

Rev. Dr. Burns spoke upon the text, St. John viii. 32: "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." He said: Absolute freedom belongs to God alone. All others are held in bond natural or unnatural, legal or illegal, pleasant or galling. The whole human race is a subject race, legally and naturally subject to the restraints imposed by infinite wisdom and goodness; and illegally and abnormally subject to the galling slavery of perverted appetites and desires, also to the oppression of ignorance in its thousand forms or to the overpowering force of outside tyranny, acting on the principle that might makes right. Yet, who would be catalogued as a slave? And even if slavery of body has to be admitted, as has too often been the case, in our own Britain, for instance, and in the United States, intellectual and moral freedom will still be claimed. The Jews, to whom the Lord used the words of the text, resented the insinuation of servitude implied in them, and declared that they "were never in bondage to any man." How far from the truth was that statement? But it was not to political enslavement that the Master referred, but to a much more common and more degrading servitude. How bitterly we struggle against political subjection, how easily we glide into the bondage induced by the clouding of the judgment and the perverting of the moral sense. Through the seductive influences of sin we become the sport of forces that we were destined to control and are racked by fears begotten of ignorance. For ages the elements were a continual terror to man, the majority of phenomena were supernatural, and behind every fear lay a demon or a demigod. How galling the thralldom under which the whole Church groaned for centuries, while astronomy, geology, physiology and biology were being interrogated and their secrets extorted. Multitudes lived and died in the firm conviction that the man had better never been born than that he should shock the Christian world with the idea that the sun was the centre of this system, and that the earth travelled round it. So when the idea of "more worlds than one" grew out of the teachings of Copernicus and Galileo it was met by the most violent opposition, as turning into ridicule the story of the incarnation. When the nebular hypothesis was propounded by the great

La Place, followed by the theory of the transmutation of species and the general teaching of evolution, there was an unquestionable flutter among theologians and an unseemly tremor all through the Christian ranks. There was a triple cause for this perturbation: The unnatural methods of studying nature; the irrational system of interpreting scripture; the ignoring of the simple truth that if nature and revelation had a common origin there must be harmony, and that when discord or contradiction occurs it must be from misinterpreting one or both of them. Here we may surely say with the poet, "All discord, harmony not understood." These fears have all subsided, or are rapidly disappearing. It may be that there are a million million worlds immeasurably larger than ours and more densely peopled with intelligencies; but the discovery, if confirmed, would not obscure the revelation of our Great Father to us or weaken the testimony of our consciousness to His Spirit speaking to our hearts or His love shed abroad therein. Then look at the bondage of liberalism and bibliolatry that so long oppressed the Church and which, to some extent, galls her yet. An unalterable meaning was attached to biblical utterances at a time when but little light had fallen on many subjects and before criticism had become a science. A thorough and rational system of reverting criticism has been applied, resulting in a reverence for the word and love of it that would have been impossible under the former bondage of infallible literalism. But have not discrepancies multiplied? No, they have almost disappeared. Indeed it might be said that discrepancies had dropped out of New Testament criticism altogether. There never was a book so maltreated as the Bible. It has had to carry the ignorance of the masses in their perverse and vicious interpretation and application, the bigotry of the zealot, the blasphemous handling of the inquisitor, the slaveholder and the distiller, each of whom found in its sacred pages some passage that infernal skill could bend to his purpose. Buoyant in our freedom from the bondage of the letter, we unhesitatingly declare that he is guilty of high treason to our faith who would fear the result of any investigation, whether biblical, philosophical, scientific or historical. The day of broader vision has