

Use Your Reason

First of All – About God.

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Catholic Truth Society of Ireland No.apol045a (1945)

1. INTRODUCTION.

WHEN you leave school, you will meet with all kinds of people — in workshops, in ships, in offices, and so on.

Up to now, you have spent nearly all your time among folk — children, parents, teachers, and so forth — who believe in God, in His Commandments, and who, more or less, act accordingly.

It will be different when you go to work. All kinds, I said — that's true enough, for every man is a class by himself, but there will be three or four main groups or classes of people you will come across.

First of all, people who believe in God, in Our Lord, and in the Church He founded, and who act accordingly, more or less.

Secondly, people who believe, or say they believe all this, but who do NOT act according to their belief — bad Catholics, plenty of them, unfortunately.

Thirdly, you will meet with people who don't believe in God at all — some are what we'd call good people, and some are not.

Fourthly, the kind who say, "We don't believe in God ourselves and we are going to see that others do not also."

Fifthly, you will meet with people who will tell you that they never think of these things — they don't worry about whether there's a God or not. Now if it's a fool who says in his heart, "There is no God," what kind of a fool says "I don't care whether there is or not"!

Sixthly, you will meet people who are Christian, but not Catholic, and they will be of two types. Like our first and second categories.

A man may, so far as he was able, have given the question some thought, and still not believe in God, but no man is honest who says, "I don't care either way."

Your mind, and mine, and everyone's — our intelligence — is in one way the most precious thing we have; it makes us different from pigs and goats and monkeys, and we are bound to use it, as we are bound — (apart from God altogether) — to use other natural gifts, legs, arms, ears, and so forth.

It would be wrong to let them fall into paralysis through not using them. We must use our minds — and the only thing a mind can do is think. You must think, you ought to think, and you ought to think about the most important things, and find the answers to the most important questions.

Which are the most important questions? There are two things no man — no ordinary man — will deny. One is that he's here — he exists. If he denies that, try him with a half-brick — a carefully planted half-brick will prove a good many things! No man will tap himself on the chest and say, "There's no such a fellow as myself!" The other thing he will not deny is this, "Although I'm here, I know I shall not always be here — any day, any moment, I may pass out of here."

But you will also meet with people who do not believe in God — not that they say there is no God, but they are not convinced of God's existence, and they would like to be, they "would give anything" to have your faith and mine. They have the common sense to know they will die, die any day, and leave everything in this world — friend, work, pain, sorrow, joy, and gladness — forever.

These things, the things of this life, have, you know, I know, and they know, only the reality of a cloud — this shape now, another shape in a few minutes, changing from moment to moment until it disappears. Yet they feel in their hearts that though we may disappear we shall not come to an end.

The cloud is a mere shape or form; it floats before our eyes its few moments, with its changes, and is gone; but the reality that makes the shape — the water-vapour — still lives on.

So the great reality that is you, I, and everyone, will live on; they feel it — so you do; and everyone does who is honest enough to think or care; even those who do not know what happens to us after death are often glad, very glad, for anyone to give them some inkling, still better some conviction about these things. They are often — even the unbeliever — very willing to shape their lives according to the facts, if once they realize the facts.

Isn't it worth your while to help them to realize the facts? They are anxious to hear them; you should be anxious to be able to tell them.

It's like this. — Suppose you were in a big fair-ground, with crowds of people wandering about, this way and that, and roundabouts, swing boats, Aunt Sally's and what not, kicking up a combined din, and no one caring much about anyone else, but only thinking of enjoying themselves, and you came across a little chap of five or six, crying his eyes out because he was lost in all that din and bustle — strayed away from his mother.

Wouldn't it be nice to be able to say, "Come along, little man, I know where your mother is." You'd be glad when he put his little fist in yours, and you walked him off, and in a few minutes showed him the one face in all that crowd that he wanted to see.

That would be a very pleasant business all round. You'd be glad; he'd be glad, and I've half an idea, mother would be glad as well; all the time he was lost, she was anxiously looking, and enquiring — now she has him. Yes, she's glad as well.

Now, there are plenty of little children, foolish little children of all ages, in this world, who have wandered away from their mother, or who can't recognize her in all the din, and bang, and clatter of this great 'World's Fair'.

The roundabouts are rounding about, and the swings are swinging, and the coconuts are flying this way and that, the clowns are doing their bit, and folk are paying their tuppences, and some are crawling in under the canvas — but soon the lights will be going out one by one, and it would be as well if we all found our mother before the darkness falls.

You would like to help, to be able to help, to show the lost ones the way home before the night comes. Well then, we'll see what we can do.

2. FIRST CAUSE, OR WHAT STARTED IT?

DID you ever look out of your window, and see a leaf, or a piece of paper, go down the street? You wouldn't say go down the street — you're not such a fool as to think the piece of paper made up its mind to toddle off down the street of its own accord.

I'm supposing you have a little brother — or a sister — six years old. You know what these six-year-old people are like; they're what I'd call animated question-marks. It's all "Why?" with them, and they've always got a "Why?" left, if you answer Whys all day.

Well, your small brother (or sister) says, "Why does the paper go down the street?" And you — a profound philosopher — say, "The wind makes it," and you think it's all over — but not likely. "What is the wind?" is the next. "The air moving," says you, hoping for the best. "What makes it move?" These six-year-olds are savages when it comes to questions. "Some air gets hotter than the rest," says you; you know all about temperature and expansion, and rising of expanded and lighter air — you know all this, but small brother, or sister, doesn't. "Some air gets hotter and rises, and the cooler air rushes in to take its place — that makes a wind."

That settles it, you hope — but no. "What makes it hotter?" "The sun." "What makes the sun hot?" "Don't know." "Was the sun always there? Well where did it come from? Who put it there?" and so on, and so on, until Mother rescues you from the tyrant.

There are questions you should ask yourself some time. — What caused the paper to move? What caused the wind? What caused the temperature to be changed? What caused the sun? What started all this business? What was the FIRST Cause?

You look at a blade of grass. What caused it? — A seed. What caused the seed? — A blade of grass before that, and so on, and so on. But what was the first — the seed, or the blade of grass? If the seed was first, how could it come without grass before it? If the grass was first, how did it come without a seed before it? What first caused the seed, or the grass, the acorn, or the oak tree?

There are people who say they can trace everything in the world — men, animals, plants, rocks, seas, all nature — back to when this world was only vapour; then it cooled; then life came — and so on, and so on.

But even if you could be quite certain that the world was once only a puff of vapour, and if you could explain how life did come into the world, and how mind and intelligence came into that life — which of course you can not — you must still find out where the vapour came from; you must still find the origin — the First Cause.

Now this is not a question of Church, or Bible, or priest, or teacher, or anything like that. It is simply a matter of COMMON SENSE, of using your wits, or your reason — a matter of thinking with your own brains, apart from Church, or Bible, or all the rest.

Take anything at all you like, from a moth to an elephant, from a daffodil to a forest, from a pebble to a range of mountains — anything living or dead.

Examine it, and you will see that it is the effect of some cause — it was caused by something BEFORE it.

Bring it before anyone — the cleverer the better; bring your daffodil to the greatest botanist the world ever knew; he will be best able to trace it back though all the causes before it — each cause

being the effect of the cause that went before, just as this year's daffodils are the effect of last year's, and also the cause of next year's.

If the botanist denies God, he is saying that he has a long series of things, each of them depending on something gone before it — but all of them together depending on nothing at all.

It doesn't matter one bit what it is you select — it may be a cockle or a whale, so long as the thing you select is real — has existence. The question — the point is exactly the same. There must be a First Cause.

You're staying in the country; you walk into a meadow. On three sides, the meadow has an iron railing or fence — on the fourth side there's a hawthorn hedge. — You like hawthorn hedges in springtime especially. As you walk along the iron fence, you see — about every ten posts — a stamp or label, " So and So & Co., Makers," and the address of So and So & Co., after it. You've seen their advertisement. — Makers of wood, iron, and wire fencing — and their price list; you remember the name.

Along the hawthorn hedge (have you ever smelled hawthorn in the early morning?) there's no label, no maker's name — at least you can't see it.

Perhaps nobody made it — it came itself? From what? It seems rather mysterious. A bit of cold, dead iron, that's rusting away before your eyes, and must soon be mended, or renewed (as per enclosed price list), needs a maker, with label complete — yet a hedge that's alive, every leaf and twig alive, that will renew itself next year (without any price list), and the year after; that has renewed itself, ever since the farmer was a boy, "aye, an' his grandfeyther before him," a hedge that must be clipped, and trimmed, because it is so much alive — that needs no maker?

It's more than mysterious — it's idiotic. — It's not REASONABLE — to say the dead rusting iron needs a maker and the much more wonderful hedge does not.

3. "ISNESS."

THERE'S an answer in the Catechism, and perhaps you've often wondered what it meant. "God always was, He is, and He always will be." You've thought to yourself — God 'was' What? He 'is' What? He 'will be' What?

Well, it doesn't mean IS anything in particular, it simply means God IS — He exists.

If you knock your toe against a brick, you know the brick is there — it exists. Of course, you also know it is hard, and it is heavy, but the first thing you know about it is that it IS — it exists; there is such a thing — it is real.

Anything that exists, IS — it IS'es, if you like. A thing that doesn't exist, doesn't IS — it is not, it is unreal; there is no such thing.

I'm sorry to tell you there IS no such thing as a fairy. Fairies don't exist; a fairy IS not — it doesn't is.

In some parts of the country, instead of saying, "He is in the garden," or "It is on the table," they say, "He be's in the garden," or "It be's on the table," or "He be a good boy" (an unlikely state of affairs, but still —). You see, "He is," or "It is," can be said, "He be's," or "It be's," and really in one way "be's " is better than is, because to say a thing is, means that it be's — it has BEING — it exists — it is a BEING.

The boy or girl sitting next to you is a being, because he or she exists — he (she) IS. Never mind what she is; she may be nice, or she may not; she may be tall or short; she may be clever or stupid; she may be lots of things, but the big thing about her is, she IS — she exists — she has BEING — she is A being.

A caterpillar is a being, so is a frog, or a cockroach, or anything else that is — that exists. If there is such a thing, it exists, it is, it be's, it has being, it is a being.

You've no idea how clever you are if you understand that — you are learning 'ontology', and that's something!

The Catechism says God is the Supreme Being — that means He is the highest and greatest thing that exists. Lots of other things exist — the sun, the stars, the sea, the earth, moths, mice, butterflies, linnets, maggots, rats, elephants, and what not; these exist, there are such things, they ARE, they are beings — they are real. Whatever is real, exists, is, be's, is a BEING.

Now let's see if you can come along a bit further. You know what BEING means, and what A BEING is. Now you are going to be very clever, I hope.

When you come across BEING, or A BEING, it MUST be either dependent on some other being for its existence, or else it is not dependent. That is, it either depends on something that existed before it, or it is independent — exists of its own power, and without anything before it that made it exist.

A daisy, for instance, does not exist without depending on something else. As you know, it came from a seed, and it will wither.

An elephant — does that exist of its own power? No, because he was once a baby elephant strolling round the jungle with Mama elephant, and he'll grow old and die; and so on through all things, flowers and animals, and men and women, and boys and girls, and everything, in a word, that we see in the world; you'll find they are all dependent — they all depend on something else for their existence, their ISness, their BEING, and we can easily show how they depend.

We see how this year's daffodils depend on last year's — were caused by last year's; we see how next year's depend on this year's, and so on.

We can easily show how all living things, men, and animals, and plants, succeed by generation after generation. This generation could not exist or BE without the generation before it. All we see about us, we see to be dependent — and the first man that ever thought, he too could see that all around him, including HIMSELF, was dependent. Dependent on What? Ah, that's the question. If all Being is dependent, in the name of common sense what is it dependent on?

There is only one answer — there must be BEING that is not dependent, that began all other BEING, upon which all other being is dependent, and that IS, BE'S, EXISTS, of its own power, is dependent on nothing, had nothing before it, was caused by nothing — that is to say, was not caused at all — never began to BE, because nothing could begin it; therefore, had no beginning, and because it exists of its own power, and is not dependent, will always exist, even if every other being is destroyed, or wiped out, or dies, or withers, or fades.

BEING — A BEING — independent, without a cause, without a beginning, without an end, an always WAS, an always WILL BE; BEING upon which all other being depends, to which all other existing things owe their BEING, their existence, their Isness — that is GOD.

Remember, the word doesn't matter — I mean the word "God" — it is the FACT that is important, the fact that there exists, and must exist — an independent Being.

You may call it God, or the Infinite, or the Absolute, or the Almighty. The word "God" simply means "something to be worshipped". It is an easy English word, we'll admit, but it doesn't matter — it is the point that matters.

If there is any being at all — if anything exists — there must be independent being — something that exists of its own power.

If there is no independent being, then all being — all things that exist — are dependent, depend on something else.

But how can all things depend on something else, if there's nothing for them to depend on? The existence of ANYTHING AT ALL proves the existence of God; if there is ANY BE-ing, there must be independent BE-ing. The person who denies independent Being — God — denies even if he doesn't realize it — ALL Being — including his own: God IS or NOTHING is. The man who denies God — denies his own existence. He MUST admit he's dependent and yet deny there is anything to be dependent on.

4. CHANCE OR DESIGN.

TAKE ten pieces of paper, and number them up to ten. Now take them in your hand, throw them up in the air, and see how they fall down.

Will they fall in a nice line — 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or will they fall higgledy-piggledy, any old way? What do you think?

Try it, or watch someone else try it. You know perfectly well, there will be no straight line, and no order. You throw them up again, and they fall altogether differently.

Suppose you had to keep on throwing them up until they came down on the floor in ORDER. How long would you be at it? I don't know, and nobody knows. You might get it right first time — you don't know. You might get it after a thousand times — you don't know, and neither do I.

It is what we call Chance — pure chance; you have no control over it; you cannot make it happen, and you cannot tell how they will fall down.

Now suppose one day you asked a strange boy or girl to throw them up — and the first time they came down in a nice straight line — 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

"Marvellous," you'd say, "but it's only his luck — or her luck." (Girls are sometimes lucky, you know.) You tell him to try again, and again they come down in a nice straight line — in perfect order.

"Oh," says you, "this is a funny business "; and you get him to throw them up again, and again they come down in perfect order.

"There's something behind this," you say to yourself, "this chap knows a trick or two." You'd say, "This isn't chance; this chap can control the bits of paper — he can make them come in order."

Now, what I want to know is this. Will they come down in order, by themselves? Can those lifeless bits of paper arrange themselves orderly in a nice straight line — by themselves? Must there be someone who knows a trick or two — someone at least who knows that trick?

Mind you, I don't think there's anyone on earth who could say, "I'll make them fall down on the floor in order" — in fact, I'm certain there's not — not even once, never mind every time.

But suppose there were such a person — a person able to put order into a number of things that could not possibly order themselves. Do you know such a person?

Ah, that's the question.

Look around you and see if you find order anywhere. Do you find things happening time after time in a regular, unchanging way — the same today as yesterday, this year as last year? Do you see anything moving with a settled smoothness — moving according to definite clear-cut rules, or laws, where chance plays no part?

Look around. Is there any such order round about you? Is it chance the sun rose this morning? Will it rise tomorrow by chance? Did it rise by chance two thousand years ago, and every morning since?

Did Julius Caesar, or Alfred the Great, or Moses, or Nelson, or Charles the First watch the moon wax and wane, and is it by chance you to-night can watch the same moon that they looked up to do the same thing?

Is it by chance the same moon has guided the galleys of the Phoenicians and the twenty-eight day cruises of today?

Is it by chance the same stars that the lonely Egyptian in the desert studied centuries ago, have moved for all those centuries in an order of exquisite smoothness and exactness, so that you to-night can watch exactly the same stars, in exactly the same movements? Is that chance or ORDER?

Examine the world about you, and find how unspeakably ORDERLY it is. Look at creation, and tell me is it chance.

Is it by chance we can tell of an eclipse hundreds of years before it happens? Is it by chance eclipses have been foretold to the second, to the spot, hundreds of years before they have happened? Is it by chance we can tell the tides — the ebb and flow of the boundless ocean — years in advance?

Examine creation. I can't tell you where to begin, and still less can I tell you where to stop.

Go into a garden. Is it by chance the pansies were not roses — or is there ORDER in it? Is it by chance the butterflies are not beetles — or is it settled beforehand what's to be a butterfly and what a beetle?

I don't care if it's only a window-box, with a couple of geraniums, and two dozen maggots — (the maggots are usually a dozen to one against the plants.)

Your garden, I say, is an example, an instance, an illustration, of a quite indescribable sweetness of succession — an order so perfect that no man can describe it.

If you are not satisfied with your garden, look up at the stars — and think that the painted savage of four thousand years ago looked at the SAME stars, making the same ORDERED movements, as regularly and accurately as the most delicately balanced watch; and think that ten thousand years hence — long after you and I are dead, and forgotten — if the world lasts, some boy or girl will watch the SAME stars, moving in the SAME ways, with the SAME awful accuracy. — No sane man will deny that.

Now, I want to know, is that Chance — a mere accident, a mere happening — that No one controls, or can control? Or is it regular, according to rule, or law, or order?

Do the same wonderful things happen, day after day, night after night, for centuries, without any control?

Do they happen year by year, springtime after springtime, winter after winter, in your garden, and everybody's garden, and in the trackless forests of the tropics, by chance — or by law and order?

If by law and order — by whose law and order? Who put law and order into the 'bit of vapour', that started all this?

If you get a lot of pins and needles mixed up, can they sort themselves into two groups — pins here, needles there — or do you need someone who knows a pin from a needle? Do you, in a word, need an intelligence to sort the pins from the needles — to give order to the mix-up?

And if so simple a thing as that needs an intelligence, what about this wonderful world, of quite indescribable order and design — does that need, or did that need no intelligence? No designer?

5. BY HIS WORKS.

SUPPOSE an inspector walked into a schoolroom — you know the way inspectors have — and saw on the teacher's desk a pile of exercise books waiting to be marked.

Let us say they are Arithmetic books. He picks up the first and opens it — first Page, three blots, half-a-dozen figures scratched out, six sums wrong, and two right. He goes on, page after page, and comes across much the same thing, only worse — blots, scratchings, scrapings, most of the sums wrong, dirty, untidy, and careless.

Now he hasn't seen the name on the book, and he hasn't asked anything about the boy whose book it is.

Do you think he knows anything about the boy? Would you? Even if you never saw the boy, there's his work in front of you — sloppy, dirty, untidy, and careless — page after page of it.

I think you'd be able to say something about the boy, even without seeing his work — it would be enough to be told about his work.

You mightn't know the boy's name, or the colour of his hair, or anything else — but you'd certainly know something about the boy.

Suppose the inspector — or yourself — went through the books — some were pretty good, some only fair, some fairly bad, and so on.

When you came to a very bad one, you'd ask, "What boy or girl did this?" and when you came to a particularly nice one, you'd like to know whose it was.

And then you come to the last of all, and open it. First page — lovely, every figure beautifully made, every sum right and not the least sign of a blot — next page the same, and the next.

You go on page after page, beautifully neat, and clean, and orderly, and all the sums right. You notice, as you go on, the sums are harder and harder, and each sum depends on the one before it. The whole book is a continuation from the easy sums of the first page — all beautifully worked out — to the very difficult ones towards the end of the book; everything is dated and numbered perfectly — and seemingly there is no kind of sum, no rule, that is not worked out correctly here.

You say to yourself, "Well, whoever did this certainly knows all about it, and does his work perfectly," and you ask the teacher, "Whose book is this one — it's miles better than all the rest put together?"

The teacher says, "Oh, that one! It did itself — or rather, there was some ink in an ink-pot and a few bits of paper, and, somehow or other, the ink got on the paper, and made some marks and things, and signs, and dates; and the signs, and the dates, and numbers jumped together, and somehow the 'what's-this' came up to the 'thingammyjig', and that caused the 'whatdjecallit' — and there's the book."

That would be a very silly way to account for a lovely book. — Yet some people try to say this lovely world "just happened" like that.

SCIENCE.

You'll often hear people saying, "Science tells us so and so." Science means knowledge — knowledge about ANYTHING. A scientist is a person with a great deal of knowledge, who has studied a great deal — and SOME scientists don't believe in God.

Don't imagine, not for a moment, that I want to make little of science — not likely.

You know how we get to know about a boy by looking at his work — his exercise book, for instance.

We can learn a very great deal about him — but mind you, we can't learn the most important things about him. We'll know if he's neat and orderly, and tidy and clever — but we shan't know if he's kind and gentle, or a bully. He might be a cheat at games, or he might be the nicest chap you ever met; he might be mean, or he might be as generous as the sunshine. There are a great many things we could not know, without knowing the boy himself, but still there are many things we can know by simply looking at, and examining his work — any work, anything he has done.

In the same way by examining creation — and that is what Science does — real Science does nothing else — by examining Creation, the work of the Creator, we get to know more about the One whose work it is.

If someone tells me about a lovely picture he saw, he's telling me something about the artist — he needn't even name the artist or mention him at all.

I'm told about a lovely garden — I'm learning about the gardener, even if he isn't mentioned, and so on.

If science tells me all about a spider — sorry, science can't tell me all about anything — but if science tells me a great deal about the spider, only the spider, mind you — then science is telling me a little more about the spider's Maker than I knew already.

The more I know about cockles and mussels, and jellyfish and crabs, pansies and potatoes, larks and linnets and nightingales, elephants and crocodiles and grasshoppers — in a word, the more I learn about "Nature," the more I learn about the Maker, the designer of nature.

I cannot know more about flowers without knowing more about the One who produced the flowers — and all the different branches of science tell me more and more about "Nature," and therefore more and more about the Causer, the Author of Nature.

Ask your teacher about biology, and geology, and entomology — and the rest. These tell us wonderful facts.

Biologists with microscopes examine the tiniest little insects and plants; they examine and study life, no matter how tiny the thing is that lives — but they can't tell us what life is.

Astronomers peer into the very depths of space, and examine the stars and search for new ones.

Whether it is the biologist with his microscope examining things unseen by the eye — too small to be seen — or the astronomers searching distances too great for the imagination, in either case, and in both cases, they find a most exquisite order, tidiness, and purpose, in everything they see, in every new thing they discover — whether it is a new planet, millions of miles away, weighing millions of tons, and flying through space at thousands of miles an hour, or whether, with a new and more powerful microscope, they find in a thimbleful of pond water, or sea water, a new "life" that was too small for other microscopes to find: in all things great and small, they always find a wonderful system — order; everything follows quite definite clear-cut laws; everything has its purpose; everything seems exactly designed for its purpose, and everything seems to work in perfect harmony — as we'd say — with all the things around about it.

This wonderful world is ticking along day after day, night after night, century after century, in a way quite wonderful to think about, and so wide, so deep, so high, so vast, that all the cleverest minds in the world, put together, could not know it — not in centuries.

No, I'm saying nothing against science — oh dear, no. But I want to warn you about some of the stuff you'll read later on, when you have left school — or the stuff you'll hear.

"Science tells us," — you'll hear very often — and very often, as I've said, it means only "I think," or "This scientist thinks."

Mind you, some of the greatest scientists ever known have been good Christians; even more, they have been good Catholics: — André-Marie Ampere after whom is named the unit of electrical current; Alessandro Volta after whom is named the unit of pressure; Charles-Augustin de Coulomb after whom is named the unit of quantity; Wilhelm Röntgen who discovered X-Rays; the great Louis Pasteur; Guy de Chauliac, Father of modern surgery; Bertram Windle, the noted anatomist; more still, they have been priests — Gregor Mendel, the geneticist and Angelo Secchi the astronomer. More again, they have been Saints of the Catholic Church.

Perhaps the greatest intellect, the cleverest mind in the history of mankind, was Saint Thomas Aquinas — at least he was the greatest we know of. There may have been greater minds — but most people will agree that his was the greatest mind that we know of. He did a great deal of thinking, and a great deal of writing — wonderful books. He also wrote *O Salutaris*, (*O Saving Victim*), *Tantum Ergo*, ('Down in adoration falling', 'Hence so great a Sacrament, Let us venerate') and so on. He was a pupil of that great scientist Saint Albert the Great.

So don't imagine that science tells us there is no God. The greatest number of scientists, of men and women who studied "nature" — creation — have come to the conclusion, from the study of Nature — remember, from that alone — that there must be a God.

Their reason only, their mind — leaving out miracles and Scripture, and Our Lord, and all the rest — only from studying nature, has said there must be a God.

God must exist — without Him nothing could exist — so don't be afraid of science; all the other way, love it, get to know as much as you can about it — but don't swallow all you hear, or all you read.

Mind you, a very great deal of our knowledge of nature is as true as human knowledge ever can be; what you want to do is to draw the line between what is settled, known, agreed, and proved fact, and what is only theory or guess-work.

You'll find that no settled, agreed fact has anything to say against religion, or against God — all the other way.

6. WHAT IS "MATTER"? MORAL LAW.

LET'S go back to this 'bit of vapour' that started it all — according to some people. What was it? Matter.

All the vapour we know anything about is matter — there's nothing supernatural about it. It is matter, and only matter — and because it is only matter, it must obey the laws governing matter, unless there is something put into it, which raises it above the laws of matter. Mere matter, BEING which is only matter, is governed by laws — it is subject to laws, — that it cannot possibly resist — that it cannot "go against" — laws that it must obey.

A lump of sugar, well, it is matter — put it in your tea — it melts or dissolves — you expect it to do so — it did yesterday and the day before; and as long as you can remember. It did for Dad and for Gran-dad, and when you are a gran-dad, it will behave in the same way — it can't help itself. The law is that sugar dissolves in hot tea — or cold tea if you wait a bit longer — and you'll never get a piece of sugar saying "Yah, not this morning." No —, that will never happen.

Try a nail in your tea — it won't melt — not ever. (Apply super heat and the tea will evaporate before the nail will 'melt'.) You don't say the sugar is kind and obliging for doing what it can't help doing — and you're not such a fool as to think the nail is brave or stubborn or obstinate.

Neither the sugar nor the nail has any "say" in the business — they have no choice whatever. The sugar melts — the nail doesn't — that's definite — and constant — it won't change. The behaviour of matter in any circumstances is altogether outside its own control. Now if this 'bit of vapour' that we hear so much about was the start — and the whole start of all things — which of course it could NOT be — because it would have to come from something else, or create itself out of NOTHING (and I'd like to be there when it did that), but if the 'vapour' started all things — and nothing else was added to it — then all things are matter — and only matter. The jellyfish and lizards and apes and what not are matter — so am I, and so are you — and Dad, Mother, and all the rest of us. And like the nail and the sugar, we can't help what happens to us or what we do in any circumstances. If we are only matter, we are governed by changeless laws that we CANNOT disobey. The nail and sugar MUST obey the law — so MUST we, if we are only matter. Good mothers and bad murderers are just like the nail and the sugar — they can't help what they do. If we're only matter there is, and there CAN be, no right or wrong in anything we do.

If you are kind and gentle and generous and forgiving, you are no more to be thanked than a pork chop — because you can't help yourself if you are only matter and nothing else. If you get what's called a "character" when you leave school — it means nothing at all, on the 'vapour' idea — that is, if you are only matter — because no one knows, no, no one, what you will do next — you don't even know yourself. If we're only matter, why the medals and rewards? Why the gaols and

punishments? The people with the medals and the people in the gaols are in exactly the same boat on the "matter only" idea — they couldn't help themselves. You can't sensibly reward matter for what it does — and you can't sensibly punish it either.

There's no virtue, and there's no vice, in matter. There is no right or wrong in what matter does or in what happens to it — it can't help itself — it has no "say" — it must obey.

Yet all men have a sense of right and wrong — a notion that there are some things they ought to do and some things they ought not to do — they have a sense of what we call "moral values" — in a word, they have a "Conscience." I am not saying, and I don't pretend that all men have the same sense of moral values. I know that all men don't agree as to what things are right and what things are wrong, but that disagreement makes no difference to the point.

You'll often hear people argue whether a thing is right or wrong — the argument proves that they have the "idea" of right and wrong, because you can't talk or argue about a thing if you have no idea about it. No, all men have not the same sense of moral values but all men have some sense of moral values.

Now you don't get a sense of moral values — a "conscience"—in 'vapour' or in matter. If we all came from "vapour" and nothing else — if we're all matter and no more than matter, where did we get the conscience from? This "conscience" — this sense of right and wrong — is "within us" so to speak — in our mind — part of our intelligence. It is not a question of obeying laws — I mean obeying the law of the land — man-made laws. You often have people deliberately refusing to obey the law of the land, because, so they say, their conscience won't let them obey — to obey the law would be against their conscience. Their sense of right and wrong tells them that the law is wrong — that often happens.

We know that a leg of mutton has no conscience — neither has a lump of coal — but tell a MAN he has no conscience and see what happens — or better still clear out before it happens. The atheist or materialist who denies God — who says that nothing exists but matter — cannot explain where conscience comes from — at least he cannot satisfactorily explain it.

I am not saying that an atheist can't be "good" by no means. If he's good — and of course he may be — he's like a man who decorates his house with someone else's pictures. His idea of goodness is borrowed from those who believe in something more than matter — in God.

So, by USING YOUR REASON, you can know that there is a God, and something, at least, about what He is like.
