

A MOMENTOUS MISSION

EVIDENCE OF THE UNSEEN ONLY BASIS OF MUCH KNOWLEDGE.

THE GREAT MODERN BATTLE

Claims of Infidelity and Christianity Considered in a Manner Which the Unbiased Searcher After Truth Will Gladly Welcome—Mass of Evidence, Direct and Collateral, Overwhelmingly in Favor of the Latter.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1904, by William Bailey, of Toronto, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Los Angeles, Cal., Nov. 27.—In the great battle that is being waged between infidelity and Christianity this sermon introduces a mass of evidence, direct and collateral, which the unbiased searcher after truth will gladly welcome. The text is Hebrews xi, 1, "Faith is the evidence of things not seen."

What is evidence? Testimony, proof, demonstration. It is a statement of facts, made in court by a witness, by which a juror is led to believe something that his eyes have not seen nor his ears heard. It is the alibi by which a man proves that he could not have been on the scene of a crime. It is the proof which a wrongly evicted owner produces of his right and title to an inheritance. It is an argument from admitted and existing facts to prove the operation of causes remote in time. It is the means by which truth defends itself against the onslaught of error and the weapon with which it overthrows the fortresses of superstition and false doctrine.

Evidence of the unseen has a momentous mission. For the greater number of us it is the only basis we have for our knowledge. If we were to believe in nothing that we have not ourselves seen we should have to give up our belief in facts and events innumerable. "It is not necessary for me to go and see London before I believe that there exists such a city as London," once wrote a great Bible commentator. In reference to my text, I know that such a place as St. Petersburg exists, although I have not seen it. Why? I am convinced by the testimony of those who have seen it. The "evidence of things not seen" has proved to me that it exists. I have read books written about the city of St. Petersburg. I have seen pictures of the great buildings of that Russian capital, its cathedrals, its royal palaces, its magnificent boulevards. I have heard my friends, who have traveled among the Muscovites, describe its bridges and its citadels. Why should I then doubt St. Petersburg exists, although my eyes have never seen it?

For days and weeks the old North American Indians could follow their foes by the tracks left upon the ground by the enemy. They could tell by those tracks how many men, how many women, how many children, how many horses and how many wagons and cattle composed the party ahead. They could unerringly read all these facts by the "evidence of things not seen." In the same way, in which the Indian warriors of old followed their enemies by visible signs we may find the "footprints of the Man of Galilee" not only in Palestine, but also in all sacred history. We may prove by the same process that Jesus is not a mere vision and that our gospel faith is not merely a poetic dream. They are far more than these. Our faith is rational. It is founded upon the conclusive "evidence of things not seen."

First, our faith is rational. Its geographical foundation stones are strong and true and well anchored. I not only find "the footprints of the Man of Galilee" visible all through Palestine, but, as Dr. Thomson once wrote, I find the land and the book are one. I find, by going among the holy hills, that Jesus was not a mythical character, a livid, among mythical people in a mythical age. Christ was God; Christ was also a man. He lived, he breathed, he walked, he slept, he ate, among those Hebrew people of the east as one of themselves. We find the place of his birth. We can find the places

where he passed his boyhood. Where he went as a man, where he died, where he was resurrected and the hill from which he ascended.

The land and the book are one. The personality of Jesus Christ, in the first place, has a true, a vitally true, geographical setting. No Bible student ever walked the Judean Hills with eyes truly opened to the divine truth that he did not have his belief in Jesus Christ irrevocably sealed and infinitely strengthened by the conformation of eastern customs and geographical facts with the recorded biographies of Christ's life. Henry A. Harper, the great archaeologist, the author of that marvelous book entitled "The Bible and Modern Discoveries," presses home this statement upon his readers in a powerful way. I might go on and quote scores of testimonies just like Dr. Harper's, but I will not. The harmonies of the Christ life with the geographical facts and the Hebrew customs of the Palestine hills.

Studying to-day the "evidence of things not seen" in reference to Jesus Christ, is there nothing rational, nothing overwhelming, to you in the harmony between the opened leaves of eastern rocks and the biographies of the four gospels? Is there nothing marvelous to you in the fact that there is not a detail in all Christ's earthly life which cannot be verified by the rocks of the Palestine hills and valleys, which are absolutely in accord with one another? The men who wrote the Bible were not historical novelists like the author of the "Tower of London" or of "Kenilworth" or of "Honor" or of "The Crisis." They did not accept historical facts when they wanted to use them for the benefit of their plots and reject those facts when it did not suit their convenience to use them. They did not put Christ in imaginary places at impossible times and put fictitious and impossible statements in the mouth. Almost every detail of Christ's earthly life can be verified by geographical position and eastern custom.

Jesus was not a mythological character. "Before you" can obliterate the story of Jesus Christ from this earth, on which he so sublimely lived, you will have to grind out of sight and forever erase the sacred hills of Palestine," once wrote David Gregg in a book for which authorship he was elected an honorary member of the Royal Geographical Society of London. "You will forever have to grind out of sight the sacred hills of Palestine, where Christ was tempted, and where he preached his wonderful sermon, and where he was transfigured, and where he died, and where he ascended. God be praised for the gospel according to geography! God be praised for the Holy Land, with its Jordan and Bethlehem and Hermon and Zion and Calvary and Olivet! These are all indestructible pages of the divine and indestructible book. These are all witnesses that Christ has spoken to men and lived among men and wrought out salvation for man." Christ was a God. Yes, Christ was a man! By the evidence of the pages of rock I know it!

But we find Christ as the "evidence of things not seen" in another way. By the fulfillment of Scripture prophecies in reference to his birth, his life, his death and his resurrection we know that the prophecies of his second coming will be fulfilled as well as his first coming. We know there will come a time when, upon the white horse of victory, Christ shall ride down the blue hillside of heaven. He shall come to put all his enemies under his feet. He shall come to claim his own. For then his name shall be written, "Kings of kings and Lord of Lords." We know by the words of his own lips that he has gone to heaven for a little while to prepare a place for his children, so he will come again and receive them unto himself, that where he is there they may be also.

The prophetic studies of the Bible are among the most instructive and fascinating of all the Scriptures. But in order to limit our studies let us confine our thoughts for but a brief moment to the wonderful birth and life and death of Jesus Christ. No rational man can read the fulfilled prophecies in reference to the birth of Jesus and not declare that his nativity was divine. Supposing I should come to you some day and say, "Mrs. So-and-so, that little

child of yours is going to have a wonderful history. When he gets to be eighteen years of age he is going to the Far East and will settle in one of the Pacific islands. Then he is going to be elected ruler over that island, and the people are going to obey him as their ruler and their king. Then he is going to marry and have children, and his children will have children. His descendants are going to reign in that island for hundreds of years. Then one of his descendants hundreds of years from now is going to visit London, and while there he is going to have a child born in the outskirts of London, in the suburb of Chelsea. Then that child is to stay in England and grow up and become a leader of the people until at last the King of England will become jealous of him, and he will be hanged in the Tower of London."

Suppose I should ramble on in a long ramble like that in reference to your baby, what would you say? Why, you would look at me askance and then say, "You are crazy! No uninspired man can look into the future and tell what is going to happen to my descendants thousands of years from now. A crank or a fool might happen for once to declare aright, that it will snow in Canada in July—as one weather prophet did a few years ago. But to declare what is to happen a thousand years from now, that is beyond all range of human possibilities." Yet the fulfilled statement that I made a few moments ago in reference to a little child is not nearly as wonderful and seemingly absurd from a human standpoint as those Messianic prophecies which were given to me, but by many writers of the Old Testament in reference to the birth, life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When the wise men came to Jerusalem to find the newborn King, who was yet to be "King of kings and Lord of Lords," what answer was given to the Oriental strangers by those learned in the Hebrew law? They promptly answered, "In Bethlehem," and gave for their authority the words of the prophet Micah, who lived and wrote 700 years before Christ was born. Yet, when the wise men went to Bethlehem, they found there the infant Christ, as Micah had foretold. Is not this fulfilled prophecy a startling evidence that Jesus was born a man, yet that he was the Being whose divine attributes were foreseen by the prophets?

But the divinity of Jesus Christ is found in the testimony of Christ's contemporaries as well as in the prophecies of those inspired men who lived hundreds of years before Christ was born. It is not only found in the gospel biographies of Jesus, who knew Christ personally, but also in the testimony of such mighty persons as Paul, who was martyred in Rome about 67 A. D., and Ignatius, who was martyred in 100 A. D., and Polycarp, who lived to be nearly ninety years old and was martyred in 155 A. D. These men did not live hundreds of years after Christ was born. By direct touch with events they were able to prove with their own eyes and ears if Christ was a fraud or whether Jesus truly placed the stamp of his divinity upon his life's work by the miracles he wrought.

Explain away the prophecies? Oh, that is impossible! And yet it would be no less difficult to explain away the testimonies of the contemporaries of Jesus Christ, who declare that Christ was divine. Why? Because, as I read those testimonies, I find, with but one exception or possibly two, they were all sealed with the blood of martyrdom. Here is the honor roll: Matthew was slain with a sword in Ethiopia; Mark was dragged through the streets of Alexandria until his brains were dashed out and the matted hair stuck to the walls and the rocks; Luke's mode of death is not known positively; tradition says he was slain for Christ; John, the only apostle who died a natural death, was not only exiled, but also cast into a caldron of boiling oil; James the Great was beheaded in Jerusalem; James the Less was hurled from the top of the temple to the ground and there beaten to death with a club; Stephen was stoned to death; Philip was hanged; St. Bartholomew was flayed alive—that means his skin was peeled off from his quivering flesh while he was yet conscious, the bystanders standing about the sufferer at the time and mocking him; Andrew was preached from the cross while the people scoffed at his dying agonies; Thomas was pierced by a lance; Simon Zeotes was killed in Persia; Matthias was murdered; Paul, Polycarp, Ignatius and scores of others were all, as I said before, martyred. Is it rational to suppose that those who lived in Christ's time, who were able to verify his miracles, would have been willing to endure hardship and persecution and finally to lay down their lives for Christ if they knew him to be an impostor? Why, the supposition is absurd!

But not only do we find the "footprints of the Man of Galilee" marked side by side with the footprints of his disciples who lived 1,800 years ago, but also with his disciples who are living by our side at the present day. And, wonderful to state, Christ's footprints are best revealed when he has been walking with the vilest of modern sinners and outcasts, as they were when he walked by the side of Mary Magdalene and talked with the women at the well of Samaria and followed Zaccheus to a despised publican's house, built by the stolen moneys of a Roman tax collector.

Oh, Christ worked some wonderful miracles when he was upon earth among the publicans and the sinners! But I do not believe a greater example of his power over sin and disease was ever more convincingly manifested than when he alleviated the sufferings of those unhappy maniacs whom the writers of that time describe as being possessed by devils. That was a vivid picture that Christmas Evans drew of the return to his home of that man whose home was among the tombs, where he dwelt like a wild beast, a misery to himself and a terror to others. No

sooner was he delivered by the mighty word of Christ than he started off to hunt up his wife and children. No sooner did the wife see him coming than she was struck dumb with fear. Then she cried, "Run, children! Run to the house and bar the doors! Your father is coming! Run or he may kill us!" The family hastened into the house, while the older boy started off to the neighbors for help. They barred and barricaded the windows and the doors of the house. But, strange to say, as the trembling wife and children saw the father and husband come nearer, instead of seeing him foaming at the mouth and flashing his eyes and of hearing him rave with his cursing lips, they saw him with a loving smile upon his happy face. He kept calling to his wife, "Mary, open the door! Do not be afraid. It is I, your husband, freed from all my devils. Mary, open! Jesus has saved me! Jesus has saved me!"

Oh, I know Christ can. I know Christ will if we will only let the "evidence of things not seen" do their work. The great trouble with most men who do not believe in Christ is not that they reject him. They do not do that only by the sins of omission, but they do not accept Christ because they will not study the "evidence of things not seen" as evidence. If a man will only study the facts about Christ all his thoughts and feelings will be different.

This studying of the gospel evidence as evidence has won the allegiance of many of our greatest lawyers to Christ as well as laymen. This fact was true of the conversion of Salmon P. Chase, the great Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Many years ago, after Senator Chase had been in the active practice of the law for some time, he one day unemotionally made up his mind to this one action. He said to himself, practically this: "Now, Chase the Bible is the great religious book of my country. Jesus Christ is the incarnate God who is here worshiped. As an educated gentleman as well as lawyer I should know what that Bible contains and whether or not I should give that Christ my allegiance or contempt." Thus as a lawyer he went to work. With all the power of one of the most brilliant judicial minds this country ever produced Salmon P. Chase tried to find out whether "the statutes of the Lord are right." He weighed calmly and deliberately all the evidence made in Christ's favor. Then, after he had weighed and compared both sides, he rendered his verdict. Salmon P. Chase, in the quiet of his law study, said this: "The Bible is true. Jesus is divine. He died to save me. I accept that sacrifice for my atonement of sin. I here and now promise to serve him all the rest of my earthly life that I may dwell with him in glory." Liked Chief Justice Chase, are you and I ready to-day to accept Christ's promises of love by the gospel power of the "evidence of things not seen?" Will it win you, O sinner, to-day for Christ?

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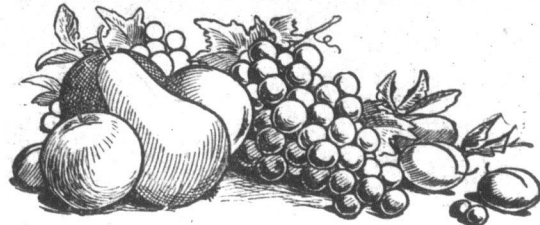
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