

Now there are some who, when pressed for a definite answer to many most important questions, find themselves in a similar dilemma. Their answer to all the mysteries of life and death is just the same, "We cannot tell." We cannot tell if there is a God. We cannot tell if man has an immortal soul. We cannot tell if there is judgment after death. We cannot tell if right and wrong are absolutely opposed to each other, or whether our ideas of the superior excellence of truth, charity and love are just a bundle of prejudices inherited from our forefathers.

The late Mr. Spurgeon once greeted a young man who declared himself an Agnostic with the brusque reply, "Ah! that's the Greek for ignoramus. I hope you will soon learn better." Surely it is an awful judgment upon the intellectual pride of the day that some learned men cannot get beyond the humble confession "we cannot tell." Many things that no one wants to know they will tell you with confidence, but to those questions which the heart of man is always asking, which no thinking man can rest contentedly, in ignorance of, they have but one answer, "we cannot tell."

But the question put to these Jerusalem Agnostics had to do not with abstruse matter of philosophy, but with a plain matter of history and fact. Was the Baptist a sincere man? He claimed to be one sent of God. Was he a true prophet, or an impostor? And all the difficult questions which the Agnostics stumble over may be reduced to just as simple questions of history and fact.

Take, for example, the foundation question: "Is there a God?" Men try to argue this as a question of pure philosophy, and they can get no nearer than the giant intellects among the old Greek philosophers. "We feel there is a God; we cannot understand the world as we see it, or life as we find it, unless there is a God; but we cannot prove it, we cannot know it." But that is not the way to find the answer. Men cannot by searching find out God. If you ask, however, "What lessons can I learn from the history of the Jews—is their witness to the One Eternal God to be believed or not?" You will be on the right way to truth.

Ask any Jew you meet the history of his nation. He claims descent from Abraham. He declares that Palestine is his proper country. That Palestine was given to Abraham by God. That God interfered again and again to establish his nation in Canaan. That they were brought out of Egypt, where they had been in slavery for 400 years. That the Canaanites were driven out of the country before Joshua and the armies of Israel. That when, in punishment for their idolatry, Jerusalem was destroyed and His people taken captives to Babylon, God moved the heart of a heathen monarch, Cyrus, to send them back to Jerusalem. And bid them rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem. And perhaps he will add that, though now Israel seems to be cast off, the day is soon coming when the ascendancy of the Turk will cease—

the Sultan is filling to the full his cup of iniquity—and then once more Palestine shall be given back to Israel, who will again take their place as the chosen nation of the Lord. Such is the testimony of the Jews. Now let us put a few plain questions bearing upon historical facts.

Who was it that brought Abram out of Charran; how was he led to believe that Palestine should belong to his descendants; how is it that his descendants have remained a separate people ever since, and still look upon Palestine as the land given to them by God?

Who was it that inspired Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, and enabled him to carry through such a stupendous task?

Who was it that moved Cyrus, the Persian, to restore the Jews to Palestine?

The Jew replies, "It was Jehovah, the Almighty, the Holy One of Israel. He made us a nation and chose us to Himself from all nations of the earth, that we might know the truth, and witness to the One Eternal God." And the Agnostic can only say, "We cannot tell." The plain question of fact, "Is the witness of the Jewish nation true?" puts the Agnostic into a hopeless dilemma. The history of the Jewish nation is one which cannot be explained on natural grounds, whilst to accept their own explanation is to establish all the foundations of Christianity.

So with all the greatest mysteries of life. Men ask if there is life after death; is there a heaven above; is there any resurrection of the body; is there a Judgment Throne? We answer, "Did Jesus rise from the dead?" It is a simple historical fact, as certain as the death of Julius Caesar, or Alexander the Great, that Jesus Christ was crucified by order of Pontius Pilate, that He died and was buried. What happened to that dead body so lovingly laid in Joseph's tomb? Did it remain there or elsewhere in death and corruption all the time that His disciples were declaring that He was risen from the dead? How came the disciples to be certain that Christ was risen, and, in the new courage and hope which that assurance brought them, to turn the world upside down? The Agnostic answers, "We cannot tell." They dare not maintain any other explanation of the phenomena. They dare not assert that Christianity was founded upon a gigantic fraud, or arose from the dreams of eleven fishermen. But to confess that Christ rose again overthrows all their hypotheses, and proves that there is a living working God among men. Or, if we ask simply, was Jesus a good man? If so, how came He, knowing all the teaching of the Jewish Scriptures, knowing the brilliant expectations which gathered round the promised Messiah, how come He deliberately of God? Either He was the Messiah and repeatedly to declare Himself Son of Israel, Son of God, or He knew that He was not. If He was not the Son of God He was an impostor. The witness of Jesus to Himself, was it false or was it true? And again the Agnostic

is in a dilemma, and must answer, "We cannot tell."

But without going back 1,800 years, let us take the Agnostic to Uganda and show him the marvellous transformation that the Gospel has wrought in that once savage and barbarous land. "The Work of Uganda, is it from heaven or of men?" Or, without leaving our own shores, here is a picture of a cottage home as I first saw it. The husband, in regular work, but always drinking. The wife, who spent her evenings serving in a public house, idle and untidy. The home dirty and neglected. The children the same. Not one of the family attending church or meetings of any kind. The children never attending Sunday school. Not a Bible in the house. The whole aspect of the home joyless and wretched. Parents and children alike cross and ill-tempered, as though life was a misery and a burden. But the woman became a Christian, left her work at the public house, and began praying, and taught her children to pray. After a year the husband gave his heart to God and became a total abstainer as well. Then everything was changed. They loved the Bible and they loved the Saviour. They loved each other and loved the children. The house was clean and comfortable. The very expression of their faces changed. They became examples to the whole neighborhood. Now this change, which I saw myself, has lasted for twelve years. It is one of tens of thousands to be found in England alone. We ask, then, the power that wrought this change, is it of heaven or of men? The Gospel that transformed this home, is it true or is it false? And the Agnostic can only answer, "We cannot tell."

Once more. These poor Armenian Christians who are being butchered to death by the hundreds while the chief assassin sits on the throne and defies the concert of Europe. Is there to be no vengeance for such inhuman cruelty? Is there to be no recompense to these men, women and children thus suffering for their faith? The Agnostic answers: "We cannot tell." But we know that not one of these murderers will escape in the great day of reckoning—that the lowest place in hell awaits those monsters who trample upon every law of nature and of God, and that the God who puts into his bottle the tears of his saints, will recompense one hundredfold to His faithful servants all that they have suffered for His name's sake.

One might multiply examples. Miss Coddington, though so wounded in the Ku-Cheng massacres, hopes to return to Fuh-Kien, and give herself once more to the dark heathen of China. Is not that glorious? A young Christian gave up a good business appointment the other day because he would not tell a lie. Is not that grand? You know it is. But the Agnostic must answer, "We cannot tell." Of course, such devotion and conscientiousness seem to us very beautiful, but we do not know why it may be that we have inherited strong prejudices in favor of these qualities, and that in some unknown island it may be just