiful conceptions of the Greek mind shone forth in a hundred forms; the passion not only of the mighty idolatries, whose altars flamed in all cities and countries, but of the learned Rabbis who gloried in their descent from the father of the faithful, and also in their relation to Him who is higher than the highest. And yet the religion of Jesus moves on, simple in its teaching, subduing nation after nation, subordinating or overturning philosophy after philosophy, living in all climates, at home among all classes, carrying along with it the blessings of the purest civilization, and displaying the light of a new and magnificent charity. Reason concludes by just processes that such a religion has in it a divine life. Reason assents to the sentence of Gamaliel, if this thing be of man it will come to nought, but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it. Faith accepts the evidence and the conclusion. These rational arguments are exceedingly numerous, as are the signs in nature from which reason infers a divine intelligence. The successive steps of the great economies, the one transmitting to the next its treasures; the monotheistic language, with its fixed roots through all forms, and each with its doctrinal idea like a nail fastened by the master of assemblies; the unity of the grand system of Scripture arising from what were apparently disjointed parts—these are but specimens of arguments which fill volumes, and in which unbelieving men have been able but here and there to discover a weak point. The argument of Lord Lyttleton—and by which that distinguished writer was won

from skepticism to the faith—upon the conversion of St. Paul, has never been answered. The attempt of one as eminent as Prof. Max Müller to show a historic unity in the oriental religions, like that of Judaism and Christianity, has been a signal failure. Yet it must never be forgotten that Christianity does not depend for support upon reasonings. Conclusion after conclusion may be reached by processes no one can gainsay; by line after line of argument, which the logic of man can never break through, may Christianity be walled about, and yet die in the midst of her impregnable fortifications. No unprejudiced reader can doubt that in the great Deistical controversy in England the Christians had beyond all compare the better in the argument; for the chief work of the Deists was to pick flaws and to criticise, always easy both as regards the works of God and man, and yet, with all their splendid array of intellectual might, and strokes like those of Titans, and which make some of us of this century feel that we are a degenerate race, the Christians were beaten in the field, and Deism swept like a desolating fire over the nation. Then suddenly among the poor and neglected laborers was heard the sound of Christ's Evangel, and George Whitefield and the Wesleys arose to reannounce the forgotten cry of the prophet, not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord.

Both the kinds of evidence we have mentioned are useful, and, indeed, necessary, but they never can sustain the religion of God.

3. There is another kind of evidence upon which we constantly • • rely and unhesitatingly act, and that is the *intuitional*; by which we accept as true many things which have nothing to do with history nor with reasonings, but are directly discerned by the mind. Many would prefer to call these discernments knowledge, and they may with all fairness be classed with the sight of the eye and the hearing of the ear, but we here regard them as evidence to be accepted by the faith of the soul. They are self-demonstrating; and as they cannot be verified by any other evidence,

they must be accepted at once as true by faith, or they cannot be accepted at all. Such are the axioms of mathematics, such are the primary truths of mental philosophy; the moment you begin to reason upon these you envelop them in a mist, you excite doubt, and that because you are using reason for an illegitimate purpose; you must confide in these intuitive perceptions at once, or you must deny them as true; but in that denial you contradict your own nature, stultify your own actions, and sweep away all the foundations of knowledge. For if you destroy faith in the truthfulness of these authoritative assertions, how can you rely upon your senses, or the conclusions, or even the processes of your reason, or how can you utter an authoritative sentence, or declare anything to be true or not true? The appeal to the judge within us is final. You may bring arguments to prove to a blind man the existence of light, and the idealistic philosopher will bring as many to prove that light has no existence out of the mind, and upon the whole the idealist has the better arguments; but let the blind man receive his sight, and the reasonings on both sides are equally worthless, because the man has the witness in himself. All the testimony of the world, and of every kind, will add nothing to conviction produced by direct discernment; and on the other hand, all the testimony of mankind can never disturb that conviction, nor prevent his acting upon it. Thus, the mind sees directly that design implies a designer, motion a mover, effect a cause, and through our whole life we are *compelled* to act upon these intuitions. Now, there are certain moral truths which are perceived *directly* by the soul of man, or they are never seen at all. You may bring volumes of historic evidence, and whole systems of logically arranged reasonings, but they only play around the morally-blinded spirit like colors about the eyeballs of the blind. The discernments of a distinction between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, of moral obligation, the duty of gratitude for favors, of ill-desert, of sin, are never attained by reasonings; the man must be *conscious* that he is a sinner, or he is necessarily precluded from all discernment of that truth.

He can no more perceive sin by the reasoning faculties than he can light by the ear. Each power in man has its own specific office, and cannot do the work of any other power. The mastery of the Christian religion over the world lies in its *self-demonstrating power*; the man who believes on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; as his religion is not based upon nor upheld by logic, so neither can it be overthrown by logic; even as the man perishing with thirst, when he drinks the reviving water which quenches it, needs no reasonings of men and no evidence from history to prove to him that this is nature's supply. The fact is self-evidencing; he drinks and is satisfied. The sinner, his moral nature aroused, coming to the consciousness of his obligations to the Great Power who originated and designed and upholds this universe, and himself conscious of the sacredness and justice of that moral law he has violated, and of the irreparable wrongs of which he has been the perpetrator; conscious of the shadows of divine wrath, and of a coming judgment falling upon his soul, and finding no refuge in flight, and no forgetfulness of the past by repentance, is arrested by the revelation of God manifest in the flesh; appearing upon the earth as a Saviour; atoning for the transgressions of men upon the cross; taking upon Himself the wrongs of the guilty; rising from the dead, that as a prince he may give a robe of spotless righteousness to the sinner who desires to approach the eternal throne; granting, without money and without price, repentance and the remission of sins; meeting with His love, His grace, His power, every conscious want and distress of the soul; the sinner, perceiving all this, accepts the Lord and all He offers, by faith; and swiftly as the sunlight and all the scenery of nature pour their streams of glory into the soul of the restored blind man, so swiftly and surely does the peace of God, which passeth understanding, pour into the soul of the believer. In the one case it is the assurance of sight, in the other it is the assurance of faith; and the one is as strong as the other, but as much higher as heaven is above the earth.

It were as easy to show in detail, how in its hundred revelations the Christian religion manifests its self-evidencing power. Out of a multitude let us select one. Can it be doubted that among all the inhabitants of this world, and especially among those who reflect upon man's condition and destiny, or upon whom there fall with peculiar heaviness the unexplained sorrows of life, there is a consciousness of orphanage? Impelled by this, the earnest men of the world have sought after God, and the saddest sight in all history is the great Plato gazing upward toward his unapproachable idea, and hearing no voice nor answer to call a gleam from the face upon which for years upon years no man saw a smile. The aged face would have shone with light if Plato could have seen and heard and believed in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, or if at any time in his solitude, when there came upon him the consciousness of an endless want, the longing, indestructible, and forever unsatisfied, there fell a still, small voice, like that which came to Elijah upon the mount, when he wrapped his face in his mantle, "I am thy Creator and Father. Beside me there is no other. My goings were of old, even from everlasting. I made the heavens, and also the earth, by the word of My power, and I adorned them with light and beauty, that so they might reflect My nature. This is My glory which radiates from the landscapes and the constellations, and which unfolds in the panorama of the seasons, and in all the processions of the universe advancing toward its destiny. I am not hidden away in My inaccessible heavens, but I am with thee every moment, and as thou askest for Me, I also ask for thee, for the faith and the love of thy heart. As thou art made for reverence and adoration, so am I a Being of boundless majesty; as thou art a creature of dependence, so am I unchangeable and almighty; as thou art created for gratitude, so am I infinitely beneficent; as thou art guilty, so have I provided for thee an atonement; as thou art immortal, so am I inexhaustible in resources, forever causing to shine forth before My sons new forms of beauty and power; as thou seekest a resting place, so am I a Father, higher than fate, dwelling with that

man who is of an humble and contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word." The man who receives that message by faith falls upon his face with mingled reverence and gladness, to cry, Jehovah, He is God. That presence is self-demonstrating, and the soul was no more conscious of its poverty, than it is now that it has regained its lost possession. Every believer can echo the language, "In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand are pleasures forevermore; every believer finds REST on the bosom of the infinite God." It may be said all but believers are thus cut off from the highest and most convincing evidences of Christianity. And this accords with the assertions of Scripture, "The natural man cannot know the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned." How, then, is the natural man responsible? plainly for rejecting evidences which ought to arouse his moral nature and his sense of obligation. He is like a sick man to whom is brought a remedy which has given relief to all who have taken it, yet the highest testimony for him can only be in the healing itself, while from this he is necessarily precluded if he declines to take it; and if he dies, all the world will pronounce him a self-destroyer.

1. The subject shows us how groundless are the fears of some that Christianity will perish. God has one awful hold on all mankind, and that is through the indestructible conscience, which forces on man the recognition of moral distinctions and of obligations and of accountability. The religion which quickens the soul to these moral intuitions, and which meets the tremendous demands they occasion, will take possession of the world, and all attacks upon it are idle as the winds. The Lord has set his true disciples, the learned and the unlearned alike, in a sphere in which they as serenely repose amid the assaults of worldly logic as they once did amid the fires of martyrdom; nor is it improbable the assaults are permitted that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed, and that all who do not stand by faith may fall.

2. The subject shows us the mistake of attempting to uphold Christianity by *scientific* methods. It is of the last importance that we discriminate between the kinds of evidence, and what each is designed to uphold, and *only* to uphold; nevertheless, Christianity does not stand by the wisdom of men, but by the power of God, and every Christian 'stands by faith. It may be asked, Why, then, contend for the truth of the records of Scripture? Why for its inspiration? Why for its canonical books? Simply, because the Bible is the cup which conveys to our thirsty souls the water of life—a cup marvellous in its structure, and adorned with many precious jewels from the heavenly treasury, and radiant with divinity. We contend for miracles, not because they will ever, as proved historical facts, convert any unbeliever from his sins, nor because the obligation to repentance would be any less if miracles were swept out of the world, but because the Lord wrought them, and we see in them His greatness and power and love. At the same time we know they ought to produce faith, and the treatment they receive from unbelief is such as is bestowed upon no other clear, consistent historic records upon earth; and that the reception this history meets with clearly reveals the feelings of the heart toward Christ.

3. The error is seen which assigns religion to the sphere of the feelings. On the contrary, it rests precisely where science does, and all human activity, upon faith. The scientist is glad when he makes a new discovery in nature, and the Christian is glad when he discovers a new beauty in God and in the things of God. It is true, science and philosophy lay claim to only a part of the nature of man; religion to the whole nature; but that religion, by claiming the affections, exempts the intellect and even the bodily powers, is no more true than that the claims of a mother to the love of her son exempt him from obligations to obedience. The intuitions are no more necessarily in the domain of feeling than are hearing or logical processes. Great interests, exciting emotions, may be involved in any case.

4. Equally plain is the magnitude of the error which confounds religious faith with the *imagination*. Imagination is the faculty which weaves its own fabrics, creates its own conceptions; faith is the power which grasps the revelations of God; the creations of the imagination are phantoms changeable and evanescent; the things of God received by faith are substantial and eternal; the creations of the imagination are limited; the objects of faith are such as transcend, neither have they entered the heart of man; with the imagination, man creates his God; by faith he lays hold upon the God who made man. We all have faith in the existence of the City of Pekin; no two of us have *conceptions* of that city alike, yet, whether our conceptions conform more or less to the reality does not affect our *faith* in the slightest degree. It is freely admitted that in their efforts to attain to fellowship with the infinite God in whom they believe, Christians have conceptions always poor and inadequate. The anthropomorphic representations of the Old Testament are given to help the struggling soul on its way toward the spiritual, but every student of the Bible knows how carefully Jehovah guards His people against the fatal error of giving Him form or shape, or of making a similitude. In their oldest records, in Genesis and in Job, He is the Almighty and Everlasting God, *unlimited* as He offers Himself to their faith. As well might objections be made against the letters which spell his name as against the symbols by which He, through appeals to their own nature, teaches His ignorant children.

And well might it be asked here, whose was the mighty imagination which gave birth to the transcendent God of the Christian-faith? Who were the men in the distant ages who possessed so profound a knowledge of the wants and aspirations of the human soul, and such an immeasurable reach of thought? Not the Egyptian nor Assyrian priests; they were pantheists, and worshipped nature; not the philosophers; they never attained to this height, and in all ages they touch only to mar the glorious symmetry of the perfect God. Was it Moses? Was his the imagination from which came forth Jehovah, the Lord God, merciful and

gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin—and that will by no means clear the guilty? Is this the man who, in the full light of the law—every statute of which appeals to man's sense of justice and of truth, arouses like a trumpet note the moral sense, and reverberates through all the chambers of the soul—is this the man, with his clear sense of right and of truth, to stand forth the prince of deceivers? He professes to have received these sublime revelations from God, to have talked with God. And now from age to age the promise by the lips of Moses is fulfilling against ceaseless antagonism. "As I live, saith the Lord, the earth shall be filled with my glory." The eternal Jehovah of Moses is gaining the victory over the world.

5. The subject illustrates the *folly* of unbelief. Whenever any man, instead of believing upon sufficient evidence, proceeds to reason, there follows at once a confusion of the perceptions, through which he is led into absurdest mistakes. No one of us can reasonably doubt the existence of Napoleon Bonaparte, yet no one of us can read the little book of Archbishop Whately and not doubt that existence; we cannot read Berkeley's Minute Philosopher and not doubt whether matter exists; we cannot reason upon sight without exciting doubts as to whether we see at all. This is the vengeance taken upon us for abusing our powers. The moment we pass the legitimate bounds of knowledge the doom of skepticism falls upon us. Because of this darkening of the mind it is that the systems of unbelief invariably contain the elements of their own destruction, but which their authors fail to see. Thus, the skeptic says: "Nothing is certain," then, *that* is not certain. A consistent skeptic cannot utter a word; he is shut up to everlasting silence. Thus, too, Hume says: "You cannot prove a miracle, because human testimony is uncertain, and cannot therefore outweigh the testimony of nature's laws, which remain fixed through all ages." And how does he know they have been thus fixed? By human testimony?

A distinguished scientist has just said that the Force of the Universe is unknowable ; how, then, can *that* predicate be made of it? Fichte, who denies an external world, proceeds to lecture to classes, which exist only in his own mind, and carries on with great power a controversy with his own thoughts, and has his works published at Leipzig or elsewhere; nay, by the very same arguments by which he idealizes the world he does away with the mind itself. And now we have the revival of the ancient doctrine of Democritus, that all varieties, air, clouds, water, crystals, vegetables, animals, man, life, mind, are but the different arrangements or dispositions of the monads, molecules, or final atoms of nature. And this the evolutionists will show you by converting (at least they think so) gases into water and water back again into gases; and other gases and materials they will turn into living substance, and thus show you (a few links only being wanted and a few qualities unaccounted for) how man emerges from the molecules with a free-will and a conscience, and a something in him reaching out after an infinite and eternal God. All this is done as easily as when a prestigator with a touch causes the orange to disappear and the lemon to take its place, and also reverses the experiment. And now you ask the scientist, "How do you know there are any molecules? Have you ever seen them? Have you detected them with your instruments?" "No," he replies, "we infer their existence." But stop a moment; if we appeal to the mind we must accept the decisions of this judge; and what are they? *That no man can conceive of a final atom.* The moment you conceive of an atom you perceive that it is *divisible*, and each part can be subdivided, and so on indefinitely. The theory is, therefore, as contrary to the laws of thought as it is to the empirical philosophy. Who can tell what are the primordial elements, or what subtle forces in nature interfere in visible experiments? Who knows what life is, or from whence it comes, as it manifests its presence? Who can prove that it emerges from the substance under experiment? By what tribunal was it adjudged that sub-

stances can confer gifts and qualities which they do not possess? And so men of intelligence have held to the eternity of matter, contrary to the laws of thought, which only allow it to exist in space and *time*; and others that matter is self-created, that is, it had power before it had existence.

Time would fail us in enumerating the follies of theories which appear only to perish. Already signs are manifest that the leaders of modern materialism are dissatisfied, and ere long will swing over to idealism. And that will be a blessed day for the men who have felt the pressure of this horrible nightmare, when perhaps for half a century they will have their thoughts turned to the glories of *mind*, and be permitted for that length of time to associate with spirits instead of herding with monkeys.

6. How evident is the cruelty of unbelief—cruelty, gratuitous and inexcusable. There is no middle ground for a champion of unbelief; he accepts the awful issues; he declares war against the Almighty God. That the interests of men should be disregarded accords with the whole purpose of the assailant, which is purely destructive, namely: as he cannot reach the throne of God, to destroy human faith in its existence; consequently, in obligation to obey the Sovereign of the universe. No soft words will change the nature of the conflict. What can be the motive of any man in thus assailing the foundations of faith and virtue? Why this persistent attempt to destroy the religion of Jesus Christ? Why do men conceive a purpose so horrible as to rob mourners at the grave of all their consolations, and millions of our race of all their hopes for this world and for eternity? Professor Tyndal admits the necessity of prayer for mankind; why, then, seek to destroy it? What reason can men advance for breaking down all the acknowledged moral restraints of society (substituting no others in their stead), and for sweeping away the proved inducements for the elevation and culture of the race. They well know that the Church of Christ, and by an influence emanating directly from Him, sustains thousands of asylums for the

orphans, the poor, the aged, the blind, and that its members pour out their riches to relieve human misery ; they well know that in all Christian lands there are thousands, once under the power of their selfishness and their vices, who are struggling after divine virtue only by the help of the Lord Jesus Christ ; they well know the purpose of each true Christian is to become like God, and of the whole Church to exalt mankind in all intellectual and moral and divine excellence. Why do they wish to put an arrest on all this ? While at the same time, scientists equally capable with themselves of discerning truth assure them that they are wrong, and entreat them to pause in their destructive career. They tell us it is the love of truth. Is there, then, but one kind of truth in this universe ? Is there no moral, no intellectual, no æsthetic truth ? Is there not truth here which defies your analysis ? Can you put an *induction* into the crucible ? Did you find that among the atoms ? Is there no beauty in virtue ? Can you analyze the beauty of the landscape or the rose ? Apply to it your instruments and it disappears like a dream ; but is it not a *power* ? Tell us, then, shall the man who has the true conception of the truth of beauty take his stand by our city and proclaim : “ Your buildings and your streets are not according to truth, and therefore I will apply to them the torch, and sweep them away in one universal conflagration.” What is a crime like that to the crime of deliberately attempting to destroy the city of God, with all its mansions, and leaving its millions homeless and in despair ? None the less wicked the attempt because it must fail. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh ; the Lord shall have them in derision. It is not for the city of God, with its ancient battlements, against which armies and nations have dashed themselves to their own destruction, we fear, but for you, my young friends, lest the enemies of your souls should entice you from its gates, and leave you, as they will, to wander among the dark mountains. The enemies of God are *your* enemies. God save you from their deadly influence, and throw over you the mighty

shield of faith! God in His mercy save you from the hopelessness and the horrors of infidelity, and grant that each of you, amid all the vain reasonings of men, may hear the voice of a Saviour whispering in his heart, *Thou standest by Faith.*

