

Dealing with Doubt.

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This is the title of one of Dr. Henry Drummond's addresses. Henry Drummond was a fellow of the Royal society of Edinburgh and of the Geological society. He was a scientist, who accepted the theory of Evolution, and could explain it lucidly. He completed his education in Germany and was familiar with the Higher Criticism. He was a University professor, and also a clergyman of the Free Kirk of Scotland. He was an evangelist and a disciple and helper of D. L. Moody. A man, who was a disciple of Darwin and Moody at the same time, is worth listening to, when he undertakes to tell the Christian how to persuade the modern doubter to become a follower of Jesus and John Calvin. What follows will be mostly quotations from the address of Dr. Drummond, but it seems to me it is what Horace Greeley used to call "Mighty interestin' readin'." The address begins with this:

"There is a subject which I think, we as workers among young men, cannot afford to keep out of sight—I mean the subject of Doubt. We are forced to face that subject. I would rather let it alone; but every day of my life I meet men who doubt. . . . Now it becomes a matter of great practical importance that we should know how to deal wisely with these men. Upon the whole, I think these are the best men in the country. . . . They are men of intellectual honesty, and cannot allow themselves to be put to rest by words and phrases, or traditions or theologies, but must get to the bottom of things themselves."

One would think that if the doubters, the men of intellectual integrity, were already the best men in the country, a good way would be to let them doubt, especially if, after taking a careful inventory of the resources of Christianity, there was found to be only "words and phrases, traditions and theologies" to offer them.

Drummond says, "Respect doubt for its origin. It is an inevitable thing. It is a part of man as God made him. Heresy is truth in the making and doubt is the prelude to knowledge."

The doubter, according to Drummond, is the man as God made him, and the man of faith and superstition is the man as the priests and preachers have made him—the man who has been born again. Clifford gives a different account of him after the change. He says, "The superstitious man is father of the liar and the cheat."

In justification of doubt Drummond says: "All religious truths are doubtful. There is no absolute truth for any of them. Even the fundamental truth—the

existence of God—no man can prove by reason. The ordinary proof, for the existence of God, involves either assumption, argument in a circle, or a contradiction."

That is the position of the Agnostic. Ingersoll is lecturing upon "Why I Am An Agnostic" and Drummond was trying to tell why an Agnostic should be a Christian.

Drummond continues: "What does this brief account of the origin of doubt teach us? It teaches us great intellectual humility. It teaches us sympathy and toleration with all men who venture upon the ocean of truth to find out a path through it for themselves."

Dr. Drummond says that is what it should teach, but he admits that that has not been the effect upon Christians generally.

He continues: "What has been the church's treatment of doubt in the past? It has been very simple. 'There is a heretic. Burn him!' That is all. 'There is a man who has gone off the road. Bring him back and torture him.' We have got past that physically; have we got past it morally? What does the modern church say to a man who is skeptical? Not 'burn him,' but 'brand him—call him a hard name.'"

So far, then, we have found that there is no logical proof of Christianity, or any part of it; and that its effect has been to make its victims hate and persecute their fellow men, and he admits that it still has that effect.

He says: "That has been the church's treatment of doubt, and that is, perhaps, to some extent, the treatment which we ourselves are inclined to give to men, who cannot see the truths of Christianity as we see them. Contrast Christ's treatment of doubt."

We fail to see the contrast. Jesus said, "He that believeth not shall be damned." He told people to forgive their enemies, but he proposes to roast his. He told them to "Depart from me ye cursed into eternal fire." He called those who disagreed with him hypocrites, whited sepulchres, fools, and "offspring of vipers." Think of that. Offspring of vipers! Dr. Drummond could not only have given him pointers in gentlemanly discussion, but could have told him that there is nothing in the Darwinian theory to justify such a statement. The ophidians are not in our line of ancestors at all.

Dr. Drummond says: "Christ never failed to distinguish between doubt and unbelief. Doubt is can't believe: unbelief is won't believe."

Here we come to the preacher again. No doubt Christ was a great logician. First we are told that there is no proof. The doubter is one who can't believe without proof. Hence the unbeliever is an

obstinate fellow who won't believe what he can't believe.

Again, "But for the intellectual questionings of Thomas and Phillip and Nicodemus, and many others who came to him to have their great problems solved, he was respectful and generous and tolerant."

Thomas had no intellectual difficulties. Ten of the disciples told him of a materialization seance, and being well acquainted with them, he regarded what they told him as idle tales. Then they got up another seance and he was convinced without ever looking inside the cabinet. Nicodemus wanted to know about being born again, and Jesus explained it to him this way. "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one who is born of the spirit."

That is strictly correct. They are like the wind. You can't depend on them. You hear a big noise but never can tell "where they are at."

These are the preliminaries:

"Now how are we ourselves to deal with our fellow students who are in intellectual difficulties? In the first place, I think, we must make all the concessions to them that we can. When a doubter first encounters you he pours out a deluge of abuse of churches and ministers and creeds and Christians. Nine-tenths of what he says is probably true. Agree with him."

Dr. Drummond seemed to think it was abusive to tell the truth about the Church. Nine-tenths true! The only question relates to the other tenth; and yet he goes on as cheerfully to assume that the church is right in regard to the other tenth, as if the church had not always and invariably been in the wrong.

He says, "This is the great point. Turn away from the reason, and go into the man's moral life."

Here again we leave the man and encounter the priest. The first thing he wants the man to do is to abandon reason. The next thing he takes him to a private confessional. If the doubter retains his reason, he will ask the preacher "Why should I confess to you more than you to me?" Religion is not for a reasonable man. Reason must be surrendered as the first step toward entering the kingdom. Is heaven to be the paradise of fools?

Drummond says, "It is a good thing to think; it is a better thing to work—it is a better thing to do good."

How is that? It is a good thing to think; it is a better thing to be a Christian. Whoever believes that, let him surrender his thinker to the church.

Again, "You have to tell him, in fact, that there are two organs of

knowledge: the one reason, the other obedience."

The organ of reason is the brain. In what part of the anatomy is the other organ located? Whoso surrenders his brain to the church will himself be an organ, or some other instrument—most likely a lyre.

"And now tell him, as he has tried the first [reason] and found little in it, just for a moment or two to join you in trying the second. And when he asks you who he is to obey, you tell him there is but one, and lead him to the great historical figure who calls all men unto him."

But the doubter, who keeps his brains, will tell him there is no such character. There can be no natural history of the supernatural. There might have been an historical Jesus, but there is not. To accept Christ in his sense, is to accept the whole creed which he told us to lay aside; but then if he can persuade the doubter to abandon his brains and experiment with the organ of "obedience" he will not think of that. Saint Augustine said that he preached to a nation of men, in northern Africa, who did not have any heads. It seems that Drummond and Moody did the same.

But finally Dr. Drummond gives his method of dealing with specific doubt: "The commonest thing we hear said nowadays by young men is, 'What of evolution? How am I to reconcile my religion, or any religion, with evolution?' That upsets more men than perhaps anything else at this hour. I would say to a young man that Christianity is a further evolution."

But if the young man asked him to prove it, all he could do would be to remind him that he had given up the organ of reason and was now running what he supposed to be his mind with the organ of "obedience."

"The next commonest question is the question of miracles. That question is thrown at my head every other day. 'Why do you believe in miracles?' I say because I have seen them. He says 'When?' I say yesterday. He says 'Where?' I say down such a street I saw a man who was a drunkard redeemed by the power of an unseen Christ."

Can a man be serious in offering that for a miracle? Keely in a Magazine article claimed that his gold cure restored ninety-five per cent of inebriates. Jesus made wine for his first miracle and gave wine to his apostles at the last supper; and are we to believe that at this late day of grace, he is working miracles to "redeem" here and there an isolated one of the victims of his own example? In trying to furnish one, Dr. Drummond acknowledged that we have a right to a present up-to-date miracle. We need one that is first