

*Discard  
Lateness files  
at Dartmouth  
S. F. P. letter*

"THIS I BELIEVE"

Wilder Penfield

(Talk in radio broadcast series "This I Believe"  
Broadcast January 20th. 1955)

One March afternoon during the first world war, I stood with friends on the forward deck of a cross-channel passenger steamer, the Sussex. The sun of early spring sparkled on the waves as we laughed and talked, and kept a sharp look-out for the first appearance of the coast of France.

Suddenly, <sup>without warning, there was a</sup> ~~I was aware~~ of a prodigious sound and knew that I was moving through space. Objects moved with me, turning slowly over and over. Curiously enough, though I realized that I was at the very center of an explosion, my mind seemed crystal clear. <sup>nois</sup>

"We have hit a floating mine", I thought, "or else it is a German torpedo. I must eventually fall into the sea and this wreckage will come drifting down on top of me. This is the end of my life". And all the while there was that dreadful din in my ears and time stood still.

Then it was that my own personal belief seemed to speak out in words within me. "No. This cannot be the end. The work that I have planned to do is good and it has only just begun." During that moment of time I seemed to see my own life as though in distant perspective. I was sure then that God controlled all things and that healing and research was the job he had given me.

It was as simple as that. Logic or no logic, the experience showed me what I believed. You may say that the thinking was presumptuous, egotistical. Nevertheless, it was sincere.

Let me rephrase it according to my present thought. There is a great purpose, a great spirit, that moves in the universe. And we, as individuals in this world, have each of us a certain sphere of free will. We may seek to play a role that is in accord with the will of God, or we may turn our lives to sabotage. We have it in our power to help or to hinder. There is a job for every man and his contribution, though infinitesimal, is none the less important.

I am astonished to discover how many people seem to believe that there is a basic contradiction between religion and science. This, it seems to me, is a false conclusion derived from two misconceptions: first, a misunderstanding of what science can



achieve and second, a narrowness of interpretation of the meaning of religion.

My own work in the practice of medicine has led me to join the many scientists all around the world, who are studying the human brain. It has been possible for us to trace ~~much of~~ the nervous action that carries information inward, into the brain, and to record the nerve impulses that pass outward to produce voluntary activity, but we are quite ignorant of how nerve action is transformed into thought and how thought is converted into nerve action.

Science provides no methods of studying this enigma. And it is my belief that, however far scientific knowledge may advance in the future, it will never explain the nature of the spirit, nor will the machine ever wholly account for the man. We must believe some things that we cannot prove.

*the pathways of nerve impulses, those entering the brain that bring information to the mind and those*