

highest life from which he is derived must of necessity possess this same attribute in larger measure—the free God, and therefore the personal God, must be the object of search. Who can forecast the results of human freedom? It is a perilous thing to be a weather prophet. How much more to be a prophet concerning the actions of our fellows? Yet man, who cannot tell what his fellow-men may do for a single hour under given circumstances, will arraign the Supreme Freedom before his tribunal and publish to the world what Divinity can and will and ought to do. God is free to reveal Himself in the world of phenomena and to reveal Himself as it seems good in His sight. The second phenomenon is what has been termed the Moral Sense, because it deals with questions of right and wrong that no sensuous apprehension can lay hold of. Neither in eye or ear, in organ of taste or touch, is the Categorical Imperative of Kant, the “ought,” or “must” to be found that all men obey in some measure. “Stern daughter of the voice of God,” Wordsworth calls it. Is it not rather the Hebrew Bath Kol, the very voice of God, appealing continually to its appropriate sense that lies out of the world of phenomenal things, directing the soul to the all-holy personality from which it emanates? And, third phenomenon, is the religious sense or instinct of worship that says thou shalt acknowledge and pay reverence to that which is higher and better than thyself, the instinct that made even Comte himself clothe the convict’s wife with all possible perfections, that bowed his spirit in adoring humility before her, as he applied towards a sinful creature the sacred language that the page of inspiration had consecrated to the Only Divine. The evolutionists speak of senses being created for wants. This is more. As it is part of our civilization to create wants and thus extend human industry and increase, where that want may be supplied, human happiness, so God’s presence unseen creates a want, the longing for Himself as the only satisfying portion. Part, and a great part of the Christian preacher’s mission, is to intensify this want, this craving, until the search for God be begun in the soul.

Then you say God is to be found in the constitution of the human soul? I did not say so. The fact of His existence you may gather from the phenomena of the soul, but the fact of God’s existence is not God. If God were in your soul would you not know Him there? All that you know is a voice which says, “God is,” or a vision it may be like that of Lancelot:

“O yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
All palled in crimson samite, and around,
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes.
And but for all my madness and my sin,
And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw
That which I saw; but what I saw was veiled
And covered; and this quest was not for me.”

Where shall we find God? Where He is revealed. It is a person you are seeking, and persons are revealed not in nature, nor in common psychological conditions, but in experience, and that history which is the sum of experience, that history which is the record of human freedom, ay, and of divine freedom too. The world in every age is full of voices that proclaim God’s presence. Many godlike men and women declare “we have found God,” as Andrew and Philip announced that they had found the Messiah. Their words are those of the Apostle John: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” They declare Him not in order to knowledge but to fellowship, not to the comprehension of intellect but to the apprehension of experience. Now here is a strange phenomenon pertaining to the highest and holiest form of life. For nearly nineteen centuries men have professed to find God, and all in the same way, through the word of those who beheld His phenomenal existence. Is this a popular delusion? Popular delusions, as a rule, are not experiences, but belief in the existence of that which would fain be made a matter of experience. What are the strongest and most lasting experiences? Are they not those of sensation and emotion? A burnt child dreads the fire. A lost love will pain the heart forever. But here is an experience that triumphs over these and tramples them beneath its feet. For this experience the heights of human happiness have been renounced; for this the depths of pain and misery endured. Men talk of phenomena, of things that do appear, the modest flower by the wayside and the giant forest oak, and exclude from view the opening bud of childhood’s simple faith and the hoary head with its crown of heaven’s glory. The tamed lion crouching in his den is a phenomenon, but no less so is the dispossessed of devils that sits at Jesus’ feet. The lightning that rends the skies and smites the lofty tower to the ground is not more patent to sense than the word which brings the proud soul down to the dust of humble penitence, nor the mist that rises from earth to form the fleecy clouds above than the ceaseless prayer of faith that ascends to the throne of God. There is an unseen life at the basis of all these phenomena, and that unseen life is God.

The knowledge of God, if not the knowledge of a phenomenon, is knowledge based on phenomena, and not a mere inference from phenomena. The God of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, was a phenomenon, and such, in a greater degree, was the God of the Apostles and Evangelists, who declared, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” This phenomenon is what St.

Paul calls the mystery of godliness: “God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” Then is God a phenomenon, not physical nor psychical, but historical! Yes, to a large extent, this is true. The God to be sought and found is the historical God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God incarnate in Bethlehem, and who ascended at Olivet. No other science has a right to sit in judgment upon that history in which He has been revealed, for it is the record of human and divine freedom, a freedom which, even in its minor manifestations, can be gauged neither by Tyndall’s physics nor Spencer’s psychology. To remove these phenomena of divine revelation from the sphere of human knowledge is virtually to banish history from the field of study, and to destroy all faith in that which has gained for us the accumulated wisdom of to-day, the evidence of human testimony. The unquestioned testimony of eighteen hundred years ago is as worthy of credence as the testimony eighteen hours old. Let the same preconceptions rule in the minds of a jury as sway the objectors to the testimony of Scripture, and an equitable verdict becomes an impossibility. No theories, physical or metaphysical, can tell me whether one man robbed or killed another. The testimony of witnesses, the traces of the crime, the experience of the prisoner’s character, all of which are historical, are the means by which the accusation is justified or condemned. So history must be tested by history, for facts and theories, like men, should be judged by their peers. Bring forth your sister science that deals with human freedom in time, and then, but not till then, will you be warranted in any interference from without with the historical record. The theologian is a historian, and he has gone astray by arraigning scientific (I mean physical) facts before his historic tribunal, so that he need not be astonished that the physicist should retort by arraigning his facts of history before the bar of natural science. They are both wrong. I do not, indeed, sympathize with those who tell us that the Bible was never intended to teach science and philosophy, least of all with those who will not allow it to be a truthful record of history. If the Bible is anything, it is a history, first and foremost, and as a history it takes its place to be judged by history. When science and philosophy appear, let science and philosophy approve or condemn; but let not these systems presume to sit in judgment upon knowledge beyond their sphere.

What shall we say then? God is in history! Yes, but He is also in Nature, and in the soul. The God of sensuous phenomena or, in other words, the God manifest to our senses, is in history. The flash of lightning that killed and maimed certain men on the line of the Pacific Railway last summer is matter of history, but the electricity of which it was a manifestation is not historical. That great body can hardly even be called phenomenal, yet, knowing its existence from certain manifestations in space and time, we are able to avail ourselves at any time or place of that which knows neither place nor time. So in history we have but the flashes that reveal the omnipotent and everlasting God, whose unphenomenal existence we believe in. We learn from history that He is the source of all that being and life which we call nature, Himself the fount of life, the self-existent. In history we find Him to be the original from which our spiritual constitution has derived all that is worthy in reason, in appreciation, in conscience, the true, the beautiful and the good. Have we thus found God? No, God is no more a historic statement than He is a mental proposition or a phenomenon of nature. God is a person, a living being, a great soul, and you cannot transfer a living soul to the page of a printed book and thence to your mind. What says the historian who gives us the grandest view of God? “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” We have fellowship with living souls, and not with facts of any kind, be they physical, psychical or historical. If this passage means anything, it means that we can as truly know the phenomenal God as did that John who had heard, seen, looked upon and handled the Word of Life. For nineteen centuries there has been no God phenomenal to the senses, yet for all these centuries there have been thousands of witnesses to His existence in a really phenomenal world. David had no sense perception of God, yet numberless statements of the pious king attest the Divine presence in the phenomena of his life, as when he said, “I cried unto Thee, O Lord, and Thou hast healed me,” or “My soul longeth for Thee, to see Thy power and Thy glory so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary.” He found God as we find Him, as the Church has ever found Him, not in nature, nor in the mind, nor in history, though all these may be indicative of His existence. But in and through, and yet above and beyond all these, a great spiritual existence near to everyone of us, energizing and ready to energize in us and for us. When we have an experience of that presence, infusing such righteousness, peace and joy as are beyond the power of physical or psychical phenomena to communicate, and which in contradistinction to these are spiritual phenomena, then we have found God.

Now, as Christian apologists, as the greatest human benefactors of humanity, we say, Come and find God, for he that seeketh findeth. Seek God with desire to find Him. But, answers the infidel, “this desire will prejudice your search, and lead you to believe in a phantom.” Did the desire of Columbus in search of a new world, of Stanley in quest of the African explorer, vitiate their procedure, or