

The Angel Message Series

Chapter 2

Faith in God. Is It Scientific? Is It Biblical?

By ELBERT A. SMITH



And I saw another angel fly in the midst
of heaven, having the everlasting gospel
to preach unto them that dwell on the
earth.—Revelation 14: 6 : : :

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"Now Abideth Faith"

Genuine religion has its roots deep down in the heart of humanity and in the reality of things.—Sir Oliver Lodge.

If you think strongly enough you will be forced by science to the belief in God, which is the foundation of all religion.—Lord Kelvin.

Faith in order, which is the basis of science, cannot reasonably be separated from faith in an ordainer, which is the basis of religion.—Asa Gray.

Epochs of faith are epochs of fruitfulness; but epochs of unbelief, however glittering, are barren of all permanent good.—Goethe.

The steps of faith fall on the seeming void, but find the rock beneath.—Whittier.

When men cease to be faithful to their God, he who expects to find them so to each other will be much disappointed.—Horne.

All the scholastic scaffolding falls, as a ruined edifice, before one single word—faith.—Napoleon.

There never was found in any age of the world, either philosopher or sect, or law, or discipline which did so exalt the public good as the Christian faith.—Bacon.

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.—Paul.

Earth is crammed with heaven
And every common bush afire with God.

—Mrs. Browning.

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CHAPTER 2

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

The human mind knows no bounds of time or space. A word or a gesture starts a train of thought, and we are off to other lands or other times.

These words of Jesus take us back to a lonely road in Judea. We see a group of men journeying from Bethany to Jerusalem. Our attention is immediately attracted to the leader.

As they journey in the ruddy glow of the morning light, his gaze is drawn to a fig tree at some distance. It is luxurious with pleasant green foliage, a glorious promise of full fruitage. Apparently hungering, he wends his way to this tree for refreshment. But lo, it is barren.

To our surprise he rebukes the tree, and declares, "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever."

Is this some madman? Is this some fanatic? Is this some irresponsible neurotic?

We must wait until another day for our answer. It is morning again, and we see this same group of men journeying again over this same road toward Jerusalem. As they approach the tree one of the followers cries out in surprise.

At its foot the luxurious leaves of yesterday lie

withering in jumbled confusion. The tree itself is blasted and shriveled,—dried up, root, trunk, and branch.

Stricken into sharp attention, as by a lightning's flash, these men stand with bated breath while their leader turns and delivers this short, pregnant sentence, "Have faith in God."

JESUS PREACHES IN THE OPEN

The mystery is solved. This man is Jesus of Nazareth. These are his followers. Having at once secured their attention, demonstrated to them the fate that overtakes hypocritical profusion of promise without fruitage, and impressed them with the power of God over all living things, he preaches a sermon by the wayside.

Jesus was never dependent upon pulpit accessories. He preached upon the mountain's inspiring height, in a boat upon the tossing sea, by the river's brim, by the side of the lonely road, or within the dim and hallowed interior of the synagogue.

On this occasion he preaches a short sermon on faith and forgiveness, fronting as he does so the morning light of heaven, that reverently touches his splendid forehead with a hint of the glory that is to be, the shadow falling behind him, predicting the cross that temporarily shall eclipse the glory.

For the time being we remember only a single sentence of that discourse: "Have faith in God."

IS FAITH IN GOD UNSCIENTIFIC?

Is the message that Jesus gave to the world that morning a message for this age? Does that com-

mandment require of us anything that is contradicted by the reason, research, and scientific conclusions of the studious ages that have followed each other in orderly procession since that morning in Judea?

Is it possible to-day to have faith in God and yet keep step with the vanguard of truth seekers everywhere? The men of whom Whittier wrote:

Hail to the future singers!
Hail to the brave light bringers!
Forward I reach and share
All that they sing and dare.

You will meet men who will tell you that science has stormed the citadels of faith. That scientists have undermined and overthrown ancient religion.

OUR APPEAL TO THE COURT OF SCIENCE

We propose to prove that these statements are untrue. We take our appeal to the court of science.

In answer, Sir Oliver Lodge, president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, in his presidential address of 1913, said: "Genuine religion has its roots deep down in the heart of humanity and in the reality of things."—Continuity, p. 106.

SCIENCE AFFIRMS CREATIVE POWER

Lord Kelvin, in an address before the Christian Association of the University of London, 1902, said:

Science positively affirms creative power. It is not in dead matters that we live and move and have our being, but in

the creative and directing power which science compels us to accept as an article of belief.—Christian Apologetics, p. 25.

Remember when next you turn the pages of the Bible and read as the great initial postulate of that book that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, that Lord Kelvin, called “the prince of scientists,” is in harmony with that statement. And he added:

If you think strongly enough you will be forced by science to the belief in God, which is the foundation of all religion. You will find science not antagonistic but helpful to religion.—Ibid., p. 26.

A DOMINATING MIND IN THE UNIVERSE

Edgar Lucien Larkin, director of Lowe Observatory, says:

I do not hesitate to write this: There is not a great scientist now living not aware of the existence of Mind in the Sidereal Universe—A Dominating Mind.—Within the Mind Maze, p. 346.

It is not enough to say that faith is not unscientific. We affirm that it is fundamentally and eternally scientific.

Jesus of Nazareth in simple dignity, with clear-cut brevity, stated a principle that to-day is supported by Lord Kelvin and Sir Oliver Lodge.

Where then originates the brunt of this opposition to faith? Perhaps, having failed to find it among scientists, we shall find it among the

“CAMP FOLLOWERS OF SCIENCE”

Professor Alexander Macalister, M. A., M. D., D. Sc., LL. D., F. R. S., of the University of Cambridge, says:

In my opinion there is no conflict between science and the moral and spiritual teachings of the Bible. . . . It has been my experience that the disbelief in the revelation which God has given in the life and work, death and resurrection of our Savior, is more prevalent among what I may call the camp followers of science, than amongst those to whom actual scientific work is the business of their lives.—Religious Beliefs of Scientists, p. 33.

AND AMONG THE SMALL-MINDED

Professor J. J. Walsh, M. D., of Fordham University, New York, says:

All the greatest scientists have been believers. They have no trouble at all in reconciling science and faith. It is smaller men who have found that their little buckets of minds were not large enough to hold science and faith.—Ibid., p. 162.

A SECOND-HAND SMATTERING OF SCIENCE

Professor Frank Cavers, D. Sc., professor of biology at Hartley University, Southampton:

As to the alleged "conflict" between science and religion, I believe you will generally find that the science which is pressed into service by agnostics and atheists is many, many years behind the times, and that these writers and lecturers have only a second-hand smattering of the biology of forty or fifty years ago.—Ibid., p. 77.

Professor A. H. Sayce, LL. D., D. Lit., professor of Assyriology in the University of Oxford:

There are a few "leading scientists" who are irreligious, but the vast majority, so far as my knowledge goes, are quite the reverse. The "irreligious" are for the most part those who have merely a smattering of scientific knowledge.—Page 52.

WHY WE BELIEVE IN GOD

We are admonished to give a reasonable answer for the hope that is in us. Accepting Jesus as our

teacher, we accept also his dogmatic precept, "Have faith in God." But there are other reasons which may be set forth in their order. We believe in God because

IT IS NATURAL TO BELIEVE IN GOD

It is both *natural* and *scientific* to believe. Kelvin says, "Science positively affirms creative power." Lodge says, "Genuine religion has its roots deep down in the heart of humanity and in the reality of things."

Go where you will, in Patagonia or Alaska, in the islands of the Pacific, in the Orient or the Occident, you will find that all races believe in some supreme or superhuman being.

They may not call it God, but they do their best to carve their rude presentment of deity in wood and stone.

Probably in the first instance they did not worship the image, but rather that for which it stood. Their vision of God is obscured by ignorance and superstition, and so their presentation of him is distorted and grotesque.

Their belief is not *because* of ignorance, but *in spite* of it. When we ascend to higher peoples, we find as strong a faith coupled with a clearer perception that forbids men attempting the impossible task of picturing in wood or stone the lineaments of deity.

The clearest-headed statesmen, the most profound philosophers, the greatest scientists, the most inspired poets have believed in God.

Our parents walked and talked with God, as did Seth, Enoch, Noah, and many others. They knew him in the long ago, and that knowledge became a

mighty force through all succeeding generations. It has been dimmed by time and distance, yet fostered by all that we see around us.

Atheism, on the other hand, is acquired. It is the result of perverted or incomplete education. Doubt may be and has been nursed and fostered to the point where one will doubt the existence of his own body and of the earth itself. But hunger and cold and hard knocks, as well as joy, comfort, warm sunshine and glowing landscapes, bear testimony that most men heed; equally positive forces testify of God.

A MATTER OF CHOICE

Next, we believe in God because we wish to do so. It is a choice between anarchy and law. We do not care to go out and tell people that there is no ultimate lawgiver to whom they must sometime give an account.

A noted anarchist said: "I believe in no God. I believe in no hereafter."

Now note what followed in that creed, as naturally as darkness follows the setting of the sun:

I believe in no God; I believe in no hereafter; I believe in no civilization; I believe in no marriage; all property is robbery; all government is tyranny; right and wrong are prejudices; I believe in the red flag of anarchy; the rich and the rulers are only proper food for gunpowder, and dynamite; I am sworn to live and die by the articles of this creed.

This was simply carrying things to their logical conclusion. And let us tell you, if you convince all men that there is no God and no hereafter, you shortly will have no civilization, you will have no marriage, you will have no government, you will have

no property. You will have anarchy, with every man his own best law, and bound to respect none else.

OBSERVATION CONFIRMS FAITH

Again, we believe in God because the natural tendency to believe is strengthened by what we see around us.

Chance as a creative force is not in evidence. It is now quite universally accepted as a scientific fact that life must spring from preceding life. So we trace it back until we reach the point that Lord Kelvin said God has "reserved for his own appearing,"—the beginning of life.

We find in every city certain statutes enforced. For instance, there is a statute against trespass. No one need tell us that such a law introduced itself, voted on itself, inscribed itself on the statute books, enforces itself. We know there is a city council and a mayor back of it, and that a very material policeman looks after us if we violate it.

No one need tell us that all the houses in that city designed and builded themselves, or that they sprang up in a night by chance, or that they evolved from a single crooked stick that came into existence years ago as the result of "a fortuitous concourse of atoms." We have never seen the designers or builders, yet their works testify of their intellect.

—Though men might burn the Bible and publicly renounce the God idea, we are sure that the first time they found themselves free from artificial restraints, out under the eternal stars, their hearts would whisper over the articles of faith that their

fathers repeated ere the Bible was written or infidelity was dreamed.

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.”—David.

Man himself is one of God’s greatest revelations of wisdom and power.

A man went down to Panama,
Where many a man had died,
To slit the sliding mountains
And lift the eternal tide:
A man stood up in Panama,
And the mountains stood aside.

The Power that wrought the tide and peak
Wrought mightier the seer;
And the One who made the Isthmus
He made the engineer.—Mackaye.

A MORE SURE WORD

We believe in God because we have in the Scriptures a revelation of him that speaks for itself. We find there things which man of himself could not have written.

Daniel pictured the future of the world, and for over twenty-three hundred years the events of history in their orderly march have fallen into line to fulfill his prophecy.

Isaiah pictured the coming of Christ, his life, his betrayal, his death. Christ foretold of the destruction of Jerusalem,—it is history.

Now we submit that the written word speaks for itself and shows an understanding of futurity—that man of himself could not have. Its moral character is also its own best testimony of divinity. It meets human needs in every age.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.—2 Peter 1: 19.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

We believe in God because we find in his word the revelation of a perfect law, that if heeded would fill the world with love and peace, bringing to pass the ancient ideals,—liberty, equality, brotherhood.

We believe in God because we have something in addition to the written word, or that which we may see.

“If any man will do his will, he shall *know* of the doctrine.”—John 7: 17.

We have felt the influence of that Spirit promised to those who do his will, and know that it is not of earthly origin. We do not depend solely upon the word of others. Our gospel came not unto us in word only. We received it not of men. It came in power, with much assurance, and with the Holy Ghost, as it came of old to Paul.

FAITH POSITIVE AND DYNAMIC

Faith is affirmative, positive, dynamic. Atheism is negative (when not evasive); it is static, or reactionary; the creeping paralysis of human aspiration. It makes no affirmation, and has no program. Its gospel is the gospel of doubt and despair.

Atheism, agnosticism, infidelity do not affirm. The more intelligent opposers of the God idea have avoided definite statement.

You may read the lectures of Ingersoll from be-

ginning to end, and you will never find where he says there is no God. You will find where he says, "There may be a God; I do not know." You will find where he said, "In the hour of death hope sees a shining star, and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing."

That calls to our mind the statement of Lord Bacon, "Atheism is more on the lips of men than in their hearts."

Faith is aggressive. It is affirmative. It is constructive.

"I will *build*," declared Jesus.

"Let us *create*," said God.

Let us join forces with the *builders*. The iconoclast has his work in the demolition of error; but it is transient. The Christian has his work; it is eternal. "Have faith in God."

FAITH IN AN IMMANENT GOD

Biblical faith is faith in an *immanent* God. Note his statement:

Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he *is*, and that he is a *rewarder* of them that diligently seek him.—Hebrews 11:6.

We must believe in God's *existence*, and in his divine *justice*, and in his *approachability*. True faith presupposes a God that IS. The great I AM, who in the midst of most primitive surroundings spoke to Moses from the burning bush, is still at work in the world among the complex and artificial conditions of modern life.

He is able to speak now as of old: He is able and willing to "reward" those who now "diligently seek

him," as anciently. He has never drawn a line through any day or year in all the calendar of time and said, This can not be a day of revelation and of miracle. The unbelief of the people has cut them off from revelation and healing,—not the will of God.

Walter Rauschenbusch said of the prophets of old: "They went to school with a living God who was then at work in his world, and not with a God who had acted long ago and put it down in a book."

This age needs an awakening sense that God IS, and that he is a REWARDER of them that diligently seek him.

FAITH IN JESUS AND IN THE WORD

Faith in God includes faith in Jesus his Son, and in the word of God.

On the road to Jerusalem Jesus admonished his disciples, "Have faith in God."

Very near the close of his ministry, after the last supper had been eaten; after Judas had received his sop and gone out to earn his infamous thirty pieces, Jesus seized the opportunity to give his followers one more impressive admonition and precept: "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in GOD, believe also in ME." (John 14: 1.)

This same Jesus called the attention of the Jews to the necessity of scripture study, and faith in the Word: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John 5: 39.)

FAITH MUST BE ASSOCIATED WITH GOOD WORKS

It is true, Paul said that we are "justified by faith," and on that statement is postulated the confession of some professed Christians: "That we are justified by faith *only* is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort."

But such a dogma may be very unwholesome and very full of deception. It must be understood that the faith that Paul had in mind is inseparably associated with *good works*.

Thus James says:

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?—James 2: 14.

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?—James 2: 20.

Beware how you subscribe to the ancient and "orthodox" heresy that men are justified and saved by faith *only*.

The faith of which we write is associated with good works, character building, complete obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a *living* faith in a *living* God.

SUCH A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Faith in God is both biblical and scientific. It is confirmed by the revelation in his written word, by the immediate testimony of the Holy Spirit, and by the works of nature: "The three grand pillars upon which faith builds her glorious and imperishable works for the life that now is and for the life that is to come."

Every star, every blade of grass, every song bird,

is a witness of God. And these things are so wonderful that Professor Larkin, director of Lowe Observatory, says:

The retina of the eye is a portion of the brain, an exploring expedition. . . . the brain tissue itself come forth to see! The visible part of the universe is so supremely magnificent, that the very matter of the brain comes out of its prison of bone—the skull—to behold. . . . The seeing ones tell those in interior darkness of the beauty and wonders of the stars and starry vaults of the celestial sphere. And of the flowers, and the warbling birds, of crystals, colors, and of sparkling gems. These and the radiant sun, the brain came forth to see.

“He that has seen any or the least of these” has seen a witness of God. For, as Emerson says, “Nature is so thin a screen, God breaks through at every point.”

Well did Jesus say, “Have faith in God.” Well did Paul name faith as one of the six fundamental principles of the doctrine or gospel of Christ.

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NOTE.—The next chapter will be devoted to repentance. This chapter will not be merely a dogmatic, theological exegesis of the doctrine of repentance. It will be a direct and searching appeal to men and women who must repent soon or perish.