

THE REASON FOR OUR HOPE

by

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CHAPTER THREE

THE DIFFICULTIES OF DISBELIEF

DO YOU FIND IT HARD to believe in God? Perhaps you have been reading the daily reports from the battlefronts of the world, reports which depress because their cold statistics hint at carnage and human suffering. And perhaps, pondering on those reports, you have thought to yourself, "How can a world where bloody war is possible be the creation of a loving God? Maybe there isn't any God after all!" Or perhaps you have been visiting a friend who is dying of an incurable disease which slowly, horribly, agonizingly, eats away his body. And perhaps, visiting that friend, you have thought to yourself, "How can a world where cancer is possible be the creation of a loving God? Maybe there isn't any God after all!" Or, yet again, perhaps you have been brooding over your own life with its wrecked hopes, its repeated frustrations, its monotony and misery. And perhaps, brooding in that way, you have thought to yourself, "How can a world where a life like mine is possible be the creation of a loving God? Maybe there isn't any God after all!"

Suppose, then, finding it hard to believe in God, you decide to abandon faith and to exile the thought of God from your mind. Here, for example, related in his own words, is the experience of George Romanes, the famous English scientist, when temporarily abandoning all belief, he embraced atheism:

"I am not ashamed to confess that, with this virtual negation of God, the universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness; and although from henceforth the precept '**to work while it is day**' will doubtless but gain intensified force from the terribly intensified meaning of the words, '**The night cometh when no man can work,**' yet, when at times I think, as think at times I must, of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed which once was mine, and the lonely mystery of existence as I now find it, I shall ever feel it impossible to avoid the sharpest pang of which my nature is susceptible."

Giving up his faith in God did not help George Romanes at all. A few years ago a student at Yale University committed suicide. When his father, a distinguished writer, was asked for an explanation by the newspaper reporters, this was what he told them:

"My son saw no reason in life, and so none for it. All of us today do not know what the reason for life is. We do not understand life. Anyone who pretends to is bluffing."

Apart from God, therefore, life has no peace, no joy, no purpose, no reason.

Putting God out of the picture, how can you possibly account for the existence of the world itself? Oh, I know that very often it is lightly assumed that the world has always been and always will be. But whoever assumes that is mistaken. For modern science teaches, and teaches with a note of positiveness, that our world has not been in existence forever. What is it that Professor P. G. Tait and Balfour Stewart say in their book, *The Unseen Universe*, "It is perfectly certain . . . that the visible universe must have had its beginning in time." And again they say, "We do not hesitate to assert that the visible universe . . . had its beginning in time and will also come to an end."

And what does Sir James Jeans, the master of contemporary physicists, have to say?

"Everything points with overwhelming force to a definite event, or series of events, of creation at some time or times not infinitely remote. The universe cannot have originated by chance of its present ingredients and neither can it have always been the same as now."

If you decide to renounce all faith in a Creator of Love, another mystery emerges. How can you account not alone for the existence of the world around you but also for your own existence?

Face that mystery honestly, and I am confident you will finally agree that God is the one satisfactory explanation of your existence. For here, you are put together in such a way that you can reason and reflect. You have a mind and you possess intelligence. But where did your mind come from? What was the origin of your intelligence? Is it simply the accidental outcome of a blind process of evolution?

To be sure, it is very commonly said nowadays that in the beginning there was no God; instead there was nothing except water and dirt; and the primeval mud became dissatisfied with its lowly lot, and so through numberless eons lifted itself higher and higher from fish to reptiles, from reptiles to birds, from birds to animals, and at long last from animals to man with the strange power of thought. Therefore everything in the world, including even the human mind, can be explained quite easily in terms of evolving mud. Just give mud enough time and it will produce all by itself the dramas of Shakespeare, the music of Handel, the paintings of Michelangelo, and the teachings of Jesus Christ! God is not needed to interpret man and the world. Not at all! Mud and time are a sufficient explanation.

Now why such nonsense is unquestionably accepted as being the essence of truth is to me a dark enigma. Mud and time—what an explanation! Put a lump of mud in a jar on your pantry shelf, and what will happen to it? Will it ever, all of itself, become a tulip, or a dog, or a human mind? Never! Not in a hundred million years! What nonsense! If that mud is ever going to be anything else except mud, some outside force must act upon it. And so, if in a world of mud, living creatures with minds put in their appearance, it is not because mud has transformed itself but because an Eternal Mind outside the world has made those creatures in His image and likeness, equipping them with minds like unto His own. Sit where you are and think about that, and every thought will cry out, "God!"

Or take the conscience which you possess, however hotly some of the psychologists deny its existence. Here you are with a sense of ought from which you cannot escape. Here you are with a feeling of pride if you do certain things, and with a feeling of guilt if you do certain other things. Here you are with an idea of right and wrong. Here you are, in short, with a conscience, a unique possession. A stone does not have it. A tree has no sense of ought. A frog has no haunting feeling of responsibility. A cow has no idea of right and wrong. A dog steals a link of sausage and suffers no remorse, but you cheat anyone and you are inwardly troubled and self-condemned.

Now how do you account for that invisible monitor within yourself unless you admit that behind the universe is an Eternal Righteousness, a God who in creating man endowed him with a conscience to serve as a reminder that a human being is not a mere animal but a moral creation made in the very image of his Creator? Believe in God and you can explain yourself. Deny God and your own conscience will remain a perpetual mystery.

I think you will agree that the thing for you to do is not to renounce all belief because life has its ugly and puzzling aspects; rather, you should press on in your spiritual experience until you come to know God in a way so real, so vital, so personal, that never again under any circumstance will your faith in Him be on the verge of collapse. You need to know God as He has revealed Himself in and through Jesus Christ, and especially in and through Calvary's cross.

Early in this century, Robert Blatchford, of Great Britain, was editing the *Clarion*, an influential magazine in Great Britain, the sole purpose of which was the destruction of Christianity and the overthrow of all religion. A genius in the field of journalism, Blatchford made such statements as this:

“There is no heavenly father watching over us, His children. He is but the baseless shadow of a wistful human dream . . . If God were a God of love, He would not choose to create a world in which hate and pain should have a place. Why does He permit pain and hate to continue?”

It was so hard for Robert Blatchford to believe in God that he was an atheist, defying and denying Deity. But when his wife died, that unbelieving editor found that it was harder not to believe in God than to believe in Him. Let me quote from his autobiography:

“When I got up on the morning of her death I found to my surprise that I did not believe that she was dead. My materialism notwithstanding I felt that my wife was alive. My daughter, who held the same materialistic views as I did, felt the same. We could not believe that she was not.”

Robert Blatchford discovered that he needed the God whom he had defied and denied with all his powers. He cried out to God for pardon in the name of Jesus Christ and learned how divinely true is the precious promise of Scripture, “**Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.**” And as he came to his journey's end, he confessed,

“I will not dissemble nor cloak my sins, but . . . I can repeat without blushing the golden sentence, ‘That it may please Thee, O God, to strengthen such as do stand; and to comfort and help the weak-hearted; and to raise up them that fall.’”

Come to God in the name of Jesus, confessing that you are a blinded, bewildered sinner. Come, beseeching Him to grant you sight and light; and He will hear you and help you and draw you into a fellowship which fills both life and death with heavenly glory.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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