

11. Q. What is the third argument for our belief that there is a God?
12. Q. What is the Argument from Experience?
13. Q. What fundamental conviction do we reach at this point in our study?
14. Q. What practical lesson should we derive from these truths?

Lesson Two

THREE COMMONPLACE PROOFS OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Psalm 19.

Scriptures To Memorize: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psa. 19:1). "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

TO INTRODUCE THIS LESSON, explain that by commonplace we mean common to our everyday experience. Jesus made use of commonplace things to enforce the most profound spiritual truths, as, e. g., the lily of the field, the sower who went forth so sow, the shepherd and the sheep, the vine and its branches, etc. Following His method of teaching, we call attention here to three commonplace evidences of God in the world which are incidental to our everyday experience, so much so in fact that we are prone to overlook their eternal significance.

15. Q. What is one commonplace proof of God?
A. Life.
16. Q. How does life prove that there is a God?
A. Life is itself proof of the Divine Life-giver.

(1) "One of the most deeply suggestive events in nature is the reawakening of life in the springtime, with the sense of fresh beauty and newness of being which it brings" (H. W. Dresser, *The Philosophy of the Spirit*, p. 1). What is this oft-recurring miracle but another of the many "renewings" of the Divine Spirit?

(2) Life is all around us and within us. As the poet has written:

“Whether we look or whether we listen.
 We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;
 Every clod feels a stir of might,
 An instinct within that reaches and towers,
 And, groping blindly above it for light,
 Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers.”

(3) But what is Life? We do not know fully. It has never been adequately defined or explained. We do know that an essential principle of life is growth. That which does not grow will sooner or later stagnate and die. Age itself, writes George Macdonald, “is not all decay; it is the ripening, the swelling of the fresh life within, that withers and bursts the husks.” But as to defining life, neither science nor philosophy has ever been able to do that. “Life is a simple idea, and is incapable of real definition” (Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 251). (4) We do know, however, that the stream of Life flows out from Somewhere, and that it reaches its highest expression, in our visible world, in the self-conscious personality of human beings. Did you ever ponder the differences between you, and the world around you? You are different from a rock, a chair, etc., different from a thing. You can think; you can feel (remorse, hate, love, etc.); you can will (i. e., decide between this and that, choose whether you want a new bicycle or a trip to the country). A mere thing has none of these powers. Intellect, feeling, will, conscience, etc., belong only to personality, spirit, selfhood. (5) Through these faculties you are able to distinguish yourself from the world around you. “Personality is the knowledge that we are apart from the rest of the universe. Our body is made out of the same elements that are in the earth or in the stars. It is a part of the world. But our life is something apart and our consciousness is even more separate. Alone of all animals we can double ourselves up, so to speak, to look at ourselves” (Dimnet, *What We Live By*, p. 22). (6) From what source did man derive these powers? Not from things; not from nature, or the world around us; for these faculties set us apart from the world around us, lift us above it, in

fact. The life within us has always been. You were born, not made; you were born alive; and your parents were born of their parents; and so on and on. Whence came the first life on this planet? It must have come from the Divine Life-giver, who is Himself the Living God. (7) Again, the source of a stream must be higher than its outlet. If the outlet of Life's stream is in self-conscious personality (the human), it follows that the source is in the Divine Self-conscious Personality. Cf. Exo. 3:14—"I AM THAT I AM" (timeless existence, personality, etc.). John 4:24—"God is a spirit." (8) The evolutionist may trace the stream of life back through numerous "missing links" until he reaches his far-famed "primordial cell." But in so doing he has accomplished little or nothing, for the big question is: How did Life get into the cell? (9) Gen. 2:7—"Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath (*i. e.* the spirit) of life." The body of the first man was made of the earthly elements; but his life was the consequence of a Divine inbreathing. Does not this teach that Life is a gift, and a gift from the very essence of God Himself? Where do we find a nobler conception of life and its origin, in all literature? Never forget that life is not a creation, not a reward, not a thing merited by man, but a gift from God! It is a gift to be cherished, to be nurtured, to be utilized for God's glory and for the benefit of our fellows. John 6:63—"it is the spirit that giveth life." The same is true of spiritual and eternal life. It, too, is a Divine Gift. Rom. 6:23—"the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (10) Without God, Life is without rational explanation. Philip James Bailey has written:

"Let each man think himself an act of God,
His mind a thought, his life a breath of God;
And let each try, by great thoughts and good deeds,
To show the most of Heaven he hath in him."

(11) Our God, the God of the Bible, is a living God. Jer. 10:10—"Jehovah is the true God; he is the living God," 1 Thess. 1:9—"ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God." Acts 17:24-25, "The God that made the world and all things therein . . . he himself giveth to all

life, and breath, and all things." Matt. 16:16—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17. Q. What is a second commonplace proof of God in our world?

A. Law.

18. Q. How does law prove that there is a God?

A. Law is itself proof of the Divine Law-giver and Sovereign of all things.

(1) Our world is said to be a world of law. But law is merely an explanation of method, not of cause. It deals with the how, not the why. (2) You may throw a ball into the air. Why doesn't it keep on going? Why does it return to the earth? Because, we are told, the earth puts forth an attraction (which we call gravity) that pulls it back. But what causes the earth to put forth this attraction? When we state the law of gravitation, we merely describe how the heavenly bodies act in relation to one another. But what causes them to act in such manner? Again, two atoms of hydrogen combine with one atom of oxygen to form a molecule of water, according to the law of chemical affinity. But what causes them to unite in such fixed proportions? (3) The conclusion is obvious; back of all law, there must be will. Law is the expression of the will of the lawgiver; and as will is an essential part of personality, the lawgiver must be a person. We cannot even imagine that unintelligent things could have originated laws. (4) In a monarchy, law expresses the will of the king; in a democracy, it expresses the will of the people. In the universe, law is the expression of the Divine Will. God's Will is the constitution of our material universe. Psa. 33:9—"He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Note the significance of the statement, "And God said," recurring so frequently in the Mosaic narrative of creation (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, etc.). (5) The same reasoning applies to the realm of moral law. God alone, the Sovereign Ruler of all things, has the right to decree what is right, and to distinguish right from wrong. Rom. 7:7—"I had not known sin, except through the law; for I had not known coveting, except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'" Rom. 3:20

—"through the law cometh the knowledge of sin." (6) There is no rational explanation of either natural or moral law aside from the Will of the Divine Lawgiver, God. Richard Hooker writes: "Of Law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world. All things in heaven and earth do her homage—the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power." "Proportion, order, harmony, unity in diversity—all these are characteristics of beauty. But they all imply an intellectual and spiritual Being, from whom they proceed and by whom they can be measured. Both physical and moral beauty, in finite things and beings, are symbols and manifestations of Him who is the author and lover of beauty, and who is Himself the infinite and absolute Beauty" (Strong, *ibid.*, p. 61).

"Back of the loaf is the snowy flour;
And back of the flour the mill;
And back of the mill is the wheat and the shower,
And the sun, and the Father's will."

19. Q. What is a third commonplace proof of God in our world?

A. Love.

20. Q. How does love prove that there is a God?

A. Love is unfailing proof of the Divine Lover.

(1) Love is the master passion of our world. It has inspired innumerable hymns, songs, poems, and works of art. It has wrought countless deeds of sacrificial service. (2) But—can a rock, a chair, a mere thing, love? No. Love can be experienced only by a person. Therefore it must have had its source in the Divine Being. As surely as rain falls from the cloud, as surely as light pours out of the perspective of the eye, so Love has its source in the heart of the heavenly Father. 1 John 4:8—"he that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is love." (3) As the essential principle of life is growth, and of law is authority; so the essential principle of love is sacrifice. He who loves much will give much. One will inevitably espouse the cause of the object of one's love. Illustrated by the mutual love of sweethearts, by the love of parents for their children, by the love of a mother

for her son, by the love of a patriot for his country. So, when God foresaw the world in danger of perishing forever, He incarnated Himself as its Savior. 1 John 4:8 — "God is love," i. e., He is a God of love. John 3:16—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON TWO

15. Q. What is one commonplace proof of God?
16. Q. How does life prove that there is a God?
17. Q. What is a second commonplace proof of God in our world?
18. Q. How does law prove that there is a God?
19. Q. What is a third commonplace proof of God in our world?
20. Q. How does love prove that there is a God?

Lesson Three

WHO IS GOD?

Scripture Reading: Acts 17:22-31.

Scripture To Memorize: "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

21. Q. Is God just an idea?
 - A. The Scriptures teach what God is, i. e., that He has actual being.

(1) Heb. 11:6—"he that cometh to God must believe that he is," etc. (2) The favorite claim of the "Humanist" is that God is just an idea ("concept") of the human intellect; that, instead of God having created man in His own image, man has created God in his own imagination. This is pure atheism. It asserts that there is no God in fact, i. e., apart from our thinking. (3) To this notion we object: that any human being capable of imagining a God with all the perfections of the God revealed in the Scriptures, particularly as He is fully revealed in the New Testament, would himself be a god. "Had Jesus never lived," says Rousseau, "the writers of the gospels would themselves have been as great