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A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php

It is good to speak to Him even though I have nothing particular to say: it will intensify my recognition of His immediate immanence: it will unconsciously move me to live my whole life to approval and delight.

Arise, let us go hence! Jesus says, as, step by step, we make our way through this life. And, when the time comes, He will say it on the threshold of the life to come. 'As the gates open', exclaimed Adolph Monod, within sight of the end of his apostolic ministry, 'as the gates open, I shall hear the Master's voice saying, "Arise, let us go hence!" It will not be going out alone, or to be alone yonder, but "*Let us go hence!*" The valley shall be aflame with the light of His presence and the waters of the river shall part at the His touch of His divine feet!'¹

ON HAVING CONVICTIONS

J. B. WATSON

This is a day in which the virtue of open-mindedness is much extolled. To be suspected of being inaccessible to new points of view, or so fixed in opinion as to be above persuasion, is counted an intellectual sin beyond pardon. It is certainly desirable to be ready to look any fresh idea or proposal in the face and give it fair consideration. To fail of this is to fall before the charge of obscurantism. But let us be sure that we understand what we mean by open-mindedness. Far from us be that spurious brand which means leaving the door of the mind open for any thief to enter and remove all our treasures. True openness of mind is to keep an outward facing window from which we may scan the features of any newcomer as he approaches, ready to consider his credentials dispassionately in the light of what we know already to be true.

There are, of course, many subjects on which it is right to suspend judgement. Lord Balfour's phrase, 'I have no settled

¹The above is a chapter from Dr. F. W. Boreham's book, '*Cliffs Of Opal*', by kind permission of the publishers, The Epworth Press, London. The other chapters are also interesting and suggestive in their varied lessons; even for the Bible Student!—Ed.

convictions', expresses a correct attitude towards many matters: subjects morally colourless, or remote from life's great issues, speculative subjects on which no revelation has been given, some political opinions, and many questions the 'yes' or 'no' of which matters nothing to anybody. No one can be blamed for keeping an open mind about whether Mars is inhabited or what will be next year's fashion in frocks. Such debatable questions afford scope for the open mind.

But we will now praise the contrary virtue of *the closed mind*. For there are great matters on which it is essential to arrive at settled certitude, and having arrived, to regard them as outside the realm of debate. We must have this settled conviction about *foundations*. How far is it possible to proceed, say, with the study of the science of mathematics if the student keeps an open mind on what twice two are? To get anywhere in that study one must look upon the multiplication table as incontestably true. So also, in the all-important sphere of things spiritual, a man must reach settled working beliefs if he is to live higher than brute or vegetable.

What are Convictions?

Some regard the word 'believe' as derived from Saxon sources, and think of it as compounded of two words 'by' and 'lief' (live), the word thus meaning 'the things we live by'. When King Hezekiah recovered from his sickness that had seemed to be 'unto death' and wrote his 'psalm of the convalescent', musing upon the reality of the dealings of God with him in that experience, he confessed, 'O Lord, by these things men live,' meaning surely the things that make men sure of God. By these 'beliefs' or 'convictions' we live; they are life's bases: the anchorage in the sure holding of which we ride out the gales that sweep our vessel.

The unshakable certainty that a thing is true though the sky fall down and is not only true but big; true enough and big enough to live for and, if need be, to die for; that is what we mean by having convictions.

What are not Convictions?

It is a curious fact that many mistake prejudices for convictions. Prejudice is never Christian. He who is governed by

prejudice is a bigot. A prejudice is a sour deposit which has been allowed to fill a dent in one's character. We need constantly to challenge our hearts whether the things for which we fight are Christian convictions or mere prejudices, and it requires honest dealing with oneself to allow the distinction.

Beware also of fads, for many confound these with convictions. A fad is a tame mouse whose owner believes it to be a lion. The owner of a fad becomes a crank, and in extreme cases an eccentric. The whole world is plagued with earnest but mistaken folks who have given themselves over to the occupation of cracking egg-shells with sledge-hammers. A din and a useless splash is all they accomplish. Therefore pray that the grace of a sense of proportion may keep you from both the sources of prejudices, and the futility of fads.

What is the Basic Christian Conviction?

It is the conviction that makes its possessor sure of God. That He is good, wise, just, transcendent. That His ways are indefectibly right, whether we understand them or whether they are darkness to our minds, whether we can trace them or whether they seem to contradict everything we have hoped and believed. Hosea's conviction—the immovable rock on which he rested his life, 'The ways of the Lord are right;' the conviction of Paul, standing before inscrutable mysteries of His providence: 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God;' the final conviction of John, as he thinks into the heart of things, 'God is love'. This is life's ballast; this the conviction that steadies, the soul's sure hold of God.

And what is

The Guiding Conviction

that has charge of every truly ordered life? It is the sure belief that God has spoken, revealing Himself in His Son. A silent God? Who made man's mouth? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? Shall He who made man's mouth Himself be dumb? Or shall He Who implanted in man the impulse to communicate his thoughts be Himself devoid of desire to communicate with man? Did He

create the hunger our souls have for Him, only to mock it with eternal silence? We decline to believe it. God has spoken.

He has spoken of His power and Divinity in the works of His hands. His wisdom and goodness are uttered in His ceaseless providence. But His heart, His very heart of mercy, grace, truth, and love are told out in Him Who is the Revealer of the Father. The story of that supreme revelation is enshrined in Holy Scripture. There, in a way that is not known elsewhere, the voice of God is heard. These writings are the Word of God.

The implications of this conviction are far-reaching. His will is unfolded in the Word; His will for me. He has a way of life for me to follow. I may find it if I will hearken, and realize it if I will obey. This Word, then, must guide—to it rather than to subjective frames, impressions and impulses I must turn for life's guidance. Thus will mine become the indoctrinated life, its direction fixed by the conviction that God has spoken and that His revelation is made available for me in His written Word. Then, what is

The Driving Conviction

of true Christian living? It is the profound persuasion that the Cross of Christ is the focal centre of God's revelation of Himself. The writer to the Hebrews regards the Cross as standing at the centre of Time, saying that Christ's appearing to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself occurred at the 'consummation of the ages', i.e., that even as all past ages had looked forward to that unparalleled event, so all succeeding ages look back to it. The Cross rules all Time. In a very real sense it is race-wide. Hear Paul express his considered judgement of its vast significance: 'If one died for all, then all died'. O levelling Cross, laying all men low; making the lost estate of man at his best and worst clearly evident. 'And He died for all that they might live'. O life-bestowing Cross, through it there are those who, out of their former death have been made to live, as in another place this same Paul confesses, 'I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live'. And now, what is his conviction concerning these who have their new life from this once-dead, now living Christ? 'WE THUS JUDGE, that they which live should not hence-forth live unto themselves, but UNTO

HIM who died for them and rose again'. It was this calm, deliberate conviction of the meaning of the revelation of God which centres in the Cross that drew Paul on and ever on, and would not let him rest save in unremitting service to the Lord Jesus, Whose love had conquered him.

Let this conviction of the significance of the Cross lay hold of a man and he will be constrained, as Paul was, to 'live unto Him'. Think through them till you, too, 'thus judge'. As C. T. Studd did when he said, 'If Jesus Christ be God, and if He died for me, then no sacrifice I can make for Him can possibly be too much'.

A long steady look at the Cross, till its moral claim is so clearly seen by us that we come to a love-constrained recognition of His claims; that is what we all need.

When Abraham Lincoln's body was being taken from Washington to Illinois, all along the streets of the numerous towns through which the Liberator's cortege passed, stood silent and respectful crowds, paying their last homage to one who had championed a noble cause and had paid with his life. As the carriage went through the town of Albany, there stood at the back of the crowd a negress, whose tiny piccaninny son clutched at his mammy's skirts. Just as the coffin was about to pass the spot where she stood, she stooped, lifted up her boy, and set him high on her shoulder, where without difficulty he could see the procession. And then she said to him: 'Take a long, long look, Sammy—he died for you'.

Take a long, long look at the wondrous Cross: let it speak to you, till the love of Christ shall make its gracious compulsion felt, and you come to share the driving conviction that sends us out to live, not to ourselves, but to Him Who died for us.