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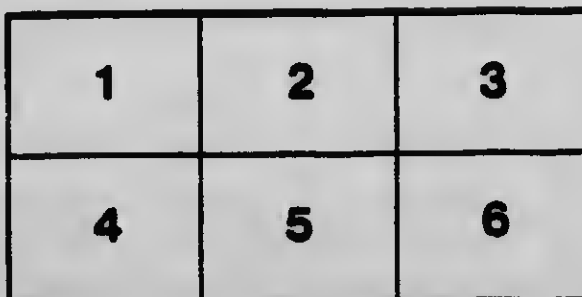
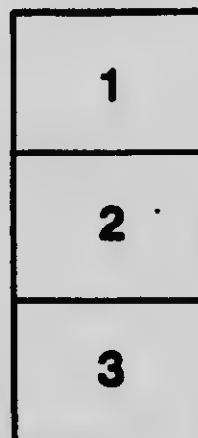
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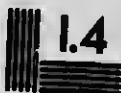
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Why We Believe

Addresses on Foundation
Truths, delivered in
Central Presbyterian
Church, Toronto, by
Rev. D. McTavish,
M. A., D. Sc.

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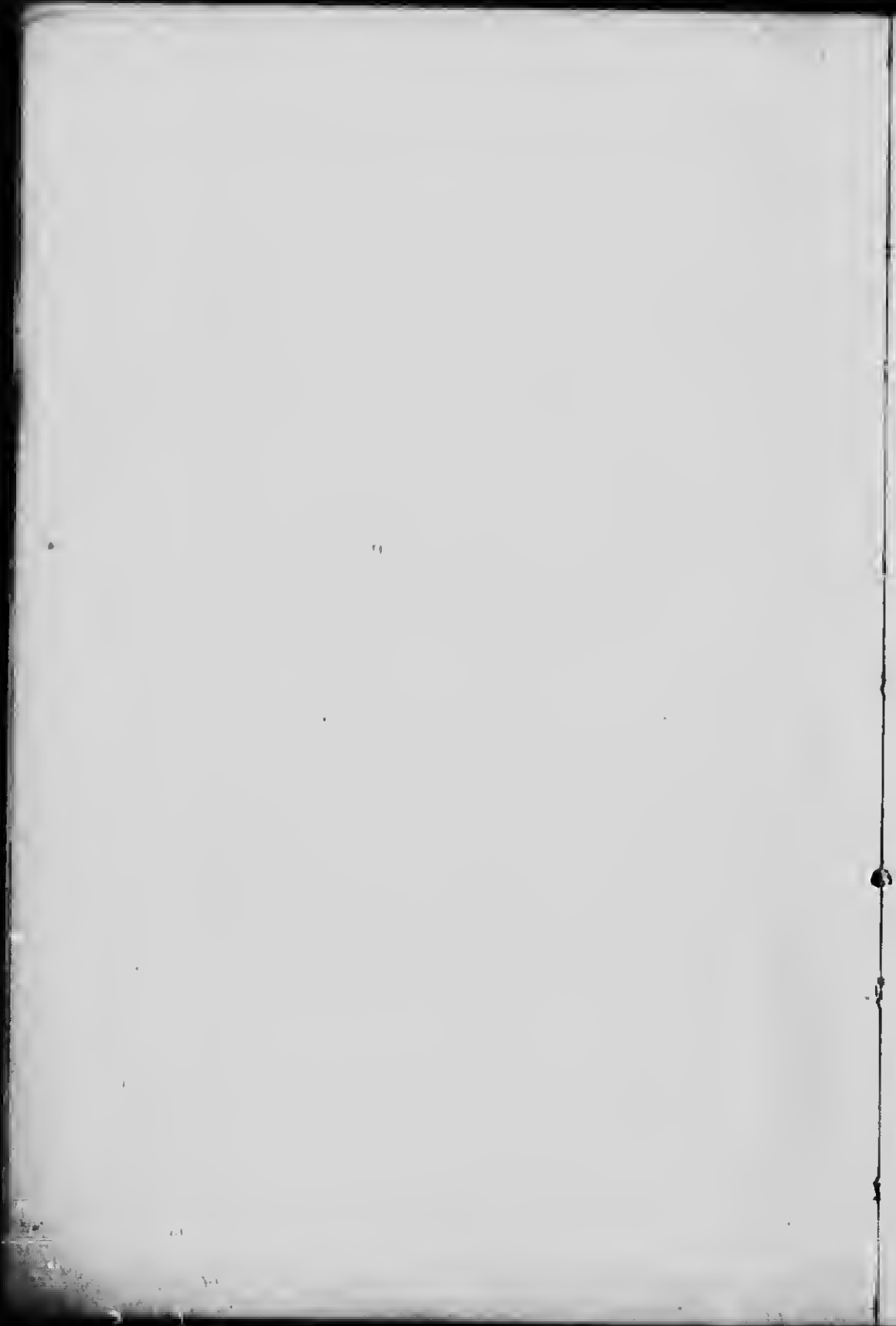
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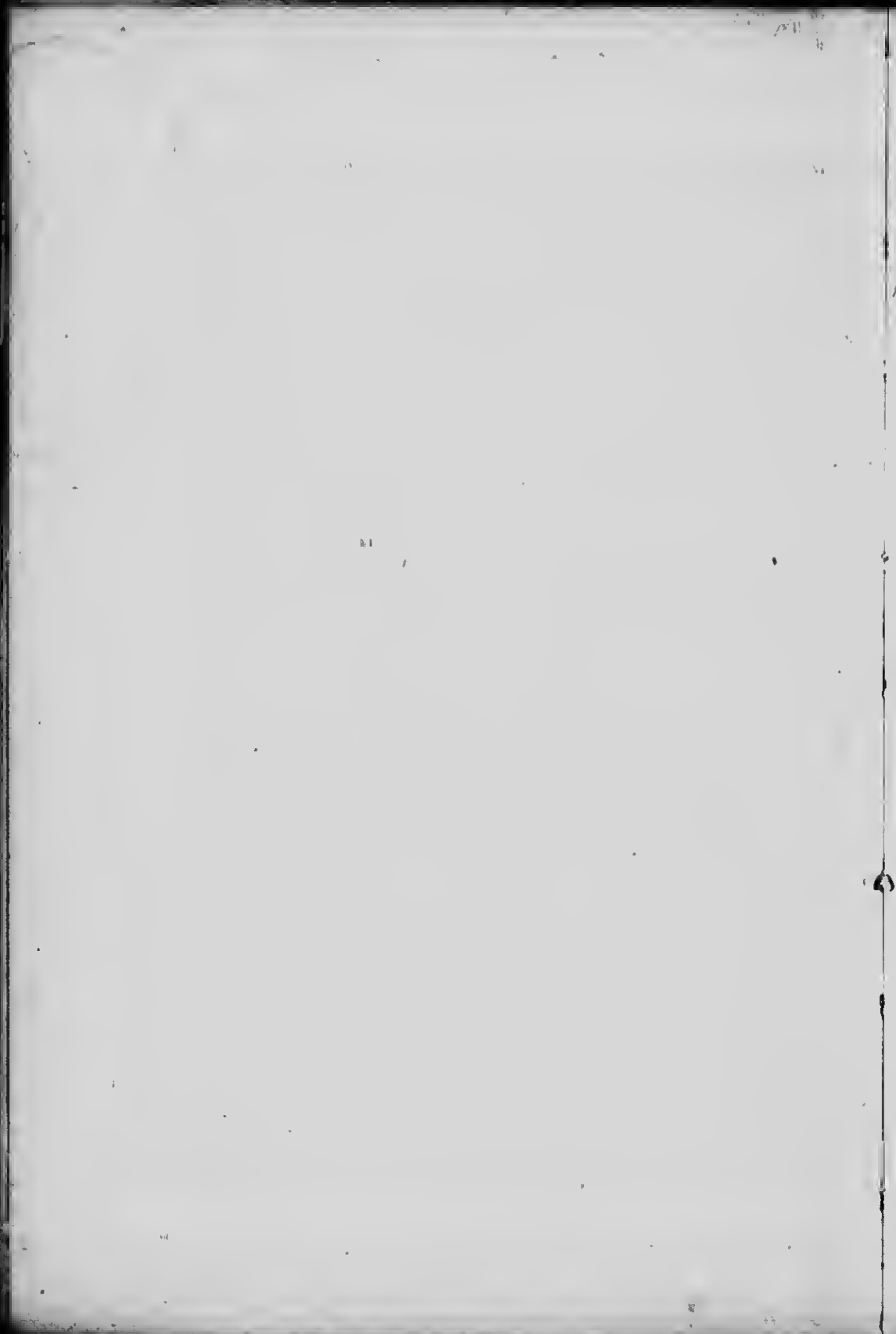
PREFACE

IT is with a good deal of hesitancy these addresses are committed to print. The writer, with many misgivings, began a course of Sunday evening addresses on some of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. The aim was to present the truth not in academic form, but in such a way as to be intelligible and profitable to the average thoughtful church member. The result greatly exceeded his expectations, for not only were they listened to with deep interest, but at the close an almost peremptory demand came from some of the members of the congregation that they should be published. In undertaking the addresses and afterwards issuing them in the present form special thanks are due to Rev. Dr. Welsh and Rev. Dr. Kilpatrick for kindly encouragement and for the use of valuable literature on the subjects discussed. Trusting they may be helpful in leading some perplexed ones out of the mists and shadows into the sunshine, they are now placed in the hands of the public.



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Why We Believe

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WHY DO WE BELIEVE IN GOD

Many of our beliefs we have received simply as a matter of training and tradition. They are handed down from parents and teachers to children and accepted without any question. But to most thoughtful persons there comes sooner or later the questioning stage and unless one surrenders his intelligence to churchly or priestly authority he will demand a reasonable explanation of his beliefs. This is what the Apostle Peter urges: "Be ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you." In the earnest desire to be of some help to those who are thinking on these vital questions that lie at the very heart of our Christianity I have undertaken these addresses.

People in every age and condition are in some way seeking after a Supreme Being. In some it is a dim and distant fancy almost buried beneath a superincumbent mass of gross notions and superstitions while in others it is a comparatively pure and lofty con-

ception. Is there a Supreme Being and if so what is His relation to us and what should be our relation to Him? These are questions that touch the very core of human experience. You have no doubt observed that Scripture gives us no reasoned proof for the existence of God. It really takes His existence for granted. Its opening statement is "In the beginning God——." We must remember that the proof or proofs of God's existence are not like mathematical proofs that compel the assent of our reason. A man cannot doubt that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles without abdicating his reason. But in religion we are dealing not with finite things but with an Infinite Being. This must always involve faith because in an Infinite Being there must always be a region that lies beyond the bounds of our finite reasoning. All we can expect is a sufficient ground for believing in the existence and character of God—a ground on which our faith may satisfactorily rest. Neither are we surprised to find in religion problems relating to God and immortality that we cannot solve with our limited reason. This does not prove that these problems are unreasonable—to do so would be the finite measuring the limits of the infinite. We may arrive

at conviction regarding the existence of God in three ways.

I. From the nature of things or what has been called natural religion.

Paul states this concisely in Rom. i. 20. "For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made even His everlasting power and divinity, that they may be without excuse." The Apostle considered there was evidence enough in nature to convince man of the existence of a Supreme Being.

1. We look about us and ask—how did all these things come into existence? We see that every effect has a cause and when we see the wonderful arrangement of matter and forces in the world we conclude that these wonderful results must have been produced by a very special cause. The only choice is between an endless series of causes,—which can never satisfy the human reason—and a great uncaused First Cause which we call God.

2. When we look at the world we see the marvellous order and arrangement by which it is pervaded. We see order and adaptation in the structure of plants and animals and perfect harmony in the vast movements of the heavenly

bodies. If we saw a heap of stones that had fallen from the face of a high cliff and lay in confusion at the foot, we would think of it only as an accident or change in nature without any purpose. But if you came again and saw these stones erected into a bridge or a house you would at once conclude that an intelligent being had been at work, because you saw clear evidences of purpose and design without which these stones could not have taken that particular form. It is scarcely conceivable that a mass of rock should fall from a cliff in such a way as to form a bridge or the walls of a house. Intelligently directed energy alone could do that. So the order of the world as a whole shows such clear signs of intelligent cause that it is surely more reasonable to believe that there is an Infinite Intelligence who planned it than that it is self caused. We say the world is a rational world, that is to say, it can be understood by thinking beings. Huxley has said that science is the discovery of the rational order that pervades the universe. Mind and matter are fitted to each other like a key and lock. How can we explain this unless we believe that there is an Infinite Mind behind both man and nature that explains their harmonious relation.

3. As already suggested no race of people has yet been discovered—however sunken and ignorant—who do not possess some idea of a Supreme Being. Hence it seems to be a part of the constitution of the human mind to have that idea. Of course having an idea does not prove that there is a reality corresponding to it. But the existence of an idea so universal as this would seem like a mockery of human intelligence if there was no reality corresponding to it. Hence we cannot regard the *thought* of a Supreme Being—common in some form to the human race—as a mere thought or fancy.

4. All intelligent beings have a sense of accountability. This arises from the fact that there is implanted within every man a conscience which indicates whether he intended to do right or wrong in his actions. Right may be obeyed or disobeyed but it is the supreme and authoritative impulse in the human soul. It must therefore have been implanted by a Being who Himself righteous and to whom we are ultimately accountable. Hence if nature reveals God as Supreme Intelligence conscience reveals Him as supreme and perfect righteousness.

II. We may arrive at this conviction through revelation.

This may appear like begging the question as we are taking for granted the very thing we started out to prove. This, however, is not really so, because there are three important facts for which we must find an explanation, viz., personal experience, human history and Scripture.

1. To many the conviction of God's existence arises through personal experience. One says, I know God exists because I feel His power and goodness within my own soul. I have daily communion with Him and that communion has influenced in the highest and best way my whole life. This was Paul's attitude when he said: "I know whom I have believed." The obvious objection to this is that you cannot base an argument on the inward experience of an individual as individuals are liable to err and be deceived. But when this individual experience becomes almost indefinitely multiplied under a great variety of circumstances and conditions then it becomes a religious phenomenon that demands recognition.

"Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest

Cannot confound nor doubt Him nor deny,
Yea, with one voice—O world though thou
deniest

Stand thou on that side for on this am I."

2. In human history we have recorded the sum of human experience.

In all human history there is no fact to which clearer testimony is borne than the fact of God's existence and of His personal dealings with men. Not only have men's lives been changed by this belief, but they have been ready to die cruel martyr deaths rather than deny it.

3. In Scripture we have a revelation of God's character and purpose.

Here is a book that has to be reckoned with. It professes to be a revelation of God given through man. "God having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets, by divers portions and in divers manners hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son." If a Supreme Intelligence exists it is not only possible that He may reveal Himself to His creatures in some definite way, it is entirely probable that He will. In nature we believe we have a revelation of God showing His wisdom and power; in scripture we have a higher revelation showing His redemptive purpose. This book professes to be a revelation of God and in Christian history we see the marvellous influence of that book in transforming the lives

of men. Here again we reason from a Divine result to a Divine author.

III. We may reach this conviction by considering the inadequacy of all other explanations of the world.

1. One of these explanations is that everything is God. All finite things are but aspects or parts of the One Eternal Selfexistent Being. This Being reaches consciousness only in man. It denies actual personality to the Deity and also denies that the world is the product of a free divine intelligent will. It is an eternal process that could not be other than it is. This theory really imprisons God in His own creation because He is at once both creator and creation, if such an idea is thinkable. At most God is simply a blind impersonal force. How can we believe that an explanation that does away with personality, human and divine, and that abolishes freedom and moral responsibility can be a satisfactory conception either of God or the world. There has been a curious recrudescence of his strange theory in what is called "The New Theology."

While we believe in the immanence of God in nature—for "in Him we live and move and have our being" we must also recognize His transcendence as the "God over all blessed

forever." To identify Him with nature explains neither nature nor God.

2. The opposite theory maintains that mind has nothing to do with the creation and arrangement of the universe. Nothing has any real existence but matter and the forces that operate in it. Matter and force have built up the universe. Matter existed originally in the form of atoms and by chance they came together under the influence of certain forces and by this process through long ages we have things as we find them. Life, feeling, reason—all came into existence through matter and motion.

But can we believe, with all the evidences we have before us of plan and purpose, that everything came by chance? As well say that if you threw a font of type in the air they would fall in the correct form for printing Shakespeare's plays or Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. This theory places the eternity of matter over against the Eternal God. But there are three things it has never been able to explain: (1) The origin of life—How can you get the living out of the non-living? (2) The origin of feeling—or sentient life in animals. (3) The origin of reason or self conscious life in man. It has maintained its influence over

men largely because it has identified itself with physical science. It has no right to this alliance. Many of the great leaders in science have not only repudiated it but have found in the established facts of science what they believed to be important evidence of the existence of a Supreme Being.

3. A third position—held by some—is that if there is a Supreme Being we do not and cannot know Him. Such a being if He exists is unknowable. All we know is matter and its laws. This is not an explanation of the origin of the world but a simple denial of the possibility of knowing its origin. In some cases they admit the existence of a Power that created and sustains all things. But this they recognize is illogical and therefore the general attitude of this class of thinkers is as I have stated. The name by which it is known is Agnosticism. These are the main theories advanced to explain the world apart from a Personal Supreme Being. It is evident, therefore, that if such a Being does not exist we are here without any adequate theory of the universe.

But I should like to carry you a step farther and show that this God is a Personal Intelligence. This, as we have seen, is really

denied by Pantheism. If God is not a Person there can be no religious relation to Him in the deepest sense, for man & a person cannot have communion with a mere blind force or a stream of tendency. You may be awed by such a force as, for example, when you see Niagara Fall or hear an electric storm. But that is not religion. It is not a relation of love and trust such as can satisfy the inmost being. We reason from our own personality that if there is a Supreme Power that created us and endued us with the faculties we possess He surely cannot be inferior to the creatures whom He created. Just as man feels that personality is higher and nobler than non-personality so assuredly he feels in his best moments that he can think of the Supreme Being worthily only when he thinks of Him as a Person. Theories of evolution do not really effect this, as they have to deal with the *how*, not the *why* of things.

I have sought to point out some of the reasons why we believe God exists and is a Personal Being. While it is important that we should be clear on these points (for they are assailed every day), yet this belief will not in itself change or influence our lives. But if God not only is, but is a "rewarder of them that seek after Him," there surely rests upon us an obliga-

tion to live in the right relation to Him. He has revealed Himself in Christ and nothing can excuse us from an immediate acceptance of the grace He thus offers. The sense of responsibility implanted within is not a mere phantom to frighten us but the voice of God calling us to a life in which when ended here we may face that God without fear and may look for the blessed reward He Himself has promised to all His faithful ones.

II.

WHY DO WE BELIEVE IN THE DEITY OF CHRIST?

All who have given the matter any serious consideration are agreed that Jesus Christ is the greatest personality that has ever appeared in human history. Such a person cannot be set aside by a mere wave of the hand or by a pretty sentence or two. He stands before every age as an insistent fact and presents anew the question He asked the disciples at Caesarea Philippi "Who do ye say I am?" Whether we consider the spotless purity of His life, the dignity and nobility of His conduct or His mysterious and far-reaching influence, we are compelled to stop and ask "Who is this person? As Leckey has tersely put it—"The three years of the active life of Jesus have done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists." He differs entirely from other great leaders and is in a class by Himself. We speak of Alexander the Great and Alfred the Great, but who ever thinks of saying Jesus Christ the great. Charles Lamb touched the core of the distinction when he

said in a company of gentlemen who were discussing this question—"The fact is, gentlemen, that if William Shakespeare were to come into this room now we should all rise to our feet, but if Jesus of Nazareth were to come in we would fall upon our knees."

Jesus Christ stands in a different relation to Christianity from what other great religious leaders do to the systems they founded. Buddha and Mahomet gave a plan and first impulse to their respective movements and to some extent stamped upon them the mark of their own individuality. But, as has been well said, Christ not only inaugurated and taught Christianity but Christ is Christianity. It depends for its very existence not only upon what He was but upon what He is. It demanded of men not merely an acceptance of His moral teachings but a complete and devoted surrender to His Person. This is the Person I invite you to consider. He knew He was a problem to the men of His own time. He is a problem to the men of every time, and it is as we have already suggested, a problem that will not down. It must be faced and solved in the light of history and in the light of human experience. We have become accustomed to seeing in Him—"a true Incarnation of God, a personal and satis-

ying disclosure of the Heavenly Father, a Divine interposition to bless and save the world." I purpose giving some of the reasons for this conviction. In doing so (as in proving the existence of God) it is not like a mathematical demonstration that compels the assent of the reason. Yet while the arguments are not compelling they seem, to me at least, to be absolutely convincing.

I. The testimony of His life and character. That life was narrowly watched while he was here upon earth. Since then it has been under the blaze of human scrutiny from some of the keenest minds of our race. It is interesting to notice the testimony recorded in the Gospels and in the rest of the New Testament by men of His own age.

1. They were struck by His remarkable power as a teacher.

"He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." "His word was with power." "Never man spake like this man." These are some of the testimonies they gave. He had the power of unfolding by one swift lucid sentence the very heart of moral and spiritual truth. Hence they acknowledged Him to be a divinely sent teacher. As one of

them said: "We know that thou art a teacher come from God."

2. The next thing that impresses us is the marvellous blending and balance of elements in His character. In the mingling of elements in ordinary human life we often see a one-sided extravagance that destroys the beauty and symmetry of the whole. High and low, noble and ignoble are often sadly mixed. We see weak spots even in the strongest characters. Abraham doubting and deceiving. Moses in a passion and Peter in a fit of cowardice denying his Lord are a few examples of this. But as you watch the life of this Galilean carpenter you always see perfect consistency of action allied with perfect balance of teaching. He combines purity with power. Innocence was not in Him weakness, for we see with what indignation He denounced the hollow religious pretences of the Pharisees. It was innocence stung by hypocrisy and expressing itself in indignation. Seriousness was combined with pure moral gladness. When men become serious they often fall into a moody and gloomy spirit, or on the other hand their gladness becomes frivolity. It was never so with Jesus. He was troubled in spirit and yet rejoiced in spirit. Even when under the

shadow of the cross he was full of comfort and good cheer for others. He united the exercise of the passive virtues with the loftiest strength. Indeed, He revealed a new fact to the world, viz., that the true exercise of the passive virtues involves the very highest moral heroism. He could call twelve legions of angels to deliver him, but He did an infinitely nobler thing. He became obedient unto death, yea the death of the cross.

3. Another striking characteristic is exhibited in His character, viz., its universality.

Here is a person born and brought up in the heart of Judaism—a system that in His day had become a synonym for bigotry and intolerance—a system that cursed Samaritans and called Gentiles dogs, yet you cannot discover in Him any of those distinguishing marks of the Jew of that day. He belongs to no time or place or nation or class. He is as truly Western as Eastern. He attracts to Him with equal devotion men of every rank and condition. Truly it is a wondrous spectacle. A simple Galilean peasant from an obscure and despised village establishes, in the very heart of Judaism, a world-wide kingdom and preaches a world-wide gospel.

4. But above all else He stands forth as the

embodiment of perfect sinlessness. His is the one flawless life in a world of sad moral imperfections. The testimony of Pilate has been corroborated (in a far deeper sense than he meant) by the study and thought of the ages, "I find no fault in this man." He taught others—even His own disciples, to confess their sins, but He never confessed any of His own. He is the one Being this world has ever known who had no sins to confess. And yet He did this calmly in the face of the very strongest teaching regarding the universality of human depravity. One has only to look at such portions of the Old Testament as the Fourteenth Psalm to see the truth of this statement.

"Jehovah looked down from heaven
Upon the children of men,
To see if there were any that did understand
That did seek after God.
They are all gone aside
They are together become filthy
There is none that doeth good, no not one."

Yet knowing this to be the word of God He challenges them to convince Him of sin. Two thousand years have come and gone, yet the world has never taken up that challenge. Surely this alone separates Him by an impassable gulf from all other men.

II. Christ's own testimony regarding Himself. It is very remarkable that one should stand forth to proclaim a religion and make Himself its foundation and centre. Moses, Isaiah, Buddha and Mahomet never dreamed of doing that. Had this been done by anyone else it would have been set down as extreme egotism. Yet devout men in His own time (and in every time) felt it was in perfect harmony with His character as they knew it. What would have been considered intolerable presumption in others is accepted with the utmost calmness in Him. What then are the claims He advances on His own behalf.

1. He claims to occupy a peculiar relation to men. In assuming the title "Son of Man" he asserts a special relation to the race. This title is used by Him eighty times in the Gospel. By it He is on a common ground with our humanity. Yet it suggests that He is more than a mere individual. He is not a son of man but **THE** Son of Man—the ideal absolute man—the human head of a new race—the Second Adam. He is the centre of the unity of mankind. Other men are but fragments of this idea. He represents that idea in its fullness and perfection—the ageless and limitless Son of Man. More than this, He is the one in

Daniel's vision—"like unto a son of man" who is to establish an everlasting kingdom before which all "earth's proud empires pass away." Hence humanity reaches not only its perfection but its sovereignty in Jesus.

But He also claims to bring God to men. He says "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." Again He says—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." This is one of the purposes of the Incarnation—to give men a true conception of God. Hence, JOHN says, "The word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth."

He demanded the trust and homage of men's hearts and lives. When He said "Believe on the Son" and "Follow me"—this meant far more than a relation of confidence between man and man. He demanded the submission of the conscience. So absolute was this demand that not even the most sacred social relation can stand in the way. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." In the moral world there is surely but one person who can rightfully exer-

cise this authority. In submitting to it men therefore virtually confess His deity. He professes to bestow blessings that no mere man has the power or right to bestow. He declared in the presence of all that "the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." It was not that He had power to declare the forgiveness of sins, which any believing man may do, but to impart it, which none but God has authority to do. It was doing this that raised against Christ the angry protest of the rulers. He further said that He had power to impart eternal life to men. "I came that they might have life." "I am the bread of life." "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." This means life in the sense of eternal affinity with God and the one who imparts this life must Himself be the source of it.

He claimed the central place in the new religion. He always spoke of Himself as the goal of that long period of preparation recorded in the Old Testament. Hence in the Synagogue at Nazareth He read the great prophecy of Isaiah and then said "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." That service so long held central and sacred by the Jews—the Passover—He calmly set aside as a thing that had fulfilled its end and in its place set up the

Lord's supper whose main instruction is "Do this in remembrance of ME." What a stupendous claim to represent Himself as the fulfilment of that age-long process of revelation and preparation.

He is not only the fulfiller of revelation but the final judge of this world. He declared over and over again that before Him would be gathered all nations and He would judge with absolute insight and justice and assign the destiny of every soul. His word is to be the final word that will sum up the value of life and time and history and Providence.

2. But He also claims to stand in a unique relation to God.

This is really involved in the claims He makes in relation to man. He calls Himself the "Son of God." Is it merely in the sense in which angels and believers are sons of God? You don't study the subject long till you see there is an essential difference.

He claims to know the Father and be known of Him in a special sense. Matthew xi. 27. "All things have been delivered unto Me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him."

He is explicit in the use of the term Father. He says, "My Father," and "your Father," but He never says—including Himself—our Father. This surely means that He occupied a relation to the Father in which no one else is included. He declared His eternal pre-existence with God "Before Abraham was I am." The same thing is expressed in terms of His oneness with the Father, "I and the Father are one." This relation is acknowledged by John when he writes, "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God, and the word was God."

Last of all He says that He had received divine authority from the Father. Not only did He declare that all authority in heaven and on earth was committed unto Him, but he also said that the Father had committed all judgment unto the Son that all men should honor the Son as they honored the Father.

III. The Testimony of Christian Experience.

1. Individual believers have experienced deliverance from the sense of guilt and from the bondage and tyranny of sin and have been introduced into a new peace and joy through their relation to Jesus Christ.

2. There is the testimony of the apostles and apostolic men. They knew Christ personally and wrote soon after His earthly ministry and in their writings they corroborate every claim He made for Himself.

3. There is the larger testimony of Christian history.

Leckey 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; has shown itself capable of acting in all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions, and has been not only the highest pattern of virtue but the strongest incentive to its practice." Quotations almost numberless could be made from the writings of those who did not believe in the Deity of Christ yet declared that His was an absolutely unique character.

This, then, is the Person and these are some of His claims and the testimonies borne to Him. What is your explanation?

1. Is this a mere idealized picture?

That is more difficult to believe than that He is Divine, for how can you imagine some unlettered Galilean fishermen drawing from their own imagination the picture of a charac-

ter that has challenged the admiration of the world.

2. It grew up by the slow accretions of later ages and is, therefore, an invention gradually produced. But how can this be when on the one hand we have generally accepted the historical truthfulness of the writings of men who lived in His own time. Some of Paul's Epistles, which are the first of these writings, are the most explicit in asserting His claims.

3. That He was a benevolent but deluded fanatic. Are His teachings the teachings of a fanatic? Did He not again and again repress the fanaticism of His own disciples? Where in the whole range of life and literature will you find a character and teachings at once so sane and so perfectly balanced?

4. He was a deceiver and deliberately sought to delude the world.

Then you have to believe that the world's highest morality was born in a lie and the world's noblest character was a fraud. Whatever we believe we cannot believe that.

There is only one conclusion to which all this evidence leads, viz., to accept Him as Thomas did when all his doubts had been removed and when he cried out, "My Lord and my God." If this is true then this historical

34 Why We Believe in the Deity of Christ

Christ becomes the Christ of conscience and you are in honor bound to face the question Pilate asked in his perplexity, "What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"

III.

WHY DO WE LAY SUCH STRESS UPON THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

If we held the position taken by some that Christ's death was merely the end or consummation of a conspicuous life, or of others that it was that of a martyr in a good cause—like John the Baptist or Savonarola or Huss or Latimer—then we have entirely misplaced the emphasis. For we—and when I say we I mean practically the whole body of the Christian church—have held and taught that Christ's death is the crown of His earthly ministry and the supreme purpose for which He came into the world. We are led to that conclusion by many lines of reasoning.

I. Because of the large space it occupies in the gospel narratives.

You will find by examining any of the gospels that the account of the passion week occupies about one-fifth of the whole record of a three years' ministry. John the Baptist's death is recorded in two or three verses whereas we have almost every detail of Christ's death carefully recorded. At the very outset we are

arrested by this fact and naturally ask the meaning of it.

II. Because of the way in which Christ Himself emphasized it.

1. He did this *indirectly* and by the use of figures, as when He says: "The days will come that the bridegroom shall be taken away." "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone." "I am the good Shepherd, the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." By these and many similar hints He suggests to them His death.

2. But He did it also *directly*.

In Matt. xvi. 21, "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and the third day he raised up again." The time referred to was when Peter made that striking confession of Christ at Caesarea-Philippi. "Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God." This was toward the end of His ministry, and the reason why He did not speak plainly about it before was that He could not say much of His death until they understood something of His personality. They must know who He really is before they will understand what He came to do. It has been

well said that Christ did not come so much to preach the Gospel as that there might be a Gospel to preach. Christ is the Gospel. From this time we have four definite statements by Christ regarding His death.

1. Mark viii. 31. "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and after three days rise again."

This was such a startling and unlooked-for announcement that Peter took upon himself to rebuke his Master. Christ in turn sharply rebuked Peter—"Get thee behind be Satan—thou art a stumbling block unto me." He recognized in this another form of the wilderness temptation—a kingdom without sacrifice.

2. Mark ix. 31. He was now approaching Jerusalem and knowing that the great crisis was near, said: "Behold we go up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes and they shall condemn Him to death," etc.

Each reference becomes more specific and detailed.

3. Mark xiv. 22-25. When He was with His disciples in the Upper Room at the Passover He instituted the Lord's Supper. Taking the cup He said: "This is my blood of the covenant

which is poured out for many." Here He institutes a Holy Sacrament, the central significance of which was a memorial not of His life or His teachings but of His death. After His resurrection the same fact was emphasized. To the two Emmaus disciples he said: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" Later He impressed the same thing upon the company of disciples. In the Apocalypse He refers to Himself again and again as the Lamb Slain. Hence, upon Christ's own testimony His death had to Himself a transcendent importance.

III. Because of the central place it occupies in the teachings and writings of the Apostles. In the sermon delivered by Peter on the day of Pentecost he shows that Divine Purpose and human lawlessness met in the death of Christ and that this crucified One rose from the dead. This is really the heart of his gospel.

Paul is the Apostle whose writings are nearest to the time of Christ's death. No one seriously denies the emphasis he lays upon Christ's death. In the very first epistle he wrote he has this statement (1 Thess. v. 10) "For God appointed us not unto wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ *who died for us,*" etc.

In 1 Cor. xv. 1-4 Paul tells us what the Gospel was which he and the other Apostles preached and which the disciples received and believed.

“I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried and that He hath been raised on the third day,” etc.

That this was His supreme message he tells us in the same Epistle(ii. 2). “For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” In Romans and Galatians we are shown that we have redemption by His death, who in dying became a curse for us.

Peter is equally emphatic. In 1 Peter i. 2 he speaks of “the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus,” and in vs. 18-19 of the same chapter declares that “we are not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold. . . but with the precious blood of Christ.” In 1 Peter ii. 24, he speaks of Christ’s death in these words, “Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.”

As for the Epistle to the Hebrews, take the sacrificial death of Christ out of it and all that remains is a collection of meaningless fragments.

John in the Apocalypse refers to Christ's sacrificial death in many ways. At the very beginning he has this ascription of praise. "Unto Him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins in His blood." In the Gospel He is described as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." And the one who is to be lifted up as the brazen serpent was lifted up in the wilderness. Reference is also made to this by John in his epistles.

These are a few samples of the uniform testimony borne by all the Apostles to the importance of Christ's death. To them, at least, the Cross of Christ was the pivotal centre of all their teaching. Every attempt to find the apostolic emphasis in anything else has proved an utter failure.

IV. Because it gives unity to all the Scriptures.

The sacrificial death of Christ is the scarlet cord that runs through the whole of Scripture. When the light of the New Testament falls upon the Old all its mysteries unfold themselves. When from the standpoint of the cross you look back upon all the sacrifices and symbols and upon all the prophecies, their meaning becomes quite luminous. All Scriptures converge toward Calvary. "Thus it is written

that it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day." These are the words of the risen Christ to His wondering disciples. Egyptian Hieroglyphics were an unreadable language until the discovery of the Rosetti stone furnished the key. On it the hieroglyphics were translated into Greek. This was the key and as soon as it was discovered the reading of the language became easy. The Cross of Christ is the key to the meaning of Scripture and apart from it all becomes a meaningless hieroglyphic.

V. But we emphasize it more particularly because of the special purpose attached to the death of Christ.

Some take the position that the fact of Christ's death may be recognized, but they stop there saying that no explanation is necessary. They repudiate any theory of the death of Christ. But if anything is clear surely it is this, that Christ came into the world in view of a certain situation—a situation, created by what we call sin. If at midnight you see a physician making his way through the storm to a home, you judge at once that it is not a mere friendly call. A serious condition has arisen there—someone is smitten with dangerous sickness. When Jesus left the glory of heaven and

entered this dark world's stormy night it was because there was a special need. He tells us Himself that it was to save lost men He came. Some tell us that sin has created distrust in the hearts of men, and Christ came to remove it. But when you ask—how, they have no definite answer. Again they say sin degrades man and Christ came to restore him. But when asked how it is done they answer only in vague generalities. The distrust and degradation of man are bad enough but there is a far worse element in sin than that. Because of sin man is under the condemnation of God. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." This is the seriousness of the situation. Has the death of Christ any relation to it? We find Christ using the words "must" and "ought." Here is implied obligation and necessity. But was this *must* merely *inevitable*—that is to say, He could not escape from the hands of His enemies. Or is it rather *indispensable*. He could not accomplish what He came to do without it. The latter is surely the meaning of the agony of Gethsemane and the betrayal and arrest that followed.

That Christ taught a definite purpose in His death in relation to sin is evident from Mark

x. 45, where He says, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Again at the Lord's Supper He says, "This is my blood of the covenant poured out for many unto remission of sins."

There is surely no mistaking His meaning. His death was necessary that the condemnation might be removed and free forgiveness be granted to the sinner.

But some one may say—can God not forgive sin without any sacrifice? To this question there is a twofold answer, (1) It would be a denial of the moral order of the world and make sin a matter of no account; (2) It would rob the coming and death of Christ of any real meaning. Why did He need to come at all?

The teaching of the Apostle is very explicit in regard to the purpose of Christ's death. In 2 Cor. v. 14, Paul writes—"We thus judge that one died for all, therefore, all died," and in v. 21 "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Again in Galatians iii. 3, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us." Peter is equally explicit. In His first Epistle

(iii. 18) he writes, "Christ also suffered for sins the righteous for the unrighteous that He might bring us to God."

There is only one theory that satisfactorily explains these and many other passages, namely, that Christ on the Cross suffered in the stead of the sinner. In the Cross we behold the goodness and yet the severity of God. We not only see what God thinks of sin but we also see, in that voluntary sacrifice the wondrous love that provided deliverance from its awful guilt. It is this gospel of a crucified Christ that has delivered men in all ages and is delivering them to-day. Bunyan's picture is absolutely true both to scripture and experience. The sight of the cross released the burden. In closing I would emphasize these two great outstanding facts.

1. The death of Christ is a complete provision for the forgiveness of the sinner.

When Christ was dying on the Cross among His last utterances was this significant word—"It is finished." Paul writes to the Romans, "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," and again "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." That death meets every claim against the sinner. This same glorious truth is emphasized

in the Epistle to the Hebrews by the expressions, "Once" and "Once for all." "But Christ through His own blood entered in *once for all* into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

So we may well sing—

“Done is the word that saves,
Once and forever done
Finished the righteousness
That clothes the unrighteous one.”

2. The death of Christ brings every man face to face with an absolute issue.

The cross is the dividing point; it marks the parting of the ways. If you turn aside and reject the offer of mercy and forgiveness it presents you reject God's supreme and final provision for your salvation. Those are intensely solemn words in Hebrews x. 26-31, "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins." God has spoken His last and greatest word in His Son. Is it strange that man's destiny depends on whether he receives that word or not.

Are not these good and sufficient reasons why we should lay stress upon the death of Christ?

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Surely there is no greater example of ingratitude than that of one who knows all this and yet will not acknowledge it. A man was once sent to prison for a crime he never committed. He was a postmaster and a letter was missing. It was traced by detectives to his office. He was arrested, confessed himself guilty and was sent to prison for a term of years. He was a man of such high character that it was a wonder to everybody who knew him. He told a friend that his wife and daughter assisted him in the office, and tempted by love of dress, had taken the money. To shield them he pleaded guilty and bore the sentence. He satisfied the law and they escaped. Think of the ingratitude that never acknowledged this, for even after he was dead they allowed the stain to remain upon his memory. But what are we to say of those for whom Christ died and who have never confessed His name? Should not the attitude rather be,

“But drops of grief can ne'er repay

The debt of love I owe,

Here Lord I give myself away

'Tis all that I can do.”

IV.

WHY DO WE BELIEVE IN MIRACLES?

Belief in miracles, like belief in predictive prophecy, is rather in disfavor at present among those who arrogate to themselves the title of "thinkers." It is a singular thing that miracles which were regarded in the apostolic age as evidences of the validity of Christianity are now regarded by many as a chief obstacle to its acceptance. Some are demanding a religion stripped of all supernatural clothing. How has this change come about? The marvellous progress made by the physical sciences in the discovery of the elements and forces of nature has greatly enlarged our knowledge of what we are accustomed to call "the order of nature." With this has arisen a conviction or body of scientific opinion that nothing happens out of that fixed order in which cause and effect operate unchangeably. Hence "the very idea of miracle is excluded by the doctrine of the uniformity of nature" and by the conception of the all-embracing "Reign of Law" which the march of science is establishing more firmly every day. Hence many have come to think a

miracle is something that an educated man cannot accept without losing intellectual caste. Instead of meeting this spirit in an intelligent way and defending the Christian position some Biblical Scholars are inclined to throw overboard piece by piece the miraculous elements in the word of God in much the same way as the Russian traveller pursued by wolves leaves behind one article after another to satisfy their hunger.

A miracle may be defined as:—

“An exception to the observed orders of nature brought about by Divine Power to reveal God’s will or purpose.”

Miracles are of two classes.

1. Relative—which are a Providential disposition of materials and forces already at work in the world. Thus the drying up of the Red Sea when the children of Israel passed over, was effected by a violent wind. The miracles involve fitting in the action of nature with the special need, but it is not interference with nature’s laws.

2.—Absolute—which imply a creative act, such as the turning of water into wine and the multiplying of the loaves. We will see that these miracles are not an interference with the laws of nature in the larger sense.

I. Miracles pre-suppose the existence and free activity of a Personal God.

There can be no miracles according to materialism because it recognizes nothing but matter and its laws. Nor can Pantheism admit the miraculous since God is bound up with His own creation. But we have already seen that neither of these theories furnishes an adequate explanation of the world. If there is a Personal God who can will and work—a Power superior to nature who has created it, and can act upon it freely, there is no difficulty whatever in believing in miraculous intervention.

II. Miracles are an external proof of the Supernatural nature and origin of Christ.

They are not the only proof—in the estimation of many they are not the supreme proof. The highest evidences of His Deity are to be seen in His unique character, His matchless teachings and the claims He put forth for Himself. They all have the marks of the Supernatural. There is also the proof of the system of religion He founded. It stands in the world to-day as a witness to the Divine character of its author. Convincing as these proofs are, yet it is natural that men should crave for some distinct and external and objective evidence. If Christ stands in one way related to

nature and yet in another on a plane above nature we are justified in expecting some specific evidence of that fact. When the disciples of John the Baptist were commissioned by their imprisoned leader to ask Jesus if He really were the Messiah, He performed many miracles in their presence and then said to them, "Go tell John the things which ye see and hear, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the Gospel preached to them, and blessed is he who shall find no occasion of stumbling in me." Thus one kind of proof lends support to the others, and they all unite in satisfying the candid enquirer that Christianity is of Supernatural origin.

III. Miracles are essential to revelation.

Mozely has said: "A supernatural fact is the proper proof of a supernatural doctrine." Bishop Butler says, "Revelation is miraculous and miracles are the proof of it." But more than this the teaching of Jesus, of which we have record, is so interlaced with miracles that the former cannot be understood if you remove the latter. Take as an illustration the case of the disciples of John the Baptist just referred to—if there had been no evidences of super-

natural power to *see* how could Jesus instruct them to go and tell John what they had *seen*. Miracles are sometimes imbedded in the heart of a narrative and become an integral part of it. An instance of this is seen in the case of the paralytic who was let down through the roof and to whom Jesus said, "Son, be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee." How can anyone separate the forgiving of the paralytic from the discussion that followed upon the right to forgive sins. Much of the record of Christ's life is inexplicable if we delete the miracles or even if we explain them away as natural occurrences.

It was his mighty works that attracted the multitudes to Him—"they saw the signs which He did"—and so pressed was He by their constant presence that He had again and again to withdraw into the wilderness or into the mountains to have time for retirement and prayer. Thus the miracles not only attest the Supernatural character of the revelation recorded in the Gospels but are also an inseparable part of the record itself. This is pre-eminently true (as we shall see), of that miracle of miracles, the resurrection of Christ.

IV. Objections to miracles.

1. That they are a violation of the fixed order of nature.

They are looked upon as an interference with the harmony of nature. But the question at once arises—"What do you mean by the order of nature? If you confine it within the range of observation—nature as known to the physical scientist—that is one thing. But surely the order of nature has a higher and larger meaning than that. Should it not include the whole universe of God with all the facts and forces therein? A potent fact in that order of nature is human personality and therefore human freedom. We believe ourselves to be free beings, not bound by the laws of nature, but in some measure able to direct and control them for our own purposes. In the narrow sense it is an interference with a law of nature to see a stone going up into the air. But if we know that a human hand directed by a human will has brought into operation a higher law—the law of muscular action—all becomes clear. The law of gravitation was not set aside or destroyed, it was operative all the time, but was overcome by a higher and stronger law, the law of muscular action. A child falls into the water and is drowning. The fall is by the law of gravitation and the suffocation that will

follow is in accordance with other laws. But a bystander jumps in and rescues that child. You see the chain of cause and effect is diverted. This was done by muscular action directed by human will in accordance with moral purpose. Yet looked at from the standpoint of an unbroken chain of cause and effect in nature the rescue of that child was a miracle.

Surely there is no special difficulty in passing from this to the higher Personality of God and finding that Scriptural miracles may be explained in accordance with the activity of the God of Nature and Redemption, who is acting according to the laws of His own being.

Supernatural action may bear to the ordinary action of nature a relation similar to what observation bears to experiment. Results are obtainable by experiment with a speed and certainty quite unattainable by those who are content to simply sit and see nature at work. How is this done? Not by ignoring natural laws but by controlling and directing them. You see a new force has come into play—human personality which means human mind and will and strength working for a definite purpose. Man can hasten the growth of plants and flowers—as is done every day in hot houses—or he can retard growth as is done in such a

wonderful way in Japan, or he can entirely change the form or products of tree or plant or flower as is done by Luther Burbank in California. Now the ordinary way of producing loaves is by sowing seed, waiting for it to germinate and ripen and from it making bread by regular processes. But if man can hasten a process is it incredible that God should do it and so multiply the loaves? Certainly there is no necessary violation of nature's laws in this action. If you admit a power that has created and can control these laws there is no longer any difficulty about it.

Again we must remember that the order of nature is not a fixed and unbroken series—as men of science quite freely admit: (1) We cannot find in matter the cause of its own creation; (2) Inorganic matter cannot produce life; (3) Plant life cannot be developed into sentient life; and (4) Sentient life cannot produce self consciousness. Here is a series of admitted breaks that have demanded the interposition of a higher power or we could not have nature as it is.

The miracles of Christ did not create disharmony in the world. That was created by a power which all men recognize, viz., the power of sin, and the miracles of Christ were directed

to restore the broken harmony. Miracles become possible when we recognize a free and almighty personality in the universe and when His purpose is the revelation of Himself and the redemption of man.

2. The second objection to miracles is the denial of their credibility.

It proceeds upon the assumption that even if miracles were possible no evidence would be sufficient to prove that they had taken place, and that as a matter of fact no satisfactory evidence has ever been given for any alleged miracles. There are two kinds of evidence—the evidence of experiment and the evidence of history. In the very nature of the case you cannot expect the first kind of evidence for miracles—although Professor Huxley proposed to test the value of prayer in that way. The fact of the reality of miracles must be established by historical evidence. Hume says—“A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle from the very nature of the fact is as entire an argument from experience as can possibly be imagined.” But we have seen that violation of the laws of nature in a miracle, is a fallacy. It only violates them in the sense in

which men are doing every day when they are overcome or set aside for some higher end. Again when he speaks of "firm and unalterable experience" he is assuming the very thing to be proved. What he is really demanding is the proof of experiment. The only way to furnish him with proof that Christ rose from the dead would be to have a number of men die and rise again under the most careful scientific observation. Indeed, this is what Renan, the brilliant French Rationalist demanded. But is historic evidence valueless unless it is certified by experts? We have the evidence of men who were friends of Christ and also of men who were his bitter enemies and had every reason to discredit His miracles if that could have been done. But they never denied their validity. All they could do was to attribute the power that wrought them to an evil source. Christ's miracles were no occult tricks done under dim light in a cabinet. They were performed in the broad light of day before the eyes of friends and foes. To deny the testimony regarding them is practically to declare that the witness of history is valueless.

8. It is sometimes objected that if there were miracles in those days why are there none now?

When Christianity was established by its founder we can see a reason for miracles that does not exist now. Christianity is now a recognized fact and has hundreds of years of history to which it can appeal. When its founder had attested His Supernatural character and mission by miracles there was not afterwards the same need for them. When an ambassador arrives at a foreign court he must first present his credentials; but when once he is duly authenticated and acknowledged he no longer keeps on showing these credentials. May this not be so with Christ and Christianity? Whether there are miracles in the sense in which Christ and His disciples wrought them or not one thing is clear that we are daily seeing the unmistakable miracle of changed lives. According to all physical and moral laws men must reap as they have sown. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" is as truly a law of the moral world as gravitation is of the physical. If this law acted uniformly we would see a constant stream of human beings sinking deeper and deeper into the awful mire of sin. But the law is interrupted by a higher law—the law of Divine Grace, and when man yields to its operation the whole course of life is changed. When we see a man like Jerry

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McAulay, the abandoned river thief and adventurer, becoming a flaming evangelist, is that not a miracle as healing a leper or turning water into wine?

Whether you believe in miracles or not they are in a very real sense taking place every day before your eyes. A miracle has taken place in your own life if you are born again. If you are not God is ready to perform that miracle in you at this very hour if you are willing to yield your life to Him and trust in His Son who died for your sins and rose again for your justification.

V.

WHY DO WE BELIEVE IN CHRIST'S RESURRECTION?

By the resurrection of Christ we mean that on the early morning of the third day after His crucifixion Christ rose from the dead, passed out of the grave in Joseph's garden, leaving His grave-clothes behind, appeared to His disciples at different times during forty days, and then ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father. This, briefly stated, is the fact as the Church has understood it.

I. Consider the importance of this fact.

Tallyrand went right to the heart of the matter when a French philanthropist, who was trying to bring into vogue a sort of benevolent rationalism, complained that his propaganda made very little headway. What am I to do, he asked. The celebrated Frenchman said: "You have undertaken a difficult task. Still—he said, after some reflection—there is one plan which you might at least try. I should recommend you to be crucified and to rise again the third day."

Paul writes to the Corinthians:—"If Christ hath not been raised then is our preaching vain, your faith is also vain." He further emphasizes the same truth thus—"If Christ hath not been raised your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished." Strauss who was no friend to the true Christian faith said—"The resurrection is the centre of the centre, the real heart of Christianity as it has been until now. The resurrection created the Church, the risen Christ made Christianity, and even now the Christian faith stands or falls with Him." Every essential truth of Christianity is involved in the resurrection of Christ. If that stands all the others stand; if that falls they fall. A leading sceptic said recently, "There is no use wasting time discussing other miracles; the essential question is—Did Jesus rise from the dead? If He did it is easy enough to believe other miracles." According to the testimony of enemies as well as friends we see that the resurrection of Christ is a matter of transcendent importance.

II. What then are the evidences of His Resurrection?

1. Paul is the writer whose recorded testimony comes nearest to the time when the event

took place. Within twenty years after the resurrection he wrote his epistles to the Thesalonians and to the Corinthians. He declares that among the Christians at the time he wrote it was a commonly accepted article of faith. There were some in Corinth evidently who doubted it and this called forth his matchless argument in 1 Cor. xv. But the important fact to notice here is that within two decades it was the common belief of Christians everywhere and in Paul's epistles this fact is always taken for granted. But more than this Paul gives his personal testimony. In 1 Cor. ix. 1, and xv. 8 he declares that he saw the risen Christ. Think of the kind of man he was, with trained mind, keen, alert, not likely to be misled and yet at one point the whole current of his life is changed. With absolute sincerity and splendid devotion he gives himself to establish the faith he once sought to destroy. It could be no superficial fancy that produced this remarkable change. His own explanation is this—"Have I not seen the Lord?" He further tells us that others saw Him after He rose and before His ascension (1 Cor. xv. 5). He had met these brethren at Jerusalem and had the testimony from their own lips.

2. We have the testimony of the apostles and others of their company.

In the five Gospels we have the record of the resurrection and the ten appearances of Christ to His disciples during the forty days. These records bear every evidence of genuineness. Indeed the witness is so clear that men who have gone with prejudice against the truth and carefully studied it have been convinced of its validity. A remarkable example of this is given in the 18th century. Amid the triumphs of Deism in that century two eminent jurists, Gilbert West and Lord Littleton were put forward to deal the final blow to the defenders of Supernatural Christianity. They fastened upon its two alleged bulwarks—the conversion of Saul and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Lord Littleton took the first of these subjects, West the second, and they determined to show that they were mere myths. They admitted that they were not very familiar with the Bible, and having a character as jurists to maintain they decided they must study the evidence. As they did so each began to express doubts as to the soundness of the position they set out to defend. When the books were finished it turned out that Lord Littleton's book was a defence of the conversion of Saul, and West's a defence

of the resurrection of Christ, and these books may be found in any large library at the present day.

Peter, in the first sermon he preached on the day of Pentecost, and in his epistles makes the resurrection a central part of his teaching. John, in the Apocalypse speaks of Christ as "the First Begotten of the dead," and in his epistles the Living Christ is the constant theme.

3. I need scarcely adduce Christ's own testimony on this subject.

Before his death (as we have been discussing that subject) he alluded to it again and again and long after His resurrection, when He appeared to John in Patmos he said, "Fear not I am the first and the last and the living one, and I was dead and behold I am alive forever more."

4. Besides what has here been stated there is a great deal of indirect evidence.

The variety of circumstances under which He appeared makes it practically impossible (according to the well-known law of probabilities), that the disciples could have been deceived. Their evidence was published on the spot at the very time when there was every opportunity of refuting it.

Then there is the evidence of the marvelous change wrought in the disciples themselves. Hopelessness and despair were changed into abounding joy. Carnal ambitions gave way to noble purity, and unselfish service. There stood the empty tomb with the grave-clothes lying in it. If He did not rise the body must have been removed either by friends or enemies. There is not a particle of evidence that the body was removed by friends—the evidence is all the other way. If on the other hand it was taken by enemies why did they not produce it? This would at once have settled the matter and have been the death blow to Christianity which they were so eager to destroy. But the very wrappings were lying in such form as to indicate that the body had risen from them and left them as they were.

But the question may not unnaturally be asked why did He not appear to His enemies as well as to His disciples. Several reasons may be given for this: (1) He never did anything for mere display, and His appearance would not have convinced those who did not want to believe. They could have denied His identity or trumped up some other excuse for not believing. "Neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead"; (2) If special

interest had been aroused it would have resulted in no more than a wave of popular enthusiasm, as when they desired to take Him by force and make Him a King; (3) To object to the witnesses because they were His disciples is to declare either that they were either incompetent or untruthful. They cannot be said to be incompetent in view of what they have written and accomplished, and to say they were untruthful is to rise a greater difficulty than is sought to be removed.

III. Our belief is further confirmed when we consider the failure of all theories denying Christ's resurrection.

If it were not a fact we have a right to expect that by this time some adequate explanation would be forthcoming regarding it. Three or four theories have been advanced but they need only to be stated to reveal their inherent weakness.

1. The Theft Theory.

It is that the disciples stole away the corpse while the Roman guard slept (Matt. xxviii. 13), This, we are told, was the story the guard was bribed to publish. The whole thing is too clumsy to be seriously considered by any thoughtful person.

2. The Swoon Theory.

According to this theory it is argued that Christ was not really dead when He was taken from the Cross, but was merely in a faint or swoon, and when He had lain a little time in the cool grave He revived, came out and showed Himself to His disciples. Christ in coming from the tomb being weak and sick was obliged to remain for some time in that vicinity. Clothing was provided for Him by the gardener but He was suffering so much from his wounds that He could not bear the touch of Mary. By and by He was well enough to let Thomas do so. The white-robed messengers by the tombs were Essenes and that Christ ultimately retired to live with them—none knowing His strange and terrible secret. It is difficult to think that intelligent men could believe this. It is surely an example of the credulity of unbelief. Strauss gave the deathblow to this theory. He says: "One who had crept forth half dead from the grave, and crawled about a sickly patient needing medicine and surgical assistance, nursing and strengthening, and who finally succumbed to His sufferings could never have given His followers the impression that He was the conqueror over death and the grave—the Prince of Life."

Nothing will explain the triumphant faith of the apostles and disciples, but the fact of their really seeing the risen Lord clothed with power.

3. The Myth Theory.

This is scarcely worth considering as it is inconceivable that a myth of such a nature and with world revolutionizing power could have arisen in that brief time. A myth is the growth of centuries. If the Church is not founded on fraud it is not founded on mist.

4. The Vision Theory.

This is the explanation advocated by Renan and Strauss. As the disciples' imagination brooded over what had taken place—the greatness of their Master and the impossibility of believing that such a life could have ended—this wrought on their excited and highly nervous condition, taking the form of visions of a risen Christ. The first to have such a vision was an intensely emotional woman—Mary Magdalene—then it spread to others and they had visions also. Renan cites the case of Omar who, when Mahomet expired rushed from his tent sword in hand and declared he would hew down any one who would dare to say the prophet was no more. Heroes do not die. But Renan does not state the additional fact that

Abu Bekr came forth from the death chamber of the Prophet and uttered the memorable words. "Whoso hath worshipped Muhammed, let him know that Muhammed is dead but whoso hath worshipped God that the Lord liveth and doth not die."

This vision theory is inconsistent.

(1) With the mental state of the disciples at the time, such visions require a very strong and definite previous expectation. Now, nothing is clearer from the evidence we have than that such expectation was entirely absent. Not a single disciple so far as we know had any expectation of His resurrection, and His appearance was in every case a startling and unbelievable surprise.

(2) It was inconsistent with the number and nature of His appearances.

If there had been only one appearance there might be some force in this theory. We have the record of at least ten occasions on which He appeared to His disciples, and they certainly were not impalpable visions. He met with them at different times and instructed them, and contrary to all human ideas they obeyed His instructions, and after His departure tarried ten days in Jerusalem. Could all these persons under all these circumstances have been deceived?

(3) It does not explain the fact of the empty tomb and the grave clothes already alluded to.

(4) Neither does it furnish any adequate explanation of the marvellous transformation in the disciples and the wonderful progress of the Christian Faith. There is no question that the disciples believed in a bodily resurrection, and based their Gospel upon that fact. Has the whole thing rested upon a mere delusion? Surely—as one has said—it is better to believe in the Supernatural than to believe in the ridiculous.

But it has become fashionable with some to assert that it was only a spiritual resurrection, and that the resurrection and transfiguration of Christ's body was not necessary. But this means nothing at all, for the disciples did not need to be assured that Christ was immortal. They had no doubt upon this question. What they must have wondered when they saw His humiliating death and His burial was something quite different, namely, whether after all He was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Absolute proof of this the resurrection gave, for the disciples never had any doubt about it afterwards. Even doubting Thomas exclaimed when he saw Him, "My Lord and my God."

IV. It is necessary in conclusion to point out the practical significance of this great fact.

1. It has a reasonable and consistent relation to Christ's work as a whole. It was a necessary part in His Messianic program. It is not the rising again of an ordinary individual; it is the Resurrection of the Messiah, of the one who was put to death because he claimed to be the representative of God. He was not a man but **THE** man, perfect manhood. This could not be completely demonstrated until He had risen and entered into heaven in a glorified body—the first fruits of those bodies that are asleep in the grave.

2. It was an attestation of Jesus' claims.

It is easy to claim Divine authority but it is not so easy to have it attested. In Rom. i. 4 He is declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. His enemies had shown their contempt for His claims by crucifying Him. The resurrection is God's answer to their calumnies.

3. It declares the ground of man's salvation.

In Romans iv. 24-25 Paul writes "We believe on Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised again for our justification." This really means that He was delivered because

we trespassed and was raised again because we were justified. The resurrection is God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross for our sins. There He offered Himself for our ransom. Will God accept it? Three days He lay in the tomb, but on the third day the breath of God came to that sleeping body and He rose triumphant over death. He had satisfied every claim against us—the price had been paid—then the prison door swung open and He was received in Glory and honor at the Father's right hand. "Through this man (this risen and glorified Christ) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

4. It assures to every believer victory over the power of sin.

Our relation is not to a Christ who died two thousand years ago, but to one who rose and lives to-day. So He says—"Because I live ye shall live also." So, too, the author of "The epistle to the Hebrews" writes: "He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him seeing. He ever liveth to make intercession for them." You and I are weak, and easily fall before the awful influence of temptation, but our risen Lord in Glory is infinitely strong. Victory therefore is not a question of any weak-

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ness but of His strength. As the Alpine climber is held when he slips by the strong guide ahead of him to whom he is fastened, so in the treacherous and slippery mountain steeps of our earthly journey we may lose our footing, but if we are united by a living faith to our strong sure Guide, the risen Christ, that power will hold. "They shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand."

5. It discloses a real connection between this life and the unseen eternal world. Christ did not merely come back to the same conditions as before. It was a resurrection to a life forever beyond the power of death. Neither did He leave His human body behind. He rose and ascended with that body glorified, but still with all its human affections and sympathies, He revealed the possibilities of our life here. He has disclosed the destiny of our life hereafter. The first fruits have been received, the first ripe sheaf has been gathered into the heavenly garner and the glorious harvest is sure to follow by and by, "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality."

"Soar we now where Christ hath led
Following our exalted Head—
Made like Him, like Him we rise,
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies."

VI.

WHY DO WE BELIEVE IN IMMORTALITY?

That there is doubt in many minds on this subject cannot be denied. The marvellous progress made by the physical sciences during the last half century has led not a few to believe that here we have an adequate explanation of the universe. And as many physicists had no place in their theories for immortality it was ruled out of court, and it became rather unfashionable to hold it. There has also been vast material progress during the same period, gigantic enterprises are undertaken and wealth has accumulated with amazing rapidity. Very naturally many have become absorbed in this and, almost unconsciously, the sense of the majesty of life has slipped away from them. But the tide is beginning to turn. A revival of interest in spiritual views of life and theories regarding them is bringing the question of immortality to the front once more.

This great basal truth may be established by several converging lines of reasoning.

I. The facts of common experience favor it.

(1) There is the well known fact of the universal belief in a future state. No barbarian tribe has been found, however ignorant and degraded, that did not at least in some dim and shadowy way, cling to the belief in a life to come. The American Indian has his happy hunting ground and the weapons of the chase are buried with him that he may be fully equipped for the enjoyment of that future state of bliss. The Greeks believed in Hades and the Romans in Orcus, and into those gloomy cheerless abodes the shades of the departed entered at death. This belief may have come originally through dreams in which the consciousness seemed for a season to be dissociated from the body and mingle in converse with those who have passed beyond the bounds of this life. They saw analogies of a future and brighter life in nature about them. The dull beetle that crosses the pathway dusty and unsightly suddenly bursts asunder and laying aside the outer covering displays a new dress of wondrous beauty. Thus the Scarabaeus becomes to the Egyptians the sacred symbol of immortality. The Romans saw the caterpillar passing through its state of chrysalis and emerging a gaily colored butterfly, so they carved this on their tombs as a symbol of their hopes. These all indicate a

cherished belief in a future and brighter existence. In the Bible we see the development of this idea. The Sheol of the early scriptures is, like the Hades of the Greeks, the abode of the departed spirits with little distinction between good and bad. Hence Job says of it (iii. 17-19)—

“There the wicked cease from troubling
And the weary are at rest,
There the prisoners are at ease together
They hear not the voice of the taskmaster.
The small and the great are there
And the servant is free from his master.”

They all existed in a feeble and nerveless state, having no connection with God or with the world of light. Hence the Psalmist sings mournfully—

“In death there is no remembrance of thee,
In Sheol who shall give thee thanks.”—Ps.
vi. 5.

Again—

“What profit is there in my blood
When I go down to the pit
Shall the dust praise Thee?
Shall it declare Thy truth? Ps. xxx. 9.

There are at least three reasons why the Jews had such imperfect ideas of the future.

1. They conceived of their relation to Jehovah as national not individual.

Hence the idea they fondly cherished was a national immortality—that the seed of Israel were to be an everlasting nation. Individuals might die but Israel would live. It was only at the breaking up of the national life at the exile that higher ideas of immortality begin to appear and the individual relation to God is recognized.

2. They believed this life to be the sphere of reward and retribution.

“Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: how much more the wicked and the sinner.” Prov. xi. 31. This idea of retribution on the earth throws light upon what are called the cursing Psalms. It is the theory that is controverted in the Book of Job, but it persisted even till the time of Christ. With this theory dominating them, length of days here on earth was evidence of the Divine favor. The existence beyond had therefore only a secondary interest to them.

3. To them religion consisted in fellowship with God here on earth.

They did not speculate regarding the immortality of the soul. Their Psalmists sang with all the intensity of their hearts.

"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God
When shall I come and appear before God."

True there are gleams of higher things ever
and anon breaking out.

"In Thy presence is fulness of joy
At thy right hand are pleasures forevermore."
Job in his distress cries—

"I know that my redeemer liveth," etc.

But at least all this goes to show that this
universal idea is a sort of pledge of its realiza-
tion and is a protest against the theory of per-
sonal extinction at death.

2. There are the inequalities of life.

These constitute a constant appeal to the
justice and righteousness of God. Abraham
made this appeal regarding Sodom. "Shall not
the judge of all the earth do right?" How
many have lived and suffered wrong all their
days and died unrequited? Wrong (as the
Psalmist describes it in the 73rd Psalm) is
often prosperous and at ease in this life while
right is crushed and unheeded. Have Herod
and John the Baptist; the monster Nero and the
noble Paul; Julian the apostle and persecutor,
and John the Beloved all alike dropped through
the same death-trap into the same eternal
oblivion? Such a thought is intolerable. We

believe as God is God in the justice and rationality of the universe—

“Some day but not yet
Somewhere but not here
God shall by thee set
Joys for each past year.”

(3) Closely allied with this is the idea of the unfinished character of life we so often observe. Apart from the vast number of children cut off in infancy how frequently we see splendid lives carefully prepared and equipped for life's duties upon which they have barely entered. when the long summons comes. Ion Keith Falconer, that splendid young Christian nobleman, who had given his life to service among the Arabs, had scarcely settled at Aden in Arabia when he was called away. Surely there is a mystery here if this life is all. Indeed man is the most incomplete of all God's creation. The earth and other planets are complete. Trees and plants quickly reach their perfection. So with insects and animals. But man even at the longest life feels he is but a child and has realized but a feeble few of his boundless possibilities. Surely it is mockery to have these transcendent powers for but a few brief transient years. It would be like putting a splendid thousand horse-power engine into a little

steamer to cross a lake two or three hundred yards wide. It resembles the conduct of Pietro the tyrannical prince of Florence compelling Michael Angelo to use his unrivalled genius in carving a statue of snow which melted away almost as soon as it was made.

These and other facts of experience clearly suggest that this life is not all of life.

II. The facts of science do not preclude the idea of immortality.

Science had gone so far as to declare immortality an impossibility—a mere figment of the imagination. Auguste Comte in his Positive Philosophy ignored the idea altogether. Huxley and Spencer took a less extreme attitude, taking the position that we do not know inasmuch as we have no scientific proof. It is from this attitude the name Agnostic has arisen. Some leading present day scientists such as Lord Kelvin and Sir Oliver Lodge hold that science does furnish positive proof of immortality and of the existence of God. The extreme theory of science (as opposed to immortality) is that conscious life is a function of the brain—that the brain (to put it boldly) secretes thought as the glands secrete saliva or the liver bile. When, therefore, the natural brain dies further life is impossible. Haeckel—one of that

school—says, “Such an idea (as immortality) is in hopeless contradiction to the most solid empirical truths of modern science.” But is this a fact? Is conscious life so related to physical organism that as one dies so dies the other? That is the problem that science has not proved. Is the soul a function of the brain, as a tune is of the musical instrument, or is it really independent though related, as is the rower to his boat. In the first case the relation is inseparable, but in the second case it is clearly separable since the boat can be destroyed without destroying the rower. One has used this illustration. The steam is inseparable from the locomotive. Take away the latter and there is an end to the steam. On the other hand you can pass a ray of light through a prism and it is separated into its component colors. But taking away the prism does not destroy the ray of light, because it did not create it. The prism was merely a revealing medium showing its different colors. So the physical brain does not create thought but is merely the medium through which it operates in a physical world. That the relation between the brain and thought is not casual is evident: (1) Because mind is the very antithesis of matter. It cannot be measured or weighed or estimated by

the same tests. (2) The mind or soul is a simple, identical thing. It is held by scientific men that the whole structure of the body, including the brain, changes every seven years, but the identity of the person remains. In this identity there is something that is not subject to physical change. (3) Matter is under the control of natural law and therefore partakes of the nature of necessity. But unless the mind is free we cannot choose one thing in preference to another, and are, therefore, not moral beings. So great a scientist as Tyndall felt the force of this objection to a mere physical explanation of thought and declared that a connection between mental and physical phenomena is unthinkable. But if there is no causal connection why say that the mind or soul cannot exist after the brain dies any more than that the rower can exist after the boat he has rowed is wrecked? The theory of evolution; instead of overthrowing the idea of immortality affords a strong presumption in its favor. According to that theory the world-process has been going on through countless millenniums. From lower to higher and more complex forms the progress has been made until finally man appears as the crown of the process. If this theory be true can it be possible

that the crowning result of this stupendous process—a self-conscious being, should one day drop out of sight and forever cease to be. Surely the presumption is entirely on the other side.

Hence we see that though the scientist may be an agnostic and be unable to find positive evidence for immortality he cannot scientifically deny it.

III. The conclusions of Philosophy support this idea.

1. Philosophy proceeds upon the assumption of the rationality of the world.

Man is a reasoning being and the world is such that it can be understood by him. If this were not so progress in the realm of knowledge would be impossible. If one set of men made locks and another set having no connection with them made keys there is little likelihood that the keys would fit the locks. It is this power of reasoning which places man above the brute creation, makes him superior to the world about which he reasons and gives him kinship with the Eternal mind that is both in man and in all creation.

2. Philosophy finds the ultimate reality in personality. Man is a person, preserving his identity through all changes. This identity—

as already pointed out—must be superior to the world in which man lives, for it is not affected by its changes. Here we have in man a second thing that lifts him above the narrow bounds of time.

3. Philosophy recognizes man as a moral being. He has implanted within him an idea of right and wrong. Conscience asserts its authority within him. Yet he knows conscience does not get its authority from anything in this world. It not only comes from, but leads to some other realm for man feels its mandates should be implicitly obeyed, and yet are never fully obeyed here. Whether man is immortal or not he is summoned by a power he feels he ought to obey, and so to live as if he were immortal. But does it seem reasonable to require a man to live as if he were immortal if he is not. Of course we know there are those who teach us that we ought to be satisfied with the immortality of influence or the immortality of the race. But if the highest reality we know is Personality how can man be satisfied with mere impersonal abstractions? If, therefore, philosophy does not absolutely establish immortality it gives a strong threefold support in maintaining the rationality of the world and the personality and morality of man.

IV. It is in Jesus Christ we have the fact of immortality established.

Paul says—"Christ Jesus brought . . . immortality to light." All that had been dimly foreshadowed in the Old Testament and in human knowledge and experience was made clear and explicit through Christ.

The heart of religion is fellowship with God and that fellowship has been fully established through Christ. But is it to be forever exhausted in the brief span we call our earthly pilgrimage? Are we pilgrims going nowhere? Relying on a faithful God we cannot think so. "Because I live ye shall live also," is a supreme word on this subject. Immortality is, therefore, established.

1. By the coming of Christ.

As we saw in a previous study we have in Christ an absolutely unique person. He is God Incarnate, and this incarnation is the promise and pledge of immortality.

2. By His Teaching.

He does not argue on behalf of immortality. He assumes it. "If it were not so I would have told you." But the messages He gives on this subject are full of comfort and assurance. "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. . . . I will

come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." That is the goal of immortality to every believer. To be in heaven is to enjoy immortality in the presence of that glorified Christ.

So we can sing with Baxter—

"My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim,
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him."

Or breathe out our hopes with Tennyson —

"For though from out our bourne of time and
place,

The flood may bear me far
I hope to see my pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar."

3. By His Resurrection.

It is in the resurrection of Jesus Christ that immortality becomes a fact. "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept."

Paul in 1 Cor. xv. bases his great argument on the resurrection of Christ. "If the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised, and if Christ hath not been raised your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." Principal Fairbairn has well summarized it—

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“The resurrection created the Church, the risen Christ made Christianity and even now the Christians’ faith stands or falls with Him.”

But surely this is not a mere theological discussion. It is at once the most intensely solemn and the most intensely practical of truths. Do you live as though this life were all—going through your empty round of pleasures and gratifications. I can imagine such lives find little comfort in an immortality that will bring them face to face with the consequences of their own folly. But how different it is with the life that has come under the blessed spell of Christ and upon whose daily duties the light of the eternal world is forever falling. They see life steadily and they see it whole. They know this life is but a little segment of that circle that has its completion in eternity. So they are sustained amid all earth’s sorrows and sad partings, for their true life is beyond and their anchorage is within the veil.

“We pace the deck together—

Faith and I.

In stress of mid-night weather—

Faith and I.

And catch at times a vision

Of that bright Eastern sky,

Where waiteth God to tell us

That we shall never die.”

VII.

WHY ARE WE MEMBERS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH?

In whatever way we view it the Church of Christ is a factor in the life of humanity and in the progress of civilization that cannot be ignored by any really thoughtful person. In giving an answer to the above question it will be necessary to go back and consider some questions that lie at the foundation of the whole subject.

I. What do we mean by the Christian Church?

The term "Church" is used in two different senses in the New Testament.

1. It means the whole body of believers in every age and place who are united to Christ by a living faith and have thus in common become partakers of the Divine Nature. That is the meaning implied in the name when Paul writes: "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." This for the sake of distinction has been called the Invisible or Spiritual Church, because all who compose it are not definitely known.

2. But it also applied to a visible Christian Society which consists of all who publicly profess the true faith of Christ and are organized for worship, teaching and service. That is the meaning to be attached to the name in such expressions as this:—"The Lord added to the Church daily such as were being saved." "The Church in Corinth." "The Church in Ephesus," and so on. In the Apostles creed we have the statement, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints." In this statement the Church is represented as ideally a unity, though sadly divided.

"Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder
By heresies distrest.

.
Yet she on earth hath union
With God the *Three in One*".
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won."

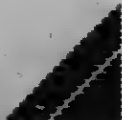
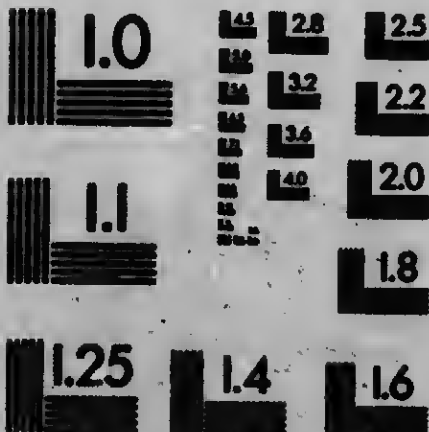
We must not confound unity with uniformity. Outward uniformity may be desirable but it is not essential. It is also ideally holy in spite of its many defects. We know that the weaknesses and failings of Christians are the reproach of their enemies. Yet is the Church

which He has purchased with His own blood clean. "Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." The Church is also Catholic. This is a term that did not come into use till three or four centuries after Christ. Then, as we know, it was specially appropriated by the Church of Rome. The word as you are aware means universal and the Church of Christ is indeed ideally universal in spite of the clay walls of sect by which men have shut themselves off from their fellows. It means Catholic as extending everywhere and having its doors open for all classes and conditions of men, but also because it welcomes and embraces all truth. In this latter sense it is kindred in meaning to our word "university." Because it has as its heritage the whole circle of truth, it has always a fresh message to deliver. But when the Apostles' creed declares a belief in the communion of saints it expresses most nearly the basal idea of the Church. It is a communion with one another and with their Lord. It represents a community of interest. There has been a tendency in the history of the Church to emphasize one side of this relationship at the expense or to the neglect of the other. When the Divine relation is emphasized and the visible organization is ignored we have mysticism. It



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is a very intimate union and communion between the individual soul and God. When the visible organic form is specially emphasized it has generally taken the form of Sacerdotalism in which the stream of grace flows only through a specially appointed priesthood and the individual is really denied direct access to the throne of grace. How to combine both these aspects was the difficulty that faced the Reformers and had its first real solution in the marvellous genius and spiritual insight of Martin Luther. Hence till his time, as Dr. Lindsay and others have pointed out, these two views were held and taught separately by the same persons. We see the Divine side expressed in the Devotional literature in the writings of Thomas à Kempis, Tauler and St. Francis and in the Hymns of Bernard, of Clairvaux. But while these men are thus giving expression to the inmost aspirations of the soul the Church is becoming a great sacerdotal organization—a world monarchy claiming authority over earthly kings and making grace dependent upon sacramental and sacerdotal power. It is curious to see these two theories of the Church growing up and living side by side like an angel and a griffin. It was not till Martin Luther appeared upon the scene that this Dr.-Jekyll-and-Mr.-

Hyde theory of the Church was shown to be utterly inconsistent. He demonstrated clearly—and this is the sheet anchor of all true Reformation churches—that it is believers and not a hierarchy or priesthood that make the Church. The Church is a union of believers with Jesus and with one another—with one another because they are united to Jesus and so are sharers in a common life and purpose. This union is brought about through the revelation of God in Christ on the one hand and the faith of the believer reaching up to Christ on the other. Ministry, ordinances, politics are all important and valuable for the order and wellbeing of the Church, but they occupy only a subordinate place. None of these are *essential* to the Church. Whenever true believers are joined together in fellowship and service there the Church is in its visible form. Thus we see how in one aspect of its being the Church is *Invisible*. Its secret source of life is its hidden union and communion with Jesus. Its roots penetrate into the unseen and eternal and draw thence spiritual nourishment. But it is also a visible entity and may be seen wherever the word of God is faithfully held forth and the Gospel of Jesus proclaimed—wherever faith is

exhibited in loyal testimony, holy character and devoted service.

When Barnabas went as a delegate from Jerusalem to make enquiry regarding the spread of the truth in Antioch he judged the work by this threefold test: (1) Christ was faithfully proclaimed among them; (2) There was a responsive faith on the part of the hearers; (3) The fruit of the Spirit was brought forth in their lives, for "when he saw the grace of God he was glad."

We thus see what the Christian Church really is and what departures from its true spirit and character have arisen in the course of its history.

II. Why should the Church's fellowship or membership appeal to the loyalty of every true believer?

What I desire to show is that it is an inconsistent position to take when one says he accepts half of the truth regarding the Christian Church but ignores the other half. If one has faith in Christ and secret fellowship with Him why should he ignore the other half and decline to have open fellowship with other believers?

Presupposing that there are some who stand aloof from this open and confessed fellowship

one naturally asks what is the cause of this. It may arise from one or more of several causes.

1. An undue sense of defect in themselves.

They feel they have not attained to a sufficiently high standard of Christian character to be fit for that fellowship. This is a very conscientious attitude, but it arises from a misconception of the believers position in Christ. Fellowship in the Christian Church does not primarily depend on the extent of our knowledge or the perfection of our Christian character, but upon the *sincerity* of our faith in Christ. We believe that if we are rightly related to Christ our character will adjust itself. On the other hand if one is seeking to adjust himself to God by his own goodness apart from Christ he is entirely on the wrong track. "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

2. A sense of the defects of those who are church members.

If all believers had taken that position there never would have been any Church, for did not our Lord say regarding the Twelve, "Have not I chosen you Twelve and one of you hath a devil?" And in the parable of "The Wheat and the Tares" *Jesus* has indicated the same thing. What Christ could tolerate with patience surely His disciples may also tolerate. Further-

more, that is a harsh and censorious attitude to assume by any one who has himself been delivered by the mercy of God from sin and inconsistency.

3. A conviction that such relation is unnecessary.

Some have made themselves believe that they can live just as good a Christian life without that public fellowship. The main thing—they say—is to live a good life yourself and let others do the same. In assuming this attitude we are wiser than our Lord. If He saw the necessity for it and established the Christian Church for the development of the spiritual wellbeing of His disciples does it not savour of presumption for anyone to say it is unnecessary?

What are some of the reasons that should obligate all true believers to become members of the Christian Church?

1. It is an institution of God's own appointment. It is very precious to Him. Paul calls it "The Church of God which He has purchased with His own blood." That which is esteemed so highly by Him should not be esteemed lightly by us. It was established in order that by its fellowship the highest kind of spiritual life might be developed and the most efficient

kind of service rendered. The progress of civilization is not the result of isolated and detached effort but of the co-operation of men in what we call human society. Each contributes his portion and all receive the benefit. So this is exactly the conception we get of the Church in Ephesians. After reciting (in Chap. iv.) the different gifts of the Spirit, He shows that they are all used in co-operation "for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ till we all obtain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a full grown man unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." It is only in that fellowship we can render completest service and attain full grown spiritual manhood.

2. It is a definite way of showing our loyalty and devotion to Christ.

This was true in the persecuting times of the Church more than in our own peaceful and tolerant days. Yet Jesus has said for all days, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men him will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven." And Paul in speaking of the Lord's Supper says, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do proclaim the Lord's

death till He come." Are not therefore our Church membership and our partaking of the Lord's Supper acknowledgments before the world of the estimate we place upon Christ and His sacrifice?

3. The Church notwithstanding her main defects stands everywhere for the highest ideals of life to-day.

In the midst of a materialistic age and what Carlyle calls "the Gospel of dirt," she has inscribed on her banner this great truth, "The things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are unseen are eternal." She holds up before the world a sinless and perfect Christ as the model men should follow and a crucified and risen Christ as the power through whom that model can be realized.

4. The Church in every part of the world is working for the betterment of men. In the palaces of the rich where superabundance of this world's goods is apt to sensualize men, in the hovels of the poor where the awful battle is carried on ceaselessly against hunger and disease, in the crowded city and with the pioneer settler on the wide prairie or in the great forests; in civilized communities and amid heathen darkness the Church, day in and day out, is striving for the enlightening and uplifting of

humanity. She is the mother of the world's true philanthropy and where her influence has not reached the real altruistic spirit is unknown. Out in our mining camps where drink and immorality are battenning on the ruin of men the Church is the one agency that will go and pick up the wrecks of humanity, minister to their need and seek to inspire their despairing hearts with the hope of better things.

These are reasons why the Church should have the loyal allegiance of every man and woman who prefers Christ and purity to unbelief and sin. Try to get your eyes off her weaknesses and defects and consider her noble army of crowned and uncrowned martyrs and confessors

“Who climbed the steep ascent to heaven
Mid peril, toil and pain;”

consider the unselfish men and women who have given and are giving their lives utterly to her service and surely you will esteem it your highest privilege to be ranked with that glorious company.

