

II. The Gospel of the Hereafter.

Like all his other teaching, the message of Jesus regarding the hereafter is practical rather than theoretical. He never philosophized much about the nature of the future life; he simply asserted its reality and taught his disciples to live, day by day, in the consciousness of that reality. He knew that our material organization is such that no explanation of the future life is, or ever can be, in the nature of the case, intelligible to our mortal minds. To a child who knows nothing of arithmetic, the problems of the higher mathematics are inconceivable. On the other hand, when once we reach the stage where we *can* grasp the principles of higher mathematics, the elementary questions are very simple and clear. Just in the same way, from the standpoint of our earthly thought life, the facts of the eternal world are inconceivable, but when once we "pass on" into the eternal world the problems of this life, which disturb us so much now, will be very plain and clear. The higher stage of existence is unintelligible while we are still on the lower plane, but when we reach the higher plane the whole scheme of things on the lower plane will be open to us. Just now we must accept the higher plane on faith, recognizing the fact that some day "we shall know even as we are known."

Jesus himself always lived and acted in full harmony with the conception of the reality of the future existence. The things of eternity were more real to him than the things of time. He lived in the world, and yet he was not of the world. Always he recognized the fact that his true existence was spiritual, and that he possessed a heritage which was of infinite and eternal value. Paul and the early Christians in general had the same point of view. This ever-conscious faith in the reality of the spiritual order is one of the fundamental facts of the Christian philosophy as well as of the Christian experience.

III. Supernatural, Spiritual, Mystical.

Here we have three words which are often used interchangeably, and the meanings of which are not always clear to many minds. Exact and accurate definition of terms is an essential to a clear understanding of any question, and so it is well that we should subject these words to careful scrutiny.

The word "supernatural" means "above or beyond the natural," and is used to designate that order of existence which rises above the ordinary facts of our material existence. It is not to be inferred that there is any contradiction between the natural and the supernatural. Both alike owe their origin to a common source, and are responsive to a common guiding and controlling Power.

The supernatural begins where the natural leaves off, and to believe in it simply means that we accept a universe larger than the narrow realm of scientific knowledge and investigation. When Herbert Spencer taught his philosophy of the unknowable, he asserted the reality of the supernatural just as firmly as does the ordinary orthodox Christian minister. The difference between his view and the Christian interpretation consists in the fact that he taught the absolute "unknowability" of the supernatural, while the Christian has learned that, through the avenue of faith, it is possible to come into direct touch with the great unseen universe of God which surrounds and enfolds our little life of time and sense.

The word "spiritual" differs from "supernatural" in the fact that it is a more positive and vital and less mechanical term. "Supernatural" seems to imply a sort of schism in the universe, which is, of course, an altogether erroneous idea. "Spiritual," on the other hand, recognizes the actual existence of the infinite in the finite and of the divine in the realm of the human. The chief objection to the word is the limited and occasional uses which are sometimes made of it. The term "Spiritualism" is an illustration in point, for here the word is associated with a sectarian and partisan usage, which is apt to be misleading. Of course, neither the "supernatural" nor the "spiritual" can be exactly defined. Both terms belong to the infinite—that is, the unbounded—and, as the word "definition" itself means putting a boundary around the thing defined, it is impossible to "define" or bound a thing that, in its nature, is and must, for us, remain unbounded. Nevertheless, we may so far define the spiritual as to be able to recognize its existence and reality. It is possible to know that a thing exists, and even to know something about its nature and properties, without being able to exhaust all that it implies. Because we can not know *all* about God is no reason why we should not be able to know that he is, and to know something about his nature and attributes, especially as those attributes directly concern our own well-being.

The word "mystical" is now much used, especially in educational circles, as a substitute for both "supernatural" and "spiritual." It comes from a Greek word which means "hidden," and it is ordinarily defined as dealing with the unseen facts of the universe which are hidden from the view of the natural order. Unfortunately, it, too, has been used in narrow and restricted ways which have given it an unpleasant flavor. The theory of direct and immediate knowledge of the divine on the part of the human soul is usually denominated "mystical." The "mystics" in church history were people who believed in direct, and, what may be styled,

miraculous, communication between God and man. Properly used, there is no objection to the word *f*mystical," although, like "supernatural" and "spiritual," it is constantly subject to misinterpretation because of the impossibility of accurately defining the realm with which it deals.

IV. The New Testament and the Supernatural.

The New Testament, throughout, asserts the existence and reality of the supernatural. There is not one of the twenty-seven books which does not assume that there is an order of things higher than the material or scientific order about us. Christianity never was, and never can be, made a purely "naturalistic religion," if such an expression can be considered, in any sense, as legitimate. In the very nature of things, the Christian religion assumes, and must assume, that God and the spiritual order are real, and that they constitute the highest and ultimate reality. Whenever we try to explain all the phenomena of our faith on purely naturalistic or scientific grounds, we are certain to destroy the very basis of that faith. This does not mean that we attack or oppose science. It simply means that we assert that science, as we know it, can not include or explain *all* that there is in the universe. Shakespeare expressed the idea very well when he puts into the mouth of Hamlet the famous words:

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

The whole life of Jesus, as it is given in the Gospels, is unintelligible save upon the basis of an acceptance of the reality of the supernatural or spiritual order.

V. No Religion without the Supernatural.

It is readily seen, from what we have just stated, that the idea of the supernatural is a fundamental conception in religion, and especially in the Christian religion. When we take it out of the religious world, there is nothing left except a system of more or less incomplete, scientific ethics. The thing that gives religion its real meaning is faith in the reality of the supernatural. As the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." Now, it is impossible to believe in the Christian God, at least, without believing in the supernatural, for it is very certain that the God of the Bible is not to be identified with blind natural laws or forces. The Christian God is above the material universe, although, as he is a rewarder of them that seek after him, he is also in, and interested in, the material order of

things. Nature is an expression of God's will, but God is above and beyond that which merely emanates from him. There are, in fact, things in nature which are foreign to God—sin, evil, death, disease, and many others. In constructing the universe, God permitted these things to come into existence, because, without permitting them, the universe could not have been made a part of the moral order; but they are, nevertheless, foreign and alien to him. Man was made free to choose good or evil, and, being free, he chose evil, hence sin and death entered into the world. God, however—the perfect ideal of righteousness and goodness and love—remains distinct from the lower order of human imperfections. Once we give up faith in this Ultimate Goodness, we have lost all hold upon religion, and in order *not* to lose this faith we must believe in the reality of some supernatural order beyond and above the natural.

VI. Faith and the Supernatural.

We apprehend the supernatural through faith. Hence faith is the first and fundamental characteristic of the religious life. We apprehend scientific facts through our senses and thus gain what we ordinarily speak of as "knowledge." But the supernatural is beyond the reach of the material senses, and hence it must be apprehended in some other way. Faith is the bridge which joins the material to the supernatural, and which opens the way for communion between God and man. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," or, as the Revised Version puts it, the "assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." Faith "assures" us that the unseen and eternal things are real, and it is such assurance which makes the truly religious life possible. Science can not "assure" us, for the supernatural is beyond its realm, but, through faith, the soul leaps across the barrier and makes the spiritual universe its own. Hence faith is practically synonymous with religion. All truly religious souls must possess great faith, and all of them, from Abraham down to David Livingstone, have possessed it.

While faith goes beyond science and purely intellectual research, it is, nevertheless, based upon reason and facts. Faith is grounded upon evidence, otherwise it degenerates to credulity, and evidence must conform to our scientific and intellectual standards. We are to be able to "give a reason" for the hope that is in us, and it must be a good reason. God does not ask us to believe anything without subjecting it to the most careful scrutiny. All the claims made for the Christian religion are susceptible of being tested in this way, and there need be no fear that they will not stand the

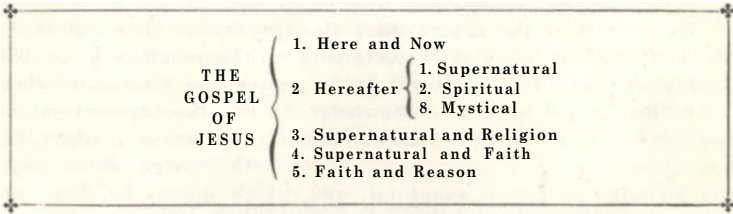
test. Our faith goes beyond reason, but it is, nevertheless, in the best sense of the words, a reasoned faith. The two extremes of skepticism, which denies the reality of faith, and of superstition, which is based upon an unreasoned faith, are alike foreign to the genius and spirit of Christianity.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES.

Heb. 11:1-6; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; John 6:27-40.

All references bearing upon the consciousness which Jesus possessed of the reality of the spiritual or supernatural order are appropriate for this lesson. There is scarcely a chapter in the Gospels where some such references may not be found. The passages selected above are only a few of the many Scripture texts which deal with the subject.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE.



OTHER REFERENCES.

1. Kershner—"Religion of Christ," Part II., Chapter IV.
2. Campbell—"Christian System," Chapter III.
3. Milligan—"Scheme of Redemption," Book I., Chapter I.
4. Fleming—"Mysticism in Christianity," earlier chapters.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. The Meaning of the Supernatural.
2. Relation of the Supernatural to the Natural.
3. Religion and the Supernatural.
4. The Supernatural, the Spiritual and the Mystical.
5. Jesus and the Supernatural.
6. The Supernatural and Faith.
7. Faith as Related to Reason.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON.

1. Was Jesus especially interested in the present life?
2. Mention some parables which show his interest.
3. How do you explain this interest!

4. What was the attitude of Jesus toward the problems of the future life!
5. How did he connect the present existence with the one which is to follow it?
6. Why is it of so much importance that we should live right here?
7. What is the general character of Christ's message regarding the hereafter?
8. Why did he not seek to explain the mysteries of the future life!
9. Why is it that we have never been able to fathom the nature or character of the future world?
10. Does the fact that the future is inexplicable for us, at present, affect the reality of the life to come?
11. Is it possible to know that a thing *is*, without knowing a great deal else about it? Give an illustration.
12. Is the real Christian *sure* of the reality of the spiritual life?
13. Why is he thus sure?
14. Is his conviction a matter of scientific knowledge?
15. Upon what is it based?
16. What is meant by the words "supernatural," "spiritual" and "mystical"?
17. Is the supernatural necessarily "unknowable"?
18. What is the chief objection to the word "spiritual"?
19. Why is it impossible to define, with exactness, either the "supernatural" or the "spiritual"?
20. Who were the "mystics" in church history?
21. Why are all of these words subject to frequent misinterpretation?
22. What is the attitude of the New Testament toward the problem of the supernatural?
23. What is the necessary assumption of the Christian religion?
24. What is the attitude of Christianity toward science?
25. Can there be any real religion without a belief in the supernatural? Why?
26. What is the Christian idea of the relation of the Deity to nature?
27. What is the relation of faith to the supernatural?
28. What is faith? How does it differ from credulity?
29. What is the relation between faith and reason?
30. What two extremes, in this field, is it necessary for us to avoid!

LESSON IX. THE QUESTION OF MIRACLE

I. What Is Meant by a Miracle.

The word "miracle" is rather an indefinite term. In the original text there are at least six different Greek expressions used to convey the idea. Sometimes a miracle is, literally translated, simply a "glorious thing"; at other times, it is a "strange thing," and, at still others, a "wonderful thing," while the apostle John always uses the Greek word, which, in the Revised Version, is correctly rendered "signs," to express the miraculous deeds of Christ. Perhaps most people think of a miracle as a "marvel"; that is, as something bizarre and allied to the realm of the juggler or the sleight-of-hand performer. Herod had this idea when he wanted Jesus to work a miracle for him in the crucial hours which preceded the crucifixion.

Any one who studies the Gospel records, however, must come to the conclusion that John's definition of a miracle is the only correct one. Miracles are simply evidences of superhuman power, and were used for the purpose of convincing others that Jesus possessed such power. In the nature of the case, if Jesus Christ were the Messiah, God incarnate on earth, he must have possessed divine power. All the Gospel records prove that Jesus claimed to have, and actually exercised, such power. Just how he exercised it must forever remain a mystery to us, living, as we do, on the lower plane of human thought and knowledge. Students of fourth dimensional space know that there is nothing scientifically inconceivable about what appears miraculous on a lower plane, if you shift your point of view to the higher plane. The miraculous to the man on the lower plane becomes the matter-of-fact occurrence to the man on the higher plane. None of the miracles of Christ would appear to be miracles, using the word in its sense of "wonderful" or "strange," if we knew the nature and laws of the higher world of which those miracles prove the existence. Miracles, therefore, in no way, contradict the idea of scientific law; they simply show that the scientific laws thus far discovered do not explain all about the universe or its ways of working. It is only when a confessedly incomplete science assumes to be absolute that the miraculous has to be read out of court. It is this scientific dogmatism which, more than anything else, has disturbed the harmonious relations which should naturally exist between science and religion.

II. Miracles and Science.

The chief objection which the purely materialistic group of scientists has urged against miracles is that they contradict the

idea of the "uniformity of nature." There are two assumptions upon which this objection is based. The first is that we know all about the so-called "laws of nature," and the second is that there are no other "laws," save those with which we are acquainted, which are operative in the realm of human experience. Any careful student must acknowledge that it requires a great deal of dogmatic arrogance to make either of these assumptions. The real scientist has discovered, with Paul, that we know only "in part," and that we can only prophesy "in part." There is nothing in the realm of natural law which precludes constant discovery of many things not hitherto known, and often the new knowledge which is gained throws an entirely different light on what we fancied we knew already. Science is, in fact, the most unstable thing in the world. The chemistry or geology of a hundred years ago differs radically from the chemistry or geology of to-day, and it is not inconceivable that the science of a hundred years hence will differ still more radically from present-day teaching.

Science has a right to demand that any evidence regarding the presence of unknown or higher forces in experience shall be strong and conclusive; but it has no right, with David Hume, to say that "no amount of evidence can ever prove a miracle." Such an attitude is dogmatic and narrowing to the last degree. The truly scientific mind is always ready to consider evidence upon any question, no matter how distasteful may be the conclusions to which the evidence tends. The attitude of men like "Wallace, James, Hyslop, Crookes, Lodge and others toward the question of psychical research is characteristic of the genuinely scientific ideal. These investigators held themselves ready to carefully scrutinize any evidence dealing with the spiritual world, or with the miraculous, because they felt that their devotion to truth, as a whole, did not permit any other attitude. Some of the greatest scientists that have ever lived—among others, Newton, Agassiz, Kelvin and Romanes—have been devout Christians. Science leaves the question of miracle open; that is, it asks that adequate proof of all miracles shall be furnished; but it does not prejudice the case by saying that no evidence can ever prove a miracle.

III. Miracles as Signs.

In explaining the reason for healing the paralytic (Mark 2: 1-12), Jesus gave the true explanation of his use of the miraculous. He said: "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house." Here he makes it perfectly clear that the miracle was simply a sign or

credential of supernatural power. By showing the people about him that he possessed power and knowledge beyond the realm of ordinary experience, he proved his divine credentials as a spiritual leader. John, as we have seen, constantly refers to the miracles of Jesus as "signs." Signs they no doubt were, and, to the unlettered men and women of the Christian era, they were unanswerable signs. It is quite true that no such signs are needed to-day, for the simple reason that Christianity has had time enough to justify its claims as a spiritual and regenerative force in the world in other ways; and yet it is difficult to see how it could ever have secured a footing in the early days without the employment of the miraculous. It is worth noting that Jesus never worked an unnecessary miracle. His whole purpose in using his miraculous power was to lay the foundations of his claims as the spiritual leader of the race.

IV. God and the Miraculous.

If we recognize Jesus as divine, there ought to be no trouble about accepting his miraculous powers. The Being who could create a world could certainly heal a sick man or bring back life to one who had died. The fact of the case is that when we deny all possibility of the miraculous, we also deny God himself. The idea that the Creator does not possess absolute power over his creatures or the work of his hands is absurd. It is for this reason that most of the rationalistic thinkers who refuse to accept any evidence dealing with the miraculous are frankly atheists, or, at least, agnostics. Such people do not, however, really get rid of the question by dodging it. They deny the Biblical miracles, and yet nature persists in pressing other and quite as astounding miracles upon them. The origin of life is a miracle, the relation of thought to matter is a miracle, the problems of heredity are all miraculous. The pure scientist who will not accept the spiritual interpretation of the world has to face these miracles, like great question-marks staring him in the face every day. Of course, he can take refuge in agnosticism, but this helps him little, for agnosticism explains nothing. Surely, it is easier and more satisfying, mentally, to accept the plain Christian interpretation and frankly to acknowledge that "God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform." The scientist, in his ordinary every-day experience, meets miracles which are as hard to believe or explain as any of the "signs" given to us in the New Testament. If we accept the New Testament, however, there is a reasonable basis furnished us for explaining everything else. If we refuse to accept this basis, the whole subject is surrounded with darkness and becomes an inexplicable mystery.

V. The Criteria of Miracles.

What has just been written applies to the subject of the miraculous in general. When we come to the matter of believing in any particular miracle, we, of course, face the question of evidence. There are miracles and miracles. Doubtless many spurious miracles have been foisted upon the credulous. The church of the Middle Ages, for example, was prodigal in producing miracles. Such miracles need to be severely tested in order to escape the bondage of superstition. Because there is some counterfeit coin in circulation, however, is no proof that there is none that is genuine. Because false prophets have arisen is no argument against the true prophet. The very presence of the imitation is rather a proof that there is something true to imitate. Every miracle should be subjected to the closest scrutiny before it is accepted. This means that it must stand at least the following tests: (1) Was there a good reason for it? (2) Is there good and unimpeachable evidence that it actually took place? And (3) does it harmonize with the general principles of religious experience? Unless any given miracle can stand these tests, it is well to be careful about accepting it. It is quite as undesirable to become a credulous dupe as it is to become a dogmatic disbeliever. The safe middle ground lies between the two extremes. The true Christian, like the true scientist, is neither a dogmatic rationalist nor a superstitious fanatic. On the contrary, he is a man who keeps a mind open to the reception of truth, and who preserves his intellectual integrity at all costs. He is ready to accept the truth wherever he finds it, knowing that it is the truth, and the truth alone, which can make him free.

VI. Present-day Christianity and the Miraculous.

The miraculous has little appeal, as evidence, to the present-day Christian. There is good reason for this attitude in the fact that miracles, as we have already said, are no longer needed to establish the validity of the principles of the Christian faith. That faith has been fully tested in the experience of the past nineteen centuries and needs no further proof. The best type of Christian evidences is found in a simple historical statement of what the Christian religion has accomplished, when fairly tested, in actual experience. Jesus himself considered this line of evidence as superior to the miraculous credentials with which his religion began. He said that "greater works" would be done in his name than he ever accomplished during his earthly ministry. While this is true, it is also true that, to attack the earlier miraculous foundations of what afterward proved so helpful and inspiring, is both ungracious and unfair. We do not despise the simple lessons of childhood

which helped us to a higher and broader view of the world. It is cheap and easy to make fun of the miraculous, but such ridicule is a mark of neither profundity nor good taste. Without the miracles, Christianity, as far as we can see, would never have gained a footing in the world. If Christianity, therefore, means anything to us, we should not despise the means by which it was first established. We should rejoice that we have come into the larger heritage of the centuries, without casting contempt upon the earlier stages of the process. It is true that there is no reason for us to go back to the more primitive point of view unless our own spiritual needs seem to require it. If a study of the miracles helps our faith, as it helped the faith of the first followers of Christ, there is every reason why such a study should be made. If we do not need this kind of evidence to stimulate our spiritual life, there is still no reason why we should criticize its employment on the part of those who needed it in the past or may still need it to-day. In any event, we should remember that to deny all miracles or the reality of miraculous power is to deny the reality of God and the reality of his presence in the world. The two things stand or fall together, and we can not overthrow the one without overthrowing the other also.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES.

John 2:11; 4:54; 5:36; 14:12; 20:30, 31; Mark 2:1-12; Heb. 6: 1, 2.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE.

MIRACLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nature 2. Purpose 3. Scientific Implications 4. Religious Value 5. Criteria R. Preaent-day Value
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OTHER REFERENCES.

1. Kershner—"Religion of Christ," Part II., Chapter V.
2. Bruce—"The Miraculous Element in the Gospels." Earlier chapters especially.
3. McGarvey—"Evidences of Christianity," Part II., Chapters IX. and X.
4. Warfield—"Counterfeit Miracles." The latest and best book on the subject.
5. Merrill and Warren—"Discourses on Miracles." A brief, but excellent, study.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. The Definition of Miracle.
2. Science and the Miraculous.
3. The Place of Miracles in Christianity.
4. God and the Miraculous.
5. The Criteria of Miracles.
6. Present-day Attitude toward the Miraculous.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON.

1. Define a miracle.
2. How does the apostle John use the word?
3. Is there anything unscientific about the idea of miracle? Why!
4. What causes the conflict between some scientists and the advocates of the miraculous?
5. What is the chief objection of materialistic scientists to the idea of a miracle?
6. What two assumptions underlie this attitude?
7. Why are these assumptions invalid?
8. What can you say about the instability of science itself?
9. What has science a right to demand in regard to the question?
10. What has it no right to assume?
11. Name some scientists who are fair in the matter.
12. How did Jesus use the miracles in his work?
13. Are the miracles needed as "signs" to-day? Why?
14. How is the idea of God involved in the question of the miraculous?
15. Does the scientist escape from the question by rejecting the Bible?
16. Mention some "miracles" from which he can not escape in his every-day experience.
17. Mention three criteria of miracles.
18. Does the fact that there are some spurious miracles prove that there are no true ones?
19. What two extremes should the Christian avoid in the matter?
20. What is the present-day attitude toward the miraculous?
21. How do you explain this attitude?
22. What are the best evidences of the truthfulness of Christianity for us today?
23. What should be our attitude toward the subject in the light of these facts?
24. What important issues are involved in the question!
25. Sum up the present-day attitude of the world's thought regarding the miraculous.

LESSON X. THE RESURRECTION

I. The Importance of the Resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the crowning miracle of Christianity. For this reason it is the storm-center of attack on the part of those who refuse to accept the religion of Christ. These attacks began quite early in the history of the church. In fact, it is due to them that we have the greatest exposition of the Christian doctrine of the future life to be found in the New Testament—the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. There can be little doubt but that this splendid interpretation is the earliest word in regard to the subject of the resurrection now in existence. There is every reason to believe that 1 Corinthians was written before any of the Gospels; at least, as we possess the latter books to-day. Paul made the resurrection central in his preaching, and encountered the greatest opposition to the gospel which he preached on this account. The Athenians who heard his famous sermon on Mars Hill listened patiently until he reached the resurrection, and then the majority of his audience refused to follow him. He had almost identically the same experience in his defense before the Jews in Jerusalem and before Festus and Agrippa. Nevertheless, Paul never ceased to hold to the doctrine that without the gospel of the resurrection Christianity had no message of culminating importance to the world. "If Christ be not raised from the dead, then is our faith vain," is his definite and final pronouncement upon the subject. All the other apostles preached the same doctrine, as is clear from the New Testament narratives throughout. The resurrection, therefore, is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith.

It is easy to see why this situation obtains. If Jesus Christ was conquered by death, his claim to be the Messiah obviously falls to the ground. On the contrary, if he really rose from the dead, everything else that he claimed for himself becomes easy to accept. The whole case, for the validity of the Christian teaching, therefore, stands or falls with the resurrection of Christ.

II. Theories of the Resurrection.

The evidence for the resurrection is unusually strong. The witnesses are numerous, and both their intelligence and character are indisputable. It has been well said that no other fact in history is so well attested or so strongly buttressed by testimony. In order to break the force of the evidence, the opponents of the Christian faith have used every resource of intellectual ingenuity. Notwithstanding this fact, more people probably believe in the resurrection to-day than at any other period of human history. The

shafts of skepticism have been hurled in vain against this citadel of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, in order to understand the situation fairly, it is well to recapitulate the strongest objections which have been made to the doctrine. Our space limitations are such that we can not go into these objections in great detail, but we can clearly indicate their nature and give them an adequate and fair presentation. The whole group may be summarized under the following theories:

1. That Jesus did not actually die upon the cross, and hence was not raised from the dead.
2. That Jesus died, but that he did not rise, the apostles and other witnesses being the victims of hallucinations or visions.
3. That Jesus died, but the apostles deceived the world as to the facts.
4. That the whole theory of the resurrection is a part of the history of religious myths and fables so common in the ancient world.

There are various shadings and interpretations of the above theories, but, in the main, this list covers the ground.

III. Discussion of These Theories.

Let us now briefly scrutinize the above theories and the evidence brought to sustain them, in order to see how well they explain the situation.

The first is very old, and yet it is still held by a few people living to-day. Its latest embodiment in literature is found in George Moore's novel entitled "The Brook Kedrith," published only a few years ago. The theory is so fanciful, however, that it has received very limited acceptance at any stage in the history of the church. The chief objection to it is found in the question as to the after life of Jesus, if he did not really die on the cross. He was known to many people in Judea and could scarcely have escaped recognition. Moreover, if he still lived and saw a false gospel preached in his name and many people being martyred by reason of their faith in this gospel, how could he have remained silent? That the Jesus we know in the Gospels could have practiced such deception would be a greater miracle to believe in than the resurrection itself. If Jesus did not die on the cross, his after career must have been one of such fraud and deception that, to those who have carefully studied his previous life and character, it becomes inconceivable.

Moreover, Jesus was executed according to the Roman law. Now, the Romans were very strict in all matters of the kind, and, while it may have occasionally happened that a condemned criminal has escaped after having legally been put to death, such cases, in all countries, are confessedly rare. Furthermore, with a Roman

guard over the grave and a man physically weakened, as Jesus must have been after the crucifixion, it is difficult to see how he could have escaped.

And, after he escaped, where would he go? Can we think of Jesus hiding away or remaining always in hiding and unknown? His friends would certainly want to find him, and his enemies would have a still greater interest in producing him, for this would have destroyed the new gospel at a single stroke.

All these considerations make the hypothesis of Jesus escaping death on the cross so improbable that very few, in any age, have been willing to accept it.

2. The second theory grants that Jesus died on the cross and that he was buried as the Scriptural narratives indicate. It says, however, that the disciples and the others who saw him after his resurrection were the victims of hallucinations and subjective visions. It does not dispute the honesty of the New Testament witnesses, but says that they were deluded. This is the most popular objection to the fact of the resurrection. It presumes that a great many people, at different times and in different places, were all subject to the same hallucination. Now, if this be true, it is the one and only instance in human history where it occurred. Individuals sometimes have hallucinations, but that eleven different people, at one time, and five hundred at another, should all have the same hallucination *at once* is unthinkable. It is characteristic of the hallucination theory that it requires one to believe something which is fully as contradictory to ordinary experience as is the resurrection itself. To a Christian it is more so, for, with his view of the universe, it is nothing incredible that one should rise from the dead, while it is altogether incredible that so many witnesses should all have the same illusion.

Then, in addition, we have the problem of the empty grave. If the grave were not empty, why did not the Jerusalem authorities silence Peter and the other Christians by simply producing the body of Jesus? But if the grave were empty, how does the hallucination theory explain the facts?

3. The third theory asserts that the disciples were dishonest and preached what they knew to be untrue. Aside from the character improbability of this position, what had these men to gain by risking death and torture in order to preach what they knew to be false? There was no earthly profit in the enterprise for them, and if they were liars and hypocrites, they must have known that there could be no reward for them hereafter. The disciples, while mostly unlettered men, were certainly gifted with ordinary common sense.

The improbability of the third position is so obvious that only the most uncritical skeptics have been willing to accept it.

4. The fourth theory practically goes upon the ground that all of the Scriptural narratives are false, and that the whole fabric of the Christian religion is a myth, like the mythological stories of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Some adherents of this theory deny that Christ himself ever lived. The early existence of the Christian records, however, and their widespread quotation, as well as the early historical facts dealing with the progress of the church, make this theory untenable. To resolve all the Gospel records into thin air is to assume that the greatest and most influential force in modern history had no real foundation. If such a thing were true, it would constitute a far greater miracle than the resurrection itself. Christianity is here, and it must have come from somewhere. To say that it is all based upon a myth is to make an assertion which not only lacks historical proof, but which demands far greater faith than anything which is required in the Christian religion itself. This position therefore involves us in greater difficulties than those from which it presumes to deliver us.

IV. Evidence for the Resurrection.

Passing from these man-made efforts of skeptics to escape from the actual facts as given in the New Testament, let us notice, briefly, the strong evidence in behalf of the resurrection. First, there is the testimony of the witnesses mentioned in the Gospels. There are eleven appearances of Jesus (sometimes reduced to ten) mentioned in the New Testament. These may be given as follows:

1. To the women at the tomb (Matt. 16: 1-8; Matt. 28: 1-10; Luke 24: 1-9).
2. To Mary Magdalene alone (John 20: 11-18).
3. To Cephas (1 Cor. 15:5; Luke 24:34).
4. To two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32).
5. To the eleven without Thomas (John 20: 19-25).
6. To the eleven with Thomas (Luke 24: 33-49; John 20: 26-29).
7. To seven disciples at the lake of Tiberias (John 21:1-23).
8. To the five hundred (1 Cor. 15: 6).
9. To James (1 Cor. 15:7).
10. To all the disciples (great commission) (Matt. 28: 16-20; 1 Cor. 15: 8).
11. At the ascension (Acts 1: 6-11).

Moreover, Jesus appeared later to Paul himself, as is recorded in the Book of Acts and in the apostle's own confession in 1 Cor. 15: 8. Second, the Christian gospel was based upon the resurrection and owed its success largely to this teaching. As already noted,

if Christ did not rise from the dead, the whole fabric of Christianity was builded upon a falsehood. If a tree is known by its fruits, such results from a false foundation are inconceivable. Third, the resurrection is the natural consummation of the teaching of Christ. He would not have been the Christ without it. It is the normal crowning and completion of his mission to the world.

For these and many other reasons which we have not space to recapitulate here, the Christian accepts the resurrection of his Lord as a cardinal article of his faith.

V. The Forty Days and the Ascension.

Jesus appeared frequently to his disciples during the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension. We are not to suppose that all of these appearances are recorded in the New Testament. Enough of them, however, are given to furnish a basis for a reasonable faith in the fact, and that is all that is demanded. The nature of the resurrected body is not clear. Some think that throughout the forty days Jesus wore his earthly body; others, that he used his spiritual body, at times materializing it in order to prove that he was alive for the benefit of his followers; still others think that there was a half-way stage before he finally took his resurrection body when he ascended to heaven. No special theory is essential, provided we accept the fact of the resurrection itself. The problem is naturally a difficult one because it deals with the future life and the nature of the spiritual world. Doubtless we shall not understand all that is involved until we rise to the higher plane of existence in the world beyond the grave. It is enough for us to know now that he lived after death, and that, because he lived, we shall live also.

VI. The Second Coming.

Closely allied to the problems of the resurrection and the ascension is the question of the "Second Coming." In the first chapter of Acts, the disciples who were present at the ascension, we are told, were notified that "this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven."

The early church believed ardently in the second coming of Christ. Some of its members looked for his return during the apostolic period, and the apostle Paul, in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, warned those who held to this view that many things must transpire before the event would take place. Later, the Book of Revelation gave an added emphasis to the subject.

Christians to-day hold to many different interpretations and theories of the second coming of our Lord. With these theories

and believes this handbook can not deal in detail. Let it suffice to say that the *fact* of the second coming, in some form or other, is made clear in the sacred writings. Just how and when the event will take place is a matter upon which there is room for wide difference of opinion. The attitude of the Christian toward the subject, whatever particular view he may espouse, should be that of the author of the final book in the Bible in his farewell words to the world: "He who testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus."

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES.

The final chapters of the four Gospels and the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians are the chief references for this lesson. On the question of the second coming of Christ, read 1 and 2 Thessalonians, especially the second chapter of the latter Epistle.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE.

<p>THE RESURRECTION</p>	<p>{</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Importance 2. False Theories <li style="padding-left: 2em;">Evidences 4. The Appearances 5. The Resurrected Body 6. The Second Coming <p>}</p>
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OTHER REFERENCES.

1. Kershner—"The Religion of Christ," Part II., Chapter VI.
2. McGarvey—"Evidences of Christianity," Part III., Chapters X., XI. and XII.
3. Orr—"The Resurrection of Jesus." The most complete one-volume work on the subject.
4. Milligan—"The Resurrection of Our Lord." An older volume than Orr's, but an excellent work in every respect.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. Importance of the Resurrection.
2. Objections to the Resurrection.
3. The Appearances.
4. The Resurrected Body.
5. Present-day Attitude Toward the Subject.
6. The Second Coming.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON.

1. What place does the resurrection of Jesus hold in the Christian religion?

2. How is the fact of its importance made clear by the testimony of its enemies?
3. What section of the New Testament contains the earliest testimony to the fact of the resurrection?
4. What place did the resurrection occupy in Paul's teaching?
5. Why did he give it this place?
6. Have the attacks upon the resurrection succeeded?
7. Mention four of the theories held by those who refuse to believe in the resurrection.
8. Give the arguments against the theory that Jesus did not die on the cross.
9. State the arguments against the "hallucination" theory.
10. Give the arguments against believing that the disciples deliberately taught what they knew to be untrue.
11. State the case against the "mythical" theory.
12. What is the final conclusion regarding the case against the resurrection?
13. How many "appearances" of Jesus after his resurrection are recorded in the New Testament?
14. State the circumstances attending each of these "appearances," as far as they are recorded.
15. Mention two arguments for the validity of the doctrine of the resurrection aside from the testimony of witnesses to the fact.
16. What can you say about the character of the resurrected body of Jesus?
17. State three theories in regard to it.
18. Is it possible to give an entirely comprehensive explanation of the subject? Why?
19. What is the Christian doctrine of the "Second Coming"?
20. What mistake was made by many of the early disciples in regard to the "Second Coming"?
21. What should be our attitude toward the question to-day?

LESSON XI. THE FUTURE LIFE

I. Importance of the Problem.

The value of the resurrection as an essential feature of Christian doctrine is apparent from even a casual study of the issues which are involved. In all ages the three great postulates of any reasoned concept of religion have always been scheduled as God, Freedom and Immortality. Religion must have a God, or it is obviously a meaningless term. However much, too, we may juggle with words,

unless there is such a thing as moral freedom, it is not difficult to see that both ethics and religion, in their ordinarily accepted definitions, become impossible. No less necessary to the idea of religion—and certainly of the Christian religion—is the postulate of immortality. The gospel of values, which is fundamental in Christianity, asserts that the Christian character, when once formed, shall not be lost. But if "the dead rise not," and if there is no future existence, then Christian character is certainly wasted—at least, so far as the individual is concerned. The idea that the Christian religion is a good thing for this life, and that therefore no other life is needed, is altogether foreign to the conception of Paul and the other apostles, as well as to the teaching of Jesus himself. Paul said conclusively (1 Cor. 15:19): "If we have only hope in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable." He evidently regarded the doctrine of personal immortality as an essential feature of his faith. It was for this reason that he laid such stress upon the resurrection of Christ. Christ's resurrection was to him a certain proof of our own, and because Christ conquered death, he was assured we shall, at some time, conquer the great foe of humanity also. Hence he made the resurrection, carrying with it personal and assured immortality for the Christian, a fundamental feature of his gospel,

III. The Question in History.

The problem of immortality is very old. The Greek writers are full of it. The most striking contribution to its solution in Greek thought is found in Plato's "Apology" and "Phaedo," which purport to contain the final words of Socrates upon the subject. It is unnecessary to recapitulate Plato's argument here. Let it suffice to say that, however strong it may be to many minds, the sentiment of humanity is pretty unanimous in agreeing that it is inconclusive. The best it does is to establish a presumption in favor of immortality, and a presumption is concededly far from conclusive proof. The difference between Plato's contribution to the subject and the contribution of Jesus Christ is the difference between theoretical agreement and practical demonstration. Plato proved, more or less conclusively, that the soul, of right, *ought to be* immortal; Jesus Christ proved, by actually rising from the dead, that it *is* immortal, and that the future life does not belong to the realm of theory, but to the realm of fact. "It is easily seen that there is a vast difference between the two positions.

The Greeks were not the only people who were interested in immortality. The ancient Egyptians, long before Plato, taught that the dead are raised and that they have to face a final judgment.

Similar ideas were prevalent among the Romans and the other people of the ancient world. Everywhere there was the most intense interest in the subject, an interest which gathered strength, both by reason of the importance and the difficulty of the question. The universal and omnipresent fact of death has always made the matter of immortality one of commanding interest and vitality. "If a man die, shall he live again?" is a question which will not down, and, however summarily the idea of the future life may be dismissed, it is certain to revive again every time a human being stands beside an open grave or weeps for the loss of one whose voice has been stilled by death.

III. Immortality in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament has no certain word with regard to personal immortality. There are various passages, notably in Job and in the Book of Psalms, which appear to assert the reality of the future life, but, when carefully scrutinized, they are seen to be far from conclusive. How inconclusive they are, is readily seen from the existence of the Sadducees, one of the great religious parties of the Jews, which, while accepting the Old Testament records, held to the idea that there is no such thing as personal existence after death. The best one can do with the Old Testament, so far as proving immortality is concerned, is to say that, like the teaching of Plato and Socrates, it establishes a presumption in favor of the doctrine. Upon this question, as well as upon many others, the old covenant simply points the way to the fuller revelation made by the gospel of Jesus Christ in the new dispensation.

IV. The Teaching of Jesus upon Immortality.

The teaching of Jesus, as we find it in the gospel records and as it was later elaborated in the preaching of the early apostles, is very clear and direct upon the subject of personal immortality. The whole assumption of Christ's message is that the human soul survives bodily death. In his argument with the Sadducees, as given in Matt. 22:23-33 and Mark 12:18-27, Jesus positively asserts the reality of the future life, while the parable of the rich man and Lazarus draws the veil from the unseen and gives us a direct and powerful picture of future conditions in the life beyond the grave. Of course, the supreme contribution which Jesus made to the subject is found in his own resurrection. As we have already noted, this contribution was in the nature of an actual demonstration rather than a theoretical argument. One fact about the resurrection, which is sometimes overlooked, is that it is not, and was not intended to be, an example of the first case of actual life after death. On the contrary, it was simply a proof, clear and unmis-

takable, of the reality of something which could not otherwise be definitely proved. One of the characteristics of the future life, up until the time of the resurrection, was that it could not be proved by actual demonstration. The grave, until Jesus arose from it and proved to his followers that he had thus arisen, remained the "undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns." People, when they died, "passed on" into the future life, but failed to return to prove the fact that they actually had "passed on" into another stage of existence. Jesus, by his divine power, broke the silence of the ages and came back to show the way to others. What was new in the resurrection, therefore, was not the fact, but the proof of the fact. Before this event took place, men had no sure and definite data upon which to base a certain and unshaken faith in the life beyond the grave. After the resurrection, however, the proof of the reality of the future life was so clear that men were justified in staking everything upon it. Hence the resurrection marks the great climactic point in the history of the doctrine of immortality.

The apostles, one and all, preached the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the one unanswerable proof of future personal existence after death. Paul was especially emphatic in the matter, but there is no reason for believing that the other apostles were less enthusiastic in proclaiming the same gospel. The early Christians went to martyrdom cheerfully because they were assured that there was laid up for them a "crown of righteousness" after their enemies had done their worst. Christianity became known everywhere as the gospel of the future life. Many Christians even sought for martyrdom in order to make sure of their inheritance. They were willing to suffer everything here if they could but attain to *he glorious resurrection from the dead.

V. Moral Value of the Doctrine.

The moral value of a fixed and certain conviction of immortality is at once seen to be very impressive. If a man once thoroughly believes in the future life, it is certain that his belief will exert the most profound influence upon his earthly career. A new value is given to everything he does when he looks at his actions, as Spinoza said, "under the form of eternity," instead of "under the form of time." There is a new dignity given to his life, and he can not afford to be guilty of small and petty deeds in the light of the great inheritance which God has entrusted to him. This is what the moralists style "the deterrent value of immortality." Men will hesitate about jeopardizing the interests of their eternal existence if they are assured that they actually possess such an existence in

definite prospect. How many sins and crimes this belief in a future life has forestalled, no one can say. There are a few "high-brow" scientists, like Spencer and Huxley, who apparently do not need such a stimulus in order to live clean lives, but the vast majority of people are constructed along different lines. Take away the belief in immortality from the world and it would mean the multiplication of suicide and of every other form of evil. Hamlet's famous "to be or not to be" soliloquy is a case in point. The "dread of something after death" makes the average man hesitate about flying "to evils that he knows not of," and the stronger his conviction that there is something after death, the greater will be his hesitancy in the matter. The responsibilities of the future life are far greater deterrents than are all the judges or juries or legal codes that have ever existed.

VI. Present-day Attitude toward the Question.

The great war of 1914, and after, has been fruitful in arousing a new interest in immortality. So many lives have been summarily snuffed out during this war period that the subject has come home in a very direct way to millions of people. It seems impossible that such a large number of bright young men, in the very prime of life, should die like extinguished candles and never be heard of again. Hence, there has come a world-wide revival of the belief in personal immortality. This has naturally brought with it a renewed interest in Spiritualism and other similar phenomena. It has also helped to center the attention of millions of men and women upon the gospel of the resurrection. Before the war, greater emphasis had been laid, in most countries, upon the ethical, rather than upon the spiritual, message of Jesus; but since the war the emphasis has been largely reversed. It is now pretty thoroughly recognized that the gospel of Jesus regarding the future life is a feature of supreme value and importance in his religion.

Before the war a large group of scientists had become interested in an attempt to demonstrate scientifically the reality of the future life. These men organized what is known as the "Society for Psychological Research." As a result of their investigations, many of them were led to believe that immortality can be, and has been, scientifically proved. In consequence, a number of these investigators became devout Christians from the evidence afforded by science alone. The majority of those who have read and studied the evidence submitted by the "Psychical Researchers," as they have been styled, perhaps fail to regard that evidence as conclusive. Nevertheless, the striking character of much of the proof submitted must be acknowledged by every thinking person who is familiar with it.

Psychical research has undoubtedly contributed not a little to the general belief in immortality now present throughout the world.

Among the eminent scientists and literary authorities who are, or have been, "Psychical Researchers" may be mentioned: F. W. H. Myers, the former president of the society, who was led from skepticism by his researches to become a devout Christian before he died; Prof. William James, the philosopher; Alfred Russell Wallace; Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; Sir Oliver Lodge; Prof. James H. Hyslop, of Columbia; Sir William Crookes, and many others of equal prominence in the field of scientific discovery.

Summing up the question, we may say that there is more universal sentiment to-day in favor of a definite belief in the future life than has existed in any other stage of human history. The Christian who accepts unhesitatingly the great fact of the resurrection of Jesus, and the further corollary of his own personal resurrection, can now rejoice because the whole world is more and more coming to realize the truthfulness and certainty of one of the great and cardinal essentials of his faith.

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES.

Matt. 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 16:19-31; John 14—the entire chapter; 1 Corinthians 15—the entire chapter; 2 Cor. 5: 1-10; Phil. 1: 21-24.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE.

THE FUTURE LIFE	}	1. Importance 2. Problem in History 3. O. T. Testimony <i>i.</i> Testimony of Jesus 5. Moral Value 6. Question To-day
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OTHER REFERENCES.

1. Kershner—"The Religion of Christ," Part II, Chapter VI.
2. Brown—"The Christian Hope." One of the best historical studies of the doctrine of personal immortality.
3. Mackintosh—"Immortality and the Future." One of the latest and best presentations of the subject.
4. Seth—"Ethical Principles," Part III., Chapter III. An excellent discussion of the metaphysical questions involved in the subject.
5. Barrett—"On the Threshold of the Unseen." The best summary of the results of psychical research.

6. Fosdick—"The Assurance of Immortality." The best brief volume on the subject.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. The Place of Personal Immortality in the Christian Religion.
2. The Voice of History and of Philosophy upon the Question.
3. The Testimony of the Old Testament.
4. The Testimony of Jesus.
5. The Testimony of the Apostles.
6. Moral Value of a Belief in Personal Immortality.
7. Immortality and the Great War.
8. The Testimony of Modern Science.
9. Present Aspect of the Question.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON.

1. What are the three great postulates of religion!
2. Why are these postulates essential!
3. Why does the gospel of values demand immortality?
4. Is Christianity, in any sense, a gospel for this world alone?
5. What did Paul say upon the question?
6. Why did he stress the resurrection so much in his preaching?
7. What has Greek philosophy to say about personal immortality?
8. Does it furnish any conclusive proof of the future life?
9. What does it do?
10. How does the contribution of Greek thought differ from the contribution made by Christianity to the subject?
11. What was the ancient Egyptian teaching regarding immortality?
12. Why has the subject always come up again and again in universal experience, even after it has been dismissed by the philosophers?
13. What does the Old Testament say about the future life?
14. Is its testimony conclusive? Why?
15. What is the value of the Old Testament testimony?
16. What was the position of Jesus in regard to the future life?
17. Give illustrations of his teaching upon the subject.
18. What was his supreme contribution to the solution of the question?
19. Was the resurrection the first case of the survival of personality after death?
20. What was the essentially new feature about it?
21. What was the attitude of the apostles toward the question of the future life?
22. What is the moral value of a belief in immortality?

23. What does Hamlet's famous soliloquy prove in regard to the deterrent value of such a belief?

24. What influence has the great war had upon the subject of personal immortality?

25. What do you know of the "Society for Psychological Research"?

26. Mention some eminent scientists who have been affiliated with it.

27. What is the net result of the evidence that has been secured?

28. Sum up the present-day status of the doctrine of personal immortality.

LESSON XII. THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF PRAYER

I. The Nature of Prayer.

Perhaps few features associated with the Christian religion have been more confused in the minds of Christians or have been subject to more misapprehension than the subject of prayer. The reason for this is easy to see. Prayer is the means of communication between the human and the divine, the connecting link between the two worlds of the seen and the unseen, and just because it belongs to both worlds it is difficult to analyze or fathom in all its details. Faith and prayer are closely allied, for both are bridges across the chasm which divides the material world from the spiritual world. Faith comes first, for, without faith, prayer is a mere empty formality; but, on the other hand, there can be no vital or fruitful faith without prayer.

Prayer, in its essence, is communion. It is the lifting up of the human spirit to the divine atmosphere in which it finds its real freedom and joy. It is the conscious realization of the fact of God and the divine life in our human experience. We come to *know* God and to *know* the blessedness of his gracious purposes through prayer. There has never been, and never will be, a really religious being who has not experienced, or can not experience, the reality and power of prayer.

Of course, with this view of the subject, it is readily seen that mere petition—begging or asking for things, and especially material things—is not prayer. Prayer naturally includes petition, but petition is a subsidiary feature. The vital thing is communion. Hence, too, it follows that mechanical or formal "prayers" are foreign to the real nature of the subject. Public prayer is a religious exercise which has value in its own way, but is very rarely real prayer. Jesus clearly taught this truth when he told his dis-

ciples not to pray in the market-place, but to go into some secluded room and pray in secret. He himself prayed in this way. Often he went off upon a mountain or to the desert, or somewhere else apart from his disciples and from the throng of people, in order to pray. Prayer touches the innermost springs of the human soul, and these are not to be exposed to the profane gaze of the multitude.

It is a mistake, also, to regard prayer as of merely subjective value. Doubtless the subjective feature is very important, but the unseen world is somehow so related to the seen that prayer has a direct influence upon objective realities. Prayer accomplishes things in the material world, although we can not tell just how it operates. Tennyson recognized this fact when he said:

**"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend!
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."**

When Jesus performed one of his most notable miracles, succeeding in a case where his disciples had lamentably failed, he said, "This kind can come out by nothing save by prayer" (Mark 9: 29), thus recognizing the fact that prayer does accomplish actual and tangible results in the world.

III. The Purpose of Prayer.

The purpose of prayer has been, in large measure, indicated in the section just preceding. Primarily, prayer is intended to strengthen our spiritual life, to give us power to live up to the highest ideals we know, and in every way to draw us closer to God. Secondly, prayer enables us to accomplish things which would otherwise be impossible for us in the world. It is not necessary here to recapitulate the many "answers to prayer" with which the history of the church is filled. After every allowance for coincidence and exaggeration has been made, there still remains a bulk of instances which are unexplained and inexplicable, save upon the theory that prayer does accomplish things in the objective world. It is no argument against this position to say that many prayers are unanswered. Many prayers lack the first essential of real prayer—that is, faith; others are of such a character that their best answer is by denial, rather than by fulfillment of the petitions. One of the best-known illustrations of so-called "unan-

swered prayer" is embodied in the experience of Jesus in Gethsemane. He prayed for the cup to pass, and the cup did not pass. And yet, in the highest sense, his prayer was really answered, for he was given strength to bear the burden and to complete his work.

Let us suppose, for a moment, that the cup had passed, as Jesus prayed for it to pass. Can we not see that such a result would inevitably have meant the thwarting of his whole earthly ministry? The same thing is doubtless true of all real or sincere prayers which remain apparently unanswered. Our heavenly Father knows what is best for us better than we know it ourselves, and he would not be the wise and loving Father that he is if he gave us everything which, like thoughtless children, we ask for in our ignorance and blindness.

Another example of "unanswered prayer" in the New Testament is the case of Paul's "thorn in the flesh." What the "thorn" actually was, no one can say, but we know, from the great apostle's personal confession, that he prayed earnestly for its removal. And yet it was not removed, but, as something better, he was given the assurance—"My grace is sufficient for thee"—and Paul doubtless was the stronger and better Christian because his prayer was answered in God's way, rather than in his own.

All true prayers are answered; of this we may be assured. Moreover, they are always answered in the way which will mean the most for our highest and best interests. This fact the Christian may rely upon, and this is all, as an obedient and dutiful child, that he needs to know.

III. Jesus and Prayer.

The life of Jesus is one long illustration of the supreme value of prayer. From the beginning of his public ministry, down until it closed in the very shadow of the cross, Jesus was constantly bearing witness to the necessity and value of the prayer life. It is especially noteworthy that, in great crises such as those upon the Mount of Temptation, after the feeding of the five thousand when they wanted to make him an earthly king, even against his own will, and, last of all, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he is specifically recorded as engaging in earnest prayer. Moreover, he taught his disciples to pray, and also taught them how to pray. The model prayer which he gave to the world has in it all of the essentials of sincere and devout petition to God. This prayer, it will be observed, covers the whole ground of Christian experience and duties. It emphasizes especially the vital interests of the soul and of the kingdom of God in its universal application, but it also touches the field of our material needs and of our daily temptations.

It inculcates personal righteousness and the forgiving of others as essential elements in the prayer life, and it guards against the daily pitfalls which threaten to ensnare the soul of the Christian.

It is worth noting, also, in regard to the great subject of Christian union, that Christ did not attempt to legislate disunion out of existence, but that he was content to pray for the union of his followers. Here, undoubtedly, he pointed the way toward the true spirit in which this great subject must be approached, if disunion is ever to be conquered, even to-day.

IV. Mistaken Views of Prayer.

We have already referred to some of the most common errors in connection with the subject of prayer, but it may be well to recapitulate these errors a little more in detail. There are at least three mistaken attitudes which are frequently assumed toward the question. We may classify these three attitudes as (1) the skeptical, (2) the legalistic and (3) the superstitious.

The skeptical attitude looks upon prayer largely as bathos and moonshine. It is the attitude of the coldly rational mind, which can not understand anything which can not be reduced to a syllogism. The average scientist is apt to assume this attitude toward the subject of prayer. Because he can not understand everything about the fact, he disputes the existence of the fact. Such a man rarely attempts to pray, and when he does attempt it, he is conscious all the while of a species of insincerity. There are a good many intellectually loyal Christians who belong to this class. Such people never go to prayer-meeting, or, if they do go, are terribly bored. They are the people, also, who never have a family altar in their homes. Even at the best, they miss much of the spiritual content of their religion, and their lives are harsher and less fruitful as a result of this fact.

The second attitude is, if anything, worse than the first, because it has in it, at least, a touch of hypocrisy. The people who belong to this class are the people who "say their prayers" as a matter of form, but who never, or, at least, seldom, actually pray. These people gradually lose what confidence they may once have possessed in prayer, or else they come to regard it as a sort of mechanical fetish which will bring them things they need, if they go through the forms correctly. There is nothing more deadly to the real spirit of prayer than is this attitude. Prayer, above everything else, is loving and real, a vital spiritual force in the world. To reduce it to set, legalistic forms is to kill it. It is not "saying prayers" which counts in the religious life, but, rather, feeling, acting and living them. Christ himself warned his disciples against

using "vain repetitions," "as the heathen do," and insisted upon the vital nature and character of prayer.

The third attitude—the superstitious—is closely allied to the second, with this difference, however, that it contains an element of emotion which is always absent from the legalistic conception. There are hosts of superstitious Christians, and there is nothing about which they are more superstitious than the subject of prayer. To them, prayer is a kind of magical rite which has power to make over the universe in accordance with their own wishes and desires. Such people are apt to bring the whole subject into disrepute with their more thoughtful and intelligent neighbors. Between the two extremes of skepticism or rationalism and superstition lies the safe middle ground of a really sane and vital prayer life.

V. The Prayer Experience of the Christian.

Every Christian should, more and more, learn to grow in the prayer life as a part of his inner religious experience. Prayer, like everything else, needs to be cultivated and encouraged. There are many ways in which this can be done. Mr. John R. Mott has testified that for many years his prayer life was unsatisfactory to himself. At last, he began to read everything he could upon the subject and to bury himself in the writings of the great spiritual masters of the race, including, of course, the New Testament writers. He finally reached a stage where prayer meant much more to him and where he could for himself realize its supreme power and value.

Every Christian home should have a family altar, and every child in the home should be taught to pray. The subject should not be treated mechanically or made tiresome, but it should be seriously and earnestly studied and practiced in daily life. It is not so much the prayer words which count, but it is rather the prayer attitude, and there is no substitute for this attitude in any real Christian experience. No child who learns the real meaning of the two words, "Our Father," as applied to the Divine Being, need ever to be taught further what prayer really is. It is because so few people actually believe in the divine Fatherhood, at least in any vital way, that prayer means so little to them. Once we come to see God as our real Father, we have little difficulty in appreciating the full significance of the nature and power of prayer.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES.

Matt. 6:5-15; Matt. 26:36-46; Mark 9:17-29; Luke 11:1-13; Luke 18: 9-14; 2 Cor. 12: 7-9; Col. 4: 2-4; 1 Thess. 5: 17, 18.

These are a few only of the most notable New Testament passages which bear upon the subject of prayer.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE.

PRAYER	}	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nature 2. Purpose 3. Mistaken Views 4. Testimony of Jesus 6. The Model Prayer 6. The Devotional Life
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OTHER REFERENCES.

1. Darsie—"Before the Throne." One of the best devotional works in Restoration literature.

2. Ainslie—"God and Me." An ideal interpretation of the inwardness of the spiritual life.

3. McGarvey—"Sermons," Sermon XXIII. on the efficacy of prayer. Interesting especially because it shows how a man of the keenly intellectual type of the author may also possess deep spiritual appreciation.

4. Mott—"Intercessors the Primary Need." A brief pamphlet worth its weight in gold to any one who has not found the secret of the prayer life.

5. Cave—"A Manual for Family Devotions." The best manual for the family altar in Restoration literature.

6. Fosdick—"The Meaning of Prayer." One of the most popular modern books on the subject.

7. Tileston—"Great Souls at Prayer." The best collection of prayers thus far published.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. What Prayer Is.
2. What Prayer Accomplishes.
3. The Prayer Life of Jesus.
4. Subjective and Objective Views of Prayer.
5. Prayer in Church History.
6. The Devotional Life.
7. The Restoration and Prayer.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON.

1. Why is the nature of prayer subject to misunderstanding?
2. What is the relation of prayer to faith?
3. Can there be any really religious life without prayer?
4. Is prayer simply petition?
5. Is public prayer a real illustration of the prayer ideal?

6. Is prayer of purely subjective value?
7. What does Tennyson say about prayer?
8. What is the primary purpose of prayer?
9. What is its secondary purpose?
10. How do you explain "unanswered prayers"?
11. Give two illustrations of "unanswered prayer" from the New Testament.
12. Were these prayers really unanswered?
13. Is any real prayer ever unanswered?
14. Sketch the prayer life of Jesus.
15. Give and analyze the model prayer which he taught his disciples.
16. What are the most striking features of this prayer?
17. How are prayer and Christian union related?
18. Mention three mistaken attitudes toward the subject of prayer.
19. Analyze the skeptical attitude.
20. Analyze the legalistic attitude.
21. Analyze the superstitious attitude.
22. What is the duty of every Christian in regard to the prayer life?
23. How may we grow in the devotional life?
24. Why do many people fail to appreciate the value of prayer?