

A Quarterly Journal
(Presented by email)

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January, 2010

Volume 2
Issue #1

“LIGHT” FOR OUR AGE

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
Psalms 119:105

Feature One: Editorial

WHAT WILL HEAVEN BE LIKE?

Sometimes I hear a whispered thought of despair of some that are Christians. They dread dying. Not because they are afraid they will go to hell, a place of torments, but rather, because they fear going to heaven. I don't mean that they want to enter the world of Satan, but they fear what heaven will be like. One person mentioned to me one day that he thought heaven would be an eternal church service. We would spend all of eternity before the throne of God bent in worship. This was a problem for him in that he didn't really like "going to church" in this life. It was something that he "had" to do.

While I don't believe heaven will be an eternal worship service, I do

believe our attitude toward worship is important, as is our love for God. But that is not really where I want to go in this article. Some years ago a young child asked me what heaven was like. Understanding both his curiosity, and the difficulty of answering that question, I made up a little “parable” that he could understand. To be honest, I have never thought of a better answer to this question, so I want to share it with you.

The Parable of the Two Caterpillars

Once upon a time there were two little caterpillars. They were silently munching away on a big green leaf when one of them quit eating and sadly began to cry.

“What’s wrong?” ask the other caterpillar.

“Oh, I am so sad.” replied the other.

“But, why are you sad?” ask the little caterpillar.

“I’m sad because of the big change we face. Haven’t you heard what is going to happen to us?”

“Do you mean the cocoon?”

“Yes. I don’t want to go into the cocoon.”

“But why? All caterpillars go into cocoons. That is the way we were made.”

“I really didn’t mind until I heard about what happens to us after we come out.”

“What did you hear?”

“I heard that we will not ever be this beautiful green color any more.”

“Oh, no! Are you sure?”

“Yes! That is what I was told.

“But we love this color? What color will we be?”

“I don’t know. I’ve just heard we won’t be green any longer. But it’s even worse than that. I was told we will be forced to walk on only six legs!”

“Only six legs?”

“That’s what I was told.”

“I will never be able to walk on only six legs! Oh, this is just awful!”

“I hate to say it, but it gets even worse.”

“What could be worse than this? Not green any more and only six legs!”

“I also heard that we will not be able to eat green leaves any more!”

“What! What will we eat? We will starve to death! Oh, this is just awful!”

So two little caterpillars bowed their heads in sadness because they were about to enter the cocoon. They couldn’t see themselves after they came out. They would not be green, but rather the color of the rainbow. They would not only have “just” six legs, but wings to fly through the heavens. They would not eat green leaves any more, but rather drink the sweet nectar of the flowers.

So it will be with us in heaven. I don’t know what it will be like, but I trust the God that made the butterfly. I trust Him that he will give us a life far more wonderful than we can imagine.

Feature 2: an article by R. C. Oliver

This is the first of a series that I will share with you this year. Following in this series of articles from “Light” by my father, R. C. Oliver, will be: Why I believe the Bible, Why I believe in Jesus Christ, and Why I believe in the Church.

WHY I BELIEVE IN GOD

This is the first in a series of articles which will be devoted to the general theme of *Why I Believe*. Though space demands brevity, yet it shall be my purpose in these articles to give sufficient material to supplant weakness with strength, doubt with hope, and darkness with light.

Under the general theme selected, I believe God should be given first consideration, for that He is the basis of all true religion all must admit. If one should be able to unmistakably demonstrate that such a Being does not exist, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." However, let the fact of His existence be clearly established and His relationship to humanity with its obligations to; obedience to the Divine law becomes manifest to every intelligent being.

Though I unhesitatingly admit that my first impressions of God were, no doubt, a direct result of my childhood environment, yet I do not believe that such constitutes my reasons for believing in God today. Rather, I believe that God is and that He has spoken to man for two basic and fundamental reasons: nature and revelation, each of which we shall now briefly study.

When I say I believe in God because of nature, I refer to what the scholar has in mind when he talks about *Natural Theology*, or a study of God as He has revealed Himself through nature.

In this division of our study we shall give brief consideration to the four well-known traditional arguments supporting the idea of the existence of God, namely: The Cosmological, The Teleological, The Anthropological or Moral, and The Ontological.

I believe in God from philosophical necessity for, as the Ancients expressed it; "From nothing, nothing comes." Where there is an effect, there must be a cause, and the cause must be adequate to the effect produced. The universe could not have just happened; it is an effect produced by a cause; and the cause producing such a great, complex and stupendous effect, must itself be indefinitely great. Such greatness is one of the attributes of the Christian's God-He is omnipotent! Therefore, though there are many questions left unanswered by the Cosmological argument, such as: Is this cause intelligent or unintelligent, infinite or finite, one or many? *et cetera*, yet it does possess value, and that value lies in the fact that *it proves the existence of some cause of the universe indefinitely great*. This demand, it is unnecessary to remind you, is met in the God of the Bible.

I believe in God because the universe exhibits order, and useful collocation. Where order and useful collocation permeate a system respectively, intelligence and purpose as the cause of that order and collocation are implied. Therefore, since such order and collocation do permeate the universe there must exist an intelligence adequate to the production of this order, and a will adequate to direct this collocation to useful ends. Therefore, though the Teleological argument, like the Cosmological, leaves many questions un-answered, yet it does possess value, which value lies in the fact that *the presence and harmony of the universe proves the necessity of an intelligence and will adequate to that presence and harmony*. The demand of this argument is likewise met in the God of the Bible--He is both omniscient and infinitely voluntary!

I also believe in God because of the intellectual and moral nature of man. It is not reasonable to suppose that dead matter and unconscious forces could create a being, man, possessing reason, conscience, and free will. Reason demands that the cause producing the effect, man, must be a cause possessing self-consciousness and a moral nature, in other words, personality. Also, man's moral nature suggests the existence of a holy Lawgiver and judge. And his emotional and voluntary nature suggests the existence of a Being who can satisfy this nature. Therefore, though this argument also has its weaknesses and limits, yet it *does* have strength, and this strength lies in the fact that *it assures us of the existence of a Personal Being--a Being who rules us in righteousness and who is the proper object of our affection and service*. Such is the revelation God has made of Himself through His holy word, the Bible.

I come now to my fourth and final reason for believing in God as presented through a study of nature. This is what is known as the Ontological argument which argument deals with thought or abstract and necessary ideas. I un-hesitatingly admit that this, to me, is the most unsatisfactory of my four arguments, not so much because of its weakness as because of its depth, for it is almost, if not altogether, a useless argument so far as the rank-and-file observer is concerned. It nevertheless has value, which value I shall mention in just a moment. The argument may be presented in different ways, one of the most satisfactory perhaps being this: "We have the idea of an absolutely perfect Being. But existence is an attribute to perfection. An absolutely perfect Being must therefore exist." I am perfectly aware that this argument conducts us only to an ideal conclusion, not to real existence. However, its value lies in the fact that *it*

shows it is what God must be, if He exists at all -an absolutely perfect Being!
And such is the God of the Bible.

Having now considered each of the four traditional arguments, we make this concluding observation concerning them: Though no one argument, independent of the other, three, can present us with a satisfactory conclusion, yet ,combined we see them presenting to us in a marvelous way the God of the Bible, for their combined testimony affirms that an indefinitely great Being, a righteous Lawgiver and Judge, the object of man's devotion and service, who is Himself perfect and eternal, stands at the fountainhead of all existence. These combined arguments therefore make me believe in the reality of God.

My next fundamental reason for believing in God is the fact that revelation, the Bible, declares His existence, for it is written. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Genesis 1: 1. I therefore believe in God because the Bible affirms that He is and that He has spoken to man. I fully realize that to the man who does not believe the Bible, this is no argument at all, for this reason I shall follow this article with another in this series on *Why I Believe the Bible To Be the Word of God* which will not only demonstrate the integrity, reliability and validity of the Bible, but which will also serve as a supplement to, and a continuation of, *Why I Believe in God*.

Feature 3: Our Communication ---

Aristotle taught the importance of having a good character as a speaker. He called this "ethos". The Bible teaches this as well. 1CO 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." Some translations render the word "manners" as "character". When we want to teach the lost about Christ, it is imperative that we are living a life that reflects what we intend to teach. Jesus put it this way in Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Jesus didn't say "let your light shine", but rather, "let your light **so** shine", or shine in such a manner that people will see God in you. For our communication to be effective, we must live the life that Jesus wants for us to live.

Feature 4: Bible Questions

If you have a Bible question send it to me by email and I will enjoy studying it with our readers. If it is a question to which you would like an immediate answer, indicate that and I will try to return it to you personally. Remember, if you would like to communicate with me, use my school email address in that this is the one I most often use. (boliver@mccallie.org)

A question that came up when I was in Russia by one of the ministers is one that troubles many people today. When a Christian sins, he ceases to be “Christ like”. Does that mean he is no longer a Christian? Suppose a Christian is faithful for a while and then goes back into the world, forgetting he ever knew Christ? How could he be considered a Christian?

I believe the answer is in the way the Bible uses the word “Christian”. There are three places where the word is used. They are:

Acts 11:26 ... And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

1 Peter 4:16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

In each of these texts the word Christian is used as a proper noun, this is a “name word”. It is never used as an adjective describing the person. It becomes his name. We all have a name, and we can either bring honor or dishonor to that name. The Bible does warn us in 2 Peter 2:20, “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.” I believe that this text and others teach us that a child of God, or a Christian, can turn from God and be lost eternally. We also see this in the parable of the sower. Some seed took root and began growing, but was choked by the cares of the world.

Once we become a Christian, we will always have that name, but whether we bring honor to Christ, or dishonor, depends on how we wear that name.

Humor:

LOT'S WIFE:

The Sunday School teacher was describing how Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt, when little Jason interrupted, 'My Mommy looked back once while she was driving,' he announced triumphantly, 'and she turned into a telephone pole!'

In Closing:

I have just returned from a wonderful trip to Russia. The church at East Ridge where I attend is working with the congregations located in Sosnogorsk and Sosnovka up in the Komi region of Russia. The sun broke the horizon about 10:00 AM and set about 2:00 PM. The temperature dropped to -34 degrees Fahrenheit and we had about three feet of snow. But the hearts of the people were warm and loving and it was wonderful to be with them again. The church appears to be growing and reaching out to the lost in that part of the world.

May God bless you as we begin the journey of a new year.

In the Master's service,

Bob Oliver