

III. THE CHURCH HAS EXHIBITED A WONDERFUL POWER OF REVIVAL AFTER DECLENSIONS. ILLUSTRATIONS :

1. *The Reformation.* It shows that the corruption and abuses of the Middle Ages were not of the essence of Christian truth. (1) In the marvellous expansion of the European mind in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Christianity, if effete, would have been overthrown. (2) Christianity not only survived, but in its purified form became the central force in the new movement. (3) Out of it every intellectual advance of modern times has sprung. 2. *Other revival movements.* (1) The Methodist revival of last century, which numbers its converts by millions and has extended its missions into many climes. (2) The missionary revival which has stimulated all the churches to return to some measure of Apostolic zeal. (3) The revival of the spiritual life of some of the ancient but lifeless Oriental churches through Protestant missions. No other religion has shown in any marked degree this power of throwing off errors and corruptions and returning to its primitive faith. In this Christianity shows the vital energy of truth.

IV. THE CHURCH HAS SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED MANY DIFFERENT ASSAULTS :

1. *The assaults of force.* (1) The persecutions of pagan Rome. (a) The whole military might of the empire was again and again put forth to crush out the Christian faith. (b) Every policy which statesmen could devise was employed for the same end. (2) The persecutions of papal Rome. The argument is not affected by the fact that these were instituted by a corrupt form of Christianity. They serve to show how a purer form of the same faith can successfully maintain itself against the utmost endeavors of remorseless cruelty. (3) The persecutions of Christians by Mohammedan and heathen rulers of to-day. 2. *The assaults of intellect.* (1) The philosophical heathens of early days. (2) The deistical writers of last century. (3) The pantheistic materialistic and critical writers of to-day. 3. *The results.* Opinions will differ as to how much these assaults have accomplished. The following points can scarcely be seriously disputed: (1) The church still exists. (2) The blood of her martyrs has generally been the seed of new accessions. (3) Every assault of scepticism has resulted in the emphasizing of some neglected truth or in the abandoning of some error or abuse. (4) If the falsity of Christianity had once been clearly shown, its doom would have been sealed by the fearless truth-loving spirit of the present age.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MAN.

That Christianity is true appears from the effects which it produces on the heart and life of the man who believes it and lives it.

I. CHRISTIANITY MAKES A GREAT CHANGE IN A MAN'S CHARACTER AND LIFE.

In contrast with other men and with his own previous life the following advantages of a true Christian may be noted :

1. *He is delivered from the power of sin.* Drunkards and other slaves of vice have often tried in vain to reform themselves, but the submission of the heart and life to Christ immediately set them free. *He has obtained a higher ideal of life.* It is not the standard of worldly honor or conventional morality, but the life of the perfect man Jesus Christ. As the Christian grows his ideal grows before him. 3. *He has a more sensitive conscience :* (1) To the evil of sin. He shrinks now not only from the act, but from the very thought of evil. (2) To moral obligation. All his duties are a loving response to a personal benefactor. 4. *He has a fuller and richer joy.* (1) His sense of guilt and consequent fear of punishment have been removed by the atonement. (2) He has constant fellowship with the purest, wisest and most loving of beings. (3) His earthly trials are an apprenticeship for higher service and happiness. "His worst sufferings here are only growing pains." (4) Death is his final deliverance from all evil and his introduction to inconceivable blessedness. 5. *He is much better able to serve others.* (1) His Christ-like Spirit is itself a blessing to those around him. (2) Christ has given him a much higher idea of the value and possibilities of every man. (3) All his mental and material possessions are held as a stewardship to be administered for Christ in the service of man. (4) His own experience enables him to be helpful to all earnest seekers after truth.