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**Please read all literature alongside your bible, so that you can see the accuracy and truth of  
the message for yourself**

This Pamphlet reproduces the sixth of a course of twelve  
addresses arranged for the first Sunday of each month during 1949, by the

CHRISTADELPHIAN (CENTRAL) ECCLESIA,  
In the  
Midland Institute, Birmingham

To show that it is not only possible but reasonable to believe  
those foundation truths of Christianity upon which doubt  
has been cast by some modern writers.

Dare we believe?

## THE VIRGIN BIRTH AND DIVINE SONSHIP

IT must be obvious that whatever view of life we may take we are compelled by reason to accept certain facts which are completely beyond our comprehension. Indeed, we are compelled to accept certain fundamental truths which seem utterly impossible. Every time we act or speak these facts are before us. A man in making an important statement may say, "I declare here and now" thus and so. In such a proclamation there are three fundamentals, all of them incomprehensible; and two of them involving concepts which seem impossible: "I", a mysterious, conscious entity quite beyond our understanding; "Here", somewhere in space; "Now", at some point in time. It seems impossible that space can be infinite, but equally impossible that there can be any end, to it; impossible that past time has been infinite, but equally impossible that it ever had a beginning. Man is assuredly a borderline creature, able to look beyond the cramped orbit of his life, but quite unable to understand.

Christians and atheists alike are bound to accept the fact of infinity. They are compelled to postulate the eternal existence of a force from which all things have come, either a living and supreme Creator or a blind, unconscious force which among other things has produced conscious intelligence. The main difference between theist and atheist is that the one, having postulated the incomprehensible idea of an eternal self-existent God, can accept all other truths without any further violence to

reason, while the atheist, beginning with an equally incomprehensible blind force, still has to find explanations for a million mysteries of law and life.

#### WHERE DOES REASON LEAD?

An exponent of atheistic evolution said that Christians were continually trying to find gaps in evolution in order that they might fill them up with God. It would be strange if any Christians were so feeble in faith as to justify this criticism. It seems rather that the incongruity is on the other side. The atheist says, in effect: "*Grant us a universe in which there is a medium enabling light to shine and material bodies to influence each other; grant us a sun, well isolated from all other suns so that there is no serious danger of collision; grant us an earth with such materials as those to which we are accustomed; grant us orderly laws, including such details as the remarkable fact that water while obeying the general law to contract with cold, yet for some unknown reason reverses the process when within a few degrees of freezing (a most important matter for man, for, otherwise ice would form at the bottom of rivers and life as we know it would be impossible) grant us a surrounding atmosphere such as that in which we move; grant that somehow on this earth living plants and animals come into existence; grant that they can reproduce. their kind and transmit to their progeny any favourable variations they chance to develop in themselves; finally, grant that such chance variations shall occur, covering in their totality the whole range of nature's wonders, including the conscious, reasoning and feeling soul of man—then we can fill in the gaps without God!*" Where are the gaps?

Yet even after these tremendous demands the atheist is not in a position to explain, as some of the most eminent of evolutionists have admitted. All development theories have broken down, that of Darwin perhaps the most completely. One of the leaders has openly stated that they now believe in evolution, not because they can prove it or explain how it occurred, but because the only possible alternative is special creation, and that is unthinkable. This remarkable utterance was assuredly not on the basis of reason. Repeatedly we have noticed men holding to negative convictions even after negative arguments have broken down. The modern tendency is to repudiate belief in God whatever may have happened to the arguments which have been urged for such repudiation. So it is affirmed that belief in special creation is clearly unthinkable just as in a former age creation was regarded as the only thought possible.

#### THE "WHY" AND THE "HOW"

No doubt there are some who would deny our proposition that all the mysteries of creation can be accepted if we believe that the first cause was a supreme Creator. They would claim that there are innumerable objections to life as they observe it, and it is because of these evil things that they find the doctrine of special creation unthinkable. But are these objections really on the basis of reason? Is it not clear that there is a vital difference between the question how and the question why in such matters? When we ask how certain things could possibly come into being we may find overwhelming reasons for believing that they are the product of intelligent, creative work even though we have no idea as to why they were made. If on an apparently desert island we found a machine with wheels and cogs and levers obviously related to each other, and with oil ducts to keep them lubricated, we should be convinced that the machine was the work of intelligent beings even though we had no idea why it had been made, why it was in this place or what work it could perform. If we found a pipe full of water which reached a certain regular height, we should assume that somewhere there was an equal height to produce this regular pressure. Our inability to say why the pipe was there would not induce us to deny that men could have constructed it, neither should we suggest that in this instance water was rising higher than its fount!

Similarly in our observation of the entire universe it is not reasonable to affirm that living creatures with complex interrelated parts cannot be the product of intelligent creation merely because we cannot understand why they should ever have been brought into being. Neither is it reasonable to claim that in some unknown way evolution has produced effects incomparably greater than the first cause. There is good reason for believing that in every field and with every force the principle we have observed with water holds true.

## **REVELATION AND REASON LIMITS OF UNDERSTANDING**

There is nothing that we can understand in its essence. We may perceive the relationship between one fact and another and we may sometimes be able, to grasp great moral truths with a feeling of certainty transcending reason, but on final analysis even the simplest of facts is almost as baffling as the fundamental concepts of space and time. Recent discoveries, even the most brilliant, and where the conclusions of science have been given the most decisive and dreadful of demonstrations, do not assist us to understand the world in which we move, nor do they offer any help to the atheistic conception of the universe. Many of us would claim rather that they strip the atheist of his last excuse. It used to be stated that evolution was from the simple to the complex, beginning with inorganic, unchangeable and eternal atoms and leading by gradual stages to the organized body and the complex mind of man. It now appears that the "mighty atom" which was regarded as the simple start, is a bewildering marvel of complexity and far more mighty than our fathers ever knew. In relation to the fundamental truths of the universe, it is true as stated in the book of Job that man is but of yesterday and knows nothing. Surely it is amazing presumption for men to dogmatize as to what an infinite Creator would do.

## **THE IDEA OF REVELATION**

It is possible, and quite legitimate, for the moment to leave any attempt to reason as to the first cause. Men who in ancient times claimed to be the recipients of revelation did not suppose that an understanding of the mysterious universe was an essential preliminary for their faith. Just as reason may tell us that some other men are wiser than we are and are able to reveal important truths to us, so it would be reasonable to believe that supermen could reveal much more. That was the basis for the faith of Abraham. Facts were revealed to him by the angels of God. We may never have seen such beings, but there is no reason for denying the possibility of their existence. There are innumerable forms of life below us and some lowly creatures we can observe closely, without their being aware of our existence. Is there no possibility of anything above us? Whatever has called man into being on earth, is it not possible for the same or a similar life force to have produced still greater, minds in other realms? Men are just beginning to contemplate taking journeys through space, is it not possible that greater beings in other worlds forestalled him in this proud ambition millions of ages ago?

No man should venture to deny the possible existence of intelligent beings far higher and more powerful than man. If we were barbarians living on a continent far from contact with other lands it would certainly not be reasonable to reject the possibility of other men living in other countries being able to reveal to us many truths beyond the range of our limited experience. If some of our members declared that such men had visited them in flying machines, and had given them messages of great importance, it would be natural to be sceptical, but assuredly it would not be reasonable to dismiss all such stories as impossible. The course of wisdom would be to take note of all the reports and test the truth of the messages by the unfolding of events. We might find the total number of such alleged revelations expanding into a book with far more wisdom than our normal standards and revealing some truths quite beyond our normal knowledge.

## **THE HISTORY OF REVELATION**

According to the Scriptures Abraham received such messages stated to come from the God of Heaven, telling him to leave the city in which he dwelt and come to another land. We are not told how the first command was conveyed but we can draw a reasonable inference from the statements which come later in the narrative. He was visited by supermen who claimed to be sent by the God of Heaven; men whose appearance and speech indicated their superiority; men who could appear again when needful in the promised land a thousand miles away; men who knew that Sarah laughed although she thought she was hidden from their eyes; men who were able to pass judgment on wicked cities, to deliver the few righteous and then to destroy the cities by fire from Heaven. Abraham had good reason to believe in the revelation they brought.

So it has been in all ages when the purpose of God has called to humanity. When the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt, they knew that the four hundred years mentioned to Abraham had run their course and the time of deliverance was at hand. They were so degraded by their long captivity that they needed many signs to convince their dulled powers of reason that further revelation from God had come. When they grasped the fact that certainly a superhuman being had called them, their attention for the most part was captured by the greedy hope of material advantage. The narrow way of discipline and restraint was as unpopular then as it has ever been, and hard experience or delayed hope soon caused rebellion.

Through Moses and many other prophets God declared the outline of divinely guided history in matters immediate and remote, thus offering to all generations good reason for believing in a great and final purpose yet to be consummated. The prophets gave details of that which would befall Israel, Egypt, Babylon and Tyre and the empires of Persia, Greece and Rome. The children of Israel were to be scattered among all nations, hated and persecuted but never to come to a full end. Their land was to be desolate for many generations until at last, after the greatest and most terrible time of "Jacob's trouble", the scattered people would be regathered to the mountains of Israel. Egypt was to become a "base kingdom" ruled by strangers; Tyre to be made like the top of a rock, and to be built no more; Babylon to be overthrown with violence; the empires of Persia and of Greece each to be succeeded by empires still greater; the empire of Rome to be divided and to remain divided to the end of Gentile times. A student who gains a comprehensive and attentive knowledge - of Scripture may soon be convinced that the Bible reveals itself as quite unlike the writing of man in a hundred different ways, continually emphasizing the unpopular thought, "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" At the same time these writings reveal knowledge of nature, and of future history, quite beyond the powers of man. One needs to study with interested and humble diligence to see the complete picture, and it is the cumulative force of the whole argument which brings conviction. Reason and revelation go hand in hand.

## **HUMILITY AND PREJUDICE**

If men are not interested they will be neither diligent nor humble. The method of divine instruction is designed to be repulsive to the scornful (Isa 28). Divine truths have been concealed from the wise and prudent and revealed to babes (Luke 10 v 21). Often the hardened prejudices of proud men have blinded their eyes to truths which are so clear to humble students that the failure of anyone to see them seems a tragic mystery. An instance of this is provided by the rise of Christianity. There are men who, while still claiming to be Christian, reject the doctrine of the resurrection and try to explain the origin of the Christian religion on another basis. They still have hope of a life beyond the grave, but not by resurrection. They still claim to believe in Christ while repudiating the central teaching concerning him. Gospels and epistles would need to be re-written to bring them into line with their ideas.

This reluctance to receive a doctrine so plainly taught in Scripture is in itself an interesting incongruity, but it is easy to understand it. No one expected and no one wanted a literal resurrection such as that recorded of Jesus. The first disciples did not expect it, the Jews repudiated it, and the Greeks laughed at it. All through the Christian era it has been an embarrassment to those who have tried to blend Christian hopes with the flattering doctrine of Plato. There is no explanation of the first century belief in Christ's resurrection but the one offered in the early Christian records. The doctrine was presented to the world with a tremendous force of evidence behind it: the evidence of men who with nothing to gain by lying had been willing to risk their lives in their insistent proclamation that Jesus had risen; the evidence of a man who began as a bitter persecutor of the Christian way, and was turned to become the chief witness—so he declared—by direct and unmistakable revelation which compelled reason to believe in Christ and to accept the fellowship of his sufferings.

### **THE MESSIANIC PROPHECIES.**

The truth was proclaimed still more effectively in those ancient Hebrew prophecies from which the apostles constantly reasoned, "[proving by the Scriptures that Jesus is Christ](#)". Those prophecies still can appeal to the reason of those who make an intelligent attempt to understand. Coming as they do out of the custody of his enemies, they are guarded against all possibility of collusion or of interpolation. Some of them are in plain language while others, although partly concealed, are still more revealing to the earnest student. These prophecies in their entirety present a picture as convincing to reason as if the revelation were written in letters, of fire across the sky.

They revealed the time when the Messiah would come, the work he would do, the fact that he would be "[cut off](#)", and that soon after this, city and sanctuary would be desolated. They predicted that he would be rejected by the nation, that he would be slain as an offering for sin, and yet that his days would be prolonged and the pleasure of God prosper in his hand (Isa 53). They revealed that the great one, Lord of the Psalmist, with words addressed to him such as God never spoke to angels, would have a period of waiting at the right hand of the Eternal until the time when his foes shall be made his footstool, and the rod of his strength shall proceed out of Zion. The prophecies revealed that in the day of power when Messiah appears as the glorified son of David, "as the messenger of God before them", and effects the greatest deliverance the Jews have ever experienced in all their history, instead of the wild rejoicing appropriate to such a salvation, there will be bitter lamentation through all the land on account of one they had pierced (Zech 12). These prophecies and many others were used by the apostles to convince the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

### **FACING REALITIES**

At one time the force of these testimonies was in large measure recognized in the Christian Church. All who have ever read Dr. Keith's *Evidence of Prophecy* will remember the use made of the messianic prophecies in that book. Nothing has happened since that time to alter the force of the argument. It has been found; however, that these prophecies do not fit well into the framework of modern Christian thought, and so they have been neglected. There are some good people who really think that the matter has been fully discussed and the argument overthrown. In reality the real argument has hardly been discussed at all, and certainly never shaken, it has only been found to be bound up inseparably with ugly things, and for that reason has been set aside. This is so with much of Christian evidence. The Bible administers such shocks to human complacency that many people find the complete picture intolerable. They are only prepared to accept a pale reflection of a few bright parts. They are like children who throw away every portion of the puzzle which displeases them and then completely fail to make a coherent picture out of the remaining pieces. Men and

women ought not to be like children, living in a world of pleasing pretence. They ought to face realities, however harsh.

Unbelievers of all grades have been quick to use this sentimental weakness of Christians. They assume that an argument based on any passage of Scripture will be dropped immediately if they can point to an ugly context which does not fit into the popular framework. Sometimes the repulsive context intensifies the argument, as with the terrible denunciations of Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26, or in the extraordinary picture of the final restoration in Zechariah 12. The complete chapters are far more significant than any text could be, presenting pictures of the future such as certainly justify the words of Henry Rogers: "Man could not have written it if he would, and would not have written it if he could".

Why should grown men and women be so swamped by sentiment or so entrenched in human complacency that they are turned away from the most compelling appeals to reason by an ugly and repulsive connection of ideas? Are there no ugly things in foundational truths that we are all compelled to accept? In history, in nature, and in the world at the present time? Was not the crucifixion ugly and terrible? Think of what has happened since then: the overthrow of Jerusalem, the terrible persecutions both of Jews and Christians, the hundreds of wars in the world, the turning of every fresh discovery and every clever invention to the science of killing. History has presented a picture of fiendish human wickedness right down to the present enlightened, atomic age, with its devil's dance to destruction. Yet in such an age as this there are many Christians who are so swamped by sentiment that they cannot believe that Jesus will ever be stern. Really there is nothing in any of the prophetic pictures of Messiah presenting a more terrible idea than we find in the New Testament in the words of the Apostle Paul and of the Lord Jesus Himself.

["He shall come in flaming fire taking vengeance"](#) (2 Thess 1 v 8)

["The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of this kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."](#) (Matt 13 v 41-42)

## **A REASONABLE BELIEF**

Reason surely tells us that this is the only way in which the world can be cleansed. Revelation gives the same message in both Old and New Testaments, in each case adding details intolerable both to Jews and Christians. In the day of supreme triumph the Jews will mourn because of one they had pierced, or "[mocked](#)" (cf Septuagint version). In the day of final manifestation "[all kindreds of the earth will wail because of him](#)" (Rev. 1). "[The tribes of earth will mourn, and shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven.](#)" (Matt 24 v 30) If with a mature readiness to face facts we study the whole of prophecy, reason will compel a belief in revelation. God who declares the end from the beginning presented a complete outline of purpose in early days, revealing matters utterly beyond the knowledge of men and contrary to the prejudices of those who wrote the prophecies concerning the nation and the Messiah—the time of his coming, the sacrifice, the desolation of city and temple, the period of waiting at the right hand of God, the changed priesthood, the national rejection of the righteous one, the long drawn out tragedy of the people scattered and hated, persecuted and punished, yet perpetually preserved. The extraordinary prophecy of Jeremiah 30 associating the unprecedented day of Jacob's trouble with the time of restoration, has already become clear to us.<sup>o</sup> The most dramatic event of all time is yet to come. (Jer 30 v 1-7)

We must now make a claim which may be resented as outrageous, but which on careful examination must be recognized as unquestionably true. We claim that as believers in revelation, accepting the

Bible as the Word of God, we are guided by reason far more than the majority of modern sceptics. Some may regard this as an extraordinary statement, but let them reflect. What basis of reason has an ordinary unbeliever for his repudiation of the Bible? Nearly always the rejection of the Bible message is on the basis of sweeping claims of scientific discovery. The sceptic would say, "We reject the scriptural view of creation because we now know that man was on the earth a hundred thousand years ago. We know now that he has gradually been evolved from lower forms of life". How does he know? What line of his own reasoning has brought this conclusion? Is it not a fact that he accepts these ideas solely on authority without making or being able to make any investigation into the evidence on which the conviction is based?

We do not deny the possibility that men were on the earth a hundred thousand, years ago, or even in a far more remote age. From the Bible standpoint it may be presumed that the angels with knowledge of good and evil had a probationary life somewhere, and it may have been on earth. If we accept the claim of geologists, however, it is purely on authority. We cannot test any part of the argument that has led to the conviction. A few fragments of bone and a tooth may have been found, but if we saw the relics we should not know what they were. The expert has to tell us that they were human, and to "restore them" as it is called, to what is supposed to have been their form in life. Sometimes they are built up into pictures by experts of another order and presented to the public in that "ever bubbling spring of endless lies".

#### **WHO ARE "SPOON FED"?**

The geological expert has to say what is the significance of the fragments being found in certain rocks. We should not know, nor are we able to find any reasons for accepting or rejecting expert opinion, or for judging between two authorities when they disagree. An illustration of this was provided not long ago when the B.B.C. allowed some talks on "How things began", trying to din into the minds of school children the doctrine of evolution according to the latest exponents. Statements were made which would certainly give the young people the impression that the record of the rocks was absolutely plain, showing a gradual development from an ape-like creature to the perfect form of man. The B.B.C. was asked whether opposition to these theories would be permitted, and the answer was that such a talk would be accepted from a geologist of recognized standing and learning. A name was put forward and accepted as having the required authority, but the proposed talk was not permitted after all. Those who have read it can understand why. It was too outspoken, declaring that the claim to have found such a consecutive record in the rocks was sheer nonsense, and that the geological evidence was the other way. This authority went so far as to say that the original speaker would never venture to put his claims forward before a body of competent scientists, and in emphasizing this criticism he challenged for debate. Here two experts disagreed not only in their conclusions, but in their presentation of the factual evidence on which opinions could be formed. The ordinary man may form a judgment between such opposing claims, but he cannot bring reason to bear upon the details. His prejudices and feelings may prompt him to accept one expert and reject the other, but he can no more make a critical examination of their findings than if it were a matter of translating an obscure treatise in an unknown language and written in invisible ink. So it may happen that a wayward youth who declares that he will not be "spoon fed" by his parents, may impatiently reject the instruction of those who love him and end by accepting a far more complete spoon-feeding from men who care nothing for him, and are in fact not even aware of his existence.

How different is the position of one who instead of the proud chase after remote knowledge devotes an equal amount of energy in a humble search for the course of individual duty! Here ml our homes are the saced writings which have been handed down to us from our parents, and here is our growing knowledge of the world in Which- we live. We can examine the details at any time, and if

reason is at work on them for only three hours in each day it means more than fifty thousand hours in the course of a lifetime. Even history, however doubtful in some of its details, is incomparably clearer to our vision than the record in ancient rocks could ever be even to the most learned of experts.

## HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Sometimes we can see history in the making. Some years ago I had the opportunity to converse with a boy who was studying for his school certificate and taking modern English history as one of his subjects. He was studying the history of a period through which I had lived. The South African war was particularly interesting. I had read the fleeting accounts of journals at the time. He was studying the permanent record. I remembered some wild and pleasing rumours which in a few days were proved untrue and passed into oblivion. Then a few weeks later came some most unpleasant news from which there was no escape. The falsehood of the flattering fancy and the truth of the evil report was forced home on us in decisions which touched the life of the ordinary people, soldiers ordered to the front and sailors called to their ships. The established facts passed into the official records. In such a manner history has been made in the past, the false reports gradually filtered out, leaving some truths which all must accept.

Here then we have something solid on which reason can work. No sane man will deny the antiquity of the Scriptures or the main historical facts on which the scriptural records impinge. Is there anything in these writings with their incessant claim, "[Thus saith the Lord](#)"; which enables reason to test them by our growing knowledge of the world? Yes, reason is compelled to recognize in the Bible the presence of something far beyond the feeble powers of man. There is a superhuman knowledge of the human heart. There is the early revelation of some truths which have only recently been discovered by experiment, such as the repeated declaration in the book of Genesis that the life of all flesh is in the blood thereof. Above all he is compelled to recognize a superhuman knowledge in the outline of divine purpose and divine foreknowledge, which has cast a light all through history down to the time in which we live.

Fifty years ago the truth of the Bible seemed to us to be amply demonstrated. Reason compelled the belief in revelation even then, but much has happened during the last fifty years by way of confirmation. We are like watchers of the night, noting the progressive appearance and passing of well known stars, indicating that the long period of darkness is nearly at an end. And, now there comes an expectant thrill, bidding us call all people to awaken, for we can see the signs of morning light in the eastern sky.

ISLIP COLLYER.

### DARE WE BELIEVE?

Twelve addresses designed for those who feel that there is a conflict between modern knowledge and religious belief.

The Need for Belief  
The Scientific Outlook and the Christian Faith  
Christianity and Evolution  
Miracles  
Biblical Criticism  
Revelation and Reason  
The Meaning of Inspiration  
The Virgin Birth and Divine Sonship  
Sacrifice and the Blood of Christ  
Physical Resurrection  
The Exclusive Element in Christianity