

is a negative proposition of this kind incapable of proof, but modern chemistry is inclining towards the contrary doctrine. And if carbon can be got out of hydrogen or oxygen, the conversion of water into wine comes within range of scientific possibility—it becomes a mere question of molecular arrangement.”

After other examples he goes on to the following practical application :—  
“ We are *not* justified in the *a priori* assertion that the order of nature, as experience has revealed it to us, cannot change. In arguing about the miraculous, the assumption is illegitimate, because it involves the whole point in dispute. Furthermore, it is an assumption which takes us beyond the range of our faculties. Obviously no amount of past experience can warrant us in anything more than a correspondingly strong expectation for the present and future. We find practically that expectations, based upon careful observations of past events, are, as a rule, trustworthy. We should be foolish indeed not to follow the only guide we have through life. But, for all that, our highest and surest generalisations remain on the level of justifiable expectations or very high probabilities. For my part, I am unable to conceive of an intelligence shaped on the model of that of man, however superior it might be, which could be any better off than our own in this respect ; that is, which could possess logically justifiable grounds for certainty about the constancy of the order of things, and therefore be in a position to declare that such and such events are impossible.”

It would thus seem that no one can get rid altogether of faith, except perhaps a few advanced German disciples of the “ higher criticism,” who avow as an initial dogma disbelief in the possibility of miracles and prophecy. To be faithless would be to stagnate, and to bar all progress. To use Bunyan’s figure—unbelief could only stay at home for ever in the City of Destruction. Faith might leave it for the king’s highway, and even credulity might go forth to wander aimlessly and perhaps with little chance of ever getting into the right way, but unbelief must remain helplessly paralyzed. This figure however may help us to a solution of the mystery. It is after all not infidelity that is current in the world but credulity, and the two resemble each other so much that we mistake one for the other.

In practical matters in life, one can distinguish three states of mind—unbelief, rational faith and credulity. The first and last are extremes, but they may practically meet. If I offer a man as a gift a handful of gold coins, he may reject them at once as spurious, he may accept them at once without