

Christianity they assail, and also whatever spirit of earnest truth-seeking there is in their disciples and advocates? If we know whom and what we have believed, know our belief as a personal experience and possession—and of what value is it unless it is a personal experience and possession—why should we fear? “Veritas prevalebit,” and we can await with calmness and confidence the end. The Father hath worked hitherto and still works. God is not dead, and He will accomplish His great purpose of truth even through temporary errors. I cannot prove by logic to any man that there is a God; much less can any man prove to me or to himself that there is no God. There may be difficulties and mysteries in the way of Belief: there are graver difficulties and darker mysteries in the way of Unbelief. Wherever there is real Faith there will be courage and charity. Whilst science has done much to undermine some foundation on which faith was insecurely resting, the spirit of inquiry she has awakened has done untold good. It has taken us back to the Bible in a spirit of humble, honest searching, back to the simplicity of the Gospels. It has helped us to seek and to show our faith of life instead of the faith of forms and formularies, to stand more confidently because more intelligently on the Word and Work of God.

This question has a very practical side which I can do little more than touch. How are we in our ministry to deal, not with the general restlessness of belief, but with actual and individual cases? When any one comes to me whose sole object is to throw discredit on what I believe and what perhaps he once believed, comes only to cavil, to put ugly conundrums, and sneer, who has no real love of truth, no real desire to seek or find it, but on the contrary a secret fear, which he endeavours to conceal in scoffing, that he would be ill at ease if he did find it, it is not difficult to know how to answer such an one. The gospel proverb about “pearls” will guide me there. But when one comes in all good faith and earnestness, with the old creed shaken and with mind restless and unsettled by new thoughts and new theories and seeks counsel and guidance, what shall I do? Refuse to listen or repel him by angry prohibition of his enquiries? Or seek to satisfy his spiritual hunger by a mere dogmatic repetition of old articles of faith which for him have been completely shaken and which he cannot see his way to accept? No, surely not, but by sympathising with him; by a frank admission of the doubts and difficulties with which my own faith has had to wrestle; by speaking together of the new facts of life and science and history and the perplexities these have engendered; by speaking, not as an infallible or authoritative priest, but as a humble, weak, yet believing and hopeful brother. Shall we accept a man’s adhesion to Christ so far as he is able honestly to give it, or shall we demand from him acceptance of everything we