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Tell Us Why, Sir!



The Questions of 1000 Australian
Children

Answered by the Younger Clergy

Edited by IAN SHEVILL, M.A.

Anglican Truth Society

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"Young Australia Wants to Know."

Edited by Ian Shevill, M.A., Th.L.

The following series of children's questions and attempted answers is based upon a questionnaire which was put to 1000 pupils in the schools of New South Wales. The experiment sought to find what were the chief questions in the mind of youth about their faith, and the question was put thus :—

"If you could ask a man who really knew, then what question would you put to him about God, the Bible, the Church, or your religion?"

For fear of being mistaken for the "man who really knew," I made little attempt to answer the questions, but explained to the children that they were helping with a scientific experiment. This explanation was given after the test, which, though hardly fair to them (for each had written his question hoping for an answer), nevertheless ensured the seriousness of the questions submitted.

As far as possible, the number of children questioned varied in proportion with the percentage of children in New South Wales who receive their education in that type of school. The figures were something like this :—

No. Tested.	Type.	No. in State in this type of school.
600	High	36,000
225	Primary	30,000
86	Technical	28,000
50	Church	5,000

This little book takes the questions asked most frequently, and gives answers which have been found acceptable to youth groups in camps and clubs. The replies have been written by clergy chosen for their wide experience of youth work, being school chaplains or leaders of clubs, their most important qualification being their own youth.

1.—HOW DO WE KNOW THERE IS A GOD ?

There are many reasons. Here are some :—

Reason 1.

All babies the world over become hungry. Why is this ? Because there is such a thing as food.

All boys the world over become tired. Why is this ? Because there is such a thing as sleep.

All young men the world over fall in love. Why is this ? Because there is such a thing as marriage.

Thus we have three wants, which only exist because there is something whereby they are satisfied.

Here is another. All races the world over worship a God. Why is this ? Because there must be such a Being as God.

In this world there is no universal desire unless the thing desired exists, and from this it is obvious that when men everywhere worship a God there must be a God to worship.

Reason 2.

Everything in this world has a maker. The pencil with which I write was made by Dixon & Co. in America. Now, I did not know there was any such company until I saw its product. If you look about, you will see thousands of products not made by any earthly being—trees, flowers and birds; thus, where there is a product there must be a creator—in other words, there must be a God.

You will say : "But the tree came from the seed."

Reply : "Where does the seed come from ?"

You : "From an earlier tree."

Reply : "Where did that come from ?"

You : "From an earlier seed."

Reply : "Where did the first seed come from ?"

You : "I don't know !"

Reply : "It must have come from God. Where there is a product there must be a producer. Thus there must be a God, or there is no explanation for the first seed."

Reason 3.

If you went into a room and saw a jig-saw puzzle all fitted together, you would immediately say, "Ah ! someone has put this picture together." Otherwise, there would be no picture. You can take the pieces of a puzzle and hurl them into the air a million times,

and not once will they all come down in a correct pattern. Thus, where there is a design there must be a designer.

In the world there are millions of patterns. In the skies every night you see hundreds and thousands of stars and planets which are all whirling round in a design which never becomes tangled.

As I write this, I notice a tiny red spot moving across the page, and, putting it under a microscope, I find that it is a tiny spider, beautifully made with hairs on its legs all moving one way, and with intricate veins running all over it and never becoming mixed up. Now, in a thing as big as the heavens we find a pattern, and in a thing as tiny as the spider we find a pattern; so (as with the jig-saw) where there is a design there must be a designer, and who could design the pattern of the stars and the veins if it be not God ?

Thus, for these three reasons—and there are many more for which there is not space—we know there is a God.

2.—WHO MADE GOD ?

(Asked by 12% of all Primary and Technical pupils.)

When I was five, it was a rule in our home that I went to bed at 7.30 p.m., and I thought that all children of my age the world over went to bed at that hour; but one holiday, when staying with a cousin, I discovered that all children did not go to bed at 7.30, and indeed we wandered off to bed when too tired to stagger about any longer.

Then when I went to school I found it to be a rule that everybody learned Latin, and I imagined that every boy in every school in the world learned Latin. One day, however, I met a boy from another school who said that they had no such rule, and that most of the boys there did woodwork instead.

Then when I left school I believed that it was a rule that everything which lives breathes air, but one day I found a book which said there was no air on some of the planets in the sky and yet it was possible that things lived there.

Thus, the rule which applied in the home did not apply outside; the rule that applied in school did not apply outside; and the rule which applied on the earth did not apply in the universe. Thus a rule which applies in the universe need not apply outside it.

In creation, nothing exists unless you make it. Everything you can see around you was made by somebody, and it is a rule here that everything which exists was made; but outside the universe, just as outside the school or home, we cannot say that such a rule exists.

God is outside creation, therefore He is outside the rule; therefore there is no need for Him to have a creator.

Thus God was not made; He has always been and always will be in the future. That is what "eternal" means.

3.—DOES GOD LOVE HITLER ?

Well, why should God love Hitler ? What has he done to cause God to love him ? I suppose he has done some good things in his life. He might even be sincere in his mad thirst for power for his nation, but surely all these things are outweighed by the terrible evil he has brought to his own people, to the countries he has enslaved, to the human beings he has tortured in mind, body and soul, and killed, and to the whole civilised world. He has declared himself the enemy of the Christian religion, and he has set up his own standard of right and wrong—what is expedient for the "Aryan" race instead of what is according to the will of God.

And yet we realise that such a description of his deeds not only fits Hitler, but, with few exceptions, each one of us. So if we say God does not love him, we must say He does not love anyone who does wrong and who sets himself up to disobey or ignore his Creator. That is like saying, "God does not love naughty boys," and that is silly, because we are all "naughty boys"; and it is also untrue, because Jesus died for us while we were still sinners. It is hard enough to die for a good man. Whoever would die for a bad man, unless he really loved him ?

After all, if we believe in God the Father, Creator, why did He create any of us if He did not love us ? To say He loved us like that means that it was love which prompted Him to create, so that we should grow to know and love Him here on earth and live in happy friendship with Him and with His friends (the Saints) in Heaven.

What happens to a good father if one of his sons "goes bad" ? Doesn't he sorrow and grieve bitterly ? But he still loves Him; otherwise it would not worry him a bit. He even feels a sort of share in his son's guilt and wrongdoing. The father could not force the Prodigal Son to return, but he waited for him. If he had not returned it would have been his own fault, not his father's.

So God created even Hitler, even you, to love and serve Him. If he, or you, refuse, it is not Christ's fault, but He still waits and He still loves. There are plenty of people whose rebellion against God or whose ignoring of Him is just as monstrous as Hitler's. We think first of Hitler only because he has caused our dear ones much suffering, but that is only being selfish. All sin hurts the heart of Christ, otherwise He wouldn't love anyone. God does love naughty boys, and I'm very thankful He does.

4.—IF GOD IS LOVE, WHY DOES HE ALLOW DUMB CHILDREN ?

We can understand a man suffering for something he has done himself. We say it is his own fault. And to some extent we can see how it is that one man suffers because of what another has done. God has given us a two-edged power—a power to help one another or a power to harm one another. We couldn't have one without the other.

But what about a child who has been dumb all its life, whose parents are not to blame, and who has not been made dumb by anyone else, so far as we can see? Would God allow that if He were love?

Sickness and pain and suffering are often just as much enemies of God as sin and wrong. We must be clear in our minds as to the distinction between two things. One is what God wills, and the other is what God allows. God did not will all the suffering which came to Christ, but He allowed it because it was for our eternal good. So it is not true to say that everything that happens is God's will, but it is true to say that nothing happens unless He allows it, and whatever He allows can be for our good if we use it or endure it as one of His children.

If God had made us for getting pleasure for ourselves, then we would have to say that His purpose could not be carried out for a dumb child; but if God made us to know and love Him, then a dumb child can certainly learn to know and love God. Dumb children do not show that God is not love; they remind us that He made us for His loving service and not just for pleasure. And the odd thing is that the sense that suffering is unfair is felt more by those who see others suffering than by sufferers themselves. Often those afflicted know that their sufferings can bring them nearer to Jesus Christ—that it is possible to do great things for God and man even though handicapped. Everybody knows how President Roosevelt overcame his handicap of infantile paralysis without ceasing to believe in the love of God. The blind Helen Keller is a wonderful illustration. Robert Louis Stevenson had a lifelong battle against disease and suffering, and while he was dying of T.B. this is what he said: *"That which we suffer ourselves has no longer the same air of monstrous injustice and wanton cruelty that suffering wears when we see it in the face of others."*

We take the good things for granted: it is only the unpleasant and painful things which are a problem to us. We speak of the "problem of evil and suffering," but we never speak of the "problem of good." That is because in our heart of hearts we know that the world and its Creator are really good. There is far more in the world to cause us thanksgiving than there is to cause us depression

or doubt. And the most important of all things for thanksgiving is that God Himself came down from heaven and was made Man and suffered for us. If He shared our sufferings He must be love.

"To Christianity, suffering is not a nettle. It is a blood red rose, of which every thorn has been crushed to harmless pulp by the pierced feet of God."

5.—WHY DOES GOD ALLOW WARS ?

Which would you rather have, an aeroplane or a robot 'plane ? I expect you would say an aeroplane, because it is free to fly anywhere, whereas a robot 'plane can only go in the direction in which it is sent.

God had to make a choice such as this when he made men. He could have made us like robots so that we could only go one way, or He could have made us like aeroplanes, able to change our direction and go any way we like.

God chose as we do, and made men so that they could either do right or wrong, rather than have a race of human machines who could only go the right way.

He made men like this because they were to be His children, made in His image, and also because He wanted us to love Him, because we *chose* to do so rather than because we were made so that we could do nothing else.

Because God made men so that they could choose good or evil, it has always been possible that men should choose the evil, fight each other, and thus start wars.

Thus God allows wars because He made men able to choose good or evil, and when they choose evil they begin wars. Had he not done this we should all be little automatic machines with no will of our own.

6.—HOW DO WE KNOW THAT JESUS EVER EXISTED ?

It must be stated that the events of history cannot be proved in the same way as, for instance, a law of science. We know that Julius Caesar lived, and that he invaded Britain in 55 B.C., but we would find it very hard to prove it scientifically. How do we know that Napoleon ever lived ? Both these men are nevertheless accepted as historic fact. Why ? Because such fact can be substantiated and supported by historical methods and documents.

In the same way we know that Jesus existed, from the historical evidence of the Gospels. We are not able to examine and assess the historical documents and manuscripts for ourselves, but those scholars who are competent to judge affirm the Gospels have high value as historical documents. Sir James Frazer, a man who has specialised in the study of legends and mythology gives this as his opinion : "The doubts which have been cast on the historical reality of Jesus are, in my judgment, unworthy of serious attention."

We also need to remember that belief in the existence of Jesus Christ does not rest solely upon the historical value of documents, though that is practically conclusive. Jesus Christ is not merely a character of past history, but He is a Person continuously active in the life of the Christian Church. The activity and growth of the Christian Church can only be accounted for by the fact that people in every age have been in contact with Jesus as a living Person.

Jesus not only existed, He exists; and, to those who seek Him in faith, He comes with a reality and a certainty which a mere character of history could certainly not achieve.

7.—CAN YOU PROVE THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS IS TRUE ?

Yes, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, one of two things must have happened.

Either (a) our Lord's Body remained in the tomb and the Christians wilfully went about telling lies and saying that He had risen from the dead. This is impossible, for had the Body been left in the tomb the Romans or Jews would immediately have produced it to prove that the Christians were telling lies and that their religion was false. This did not happen, therefore the body did not remain in the tomb.

Or (b) if our Lord's Body did not remain in the tomb, it must have been taken out. Now who would do this ?

The Christians ? If the Christians took Jesus from the tomb so that they could go about spreading the legend of the Resurrection, why were they willing to be persecuted and die rather than deny their belief in the Resurrection ? A man does not die for what he knows to be untrue. The Jews or the Romans ? If these enemies of Christianity had taken the Body of Jesus, would they not immediately have produced it when the apostles went about preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead ? They did not do this surely because they could not.

Thus, if neither the Christians, Jews nor Romans took the Body of Christ—and there was no other group who would have been interested—surely it was impossible for the Body to have been taken out of the grave.

Now if, as we have seen, it was impossible for the Body of Christ to have either remained in the tomb or be taken out by people, the only alternative is that It came out Itself—in other words, It rose from the dead.

Other points which may help us are as follows :—

(i) The religion of Christ is a religion of sincerity. It seems hardly likely that such has been founded on a lie.

(ii) S. Paul said : "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain." But our faith is not vain, as it has lasted and is still with us after 2000 years.

(iii) The early Christians—who, after all, were nearer to the events than we are—thought it to be so certain that they gave up their old and established custom of worshipping God on Saturday and made Sunday their Sabbath, because Christ rose on this, the first day of the week. Thus His resurrection is not just a pious hope. It is a proven fact.

8.—HOW DO WE KNOW THAT JESUS WAS GOD ?

Here is a very remarkable story :—

Years ago, when the soldiers of the Roman Empire were marching in flashing armour over the great roads they had built through Europe, there was in the East a small third-class province called Judea.

In this backward province there appeared a workman who started teaching, and, after only three years' work, was killed by the government as a criminal.

Shortly after his death his friends went about saying that he had come to life, walked the streets, and lived with them. For daring to say such things, the government threw them to the lions, and in spite of this more and more followers came forward.

For 250 years the Roman Empire tried to prevent this workman's followers from claiming that he was God, but all in vain, until eventually a Roman emperor (Constantine) himself claimed that he had become a believer, and the persecutions ceased.

Since then, those who have believed that this poor man was God have increased by thousands, until now there is no part of the world where there are not men who pray to him as God, and indeed the cross on which they killed him stands as a symbol on the tops of kings' crowns and great buildings everywhere.

This is the first time in history when thousands of people all over the world have believed a simple workman to be God. Can they all be wrong ? Surely it is probable that when men everywhere believe a thing it is true !

Now, this workman, whose name was Jesus, said many things which everybody holds to be true; amongst these he said he was God. It would surely be strange that he was right about everything else except himself. Then, too, it is generally agreed that he was a good man, and good men do not try to deceive people.

Should you wish to look up those parts of the Bible where Jesus said he was God, here they are :—John 14, 9 : "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Mark 14, 61 : High Priest—"Art thou the Christ, the son of the blessed ?" and Jesus said, "I am."

Thus we believe that Jesus was God, because no man living in poverty in a backwater of the world could found a religion which has in less than 2000 years spread all over the universe. Secondly, we believe it, knowing that Jesus was a good man, and thus we can accept His word when He made a claim to be God.

9.—IS JESUS COMING BACK TO THIS EARTH ?

To God all things are possible, and therefore Jesus may return to earth, as no doubt you imagine, descending from the clouds with a mighty procession of angels. You may indeed have met foolish people who, using their Bibles like ready-reckoners, have calculated the exact date at which this will take place.

When, however, we turn to the Bible story, we find Jesus telling the High Priest that he would "*see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven*"; and by saying this He meant that one day the High Priest and all men would see Him return to earth in a way far more wonderful than a mere human form.

This indeed happened, for after Christ rose from the dead He came and remained in the world in two different ways :—

(i) Christ is in the world through the Church; in fact, poets have called the Church "The Body of Christ," simply meaning that the Church is the organ through which Jesus works—healing, teaching, blessing people.

(ii) Then, too, Christians believe that Jesus comes to men in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Thus, you see, as Jesus is already with us in the world there is little purpose in our speculating about other methods He may use to come amongst us later on.

10.—WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE (IS TRUE) ?

The Christian believes in God, and must therefore believe that God is able to reveal Himself; to make Himself known to man, and to instruct man concerning His laws and purposes. Thus we believe that God has spoken, and also that God still speaks to and guides man.

One of the ways God uses to reveal Himself is through His written Word in the Bible. The Church teaches that the Bible was inspired by the Spirit of God, and has made this claim down the ages.

Why do we believe any book to be true ? We certainly have to take much for granted, but we must first of all become acquainted with the book, and read it carefully and thoughtfully. Then we must try and find out all we can *about* the book; whether others regard it as true; what others have regarded it as teaching; whether there is any independent evidence to prove the contents of the book. We need not be afraid to apply these tests to the Bible; what we must be afraid of is accepting ready-made assertions about it, which are not the result of unbiased or intelligent judgment.

When we speak of the Bible as true we must be careful to state our case clearly, or else people will be misled. When God inspired men to write the various books of the Bible, it was not like dictating a letter. God used men who gave themselves to a great task, the task of revealing and teaching deep religious truth.

Difficulties occur when people forget the natural way in which God works. The Bible was written long ago, and its truth is often contained in words, ideas and circumstances far different from those of to-day. The Bible is true in its teaching of religious truth, not necessarily in its views on scientific topics such as cosmogony (the history of the earth), geology, astronomy, etc. It must be remembered, too, that it was only gradually that God revealed Himself. Man only learns gradually, and God has led man step by step in progressive revelation. That is why many things which occur in the Old Testament seem difficult to understand in the light of the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ. We must interpret everything in the Old Testament in its relation to the higher revelation in the New Testament.

Why is the Bible true ? Because it teaches us the great truths of religion, that God is One, that He is righteous, that God is love, that we see God in Christ, that only in Christ can man fulfil the great command to love one another.

Study the Bible, read it, learn about it. God has spoken; should we not believe ?

11.—WHO MADE UP THE BIBLE ?

The Bible is a library all bound into one Book for your convenience, and, like most libraries, it was "made up" by two sets of people—(a) The men who wrote the books; (b) the men who collected the books.

(a) The Writers.

There are 66 books in the Bible, some written by one man, others being collections of ancient stories gathered by an editor. These editors and writers wrote between the 9th century B.C. and the 3rd century A.D., although some of the events which they record go back even further than the 9th century B.C. They were men of different races who worked at different jobs—Amos was a shepherd, Matthew a taxation official, and Paul a tent-maker—yet each believed firmly in God, and knew that God had chosen them to write a contribution for the collection we call the "Bible." The word "Bible" comes from a Greek word simply meaning "books."

(b) The Collectors.

The men who collected the books and decided what should be in the Bible and what should be omitted were also guided by God, so that they could choose correctly the 66 books from the hundreds available.

In 90 A.D. it was decided which books would be included in the Old Testament by a Council of Jews at Jamnia. The Jews had the right to make this choice, because their Bible is the Old Testament.

A Council of Christians meeting at Carthage at the end of the 4th century A.D. decided on the books to be included in the New Testament, and they, like the Jews at Jamnia, were guided by the Holy Spirit.

Thus it may be seen that both the authors and the churchmen who collected the works were the people who "made up" the Bible, and, indeed, both were guided by God.

12.—HOW DOES EVOLUTION FIT IN WITH THE BIBLE STORY OF THE CREATION ?

Evolution is a theory, accepted by most of our scientists, which teaches that God made man gradually, forming him from creatures similar to the monkeys.

Just as Henry Ford began with simple T models and improved them until he had produced the V8, so did God gradually make man. This theory was first put before the world in 1859 by Darwin in his book, "The Origin of the Species," and since then, as scientists have dug up many relics of ancient man, the idea has gained ground. Amongst the more famous of these relics are :—

The Neanderthal Man, discovered in 1857.

The Java Man, discovered 1891.

The Heidelberg Man, discovered 1907.

The Piltdown Man, discovered 1912.

The Pekin Man, discovered 1930.

In each of these places—Java, Pekin, Neanderthal and so on—there have been found parts of skeletons of men who are not the same as men to-day, and who seem a lower, more ape-like type than are to be found to-day in the world.

The Bible gives two accounts by ancient Hebrew editors of the creation of the world, to be found in Genesis, chap. 1 and chap. 2, v. 4. Both these show that man is the last and greatest thing created, the name they give to the first man being Adam.

The Agreement.—Both say that animals came before men, and the Bible does not say anywhere that men and apes do not descend from a common ancestor. The difference between man and ape is that man has a soul, an ability to see value in things—whether it be art, music, jokes, or other people. When God saw that His creation had reached a certain point, He gave it this new Divine quality, as the Bible puts it in rather poetic language : "*God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*"

Thus there is no disagreement between the Bible and Evolution. Both tell the same story, but while the Bible tells it in a poetic fashion the scientist works it out like a chemical experiment.

13.—CAN PROPHECIES OF WORLD EVENTS BE MADE FROM THE BIBLE ?

If you mean, "Does the Bible tell what will happen to Germany, or England, France or Russia in a few years' time?" the answer is "No." These countries have nothing whatsoever to do with the Bible or its story, and those people who would tell you that they find the names of modern lands or rulers in such books as Revelation or Daniel lack training in Bible study.

If you mean, "Can we, watching what happened to evil nations in the Bible, tell what will happen to evil nations to-day?" the answer is "Yes."

For example, Amos, the wild man from the woods, came into the very modern city of Bethel and told the people that because of their wickedness their city would be destroyed, and in time it happened. So to-day, a country like Germany, which becomes very wicked, has only one fate ahead of it, that is destruction.

14.—IS SWEARING A SIN ?

That all depends upon what you mean by "swearing."

Swear words fall into two classes:—

(i) **Blasphemies** such as "My God," "Oh, Lord!" "Jesus Christ," or such derived words as "Streth," meaning "God's truth," or "Bloody," meaning originally "By Our Lady"—and these are quite obviously sins, for did not God say in His Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not take the name of thy God in vain" ?

(ii) **Filth.** There is no need to make a list of these, for they are all slang expressions for various parts of the body, or are connected in some way with the birth of babies. These are obviously not the sort of words which should defile the mouth of a Christian, for as the Bible says : "Blest are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Now the purpose of swearing is usually to "let off steam"! A big engine has a safety valve which goes off with a bang and a spurt if the pressure of steam becomes too great; and this is rather what happens to us if we hammer our finger nail or sit on a tack—we go off with a bang and a spurt. What we say at that time really does not matter, providing we say it with sufficient gusto and venom. Therefore, the thing to do is to have up the sleeve several quite harmless oaths which we can shout to the four winds next time we need to. Personally I find "Blood and thunder" quite effective, but have known men for whom "Stiffen the crows!" or even "Scissors" seemed to do the trick.

15.—IS IT VERY WRONG NOT TO GO TO CHURCH ?

Yes, it is surely both wrong and foolish. Let us see why.
Wrong.

You no doubt know quite a number of people who belong to the Army or the Navy or the Air Force, and can you imagine any of them—be they privates, or admirals or simple L.A.C.'s—speaking like this : *"I don't think I shall go on parade this morning—I am too tired,"* or *"I can't be bothered getting the machine-gun out this morning—any old day will do,"* or *"I am not going to bomb any Japs to-day—I am too tired."* I don't think you can. When a man belongs to the armed forces he has certain duties, and he carries them out whether he feels like it or not.

Now, you belong to the Christian Army. You joined up when you were baptised, at which time you were signed with a cross and set apart for the worship of God; possibly, too, you have been confirmed thereby, making your own promises that you will be faithful to the army of Christ, carrying out your duty to worship him each Sunday as it comes.

Thus, if you think it would be wrong for a man to desert from his regiment when in battle, then surely it is wrong for any Christian to desert his post when Sunday comes.

Foolish.

There was once a man who thought that eating was a waste of time, so he decided to stop. Not a thing did he eat. He became thinner and thinner, and his friends said : "You are a very foolish man; you will die !" But he only smiled and said : "Nonsense ! I am getting on very well, thank you." As you may imagine, he did not last very long, and after a fortnight he died. You say, "What a fool !" but thousands of people go on like this with regard to their souls.

The soul needs the grace of God to live; without it the soul will shrivel. One of the ways in which we receive grace is by worshipping God and receiving His sacraments, and this can only be done at Church.

So, be not like the foolish man who thought he was "getting on very well, thank you !" For remember what happened to his body, and realise that this can happen to your soul.

Thus, once again, it is both wrong and foolish not to go to church.

16.—IS IT VERY WRONG TO PLAY GAMES ON SUNDAY ?

No, certainly not; there is nothing wrong with playing on a Sunday.

The Church has always taught that the Sunday should be kept Holy, and at times men have carried this to great extremes. In 168 A.D., 1000 Jews who were fighting a war refused to lift their weapons; so the enemy slaughtered them all, and when we see such sacrifice as this we realise that men have given much to keep Sunday holy. But there is no reason why it is not holy to play games.

In our Lord's day, the Sabbath was a miserable day. Then there were 39 "Father Laws" which had many "Children Laws" following from them. For example, a Father Law said, "Thou shalt carry no burden on a Sunday"; and the Children Laws continued, "Thou shalt not wear a ribbon on the hair or false teeth on this day, for that is bearing a burden." So strict were they that even an egg could not be eaten which a fowl had been rash enough to lay on the Sabbath !

Two hundred years ago the Puritans tried to revive this terrible sort of "Dull Sunday" in England, and of these days Dickens paints a tragic picture. The blinds were pulled down, all toys were put away, and only the Bible could be read; and there are still such people among us to-day who raise their hands in horror at the thought of a game or a swim on a Sunday.

Jesus, however, when He found those foolish laws of the Jews, set about breaking them. He healed people on the Sabbath, which was forbidden; He plucked corn in the fields, which was quite against the law, and strongly condemned the "religious people" of His day for reprimanding him for doing so.

There is a difference between organised sports and just the sort of games boys make up amongst themselves. It is obviously wrong to run organised sports or amusements on a Sunday, because this makes people who run them work, and these people are entitled to their day of rest as are the mob who go to watch.

Thus, if your Sunday games cause nobody to work, and are not noisy enough to disturb people who want to keep Sunday more strictly, then there is nothing wrong with them.

17.—IS IT CHRISTIAN TO VISIT PEOPLE'S SINS ON THEIR CHILDREN ?

It most certainly is not Christian to visit people's sins on their children, or rather, it would not be Christian if it were true. But it is not true.

What is true, and quite inescapable, is that physical and mental traits are transmitted to our children. If you became a confirmed drunkard and then married and had children, it is more than probable that they would be alcoholic—that is, would be very likely to get a craving for drink. Certain very horrible social diseases may persist, not only for three or four generations, but for many more than that. Also, diseases like epilepsy run in families. Now, all these are facts but have nothing to do with sin. Your ancestors may have contracted one or more of these diseases through sin, and you may find yourself suffering from their effects. But it would be the same if they hadn't been caused by sin. It was this fact of heredity which happens to be very noticeable in connection with diseases, some of which are caused through sin, that led the Jews to put this interpretation upon it.

Really heredity, or the passing of things on from father to son, is also a very great blessing. I know a man, for instance, who has inherited from his father's side a sound physical constitution. Combined with the intellectual equipment he has received from his mother's family, who were not so strong bodily, it makes almost an ideal combination. Neither of these gifts was due to sin or to righteousness, they are just facts of nature.

Supposing you find yourself in possession of some hereditary handicap—what then? Well, you can comfort yourself with the thought that everybody else has something or other. Some people have naturally healthy teeth; for others life is just one long series of dentists' bills, till they have the lot out, finally. S. Paul had something which was a very great hindrance, and asked God to cure it. God's answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." You notice God *didn't* say, "That's a punishment for your grandfather's sin"!

More than that, medical science is making wonderful progress, and the number of things that can't be cured is getting very small indeed, and for most of the others it can show how to lead a quite happy life with a little care. You would think infantile paralysis about the last thing for a grown-up to be called upon to bear, yet you have Mr. Roosevelt and Miss Marjorie Lawrence, who both manage to fill important roles in spite of it.

One final word. Next time you are in church and want to while away the time, *don't* turn through your Prayer Book to the part

where it says a man shall not marry his grandmother. Open it up at Morning Prayer and the Sentences. You will see a big "W." It begins a sentence, "When the wicked man turneth away . . ." That sentence is taken from Ezekiel, chap. xviii. For a long time the Jews wouldn't put that book in their Bible. Why? Because in that very chapter, a few verses higher up, Ezekiel says this business about visiting the sins of the fathers on the children is all wrong. So there!

18.—WHY SHOULD THE CHURCH TEACH PROHIBITION AND YET USE WINE FOR COMMUNION ?

The Church has never taught Prohibition. It has said, "It is wrong to become drunk."

It would be quite ridiculous for the Church to teach Prohibition when it is remembered how Jesus Christ in His first miracle turned water into wine at a wedding in Cana (S. John 2). Should you wish for another example of wine being Christian, turn to I. Tim., v. 23, where S. Paul is giving his young friend Timothy some advice, and this is what he says : "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake."

Should you hear that wine was not intoxicating in those days, remember what was said of the Christians on Whitsunday when the Holy Spirit descended upon them, and they behaved peculiarly—"These men are full of new wine" (Acts 2, 13). If wine was not intoxicating in those days, why did people blame wine for the apparent drunkenness of the apostles ?

Thus wine in our Lord's day was intoxicating, yet He encouraged its correct use. The Church, following this example, urges men to use wine in moderation, not for drunken revels.

19.—HOW IS THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS ?

You will remember that earlier we mentioned that there were two types of Christian Church—

Catholic.
Church of England.
Roman Catholic.
Greek Orthodox.

Protestant.
Congregationalist.
Methodist.
Presbyterian.
Baptist.
Church of Christ, etc.

The Roman Catholic Church differs from the Church of England mainly in this way : Belief in the Church of England has to be based upon the Bible, but in the Roman Catholic Church it can be based upon any tradition which the Pope feels to be correct. Amongst the beliefs which have been based on tradition are :—

- (a) The Blessed Virgin Mary never committed any sins.
- (b) The physical Body of Jesus is eaten at the Holy Communion Service.
- (c) The souls of those who have died will stay less time in misery if sufficient prayers and masses (which may be paid for) are offered on earth.
- (d) It is a sin for the clergy to marry.
- (e) Confession is compulsory.

* Thus it may be seen that the Roman Catholic Church differs from the Church of England in many matters of doctrine.

There is naturally not sufficient space here to go through all the Protestant churches one by one and set out all the differences between each and the Roman Catholics. Here, however, are some things which you would find in a Roman Catholic Church, and some Anglican churches, which would not be found in Protestant churches : A Holy Water bowl; pictures on the walls; candles, statues, vestments of various kinds; a place for the hearing of confessions; an altar. You might explore all the churches in your district one day and notice the differences. There is a difference also in belief, but as each Protestant church has different beliefs there is little point in trying to contrast them here.

Broadly speaking, then, the Roman Church is different from all others in that it does not rely entirely upon the Bible for its teaching.

20.—WHY ARE THERE SO MANY CHURCHES, AND WHY DON'T THEY UNITE ?

When Jesus was on earth, He founded a Church which at first was just called "The Christian Church," and then as it spread round the world was called "The Catholic Church" ("Catholic" meaning "Universal"). The Catholic Church had three special features :—

(i) It taught the doctrine of the Creed.
(ii) Its first clergy—the apostles—were ordained by Jesus; then in turn the apostles ordained others, and so the line has continued until the present day.

(iii) It has always taught people to use the sacraments.

It seems clear that Jesus wished the Catholic Church to be undivided, for He spoke of it as His Body upon earth. To-day there are three great branches of this Church upon earth. They are :—

- i. The Church of England (Anglican).
- ii. The Roman Catholic (Papist).
- iii. The Church of the East (Orthodox).

In each of these you will find the three special features set out above.

Sad to say, at times the clergy of the Catholic Church became lazy and superstitious and spent much of their time making money, and very little of it in teaching the faith. At these times, good men arose who taught Christianity as they believed it, and as most of these good men started a sect of their own, to-day there are thousands of different religious bodies, some of which are called "churches." The best known of these are :—

The Methodists, started by Charles Wesley in the 18th century, because the Church of England was full of lazy clergymen who did not teach the Bible.

The Baptists, started by Mr. Brown in the 17th century, because he believed men should be christened when they had grown up.

The Congregationalists, also started by Mr. Brown, who at that time did not believe a church should have bishops.

The Presbyterians, who began with John Knox, a teacher in Scotland, in the 17th century.

It was too late when the Catholic Church set her house in order and swept out the abuses to expect the Protestants to return, because these new religious bodies had become strong and their people would not return.

Thus you see there is to-day the Catholic Church founded by Jesus Christ, and there are Protestant churches founded by various men, and, though the Catholic Church always prays that the others may return to their original home, the people in the Protestant churches say, "We are quite satisfied to remain where we are."

That is why there are so many churches, and that is why they will not unite.

21.—WHO STARTED THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND ?

The Church of England began in England during the first century. It was then—as it always has been—a part of the Catholic Church started by Jesus Christ in 33 A.D.

When the name "Church of England" was first given to the Catholic Church in England we do not know. However, as in Magna Charta we read, "The Church of England shall be free," we are sure it was in use before 1215.

Roman Catholic children are taught that the Church of England began with Henry VIII., but as he was not born until 1491—176 years after Magna Charta—this is impossible.

22.—ARE NOT ANGELS FOR ADULTS THE SAME AS FAIRIES FOR CHILDREN ?

The difficulty about both angels and fairies is that they are not able to be put in test tubes nor kept in boxes, weighed and watched.

What we know of fairies is very little. Superstitious old women have woven tales about them, and stories of their doings have been handed down from days before men could write. In every language in the world there are fairy stories which deal with little creatures who change their shape, become invisible, and wave magic wands, but we have no real evidence that they either exist or do not exist.

With angels we are on safer ground, for both the Bible and Jesus Christ tell us a good deal about them.

It seems quite logical that God should need some assistants to control His vast universe, and these assistants have been given the name "angel." They have no bodies, but, like us, they have souls and can choose good or evil; they are neither men nor women (for there is no marriage in Heaven), and they live forever. Their work includes the guarding of men from harm, acting as messengers to men, carrying away the souls of the dead, and praising God in Heaven.

Men do not become angels when they die, for, like sheep and fishes, they are quite another part of God's creation.

Artists have tried to paint angels. Some have made them like pale maidens wafting through space in a nightgown, with hair trailing in the breeze; others have made them like fat little boys who leap about with no clothes and tiny wings, but in reality none of us know the size or shape of these beings.

There are some adults who believe in fairies and some who believe in neither angels nor fairies, and the same applies to children.

An angel is not to be thought of as a grown-up fairy for the grown-up mind, but rather as one of God's creatures whose existence we must accept on the word of Jesus Christ.

23.—IS THERE SUCH A PLACE AS HELL ?

There is no Christian belief that I would more willingly forget, no doctrine that I would rather say did not exist than Hell—yet there is such a place as Hell. Jesus says there is, the Bible and the Christian Church teaches that there is. When I told my boys that, they disagreed, and here were some of their arguments.

Dick said : **"It is not fair; nobody could be bad enough for Hell !"** So I asked them to picture a man who has gained great wealth by treachery and cruelty, by exploiting his fellows and laughing at their foolishness as he did it. When he had gained his money he spent it all on his own lusts and pleasures, then laughed at those that helped him become rich. He did all this with no misgivings, eating like a schoolboy and sleeping like a baby. He was jolly, and confident that God and man were fools; he had beaten them. He knows he is bad, he is glad he is bad, and he has no desire to change. If he went to Heaven, he would be miserable and make everybody else there miserable. Surely the only place for such a person (and it may be you) is Hell.

Then David said : **"Well, you are not asking us to believe in Hell with all its pains, are you ?"** Well, what did Jesus say ? He speaks of it as "everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25, 46); "a place of destruction" (Matt. 10, 29); "a place of banishment" (The Parable of the Wedding Garment)—and all this means something surely which is unspeakably horrid.

If you burn and destroy a log, you get heat, ashes and gas. If you have something which was once a log, it means that you have just ashes, heat and gas.

Hell seems to me to be a place where people live who have once been men, a place where they are men no longer but just burned-out shells. To enter Heaven means to become more human than we have ever been; to enter Hell means to be banished from other men forever. To be a true man is to have our passions obedient to our will and our will obedient to God. To be an ex-man (a creature fit for Hell) is to have our passions uncontrolled by the will and the will entirely centred on ourselves.

John then looked up (he has always been a soft-hearted soul) and he said : **"But I would never be happy in Heaven if I knew Dick was in Hell."** Now to that there is only one reply, and it is just this that the Bible teaches us : that Hell is the end of the story, whereas Heaven goes on forever. Heaven is the cabin in the woods; Hell is the dark outer edge of the woods where we know not what lives, and nor do we care.

No, sadly but surely there is a place called Hell.

God has done His best. He wiped out our sins and offered us a fresh start on Calvary; but men will not accept it, and don't want to make a fresh start. He forgave us, but men will not accept the forgiveness. So God leaves us alone, and if we choose the road to Hell we cannot blame Him for it.

24.—HOW DO WE KNOW THERE IS A HEAVEN ?

One of the reasons why we know there is a Heaven is just this : our whole life is full of desires which we never quite satisfy. We desire to build a cubby-house, or to study aeroplanes, or even to become a great actor, and yet if you asked the greatest builder or aeroplane expert or actor if they had really reached the heights for which they set out they would all answer, "No."

Thus in this life we have desires which no experience can fulfil, and the most probable explanation of this is that we were built for another world. God has made us with desires so that they can be fulfilled. A baby feels hunger because there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim because there is such a thing as water. So with us, God gives us desires so that they can be fulfilled—if not here, then He must have arranged it somewhere else, and that place is Heaven.

However, as we saw earlier, Jesus is God, and what did He say about Heaven ? He said, "In my father's house there are many mansions"—or stories through which we graduate. He told us that He would be there (John 12, 26), while S. Paul told us that "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them which love Him."

I feel that the greatest assurance of Heaven that we have was given by Jesus when He was dying on the Cross. The thief said, "Lord, remember me"; and Jesus, in His death agony, told no easy lie, nor did he give some glib answer—He replied with a note of authority, "Thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

Thus, if our instinct has proven that there must be a Heaven, and if Jesus has promised that such a place exists, what more can we ask ?

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