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I offer no apology for speaking upon a religious theme, for it is the most universal of all themes. If I addressed you upon the subject of law I might interest the lawyers. If I discussed the science of medicine I might interest the physicians. In like manner merchants might be interested in a talk on commerce and farmers in a discussion of agriculture. But none of these subjects appeals to all. Even the science of government, though broader than any profession or occupation, does not embrace the whole sum of life, and those who think upon it differ so among themselves that I could not speak upon the subject so as to please a part without offending others. While to me the science of government is intensely absorbing, I recognize that the most important things in life lie outside of the realm of government and that more depends upon what the individual does for himself than upon what the government does or can do for him. Men can be miserable under the best government, and they can be happy under the worst government.

Government affects but a part of the life which we live here and does not touch at all the life beyond, while religion touches the infinite circle of existence as well as the small arc of that circle which we spend on earth. No greater theme, therefore, can engage our attention.

Man is a religious being. The heart instinctively seeks for a God. Man is essentially devout.

There are honest doubters whose sincerity we recognize and respect, but occasionally I find young men who think it smart to be skeptical. They talk as if it were an evidence of larger intelligence to scoff at creeds and refuse to connect themselves with churches. They call themselves "liberal," as if a Christian were narrow minded. To these young men I desire to address myself.

Religion the Basis of Morality.

Even some older people profess to regard religion as a superstition, pardonable in the ignorant, but unworthy of the educated, a mental state which one can and should outgrow. Those who hold this view look down with mild contempt upon such as give to religion a definite place in their thoughts and lives. They assume an intellectual superiority and often take little pains to conceal the assumption.

Religion has been defined as the relation which man fixes between himself and his God and morality as the outward manifestation of this relation. Every one by the time he reaches maturity has fixed some relation between himself and God, and no material change in this relation can take place without a revolution in the man, for this relation is the most potent influence that acts upon a human life.

Religion is the basis of morality in the individual and in the group of individuals. Materialists have attempted to build up a system of morality upon the basis of enlightened self interest. They would have man figure out by mathematics that it pays him to abstain from wrongdoing; they would even inject an element of selfishness into altruism. But the moral system elaborated by the materialists has several defects. First, its virtues are borrowed from moral systems based upon religion. Second, as it rests upon argument rather than upon authority it does not appeal to the young, and by the time the young are able to follow their reason they have already become set in their ways. Our laws do not permit a young man to dispose of real estate until he is twenty-one. Why this restraint? Because his reason is not mature. And yet a man's life is largely molded by the environment of his youth. Third, one never knows just how much of his decision is due to reason and how much is due to passion or to selfish interest. We recognize the bias of self interest when we exclude from the jury every man, no matter how reasonable or upright he may be, who has a pecuniary interest in the result of the trial. And, fourth, one whose mortality is based upon a nice calculation of benefits to be secured spends time figuring that he should spend in action.

Morality is the power of endurance in man, and a religion which teaches personal responsibility to God gives strength to morality. There is a powerful restraining influence in the belief that an all seeing eye scrutinizes every thought and word and act of the individual.

There are difficulties to be encountered in religion, but there are difficulties to be encountered everywhere. I passed through a period of skepticism when I was in college, and I have been glad ever since that I became a member of the church before I left home for college, for it helped me during those trying days. The college days cover the dangerous period in the young man's life. It is when he is just come into possession of his powers, when he feels stronger than he ever feels afterward and thinks he knows more than he ever does know.

It was at this period that I was confused by the different theories of creation. But I examined these theories and found that they all assumed something to begin with. The nebular hypothesis, for instance, assumes that matter and force existed, matter in particles infinitely fine and each particle separated from every other particle by space infinitely great. Beginning with this assumption, force working on matter, according to this hypothesis, creates a universe. Well, I have a right to assume and I prefer to assume a Designer back of the design, a Creator back of creation, and, no matter how long you draw out the process of creation, so long as God stands back of it you cannot shake my faith in Jehovah. In Genesis it is written that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and I can stand on that proposition until I find some theory of creation that goes further back than "the beginning."

I do not carry the doctrine of evolution as far as some do. I have not yet been able to convince myself that man is a lineal descendant of the lower animals. I do not mean to find fault with you if you want to accept it. All I mean to say is that, while you may trace your ancestry back to the monkey if you find pleasure or pride in doing so, you shall not connect me with your family tree without more evidence than has yet been produced. It is true that man in some physical qualities resembles the beast, but man has a mind as well as a body and a soul as well as a mind. The mind is greater than the body, and the soul is greater than the mind, and I object to having man's pedigree traced on one-third of him only, and that the lowest third.

One does not escape from mystery, however, by accepting this theory, for it does not explain the origin of life. When the follower of Darwin has traced the germ of life back to the lowest form in which it appears, and to follow him one must exercise more faith than religion calls for, he finds that scientists differ. Some believe that the first germ of life came from another planet, and others hold that it was the result of spontaneous generation.

If I were compelled to accept one of these theories, I would prefer the first, for if we can chase the germ of life off this planet and get it out into space we can guess the rest of the way and no one can contradict us, but if we accept the doctrine of spontaneous generation we cannot explain why spontaneous generation ceased to act after the first germ was created.

Go back as far as we may, we cannot escape from the creative act, and it is just as easy for me to believe that God created man as he is as to believe that millions of years ago he created a germ of life and endowed it with power to develop into all that we see today. But I object to the Darwinian theory until more conclusive proof is produced, because I fear we shall lose the consciousness of God's presence in our daily life if we must assume that through all the ages no spiritual force has touched the life of man or shaped the destiny of nations. But there is another objection. The Darwinian theory represents man as reaching his present perfection by the operation of the law of hate—the merciless law by which the strong crowd out and kill off the weak. If this is the law of our development, then, if there is any logic that can bind the human mind, we shall turn backward toward the beast in proportion as we substitute the law of love. How can hatred be the law of development when nations have advanced in proportion as they have departed from that law and adopted the law of love?

But while I do not accept the Darwinian theory I shall not quarrel with you about it. I refer to it only to remind you that it does not solve the mystery of life or explain human progress. I fear that some have accepted it in the hope of escaping from the miracle, but why should the miracle frighten us? It bothered me once, and I am inclined to think that it is one of the test questions with the Christian.

Why Shouldn't Miracles Be Performed?

Christ cannot be separated from the miraculous. His birth, his ministrations and his resurrection all involve the miraculous, and the change which his religion works in the human heart is a continuing miracle. Eliminate the miracles and Christ becomes merely a human being and his gospel is stripped of divine authority.

The miracle raises two questions, "Can God perform a miracle?" and "Would he want to?" The first is easy to answer. A God who can make a world can do anything he wants to do with it. The power to perform miracles is necessarily implied in the power to create. But would God want to perform a miracle? This is the question which has given most of the trouble. The more I have considered it the less inclined I am to answer in the negative. To say that God would not perform a miracle is to assume a more intimate knowledge of God's plans and purposes than I can claim to have. I will not deny that God does perform a miracle or may perform one merely because I do not know how or why he does it. The fact that we are constantly learning of the existence of new forces suggests the possibility that God may operate through forces yet unknown to us, and the mysteries with which we deal every day warn me that faith is as necessary as sight. Who would have credited a century ago the stories that are now told of the wonder working electricity? For ages man had known the lightning, but only to fear it. Now this invisible current is generated by a man made machine, imprisoned in a man made wire and made to do the bidding of man. The miracle is not more mysterious than many of the things with

(Continued on page 3.)

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