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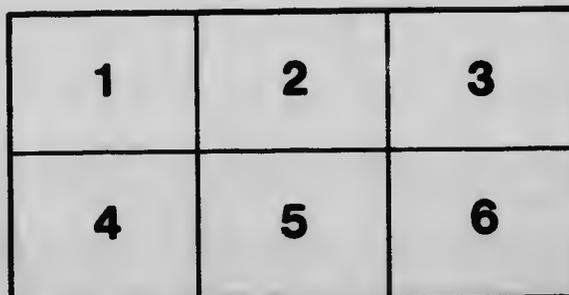
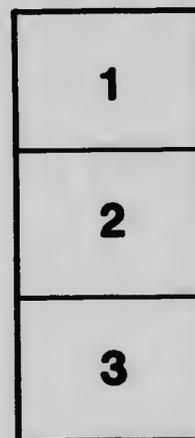
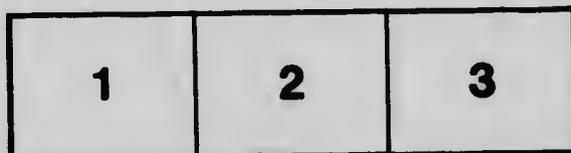
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Henry Mayhew
1902

Christianity and Agnosticism.

Lectures delivered by the Rev. James Simpson, at St. Peter's Cathedral, Charlottetown, P. E. I.

[In allowing us to publish these lectures, the Rev. James Simpson has asked us to state that they are little more than compilation. Many of the arguments, and often whole passages are taken from the following works: Christianity in relation to Science and Morals" by Canon Maccoll. "Reasons for believing in Christianity" by Canon Row. "The Chalcedonian Decree" by Rev. J. Fulton. "Evidences of Christianity" by Paley. "Addresses on the Resurrection" by Rev T. P. Ring. "Christ and modern Unbelief" by Rev. B. H. McKim. "Is not this the Christ" by Rev. C. J. Ridgeway. "The Church in relation to Scepticism" by Rev A. J. Harrison; and others.]

I. MODERN UNBELIEF AND A REASONABLE FAITH.

No one can be blind to the fact, that unbelief in its various forms is very prevalent in the present day. Periodicals are full of articles dealing with Atheism, Secularism, Agnosticism and Free Thought. Newspapers are continually inserting insidious little paragraphs scoffing at miracles, questioning the inspiration of Scripture, denying the resurrection of Our Lord, rejecting the possibilities of an hereafter. Novels are written for the express purpose of airing the doubts and unbelief of the various characters; wherever a number of men gather together, the conversation not infrequently develops into a religious or anti-religious discussion; so that where we will, read what we will, we are constantly confronted with the question, is Christianity true or false? Shall I believe in it or not.

Now, unbelievers may be divided roughly into three classes. First, there are those—a comparatively small number—

who have really studied the question, more or less deeply, and have come to the conclusion that the evidence in favor of Christianity is not sufficient for them to accept it. This class comprises many learned men, who are often pointed to in triumph by their followers as "the deepest thinkers of the day." But we must remember that there are others, who are quite as deep thinkers, and far more numerous, who still maintain an unflinching belief in the verities of the Christian faith.

The second class consists of those who don't wish to believe—careless lives, who find pleasure in sin and are only too glad to persuade themselves that there is no God, no Christ, no hereafter—for thereby they are relieved from the obligation of leading good lives, and can continue to sin with an easy conscience. These are often loud-mouthed in their scoffs and questionings, as if they were thus desirous of drowning the still, small voice within. The third class is made up, for the most part, of those who have been led away by the specious arguments they hear from others, or by articles they have read in magazines, and have thus had their faith undermined, and in some cases destroyed. Many of these lament the state they are in, and would give a good deal to have their faith back strong and firm of old. The fault here is that they are inclined to believe all they hear and read against Christianity, without enquiring what there is to be said on the other side. Think what doubts might be set at rest, what difficulties solved, what peace of mind restored, if those who are thus unsettled were to say to themselves, "This argument seems convincing, but I will not accept it until I have heard the other side

—I will go my priest, or I will go to some one who has studied the matter more than I have, and I will state my difficulty and will ask what Christianity has to say in refutation of it; for it is only reasonable to suppose that this same difficulty must have been presented to others just as intelligent as myself, and yet they remain Christians.

But, alas, this is seldom done. Instead, the difficulty is dwelt upon, and in the dwelling becomes magnified; other difficulties are searched for and all too easily found, the fundamental truths of the gospel are disregarded, Communion is discontinued, prayer is neglected, and the whole superstructure of Christianity (tho' fair enough to look upon) is held to be reared on a rotten foundation, which must crumble before the shocks of research and learning. The clergy, too lazy to work, fatten on the spoils wrung from the ignorant and uneducated by the propagation of myths and mysteries, while the people, only too glad to be gulled, swallow all that is told them without ever questioning the facts or examining the evidence.

It is with the hope of helping some who are troubled with doubts concerning "the faith as it is in Christ Jesus" that I have undertaken this course of lectures, and it is my desire to treat the subject as simply as possible. The great difficulty with the majority of books written on Christian Evidences is, that they are in a language "not understood of the people." They are written by scholars for scholars. They presuppose that the reader is acquainted with the works of Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Huxley, Max Muller and the like. They take for granted that he has a fair knowledge of logic, moral philosophy and metaphysics, and so they are over the heads of persons of ordinary education, who have not the time or the inclination to go deeply into the matter. If such read these books, they can make little or nothing out of them, and concluding that there is therefore nothing to be made, they become more confirmed than ever in their error. Now, I by no means profess that the whole thing is as easy as A. B. C., for it is not, but I do think if one will only approach the study with "pure eyes and humble heart," giving it his earnest and prayerful attention, asking God to open his eyes that he may see the wondrous things of His Law, that God will reveal

Himself to him and dispel his doubts and establish his faith. But we must look to God for guidance, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he learn them, because they are spiritually discerned."—(1 Cor. II 14.) But one may say, how can I pray to a God in whom I do not believe? I answer if you earnestly desire light, you can pray conditionally without doing violence to your present convictions. Say, "If there be a God, I beseech Him to guide me to a knowledge of Himself," and please God your prayer will be answered in due time.

But not only to unbelievers and doubters do I address myself in these instructions, but to those also who are, as yet, firm in the faith, that they may be ready, as St. Peter says, always to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear, (1 Pet. III XV) for it is much better to be ready armed for the fray which is imminent, than to wait until the attack is begun, before searching for the weapons of defence. As I said just now, scepticism is rampant all around us, if it has not yet effected an entrance into our own hearts, and sooner or later, the question must force itself upon every thinking, reasoning person "Why am I a Christian? It is useless even if it were right, to tell people that they must not read articles against Christianity, that they must not listen to the arguments of unbelievers, they cannot help doing the one or the other, since if one reads at all, it is next to impossible to avoid meeting with doubts expressed in one form or another; if one mixes with his fellows at all, he must at times come in contact with doubters of different sorts and perforce hear their opinion. Nor need he fear to do so if he will only take the trouble to learn why he believer in God, a Redemption, a future existence since there is nothing antagonistic between reason and faith. On the contrary, faith is not worth having unless it be based on rational convictions. It may be a very easy way of getting out of difficulties to say 'I am a Christian because my father was one before me, it suits me, and I have no desire to change;' but it is hardly a satisfactory foundation for our faith, and we cannot wonder if that faith gives way at the first shock. "If such people were con-

sistent they would return to the worship of Woden and Thor; for certain it is that our ancestors worshipped these deities before they became Christians, and our first ancestor who embraced Christianity must, in their eyes, have been an implacable revolt-er from the religion of his forefathers. What else had he to guide him in embracing Christianity but his reason? Our reason is not infallible; nor do our artificial lights equal the brightness of the sun; but we shall not improve our position by extinguishing them and living during his absence in the darkness of night. Equally absurd is it to refuse to walk by our reason, when it is the only light that God has given us to guide our steps."

I have said elsewhere that it is a mistake to enter unprepared into religious discussions with unbelievers, and that you should refuse to do so, since it will in all probability shake your faith and fill your mind with doubts. Lest I should appear to contradict myself, I would point out that an unprepared-for discussion is one thing; a defence of Christianity by one who understands why he is a Christian is quite another. A person who professes to be a protectionist, but understands none of the principles of protection, would stand little chance in a debate with a free trader who was well up in his subject; but if they were equally matched each would be able to hold his own; even if no good came of the controversy. So it is with Christianity, and this renders it imperative that each Christian should be acquainted with at least the general outlines of the arguments in defence of the faith he holds; that he may be able to speak out boldly when that faith is assailed.

Nor is it necessary for one to devote much time to intricate study in order to have his acceptance of Christianity on rational conviction, for this would prevent those engaged in the active duties of life from entering into these questions. God does not require impossible things from us. He has endowed us with common sense, which is an adequate guide on all practical subjects, and religion is pre-eminently practical. Profound inquiry is a luxury, not a necessity. If we could not conduct our practical matters until we could solve all the profound problems that lie at their foundation, human life would come to a standstill. Yet we do conduct them, and for the most part successfully. I propose, therefore, in these lectures, to

avoid all profound and learned questions—in fact, all such as require a special study to enable us to estimate the evidence on which they rest, and to lay before you those aspects of the evidence of Christianity which will commend themselves to the general intelligence of those members of the Christian Church, and to those honest doubters whom God, in His providence, has called to spend their energies in the discharge of the duties of active life. There are branches of those evidences of which such persons are as adequate judges as the most scientific thinkers."

And at the outset let us understand clearly that the subject we intend to investigate is Christianity not any special system of theology. The difference is fundamental and vital. "Christianity, if true, is a divine revelation." Theology is a science, and, like all other sciences, is progressive. Christianity is a definite deposit of revealed facts and truths once for all delivered, and it is the same to-day as it was 19 centuries ago."

"Our inquiry pertains to the evidence of that revelation, not of the doctrinal systems deduced from it. We want to convince others, or we want to assure ourselves, as the case may be, that Jesus Christ did, indeed, come in the flesh, that he did, indeed, reveal God's will, that he was, indeed, the Saviour of the world."

We want simply to be able to say, and to teach others to say, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God"; and if we can so marshal the evidences of Christianity as to bring any to the great confession of the central truth and the central revelation, we shall have accomplished the chief aim of our endeavors, for we must remember that to be a disciple in the Church of Christ, it is enough that a man believe the elements of the Christian religion—the articles of the Apostles' Creed. And is it not worth a little trouble, a little effort on our part, to be able to attain or to hold this profession? If the declarations of the better class of Agnostics be true,—and there is no reason why we should doubt them—they would much rather believe, if they could conscientiously do so. Over and over again I have heard them say, "Do you think I would not willingly accept Christianity, if I could only convince myself of its truth? Is not a firm faith better than a system of negation?" "Would

not a belief in a future life sustain me in my difficulties and trials in this world?"

Yes, brethren. The earnest sceptic bewails his fate. What comfort has he in his sorrows? He is stricken down with disease, and he can only curse the blind fate which has afflicted him; he loses his loved ones by death, and they are gone from him for ever—he has no hope of meeting them in another world; they have ceased to exist.

Yes, Christianity is worth retaining, if we still hold it—it is worth a little labor to regain if we have lost it. Unbelief may be all very well while the world smiles on us, and we are light-hearted and joyful, but when trouble comes, when sickness seizes us, when loved ones die, when our own death is near—then we feel the need of a belief, a reasonable and intelligent belief in a God, a Saviour and a heaven. Let us see, then, whether we cannot so rationally, and without bias, weigh the evidence in favor of Christianity, that we may be able to say, "Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief"—"Increase my faith."

In conclusion, I would refer to one specious argument of sceptics. They point to some unbeliever and say, "See what a good life he leads—so upright in his dealings with his fellows; so generous to the poor; such a devoted husband, and such a model parent. and then look at your professing Christians and see how many of them are utterly unprincipled, selfish and inconsistent. Is he not much better than they?" Now, this, of course, is really no argument at all, because, in reply, you might point to some earnest, conscientious Christian, and compare him with a number of profane, scoffing and immoral infidels, much to the credit of the former. In the same way you might argue that Americans are more honest than Canadians, by selecting some particularly upright American and comparing him with Canadian criminals. All bad men are in a sense unbelievers, since, though they may acknowledge Jesus Christ with their lips, by their works they deny him. Undoubtedly there are good moral men among atheists and agnostics, but how much of that goodness and morality is the result of Christian influences and surroundings? Suppose a colony of unbelievers could be formed and entirely cut off from all contact with Christians and Christian literature. Suppose they made their own laws and at the

same time taught their families and descendants that there was no God, or a God who cared not for man; no sin, no Saviour, no hereafter, what would be the moral and spiritual condition of that colony in a hundred years' time? Would not the Christian virtues of love, and meekness, and forgiveness, and faith, and patience have entirely disappeared, and the standard of right and wrong have sadly deteriorated?

God forbid that the time should ever come when the influences of Christianity are no longer exerted over those, even, who do not believe in Christianity itself; for then, alas, there would be little worth living for in this world, since the powerful, the rich, the cruel would prevail in all things, and the poor and needy and weak would go to the wall.

Next Sunday evening I purpose to consider the question "Is there a God?" and to produce what evidence we have for affirming that there is. And in doing so I at once disclaim all idea of originality in the subject matter or in the way of putting it. I shall for the most part reproduce the thoughts of others more capable of dealing with this subject than myself, and if in any place their words are more suitable than my own, I shall have no hesitation in using them, since my desire is to strengthen your faith rather than display my own learning. And that this effort may redound to the glory of God and the establishing of His church, I ask the prayers of the faithful.

II. "IS THERE A GOD."

It is evident that the first task in these lectures on the Truth of Christianity must be to prove the existence of a personal God, who is the moral governor of the universe. For if a person begins by asking "Why am I a Christian?" he is forced back on the question, "Why am I a Theist?" since Christianity presupposes the existence of a God, and declares that He has revealed Himself in redemptive action. So, then, to-night we will produce what proof we have for answering in the affirmative the question, "Is there a Being of infinite intelligence, and power, and benevolence and holiness, who made the world and all that it contains?"

The chief arguments from which the existence of a personal God may be confidently inferred are four in number:—

I. The argument from the general consent of mankind in that belief.

II. The argument from effect to cause.

III. The argument from design.

IV. The argument from the moral nature of man.

In each of these the witness is clear, and the cumulative weight of the four ought to be irresistible to every candid and open mind; at any rate, those who fail to be convinced on these grounds, will scarcely be so by any amount of abstract reasoning or mathematical demonstration.

Let us consider these arguments in order.

I. Mankind in general consents to the belief in the Deity. This is an undoubted fact, which none can gainsay. Not only do Christians, Jews and Mohammedans acknowledge a personal God - not only did the ancient Greeks and Romans and Egyptians worship an All Father - but practically every nation throughout the world professes the same belief; - the innumerable millions of China and Japan - the multitudes of India the wild tribes of Africa the American Indians, the aborigines of Australia, the Esquimaux of the Arctic Circle, the Hottentot of the Torrid Zone, all adore a Supreme Being; and although it is claimed that tribes have been discovered who had, apparently, no conception of a deity, yet, if we allow these claims, which are by no means clearly proved, the exceptions are still so rare that we may maintain that the belief in a God is so nearly universal among the families of the earth as to justify the inference that there is something in the constitution of human nature which suggests the idea to man, or else that it is one of the primitive beliefs which have been handed down from the beginning of the race, until now. Grotesque and degraded as are the forms in which this belief often appears, it is possible to trace features in them, all which point to an original universal belief in a personal God of power and goodness. Polytheistic and other degraded ideas of the Deity are evidently departures from the original. These are not universal. The common features in which the manifold forms of religion coincide testify to an original universal belief such as just alleged.

How, then, are we to account for the immemorial, universal belief in God? It cannot be said that it is a mere historical conclusion, an error of our forefathers,

which has been transmitted from generation to generation because in the course of centuries it would have been rectified. The phenomenon of inherent belief in God can only be explained as a natural instinct, as a result of the influence of the senses upon the reason. There is in the generality of mankind a God-consciousness, just as there is a self-consciousness. It is true that some men seem to lack this God-consciousness just as there are cases of color blindness, or even of partial insensibility to moral distinctions. But in such instances we may well demand whether the faculty has not been atrophied by neglect, whether the eyes of the soul that once did perceive God have not been put out; whether this inability to recognize the existence of God is permanent, of only temporary; whether the God-consciousness be not dormant rather than dead or non-existent." At any rate these are exceptions to the general rule. St. Thomas Aquinas was but confirming the axiom of Cicero and Seneca when he said, "That which all men affirm cannot be false." And it has been always held that universal testimony may be accepted as evidence of the natural intuition of mankind. Therefore we must conclude that when all men with common consent believe that God exists, God does exist.

II. The second argument we produce for the belief in the existence of a God, is that of effect and cause. No law is more universal than this: every effect must have a cause. We are ill, and we know that something caused that illness. It rains, and we know that some atmospheric changes produced that rain. We stumble as we walk, and we know that some impediment caused us to stumble. Day changes into night, and we know that something has obscured the light of the sun; and so, whenever we see an event, we cannot help inferring that it must have originated in a cause, it being impossible even to imagine an event without a cause.

Nature exists; we see it, we feel it. Now, reason tells us there is no work without a workman, and from this axiom, which admits of no exception, we conclude that there must be a supreme workman, apart from nature, who has created all things; that this workman must be from eternity eternal without ever having been created.

Nature has life, movement; but reason tells us there is no motion without a motor; and from this axiom, which admits of no

exception, we conclude that there must be a prime motor who has life in Himself and can never lose it.

Nature is regular, methodical in her movement; but reason tells us that there is no regularity without a regulator; and from this axiom which admits of no exception, we conclude that there must be a supreme, perfect, intelligent regulator. "In other words the universe is an effect, or rather a complicated series of effects. It must have had a cause. That cause is God. We trace, indeed, a series of causes, a chain of causations. But our minds compel us to believe that that series must have had a first term; that chain must have had a beginning. Every stream must have a source; the many branching streams of effects which we call the universe must have its source, its fountain head. That fountain, that cause of causes, is God. He is the first Great Cause, the uncaused Cause. Such, stated in the briefest terms, is the argument from causation, and the principles on which it rests are among the axioms of natural science. Let me give you an illustration. In the year 1846, astronomers observed an irregularity in the orbit of the planet Uranus. It was evident then that some hitherto unknown and hidden force was disturbing his motion and deflecting his path in the starry heavens. Two mathematicians, one in France and one in England, quite independent of each other, made a series of calculations and declared that in a certain fixed locality, in infinite space, there was an undiscovered planet, sufficiently large to affect the motion of Uranus. Astronomers in obedience to their commands searched for this planet with their telescopes, and there at a distance of 2,862 millions of miles from the sun—that is to say, about 3,000 times as distant as the earth is from the sun, they discovered the planet Neptune. "Precisely in the same way the believer in a personal God may feel confident that He exists, and that He is possessed of certain attributes." No man hath seen God at any time. We have not the evidence of our senses that He exists. We have not demonstrative evidence. But we have sufficient evidence from which we infer His existence as certainly as those two mathematicians inferred the existence and the locality of the planet Neptune." The force of this argument is acknowledged by some of the most distinguished representatives of agnosticism, including Herbert Spencer.

III. The third argument we produce for the belief in the existence of a God is that of design. This may be treated under two heads. (1), order; (2), adaptation.

(1) "Whenever we behold order and arrangement, our mental constitution compels us to infer that it must have originated in intelligence. We cannot believe that orderly arrangements can have resulted from the action of blind, unintelligent forces. As far as we know anything of the action of the latter, they do not produce order but disorder. Now, the universe is full of orderly arrangements of the most striking character. We therefore infer that they must be due to the action of a Being who possesses an amount of intelligence adequate to have produced them. This Being we designate God.

One or two simple illustrations will make the force of this argument plain. We take a walk in the country and see various flowers growing by the way side. They are in no order or design, but are scattered here and there in luxuriant profusion. We are told that the seeds were blown thence by the wind or carried by birds and insects and we have no difficulty in believing the statement. But we go to Queen Square Gardens and we see the flowers there laid out in set design with mathematical precision, no one flower is out of place, no one has outgrown its fellows in the same pattern. If we are told that this is merely the work of wind and birds and insects, we are incredulous; we know that some intelligent force must have planted these flowers and tended their growth.

We stroll along the seashore and we see huge masses of stone lying about, of all shapes and sizes, in all conceivable positions; we are told they were once included in the cliff, and that the action of the wind and waves and frost has gradually eaten the cliff away and left these boulders exposed to view, and we accept the explanation. But we go into a city and see some lofty church or elegant mansion, composed of the same stone, all cut and carved and embellished, and we scoff at the idea that this could be produced by the combined action of wind and wave and frost, for we know that some intelligent force must have fashioned these stones and laid them in their places one by one.

So it is when we survey the universe. We see the regularity of the seasons, the

movements of the planets in their orbits, the mutually counteractive laws of centripetal force and centrifugal force keeping these planets exactly in their courses, we see that this order is not only manifested in the immensity of the heavenly spheres, but also in the lowest creatures that crawl upon the earth. It appears in all phenomena, visible not only to the naked eye, but to the eye equipped with optical instruments, which have been brought to the highest perfection,—and as we see all this the conviction becomes irrefragable that it cannot be the result of blind force, but of an intelligent Being, whom we call God.

(II) Adaptation. Closely allied to argument from order is the argument from adaptation. By the word adaptation we mean a number of distinct things meeting together at the right time and place, which, by their conjoint action, produce a definite result, which result would have had no existence apart from their conjoint action. An illustration will make this plainer. A machine is an adaptation,—such, for example, as a common locomotive. It consists of a number of distinct and separate parts—the boiler, the condenser, the piston, the furnace, the wheels, etc., and the water and the fire to generate the steam. These are so combined together that by their joint action they produce a particular result. To effect this the parts must meet together at the right time and place. If any one of them had been different from what it is the result would have been different. Whenever we witness such combinations, our minds cannot help drawing the inference that their existence cannot have been due to the action of unintelligent forces, but that they must have originated in intelligent volition.

Various things in nature, in numbers so vast that our intellects are utterly unable to form any adequate conception of their multitude, present similar combinations and adaptations, only infinitely more complicated and marvellous. A single instance—the eye—will serve for the purposes of illustration. Its adjustments are of a most complicated character. Light is the result of the combined action of its various parts. If any one of them had been different from what it is, sight would have been impossible or imperfect. But, further, by their modification, the power of sight is adapted to the particular circumstances of each particular order of animal. The ear is perhaps a more mar-

vellous example of such combinations even than the eye. To render the hearing of articulate sounds possible, so complicated organs are necessary, viz., the ear itself, and that marvellously complicated instrument, the mouth, composed of the throat, the larynx and the lungs, which, by their combined action, produce the human voice. Nor is this all, for the ear and the vocal powers would exist in vain unless the atmospheric air had been adjusted to convey the wave of sound to the ear. The whole animal frame consists of a combination of similar adaptations of the most marvellous complexity, all nicely adjusted to themselves and to the entire organism, and in numbers past all comprehension, and we argue from this with assured certainty that there is a wise Creator by whom all these subtle and delicate adjustments have been perfected. The force of this argument has been felt even by speculative unbelievers. John Stuart Mill confessed its validity. David Hume, as he walked home one beautiful evening with a friend exclaimed: "No one can look up to that sky without feeling that it must have been put in order by an intelligent Being."

"It has been asserted by many that this argument from design is overthrown by the now widely accepted theory of evolution. But that assertion cannot be substantiated, as can be shown in a few words without entering upon the discussion of so vast a subject as the theory in question brings up and which would be quite out of place here. Observe then, that many of the most able and thorough going evolutionists remain firm believers in God, and even devout Christians. In them the argument from design not only loses none of its force, but is even enhanced in power and beauty by that hypothesis. They feel with Charles Kingsley that it is only cause for greater wonder if indeed God is not only so wise that He can make all things, but so much wiser even than that, that He can make all things make themselves." No matter how long the process of evolution, they find at last, behind all, infinite intelligence, wisdom and goodness. No matter how natural the processes by which through "natural selection" the world or man may have been developed, they reach finally the supernatural cause, the will, and purpose, and wisdom of an Infinite Creator, endowing matter with these marvellous capacities. They see in the

wondrous combination of beauty and utility in nature the manifestations of a Divine purpose and a Divine arrangement, not a whit the less because the process of its development is natural and extends through an almost inconceivably long period of time."

IV. The fourth argument we produce for the belief in the existence of a God is that from the moral nature of man. The other arguments only indirectly prove that the Creator of the universe is a moral Being; this one establishes it. Man is a free agent. He has the great prerogative of choice. He is largely a self-determining being. He believes himself free. He feels his accountability for his choice. He acknowledges his responsibility as a moral being. He holds his fellow men similarly responsible and similarly free. How is conscience to be accounted for? Who has not heard its voice, "Thou hast done well - thou hast done ill?" Man must stand face to face with this mysterious guest - escape from him he cannot. Who has placed this conscience within him, this tribunal before which he must appear in spite of himself? Can it be the family, society, education? No, for conscience is often opposed to that which is approved of at home, to that which occurs in society, to that which education teaches. The atheistic evolutionist tells us that the universe in its primitive condition contained nothing whatever but matter, force and motion; but how could conscience, or freedom, or consciousness have been developed from any of these? We infer therefore that he who has originated the moral nature of man must himself be a moral being and a free agent; and that every moral attribute that exists in man has a higher counterpart in God. "This has a higher counterpart in God." This conclusion says a recent writer "we shall continue to accept, notwithstanding all the sneers of a popular school of philosophy that such a belief is nothing better than anthropomorphism i. e. that man a God is one of our own creations. It will be sufficient to reply to philosophers of this class, that there is not a single conception in their philosophy that is not open to a similar objection. When such philosophers object that to attribute the moral attributes of man to God is nothing better than the deification of man; we reply that our mode of reasoning is correct, because man is made

in the image of God. If man is made after the image of God, to ascribe to Him the attributes of personality, holiness, justice, benevolence and truth, is not to project man into God, but to attribute to God that which originally existed in Him and in the image of which he has created man."

III. IS A REVELATION FROM GOD IMPROBABLE?

In our last lecture we brought forward four arguments in favor of a belief in a personal God. The first of these was from the general consent of mankind—every nation, tribe and tongue confesses a supreme Deity, and even if (as some affirm) there have been found people who do not acknowledge a God, yet they are at the best but very rare exceptions, which only prove the rule. The second argument was from effect to cause. It is an axiom of thought, —a self-evident truth—that every effect must have a cause. No law is more universal than this; its validity is at once recognized. And since an infinite succession of causes cannot be conceived of as possible, we infer that all finite causes must have originated in a *first cause*, which must have been itself uncaused. This *first cause* we designate God. The third argument was from design, first seen in the order of the universe, and then in its adaptations. The things of this world are not thrown together haphazard, but are arranged in a marvellous beauty and order which implies that it is all the result of intelligence, since it could not possibly have originated in unconscious and unintelligent forces. And the fourth argument was from the moral nature of man, which could not be from natural selection, or of purely physical evolution, with no personal Being behind that evolution; it could not have originated in matter, force or motion; than which the universe in its primitive condition contained naught else according to the atheistic evolutionists. So when we consider the personality of man, his freedom, his conscience, his religious nature, his spiritual aspirations, his innate perception and approval of the true, the beautiful, the good, we conclude that there must be a Being who is free and pure and good; a personal being who is spiritual and moral, from whom man has received his spiritual and moral nature.

Each of these arguments, considered by itself, affords reasonable evidence that

God exists—so reasonable that many unbelievers have admitted the validity but our case is strengthened infinitely by the combined force of the arguments. The possession of the purse of a murdered man may not be conclusive proof that the possessor was the murderer. But if his clothes are stained with blood; if various articles belonging to the murdered man are found in his possession; if it can be proved that he purchased the instrument by which the murder was accomplished; if his footprints exactly correspond to those of the murderer; if he has also adopted a number of cunning devices to avoid detection, if all these circumstances meet together in the same person, they afford a stronger evidence of guilt than that of one man who affirms that he saw the prisoner commit the murder, because testimony may be false, or a mistake may be made about personal identity. But facts like these can neither lie nor deceive, and when they thus converge in a common focus they possess all the force of demonstration. So it is with the evidence before us." Each separate argument, taken by itself, affords a strong presumption that God exists, but when they are all taken together, the evidence becomes overwhelming. We therefore feel justified in concluding that there is a personal God, the Cause of Causes, the intelligent orderer and adapter of the universe, who is at once benevolent and holy and just and true and moral.

Having proved the existence of God the next question that demands our attention is, "Are there any sufficient grounds for believing that He will make any manifestations of Himself to man other than those He has already made in His various creative and providential acts?" This point is of very considerable importance in relation to the question before us. You all know, for it is constantly brought to your notice in the ordinary affairs of life, that the amount of evidence which is necessary to prove that a certain event has taken place varies in proportion to the probability or improbability of its occurrence. Very slight evidence is sufficient to satisfy us that an event has occurred if such an event is likely and expected. For instance, if we saw a man in the last stages of consumption and were told that he could not live many hours longer, we would have no difficulty in believing he was dead if an obituary notice appeared in

the newspaper the next day. But we should require much stronger evidence than a newspaper to convince us that autumn was not succeeded by winter, or winter by spring, in some given locality. In a similar manner, an action which, if assigned to one motive, may be in the highest degree improbable, may be accepted on the most ordinary testimony if assigned to another. We should require strong proof before we could believe that one whom we had always looked upon as a consistent Christian, had subscribed largely towards the erection of an idol temple in his town, but if it could be shown that the money was extorted from him by threats of violence or injury to his business, while condemning his cowardice, the difficulty in accepting the fact of the subscription would disappear.

Or let me put it another way. If the papers announced that the Federal Government had ordered several shiploads of provisions and clothing to be sent to Charlottetown, to be distributed indiscriminately among the people, we should receive the news with a smile of incredulity. It is antecedently improbable that the Government should interfere in our favor, because there is no manifest reason why it should do so. But if next Spring we should hear that the people of Labrador had run short of provisions, and were, consequently, starving, we should not only have no difficulty in believing that the Government would send them supplies as soon as navigation opened—we should expect them to do so. To-day we would laugh at a telegram stating that the principal cities in Canada, England, and the United States were raising subscriptions for us in Charlottetown; but if a fire swept away three-fourths of our city to-night, to-morrow we should expect to receive such a telegram, because our condition would be entirely altered, and consequently the idea of foreign assistance would be brought within the bounds of reasonable probability; in fact, we should be very much surprised if other cities did not come to our aid, since we have always helped other cities in similar distress.

The bearing of this principle on the question of divine revelation is obvious. Abstractedly it may be very difficult to believe in supernatural interferences with the ordinary affairs of the universe, and it may require an overwhelming amount of evidence to prove their reality. But if we

have reason to believe that the divine character and the condition of man are such as to render a revelation probable, the difficulty of accepting it disappears and it can be believed an ordinary testimony.

"We ask, therefore, if there be a God, is there any reason for thinking that He will interfere in man's favor in a manner other than he has already done in the order of nature? In answering this question our appeal must not be to theories, but to facts only. Here again we can quote the high authority of John Stuart Mill in connection with this subject in his posthumous essays. The picture which he has drawn of man's condition is sombre indeed—we believe it to be overcharged, but there it is, as it presented itself to the reason of this eminent unbeliever. If it is only quarter true, it is in the highest degree probable, if a God exists who cares for men, that He will make an interposition in his favor beyond any that he has already made. Look abroad upon the world. Where do we see the features of the Almighty Father? Is not the earth like the prophets' scroll, "Full, within and without, of lamentation and mourning and woe?" Do we not feel with the Apostle that "the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now?" That is the first impression which the study of nature is calculated to make on a reflective mind. The world is full of misery and pain, and this apparently anterior to the entrance of sin and independent of it. Geology has deciphered for us the testimony of the rocks and of the everlasting hills, and there we find ample evidence of conflict and carnage long before the apparition of man upon the scene. Timorous flight and swift pursuit; animals fleet of foot and strong of limb, with claws to rend and teeth to grind; whole tribes living on the violent death of creatures weaker than themselves. This is what we find written on the unerring records of the time when man was not yet. And now, is it not a simple fact that the vast majority of mankind are in a very degraded condition? Does not evil everywhere abound? Does it not occasion a vast amount of suffering, even to those who are not the guilty causes of it? How all this originated, is nothing to do with the question, any more than how a fire originated which swept away a city. The facts are there, the need is apparent, a

remedy is demanded. Has not past experience utterly failed to provide any adequate cure for it? Or does it suggest the hope of being able to eradicate it for countless ages to come? With the facts of life and history before us, these are things that cannot be denied. It follows, therefore, if there be a God who contemplates man with feelings of benevolence, that some interposition in his favour is highly probable, and that there is no abstract difficulty in accepting the fact that He has so interposed, if only it can be established on evidence that will commend itself to our reason.

Such evidence we now hope to bring forward to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is a revelation from God. His character, His discourses, His influence on mankind cannot be catalogued among merely human phenomena. But before we proceed to do this, let us clear up any possible misunderstanding upon two points, viz., that it is necessary to assume the inspiration of the Bible, and that it is necessary to point to the miracles of Christ as a proof of His Divinity.

It is not necessary to assume the inspiration of the Bible in our argument for Christianity. To prove Christianity by the inspiration or authority of the Bible would be to beg the question at issue. This is obvious, though it is not always observed.

Even though the Bible were not inspired, Christianity might yet be true. Even if we could not recognize in the writings of the New Testament the result of the influence of the Holy Ghost upon the men who wrote it, it might still be possible to accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. It is therefore no essential part of our duty in this place to establish the inspiration of the Bible or any part of it. Do not misunderstand me. I believe the Bible is inspired and I believe its inspiration can be established to the complete satisfaction of the Christian mind, though some of the commonly accepted theories of inspiration cannot be established. But we can prove the divine origin of Christianity, the divine mission of Christ and His claim to be the Lord and Saviour without ever raising the question of inspiration. It is possible, therefore, to believe in Christ, and to be a sincere Christian, without believing in the inspiration of the Scriptures. I do not say it is reasonable.

I only say it is possible. This was recognized 250 years ago by that devout and able non-conformist, Richard Baxter, who has not without reason been called "the father of English apologetics." "If (he says) the Scriptures were but the writings of honest men, that were subject to mistakes and contradictions in the manner and circumstances, yet they might afford us a full certainty of the substance of Christianity. Tacitus, Suetonius, Livy and others were all heathens and very fallible, and yet their history affords us a certainty of the great substantial passages of the Roman affairs which they treat of. Now if Scriptures were but such common writings as these, especially joined with the uncontrolled tradition that hath since conveyed it to us, may it not yet give us a full certainty that Christ was in the flesh, and that he preached this doctrine for the substance which will afford us an invincible argument for our Christianity.

The recognition of the fact that the truth of the Christian religion is not bound up with belief in the infallibility, or even the inspiration of the Bible is of the utmost importance. It clears the ground of discussion of many irrelevant issues. It is then seen that however the questions between the Bible and science are determined, they do not necessarily involve the integrity of the Christian religion. Suppose you make out to your entire satisfaction that Genesis and geology are irreconcilably opposed (which I for one do not believe), this conclusion does not shake the evidence by which we are convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was a superhuman person and that His mission was divine. Equally clear is it that most of the questions discussed so earnestly in our day in the field of criticism leave the argument for the essential truth of Christianity untouched. Whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch; whether Isaiah was written by one person or two; whether Daniel and St. John wrote the books bearing their respective names matters not,—the truth or falsity of Christianity is not bound up with any of these or similar questions. Unhappily they have been discussed as well by Christians as by unbelievers, as if the very citadel of the Christian faith must stand or fall with the issue here involved, and so the faith of multitudes has been shaken, and the peace and comfort of thousands

have been disturbed by this confounding of issues which are really distinct." (McKim).

II. It is not necessary to point to the miracles of Christ to prove His Divinity. "It is a popular idea that Christianity rests for its attestation exclusively on the evidence of miracles wrought expressly for the purpose of proving its truth, and the principles which have been laid down by many learned writers have greatly formed this conception of it. I cannot but think that this view of the subject is a very imperfect representation of the case. Miracles constitute an important portion of the evidence of Christianity, but by no means the whole or even the most prominent part of it. Our Lord affirmed that He had a higher witness than that of miracles to the truth of His Divine Mission. This is indisputable if we accept the fourth gospel as a truthful exponent of His teaching. His own express assertions assign the first rank to the manifestation of His own divine reason and character as affording proof that He came from God, and to his miracles the second rank. This must necessarily have been the case if He is the Light of the World. The existence of the sun is best known by his visible shining. Our Lord's divine working, viewed as a whole, constitutes the highest evidence of His mission. In this is included the moral aspect of his miraculous acts. Miracles would indeed be a convincing evidence of a divine mission to those who witnessed them. But their testimony weakens with the lapse of time. We who live in these latter days do not, as a rule, behold miracles so our belief in them must be grounded on the testimony of others. To us, therefore, they afford an inferior evidence compared with that which they yielded to the actual spectators. We have to establish the facts by a long chain of historical reasoning, involving the discussion of several abstract questions which would require more time than we can devote to them in these lectures. So then we will not argue that Christ must be the Son of God because He wrought miracles; but rather we shall urge weighty reasons for believing in his superhuman personality, independent of the truth and reality of the miracles He is alleged to have performed. Our argument will be this: The character of Jesus is superhuman; the teaching of Jesus in history and in the individual soul is superhuman, the work of Jesus is superhuman;

therefore, He was Himself superhuman. He was the Christ, the Son of God, and as such it was natural that he should work miracles. Instead of proving Christ by the miracles, we prove the miracles by Christ."

And this we aim to do by meeting the intelligent unbeliever on his own ground, and in the arguments used conceding everything to him, but what we can prove clearly and satisfactorily to be untrue or unreasonable, illogical or unhistorical.

IV. CHRIST'S DIVINITY PROVED BY HIS CHARACTER.

So far in these lectures we have produced plain and reasonable evidence in proof of the existence of a personal God; and we have also argued that if such a God exist, it is more than probable that He should reveal Himself to mankind in another manner than He has already done in the course of nature; and this on account of the general degradation of the majority of men, the evil which abounds everywhere, the suffering which is endured by innocent and guilty alike, the inability of the past to provide a cure for this state of things, and the improbability of such a cure being discovered in the future. If, then, you can say, "I believe that a God does exist who cares for man," and I believe that it is highly probable that He should make some interposition in favor of mankind, and that there is no abstract difficulty in accepting the fact that He has done so, if only it can be established on evidence that will commend itself to our reason; you are now prepared to receive the testimony of those who claim that *Jesus of Nazareth is a Revelation from God*. And I would remind you here of what I said last Sunday, that our aim is to meet intelligent unbelievers on their own ground, and in discussing this great subject of the truth of Christianity, to concede everything to them except what we can fairly and satisfactorily prove to be untrue or unreasonable, illogical or unhistorical.

It is evident, then, that we cannot appeal to the Christian Scriptures as infallible or inspired in arguing with men who do not believe in Christianity since they would refuse to accept the testimony offered by them. If we are to make use of Scripture to all in these lectures, we must only do so in a manner that cannot be disputed by our opponents. And what do they

concede to us here? You are aware, perhaps, that the strenuous efforts have been made by the enemies of Christianity, to reject and cast aside as unreliable the history of Jesus Christ as found in the four gospels. They have endeavored to prove that the first three gospels were copied from some original document—that they were the work of visionary and untrustworthy enthusiasts; that they were forgeries; that they were written so long after the death of Christ that they have no historical value; that the gospel according to St. John is to be altogether discredited. And what is the result of these efforts? These gospels have been sifted and examined as no other book in the world has ever been, and yet they have come out of the furnace glowing with the brilliance of verified truth. It is now generally admitted by the most learned sceptics, such as John Stuart Mill, Ewald, and others, who have studied the matter most critically and with declared intent to prove them false, that (i.) the first three gospels were composed between the last ten years of the first century and the first twenty-five years of the second century. The great French philosopher, Renan, concedes that they must have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem, i. e., A. D. 77. (ii) These gospels were written by four different persons, writing entirely independently of each other. (iii) That the first three gospels are genuine, and two at least were written by eye witnesses of the events therein related, or at their dictation. (Renan.) (iv.) That the fourth gospel is also genuine. Ewald, the great German nationalist says that "no man who does not will, knowingly, to choose error and to reject truth, can dare to say that the fourth gospel is not the work of the apostle John." (v.) That in the earliest times the authority of these Gospels was not questioned by those who attacked Christianity. (vi.) That the account of Jesus Christ contained in these gospels may be accepted as historical, so far as it does not touch on the miraculous. (John S. Mill.) Since the writers were not separated from the events they recorded by a period greater than 50 years or about as far as we are from the accession of Queen Victoria, and such an interval is too brief to have allowed of the falsification of the chief events in the history of Him on whom the life of the Church was based. And all that we are really

concerned with us, the truth of the chief facts. Minor variations are unimportant for the great purposes of history.

In referring to the gospels then in these lectures, we simply do so as we would to any other credited ancient history, such as Livy, Tacitus, Thucydides and Herodotus. We accept them in common with sceptics who have looked into the matter carefully, as giving a generally reliable account of the events therein recorded; but we do not ask you, for the present, to believe in the miracles contained in these accounts, any more than we ask you to believe in those miraculous circumstances related by other ancient writers, whether Christian, Jewish or heathen.

I would point out to you in passing, that Christianity differs from every other religious system in this important particular. Its entire system, its inner life and its sole principle of cohesion are based on the personal history of its founder. If the life of Jesus Christ be removed out of Christianity it would remove the keystone out of its arch, and the whole would collapse into a mass of shapeless ruins. This is not the case with any other institution, whether religious, political, philanthropical, or social. Three great religions exist in the world, which probably number among their votaries between six or seven hundred millions of the human family—Brahmism, Buddhism and Mahomedanism. Two of these have known founders, yet the essential principle of all three consists in a body of dogmatic teaching, not in a personal history. The persons of their founders might be removed out of them without damage to their entire systems. The same is true of all the religions that have ever existed among mankind. But to remove the Person of the Founder of Christianity out of His religion would be its destruction. It is quite true that the New Testament contains a considerable amount of doctrinal and moral teaching, but neither of these constitutes its inner life. The Person of Jesus Christ our Lord alone imparts to it vitality and cohesion. The Church, the greatest of all visible institutions, is founded on Him alone. Remove His Personality from it and the whole edifice crumbles to the ground.

We will now proceed to examine the character of this Christ as it is portrayed by His biographers. We have four separate accounts of the life of Jesus,

written by four different persons, yet in all the great features of character they are in complete harmony. Now in writing as they did these men, (who ever they were it matters not) either gave a true portrait of a real person, as they knew Him or else they drew a picture which was nothing more than an ideal delineation created by their own imaginations. This latter alternative we may dismiss, I think on the authority of that learned unbeliever John Stuart Mill—He says in the last of his posthumous essays: "It is no use to say that Christ as exhibited in the gospels is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of his followers. The tradition of his followers suffices to have inserted any number of miracles, and may have inserted all the miracles he is reported to have wrought. But who among his disciples or among their pro-clytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee, certainly not St. Paul and still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than that the good which was in them was all derived, as they all professed that it was, from a higher source."

"And if in opposition to all tradition you contend that these histories were not written by the followers of Christ at all; by whom were they written? "Surely men possessed of such unparalleled genius as was requisite to the creation of such a character as that of Jesus should have left some impress upon the world or some record of themselves and their work! It was an historic age. Why have we no record of the writers who surpassed that of all other writers? "fiction that ever lived?" Let me call your attention to another peculiarity of these four portraits of Jesus. I say four, because the independence of the writers is now generally admitted, had these accounts been written by four men acting in concert they would never have left such apparent discrepancies lying in the surface as we find in the Gospels. The peculiar feature is this. The writers do not describe Jesus. They make no comment on His sayings or His acts. They do not draw the likeness of the man whose memoirs they preserve; there is no formal delineation of the character of Jesus in the Gospels. They do not praise Him, they do not

hold Him up as an object of adoration or of imitation. They narrate His miracles without any expressions of surprise or of admiration. They tell the story of His wondrous life absolutely without feeling. His marvellous self-sacrifice, His divine patience, His deep humility, His God-like calmness, His forgiveness of His enemies, His majestic silence and dignity under insult, are all related without comment, as if by spectators, who had absolutely no interest in Him, or in the scenes they describe. Even the story of the Crucifixion is told without any sign of condemnation of His murderers, or of astonishment at the events described, and with no effort after effect.

And yet their narrative is admitted by friends and foes to be the most majestic ever penned, and the man of whom they write the sublimest character the world has ever known—without any art, without any effort, without any attempt at character painting, they have delineated a character and a life which stands before us in unapproachable grandeur. Without aiming at pathos or dramatic effect, they have set before us scenes which in these very features have never been equalled by any creations of the mightiest genius; and even such notable infidels as Lecky, Renan, Mill and the author of "Supernatural Religion" have yielded their testimony to the beauty and the power of the power of the life and character of the Jesus of the gospels.

What is the explanation of these strange literary phenomena? There can be but one—those evangelists are simply putting down the true story of what happened. Their work is as unconscious as the work of the sun's rays in producing a photograph. The narrative is so wonderful because the scenes it describes were so unique and unexampled. The character their simple story delineates is so sublime and of such moral grandeur because the original was so. (McKim).

What now were some of the features of the character of Jesus? I will give you them for the most part in the words of a recent American writer on this subject (McKim.) His childhood was absolutely pure. The Evangelists tell us very little of His early years, but in those few delicate touches there is delineated "a holy thing," a child without guile, without weakness without sin. No other great character of history is so described.

Here is a feature of absolute originality.

I next call attention to His innocence. From beginning to end of the three short years, the record of which, as Mr. Lecky, the learned agnostic confesses "has done more to generate manhood than the disquisitions of philosophers and all the precepts of moralists." He was without guile, a man spotless innocence. "The Lamb of God" is one of the most characteristic of His titles, and yet this innocence was combined with matchless force, unflinching courage, unconquerable purpose. He was at once the strongest and the gentlest of men, the most masterful yet the most innocent. No man we associate weakness with innocence as the association is so powerful that no man writer would undertake to sketch great character on the basis of innocence or would think it possible.

Another remarkable feature of the character of Jesus is the absence in Him of any consciousness of sin. It has been remarked that human piety begins with repentance, but there is no sign or expression or hint of Jesus having ever repented or even regretted any act or thought or word of His. All other good men have felt and confessed their shortcomings, their failures, their sins; and as they have become better and holier they have had a deeper sense of their sinfulness. But Jesus, though His words and acts and very presence are like a pure perfume of holiness, never for one moment feels or confesses any sense of sin or imperfection. Nay He claims to be sinless. "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" was His challenge uttered eighteen centuries ago, and never successfully met. Here is a feature of character not only unexampled, but absolutely different from the fundamental experience of mankind—so different that it forbids us to classify Jesus with men, notwithstanding the beauty and perfection of his manhood. "Piety without one dash of repentance, one ingenuous confession of wrong, one tear, one look of contrition, one request to Heaven for pardon—let any one of mankind try this sort of piety and see how long it will be ere his righteousness will prove itself to be the most impudent conceit." "Now, Jesus was either sinless or he was not. If sinless, what greater, more palpable exception to the law of human development than that a perfect and stainless being has once lived in the flesh? If not, then we

have a man taking up religion without repentance, and holding it as a signet of insufferable presumption to the end of His life, and that in a way of such untaunting grace and beauty, as to command the universal homage of the human race! Could there be a wider deviation from all we know of mere human development? Yet another unique feature in the character of Jesus was His perfect humility, conjoined with His amazing pretensions. Let me recall one or two of His utterances: "I am the light of the world"; "I am the resurrection and the life"; "I and the Father are one"; "Before Abraham was I am"; "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth"; "Come unto Me all ye that travail and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." There has never been any human being, unless he were a madman, who at all approached such self-assertion, such self-confidence, and such astonishing pretensions as these. In fact, if they had been attempted in any other person than Jesus Christ, nothing could have saved them from ridicule. An illustration will place this before you in a striking light. Socrates the great Greek philosopher produced among his followers a deep feeling of attachment, but nothing but madness could have induced them to propound him to future ages as the centre of moral and spiritual obligation. Suppose for one moment the following expressions to have been put into the mouth of Socrates, who suffered death on account of his teachings: "I, if I drink the cup of hemlock, will draw all men unto me." "Come unto Socrates all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and he will give you rest." "Take Socrates yoke upon you and learn of him, for he is meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Or suppose these words to have been the utterance of one of his disciples: "The love of Socrates constraineth us." Whether we live, we live unto Socrates, and whether we die, we die unto Socrates, whether therefore we live or die we are Socrates." "I drink the hemlock with Socrates, nevertheless I live; yet not I but Socrates lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of Socrates, who loved me and gave himself for me." Applied to Socrates such expressions are ridiculous; applied to Jesus Christ they are a mighty power. Would any follower have dared to apply them to Confucius or

Mahomet? Would not Moses have rejected them with horror? Yet Jesus has made these claims—His disciples have spoken thus of Him, and He retains, even among unbelievers, the respect and the admiration of men, and although He has made these transcendent claims, which would imply unequalled arrogance in any other man, yet He retains among men to-day the place He has held for eighteen centuries as the meekest and most modest and lowliest of men! His spirit is seen to be so celestial, His worth so great, His authority so high, that instead of being offended by His pretensions, we take the impression of one in whom it is even a condescension to breathe our air. I say not only His friends and followers take this impression; it is received as naturally and irresistibly by unbelievers. Here is indeed an argument for his superhumanity that cannot be resisted. Let me briefly recapitulate it.

"It is an undoubted fact that there is no character, whether real or fictitious, that can bear the smallest comparison in point of ideal perfection with that of Jesus. It stands out in solitary and unapproachable grandeur in its pure childhood—its spotless innocence conjoined with matchless purity—its unconsciousness of any sin—its perfect humility conjoined with amazing pretensions. Whence comes this? If it is that of a mere man, how comes it that no other man has made a near approach to it? If it be a fictitious creation, whence is it that no fictitious character of the ancient world comes anywhere near to its perfections? Fictitious characters are abundant enough in ancient literature, and the genius of ancient poets is unquestionable. How is it then that the creations of ancient genius have utterly failed to portray a character which even approximates to that of the Christ of the Gospels? After eighteen long centuries the character of Jesus inspires the hearts of men with an impassioned love. No other character of the ancient world, real or fictitious, does so. But there is one more point pre-eminently remarkable, to which I ask your earnest attention. During the last eighteen centuries fiction has been busily at work with its creations; yet Jesus still reigns without a rival. Again, we ask, what does this mean? What is the evidence it bears to the momentous question we are considering. Prof Goldwin Smith tells us in never-to-be-forgotten

words, "The essence of man's moral nature, clothed with a personality so vivid and intense as to excite in all ages the most reverent affection, yet divested of all peculiar characteristics, the accidents of time and place, by which human personalities are marked. What other notion than this can philosophers form of divinity manifest on earth?" There is one key, and only one, which will unlock the mystery. It is this, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Apply this key and all is clear.

The Christ is Divine, therefore He is perfect for perfection is supernatural.

The Christ is Divine, therefore He is sinless, for God is holy.

The Christ is Divine, therefore He is humble, for He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation and humbled Himself even unto the death upon the cross.

The Christ is Divine, therefore He is truthful, for He is the truth and in the defence of the truth of His Divinity He laid down His life.

Such is the witness of the character of Christ.

I ask you to take that character and study it for yourselves as it is portrayed by loving hearts and hands in the gospels. As you study it you must admire its beauty, even as non-Christians have boldly owned they have admired it. Admire it and you must learn to reverence it for its consistency and truth. Reverence it and you must go on to love it. How can you help it?

And if you admire, reverence, love it you will not be able to stop there, but there will come to you sooner or later, that faith which, linked to reason, worships and adores and you too will be forced to cry "Lord I believe that Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God."

V. CHRIST'S DIVINITY PROVED BY HIS TEACHING.

Our endeavour in this course of lectures is to prove that "Christ is a revelation of the Divine" and this because His character is superhuman, His teaching is superhuman and His work is superhuman. Last Sunday we devoted ourselves to the study of the character of Christ and we saw that it was so essentially different to all other characters either in history or in fiction, that it was impossible to classify

Him with the rest of mankind. His character was absolutely pure. He combined spotless innocence with the most manly strength; perfect humility with most amazing pretensions, and with there was an entire lack of any consciousness of sin. This was altogether unlike any other of the children of men in life or in ideal. And yet there was an essence of what we call character. All men and women have some special characteristics—some are brave, another humble, another patient and so forth. Moses was the meekest of men, Solomon the wisest, Job the most patient. What does this mean? It means that those qualities predominated over the rest of the character in their respective possessors. But the predominance of any special quality is a mark of imperfection. The perfection of man's constitution is to have its qualities in equipoise; each in its proper place, each coming to the front when required, but none overshadowing the rest. Read the history of Christ as you find it in the Gospels and you will see that one of the most wonderful things about it is the absence of any special characteristic. All His intellectual and moral faculties are in perfect equilibrium. Each was in its proper place, each asserted itself when necessary just to the extent required, and not a jot beyond. He was the bravest of men, where bravery was required; the meekest where meekness was demanded; the most indignant when the occasion demanded indignation; the most merciful when mercy was deserved. But there was no special quality to distinguish Him; no particular attribute which dominated the rest of His human nature."

Before leaving this subject let me call your attention to another argument from the character of Christ. It has been pointed out by a recent writer (John Fulton) that the most difficult of all falsehoods is the simulation of character. Even when its purpose is innocent, as in dramatic art, nothing short of genius suffices to ensure success. The player struts and frets one little hour upon the stage, and yet, though thousands of well educated and laborious people study hard to represent the various characters in the few brief scenes of a play not one in a thousand of them all attain to excellence. One false ring in the voice, the least exaggeration of display, a momentary lapse of memory, dispels the illusions he is striving to produce, and so with every

aid that art can furnish, the actor fails to sustain a character for the brief hour of his engagement. When an actor does succeed the world raves at his genius, Fame and fortune are his own, because the task of simulating character is recognized to be one of the most difficult that a man can undertake.

It is very clear that the difficulty must increase or diminish with the complexity or the simplicity of the character which is assumed. An actor might easily succeed as Horatio who would make a sorry failure as the wise made Hamlet. I think we may safely say that during the last 300 years not five people have been able to simulate the character of Hamlet with any degree of perfection, and all this though a higher genius than the actors had already conceived the character, pre-posed its situation, and composed the very words the actor was to speak. Thus, perfectly to simulate a great human character demands the loftiest efforts of two men: one to create it and the other to assume it in the action of a few brief scenes.

What should we think of a person who should attempt, not for an hour upon the stage, not in the presence of a limited or sympathetic audience, but for years together in every circumstance that friendship could create or malignity devise—in the familiarity of daily intercourse and in the very hour and article of death—what should we think of a person who should undertake both to improvise and to simulate, not only the mightiest and most majestic of human characters, but a character which transcends the utmost reach of human imagination, the character of the Eternal Son of God? Yet, according to the historical gospels Jesus did conceive that character, bore it for a lifetime, never faltered nor faltered in it—lived it through, and died in it, with its celestial glories radiant on His crown of thorns? To pretend that a few uneducated and deluded fishermen could have constructed such a character is sheer absurdity; and only to stimulate that character successfully would have sufficed to prove that Jesus must be more than man. To sustain it faultlessly would have surpassed the power of an archangel ruined. To have borne it falsely through a life of perfect innocence, with nothing to be gained by it but the reward of infamous and enormous guilt, would have been to present the im-

possible spectacle of principled mendacity as the motive of spotless holiness, and of consummate wisdom acting for a whole lifetime with consummate folly. Yet that is the character which the Christ sustained, and so where in the action or utterance of that transcendent drama has the world to this day found one flaw, but it is still forced, against its will, to repeat the verdict of the unhappy Pilate: "I find no fault at all in this man" and from this again, we claim that Christ was something more than human, and therefore divine."

To-night we take up the argument from the unique teaching of Christ; and we shall attempt to show that it was so fundamentally different to all human teaching—so infinitely superior to it in every respect—so inconceivable in its originality by any mere man that it must in consequence be superhuman—that of a truth "never man spake as this man."

And here again it will be necessary for us to appeal to the account of the life of our Lord as we find it in the four gospels; but let us understand that we in no way insist on the inspiration of these accounts. We simply say, here are four histories of a person called Christ—it is acknowledged on all sides that (omitting the miraculous parts) these histories are in the main authentic—that they are written by four different persons acting independently of each other; and so we claim for them just so much, and for the purposes in hand no more than we claim for any other histories,—that if they do not contradict one another, they may be considered to give a fairly accurate account of the persons and events described. There can be surely no objection to this mode of procedure. Let us, then, examine the teaching of Christ as it is related to us in the gospels:

I. The first feature of this teaching which we allege is proof of the Divinity of the Teacher, is the avowed purpose and aim of His mission. To establish a worldwide kingdom in the minds and hearts of mankind, not only while He was among them in the flesh, but so long as the world lasted. He foretold His death; but in spite of this death, He will still be King of this Kingdom, the Living Ruler of His Church through all time, the ever-present Head of His Society through all the cycling centuries.

Is it thus that men lay their plans? Did

any other man ever dream of such an undertaking? Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon have been great conquerors, but in the wildest flights of their ambition did they ever boast that their kingdoms should never fall, that they themselves would guide and govern them for all ages to come? If any living man should hold such language to-day would he be listened to? Would he not be laughed to scorn? Yet Jesus Christ was listened to, men heard him, followed him, obeyed him, gave up all for him. More wonderful still, myriads who never saw him or heard His voice have died for him. This is what so impressed the Emperor Napoleon. "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself," he said, "have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His Empire upon love, and to this day millions would die for Him. . . . I think I understand something of human nature, and I tell you all these were men, and I am a man. None else is like Him; Jesus Christ was more than man. . . . Christianity alone succeeds in so raising the mind of man towards the unseen that it becomes insensible to the barriers of time and space. Across a chasm of 1800 years Jesus Christ makes a demand which is beyond all others difficult to satisfy. . . . He asks for the human heart. He will have it entirely to himself—He demands it unconditionally, and forthwith His demand is granted. Wonderful . . . unaccountable; it is altogether beyond the man's creative powers. Time, the great destroyer, is powerless to extinguish this sacred flame; time can neither exhaust its strength, nor put a limit to its range. . . . This it is," he adds, which proves to me quite convincingly the divinity of Jesus Christ."

See, too, how intimately connected with His own person was to be this new kingdom Jesus was to set up. He was to be not only its King and Head, but its Heart also; He was to draw all men unto Him; He was the light to lighten the world; His blood-shedding was for the remission of sins; to Him belonged the forgiveness of sins, the keys of heaven and hell and Paradise. And as He puts Himself forward as the Saviour of the world, so also He advances the equally astounding claim to the Judge of quick and dead. Yes, the judgment and the final destiny of every individual soul of all the generations of men, and of all races

and peoples tribes of mankind, is to the hands of this man Jesus of Nazareth, a village carpenter, an illiterate Galilean. What, then, is He? Who is He? What came He? Is He a man, or is He indeed the Christ, the son of the living God? That is the inevitable dilemma.

II. The next feature of the teaching of Christ which we allege is proof of divinity, is the astounding claim put forth by this Jesus of Nazareth. "If the Law was not more than man, he was less than a good man. Either He was God, or must cease to be our pattern Man, our Great Exemplar of our race. My reason for saying this is that Jesus makes claims which would have been arrogant and blasphemous as coming from a mere man. Read the lives of the great teachers of mankind as they emerge upon the page of history; Gautama, for example, the founder of Buddhism; and Socrates, the great moral teacher and philosopher of Greece. Neither of them makes any claim to sinlessness or moral perfection. On the contrary they bewail their ignorance, their foolishness, their manifold imperfections, and what is true of Gautama and Socrates is true of all other great teachers, Pagan, Jewish or Christian. They acknowledge their kinship with other men not only in race, but in the moral imperfections which characterize the race; and in a need of salvation from a source higher than man. Not so Jesus of Nazareth. He claims a unique distinction, an unapproachable superiority over every other member of the human family. His teaching abounds in lofty self-assertions, which are utterly incompatible with His being simply an ordinary man; and never once does He suggest that Himself needs redemption. Let us take a few instances, "He affirms His pre-existence; Before Abraham was, I am." The expression "I am" is remarkable and significant; it means Jehovah, the great name which God had revealed as His peculiar designation to Moses on Mount Horeb. Here Jesus asserts His right to appropriate it. He does not say "Before Abraham was, I was," but "I am" that is "I am the self-existent One independent of time, with whom is no past or future but one vast present." He associates Himself with the eternal glory of the heavenly father in past eternity. "Father glorify Thon Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." He

claims co-equal honor with the Almighty. "All men should honor the Son even as the Father"—co-equal knowledge. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father neither knoweth any man but the Father save the Father," co-equal power:—"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He speaks with an authority as absolute as that which promulgated the moral law on Sinai. "It was said to them of old time, but I say unto you" "All other prophets and teachers sent from God used in their highest utterances the formula, "Thus saith the Lord," but this man says "verily, verily I say unto you" thus implicitly placing Himself on a line of equality, not with Moses, not with Abraham but with the Lord God Himself." And what was the most prominent subject of His teaching? Was it justice, or benevolence, or meekness, or purity, or patience, or chastity? No; His chief subject was Himself, and when He sent out His disciples it was that they should preach Christ. Hear His words: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life"; "I am the Bread of Life"; "I am the Good Shepherd"; "I am the Door"; "I am the True Vine"; "I am the Resurrection and the Life"; "Without Me ye can do nothing"; "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me"; "He that believeth in Me hath eternal life."

Notwithstanding all this self-assertion, which in any other great teacher would excite contempt or ridicule, or indignation, Jesus still occupies the highest place in the esteem and admiration of mankind, even when these, His claims are not acknowledged, and still stands out a peerless model of meekness and humility. Channing, the great Unitarian, declares that the charge of an extravagant, self-deceiving enthusiasm is the last to be fastened on Jesus. And yet if these claims of His to divine honor and power and worship be not just, how can He be vindicated from the charge of blasphemous presumption or self-deceiving enthusiasm.

The dilemma is inevitable; either He is what He professed to be, the Christ, the Son of God, or else He is a man, who can no longer be followed as an exemplar or trusted as a teacher. But let any enquirer consider that dilemma in the light of His unparalleled moral teaching and His peerless life and character, and then say which is the more reasonable conclusion: that such a man, such a teacher, such a sublime and royal personage was after all a

mad dreamer, or that His claims were founded on truth, that He was all He declared Himself to be, that we are here in the presence of a superhuman character, a superhuman life and superhuman wisdom, and that this man of Nazareth is indeed the Christ the Son of the Living God.

III. The third feature of the teaching of Christ, which we allege in proof of His Divinity, is that it satisfies all the higher aspirations of the human mind, and at the same time appeals to none that are degrading. What are the subjects on which the spirit of man most intensely requires satisfaction? They are four in number, (1) To know whence we came; (2) To obtain freedom from the sense of guilt under which man's conscience labors; (3) To have before us a perfect ideal of moral rectitude; (4) To obtain a more definite assurance than our natural light affords us as to the destiny that awaits us beyond the grave. Whether Christianity satisfies man's highest aspirations on these points is not a question of theory, but of fact.

1. Man intensely desires to understand the relation which exists between him and the Author of the universe. This question man has very imperfectly succeeded in solving for himself, as is testified by the universal voice of history. But the solution of Christ is clear and definite. It tells him that there is a sovereign creator of all things, to whom man stands in the relation not only of a creature but of a child. He is a personal moral Being, the Controller of Providence, holy, just, beneficent, and unalterably good. Contrast the account which the New Testament gives of God with those of other religions which have dominated mankind, and the difference in point of elevation is prodigious. The God of the philosopher was a being who satisfied not one of the aspirations of the human spirit. He was, for the most part, an impersonal God, incapable of evoking either trust or love. The popular deities were tainted with the worst imperfections of human nature. The God of the Christian is the merciful Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is what Christ is. It is impossible, therefore, that He who propounded views of the divine character more elevated than any others which can be found in the ancient or modern world, can have been the prey of enthusiasm, credulity or fanaticism.

2nd. Man's conscience labors under a

sense of guilt, and earnestly desires freedom from its burden. Of this fact the universal prevalence of the rite of sacrifice in some form or other is a sufficient proof. No race of men who have believed in the being of a God have been without some means of expiating guilt. It may be objected that there are individual instances in which this feeling does not exist at all, or only imperfectly. I reply that such cases no more avail to prove that a sense of guilt is unreal in human nature than the cases of those persons who are born blind or deaf prove that these faculties do not belong to it. And not only is this so, but the holiest and best of men have always felt deeply conscious that they have not lived up to that law which conscience pronounces to be right and the deeper has been their sense of this in proportion to the degree of their holiness. In what position then, does this feeling of sin place man with God? What effect has it on their respective relations? How are we to be delivered from its consequences? While these are questions of the profoundest interest, which have been felt to be so by every portion of the human race except a few of the most degraded savages, we have no data which can enable us to return a precise and definite answer to them. But Christianity professes authoritatively to solve the question. It informs us that Jesus Christ has completely restored the union between heaven and earth; that the sense of guilt need exist no longer; and that whenever repentance is real the consequences of sin are done away. In connection with this I ask you thoughtfully to consider the following point, as proving that its solution of this problem has been felt to be an adequate one. Wherever Christianity has prevailed it has abolished the old world-wide institution of sacrifice. It has subverted them by announcing that man can approach God acceptably through the perfect man Jesus Christ. Before this idea all the expiations and sacrificial rites of the ancient world have perished.

3rdly. With the third of these subjects we need not further occupy our attention, as we have produced ample evidence that the character of Jesus fully satisfies the cravings of the human spirit after a great moral ideal, and it does it with matchless perfection.

4thly. Christianity returns a definite answer to the question what is man's destiny beyond the grave? I assume that

no one can dispute that light that man possesses on this subject independently of a revelation, is very certain nor have the discoveries of modern science in any way tended to dissipate gloom. The atmosphere that our natural light can do is to afford us a hope, that death will not terminate our existence. Yet we will venture to affirm that some definite information on this point is not in the highest degree desirable. The question whether we shall perish by the stroke of death, or if not, whether our condition hereafter will be effected by our conduct here, is one which no amount of unbelieving philosophy pronouncing it insoluble will prevent man from putting to himself with the profoundest interest. Man struggling with the uncertainties and the unsatisfying character of present things, cannot help asking himself the question, do my hopes and my fears terminate with this shadow of existence, which we call life? I know nothing more mysterious than the darkness of our natural light on a subject of such profound practical interest. Yet it is a fact. Surely if there be a God, He will afford us some information for our guidance? Christianity affirms that it can solve this question on grounds of the highest certainty—the express authority of its founder Christ. It affirms that the existence of man will not be determined by death, and that his condition hereafter will be dependent on his condition here. It even goes beyond this, and asserts as an historical fact that in one case the universal law of death has been reversed; that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, and that His renewed life is a pledge of the resurrection of all mankind. If this answer is true, it is clear that it is one that fully satisfies the highest aspirations of the spirit of man. Contrast the Christian doctrine of immortality with that propounded in the fabled literature of the ancient world and mark its superior elevation. Homer makes his greatest hero say in Hades, "I had rather be the meanest slave of earth, than king among the shades." Contrast also the words of the dying Socrates, who while expressing his hopes for the future, declares his inability to affirm anything respecting it with certainty. Contrast, then, I say, with the language of the Galilean fisherman: "In whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This, then, is briefly

the argument from the teaching of Christianity. It has been necessary to condense it very much to get it within the limits of a single lecture, yet I think I have said enough to show that such a Teacher, with such a plan, putting forth such astounding claims, and satisfying the highest aspirations of mankind, is something more than human—is indeed Divine—a revelation from God Almighty. We ask you, then, to take the teaching of Christ, read it, study it, learn to know something of its beauty and meaning, and you cannot but admire, reverence, love it. Are we asking too much? Listen, then, to the testimony of Mr. Rathbone Greg, whose "Credo of Christendom" is said to be one of the keenest attacks ever made upon Christianity: "It is difficult," he says, "without exhausting superlatives, even to unexpressive and wearisome satiety, to do justice to our intense love, reverence and admiration for the character and teaching of Jesus. We regard Him not as the perfection of the intellectual or philosophical mind, but as the perfection of the spiritual character, as encompassing all men at all times in the closeness and depths of His communion with the Father. In reading His sayings we feel that we are holding converse with the wisest, purest, noblest Being; that ever clothed thought in the poor language of humanity. "There he stops. But can we stop there? Nay; Jesus is either more than all this, or He is none of these; for in His teachings He claimed again and again to be more than man. We, too, admire, reverence, love the teaching of the Christ; but we do more. See! He stands in our midst, and pointing to those who in every age have turned their backs on Him, and gone back from following Him. He says to you and to me to-day, "Will ye also go away?" What shall we answer? Surely we must be constrained to say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, for Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

VI. THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST PROVED BY HIS WORK.

"We are dealing with the truth of the Divinity of Christ as it has been proclaimed by Christendom ever since the day when He lived and died on this earth. We are endeavouring to test the weight of evidence in favour of such a tremendous claim, and in order to do this effectually we are summoning certain witnesses before us that they may

bear their testimony for or against it. Two of these witnesses have been already examined by us—the character of Christ, and the teachings of Christ. We have found of both that they are facts well authenticated, and therefore credible; acknowledged by foes and friends alike, and reliable. Moreover they are exceptional witnesses. Even His enemies tell us that His character is unique and ideal—His words such as never man spoke. Accordingly we have cross-examined these witnesses, sifted and tested their evidence for ourselves. With what result? Do they justify or condemn Him of whom they bear witness? The answer is plain and unmistakable. There is no alternative. If the claim to Divinity made by Him and repeated by His Disciples be not true, then His character is a hopeless tangle, a mass of inconsistencies. His teaching that of a fanatic or an impostor, and even the keenest antagonists of His Divinity shrink from endorsing either one or other of these terrible charges.

To-day we have to do with another witness—the Work of Christ, which we claim is as unique and superhuman as His character and His teaching. And here again I would make clear that our evidence is by no means based on the Inspiration of Scripture—it is necessary to reiterate this. People have become so imbued with the idea that unless Scripture is inspired there can be no truth in Christianity, that it is difficult to convince them that this is not the case. God forbid that I should in any way belittle His sacred word, which I firmly believe to be inspired. But what I insist upon is this: if it were proved, to-morrow, most conclusively, that the Bible was the work of ordinary uninspired men, and was by no means to be depended upon for its accuracy—it need not in any way interfere with our belief that Jesus Christ is God—a Divine revelation from the Father. The ordinary way in which faith becomes unsettled is this—the Bible says the world was created in six days—Science proves that this was impossible—the Bible says the Flood covered all the earth—Science declares that this was not the case. The Bible is full of miracles—miracles are contrary to evidence—therefore the Bible is not reliable. But the Bible tells us about God, about Jesus Christ—it is probable that it is wrong here as elsewhere, therefore I refuse to believe in Jesus Christ and in God. We have not time to enter now upon the supposed differences between science and the Bible, or I would say in passing that the Bible is credited with saying a good many things which it does not really say. But I want to point out that this argument is fallacious, since the imperfections of the Bible (if there be any) do not invalidate the claims of Christ to be the Son of God. So then the first question to be

grappled is "What think ye of Christ?" Never mind objections against the authenticity of the books of the Bible, or against the scientific or historical accuracy of the Old Testament, or against the harmony of the Gospels, until that is settled. Unless Christ is recognized as the Son of God all other beliefs will be vain. If He is so recognized the one thing needful is attained. If by rational argument you can be so convinced of the truth of Christianity that you are able to say with the Ethiopian eunuch: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," then you have a solid foundation on which to stand, and as long as you do stand upon it all the storms of doubt and Biblical criticism and unbelief cannot dislodge you. Doubtless there will be difficulties which must remain unexplained, questions which must remain unanswered, but they are all of minor importance compared with the grand central truth of Christianity, the Divinity of Jesus, and indeed it is as we sometimes sing, "Worth while a thousand years of woe to speak one little word, if in that "I believe," we own the Godhead of our Lord."

I. The first evidence I bring to prove by the Work of Christ that He is Divine is the fact of Christianity. This cannot be disputed. There are in the world to-day some six hundred millions of souls calling themselves Christians. This cannot be denied or explained away, so it must be accounted for. We must appeal to history. If with such non-Christian writers as Renan and Ewald you are prepared to accept the Gospels as historical, we learn that some 1900 years ago a Jewish carpenter gathered a band of fishermen and peasants around Him—that after His death at Jerusalem—that after His death His followers went everywhere preaching that He had risen again and that He was God. At first the company numbered about one hundred and twenty souls—in a few days it was three thousand, shortly after five thousand, then multitudes, both of men and women, were added—"the disciples multiplied greatly"—"a great number of priests were added to the faith"—all this was in Jerusalem. Then, after about two years, the disciples spread through Judea and Samaria and Galilee, and next the gospel was preached to the Gentiles, and continued to be accepted so freely that within thirty or forty years after the death of the founder disciples could be found in every part of the known world.

But suppose we reject the account as found in Holy Scripture, as unreliable, it is not going to alter our position at all. Tacitus, the heathen Roman historian, writing of the burning of the city of Rome, which took place thirty years after the Ascension, says the Christians were accused as the authors of this mischief, and gives the following account of

them: "They had their denomination Christus, who in the reign of Tiberius was to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious system though checked for a while broke out again and spread only over Judea but reached this city also first they were only apprehended who confessed themselves of that sect; afterwards a multitude were discovered by them." The testimony to the early propagation of Christianity is extremely material. It is from a historian of great reputation, living near the time, from a stranger and an enemy to the religion hegar in Judea; that it had reached Rome, and not only so, but that there had obtained a great number of converts.

Next in order of time and perhaps superior in importance, is the testimony of Pliny the younger. Pliny was the Roman governor of Pontus and Bithynia. He writes a letter to Trajan the Emperor to know how to deal with the Christians in his province. The date is about eighty years after the death of Christ. In it he says: "Many of all ages and of every rank, of both sexes likewise, are accused and will be accused (of Christianity.) Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only but the lesser towns also and the open country. Nevertheless it seemed to me that it may be restrained and corrected. It is certain that the temples which were almost deserted begin to be more frequented and the sacred solemnities (of heathen worship) after long intermission are revived."

Here then, is very singular evidence of the progress of the Christian religion in a short space. Not seventy years after the apostles began to mention the name of Jesus to the Gentile world the Christians were in such numbers in the Roman Provinces that the authorities had to appeal to the Emperor; to know how to treat them. But it is unnecessary to multiply quotations from this time forward, profane history is full of references to Christians. In two or three centuries it triumphs over the religions, the philosophies, the superstitions of mankind. "It wins its way from town to town, from shore to shore, till it becomes the prevailing religion of the Roman Empire; it changes the customs, the laws, the jurisprudence of the world, and at last the proud eagles, before whose conquering might every kingdom of the earth had succumbed, bow before the mightier might of the cross of Christ. Yet from the first everything was against it. Its origin as a Jewish sect, the prejudices and superstitions of the lower classes, the prestige and antiquity of the existing polytheism, the keen intellects of the philosophers, the culture and refinement of the wealthy, the might of the mailed hand of Imperial Rome itself—and yet it triumphed, tri-

umphed in the face of persecutions too dreadful to be described.

And by what means, by what arms did it triumph? By abjuring every appeal to the passions, or lusts, or desires, or ambitions of men. By demanding that they renounce the honors, and glories, and emoluments of the world and embrace (under the then conditions of the case) losses, imprisonments, degradation, death. By holding out as the reward of faithful service tribulation in this world, immortality in the world to come. Jesus chose means adapted for defeat, while Mohammed, preaching a religion of conquests and sensuous enjoyments, chose means adapted for conquest. With confidence then we appeal to history, for its pages contain the indelible record of the superhuman action of Jesus Christ among men. The triumph of Christianity in those first centuries is a phenomenon that refuses to take its place in any process of natural evolution, because no natural causes are adequate for its explanation, and if any one can believe these miraculous events, contradictory to the process and dispositions of human nature, were brought about without any supernatural assistance, he must be possessed of much more faith than is necessary to make him a Christian and remain an unbeliever from mere credulity. And look at Christianity now. For eighteen centuries it has stood unshaken, attacked upon all sides, by foes within as well as without, it has remained impregnable. The longer it has existed the stronger it has proved to be, until we see it as it is to-day. It has interlaced itself with the history and the interests of mankind. Poetry, painting, sculpture, literature, architecture are all saturated by its spirit. It has worked and is still working a mighty revolution in the world, not less real because quiet and bloodless, and you and I look around upon it, a kingdom, worldwide, ennobling, exactly, adapted to the circumstances of the age, the political requirements of nations—the most sacred yearnings of humanity. Again I claim that its founder must be Divine.

II. The next evidence I bring forward to prove by the work of Christ that He was divine is "the social and moral reforms which His religion has wrought among men." I need not, I am sure, produce testimony to convince you of the pitiful state of the old heathen world. The slightest knowledge of ancient history will cause you to admit readily the oppression of the mighty over the weak, the degradation of womankind, the curse of slavery, the intolerance of the wealthy, the miseries of the poor—all this has been changed by Christianity. "Christianity (says a recent American writer, McKim) has asserted for every man his sonship in the family of God, and so laid the

foundation of personal liberty and individual rights. It threw its axis around the poor and the weak and the prisoner, and claimed for them sympathy and justice and charity. It first unspeakably ameliorated the condition of the slave, affirming that he was not a chattel, but a brother in the family of God; and so sowed the seed which led to the ultimate abolition of slavery. It struck the fetters from the limbs of woman, and restored her to her rightful place as the helpmate and companion of man. It took from the father the power of life and death over his children, and made the paternal relation holy and beautiful. It gave to marriage a sanctity which it was sacrilege to violate, and elevated love from the depths of sensuality to the throne of purity. It abolished the cruel and bloody games of the gladiatorial arena. It at length drove from the stage the licentious shows which so deeply degraded the morals of the people. It rooted out the prevalent crime of infanticide—that revolting and inhuman practice which more than almost anything else revealed the corruption of the human heart under the blight of paganism. It developed the humane instincts of men and created the hospital and the orphan asylum and a host of kindred institutions of charity. It reformed the principle of legislation and laid the foundations of the new science of international law." And if it be contended that these reforms are the result of civilization rather than of Christianity, I ask how comes it that the non-Christian nations have not adopted them? Look at Turkey and Asia under the rule of Mohammedanism; China, with its boasted centuries of civilization; India under the much lauded system of Buddha.

How, then, are we to account for these phenomena? Are they natural? Do the principles and powers which history, and experience make us familiar with, as those which belong to man, even in his highest developments of genius and his noblest achievements of moral power, suffice to explain the facts before us? Surely not. Neither does history give any parallel, ancient or modern, to these achievements of Jesus Christ, nor any promise or germ of the development of any such power. The Christian history, like the character and teaching of Christ, is unique. It stands alone without a peer or a rival; and the only reasonable conclusion is that a power was at work in it, which was more than human. In other words, that Jesus of Nazareth was what He claimed to be, and what the Christian Church from the beginning believed Him to be—the Son of God."

III. The third evidence I bring forward to prove by the work of Christ that He was divine is, He has revolutionized the order of the virtues. Prior to His, every system of morality placed courage, and the whole class of qualities

that are akin to it, in the first rank; and the milder virtues, as far as they afforded them any recognition, in the second. Christianity has exactly reversed this. Since it has done so, the change has received the almost unanimous approval of the wisest and the best of men. Christ has acted upon mankind mightily. He has rescued the degraded from their degradation, rejuvenated hardened hearts that no other force could break or subdue, and elevated the good and the noble. I ask is such a fact consistent with the theories that unbelievers propound as to the origin of Christianity?

Again, I would have you notice the mode in which Christianity brings a new moral and spiritual power to bear on the heart of man. In this conception it is utterly unique, no such idea having been thought of before or since. It effects this by bringing the whole force of religion to bear on man's moral nature, and concentrating it in the person of Christ. I ask you to keep in mind, steadily, this important fact, that it is the great aim of Christianity, not merely to teach morality, but to render its practice possible by imparting to man a spiritual power of which he was previously destitute.

All the great heathen philosophers were deeply conscious of the weakness of the motives by which they could enforce the practice of virtue. The violence of passion was too strong for them. All that they thought they could effect was to benefit the virtuously inclined, but they felt themselves powerless to act upon the masses. When men had arrived at a certain stage of corruption they viewed their case as hopeless. Philosophy was destitute of a spiritual power, capable of acting mightily on the heart. Every page of ancient literature that survives testifies to this, philosophy left degraded men to perish in their degradation. Its only hopes for humanity were placed in political legislation, but how such legislation was to be brought about it failed to discover.

I need not take up your time in proving that it is the prime object of Christianity to grapple with this defect. That it has done so we have the evidence of numerous non-Christian writers. Lecky, the great Irish Rationalist, says: "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love and, has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice, and has exerted so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the single record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to

soften mankind, than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists." Renan, the great French philosopher, writes: "There have been profusions of virtue more austere, perhaps firmer, there never have been like masters in the science of goodness. The joy of the soul, the grand Christian art"; and says Cotter Morison, one of the ablest of unbelievers: "We need admitting, or rather proclaiming, by a nontheist who would be just, is that the Christian doctrine has a power of cultivating any other creed or philosophy. It strengthens the will, raises the affections, and finally achieves a conquest over the baser self of man."

Yes, "their rock is not our Rock, our enemies themselves being judged." Christianity has acted as a mighty moral and spiritual power for 18 centuries, compared with which that of all others has been weakness. I ask you to consider the profound significance of this fact. Then reflect on those parts of the moral teaching of Christianity which I have set before you weigh them not only separately but conjointly, add to them the solution which it gives to the higher aspirations of man, and say whether we are not in the presence of a moral miracle. To ask us to believe that all this has been the invention of ignorant enthusiasts or credulous fanatics is an outrage on our reason; still less can it have been due to wilful imposture.

VII. IS THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST A FACT OR A FABLE?

In the last three lectures we have produced overwhelming evidence in proof of the Divinity of Christ from His character, His teaching and His work. To-night I ask you to consider carefully the testimony I shall bring forward regarding the truth of the Resurrection of this Christ, for it is most important that we should understand plainly what authority we have for asserting that Jesus did rise from the dead on the third day. You are well aware that the fact of the Resurrection is denied by large numbers of Rationalists and others who argue thus: miracles do not happen—the Resurrection would have been a miracle, therefore it did not happen. Now leaving the question of the credibility of miracles for another lecture, I want at present to deal with the only miracle which may fairly be said to be an essential part of Christianity, historically and doctrinally too. For the Resurrection stands upon a different footing from any other miracle, the Incarnation alone accepted. It was the crown and consummation of the life of Jesus. In it was bound up the hope of the world—upon it was built the Christian church

which is the Church of the Resurrection, "as the gospel is the gospel of the Resurrection." Upon its objective reality rested the whole superstructure of Christianity. If the certainty of this fact should be undermined, the Apostle saw the entire Christian system collapse in ruin. If Christ be not risen," he exclaims, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God, that He raised up Christ; whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." (1 Cor. XV, 14, 15.)

Now it appears the first preachers of Christianity appealed to the Resurrection of Jesus as the sufficient proof of His Divine Mission—the supreme evidence of the truth of Christianity. With its truth the Christian religion must stand or fall. If true, it is sufficient to carry all the other miracles recorded in the New Testament. The only question, therefore, that we need discuss, is: Is the evidence that Christ rose from the dead sufficient to establish it as an actual occurrence? If it is, it fully proves that He came from God and was therefore Divine.

"In considering this, I shall only appeal to that portion of the evidence that lies within your own reach thoroughly to investigate. I shall confine myself to those writings of the New Testament, the authenticity of which is fully admitted even by unbelievers, and instead of using them for doctrinal purposes, as is usually done, I shall employ them simply as historical documents. And here again the question of inspiration need not come in—it matters not in the least for the question in hand, whether these writings are inspired or not—we shall simply look upon them as ordinary records of well known events.

Some of you may be aware that an overwhelming majority of the most eminent unbelievers of Europe, who have studied the question fully, admit that four of the most important writings of the New Testament, were beyond all dispute, written by the Apostle Paul, viz.: The Epistle to the Romans, the two to the Corinthians, and that to the Galatians. This is a fact that ought to be known by every member of the Christian church; for it is hardly possible to exaggerate its importance. Besides these four, a large number of eminent unbelieving critics admit that four more are the work of the Apostle, viz.: the two to the Thessalonians, that to the Philippians, and that to Philemon, but we may put these aside, as the first four will be sufficient for our purpose even if all the rest of the New Testament should be proved spurious.

"Christians," says Canon Row, in a course of lectures on this subject preached some years ago at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, "Christians have hitherto been in the habit of study-

ing these Epistles of St. Paul, chiefly on account of their doctrinal value, and have overlooked the fact that they are also historical documents of the highest order. As such, they constitute the sheet anchor, which is fully capable of supporting the weight of the great facts on which Christianity rests. To you who have no time for learned research into ecclesiastical history, they are invaluable. They are in your possession, and with the aid of common sense, a sound judgment, and a moderate knowledge of the principles of history, you can fully estimate the value of their testimony." I submit the following points for your consideration:—

First, there is no class of writings more valuable than letters as historical documents, when they are written by active agents in the events. As evidence of facts, they are higher than even formal histories. Historians, even when they are desirous of telling the truth, are not unfrequently subject to bias; and they are seldom active agents in the events they describe. But the allusions to historical facts in letters are almost always incidental. As such they constitute us judges of the credit that ought to be attached to them. They are also a pledge, not only that the writer accepted them himself, but that those to whom he wrote accepted them also. All modern historians, therefore, are unanimous as to the high value which attaches to original letters, written by persons who were actively engaged in the events to which they refer. "Let us take, as an instance, the letters of some great statesman, who has lived through a long and eventful epoch, during which great political changes had taken place, in which he himself had played a prominent part. Can we imagine any testimony more important than such letters would be for placing us in a position to form a true and impartial judgment upon the history of the period? They would make clear many points which had, it may be, perplexed and puzzled us, and would enable us to enter more intelligently into the motives and designs of those who had been foremost in the conflict. If for instance there had been a dispute as to the part taken by our country in some great international question, we would turn anxiously to such letters to see whether they contained any allusions to this question, and if there were any clear and definite statements on one side or the other, we would naturally regard such evidence as of the highest importance in helping us to form a true estimate of the transaction. In these first four epistles of St. Paul we are fortunately in possession of evidence of this kind in favour of Christianity, we are therefore in the presence of historical documents of the highest order.

Secondly, the interval which separates the

composition of these letters from the great event to which they refer is extremely brief. They are in the strictest sense of that term contemporaneous documents. They were written at latest twenty-eight or thirty years after the crucifixion. (this remember is acknowledged by the most eminent unbelievers) The events recorded could, therefore, have been tested by the memory of living men who were still in the prime of middle life. There was no time for the growth of myths and legends. If the testimony were false, it could have been refuted. Suppose for instance a preacher were to appear in this town and publicly proclaim that some notorious political offender, who had been executed and buried in one of our cemeteries a few years ago, had risen from the dead, and appeared to people who were then living, many of whom were still living at the time he spoke, you can see at once how easily you could repute him, you could examine and sift his evidence; you could produce counter evidence and cross examine his statements; you could appeal to those who were living at the time; you could point to the grave where the dead man was buried; you could exhume the body. It would be impossible for you to be deceived. Now St. Paul's four letters prove beyond doubt that he himself believed and preached the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, who was crucified; and moreover they clearly show that he regarded this fact as the great foundation on which Christianity was built. His statements on these points are clear and unmistakable. His means of communicating with the original witnesses and of ascertaining the truth of the events he referred to, must have been of the most ample character; and the idea that situated as he was, he neglected to do so is inconceivable. It follows therefore, that so far as these writings contain allusions to the chief facts on which Christianity was based, we cannot have better testimony.

Thirdly, the careful perusal of these four letters of St. Paul will furnish you with the most unimpeachable evidence of the writers veracity. The proof of this is in the letters themselves. Read them; you have before you the entire man. You will see him there in all his bursts of feeling, in all his joys and discouragements; in a word, in every varied aspect that his remarkable character presents. Is it possible, I ask, to read these letters, and not to rise from their perusal with the fullest conviction of the honesty of the writer? Deceived he might have been, but that he was consciously mistating facts is unbelievable.

Fourthly, these letters contain an additional guarantee of truthfulness, such as I doubt whether can be found in any other literary compositions. They were intended to be publicly read before the assembled Church. In

several of these churches there prevailed a violent party spirit. In the Corinthian and Galatian churches, not only had St. Paul considerable numbers of vehement opponents, but opponents who went to the length of denouncing him as a false prophet. No inconsiderable portion of these letters is occupied discussing this very point. In them the apostle again and again challenges his enemies. What guarantee of truthfulness can be compared to this? If he was not an honest man himself, would not common sense have withheld him from making assertions which he knew that his opponents could dispute? Was he not certain of instant detection if he had done so? It follows, therefore, that wherever in these epistles St. Paul either states or alludes to facts they must have been accepted as true by his opponents equally as by himself."

Such, then, are these letters as historical documents. I must now bring before you the points that they prove beyond all reasonable question. My limits would fail me if I were to support my assertions by quotations. I must, therefore, take it for granted that you will read and verify them for yourselves. You will have no occasion to travel beyond the pages of the first four epistles of St. Paul. One passage, however, is so suggestive that I quote it at length. The apostle is writing to the Corinthians, who were in doubt about the resurrection of the body, so arguing from the admitted fact that Christ has actually risen, he brings home to them the reasonableness of the general resurrection at the last day. These are his words:

1. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;
2. By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.
3. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;
4. And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures;
5. And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve;
6. After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.
7. After that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.
8. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

1. "These letters prove as an unquestionable fact that St. Paul, from the date of his conversion, was firmly persuaded that Jesus Christ rose from the dead; that this belief was the foundation of the existence of the church as a

society; and that it was the sole ground on which, after his crucifixion, Jesus was again proclaimed to be the Christ. Also that during his career as a persecutor he had been unable to discover how this belief could have originated except in its reality. This carries the belief in the resurrection as a fact up to within five or six years of the crucifixion at the latest.

2ndly. They prove that all the churches when the apostle wrote these letters, accepted the resurrection of Jesus as the sole ground-work of their existence, and considered it fundamental to their spiritual life.

3rd. They prove that this belief was not one that had recently sprung up, but that it was contemporaneous with their first acceptance of Christianity, and that this belief was accepted not only by the churches founded by St. Paul, but also by those with whom he had no connection.

4th. They prove that the fact of the Resurrection was accepted equally by those who denied St. Paul's apostleship as by his followers. As the former were Judaizing Christians who claimed the authority of the church of Jerusalem for their opinions, this establishes the fact that it must have been the fully accepted belief of that church. This carries us up to the date of its foundation, and proves that the church was reconstructed on the basis of that belief immediately after the crucifixion.

5th. They prove that the following persons believed that they had seen Jesus Christ alive after his crucifixion, viz.: Simon, Peter, James, the eleven apostles on two occasions: more than 500 persons on another occasion, of whom upwards of 250 were alive when St. Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians; and finally St. Paul himself.

Now in surveying this evidence of the Resurrection, it is hardly possible to over-estimate the importance of the Church as a visible institution. It exists now. Nothing is more certain than that it was in existence and in a state of vigorous growth, in the year 40 of our era. Equally certain is it that it was not in existence in the year 20. Its birth therefore, took place in a definite and well known period of time. The account which this great society has ever given of its origin is worthy of profound attention. Such an account has a right to be accepted as the true one until it can be shown to be impossible. The Church cannot have been mistaken as to the cause that gave it birth. When, therefore, it affirms that its renewed life was due to the belief in the resurrection of Jesus, it is certain that it must have been owing to this and to no other

cause. I ask, therefore, your deep attention to the following consideration. If Jesus really rose from the dead, His Resurrection is a cause fully adequate to account for the origin of the past history of this great society. The sternest system of philosophy must admit that the cause which the Church has ever affirmed to have created it, is one, if true, that is entirely adequate to have produced the result; and is a complete solution of all the facts of history. This being so we are on every ground of reason, entitled to accept the Resurrection as a fact, until some other cause can be pointed out that was sufficient to have produced all the phenomena before us. If unbelievers affirm that the Resurrection is a fiction, they are bound by every principle of a sound philosophy, to point out clearly and distinctly what causes, other than its truth, originated the Church, and have been adequate to produce its subsequent history. So far then the Church is a standing witness to the truth of the Resurrection.

It has been pointed out, further, that the conversion of St. Paul is alone a distinct and sufficient proof of the reality of the Resurrection and of the truth of the Christian religion. And we may well understand how it came to pass that Lord Lytton, who undertook to demonstrate the falsity of Christianity by the story of this conversion of the chief representative of Judaism, was by the study of that remarkable event himself converted into a firm believer in the diviner origin of the religion he sought to overthrow.

"By one flash of conviction Saul, the bitter enemy and relentless persecutor of the Christians, is changed into a zealous preacher and propagator of the faith, against all his cherished beliefs, in the face of every worldly interest, at the cost of every intellectual ambition. And from that day forward to the end of his life during thirty stormy years, he faced persecution and contumely, hardships and losses, imprisonment and death, for the sake of this Jesus of Nazareth whom he had before hated and persecuted! All this he tells us in these unchallenged documents that lie before us. And the explanation of this marvellous transformation of this brilliant young Jewish rabbi into a Christian? One word tells the story, he had seen the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. IX.) The risen glorified Lord had appeared to him, apprehended him, spoken to him.

As to this fact St. Paul never wavered. It was wrought into his very soul. It was the most intense conviction of his being. It became the dominant force in his life, surely this man was a competent witness.

"He was not," says archdeacon Farrar "separated from the events as we are, by centuries of time. He was not liable to be blinded, as we are, by the dazzling glamour of victorious Christianity. He had mingled with men who had watched from Bethlehem to Golgotha the life of Crucified, not only with His simple hearted disciples but with His learned and powerful enemies. He had talked with the priests who had consigned Him to the cross; he had put to death the followers who had wept beside His tomb. He had to face the unutterable horror which to any orthodox Jew was involved in the thought of a Messiah who had hung upon a tree. He had heard again and again, the proofs which satisfied an Annas and a Gamaliel that Jesus was a deceiver of the people. The events on which the apostles relied in proof of His Divinity, had taken place in the full blaze of contemporary knowledge. He had not to deal with uncertainties of criticism or assaults on authenticity. He could question, not ancient documents, but living men. He had thousands of means close at hand to test the reality or unreality of the Resurrection in which up to this time he had so passionately disbelieved. In accepting this half-crushed and wholly execrated faith, he had everything in the world to lose—he had nothing conceivable to gain—and yet in spite of all, overwhelmed by a conviction he felt to be irresistible. Saul, the Pharisee, became a witness of the Resurrection, a preacher of the cross."

"But his witness does not stand alone. He enumerates six appearances of our Lord after His Resurrection—five besides that which he himself witnessed. Two of these were to individual apostles, namely St. Peter and St. James. Two of them were to all the apostles. One of them was to 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part were still alive at the time he wrote.

Now we know (again from these unchallenged historical documents, the first four epistles of St. Paul) that he had intimate intercourse with both St. Peter and St. James, as well as the other apostles, and was in familiar relation with the Christians of Jerusalem. Hence this passage gives

us all the assurance that the honesty and capacity of this witness can give to the fact that Jesus had frequently appeared to those who knew Him well, and that there was in the numerous Christian communities, a ready formed, as well as in Jerusalem itself, a firm persuasion and conviction that He had risen from the dead. Moreover this fact was not incidental to their faith but was the most prominent article it contained. The church was built upon it as its foundation. Upon this it rested. From this came its vigorous life, its conquering energy, its triumphant hope. Wherever the apostles and evangelists went they preached "Jesus and the Resurrection" and the intensity of conviction which we have seen characterized St. Paul's belief in regard to it appears to have been characteristic of the whole Church. What account, then, are we to give as reasonable men, of testimony such as this? Is it valid, and is it sufficient to establish the fact of the Resurrection? If not, why not?

VIII. MODERN THEORIES CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION.

Last Sunday I brought before you the evidence we have for believing in the truth of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it was briefly this: "Even if we were to give up the gospel narrative altogether as the product of a later age we still have St. Paul's epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians, and the Galatians, which are of unchallenged authenticity, since no reputable authority anywhere can be cited in favor of bringing any of these down to a later date than twenty-eight years after the death of Christ. In all these epistles the literal facts of the Resurrection are either taken for granted or emphatically affirmed. And in one of them the apostle asserts that Christ was seen after His resurrection not only by all the apostles but by 'above 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present.' We must therefore accept the evidence of St. Paul at least so far as this: that belief in Christ's Resurrection was universal in the Christian church, while the majority of His followers and Jewish contemporaries were alive and able to expose the fraud and delusion if it were possible.

The question before us is now reduced to a very definite issue. There are only two alternatives that are possible ones. Either the Resurrection was a fact, as the disciples of Christ declared, or the belief in it must be founded on some species of delusion. I say that the alternatives are only two, because the leaders of the most advanced infidelity have long since abandoned the idea that the Apostles intended

to deceive their readers, or to practice a pious fraud. "History," says Baur, a German Rationalist, "must hold to the assertion that to the faith of the disciples the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was a fact certain and indisputable. It is in this faith only that Christianity found a ground solid enough to erect upon it the superstructure of its whole historic development." And Strauss, another of the same school, declares that "the historian must acknowledge that the disciples firmly believed that Jesus had risen;" and he refers to St. Paul's statement in these words, "The fact that the Apostle Paul heard from the mouth of Peter, of James, and of others besides, that Jesus had appeared to them, and that they all, and the 500 brethren also, were absolutely convinced that they had seen Jesus living after he had died, is one which we will not call in question." Many such quotations as these could be given to show that the theory of imposture or pious fraud as an explanation of the Apostolic testimony to the Resurrection need no longer be reckoned with, since it has been altogether abandoned by intelligent skeptics.

"Happily the second alternative, that the belief in the Resurrection was owing to some delusion of the followers of Jesus, is resolvable into two suppositions, and two only. The first of these is the one more generally propounded by unbelievers: that one or more of the disciples in the height of their enthusiasm and credulity saw visions of Jesus after His crucifixion and mistook them for a resurrection, and on the strength of this they induced others to believe it. The second supposition is that Jesus did not really die from the effects of His crucifixion—that He, recovered from His wounds, and that His credulous followers mistook this recovery for a resurrection." These two suggested explanations are called respectively the vision theory, and the swoon or resuscitation theory. We will consider them in order.

I. The Vision Theory. It is claimed that the disciples were deceived by their overheated and highly-wrought imaginations. It was a moment of great excitement. The minds of the apostles were full of eager expectation. Jesus had spoken to them of His Resurrection. Their yearning hearts are filled with a fervent and uncontrollable desire. Reason for a time has lost its balance. Enthusiasm reigns supreme. The intensity of their faith breaks the barrier of the grave—they see what they expect to see. Mary Magdalene, who seems to have been the first witness of the so-called Resurrection, being of an enthusiastic temperament (of this by the way there is no evidence) and laboring under mental disease (another assumption) fancied that she saw Jesus the morning of the third

day when she went to the sepulchre. It is further claimed that the disciples were so excited by this story repeated to them by the Magdalene, that they also fell victims to the same delusion, and fancied they too saw Him risen from the dead. Then these visions spread, almost like an epidemic, among the followers of Jesus, who being credulous persons, accepted them as realities, and so, to quote the words of the author of Robert Elmsmere, "in the days and weeks that followed, the devout and passionate fancy of a few mourning Galileans begat the exquisite fable of the Resurrection, and (this is the wonderful part) became so firmly persuaded of it that they devoted their lives to the preaching of this extraordinary occurrence, and built upon it the splendid structure of the Christian Church, which has filled the ages with miracles of beneficent activity." As this explanation, improbable as it is, appears to have a great fascination for those who are impressed with the moral grandeur and beauty of the life of Jesus, and yet who do not accept Christianity it demands very careful and exact investigation. Let us then confront this theory with some of the facts of the case. Dr. Carpenter, the eminent English physiologist, (himself an unbeliever) has pointed out the fact that "according to well established principles of mental philosophy three mental states are necessary to enable even the most enthusiastic and credulous persons to mistake subjective impressions for external realities. These are prepossession, fixed idea and expectancy." But there is not only no evidence of the existence of these states in the disciples, there is distinct and abundant evidence of the existence of an opposite condition of mind. If we take the historical narrative of the event as it appears in the gospels (and remember our opponents admit that the writers had no intention to deceive but related what they believed to be the plain and simple facts) it is certain that the state of mind of the followers of Jesus on the evening of the crucifixion must have been one of utterly blasted hopes and expectations. Their master to whom they had united themselves in the belief that He was the Christ the King of Israel, had breathed His last on the cross, and instead of assuming a kingdom His enemies had terminated His existence in agony and shame, His remains had even been consigned to the tomb, and they, His companions, had fled lest they should share His fate. Their cause was gone. What one quality was there in these men to account for the story of the Resurrection? Despondent and out of heart, in fear of their lives, sorrow-stricken with a sense of an irreparable loss, without hope or expectation of brighter days, they were the last men in the world to conceive or imagine anything so unlikely as a rising from

the dead. Even the holy women who cling to Jesus with passionate devotion in the hours of His bitterest humiliation, had no such thoughts. They lingered at the sepulchre weeping and bewailing, but without hope, without any thought of seeing Him again. They came back very early on the Sunday morning, not with any idea of a Resurrection but to embalm the body of Him they loved. There was absolutely no material for a vision, no ground in which such an idea could take root. Before we can see a vision we must be strongly impressed with an idea, and be fully persuaded that the idea will be realized. A vision comes from within, and unless the state of mind is such as to produce it, we cannot possibly conceive it taking place. It is easy to draw a beautiful and poetic picture of the Galilean peasants, fully impressed with the idea that Jesus would rise from the dead, and eagerly expecting such an event to happen, and then to argue that the vision theory is a very natural and rational explanation of what is called "the beautiful fable of the Resurrection." But then you see the picture drawn is not in accord with the facts of the case, and the conclusion based upon it falls to the ground. To my mind this is sufficient to dispose of the vision theory, but there is still more to be said against it.

II. This vision spoke to those to whom it appeared—held long conversations with them—walked with them in broad daylight—gave them extended instructions as to the proreagation of the Gospel and the constitution of His Church. Is this consistent with what we know of other instances of mental hallucination? Surely if these Galilean fishermen, under the influence of enthusiasm and credulity, and affected by morbid mental conditions, could evolve in their disordered fancy the programme of the mightiest social and moral and religious organism the world has ever known, it is time to proclaim that mental hallucinations are to be sought after as the fruitful sources of wisdom, and the morbid mind is to be looked to as the parent of the most beneficent plans for the well-being of mankind."

III. But suppose it is claimed that the Gospel narrative cannot be accepted as evidence here, since it is only reasonable to expect the writers to be biased in their accounts in order to make the Resurrection appear as unlooked for as possible; We have still those never disputed first four epistles of St. Paul to fall back upon for our argument. And Agnostics must surely lament that they are bound to acknowledge their authenticity. "In one of these letters (the first to the Corinthians, cap. xv) as I pointed out last Sunday, the writer tells us that the risen Christ was seen on two occasions by all the Apostles, and again by 500 brethren at once. Is this within

the limits of the wildest imagination—that eleven persons should at the same moment fancy that they saw the same person, and that He spoke to them, and spoke the same words? And that they all imagined that He ate and drank with them on purpose to convince them of the reality of His appearance—that it was not a phantom they saw, but their well beloved Master Himself? Even this does not represent the full extent of the demand upon our credulity which this hypothesis makes. For it asks us to suppose that in broad daylight five hundred persons had simultaneously the same hallucination. Who is credulous enough to believe such an explanation of the admitted fact that these persons believed they saw and conversed with and ate with and listened to, the same Jesus whom they had known and loved before His crucifixion! "Is it possible for a crowd of people to be deceived in exactly the same way by their imagination, if there were no objective reality in the appearance? If, for instance, some one who had lately died in this town were to appear suddenly in this church now and speak to us all, with the same tone of voice we knew so well—allow us to speak to him and question him. If he came close to us and pressed our hands in his and submitted to be touched and handled by us, it would be quite impossible for us to regard such an appearance as a delusion. Now this was precisely the way in which Jesus appeared to His disciples. Among these five hundred brethren there must have been many like St. Thomas, of a skeptical turn of mind, who would not believe without the evidence of their senses, and yet they were all convinced, and retained their belief unto the end."

IV. "But if all these objections could be met, or ignored there is still another which interposes an insuperable barrier to the acceptance of the theory of visions as an explanation of the Resurrection. It is this: Upon that hypothesis what became of the body of Jesus? Remember the state of the case. St. Paul's undisputed testimony (not to refer to any other) establishes the fact that the supposed resurrection took place on the third day after the crucifixion. If, then, the body did not rise, but remained in the custody of the disciples, the story of its resurrection would quickly have been dissipated by the inexorable fact of the existence of the dead body. If, under the circumstances, they had continued to preach the Resurrection, they would plainly have been guilty of a wilful and deliberate imposture, a supposition which has been abandoned, as I have shown, by almost all intelligent and educated skeptics. If, on the other hand, the body was in the custody of the Romans or the Jews, why was it not produced to confound the deluded disciples who were turning the world upside down preaching that

Jesus had risen from the dead? Only a few weeks elapsed between the crucifixion and the day of Pentecost, when all Jerusalem was in uproar over this new doctrine of Jesus and the Resurrection. Now it was of the greatest importance to the Jews to confute the teachers of this sect of the Nazarenes, and had they produced the body of Jesus they would have completely overwhelmed them. For then they would have been found false witnesses to God in testifying that Jesus was risen, or else all men would have pitied or despised them as deluded dreamers, and so they would have lost all credit with the people and the new sect would have been strangled at its birth. Argument, authority, imprisonment, scourging, would all alike have been unnecessary to crush these poor fanatics who were doing such mischief to the cherished customs and institutions of the nation. By simply exhibiting the dead body in public their aim would have been reached. There would have been an end of Christianity there and then, and once for all! But this they did not do, because they could not do it.

Thus neither friends nor enemies could produce the body. What, then, is the rational conclusion? The body had disappeared, because Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. The disciples were not deluded by the phantom of an excited brain. Those numerous appearances were realities, and the Christian Church was not founded on the hallucination of a hysterical woman who communicated her enthusiasm to the rest of the disciples. The mightiest moral agency the world has ever seen did not spring from a delusion, a chance trick of the senses. The courage and the faith, the rugged strength and the patient endurance that conquered the world, were not born of the phantoms of disordered brains. The practical sense, the well poised judgment, the lucidity of thought, the invulnerable dialectics of the author of the epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians did not flow from a mind so morbid in its action as to be unable to distinguish fact from fancy. So much for the vision theory. Surely a person requires less credulity to believe the fact of the Resurrection than he does to accept this as an explanation of the positive assertions of the apostles." (McKim.

II. We will now turn to the swoon or resuscitation theory—i. e. Jesus did not really die, but was taken down from the cross in a swoon, that He subsequently recovered and lived in profound retirement ever afterwards, and that His followers mistook this for a resurrection. This theory was regarded as exploded until recently revived by Prof. Huxley in some articles written in the Nineteenth Century Magazine. I have no desire to sneer at Prof. Huxley's learning, I am quite

prepared to acknowledge him as one of the intellectual giants of the age; but we all know that the most learned of men do take up fads and theories which are, to say the least, illogical and unreasonable. The only wonder is that they cannot see their defects themselves. Let us examine this one. "Jesus had been subjected for hours to extreme physical torture (the agony of crucifixion is too well attested to allow us to doubt this, even if we are not prepared to accept the Gospel narrative of the agony in the garden—the arrest—the trials—the buffeting and the scourging). After hanging a long time upon the cross He swooned away. The collapse was so great that the spectators thought Him dead. Then He was taken down and buried, and gradually by virtue of the soothing spices, and through contact with the cool stone of the sepulchre, He revived. For thirty-six hours he remains within the tomb without food or drink, waiting an opportunity to escape. At the end of that time the Roman soldiers fortunately go to sleep at their post (a thing in itself incredible) and in some way (which, however, is unexplained) the stone is removed from the door, and then Jesus creeps forth, exhausted by loss of blood. His long fast, His terrible prostration, and dragging His poor, worn, emaciated form,—with his wounds still bleeding and unhealed—to where His disciples are assembled, and presents Himself to them as the conqueror of Death—the Lord of Life and Glory. What is there here to inspire hope and triumph, or to turn the sorrow of Good Friday into the joy of Easter? His disciples might have met Him with tears of pity and compassion, and ministered to Him in His sore distress, with loving and tender sympathy, but could that sight have filled their minds with the Christian idea of the Resurrection? Was there anything to suggest the thought of Life through death, or to give birth to the rapture of St. Paul, "Death is swallowed up in victory"? The Rationalist Strauss is too clear eyed to accept such a monstrous improbability. He exclaims, "A man half dead, dragging himself in languor and exhaustion out of his tomb, with wounds requiring careful and continuous medical treatment—could he in such a state have produced upon the minds of the disciples the impression that he was the victor over death and the grave—the Giver of Life? . . . Such a return to life could only have served to weaken the impressions which Jesus had in His former life made upon their minds, . . . and could never have turned their sorrow into enthusiasm and intensified their admiration into adoration." (Strauss, quoted by Godet, Lectures in defense of Christianity).

Again, if this theory were true, Christianity becomes the greatest and most shameful imposture which has ever victimized the world.

We cannot hold this explanation and save the character of Jesus. Even if we can imagine the disciples being deceived, at any rate the chief actor in the scene knew that there was no resurrection. Here there was no possibility of a delusion. If the disciples were mistaken Jesus must have known it, and allowed them to believe a lie. But even those who deny the Resurrection agree with the believer in exalting the human character of Jesus as the grandest and noblest of the sons of men, and yet, strange to say they would have us accept a theory which shatters that character to the dust, and degrades the Hero of humanity to the rank of the world's adventurers and deceivers. Such a burlesque of history is incredible."

But further, if Jesus recovered at all, His body must have passed from the custody of His enemies into that of His friends. Our only knowledge that such was the fact is derived from the Gospels. To do so was contrary to the Roman custom. If, therefore, the testimony of the Gospels is accepted for this fact, it must be valid for a great deal more. To accept this solitary statement and to reject all their others is absurd. And once more. In this case, what became of the body of Jesus eventually? Did He die like other men? If so how are we to account for the joyful trustfulness of His disciples in His triumph over death? "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more," was their triumphant confidence.

As these two hopelessly impossible theories—the vision theory and the swoon theory—are the only alternatives to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ having been an actual occurrence, it follows that it is as firmly established as any fact in history. As such it forms an adequate account of the origin of the Church and the power with which Christianity has acted upon mankind. It frees us also from the terrible alternative, that if the Resurrection is a fiction the most beneficent influence ever brought to bear on man is an unreality, and that the holiest and best have during eighteen centuries been bowing before One who has been sleeping the sleep of unconsciousness—who can neither sympathize with them nor accept their love. If all the sacrifice which during this long period of time has been offered to Him, has been offered to a shadow, full well may we join the preacher who had wearied himself in the pursuit of unrealities in exclaiming: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

IX. THE ARGUMENT FROM THE EXISTENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

There is one more proof of the reality of the Resurrection, which I would now lay before you. It is of a somewhat different character to the testimony

already given, but in its way quite as important, and to some minds even more convincing. The subject has been very lucidly dealt with by a recent English writer on the Resurrection, (Addresses on the Resurrection, T. P. Ring,) and I shall for the most part reproduce his arguments verbatim.

The Christian Church is a great fact. How are we to account for its rise and progress? Can we point to any merely human causes which are sufficient to explain its marvellous history? If the Resurrection is denied, it is only reasonable to ask what theory is to be substituted which, in the opinion of rational men, can be considered capable of producing such great results? Our opponents, as a rule, do not deny that they are bound to offer some solution of the problem; and the great historian, Gibbon, in the last century put forth five famous reasons—offering a sufficient explanation of the institution of the church, and although they have for the most part been rejected as inconclusive and unsatisfactory, I am not aware that any sounder ones have been brought forward. They are as follows:

1. The inflexible and intolerant zeal of the Christian, derived, it is true, from the Jewish religion, but purified from the narrow and unsocial spirit which, instead of inviting, had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the Law of Moses.
2. The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth.
3. The miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive Church.
4. The pure and austere morals of the Christians.
5. The union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman empire.

Let us consider these causes very briefly:

1. The zeal of the Christians was derived from the Jews. This Jewish zeal was not, it must be confessed an altogether attractive or pleasing quantity. It was purely defensive, obstinately opposed to all innovation, carefully and jealously guarding its own laws and institutions, but strangely indifferent to the conversion of the world. The Jewish religion was admirably fitted for defence, but it was never designated for con-

quent." Now Christian zeal is very different to this. It was the ardent begotten of a passionate love for a living Saviour, and the souls of men for whom He died. So far from being exclusive and unsocial it yearned to embrace the world, and inspired the disciples with an unquenchable desire to spread and be spent in the service of man. It was a zeal above all things peculiarly adapted for attack. Gibbon indeed acknowledges that Christianity was "delivered from the weight of the fetters of the Mosaic Law." But, then, what effected this deliverance? What broke the power of these iron fetters? What inspired the hearts of the disciples with that noble enthusiasm which turned the world upside down? They had to face the bitter opposition of the Jews—the fierce persecutions of Imperial Rome—the passions and immorality of the common people—the scorn and derision of the learned, and yet they triumphed over all. There must surely be something to account for that strange transformation which changed these Jews, all zealous for the law of Moses, into earnest and enthusiastic followers of the Crucified. If the Resurrection is an actual fact we have a sufficient explanation. Everything falls into its place. We can then understand the glowing ardor which faced the fire and sword of Nero, and counted all things as loss so as to win Christ. Such zeal for a living person, who was ever with them in their temptations and trials, watching over them with tender love as they fought His battles and endured His Cross affords a reasonable account of the rise and progress of the Christian Church. But, then, this is not the zeal which Gibbon would allow. It is not so much a cause as an effect. It is the result and consequence of a firm and unflinching belief in the Risen Christ. 2. The second cause, namely, that Christians taught definitely and emphatically the doctrine of a future life, no doubt appealed forcibly to that yearning in the heart of men, who are ever, as Gibbon says, "unwilling to confound themselves with the beasts of the field, or to suppose that a being for whose dignity they entertained the most sincere admiration, could be limited to a spot of earth, and to a few years of duration." But, again, the question arises, how came the Christians to be inspired with this strong conviction not only of the immortality of the soul, but also of a future life of the

body? Whence did they derive this knowledge? What enabled them to speak with authority on this momentous question? "There is nothing, excepting a divine revelation, that can ascertain the existence and describe the condition of the invisible country which is destined to receive the souls of men after their separation from the body." What was the revelation? What were its credentials? How came the world to believe the proclamation so readily?

Gibbon himself admits that the early Christians did not learn their doctrine of immortality from the Jews or the heathen, since neither of these could speak with any degree of certainty on this subject. What, then, was its source and origin? What transformed those dim surmises of humanity, half-conscious of its immortality, but wholly unable to arrive at the truth by the process of unassisted reason, into the assurance of a profound conviction? What transfigured the darkness of the grave, and made so real and substantial that invisible world, before so vague and shadowy? These men were not seeking, they had found the solution of the problem. They were no longer wandering in the dim twilight of speculation and fancy, but were rejoicing in the full light of truth and knowledge. They had seen the Risen Christ, and in the light of that revelation the world unseen became to them the greatest of all realities. One who had passed through the darkness of the grave was alive again, and had lost nothing by the act of dying.

This fact enabled them to grasp the meaning of their Master's words: "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." So far, then, as the deep conviction of the early Christians in the certainty of a future life tended towards the rapid spread of their faith, we have a proof of the general acceptance of the doctrine of the Resurrection which produced that conviction. The splendid and sublime faith which could stand at the open grave, and amid all the signs of dissolution and decay, cry with calm and unflinching assurance, "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," was not learnt in the schools of the philosophers, nor at the feet of Jewish teachers,

but from the lips of Him who said: "I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore."

3. When it is said further that the belief in miracles was another cause of the rapid spread of Christianity, we feel constrained to ask whether the miraculous powers ascribed to the Christians, and which Gibbon says "must have conducted to their own comfort and very frequently to the conversion of infidels," were true or false?

If the claim was a just one, and the first disciples possessed the power of working miracles, then, no doubt, such a power must have exercised considerable influence in propagating the faith; but in that case the whole question falls to the ground. The spread of Christianity is accounted for, but not without assigning supernatural causes, which infidels deny. But if the claim was without foundation, is it likely that false miracles would add any lustre to the new religion, or be helpful in the work of converting thousands to Christianity? Is it not, on the other hand, certain that such a claim would in the long run have proved disastrous to the cause which rested upon such an unsound foundation? Sooner or later the lie would be exposed, and the fabric built upon it collapse. Most certainly the claim to miraculous powers, unless true, would have been a hindrance, and not a help to the progress of Christianity.

4. The next feature in the Christian religion which Gibbon thinks had no small influence in the conversion of the world, and which "commanded the veneration of the people," was the holiness of living which characterized the members of the Church. "The primitive Christian," he says, "demonstrated his faith by his virtues." We welcome gladly this testimony to the power of Christianity. It must, indeed, have possessed no ordinary influence to enable weak men and women to lead lives of purity, soberness and self-restraint, amid the foul and polluted society in which it first originated. Yet it is not quite easy to see how these virtues could have contributed much to the first successes of Christianity. As a matter of fact, we find the rigorous morality of the early Christians aroused the bitter animosity and hatred of those who catered for the lusts and passions of the people. Their very virtues brought them into collision with the world. It was a most difficult

thing to escape the pollution of idolatry. All society was honey-combed with its debasing rites, "the important transactions of peace and war were prepared and concluded by solemn sacrifices." The marriage festival and the sad funeral procession, every art and every trade that was in the least concerned in the framing and adorning of idols was polluted with the stain of idolatry. The Christian Church also condemned the circus, the games, the gladiatorial shows, and all these things were dear to the people she sought to convert. If Christianity could have adopted a lower standard of morality and regarded with indulgence the sinful inclinations of humanity, the opposition raised would have been by no means so rancorous as it actually was. The lives of the Christians were a constant rebuke to the society of the day, and the principles of Christianity and unfailing source of resentment and hatred to the world at large. So far, then, from their virtues accounting for the rapid growth of Christianity, it can hardly be doubted that they were in no small measure the cause of some of the most violent persecutions. And, again, we cannot help asking what gave birth to these "sober and domestic virtues" so averse to the gay luxury of the age such as charity, temperance and economy? What produced those qualities which have been ever distasteful to the world, viz: humility, meekness and patience? What allured these people from lives of luxury and licence to ways of penitence and self-denial? Gibbon says "the friends of Christianity may acknowledge without a blush that many of the most eminent saints had been before their baptism the most abandoned sinners." This is glorious testimony from an unbeliever. It is a witness of the most remarkable character to the living power of Christianity. But what changed these wretched and degraded sinners into such glorious and devoted saints? What was the impulse? What inspired the passion that was capable of producing such a revolution? And we answer, it was the "expelling power of a new affection," and a case in which the devotion to a living person drove out and destroyed those vices which enslaved them. The new life of the Christian was the result of a living faith in the power of the risen and ascended Christ. "Since ye then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above,

where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God?" This must be the answer to the riddle, until our opponents can produce some other, at least as probable.

5. We come now to the last of these five causes, which, according to Gibbon, "so efficaciously assisted the spread of the Christian religion."

"The primitive Christians were dead to the business and pleasures of the world; but their love of action, which could never be entirely extinguished, soon revived and found a new occupation in the Government of the Church."

No one will deny the splendid and admirable genius for organization displayed by the Christian Church. But to assign that organization as one of the causes which accounts for the growth of Christianity is somewhat bewildering. The highly organized society which attracts the admiration of Gibbon, is simply an after growth; it belongs to the age of maturity; not of infancy or adolescence. It did not spring up in a day, but was the slow work of time. It is a splendid instrument for propagating the truth now that it is fully developed, but the organization is the result of something that went before, and not a cause. We may well ask what moved the few followers of the Crucified to combine in this wonderful society? What impelled them to produce this marvellous system? And until these questions are answered it is vain to speak of the elaborate machinery of the Church as being one of the causes of the propagation of Christianity. The Church first grew, and afterwards was organized. Indeed the more closely we examine the history of the Church, the more difficulty do we find in explaining the phenomena of its rise and progress, save on the hypothesis of its Divine origin.

Moreover it cannot be denied that from the very first days of Christianity, the Church has borne unflinching testimony to the great truth of the Resurrection.

1. The observance of the first day in the week instead of the seventh was a change of no small importance. Why was it made? To keep holy the Sabbath Day was with the Jew a matter of faith. To violate its sanctity was to place him in the category of the thief, the murderer or adulterer. In a short time all was

changed. Another day is substituted and takes the place of the old, commemorating a new event, and bringing in a new set of ideas. Such a revolution, amounting to an entire change of thought in the minds of the disciples, demands an adequate explanation. We can understand then keeping Friday, the day of their Master's death, as a day of sorrow and humiliation. But why should Sunday become the most honored day of all; not as a day of penitence and grief but as one of joy and triumph? Why has it from the beginning been called the Lord's Day? How is it that a set of Jews with all their Jewish prejudices came to make this momentous change? One fact, and one fact alone accounts for it, that on the Sunday Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and the deep conviction in the minds of the disciples which produced this change is a testimony stronger than any words to their belief in the Resurrection.

2. The two great Sacraments of the Church are also intimately interwoven with the belief in the Resurrection.

There is nothing more certain than that Baptism was from the beginning the means of initiation into the Christian Church, and Baptism preaches most eloquently the doctrine of the Resurrection. Take, for instance, a few passages from the Epistles of St. Paul:—

"Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should in a newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His Death, we shall be also in the likeness of His Resurrection."

"Buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath also raised Him from the dead."

"If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the Right Hand of God."

Here the convert is represented as going down into the grave with Christ, being buried with Him, and rising again in the power of the Resurrection. This is a very convincing proof that at the time St. Paul wrote his letters the Resurrection had been believed for many years. It would take some considerable time before the fact of the Resurrection could be applied

In this way to the spiritual life of the Christian. Nothing proclaims the faith of a people more powerfully than their public acts. An idea enshrined in some recognized rite or ceremony is guarded more carefully even than when expressed in actual words. Baptism certainly conveys the idea of the Resurrection in a most striking way, and it is, therefore, a standing witness to the faith of the Church.

3. The Holy Communion also is an act quite incomprehensible without a belief in the Resurrection. The rite is celebrated throughout the whole Christian world. Wherever there is a Christian church we find the Holy Communion occupying a place of peculiar honor. It must be remembered that this rite came into existence in comparatively modern times, and that it displaced the old systems of sacrificial worship, to which men adhered with such strange tenacity. If it is a rare thing for a new religion to meet with universal acceptance among races widely separated, it is still more rare to find the new system utterly abolishing the older forms of worship, which had met with the favor of the people. It is certainly a most remarkable fact, and one which goes far to prove the truth of Christianity, to find that, within a few years after the first preaching of the gospel, the heathen altars were abandoned, and the Holy Communion everywhere established in place of the former worship. Such an entire change challenges attention, and we are bound to offer some explanation of so strange a fact. Nothing, indeed, is more surprising than the calm and confident assurance in which Jesus Christ predicted the future triumph of the Society He was about to found. He never seemed to hesitate a moment, nor to be troubled with any doubts as to its ultimate success. He appointed officers, laid down laws and regulations and never appeared to entertain the slightest misgiving but that everything would be carried out according to His appointment. He instituted the Holy Communion, and said unto His disciples, "Do this in remembrance of Me." And the plan laid down by Jesus has been carried out. The Sacraments which He ordained have been administered in all ages of the Christian Church, and are being administered today. Is there any fact like this in history? Does it not stand quite alone as something altogether unparalleled? A

poor man, living in an obscure part of the world, declared that he would found a Society which should prevail against all opposition. He died a death of shame and ignominy, "despised and rejected," deserted in His greatest need by all His followers. And wonderful to say, His words came true. The Society began to grow within a few weeks of His death, has been growing ever since, and is growing today.

One fact, and one fact only, gives a rational and sufficient explanation, and that fact has ever been alleged by Christians as the one ground of their existence, the one source of their hope, viz: the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

X. ARE WE TO BELIEVE IN MIRACLES?

"Those who have followed the argument which I have hitherto traced in these lectures will remember that I have undertaken to give valid reasons for believing in the superhuman nature of Jesus, without assuming either the inspiration or authority of the Bible, or the certainty of His having wrought the miracles there recorded. I have waived all the doctrines of the Christian religion, and made my appeal to facts that cannot be denied or disputed. I have pointed to the character of Christ, and I have challenged any man to give a rational account of it, except on the ground of its reality, and of its being a copy of a superhuman original. I have cited the teaching of Christ, His stupendous plan and His unique and flawless ethical principles, another fact as undeniable as the light, and I have asked if these be not plainly beyond the reach of any mere human sage. I have appealed to the work of Christ in history, in society, in the church and in the individual soul; and I have urged that here, too, is a fact that defies explanation upon any other ground than this—that it was and is the action of a superhuman being, and I have examined the evidence for the resurrection of Christ. These are all undeniable facts, and they are intelligible only on the supposition of the superhumanity of Christ Himself.

There is only one way of evading the force of this argument, and that is by an "a priori" assumption that the superhuman is itself incredible, and therefore whatever may be the explanation of the marvellous facts to which I have appealed, we cannot accept the one suggested, because the superhuman, like the supernatural, is unbelievable." (McKim.)

Now, the discussion of this assumption brings up the whole question of miracles, because, though we do not put forward Christ's miracles as a proof of His divine character, yet after all He Himself, as a superhuman being, is a miracle; and if miracles are impossible or incredible, He is so also.

I have said that Christianity might be true even if the miracles recorded in the New Testament were not true. Yes; but it does not follow from this that the question of the miraculous is of secondary importance and does not affect the essence of the Christian religion. Christianity is indeed independent of the truth of any particular miracle, save only the Incarnation and the Resurrection; but it is not independent of the question of the possibility of miracles. On the contrary, that question touches the very heart and life of Christianity. If there be no miracle, then there is no Christianity, there is no Christ, for Christ is the greatest of miracles, and Christ is Christianity.

Yes, the evidence of miracles is all important. Many, indeed, turn away and reject Christianity simply because of the miracles with which it is linked, and which are interwoven with the life of the Christ and the earliest beginnings of His religion. It is often said no one believes in miracles now-a-days. If you have no other witness but this your case must surely fall to the ground. "Miracles do not happen," and certainly if the mere repetition of a phrase is sufficient to prove it, then the impossibility of miracles has been and again proved conclusively. For since those words were first penned by one of our modern philosophers they have been a pet expression of those who will not receive the evidence of the miraculous. They have been repeated "ad nauseam;" they have been dragged into so-called religious novels, lioped by silly talkers, written down by grave philosophers, lightly appropriated by the many shallow minds who borrow the ideas of others, and so save themselves the trouble of thinking, if, indeed; they possess the faculty."

"If miracles are impossible, or at least incredible, then there is no revelation of God to man; for it, too, is a miracle. Nor is even this the whole result of that denial. There is, in that case, no personal God, for a God who is shut out of His own world is no God, since He cannot, by this

supposition, intervene for the help of His children, if He will. He may be a great artificer, a great mechanic, but He is not the omnipotent One. Nay, logically, we must go further even than this, and deny the Creation; for, if a miracle is impossible, how can we believe that the visible universe was created? When there was no universe, was not its coming into being a miracle? Will any man pretend that any one, or all, of the laws or forces of nature is enough to account for the origin of the universe? Was it natural or supernatural that this great universe (or the seeds and germs of it, if you prefer) should come into existence?

But most of all, if miracles be incredible, if God's hands are tied so that He cannot intervene in the processes of nature, or the evolution of history, then there is no living God who can hear and help us when we cry to Him. We may pray, but no Almighty arm can be stretched out for our deliverance in response to our prayer. We are caught in the coil of an iron chain of necessary causes and effects. We are not the free sons of a loving Father, but the slaves of an adamant fate. Nay, we are orphans in a fatherless world. (McKin)

I. It is claimed that a miracle is impossible because it is a violation of the laws of nature. But let us ask, what is meant by violating nature's laws. It means that "a different result is produced from the same cause." As if, for instance, a stone were thrown up into the air, and remained stationary, or as if the water from an up-turned glass were arrested in the air as it fell, no force but the law of gravitation being supposed to be in operation. But are any of the miracles of the Christ such a violation of law?

What is a miracle? It is a lower law suspended by a higher. And who shall say this cannot be? To say so were to contradict daily experience. For instance, we can, we do continually counteract the great law of gravity by a higher. You can throw a stone upward, and for a time, at any rate, it seems to go against and violate the law of gravitation, or you can catch the stone as it falls, and arrest the working of that law; and all this is done, not by the violation of a law, but by the introduction of a superior law, the law of your own will, the law of volition, by which the law of gravitation is arrested or hindered. Again, man modifies the operation of the

laws of nature changes the order of physical nature—does in a word the very thing we are told God cannot do! He turns a wilderness into a garden—cuts a canal through the isthmus of Suez—drains a marsh and makes a fruitful field and a healthy instead of sickly dwelling place. In all these cases he interferes with the result of natural law; but he does not violate nature's laws—he does not even suspend them. And if man can do this by an act of will, are we really prepared to say that God cannot? Nay, if God be a personal God we must give Him the attributes of personality. We must allow that He is an intelligent Being, yea, that He has absolute freedom of will. To deny this would be fatal to the conception of God. Man can suspend and vary at his pleasure the laws of nature. To deny God a similar power would be to make man greater than God, and to say with Strauss that there is no God but man, God may conceivably perform a miracle by using one force of nature to overcome another; or He may accomplish the result by a direct act of His omnipotent will. But in any case the order of nature is not violated, the harmony of the kosmos is not disturbed, there is no rent in the universe, but on the contrary, there is a healing of a breach, a restoration of lost order effected by means of a miracle.

II. But Hume, that celebrated skeptic of the last century, declared that miracles were impossible, because they were, "contrary to all experience." The objection is specious, but untenable. It has been overthrown repeatedly by the progress of physical science. Let us take one or two examples. Alternate generation, which occurs in some of the lower orders of animal life—the jelly fish, for instance, begets a hydroid. This hydroid is an entirely different organism to its parent, and yet in its turn begets a jelly fish, thus the grandchild resembles its grandparent, and the hydroid is produced through a generation of jelly fishes into a hydroid again. Hermaphroditism, i. e., the same animal or plant uniting in itself the sexual characters of both the male and female, which is now discovered to exist normally in many in vertebrate animals. Fertilization per saltum, for several generations. All these are scientific facts, yet are opposed to the inductions of experience down to our own time. Suppose Hume

had been told that there were creatures which at pleasure threw off a limb, that this limb forthwith began an independent existence, and by and by impregnated a female of the same species, he would have refuted the story at once by his destructive formula against miracles. It was contrary to all experience down to his time. It is now proved by such evidence as would have satisfied Hume himself. But the point is that it was as true when Hume wrote as it is now. Yet his argument then would have disproved it absolutely, and would even have forbidden enquiry. In like manner we may hereafter be able to perceive that a miracle is as susceptible of explanation as some of those secrets of nature which would have appeared miraculous to our forefathers. We must always remember that our knowledge of the forces of nature is extremely limited a fact which the progress of physical science makes more manifest every year. "There is always a possibility," as the late Prof. Jevons observes, "of causes being in existence without our knowledge, and these may at any time produce an unexpected effect," and he gives the following illustration: "We can imagine reasoning creatures dwelling in a world where the atmosphere was a mixture of oxygen and inflammable gas, like the fire-damp of coal mines. If devoid of fire, they might have lived on for long ages in complete unconsciousness of the tremendous forces which a simple spark could call into play. In the twinkling of an eye new laws might have come into action, and the poor reasoning creatures, who were so confident of their knowledge of the uniform conditions of their world, might have had no time to speculate upon the overthrow of all their theories, caused by that little spark. Can we, with our finite knowledge, be sure that such an overthrow of our theories is impossible." (Principles of science.)

III. Again, "belief in miracles has been supposed by some to be incompatible with the acceptance of the doctrine of evolution. Yet the simple truth is that the doctrine of evolution has sapped the ordinary scientific position of the denier of miracles. For the doctrine of evolution implies that the creator of the universe is energetically present through all the operations of nature. If this world were a machine set going for a certain period of time the result would be constant

and invariable effects following from constant mechanical causes. But evolution has to do with living forms, and these are, *ex hypothesi*; infinitely variable. Granting that protoplasm is chemically the same in the germ cell of a man and of a fish, of an elephant, of a worm, of an oak tree, of an eagle, of a palm, this only makes it all the more certain that a presiding mind directs and shapes the very different results, since these embryos indistinguishable from each other under the highest powers of the microscope, or when analysed by the chemist with all the appliances of his laboratory, in one case develop into a man, in another into a fish, or an elephant, or a worm, or an oak tree, or an eagle, or a palm. But if we admit that a Supreme mind is behind the network of nature, directing and controlling her forces, we shall recognize that a miracle is only an instance of the same control charged with a more manifest purpose. The will of God, acting on brute matter and compelling its obedience, is not different in kind from the will of man energizing through the material organisms of the body; and the one is no more than the other a violation or suspension of physical law. If the process by which the loaves were multiplied, or by which Lazarus was restored to life, were laid bare, a man of science might be able to correlate it with the partially revealed processes which are daily going on in the laboratory of nature. In short, scientific objection to miracles, if we are to use language with strict accuracy, there can be none; and men of science themselves, who are not wedded to a foregone conclusion, are foremost in making the admission. Dr. Carpenter, for example, in his assault on miracles, on the ground of "fallacies of testimony," makes the following admission: "I am not conscious of any such scientific prepossession against miracles as would prevent me from accepting them as facts, if trustworthy evidence of their reality could be adduced. The question with me, therefore, is simply: Have we any adequate historical ground for the belief that such a departure has ever taken place."

Since, then, it is admitted that there can be no antecedent objection to miracles upon scientific grounds, we must admit that miracles are possible. Let us now go a step farther and inquire, are they probable? And here I would use the same

argument as in my third lecture of this series, wherein we considered the probability of God revealing Himself to mankind. It is the highest degree improbable that the Creator of the Universe should reveal Himself beyond what He has done in nature, unless there were some very adequate cause for such revelation, just as it is the highest degree improbable that the Dominion Government should send us shiploads of provisions and clothing free of charge in our present condition. But just as we should expect the Government to send us aid if we were in a starving and penniless condition, through some calamity, such as a fire like that which destroyed St. John's a few years ago—so we expect God, whom we believe to be benevolent and loving, to reveal Himself to us, since it is evident that the world is not in its natural state. "Disorder—destitution is as plainly written upon the face of society and upon the moral state of the individual man as order is upon the face of nature. Sin is here! Whoever ignores this tragic, tremendous fact can have no approach to a true reading of the state of the world. Its blighting touch, its circean breath, its destroying hand, are everywhere upon the body, upon the soul, upon society, upon the world itself. It has broken the harmony and unity of the world. It has violated the integrity of nature. It has made awful discord in the anthem of creation."

I hold then that an interposition in favor of mankind would be in the highest degree reasonable. It would be a denial of Himself if God did not intervene. But this intervention, in what ever way made would of necessity be miraculous. It would be a manifestation of God for a special purpose, and in a special form. I have shown satisfactorily I think, that Jesus Christ is such a revelation. But He was not a Messiah, such as the Jews expected. They looked for one who would deliver their land and free them from their conquerors. But instead thereof He spoke of a spiritual kingdom and told of heavenly promises. And as men looked upon Him they wanted to know where were his credentials. "What sign showest thou?" What dost thou wish?

But, you say, were not His character and His teaching enough? Nay, they might be for us, but not for them. In those early

days many among men knew but little of His character and heard only a few of His words. There was need of other credentials, plainer and more striking, to support the claims which Jesus made. We need them not. The miracles of Christ were like the bells of the church that ring before the service begins and call men by their music to come and worship. But the bells cease when the congregation has assembled, and the act of worship commenced. And so we say that it was to be expected that a supernatural revelation, brought by a supernatural teacher, should, in the absence of all earthly power and greatness, be accompanied by supernatural signs, to attest the truth of the messenger and of the message He delivered unto men. If then, miracles are not only possible, but probable, the only remaining question for us to ask is, have we any satisfactory evidence that they have occurred? I have asserted, and I think not without cause, that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is, historically, a most certain fact. This Resurrection was itself a miracle, and if we can accept this as true, it were utterly illogical for us to disbelieve the other miracles which our Saviour worked. He who could raise Himself from the dead could surely still the tempest, feed the hungry, and heal the sick. But lest, by saying this, we should appear to be shirking inquiry into the marvels of Christ as reported in the gospels, let us see what evidence there is in their favor. You will observe that I do not, and have not, alleged these miracles in proof of the divine mission of Jesus. If He wrought miracles (as we believe) then they were credentials of His mission to those who witnessed them. But for us they have not the same evidential power because of the lapse of time and the long and complicated chain of evidence necessary to establish their occurrence. To us the long ages of Christian history are the credentials of His mission. These convince us, (not the miracles) that Jesus was the Christ."

First, I would have you bear in mind that the miracles of Christ, like the other witnesses we have called, are well authenticated facts, for they were worked in public, in the presence of men, before His foes as well as His friends. They were not done in a corner - in the sight of a few chosen followers, who were ready to ac-

cept anything but in the full light of day.

They are facts, for they are related by the writers of the four Gospels, in two of which, even that learned French infidel, Renan, admits we have the personal reminiscences of eye witnesses. And it is important for us to remember, in these days when we hear so much about the value of testimony, that once evidence is written down it is not affected by the lapse of time, but is just as conclusive thousands of years afterwards as it was in the days when it was first promulgated.

They are facts, for they were proclaimed far and wide at the time and in the country where they were alleged to have been worked, and could easily have been contradicted and disproved. They are facts which His Disciples believed in, and who were so likely to know as they?

They are facts, for even His enemies admitted their reality. The Jews did not deny them, but said He did them by Satanic influence. The heathen opponents of the Christ, while they maintained that they were worked by magic power, never thought of doubting the veracity of those who related them. In the Rabbinical writings it is implied that Jesus of Nazareth did many mighty works, while Celsus the heathen acknowledges that Jesus wrought miracles.

Secondly, the miracles of Christ are to be expected. They were the natural accompaniments of His mission of love; - the embodiment of His character and word, in harmony with all else we are told of Him. They were perfectly natural and ordinary in Him, they were His powers or faculties, His capacities, just as sight and speech are ours. The healing of the sick, giving sight to the blind, the raising of the dead - things entirely beyond the reach of our powers, yet lay entirely within the compass of our Lord's capacities, and were in accordance with the laws of His nature. They were just such acts as might be expected of Him, like the kind deeds of the wealthy, or the good advice of the wise.

Thirdly, the miracles of Christ are unique. No other religion was ever founded upon miracles, as was Christianity. Mahomet disclaimed the power of working miracles, and in his, as in other false religions, miracles are only worked in the presence of those whose minds have been prepared and trained to

accept them. But from the very first Jesus proposed to work them, and that He so proposed is the best attested part of His whole History.

They are unique, for while it is true that history is full of stories of wonderful deeds, there have scarce y anything except name in common with the miracles of Christ. There is a plan, a method, a purpose, a simple grandeur in these which can be found nowhere else. Compare for instance, the apocryphal stories of Jesus in the past, and the most prejudiced observer must admit how vast is the difference between the miracles of Christ and these.

So far, then, as the essence of Christianity is concerned, it is of comparatively small moment whether you are able to believe this or that particular miracle, but it is absolutely illogical and unreasonable—yes, I dare to say, also unscientific—to disbelieve that Christ worked miracles, if you believe that there was such a Being as we have found Him to be. Faith in the supernatural Christ carries with it faith in the miracles He wrought. We hold this faith with the aristocracy of the world's thinkers, and we hold it without prejudice to our faith in the splendid achievements of modern science in all its departments of investigation.

XI. SUMMARY.

For the past few Sundays, we have been examining the evidence for and against the truth of Christianity; and now I must bring this course of lectures to a close. But before doing so I ask you to go over the ground with me once more and review as briefly as possible the various arguments which have been adduced in proof of our contention that Jesus Christ is a Revelation from God.

Our first task was to answer the all important question "Is there a God?", and in doing this we brought forward four arguments which the greatest minds in Christendom have considered conclusive; and which have, for the most part, been acknowledged valid and reasonable by the leading agnostics of the day.

I. Our first argument was from "the general consent in that belief." All nations in every part of the world, throughout all time, have believed in a Supreme Deity. And it has always been held that universal testimony may be accepted as evidence of the natural intuition of mankind. "That which all men affirm cannot be false," is an axiom of philosophy. Therefore we conclude that when Nature leads us to believe that God exists, God does exist. Atheism is the most profound

anomaly, because it refuses to recognize one of human nature's most imperious instincts. Either we must believe in God, and so reconcile common sense with our natural instinct, or we must deny God, repudiate the universal testimony of man, and reject natural instinct. We must, in fact, believe in God, or cease to be called men. Some will, however, observe: "If belief in God is a characteristic essentially distinctive of man, how is it that atheists exist?" But do you really believe that atheists exist, as some pretend to teach? Do not the efforts which these people make to convince themselves of the non-existence of God, sufficiently prove to you that they are subject to the power of God? An ancient poet asked a philosopher: "Dost thou believe in the existence of the Gods?" And the philosopher replied: "I believe it, and the proof is that I hate them." How many similar atheists there are at the present day who think to become popular by the very novelty of their negation.

II. Our second argument was from "Effect to Cause." There is no law more universal than this, every effect must have a cause. We cannot begin to imagine the very humblest and meanest effect without a cause. And that this argument is admitted as sound by our opponents, is shown by the following words of Herbert Spencer, one of the ablest and most candid of agnostic teachers: "Respecting the nature of the universe, we seem committed to certain unavoidable conclusions. The objects and actions surrounding us, not less than the phenomena of our own consciousness, compel us to ask a cause; in our search for a cause we discover no resting place until we arrive at the hypothesis of a first cause; and we have no alternative but to regard this first cause as Infinite and Absolute."

III. Our third argument was from Design, as seen first of all in the Order of the Universe and then in its adaptations. "One of the first things that must strike a reflective mind, in surveying this world in which we live, is the prevalence in it of order. Now, order implies mind, not merely power, you may have power without order, without any evidence of mind, you have power in the earthquake, in the volcano, in the tempest which dashes the waves of the ocean against the rocks and engulfs the passing ships, you have power but not order, and so far no evidence of mind. But what you have in the world around you is not power only—although you have that in abundance—but order, which implies mind. Suppose you found a quantity of printers' type lying upon the ground in confusion, that would not suggest any order or presiding mind. But if you found the letters in regular arrangement, forming words, and the words forming sentences, and sentences conveying intelligent

Ideas, then your reason would force you to the conclusion that such order implied mind. Look at the regularity of the seasons, the movements of the planets in their orbits, look at nature's arrangement of colors combining utility with beauty. We observe order and design throughout the whole universe, and order and design imply mind so evidently that that our reason refuses to associate them with any cause short of mind. To suppose the contrary would be like supposing some vast cathedral could have been designed by a jelly fish, or that Handel's "Messiah" could have been composed by an accidental combination of sounds." Nor is this argument upset by the widely accepted theory of evolution, since without the hypothesis of a presiding mind directing its processes, the doctrine of Evolution is a greater mystery than that of special creations. John Stuart Mill and David Hume, both confessed the validity of this argument

IV. Our fourth argument was from "The Moral Nature of Man." Conscience exists in all of us. It comes to us, and speaks to us in defiance of our will, when the will is set against hearing it, and still more against obeying it; when the will is bent on stifling and drowning its voice. It warns, threatens, punishes us, against the will and with a voice of authority, as the delegate or deputy of a perfectly good and holy will. Whose is this perfect authoritative, supreme will to which all consciences, even the most erring, point back? Whose if not God's? We have a conscience which does not counsel, but which commands us to do what is right, and to resist what is wrong, and this consciousness is a delusion, this conscience a false witness, unless there be a God on whom we morally depend, and who is our Holy Creator and our Judge. Each of those arguments offers reasonable testimony that God exists. Taken altogether, their evidence is overwhelming, and has all the force of a demonstration. We, therefore, have no hesitation in declaring to all the world our assent to the universal creed of man, "I believe in God."

Our next task was to show that it was in the highest degree probable that this God should reveal Himself to mankind in addition to that revelation He had already made in His various creative and providential acts. And here we crossed swords with another class of antagonist. The existence of God is only denied by Atheists, (a very small section of unbelievers). Agnostics freely admit that there is a God, a First Cause, an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed, but they declare that He is unknowable, and reject the idea of revelation as in the highest degree improbable. They contend, that having organised the universe, either by evolution

or by direct creation, He has nothing more to do with it. It is governed by fixed and unalterable laws whose sway extends throughout the illimitable extent of the universe, blinding alike the smallest atom and the mightiest planet, and with which the Creator cannot interfere. In a word, all things through all ages seem bound with a chain of physical necessity by the law of cause and effect.

It therefore devolved upon us to produce evidence to show why we should expect God to reveal Himself to us. Acknowledging that abstractedly it may be very difficult to believe in supernatural interference with the ordinary affairs of the universe, and that it would require an overwhelming amount of evidence to prove their reality; we still contended that the depraved state of mankind—the presence of evil everywhere—the vast amount of suffering which abounds in innocent and guilty alike—the failure of past experience to provide an adequate cure—the hopelessness of eradication in the future (all of which, and much more is acknowledged by John S. Mill in his posthumous essays) rendered it more than highly probable that if there be a God who contemplates man with feelings of benevolence, He would make some interposition in his favour, and we illustrated this as follows: It is beyond reason, in our present state in this city, to expect other cities in England, Canada or the United States, to send us pecuniary aid; but if a fire destroyed our town—if a flood swept away our dwellings—if a pestilence decimated our population, our case would be entirely altered, that not only would foreign assistance be looked for—it would be unprecedented if it were not given.

We then asserted that not only was it probable that God should reveal Himself to man in His state of destitution, but that He had done so in the person of Jesus Christ, and in proof of our assertion, we brought forward the uniqueness of the Character and the Teaching and the Work of this Christ. In setting forth these we made no appeal to Scripture as inspired or infallible. We took the gospels at the value set upon them by the most learned and critical agnostics, that they were independent accounts, written at latest within seventy or eighty years of our Lord's death, and that they were reliable so far as they related the principal facts of the life of Christ, when these facts were not miraculous.

The Character of Christ stands out unique, towering above all in its solitary grandeur, and all thoughtful students of history—the foes as well as the friends of Christianity—have done homage to its beauty and force. It is unique in the absolute purity of His childhood:—No other great character of history is so described. It is unique in its innocence combined with its matchless force, unflinching courage and

unconquerable purpose. These characteristics are not united in the rest of mankind. It is unique in its absence of all consciousness of sin. Who else has dared to issue this challenge, unanswered for eighteen centuries, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" It is unique in its perfect humility, conjoined with most amazing pretensions which would imply unequalled arrogance in any other man. It is unique in its concentration of all virtues. In other men's characters you may see some virtue like this or that prismatic colour, but if you would find them all combined and harmonized, then you must look for them in the perfect example of Christ. In Him all virtues are exquisitely balanced. You can find no flaw, no inconsistency. As the judge who condemned Him to death, had to declare, "I find no fault in this Man," so eminent unbelievers have given their testimony in His favor. Renan calls him "the moral chief of humanity." John Stuart Mill describes Him as "the ideal representative and guide of men," the author of Supernatural Religion tells us that in the Christ we have, "the rare spectacle of a life uniformly noble and consistent with its own lofty principles." Channing, the great, if not the greatest Unitarian, writes: "I know nothing so sublime."

And yet they say he is only a man. "Only a man, and yet perfect!" Nay, it is impossible from the very facts of the case. Such a statement confutes itself. It shatters His perfection. For what becomes of His own claim? He not only allowed His disciples to think and say that in His Divinity lay the secret of His Character, not only so taught that His enemies thought this was what He meant, "For a good work we stone Thee not, but because Thou madest Thyself equal with God," but also claimed it for Himself, for when challenged, "Art Thou the Son of God?" He answered, "I am." "If then, this be not true, He cannot be perfect. He is deceived or deceiving, an imposter or a madman, for who so mad as the man who is mistaken as to His own personality?" Therefore, Christ must be Divine.

The teaching of Christ is unique, and plainly transcends the bounds of human conception. It is unique in its purpose to establish a world-wide kingdom on this earth in the minds and hearts of mankind—not only during His own life, but until the end of the world should come. No other conqueror or leader ever conceived such an idea. It is unique in that it satisfies all the higher aspirations of man, since it tells us as no other religion has done, first, whence we came. Secondly, How to obtain freedom from the sense of guilt under which man's conscience universally labours. Thirdly, Where to look for a perfect ideal of moral rectitude. Fourthly, What destiny awaits us

beyond the grave? It is unique in its astounding claims. "Again and again our Lord asserts His Divinity. Take only the first three gospels if you will, and what do we find? He is David's Lord; God is His Father in a unique sense; He will save the world; He will raise the dead; He will judge the nations; He promises a perpetual presence of Himself to His people, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." "All power is given to Him in heaven and earth." What do these words mean? Nothing at all, says the unbeliever.

But what did the early Christians think they meant? They died in defence of the meaning they found in them. How did the foes of Christ understand them? They condemned Him to death because He was guilty of blasphemy, in that He made Himself equal with God, and sooner than undeceive them He died upon the cross."

"There is but one alternative. Either Jesus is what He said He was, and His teaching true and wise, and catholic, and authoritative, or He is not what He said He was, and His teaching is not true, but false, not wise, but wildest raving, not catholic, but cruelly deceptive, not adapted to men's needs, but mocking those who think to find help in them, not authoritative, but grossest self-assertion.

What, then, becomes of His character? If His teaching is such as the deniers of His divinity would have us believe, then because "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," He cannot be the beautiful ideal foe as well as friends allow him to be, and His character is shattered to pieces. Reject his teaching and all is hopeless confusion. Therefore Christ must be divine.

The work of Christ is unique. Unique in its triumphant progress from the first centuries of our era until now. Persecution, torture, death could not check it. It won its way, gradually but surely, until kingdoms and empires acknowledged its sublime rule; and since it is absurd to suppose that a handful of Galilean peasants should have been able, in the course of a few years, to spread this, their religion, over most parts of the then known earth in opposition to the interests, pleasures, ambitions, prejudices and even reason of mankind; to have triumphed over the power of princes, the intrigues of states, the force of customs, the blindness of zeal, the influence of priests, the arguments of orators, and the philosophy of the world, without any supernatural assistance, therefore, Christ, its founder, must be divine.

The work of Christ is unique in the social reforms it accomplished, in ameliorating the condition of the wife, the slave, the child, the masses, the sick, the helpless and the captive. In this it stands alone, without peer and with-

out rival. It is unique in its power over individual souls—its power of personal renovation of character. Other philosophers despaired of the world. They gathered about them a few chosen disciples, to whom they made known the arcana of wisdom, which were too precious to be revealed to the many. They shook their heads at the misery and ignorance and men, and confessed that they could do nothing to help them. But none are so fallen, so degraded, so wretched, but the work of Christ may reclaim them. All this is so stupendous that enlightened reason must refuse to believe that it could have proceeded from any merely human source. Therefore, Christ must be divine.

After appealing to the character, the teaching and the work of Christ to prove that He was a revelation from God, our next point was to establish the fact of the Resurrection of this Christ; and this brought us into opposition with still another class of unbelievers, viz., the so-called Rationalists, who, while accepting our Lord as a model man, and divinely inspired, and receiving the Bible in a certain sense as the Word of God, yet reject, as unworthy of credit, all that is miraculous in it, and, consequently, deny that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day.

In discussing this question, we again met our opponents on their own ground, and adduced as evidence only those first four Epistles of St. Paul's, which, after the most merciless criticism, have been admitted by almost all learned unbelievers to be written by that apostle within twenty or thirty years after the crucifixion. We pointed out that incidental allusions to history contained in correspondence was, as a rule, more reliable than an ordinary history, since it was likely to be without bias.

In these letters the Apostle makes twenty-five or thirty references, direct or indirect, to the Resurrection, and not only asserts that it was a fact, but declares that Jesus had been seen on six different occasions after He had risen from the dead, and on one of these occasions five hundred brethren were present, of whom the greater part were still alive at the time of his writing. Now the veracity of St. Paul and the other apostles is unquestioned. No one has dared to say that they intentionally deceived their converts. The only explanation that can be put forward to refute their solemn declarations is that they were themselves deceived.

Two theories have been propounded by unbelievers in proof of this. The first is called the vision theory, which is that the disciples, anxiously expecting their Master to rise again, took the word of an excitable and enthusiastic woman, who declared that she had seen Him. This theory is disposed of by the testimony

of St. Paul, that Jesus appeared repeatedly not only to one disciple at a time, but to numbers assembled together, and there was no more likelihood of them all being deceived than there would be of our being deceived if some person well known to us, who had died a short time ago, should appear in this church now and hold converse with us. Again, if it were only a vision the disciples saw, why did not the Jews produce the body of Jesus, which must still have remained in the tomb, and so prove once and for all the falsity of the reported resurrection. If, on the other hand, the disciples had the body, they could not possibly have been deceived as to the facts of the case, but were deceivers of the worst sort, which even sceptics deny.

The second theory is called the "Swoon Theory," which supposes that Christ did not really die, but fainted away, and after awhile revived, crept from the tomb and returned to His followers. The absurdity of this is evident when we consider the appearance the victim would present after the scourging, the loss of blood, the agony of crucifixion which had been endured by Him. Christ could not have thus deceived His disciples even if he had desired to do so. And surely it requires greater credulity to believe these explanations than it does to believe the actual resurrection—greater faith to be an infidel than it does to be a Christian.

"To anyone who considers the matter dispassionately," (says Canon Maccoll) "the resurrection of Christ will appear to rest on evidence as irrefragable as the assassination of Julius Cæsar. In neither case is mathematical proof possible, nor would it in either case be reasonable to demand it, Christianity is not a speculative philosophy, but a religion for the guidance of human conduct and the regeneration of human nature; and it certainly demands faith in its professors. But what practical system that has to do with conduct does not? Trace to its last analysis the evidence on which repose the sanctities of domestic life, the inheritance of property, the right of our gracious Queen to the throne which she adorns, and you will find yourselves brought to bay by an objection which is from a legal point of view unanswerable, namely that the evidence is of a kind which cannot be tested. The whole edifice rests in every case on the unconfirmed veracity of a single woman. Yes! the right to every title and property in the land rests on no

other foundation than our belief in the charity and truthfulness of the mothers of England. So true is it as Bishop Butler says, that "probability is the guide of life." The probability for the Resurrection of Christ is historically so overwhelming that much more is needed to upset it than guess-work theories, for the most part mutually destructive, which have been directed against it during its long and diversified career."

We further demonstrated that the existence of Christianity with its marvellous history and beneficent influence on mankind, was a standing attestation of the Resurrection of Jesus. Rob it of its miraculous origin, and Christianity itself becomes a miracle which has to be accounted for. It stands absolutely alone in the history of religions. Putting aside other considerations of great importance, the whole organization of Christianity, its sacraments, its discipline, its ritual, are all based upon belief in our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension as fundamental facts and theological axioms. Abolish belief in the Resurrection and the Church becomes an effect without a cause, therefore those who reject the Resurrection are bound to explain the genesis of the Christian Church, which so far they have been unable to do.

Lastly, we considered the question of miracles. We examined the objections raised by unbelievers, and discovered that they were not valid, since miracles do not violate the laws of nature; nor is there any scientific impossibility to their taking place; and Hume's plea that "they are contrary to all experiences," proves too much and defeats its own end, and Archdeacon Farrar is right when he says that "the logical consistency of Hume's conclusion has been shattered to pieces by a host of writers as well sceptical as Christian." "People talk about the incredibility of miracles. What miracle can be compared to that of the creation, however you view it? The wonderful thing is not that there should be an occasional counteraction of the ordinary movements of natural forces, but that these forces should have come into existence. The great miracle is the beginning of things. Once admit that, as the constitution of the human mind obliges us to do, and the question of miracles becomes a mere question of evidence; antecedent objection there can be none. The Being who made the universe

is necessarily free to be manipulate its processes at His discretion; and to doubt either His ability to do so, or His willingness for adequate reasons, is an impertinence on the part of men.

XII. CONCLUSION.

This then is the evidence we have brought forward, in these lectures, in defence of the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Far away in distant Galilee, more than eighteen hundred years ago, a humble carpenter asked His little band of followers—poor peasants and fishermen—"Whom say men that I, the Son of Man, am?" And they replied, "some say Thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias or one of the prophets." "But whom say ye that I am?" asked the Master again. The answer was clear and decisive. It was spoken by one, but acquiesced in by all, and was at once the recognition of the supernatural in Him they called Rabbi, and the declaration of the only explanation of it, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The question was a crucial one in the day when it was first asked on the coasts of Caesarea Philippi. But it is also a far-reaching one. Since that day it has never ceased to be asked. It has sounded on and on to the heart and conscience, the reason and faith of men and women. Jesus has asked it of every generation of men who have lived upon this earth—asked it by His Birth, by His Character, by His Teaching, by His Works, by His Life, by His Death, by His Resurrection, by His Ascension, by the growth of the Religion and the progress of the Church called by His Name. Yes, the question has come to men again and again. It is a question which has only been hushed into silence when indifference to all that is pure, and true and holy has overspread the earth. But as soon as men have awakened from their stupor of ignorance or superstition, and the life of thought has asserted itself, again the question has ever insisted on being heard, refusing to be stifled—heard distinctly and clearly as if the questioner Himself stood once more in visible form among men, and calling them around Him, asked, "Whom say ye that I am?"

It is strange as we look back into the past to find how this question has occupied the thoughts of humanity. Successions of men have come and gone, but the question has never ceased to be heard. The conflict with Christianity has passed through many phases. Now Judaism has been its adversary and tried to overthrow it; now it has wrestled with the superstition of heathenism; now the shafts of philosophy have endeavored to stay its onward advance; now infidelity and the Christian faith have met in deadly combat. But through all these phases of the warfare the

question has been asked by men, almost as if against their will, a question which must be answered.

But while the answers have been many and various—many of them but echoes of the answers of the men who lived in the days of the Christ—the answers of those who have tried to explain, or explain away what they could not understand—the answer of Christendom has all along been one and the same. In her creeds, in the decisions of her great councils, in the writings of her recognized leaders, it sounds forth clear and distinct, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Ridgeway.)

But perhaps you say, while it is true that Christendom has answered thus, it is equally true that many learned men throughout the ages have answered quite differently. And how comes it that so many brilliant scholars, so many intellectual giants have refused to acknowledge the Divinity of Jesus Christ? I have only time now to offer a few hurried explanations which you may think out for yourselves.

In the first place is it a fact that such a number of deep thinkers are unbelievers? We hear of those who are, for the matter is blazoned abroad by their followers; but if we could take a census of the cream of intellectual thought in the present day, I am sure we should find an overwhelming majority in favour of Christianity. Has not the Church of England her scientists, her philosophers, her theologians? Does not the Eastern Church contribute her share? Do we not find them among the Roman Catholics and the various protestant bodies.

Again, a man may be a wise philosopher or a great astronomer—a brilliant lawyer or a keen financier—a successful general or a clever writer and yet have given very little attention to the study of the fundamental truths of Christianity. Yet because of his intellectual attainments in his own profession, he gets the credit for deep research in theological matters when perhaps he has dismissed the whole affair after the most superficial enquiry. But you reply, those eminent men you have so frequently quoted in these lectures, Mill, Renan, Strauss, Hume, Ewald, Channing, Huxley and others. What of them? They surely have studied the subject deeply? While refraining from all judgment of individuals, it is permissible, I think to suggest certain causes which may result in confirmed and hostile unbelief.

I. Often the blame has been, not so much on the side of the doubter, as on the side of the professing Christian. False and harsh views have been taught which have caused men to revolt from the recognized forms of religious belief, and often where the teaching has

been correct, the life has been inconsistent. If Christ were preached in all His grace and power, and men and women professing His name did but live His life, there would be less scepticism in regard to Christianity.

II. *God blindness.*—An inability to discern spiritual things; just as some people are afflicted with color blindness, and while perfectly clear sighted with regard to everything else, cannot distinguish one color from another. We know that there are brilliant classical scholars who are unable to do the simplest sum in arithmetic correctly, while clever mathematicians often appear incapable of learning languages. This we do not consider a merit but a defect. May not a defect exist in some men with regard to spiritual matters.

III. *The dwelling upon and enlarging of minor difficulties.*—The geologist considers that the Pentateuch contradicts the revelation of the Rocks—the astronomer that it does not tally with modern discoveries in his science—the evolutionist that it is opposed to his theories and therefore must be wrong—Hebrew scholars question the authorship of the various books of the Old Testament—scientists are inclined to disbelieve in miracles; and from these difficulties they work upward until at length they come to deny the Divinity of Christ. Now, as was pointed out in one of these lectures, the truth or falsity of Christianity is not bound up with any of these or similar questions. The all important point is "what think ye of Christ?" Was He superhuman? Was He God manifest in the flesh? This is the first matter to be decided, and if it is decided in the negative the Christian Religion is destroyed down to its very foundation and beyond hope of restoration. Inspiration, prophecy, miracles all come to naught in the general collapse; and the discussion of these questions is rendered useless by the overthrow of the Corner Stone—the Rock on which our Faith is built—the Godhead of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But if it is decided in the affirmative then it will help to explain many difficulties before incomprehensible. Other difficulties will doubtless remain, for we cannot know all things here, "we see through a glass darkly," but some day all mysteries will be cleared up, and "we shall know even as we are known." Until that time comes, let us say in all faith, when doubts or difficulties assail us, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and therefore I will wait patiently and confidently the explanation of all that I cannot understand now." If this were done there would be very few agnostics in the world.

IV. *Bias.*—If a man is convinced that he is right and sets to work to prove his convictions, he is very liable to ignore or belittle all evidence not favourable to his case. This, of

course, may apply to Christians as well as unbelievers, only we are the defenders of a faith handed down from our forefathers, we do not seek to destroy it. A person who studies the Bible with the express purpose of finding difficulties and contradictions, will surely not be disappointed. I believe that humanly speaking it is impossible to derive any good from the reading of the Scriptures unless the heart is right towards God, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

V. *Resistance of Grace.*—Man is a perfectly free agent. It is quite possible for any man however learned, to resist the grace of God, to wilfully shut his eyes to the truth, to be puffed up with the pride of intellect, to harden his heart against revelation, to declare with the Jews of old, except I see signs and wonders, I will not believe. And because these receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved, God sends them strong delusions that they should believe a lie.

And I would point out to you in connection with this matter that learned unbelievers differ quite as much with each other as they do with Christians. If it could be said with truth, here are large numbers of the deepest thinkers of the age, who all following the same line of argument come to the same conclusion concerning Christianity and its Founder, then there would be a strong case against us. But it is not so. The leading scientists disagree in their reasons and are continually at war with one another. Whether there is a First Cause. Whether this First Cause is intelligent; whether man was created or evolved. What sort of evidence is conclusive. What is the age of the earth. When and by whom the Books of the Bible were written. These and similar questions are constant causes of contention among them. I have illustrated this, to some extent in these lectures. For instance, Hume says "a miracle is impossible because it is contrary to all experience." J. S. Mill replies "this statement is worth nothing since it only means that you cannot prove a miracle to a person who does not believe in a Being with supernatural powers." Strauss says "a miracle would be a rent in the world." Dr. Carpenter declares "I am not conscious of any such scientific prepossession against miracles, as would prevent me from accepting them as facts, if trustworthy evidence of their reality could be adduced." Huxley maintains that Jesus did not die upon the cross, but only swooned away. Strauss scornfully asserts, "Such a return to life could but have served to weaken the impressions which Jesus had in His former life made upon the disciples' minds

Or take an example in Biblical criticism. Philological and historical critics have declared that the last six chapters of the Book of Zechariah were not written by the prophet whose name they bear; and these superior intellects proceed to settle the date of the writing of these disputed chapters, with the result that during the last century forty-four different dates have been given, varying from 772 B. C., to 330 B. C., or 442 years. Each writer produces, as he thinks, proof that his date and no other is correct. Yet criticism which reels to and fro in a period of nearly 500 years, and this on historical and philological grounds, certainly has come to no definite basis either as to history or philology. Rather, it has enslaved both to preconceive opinions, and at last, as late a result as any has been, after this weary round, to go back to where it started from, and to suppose these chapters to have been written by their reputed author after all. And the same sort of thing occurs constantly in all disputed points.

But I need not multiply instances of their disagreements. Any one who has looked into the matter at all, must have been struck with the amazing confusion existing in the world of unbelief, and the inability of the leading infidels to convince each other that their several theories are right. And the question before us is this: Are we to accept Christ with the whole Christian world of nineteen centuries, or are we to reject Him on the authority of some certain learned unbeliever, whose arguments are held as inconclusive, not only by Christians, but by other unbelievers just as learned as himself?

And if it be contended that greater differences exist among Christians than among infidels I reply that whatever strifes and divisions distract Christianity, there is still a grand unity which underlies them all.

As you look up into the heavens at night time you see a very maze of planet and constellation and star and meteor, and it may be comet, apparently without order, or method, or unity. And yet astronomers tell us there is a certain point seen from which all this disorder vanishes. Even so it with Christianity. The Greek, the Roman, the Anglican Church and Orthodox Protestantism, whatever may be their brilliancy, their nearness to their sun, their divergence the extent of their orbit, centre about one great truth which is the source of all that is true and living and noble in each. The confession of one and all is this: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," while on the other hand Infidelity being a system of negation has no central truth round which it can revolve.

And here I must conclude. There is much more—very much more to be said, but it must remain unsaid for the present. I have en-

deavoured to place before you some of our reasons for believing in Christianity, with the hope, that if your faith is firm, it may be made firmer still—firmer because more rational; and if your faith has been shaken by doubts, the evidence I have adduced may help to re-establish it.

That the subject has not been without interest is manifested by the large and attentive congregations who have been present here each Sunday evening, and I would again offer the advice I gave in the first lecture,—if you are troubled with doubts or difficulties do not

consult unbelievers about them, go at once to some friend of Christianity, who is likely to know better than yourself, and ask him what explanation Christianity has to offer on that point, and you will doubtless have your mind set at rest. I need not say that I shall be happy to give any assistance in my power if you will only con- to me for it. And if any of you have been helped by these lectures, I beseech you to give glory to God by a more earnest and self-sacrificing devotion to that Son of God, whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost we worship and adore.



