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Is Faith Reasonable to-day?

I hesitate to speak to you on this subject because it brings before us the theory of evolution. Not that I am myself disturbed by the problems arising out of it, but because I have seen so many young men and women in university, who have had the foundation of their faith knocked out from under them, by contact with scientific knowledge.

It is because I believe that some of you, even in this church, are passing through that ghastly experience that I have consented to do and say what I can to help you. Let me say right here, I have been through exactly the same experience, and I know what it means to feel that the religion, you have been taught cannot stand up under the searching eye of truth. However I have come through that experience with a firmer and deeper faith in God than ever before, because that faith is based on a greater knowledge of the ways of God and less on superstition. I feel certain that there are some here for whom the problem of reconciling scientific knowledge and faith has not arisen.

I hope you will pardon me for saying so, but for your own sake, I wish you were not here, because a discussion of this problem may disturb you unnecessarily.

Because of the frequent misunderstandings when this subject is brought up, I have departed from usual custom and written down what I want to say and will read it to you. I have done this for two reasons, first, I do not want to say anything which I don't mean, and secondly I do not want to be misquoted, as so frequently happens. Please, if you want to tell anybody what I have said, first obtain a copy of this address from me and use the exact words and not as you think you remember them.

First, let me say, that I have never heard a speaker speak against the theory of evolution, who did not show, that he either did not understand the theory, or he willfully misrepresented it. I am not going to take time to explain it to you, but I will say that the common interpretation, that man descended from monkeys, is so ridiculous and so far from the point, that it is hardly worth mentioning. If that is your opinion of the theory of evolution throw it overboard and admit at the outset that you know nothing about it.

When considering the place of God in our universe, let us never lose sight of the fact, that God is the creator of all things. We may, as our knowledge increases, have to admit that we were mistaken in our conception of how things were created or developed, but never can we exclude

God as the creator. The words in the first chapter of St. John must be forever true 'all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.' As I see it God has never ceased to create since the beginning of time. No doubt you have all heard of Luther Burbank. To him we owe thousands of our best fruits and vegetables. He devoted his life to developing and improving new species of plant life. In 1893 he published his first catalogue entitled 'New Creations in Fruits and Flowers'. This caused a storm of protest and hands went up in holy horror. Burbank was accused of blasphemy, and setting himself up as God, because he claimed to have created new plants. They were new creations, and we have come to accept them as such, and to bless Luther Burbank for them. But Luther Burbank never claimed that he, instead of God, was the creator. He always said that he simply made use of the ways and laws of God to attain his purposes. These are the words of Burbank "Nothing about a plant, or animal, or a human being exists by chance. Nature may select by chance or develop an unexpected characteristic, but if you look for enough you will always find that everything is the result of the working of some clear law." You know yourselves that by selective breeding you can develop certain

characteristics in your cattle or pigs. When you do so you are producing a new creation, but none of you would hesitate to say that God had more to do with the creation than you did. When we learn to think of God as the creator of everything that is constantly taking place about us, we will see God as a creative force, working with the certainty of God made laws. As man increases in knowledge and learns to use the laws of God for his own ends, he is apt to forget that God has anything to do with it. Moses made that mistake when he struck the rock and brought forth water in the wilderness.

In the study of biology we learn that all animal life begins in the germ cells. We learn that when two germ cells join together, a process takes place in which chromosomes are formed and divide according to an established law, and the process of developing a new animal begins. We know how one cell divides into two, and these keep on dividing and increasing until specialization occurs, and separate organs are formed, and so on. When we have observed this process, we are inclined to think we know something, and even go so far as to think, that now we know how an animal or man is created. We may say it is obviously a working out of a law of nature, and God had nothing to do with it, when actually we have discovered one of the marvels of God's creative system.

Instead of making us doubt God, it should bring us to our knees in reverence and adoration, that we have been permitted so intimately to observe the wondrous system of God's creation. The study of biology reveals all forms of life from one called organisms of the simplest form right up to the most complicated. If we see in them the working out of the laws of God, instead of calling it nature, we cannot help increasing our faith in God. When we see the similarity of one form for another, at some stage in its development, we cannot escape the theory that there is some relationship in origin. However that is only a theory and not an established fact and you can believe it or not as you wish. However, even if you stretch your imagination to the point of believing that all life sprang from one original cell, you cannot escape the fact, that in the beginning was God, and the whole process of development was along definite laws, which God alone could establish.

Scientific knowledge may compel you to give up your Sunday school idea of a God, separate from this world, shrouded in mystery and superstition, but when you learn to see God in everything about you, you will have a faith in God as sure as your faith that a stone will drop from your hand to the ground. A little boy was riding

in a small sail boat with his grandfather, drifting slowly toward the brilliance of the setting sun. He turned to his grandfather, who was a humble fisherman, and said, "Grandpa where is God, why can't we see him?" Tears came to his eyes as the old man answered "I can't look anywhere without seeing him." We can't see electricity, nor describe what it is, but we know there is such a thing, because we see its effects. Jesus said, "God is a Spirit." We can't see a spirit, nor can we see God as a definite earthly entity, but we know there is a God, because we see his handiwork. The words of the psalmist in the 137<sup>th</sup> psalm are not just idle words. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there." Jesus, recognized God in little things. He said, "are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." (Luke 12: 6 & 7). I see God in the vast expanse of the solar systems, so immense in their sweep as to be almost beyond human conception. I see God in the unfolding beauty of the flower. I see God in the unerring flight of migrating birds. I see God in the gorgeous coloring of the sunset. I see God in the working out of all his

biological laws. I see God in the birth of every child. I see God in the sporulation of the lowly bread mold. I see God even in the tiny disease germs, which play such an important part in our life. But above all I see God in his greatest creation, the ~~mind~~<sup>soul</sup> of man. If we see God in the life of disease germs, do we do wrong, in trying to exterminate them? If we see God in the propagation of animal and plant life, do we do wrong, in trying to vary the species for our own ends? Is it sacrilege to delve into and discover how God creates or evolves his plans in this great universe? I do not think so, because the 26th Verse of the 1st chapter of Genesis ~~says~~<sup>reads</sup>, "and God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth." I believe, that everytime ~~we~~ man extends his knowledge and dominion over anything on this earth, God is pleased. And also I believe that everytime we discover something new, of the ways of God, that we come closer to a knowledge of God. To any but the blind, science reveals God instead of obscuring him.

We know from scientific study that the body of man is very similar to all other animals. Possibly God does not

value the body of man any more highly than that of any animal. If he does, it must be because the human body houses an image of himself. Certainly we are not intended to believe that a man's body is the image of God. The image of God is found in the soul of man. The soul of man is like God. It is invisible. It is eternal. It is the soul of man that reaches out to God. ~~It is the soul of man that reaches out to God.~~ It is the soul of man that is blackened by sin. It is this image of God, <sup>in man</sup> that lifts man up to heights of Christian living. In Jesus we see the image of God shining through man in true perfection.

As we look about us in the light of present scientific knowledge, need we ask the question: Is faith reasonable? There is no other reasonable explanation but God. When I was at university, there was one student who went about making the statement, that obviously there was no life after death. If we will admit that God is the creator of man, we must also admit that God cannot be less reasonable than man. We would think a man was crazy if he spent many years building a spy scroper and then blew it up the moment it was finished. It isn't reasonable that God would create the soul of man in his own image, and then destroy it, simply because this

physical body becomes worn out. Furthermore, the soul of man must, like the spirit of God, be indestructible. Jesus recognized this indestructibility of the soul when he said in Luke 12 "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell."

If we believe, that God is reasonable and purposeful in his creation of life about us, we must believe, that he is reasonable and purposeful in his greatest creation the soul of man. In other words we must believe ~~that~~ that the soul of man lives on after death.

I have tried to show you that faith is reasonable in the light of present day knowledge, but I do not mean to say, that every one must base his ~~their~~ belief in God on logical reasoning.

Faith in God for most people is much more simple than that. It is the simple trust of a little child in his father. and that is as it should be.

Jesus said "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18: 3). But if you must put your faith to the test of reason, see it through to the finish and you will have a faith more unshakable than ever before, because not only will you have the witness of God in your heart, but there will be no conflict between your heart and your knowledge.