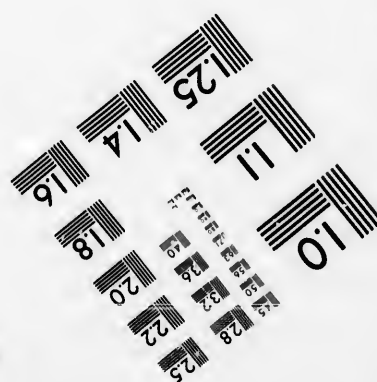
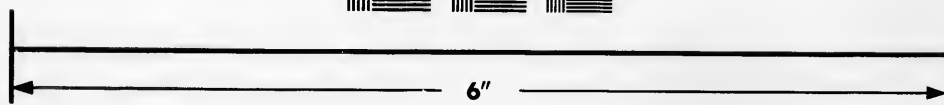
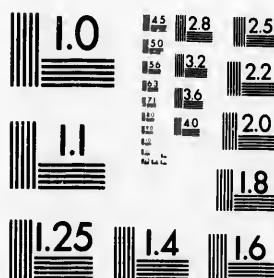


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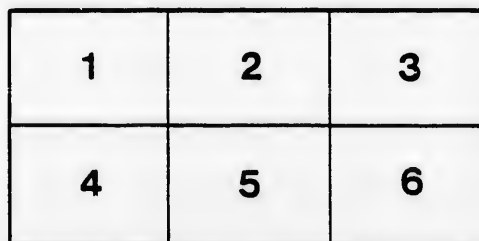
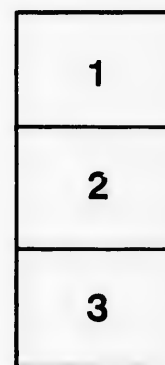
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LESSONS
ON THE
TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY,
BEING AN APPENDIX
TO THE
FOURTH BOOK OF LESSONS,
FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS.

DUBLIN:
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1846.

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LESSONS

ON THE

TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

LESSON I.

INTRODUCTION.

WE can never be thankful enough that we live in a land where Christianity is known, and where we have been taught to know the one living and true God,—that He is Almighty, always present to us and to all creatures everywhere; that He knows all things, and that He is holy, and just, and merciful, and good. It is a great blessing that we have been taught what God requires of us, in order to please Him, and especially, that being sinners, we have been taught how to obtain the pardon of our sins, and divine assistance in correcting them. We ought, therefore, to value very highly the advantage of having received Christian instruction, and thus having been made acquainted with the way to please and honor the great God, and to be happy in the enjoyment of his favor. These are blessings highly to be prized, although we may never have

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inquired very closely into the authority upon which our instructors have given their instructions. Children cannot enter into such inquiries; yet, if their parents be acquainted with Christian truth, and instruct them in it, they may receive the full benefit of Christian teaching, being trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

When the people of Israel were conducted out of the land of Egypt by Moses, they were directed to carry their little children with them into the wilderness. These little children could not understand why their parents were thus going with their families into another land; yet, they enjoyed the benefit of being delivered from slavery in Egypt, and made God's own people; and, as they became older, they would understand why it was that their parents came out of Egypt themselves and brought their children along with them; and they would bless God, that, when they understood not the reason, they had been brought out of Egypt, and set on their journey to the land promised to their forefathers. And the parents were directed to teach their children these things, when they should be of an age to inquire about them. "When thy son shall ask thee in time to come, saying, What do the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which

"the Lord our God hath commanded you, mean? then thou shalt say to thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt," &c. Deut. vi. 20. So all who are instructed in the genuine truths and precepts of Christianity have reason to bless God day by day, for the advantages which they enjoy, (which we shall show as we go on,) even although they may not be able to comprehend the evidence upon which their instructor proceeded, when he taught them the precepts of Christianity.

But, although it is not to be expected that a child should be able to weigh the proofs of the Christian religion,—although, in his childhood, he must depend upon his parents, or on those religious teachers, under whom his parents may place him, for religious instruction; yet it is important, both for his own sake and for the sake of those he lives with, that he should be made early acquainted with some better reasons for being a Christian, than that his parents were so before him. He may some time or other fall into dreadful perplexity and doubt, if he have no other grounds for his belief than our pagan forefathers, and all pagan nations of the present day, have for theirs; namely, that it is the religion of their parents and friends. And especially in an age when there are so many infidels mixed up with

society—so many persons who pay no regard to all that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ which is within their reach, and who are constantly seeking opportunities to seduce others from their faith, and to persuade them that Christianity is but a fable,—it is of great importance that every body should have some well grounded reason for being a Christian, to enable him to withstand the confident assertions of such persons; and also, to enable him, as he may have opportunity, to convince them of their folly, and the danger to which they expose themselves.

The chief purpose of these Lessons on the truth of Christianity is, to suggest such reasons to those who believe in Jesus Christ as may serve to protect them from the artifices of infidels, and enable them to strengthen the faith of others, or to restore those who may have fallen away from Christian profession.

LESSON II.

CHANGE PRODUCED BY CHRISTIANITY ON ITS
INTRODUCTION.

It is perfectly certain that Christianity had a beginning. All men agree that it arose at a certain definite period in the history of the world, and that, a period with which we have abundant materials for becoming well acquainted. It will therefore be important to contrast Christianity with the state of the world at the time at which it was introduced.

But it may be asked,—How do we know that Christianity arose at a certain definite time?—How can we tell that it did not gradually grow out of forms of religion that previously existed? The answer is, that while the New Testament exactly specifies the time at which our Lord was born, and at which he began his public ministry, there are many books still extant, written both before and after the time specified, and that in none of the books written previously to the time specified, is Christ or Christianity mentioned as being then in existence; whereas in almost all books that were written after the specified time, Christianity is either expressly mentioned, or so alluded to as to prove that it was then known.

Now we know, from the books still extant that

were written about the time at which Christianity arose, that the whole western part of the world, from the River Euphrates to the Atlantic Ocean, and from the Baltic Sea on the north to the great desert of Africa (called the Sahara) on the south, including Egypt, was under the dominion of the Romans. We know further, that the Romans, although they had made great progress in many of the arts of civilised life, were sunk in the grossest immorality ; that falsehood, treachery, bloodshed, covetousness, rapacity, such as has scarcely ever been exhibited among any other people, the most scandalous profligacy, among both men and women, were universally prevalent. One example may, perhaps, be sufficient to show what the state of morals was at Rome at this time. Public shows were frequently provided for the people, and at these, men were employed to fight with one another with naked weapons, for the amusement of the spectators. Among these spectators there were frequently women and children, and at such exhibitions it was not unusual that several persons should be butchered before the faces of the people. Nay, to such a pitch of depravity had they arrived, that if any of the gladiators (for that was the name given to the men employed to fight) was beaten,

and the spectators were not well pleased with his mode of fighting, they would, by holding up their thumbs, encourage his adversary to put him to death in cold blood, which was frequently done.

This exhibits the state of morals in the Roman empire, generally, at the time when Christianity began to take root in it.

The only nation that had in it the most striking peculiarities, either in religion or morals, was the Jewish nation. They had the knowledge of the true God, and they had a higher standard of morals than the other nations, derived from the Old Testament; yet, from similar sources of information to those which we possess with respect to the Roman empire generally, we learn that they too had fallen into a state of frightful corruption. That the account of their condition given in the New Testament does not exaggerate their wickedness, but rather throws a veil over the worst features of it, we know from a book still extant, written by a Jew called Josephus; for any one who reads that book will receive a much worse impression of the moral state of the Jews than he does from the New Testament.

Such, then, was the state of the whole world when Christianity arose; and just in proportion as Christianity was diffused, a renovation of morals

became apparent ; sentiments favorable to temperance and justice and humanity began to spread, the gladiatory shows fell into disrepute, gross and abominable crimes were stamped with public reprobation, and became confined to the scandalously wicked. The breaking in of the innumerable hordes of heathen barbarians into the empire, and the conflicts that ensued, interrupted for a time the progress of amendment ; but many of these being persuaded to embrace Christianity, a vast change for the better on the state of society became apparent, when nations in their new form began to assume a more settled state. Doubtless, there was still much vice, because Christianity was but imperfectly known, and but partially obeyed ; yet there was not that universal corruption which existed in the Roman empire when Christianity first appeared in it. Even war itself, which had been carried on with the most savage barbarity by the heathen invaders of the empire, was considerably mitigated ; and orders of knighthood were established for the protection of the weak and the helpless. Now, the very idea of men risking their lives for such a purpose, indicates the introduction of a higher standard of morals, and a better state of feeling.

In short, whatever is better in the moral condition of this country at the present moment than in the condition of society under the ancient Roman empire, is to be ascribed wholly to the progress of Christianity. Wherever Christianity has been renounced, or its doctrines and precepts become little known, as in France at the time of the revolution, towards the end of the last century, crimes of fearful magnitude have begun to show themselves. Wherever it has been propagated diligently, and received with faith, such crimes have become fewer, or have ceased altogether.

The general history of the world, therefore, since the introduction of Christianity till the present day, is a series of proofs that it was sent to men by Him who made them, to heal their moral diseases, and turn them from darkness to light. No other part of the world has undergone any such reformation of morals. The present heathen countries, such as Hindostan and the countries to the eastward of it, are in a state of as great moral depravity at the present moment as they ever were,—clearly proving that whatever there is in Christian countries superior to the morals of heathen countries, is derived entirely from the influence of Christianity.

LESSON III.

OBSTACLES TO THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY.

BUT there is another argument to be derived from the fact that Christianity arose at a certain well known time among the Jews, and spread itself gradually over the Roman empire. It proves that those who propagated it must have been able to produce strong evidence of the truth of it. No people will give up the religion of their forefathers, and receive a new religion, without what appears to them to be strong reasons. It is true that there are instances of a people gradually changing one form of Paganism for another. But in such cases the change has been more in name than reality. The principles were the same, the practice, except in forms of worship, the same; for all of those forms of Paganism have equally left their votaries in possession of their sinful indulgences. But Christianity, as we know, strikes at the very root of Paganism in every form, works a total revolution in the minds of men, and requires an entire change in their conduct; and we say that no people will submit to such a change without evidence.

Let us briefly consider a few of the obstacles to the introduction of Christianity into the Roman empire, and we shall see that its success proves that it must have been accompanied with the most convincing evidence.

In the first place, it was absolutely required of all who became Christians that they should believe the most extraordinary wonders. To confine ourselves to one, no person could be a Christian without believing that the Lord Jesus Christ had been actually crucified, dead, and buried, and that on the third day afterwards he had risen from the dead. Now, let any one consider what difficulty there would be in persuading the people of England and Ireland, to believe that a person who had been publicly executed as a criminal had actually risen from the dead, and you will understand what difficulty the Apostles must have had to encounter, in persuading men in their days to believe such a story on their testimony.

But again, the object for which people were required to believe this story was a very unpopular one. When people's inclinations are much engaged in behalf of anything, they are more disposed to believe whatever is favorable to it; but when the belief of anything would lead to results which are

contrary to their inclinations, they are proportionably slow to believe. We see every day how obstinately people will reject any statement that makes against their own political or religious party.

Now, Christianity, although really the best news that ever came to the world, appeared, at first sight, to come like bad news to every body. The Jews, for example, who were expecting that Christ would come, expected that he was to be a great King and Conqueror, and was to make them the greatest nation in the world. And when they were told that a poor man who had been brought up as a carpenter, who had travelled through the country on foot, preaching religion to the people, and who was at last taken up by their rulers and actually crucified, like a common slave and evil-doer, between two thieves,—that this man was the Christ, from whom they expected so much, and that they had all along been mistaken in expecting a great kingdom in this world, for that his kingdom was not of this, but of another world,—you may easily imagine what must have been their disappointment, and how very little they would be disposed to believe that Jesus rose from the dead, when they found that they must at the same time give up all their hopes of wealth and greatness, and consent to

look to another world for the fulfilment of their expectations.

To the Pagans, also, of the Roman empire, Christianity would appear as most mortifying doctrine, for they were required to give up their old established forms and ideas of religion, and to receive a religion from the Jews. Now, the Jews were universally hated and despised. They were particularly stigmatised as being superstitious and credulous: and you may think what it must have cost a proud Roman to acknowledge, as his Lord and Master, a poor persecuted Jew,—one whom the Roman governor of his province had put to death on a charge of sedition. Surely nothing but the most overpowering evidence could have convinced any Roman that Jesus rose from the dead, when the result was to be that he was thus to acknowledge him as his Chief, and to take his laws and precepts as the rule of his conduct.

But, yet further, Christianity required that men should reform their morals—that every man should give up his sins—all his habits of indulgence, even if they were as dear to him as a right foot or a right eye, and declared that no man could be received as a Christian who continued to live in the habitual practice of any sin. We see at the present day,

and we feel within us, how difficult a thing it is for men to make up their minds to give up their sins, and we can easily conceive how determinedly men would resist any such story as that a dead man had risen to life at the present day, if the object was to make them give up their vices. Now, there must have been the same difficulty in the days of the Apostles, and they must have found men as much disposed to reject their declarations, that Christ, who was crucified, had risen from the dead, when they found that by believing that fact, they would be expected to enter upon an entire reformation of their whole lives.

But yet again, in no part of the world could a person become a Christian without exposing himself to persecution. Jesus, while he lived, had laid open the wickedness and hypocrisy of the ruling men among the Jews; they therefore considered him and his followers as their enemies. Nor did their enmity rest till they had taken away his life. They then persecuted all who acknowledged him. No man in Judea could become a Christian without exposing himself to persecution—the loss of all his property, and the imminent danger of his life. You may conceive how very little disposed people would be to believe that Jesus rose from the dead,

when they found that their acknowledging that fact was to be followed up by requiring them to expose themselves to such deadly enmity and persecution.

The Roman rulers soon took the same view of Christianity that the Jewish rulers did. We can easily see what their feelings must have been, from the history of Herod, who, because John the Baptist told him that it was not lawful for him to have his brother's wife, put him in prison, and afterwards, at the instigation of the wicked woman with whom he was living, ordered him to be beheaded. So the Christian teachers taught everywhere that it was unlawful for either rulers or people to indulge in vices which were then commonly practised. This provoked both, so that the rulers soon denounced Christians as rebels; and the people having the same cause of enmity to them, carried into effect the persecuting orders of their rulers with the most savage fury. Yet in the face of all this, the belief in the Christian history continued to spread; that is, more and more people came to be convinced that Jesus Christ had really been crucified and had risen from the dead.

From all this it is very evident that the Apostles must have been able to bring the most convincing proofs of the truth of their testimony. And, indeed,

it seems impossible to account for their success without believing what the New Testament tells us; —that the Apostles were enabled by God to work miracles, and so to command the attention and belief of multitudes.

Perhaps it may occur to some, or be suggested to them, that the religion of Mahomet rose in circumstances very similar to Christianity, and overspread a considerable part of the world, and yet that we do not believe it to be true on that account. But the circumstances under which Mahometanism arose, were altogether the reverse of those in which Christianity was established. In the first place, Mahomet commenced his imposture after Christianity was generally received in the Roman empire, and he availed himself of some of the doctrines of Christianity which commend themselves to the natural understanding of men, such as the existence of one supreme God, omitting those doctrines at which people are most likely to take offence. All the superiority of his doctrine to Paganism, he derived from Christianity, for his religion is rather to be regarded as a corruption of Christianity than a new religion. In the next place, he did not insist that men should give up their sins, but on the contrary allowed sensuality, and promised all the joys

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of paradise to those who were killed in fighting for his cause. Lastly, he propagated his religion by the sword ; so that his followers were never exposed to persecution, but were always the assailing party. The religion of Mahomet has *never made way in any country where its opponents had the power in their hands, and were disposed to use it against that religion.*

Thus the rise of the religion of Mahomet out of a corrupt form of Christianity, and its progress by force of arms, can be easily accounted for, without supposing any supernatural agency ; while the rise and progress of Christianity cannot be so accounted for.

LESSON IV.

ANCIENT BOOKS.

WE have spoken in a former Lesson of ancient books, which are written in the ancient Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, such as the Holy Scriptures, the writings of Josephus, and certain

other ancient books, from which we derive our knowledge of the state of the Roman empire at the time when Christianity began to be promulgated. But some persons suppose that evidences derived from such books must be evidences only to the *learned*, who are able to examine ancient books, and to read them in the original languages, and that an ordinary unlearned Christian must take their word for what they tell him.

You do, indeed, read in English the accounts of what the Lord Jesus and his Apostles said and did, and of what befell them. But the English book which we call the Bible professes to be a translation of what was originally written in Greek and Hebrew, which you do not understand. And some one may perhaps ask you, how you can know, except by taking the word of the learned for it, that there *are* these Greek and Hebrew originals which have been handed down from ancient times? or how you can be sure that our translation of them are faithful, except by trusting to the translators?

And this is what many persons do. But others will be apt to say, "How can we tell that the learned have not deceived us? The Mahometans take the word of the learned men among them; and the Pagans do the same; and if the people

have been imposed upon by the learned in Mahometan and Pagan countries, how can we tell that it is not the same in Christian countries? What ground have we for trusting with such perfect confidence to our translators of the Scriptures, that they are men who would not deceive us?"

The truth is, however, that an unlearned Christian may have very good grounds for being a believer, without placing this entire confidence in any man. He may have reason to believe that there are ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, though he never saw one, nor could read it if he did. And he may be convinced that an English translation gives the meaning of the original, though he may not trust completely to any one's word. In fact, he may have the same sort of evidence in this case, which every one trusts to in many other cases, where none but a madman would have any doubt at all.

For instance, there is no one tolerably educated, who does not know that there is such a country as France, though he may never have been there himself. Who is there that doubts whether there are such cities as London, and Paris, and Rome, though he may never have visited them? Most people are fully convinced that the world is round, though

there are but few who have sailed round it. There are many persons living in the inland parts of these islands who never saw the sea ; and yet none of them, even the most ignorant clowns, have any doubt that there is such a thing as the sea. We believe all these, and many other such things, because we have been told them.

Now suppose any one should say, "How do you know that travellers have not imposed upon you in all these matters, as it is well known travellers are apt to do ? Is there any traveller you can so fully trust in, as to be quite sure he would not deceive you ?" What would you answer ? We suppose you would say, *one* traveller might, perhaps, deceive us ; or even two or three might possibly combine to propagate a false story, in some case where hardly any one would have the opportunity to detect them ; but in these matters there are hundreds and thousands who would be sure to contradict the accounts if they were not true ; and travellers are often glad of an opportunity of detecting each other's mistakes. Many of them disagree with each other in several particulars respecting the cities of Paris and Rome ; and if it had been false that there are any such cities at all, it is impossible but that the falsehood should have been speedily contradicted.

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And it is the same with the existence of the sea,—the roundness of the world,—and the other things that were mentioned.

It is in the same manner that we believe, on the word of astronomers, that the earth turns round every twenty-four hours, though we are insensible of the motion; and that the sun, which seems as if you could cover it with your hat, is immensely larger than the earth we inhabit; though there is not one person in ten thousand that has ever gone through the mathematical proof of this. And yet we have very good reason for believing it; not from any strong confidence in the honesty of any particular astronomer, but because the same things are attested by many different astronomers, who are so far from combining together in a false account, that many of them rejoice in any opportunity of detecting each other's mistakes.

Now, an unlearned man has just the same sort of reason for believing that there are copies in the ancient languages of the Christian sacred books, and of the works of other ancient authors, who mention some things connected with the origin of Christianity. There is no need for him to place full confidence in any particular man's honesty: for if any book were forged by some learn-

ed men in these days, and put forth as a translation from an ancient book, there are many other learned men, of this, and of various other countries, and of different religions, who would be eager to make an inquiry, and examine the question, and would be sure to detect any forgery, especially on an important subject.

And it is the same with translators. Many of these are at variance with each other as to the precise sense of some particular passage ; and many of them are very much opposed to each other as to the doctrines which they believe to be taught in Scripture ; but all the different versions of the Bible agree as to the main outline of the history, and of the discourses recorded : and therefore an unlearned Christian may be as sure of the general sense of the original as if he understood the language of it, and could examine it for himself ; because he is sure that unbelievers, who are opposed to all Christians, or different sects of Christians, who are opposed to each other, would not fail to point out any errors in the translations made by their opponents. Scholars have an opportunity to examine and inquire into the meaning of the original works ; and, therefore, the very bitterness with which they dispute against each other, proves that where they all agree they must be right.

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All these ancient books, in short, and all the translations of them, are in the condition of witnesses in a court of justice; examined and cross-examined by friends and enemies, and brought face to face with each other, so as to make it certain that any falsehood or mistake will be brought to light.

No one need doubt, therefore, that the books of the English New Testament are really translated from ancient originals, and are, at least, not forgeries of the present day; because unbelievers in Christianity would not have failed to expose such a forgery. But in the case of the books of the Old Testament, we have a remarkable proof that they could never have been forged *by Christians* at all; because they are preserved and highly revered by the unbelieving Jews in various parts of the world at this day.

LESSON V.

PROPHECIES.

BUT these Old Testament Scriptures are, in some respects, more instructive to *us*, than even to the persons who lived in the Apostles' time, on account of the more complete fulfilment of some of the prophecies that has since taken place.

In the times of the Apostles, the religion of Jesus Christ was indeed spreading very rapidly, both among Jews and Gentiles; but still it was but a small and obscure portion of either that had embraced it, compared with those who either knew nothing of it, or rejected it with scorn and hatred. *Now*, Jesus is, and has been for many ages, acknowledged as Lord, in all the most civilised portions of the world. His disciples overthrew the religions of all the most powerful and enlightened nations, and produced, without conquest, and without the help of wealth, or of human power, or learning, the most wonderful change that ever was produced in men's opinions, and on the most important point. The number of those who profess Christianity is computed at about two hundred and fifty millions; comprehending all the most civilised nations of the world. And to estimate properly the

greatness of the effect produced, we should take into account that there are about one hundred and twenty millions of persons whose religion is so far founded on Christ's, that it could never have existed such as it is, if Christ had never appeared,—we mean the Mahometans; for though these have departed widely from the religion which Jesus taught, and regard Mahomet as a greater prophet than He, yet they acknowledge the Lord Jesus as a true prophet, and as the Messiah, or Christ; and profess that their religion is founded on his.

This should be taken into account; because what we are now speaking of is the great and wonderful *effect* produced,—the extraordinary *change* brought about in the world, by Christ and his Apostles. So great is this effect, that every man, whether believer or unbeliever, if not totally ignorant of history, must allow that Jesus Christ, even in a mere historical point of view, was THE MOST IMPORTANT AND EXTRAORDINARY PERSON that ever appeared on earth; and that He effected the most wonderful revolution that ever was effected in the religion of mankind. Yet this wonderful change was made by a person of the Jewish nation,—a nation which was never one of the greatest and most powerful,—never at all equal, in the same of

wisdom, and knowledge, and skill in the arts of life, to the Greeks and several other of the ancient nations. And all this was done by a person who was despised, and persecuted, and put to a shameful death, by the Jews themselves, his own countrymen. If, therefore, you were to ask any unbeliever in Christianity, "Who was the most wonderful person that ever existed? and *who* brought about the most extraordinary effect in the strangest and most wonderful manner?" he could hardly help answering that Jesus of Nazareth was the person.

And then you might ask him to explain how it happened (supposing our religion to be an invention of man) that all this had been foretold in the ancient prophecies of the Old Testament; in books which are carefully preserved, and held in high reverence, by the unbelieving Jews of this day.

You may find such prophecies in various parts of the Old Testament. As, for instance, it was prophesied that a great blessing to all the nations of the earth should spring from the nation that was to descend from Abraham. (Gen. xxii. 18.)

Now, when the descendants of Abraham did actually become a nation, and did receive, through Moses, a religion which they held in the highest

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vation, they would naturally expect the above prophecy to refer to the extension of that very religion. And any one of them professing to be a prophet, but speaking really as a mere man, would have been sure to confirm that expectation. Yet it was foretold that the religion which the Israelites had received from Moses was to give place to a new one: as in Jer. xxxi. 31: "Behold the days come [are coming], saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers," &c.

You may find other prophecies to the same effect in Jer. xxxii. 40, and xxxiii. 14; Ezek. xxxvii. 26; Micah iv. i.

It was prophesied, likewise, that it was not to be by the *whole Jewish nation* that those great effects were to be produced, but by *one particular person* of that nation; and, what is still more remarkable, that this one promised Saviour was to be "despised and rejected" by his own people; as you may read in Isaiah lii. and liii. And yet that He was (though put to death by them) to establish a great and extensive kingdom. For prophecies of these several points, see Isaiah ix. 6, xi. 1; Ezek. xxxiv. 23.

Now, many of these prophecies were delivered (as the unbelieving Jews of this day bear witness) six hundred years before the birth of Jesus, at which time, and also at the time when the Gospel was first preached, the Jews were so far from being a great and powerful people, that they had been conquered and brought into subjection to other nations. So that according to all human conjecture, nothing could have been more strange than the delivery of these prophecies, and their fulfilment.

And the proof from these prophecies is made very much the stronger by the *number of distinct particulars* which they mention; some of them seeming, at first sight, at variance with each other; but all of them agreeing with what has really taken place. Such a prophecy is like a complicated *lock*, with many and intricate wards, when you have found a key that opens it. An ordinary simple lock may be fitted by several different keys that were not made for it; just as a loose, general kind of prediction—of the coming of some great conqueror, or the like,—may have been made by guess, and may be found to agree with several different events. But the more numerous and complicated are the wards of a lock, the more certain you are

that a key which exactly fits it must be the right key; and that one of them, the key or the lock, must have been made for the other. And so it is with prophecies, that contain many, distinct, and seemingly opposite particulars, when we see the event fulfilling all those particulars.

This fulfilment, by the wide spread of Christ's religion among various nations, though it was *expected* by the early Christians, had not been *seen* by them as it is by *us*. They saw, however, that what Jesus had done and suffered did agree with the prophecies of the Old Testament; that He was born at the time when it had been foretold the Christ was to come, and when the whole Jewish nation were in expectation of his coming:—that He was acknowledged by his enemies to have wrought those miracles which had been prophesied of: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing," (Isaiah xxxv. 5; Luke vii. 22); that notwithstanding this, He had been rejected and put to death, as had been foretold; and that his disciples bore witness to his having risen from the dead, agreeably to other prophecies: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (*i. e.* the grave); neither wilt

thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”
(Psalms xvi. 10 ; Acts ii. 27.)

All this led them to conclude, when they examined candidly, that the miracles which they saw were not the work of evil spirits, but that the Gospel did come from God. On the other hand, we, who have not actually seen the miracles which *they* saw, have an advantage over them, in seeing such an extraordinary fulfilment of prophecy in what has happened since their time.

LESSON VI.

MIRACLES, PART I.

THE people who lived in the times of the Apostles, though they had not seen so much as we have, of the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies, yet had seen them so far fulfilled in Jesus, as to afford good reasons for receiving Him.

But you may, perhaps, be inclined to wonder they should need to search the Old Testament Scriptures for a confirmation of what the Apostles taught, if those Apostles really performed such miracles as we read of. It may seem strange to you, that men

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who healed the sick with a touch, and displayed so many other signs, far beyond human power, should not have been at once believed, when they called themselves God's messengers. But you must remember how much the people of those days were accustomed to believe in magic. Indeed, in much later times, long after Christianity prevailed, it was a very common notion that there were magicians who were able, through the help of evil demons, to work various miracles. And in the days of the Apostles this belief in the power of magic was very general, both among the Jews and the heathen. Those Jews among whom Jesus lived, and who rejected Him, maintained that He was a magician, who did mighty works through the prince of demons. This is not only related in the New Testament, but is a common tradition among the unbelieving Jews at this very day ; who have among them an ancient book giving this account of the origin of Christianity. And there can be no doubt that this must have been (as our sacred writers tell us it was) what the adversaries of Jesus maintained from the first. For if those who lived on the spot in his time, had denied or doubted the facts of the miracles, and had declared that the accounts of them were false tales, and that no miracles had ever really been wrought, we may be sure that the same would have been

said ever after by their descendants. If, therefore, any of the Jews among whom Jesus lived, had denied the fact of his miraculous powers, it is inconceivable that another generation of Jews should have betaken themselves to the pretence of magic, to account for miracles which had never been acknowledged at the time, but had been reckoned impostures by the very people among whom they were said to have been performed.

The Pagan adversaries of Christianity also seem to have had the same persuasion on this subject as the Jews, and to have attributed the Christian miracles to magical art. We learn this from all the remains that have come down to us of the ancient writings against Christianity, and of the answers to them, written by Christians.

Now, suppose that in the present day any one should appear, professing to be sent from God, and to work miracles as a sign of his being so sent, you would naturally think that the only question would be as to the reality of the miracles; and that all men would at once believe him, as soon as ever they were satisfied that he had performed something clearly beyond human power. But men certainly did not judge so in ancient times. It was not then, only *one* question, but *two*, that had to be settled; first, whether any sign had really been displayed

which showed a power beyond that of man ; and, secondly, whether this supernatural power came from God or from an evil demon.

Now, after the former of these questions was decided, that is, after the fact of the miracles was admitted, the Jews were inclined still to doubt or disbelieve the religion which Jesus taught, because it was so different from what they had been used to expect ; and hence it was, that the greater part of them attributed his miracles to magic. But others were of a more candid mind, and satisfied themselves that the ancient prophecies respecting the Christ did really agree with all that Jesus had done and suffered. And this it was that convinced them that his miracles were wrought, not by evil spirits, but by divine power ; and thus they were brought to the conclusion that “ the kingdom of heaven was at hand.”

If, then, any one should say to you, “ How great an advantage the people who lived in those days, and saw miracles performed before their eyes, must have had over us, who only read of them in ancient books ; and how can men in these days be expected to believe as firmly as *they* did ? ”—you may answer that different men’s trials and advantages are pretty nearly balanced. The people who

lived in those times were not (any more than ourselves) forced into belief whether they would or no ; but were left to exercise candour in judging fairly from the evidence before them. Those of them who were resolved to yield to their prejudices against Jesus, and to reject Him, found a ready excuse (an excuse which would not be listened to now), by attributing his miracles to the magical arts which in those days were commonly believed in. And again, though they saw many miracles which we only read of, they did not see that great miracle (as it may be called) which is before our eyes, in the fulfilment of prophecy since their time. They could see, indeed, many prophecies fulfilled in Jesus ; but we have an advantage over them in witnessing the more complete fulfilment of the prophecies respecting the wonderful spread of his religion.

LESSON VII.

MIRACLES, PART II.

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"BUT can we of these days really find sufficient proof," some one may say, "and such proof as is within the reach of ordinary Christians, for believing that miracles really were performed, which we never saw, but which are recorded in books, as having happened nearly 1800 years ago?" Is it not expecting a great deal of us, to require us to believe that there were persons who used to cure blindness and other diseases by a touch, or a word, and raise the dead, and still the raging of the sea, and feed the multitude with a few loaves?

Certainly these things are in themselves hard to be believed; and if we were to find in some ancient book accounts of some great wonders which led to no *effects that exist at this day*, and had nothing to do with the present state of things among us, we might well be excused for doubting or disbelieving such accounts; or, at least, none but learned men, who had the ability and the opportunity to make full inquiry into the evidence for such a book, could fairly be expected to trouble

themselves about the question. But the case of the Christian miracles is **not one of this kind**. They are closely connected with something which we do see before us at this day ; namely, with the existence of the Christian religion in so great a part of the world. A man cannot, indeed, be fairly required to believe anything very strange and unlikely, except when there is something still *more* strange and unlikely on the opposite side. Now, that is just the case with respect to the Christian miracles ; for, wonderful as the whole Gospel history is, the most wonderful thing of all is, that a Jewish peasant should have succeeded in changing the religion of the world. That He should have succeeded in doing this without displaying any miracles, would have been more wonderful than all the miracles that are recorded ; and that He should have accomplished all this by means of *pretended* miracles, when none were really performed, would be the most incredible of all. So that those who are unwilling to believe anything that is strange, cannot escape doing so by disbelieving the Gospel ; but will have to believe something still more strange, if they reject the Gospel.

And it is the same in many other cases, as well as in what relates to religion. We are often obliged

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to believe, at any rate, in something that is very wonderful, in order to avoid believing something else that is still more wonderful. For instance, it is well known that in these islands, and in several other parts of the world, there are great beds of sea-shells found near the tops of hills, sometimes several thousand feet above the sea. Now, it is certainly very hard to believe that the sea should ever have covered those places which now lie so far above it. And yet we are compelled to believe this ; because we cannot think of any other way that is not far more incredible, by which those shells have been deposited there.

And so it is with the Gospel history. We are sure that the Christian religion does now exist, and has overspread most of the civilised world ; and we know that it was not first introduced and propagated (like that of Mahomet) by force of arms. To believe that it was received, and made its way, without miracles, would be to believe something more miraculous (if one may so speak) than all the miracles that our books record.

But some people may say, that the ancient Jews and Pagans, who so readily believed in magical arts, and the power of demons, must have been very weak and credulous men ; and that, therefore, they

may have given credit to tales of miracles without making any careful inquiry. Now there is, indeed, no doubt that they were weak and credulous ; but this weakness and credulity would never have led them to believe what was against their early prejudices, and expectations, and wishes : quite the contrary. The more weak and credulous any man is, the harder it is to convince him of anything that is opposite to his habits of thought and inclination. He will readily receive without proof anything that falls in with his prejudices, and will be disposed to hold out against any evidence that goes against them.

Now, all the prejudices of the Jews and Pagans were against the religion that Jesus and his Apostles taught ; and, accordingly, we might have expected that the most credulous of them should have done just what our histories tell us they did ; that is, resolve to reject the religion at any rate, and readily satisfy themselves with some weak and absurd way of accounting for the miracles. But, credulous as they were about magic, the enemies of Jesus would never have resorted to that pretence if they could have denied the facts. They would certainly have been more ready to maintain, if possible, that no miracles had taken place, than to explain them

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as performed by magic ; because this pretence only went to make out that Jesus, notwithstanding his miracles, *might possibly* not come from God ; whereas, if they could have shown that He or his Apostles had attempted to deceive people by pretended miracles, this would at once have held them up to scorn as impostors.

We read in the Gospel of St. John (chap. ix.) that the Jewish rulers narrowly examined into the reality of a miracle performed by Jesus, on a man that was born blind. This is exactly what we may be sure must have been done in the case of other miracles also ; and if the enemies of Jesus could have succeeded in detecting and exposing any falsehood or trick, they would have been eager to do so, because they would have been thus sure to overthrow his pretensions at once.

It is plain, therefore, that the weakness and credulity of the people of those days would be very far from disposing them readily to give credit to miracles, in favor of a religion that was opposed to their prejudices ; and that, on the contrary such persons would be likely, some of them obstinately, to reject the religion, and others only gradually and slowly to receive it, after having carefully searched the ancient prophecies, and found that these went to con-

firm it. Now this is just the account that our histories give.

It appears certain, then, that the unbelieving Jews and Pagans of those days did find it impossible to throw any doubt on the fact of the miracles having really been performed; because *that* would have enabled them easily to expose Jesus to contempt as an impostor. Their acknowledging the miracles, and attributing them to magic, as the unbelieving Jews do to this day, shows that the evidence for them, after the strictest scrutiny by the most bitter enemies, was perfectly undeniable, at the time and place when they were said to be performed.

LESSON VIII.

MIRACLES, PART III.

THERE are persons, some of whom you may perhaps meet with, who, though they are believers in Christianity, yet will not allow that the miracles recorded in Scripture are any ground for their belief. They are convinced (they will tell you) that the Lord Jesus Christ came from God, because

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"never man spake like this man." They find the religion so pure and amiable in itself, and they feel it so well suited to their wants, and to the wants of all mankind, and so full of heavenly wisdom and goodness, that they need no other proof of its being from heaven; but as for miracles, these (they will tell you) are among the difficulties to be got over: they believe them as a *part* of the religion, from finding them recorded in the Bible, but they would have believed the Gospel as easily, or more easily, without them. The miracles (they will say) were indeed a proof to those who lived at the time, and *saw* them; but to us of the present day, who only *read* of them, they are a part of our faith, and not a part of the *evidence* of our faith. For it is a greater trial of faith, they say, to believe in such wonderful works as Jesus is said to have performed, than to believe that such wise and excellent doctrine as He delivered was truly from heaven.

Now, there is, indeed, much truth in a part of what these persons say; but they do not take a clear view of the whole subject of evidence. It is, indeed, true, that there is, as they observe, great weight in the internal evidence (as it is called) of Christianity; that is, the reasons for believing it from the character of the religion itself. The more

you study it, the more strongly you will perceive that it is such a religion as no *man* would have been likely to invent; and of all men, a Jew, most unlikely. But there are many different kinds of evidence for the same truth; and one kind of evidence may be the most impress one man's mind, and another another's. And, among the rest, the Christian miracles certainly are a very decisive proof of the truth of Christ's religion to any one, who is convinced (as you have seen there is reason to be) that they really were wrought. Of course, there is more difficulty for us in making out this point, than there was for men who lived at the same times and places with Jesus and his Apostles; but when this point *has* been made out, and we do believe the miracles, they are no less a proof of the religion to us than to those early Christians.

It is quite a mistake to suppose that the difficulty of proving any fact makes that fact, when it is proved, a less convincing proof of something else. For example,—to take an instance formerly given,—those who live in the neighbourhood of the places where great beds of sea-shell are found near the tops of hills, and have seen them there themselves, are convinced by this, that at some time or other those beds must have been under the sea. Now, a

person who lives at a distance from such places has more difficulty than those on the spot in making out whether there *are* any such beds of shells. He has to inquire of travellers, or of those who have conversed with them, and to consult books, and perhaps examine pieces of the rock containing some of the shells; but when once he is fully satisfied that there *are* such beds of sea-shells, this is just as good a proof to him as to the others that the sea must have formerly covered them.

And so also in respect of the Christian miracles. The difficulty we may have in deciding whether they were really wrought, does not make them (when we *are* convinced that they were wrought) a less decisive proof that the Christian religion is from God.

But as for the difficulty of believing in anything so strange and wonderful as those miracles, you should remember that every difficulty (as was observed before) should be weighed against that on the opposite side. Now, the difficulty of believing the miracles recorded in our sacred books, is much less than the opposite difficulty of believing that the Christian religion was established without miracles. That a Jewish peasant should have overthrown the religion of the civilised world with-

out the aid of any miracles, is far more miraculous, —at least, more incredible,—than anything that our books relate, and it will appear still more incredible, if you remember that this wonderful change was brought about *by means of an appeal* to miracles. Jesus and his Apostles did certainly *profess* to display miraculous powers in proof of their being sent from God; and this would have been the greatest hinderance to their propagating a new religion, if they really had possessed no such powers, because this pretence would have laid them open to detection and ridicule.

But there is a distinction between our religion and all others, which is often overlooked. Almost all religions have some miraculous pretensions connected with them; that is, miracles are recorded to have been wrought in support of some Pagan religion, among people who *already* believed it. But you will not find that any religion except ours was ever *introduced*,—and introduced among enemies,—by miraculous pretensions. Ours is the only faith that ever was *FOUNDED* on an appeal to the evidence of miracles. And we have every reason to believe, that no such attempt ever did or could succeed, if the miracles were not really performed. The difficulty, therefore, of believing that the Christian reli-

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Indeed, we have every reason to believe that many *more* miracles must have been performed than are particularly related. Several particular cases of our Lord's miracles were described; but besides these, we are told, in various places, of great multitudes of sick people being brought to him, and that "He healed them all." (Matt. xii. 15; xix. 2.) So, also, besides particular miracles related as done by the Apostles (Acts ii. 33; iii. 7; ix. 33; xiii. 11; xiv. 8; xxviii. 5), we are told, generally, of their not only performing many miracles (Acts viii. 6; xix. 11), but also bestowing miraculous powers on great numbers of disciples (Acts vi. 5, 8; x. 44; xix. 6). And we find St. Paul, in one of his Epistles, speaking of it as a thing familiarly known, that miracles were "the signs of an Apostle." (2 Cor. xii. 12.) And in all these books, we find miracles not boastfully dwelt on, or described as something unusual, but *alluded* to as familiarly known to the persons to whom the books were familiarly addressed; that is, to the Christians of those days.

But besides the accounts given in the Christian

Scriptures, we might be sure, from the very nature of the case, that the Apostles could never have even *gained a hearing*, at least among the Gentiles, if they had not displayed some extraordinary and supernatural power. Fancy a few poor Jewish fishermen, tentmakers, and peasants, going into one of the great Roman or Grecian cities, whose inhabitants were proud of the splendid temples and beautiful images of their gods, which had been worshipped time out of mind. They were proud, too, of their schools of philosophy, where those reputed the wise men among them discoursed on the most curious and sublime subjects to the youth of the noblest families; and then fancy these Jewish strangers telling them to cast away their images as an abominable folly,—to renounce the religion of their ancestors,—to reject with scorn the instructions of their philosophers,—and to receive instead, as a messenger from Heaven, a Jew of humble station, who had been put to the most shameful death. How do you think men would have been received, who should have made such an attempt as this, with merely such weak human means as preaching? You cannot doubt that all men would have scorned them, and ridiculed or pitied them as madmen.

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As for the wisdom, and purity, and sublimity of the religion of the Gospel, this might have gained them some attention,—not, indeed, among the mass of the people, who were too gross to relish or perceive this purity and wisdom,—but among a very few of the better sort, if once they could be brought to listen to the description of the religion. And this, perhaps, they might have done, if it had been taught by some Greek or Roman philosophers, famous for knowledge and wisdom. But the Gospel was preached by men of a nation which the Greeks and Romans looked down upon as barbarian; and whose religion especially, they scorned and detested for being so different from their own. And not only did the Apostles belong to this despised nation, but they were the outcasts of that very nation; being rejected and abhorred by the chief part of their Jewish brethren.

If, therefore, they had come among the Gentiles, teaching the most sublime religious doctrine, and trusting merely to the excellence of what they taught, it is impossible they should have even had a hearing. It is not enough to say, that no one would have *believed* them; but no one would even have *listened* to them, if they had not first roused men's serious attention by working (as we are told

they did) "remarkable [special] miracles." (Acts xix. 11.)

Afterwards, when the Gospel had spread so as to excite general attention, many men would be likely to listen to the preaching of it even by persons who did not pretend to miraculous power, but who merely bore witness to the miracles they had seen; giving proof, at the same time, that they were not false witnesses, by their firmness in facing persecution. And this was certainly a good ground for believing their testimony. For though men may be mistaken as to the *opinions* which they sincerely hold, they could not be mistaken as to such facts as the Christian miracles of which they professed themselves eye-witnesses; as the Apostles, for instance, were of their Master's resurrection. And it is not to be conceived that men would expose themselves to dangers, and tortures, and death, in attesting false stories, which they must have known to be false. If there had been any well-contrived imposture in respect of pretended miracles, it is impossible but that some persons, at least, out of the many hundreds brought forward as eye-witnesses, would have been induced by threats, tortures, or bribes, to betray the imposture.

There were many, therefore, who received the

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Gentiles at least, to listen to them, if they had not
begun by working evident miracles themselves. A
handful of Jewish strangers, of humble rank, would
never have obtained a hearing among the most
powerful, and most civilised, and proudest nations
of the world, if they had not at first roused their
attention by the display of some extraordinary
powers.

LESSON IX.

WONDERS AND SIGNS.

It is plain, for the reasons which have been put
before you, that the Apostles must have roused
men's attention, and gained themselves a hear-
ing, by performing,—as your books tell us they
did,—many wonderful works. And these works,
as well as those of Jesus, which they related,
must have been such as to admit of no mistake,

either about the facts, or about their being really supernatural. Else, surrounded as they were by enemies, and with men's prejudices opposed to them, it seems impossible they could have been believed, or even attended to. If for instance, there were a report of some sick men having been miraculously cured by them, but such a report as to leave a doubt either as to the *fact* of the cure having taken place, or as to the *manner* of the cure,—that is, whether the men might not have recovered by natural means,—any such doubt would have been enough to shut men's ears against them.

And besides this, it was necessary that the miracles should be both so numerous, and so various in kind, as to exceed the powers generally supposed to belong to magicians. For most persons seem to have thought that a magician might, through the aid of demons, be enabled to perform *some* miracles, and not others of a different kind. We find it related, accordingly, that Jesus not only healed the lame, and blind, and sick, some present and some absent, grown persons and children, but also raised the dead, fed a multitude with a few loaves, stilled the waves and winds at his bidding, blasted a tree at his word, changed water into wine, &c. And this seems to have been no more than a necessary

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condescension to the weakness of men's minds in those days. They did not at once conclude that He must be a true prophet from his working *one* miracle; but said, "When [the] Christ cometh, will he do *more* miracles than these which this man doeth?" (John vii. 31.) So, also, Nicodemus says,—not "No man can do *any* miracles," but,—*"No man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him."* (John iii. 2.) And the disciples, who had witnessed so many miraculous cures, were astonished, we are told, at finding that Jesus had a command over the storm: *"What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"* (Matt. viii. 27.)

And we find the same variety also in the miraculous gifts possessed by the Apostles, and bestowed by them on other Christians: (as you may see in 1 Cor. xii. and elsewhere.) You should observe, too, that it would not have satisfied men's minds merely to see some extraordinary occurrence, unless it were also something plainly *done* by the Apostles, as a *sign*, testifying that they were divine messengers. It would have been impossible for them, in the midst of adversaries, to take advantage of some remarkable event, calling it a miracle, and to explain it so as to favour their own pretensions.

This has often been done, indeed, in support of some religion, or some doctrine, which men already believe, or are inclined to believe. The Pagans were, many of them, ready enough to attribute any thing wonderful to a miraculous interference of Jupiter or some of their other gods. And so, also, Mahomet easily persuaded his followers that some of his victories were miraculous, and that God sent angels to fight for him. He was a great warrior, and his followers being full of enthusiasm, and eager for conquest, glory, and plunder, often defeated a very superior force of their enemies, and gained victories which may be rightly called wonderful: though not more wonderful than several which have been gained by others. It is not strange, therefore, that Mahomet should easily have persuaded them that their victories were miraculous, and were a proof that God was on their side.

In all times, indeed, men are to be found who call any extraordinary event miraculous, and interpret it so as to favour their own views and prejudices. If a man's life is preserved from shipwreck, or any other danger, in a remarkable manner, many people speak of it as a miraculous escape. Or, if a man loses his life in a remarkable manner, or a plot is discovered by some curious train of circum-

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stances, or, in short, if any extraordinary event takes place, there are persons who at once call it a miraculous interference, and a *sign* of the Divine favor or displeasure towards some of the parties concerned.

And you may often find men of opposite opinions putting opposite interpretations on the same event. This was the case when that curious meteor, called the "Northern Lights," was first observed in England, which was about the beginning of the last century ; for it is a very curious fact, that though it has often been seen *since*, (particularly in 1836 and 1837,) it is not recorded ever to have been seen in the British Islands *before* that time. On its first appearing, people were greatly astonished and alarmed, at an appearance which seemed out of the course of nature ; and many declared that it was a supernatural sign, and that it portended such and such events ; each giving a different interpretation, according to his own particular prejudices. But people of sense saw it that was no *sign* at all ; because there was no one who had either any authority to declare, or power to know, *what* it was a sign of.

But it is very rash to pronounce in this manner as to any remarkable event that occurs. And it is

not only rash, but uncharitable also, to pronounce that sudden death, or any extraordinary affliction that befalls any one, is a miraculous Divine judgment upon him. That is what the people of Melita did in respect of St. Paul, when they saw the viper fasten on his hand, and concluded that he must be a murderer pursued by the Divine vengeance.—(Acts xxviii. 3, 4.) This uncharitable rashness is censured by our Lord in Luke xiii. 2, 3. The people of Melita were ignorant Pagans: but we of these days ought to know better. You may easily perceive, on reflection, that a mere *wonderful occurrence*, of itself, *proves* nothing; but when a man *does* something that is beyond human power to do, or *foretells* something beyond human foresight, and makes this a testimony of his coming from God, it is then, and then only, that he is properly said to offer a miraculous proof. And, accordingly, the works performed by Jesus and his Apostles are called in Scripture, (as they really were,) not merely *Miracles*, (that is, *wonders*,) but *Signs*; that is, miraculous *evidence*. (Mark xvi. 20.)

For instance, that a violent storm should suddenly cease, and be succeeded by a complete calm, is something extraordinary; but of itself proves nothing. But when the disciples heard

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Jesus give his command, and rebuke the wind and waves, which immediately became still, they justly regarded this as a *sign* that God was with Him. (Matt. VIII. 26.) So, also, that a person seemingly dead should suddenly revive and rise up, is indeed a wonderful event; but, of itself, is merely a wonder. But when the Lord Jesus told the child of Jairus, (Luke VIII. 54,) and the widow's son of Nain, (Luke VII. 14,) to rise up, and each of them did so at his word, these became proofs of his divine mission. These were among the "*works*," which, as He said, "*bore witness of Him*." Again, if any one who is opposing some particular religious sect or system, should suddenly lose his eyesight, it would be very presumptuous to pronounce at once that he was struck blind as a Divine judgment. But when St. Paul rebuked Elymas, and declared that the hand of the Lord was upon him, and that he should become blind, and immediately a darkness did fall upon him (Acts XIII. 10, 11), the Roman governor justly regarded this as a *sign*, and believed accordingly in what Paul was teaching.

Anything wonderful, in short, is then, and then only, a miraculous *Sign*, when some one *performs* or *foretells* it, in a manner surpassing human power,

so as to make it *attest* the truth of what he says. And this may fairly be required of any one professing to be a messenger from Heaven. For if a stranger were to come to you, professing to bring a message from some friend of yours, you would naturally expect him to show you that friend's handwriting, or some other such *token*, to prove that he really was so sent. And so, also, when a man comes to this country as an ambassador from some other country, he is required first to produce his "*credentials*," as they are called; that is, papers, which prove that he is no impostor, but is really commissioned as an ambassador. And it is equally right that men professing to bring a message immediately from God, should be required to show what may be called their "*credentials*;" that is, such miraculous power as God alone could have bestowed, as a sign or token, to prove the reality of their divine commission.

But credulous and superstitious people often overlook this rule; and are ready to interpret as a miraculous sign any remarkable occurrence,—such as a victory, or a famine, or thunder-storm, or a sudden recovery from sickness, or the like,—when these are so explained as to favor, or at least not oppose their prejudices, and the religious belief they are already inclined to. But the Apostles found no such pre-

of what he says. of any one professing. For if a stranger to bring a message would naturally expect the handwriting, or that he really was a man comes to this some other country, "credentials," as which prove that commissioned as an right that men proceed immediately from God, may be called their miraculous power as as a sign or token, to commission.

people often over-interpret as a miracle,—such as a storm, or a sudden e,—when these are not oppose their if they are already found no such pre-

judices in their favor. They would never have been allowed to explain in their own way anything strange that might happen. On the contrary, all the superstitious credulity of the people was *opposed* to them. And instead of men being ready to cry "Miracle!" when anything extraordinary occurred, and to interpret it in favor of Christianity, the Apostles found the most credulous men disposed rather to attribute the Christian miracles to magic.

In order to gain converts, therefore, or even to obtain a hearing, they must have shown (as our books tell us they did) many mighty works, evidently performed by them, as the "Signs of an Apostle."

LESSON X.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCES.

You will have seen, by this time, what a mistake it is to suppose, that ordinary Christians cannot be taught to understand the evidence for their religion, but must be content to take it for granted, as the Pagans do theirs, because they have been brought

up in it. There are, indeed, many who do so, but that is because, when they speak of "the evidences of Christianity," they mean *all* the evidences. And, certainly, to be well acquainted with all of these, would be enough to occupy the whole life of a studious man, even though he should devote himself entirely to that study. Indeed, to go through all the books that have been written on the subject, and to examine and thoroughly master all the arguments on both sides that have ever been brought forward, would be more than any one man could accomplish, even if he had nothing else to do. But there are many things which you may have very good reasons for believing, though you may not know a tenth part of the proofs of them that have been or might be produced. For instance, you may have good grounds for believing that there is such a city as Rome, and that it was formerly the capital of a mighty empire, of which Britain was one of the provinces. But *all* the evidence that might be brought forward in proof of this, would be enough to occupy a learned man for many years, if he were to examine it thoroughly. It is sufficient in any case, if we have *enough* of evidence to warrant our belief; even though there should be much more evidence of the same thing besides, which we have not examined. Although,

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therefore, the generality of Christians cannot be expected to know the whole, or near the whole, of the proofs of their religion, that is no reason against their seeking and obtaining proofs enough to convince a reasonable mind.

Even that small portion of the evidences you have now been learning, is perhaps more than sufficient for this purpose; though it is but a part even of what you may hereafter be able to understand.

It is certain that Christianity now exists; and that Jesus Christ is acknowledged as Lord and Master, (in words, at least,) among all the most civilised people of the world. It is certain, too, that this cannot have been always the case; but that Christianity must have been introduced, by some means or other, among the Jews and Pagans; who must have had some reasons that appeared to them very strong to induce them to change the religions they had been brought up in.

You know, also, that this great revolution in the religion of the world, was begun by a person of humble rank, in one of the least powerful and least esteemed of the ancient nations. It was not a mighty warrior, or a rich and powerful prince, or a learned philosopher, but a Jewish peasant that brought about this wonderful change. And you are

sure, accordingly, that no one, whether friend or enemy, can reasonably doubt that Jesus of Nazareth is, merely by his influence on the affairs of the world, the most extraordinary and most important personage that ever appeared.

Again, you have seen that there is good reason to be certain, that Jesus and his Apostles propagated their religion by an appeal to miracles; that is, that they professed to perform works beyond human power, as a sign of their being messengers from God. And no one has been able to point out any other way in which they did or could introduce the religion. Nor can we conceive how a few Jewish peasants, without power, or wealth, or learning, or popular prejudice on their side, could have been, at first, either believed or listened to, if they had not begun by appealing to the testimony of miraculous signs. Now this would have been no help, but a hinderance to their preaching, if their pretensions to supernatural powers had not been true; because, surrounded as they were by adversaries and men prejudiced against them, any attempt at imposture would have been detected, and would have exposed them to general scorn. And, accordingly, it does not appear that any of the Pagan religions,—in short, any religion except ours—ever was first introduced

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We have good grounds for believing, therefore, that the people of those times, even the enemies of Christianity, found it impossible to deny the fact of the miracles being wrought (see Acts iv. 16), and thence were driven to account for them as the work of evil spirits. And this we find recorded, not only in the writings of Christian authors, but also in those of Jewish and Pagan adversaries.

We find accounts, too, in the works of Pagan writers, as well as in the New Testament, of the severe persecutions which great numbers of the early Christians had to encounter. And this furnishes a proof of their sincerely believing, not only the truth of their religion, but also the miracles which many of them professed to have seen, and in which they could not have been mistaken. For, if these miracles had been impostures, it is incredible that such numbers of men should have exposed themselves to dangers and hardships to attest the truth of them, without any one being induced by suffering (and this, though some of them *were* driven to renounce Christianity,) to betray the imposture.

That the works of these writers have really come down to us, and that the general sense of them is

given in our translations, you have good reason to be convinced, even without understanding the original languages, or examining ancient manuscripts. You need not take the word of a scholar for this, or feel such full confidence in the honesty of any two or three learned men, as to trust that they would not deceive you in anything, and to believe on their authority. There is, and has been, so great a number of learned men in various countries and ages, some, opposed to Christianity, and others, Christians of different sects opposed to each other, that they never could have agreed in forging a book, or putting forth false translation. On the contrary, any supposed mistake or fraud of any one of them, the rest are ready to expose. So that there is no reasonable doubt as to anything in which they all agree.

And this, you have seen, is the same sort of evidence on which most men believe that the earth is round,—that there is such a city as Rome,—and many other things which they have not themselves seen, but which rest on the *uncontradicted* testimony of many independent witnesses.

You have seen also, that in respect of the books of the Old Testament there is this very remarkable circumstance, that they are preserved with the utmost care and reverence by the Jews, who reject

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And it was pointed out to you, that there are
 many parts of these prophecies of which we see the
 fulfilment before us, though the early Christians did
 not; namely, that a religion should arise among the
 Jews, which should have a wide spread among the
 Gentiles, but yet that it should be a *new* religion,
 not the same as taught by Moses; and that this
 religion should spring, not from the whole nation, but
 from one individual of that nation, and He a person
 despised, rejected, and persecuted even to death, by
 his own people.

All this, which is so unlike what any one would
 have foretold from mere guess, and which we see
 actually come to pass, is prophesied in books which
 enemies of Christianity (the unbelieving Jews of this
 day, reverence as divinely inspired.

Now, if you reflect attentively on all these heads
 of evidence which you have been learning, and of
 which this short summary has just been put before
 you, you will perceive that even a portion of it
 might be fairly considered as a strong reason to be
 given of the hope that is in you; but that, when
 you take the whole of *it together*, it is sufficient to

satisfy any reasonable mind ; for, to believe that so many marks of truth should be brought together by chance, or by *man's* contrivance, in favor of a false story,—to believe this, I say, would be much greater credulity than to believe that the Gospel really was from God.

These marks of truth, you should observe, are (as has been said) a vast deal stronger when *taken together*, and confirming each other. For, each of the separate proofs may be regarded as a distinct *witness*. And when several independent witnesses give the same evidence, their agreement may prove the matter completely, even when no one of those witnesses is, by himself, deserving of confidence. Suppose, for instance, that one out of several men,—none of them much to be relied on,—gives a particular account of some transaction which he professes to have seen : you may think it not unlikely that he may have invented the story, or have dreamed it ; but then, if his account is confirmed by another, and another, of these men, who, you are sure, could have had no communication with the first, you then conclude that it must be true ; because they could not have chanced, all of them, to invent the same story or to have the same dream. And so it is, when you have a number of different marks

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of truth meeting together, as they do, in the Gospel history. Even if each of these, taken separately, had much less force than it actually has, it would be infinitely unlikely that they should all happen to be found united in a false story.

These arguments, however, have been laid before you very briefly ; and hereafter, if you will study them at leisure and dwell upon them more fully, in your own mind, and in conversation with others, you will see the force of them still more and more.

But though these arguments are enough to satisfy you, that an ordinary Christian, who does not pretend to be a learned man, may yet believe in his religion on better grounds than the Pagans have for believing theirs, there are many other arguments besides, some of which are quite within the reach of the unlearned. In particular, what is called the internal evidence of Christianity,—that is, the proof drawn from the character of the religion itself, and of the Christian Scriptures, is a kind of evidence which you will find more and more satisfactory the more you reflect on and study the subject, if you endeavour, at the same time, sincerely to act up to the knowledge you acquire, and to be the better for it in your life.

LESSON XI.

INTERNAL EVIDENCES, PART I.

If the Christian religion was not from God, it must have been from man. It must have been a "cunningly devised fable" of artful impostors, or else a dream of crazy enthusiasts, or some mixture of these two, if it was not really, what it professed, to be a divine revelation.

To examine, then the *internal evidence*, is to inquire which of these is the most likely supposition; looking to the *character of the Gospel itself*;—to consider whether the religion itself and the Christian Scriptures, seem more likely to have proceeded from the God of truth, or from mere men, who were either designing impostors, or wild enthusiasts.

Now, it may said, that we are very imperfect judges of the question *what* is likely to have come from God, since we have such a faint and imperfect knowledge of Him; so that we cannot decide with any confidence what we ought to *expect* in a divine revelation. This is very true. But you should

remember that the question is not whether Christianity seems to us likely, *in itself*, to have come from God, and is just such as we should have expected a divine revelation to be ; but whether it is *more* likely to have come from God or from man. For we know that the religion does exist ; and therefore we have to consider not merely whether it is like what might be looked for in a true revelation from God, but also, whether it is *unlike* what might be looked for in the work of human impostors or enthusiasts.

Now, this is a question of which we *are* able to judge ; because we have, or may acquire, such a knowledge of *human* nature as to decide on good grounds, what is likely to have proceeded from man's device. And the more you learn of mankind, and of the works of various writers, and again, the more you study the Christian religion, the more you will see how different it is from any religion that mere men (and particularly Jews) would have been likely to contrive.

But a great part of this internal evidence is such, as, to require some experience and knowledge of the world, and reflection, as well as acquaintance with the Scriptures, to enable any one to take it in properly. Hereafter, you may have it in your power to learn, by degrees, a great deal more of this than it would

be possible clearly to put before you here, at once, in a small space. But still there are several internal marks of truth that may be pointed out ; which, though but a small part of what you may hereafter find, are yet of great importance.

For example, if the Christian religion had been contrived and propagated by a number of designing men, in such a way as would have seemed to them the best suited for gaining converts, you may be sure that they would naturally have put forth some book purporting to be written by Jesus Himself, laying down the principles and precepts of his religion, and answering to the books of the Law written by Moses. All men who were at all disposed to listen to the preaching of the Gospel, and to examine the Christian Scriptures, would have been likely to inquire, in the first place, (as no doubt many persons did,) for something written by the very Founder of the new religion. If, therefore, there had been any forgery, the forged books,—or at least the principal of them,—would certainly have been attributed to Jesus Christ as their author. And all that were not attributed to Him, would naturally have been published with the names of the most distinguished and eminent of the Apostles.

Now, the fact is, as you know, that of all the

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Christian Scriptures, there is no one book professing to be written by Christ Himself, and of the four Gospels, there are only two that are attributed even to any of the Apostles as the writers ; St. Matthew's and St. John's : and, again, of these two, St. John alone is much distinguished among the Apostles ; very little being recorded of St. Matthew in particular. The other two Gospels, and also the book of the Acts, which records the propagation of Christianity, have come down to us as the works of two men, who appear, indeed, to have been the companions of some of the most eminent of the Apostles, but who did not claim to be Apostles themselves.

All this is just the reverse of what might have been expected from crafty and designing men, seeking to impose on the credulous for the purpose of gaining converts.

Again, it is certain that at the time when Jesus appeared, the Jews were earnestly expecting a Christ, or Messiah, (that is, an anointed Deliverer,) who should be a mighty prince, and free them from subjection to the Romans, and make them a powerful nation, ruling over all the Gentiles. And this is what is still expected by the Jews at this day. Now if Jesus and his Apostles had been enthusiasts, or impostors, or a mixture of the two, they

would most likely have conformed to the prevailing expectations of the people. They would have been likely to give out that the "kingdom of heaven" which was "at hand" was a glorious worldly empire, such as the Jews had fixed their hopes on, instead of a "kingdom not of this world," which was what they did preach. And we know that the several pretended Christs who appeared a little before the destruction of Jerusalem, and even after it, did profess, each to come as a temporal deliverer and conqueror, agreeably to the prevailing notions. Jesus and his disciples, on the contrary, not only proclaimed no temporal kingdom, but did not even promise any worldly success and prosperity to their followers; but told them, that "in the world they should have tribulation."--(John xvi. 33.) And this is the more remarkable, because the Jews had been always brought up in the notion that worldly prosperity was a sign of God's favor; such being the rewards promised in the Mosaic law. The hardships and afflictions, therefore, in this life, which men were told they must make up their minds to, if they became Christians, were not only disheartening, but also likely to raise a prejudice in their minds against Jesus and his disciples, as if they could not be really favoured by God; according to the prophecy of Isaiah, (LII. 4,) "we did

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esteem Him stricken, *smitten of God*, and afflicted." All this, therefore, is what either impostors or enthusiasts, of any nation, but especially of the Jewish nation, would have been very unlikely to teach.

Again, if the Apostles had been designing men, willing to flatter the prejudices of the Jews, for the sake of making converts, but yet afraid of proclaiming Christ as a *temporal* king and deliverer, for fear of provoking the Romans, they would at least have taught that the Jews were to have *spiritual* superiority ; that is, that they were to be still God's peculiar people in a religious point of view. They would have taught that Jerusalem was still to be the Holy City, and that all men were to come thither to worship and offer sacrifices in the Temple, and were to observe all the laws of Moses, in order to obtain God's favor. This would have been the most acceptable doctrine to the Jews ; and what the Apostles, being themselves Jews, would hardly have failed to teach, if the Gospel had been a scheme of their devising. And accordingly we learn from the Acts, and from several of St. Paul's Epistles, (especially that to the Galatians,) that many of the Jewish converts did labor to bring the Gentile Christians to the observance of the Mosaic law. And the Apostles never would admit this

doctrine ; but taught that the Gentile Christians were not to take upon them the yoke of the Jewish law, and were perfectly on a level with their Jewish brethren ; and that, under the Gospel, Jerusalem and its Temple had no particular sanctity. Now, all this is just the opposite of what might have been expected of impostors or enthusiasts preaching a religion of their own fancy or contrivance.

It is true, indeed, that to have given this pre-eminence to the Jews, and their city and temple, though it would have been flattering to *Jewish* prejudices, and might have been likely to allure converts of *that* nation, would not have been so acceptable to the Gentiles, as a religion which should have put them on an equal footing with the Jews. But if the Gospel had been artfully framed to gratify and allure the Gentiles, it would at least have had *one* ordinance, which would have been acceptable to Jews and Gentiles alike ; namely, *the slaying of beasts in sacrifice*. In this point the Jewish and all the different Pagan religions agreed. Sheep and oxen were slain as the burnt offerings on the altars both of Jehovah and the heathen Gods. Indeed, it is a kind of worship so suitable to men's notions, that it was revived several ages after by the Mahometans, who have a sacrifice of a camel on certain

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festivals, as an ordinance of their religion. But at the time when Christianity first arose, neither Jew nor Pagan had ever heard of, or conceived such a thing, as religion in which no animals were sacrificed. They had always been so accustomed to these offerings, that they most likely regarded them as essential to every religion, and were astonished and shocked at finding that the Christian religion was without them. And it is incredible that Christianity *should* have been without them, if it had been a religion invented by men. It would never have entered into the minds of its authors to make it an exception to all the religions that existed, or that they had ever heard of; and that, too, in a point which would be likely to shock all men's feelings and prejudices.

The whole character, indeed, of the Christian religion differs so widely, in many particulars, both from the Jewish and from all the other religions which had ever existed in the world, that one cannot conceive how any men could, of themselves, have thought of any such system; much less, thought of it, as likely to be well received. And the same may be said of the character of Jesus Himself, as drawn by the Evangelists. It is quite unlike all that had ever before appeared, or been described, or imagined.

Another point to be observed is this; that mere men seeking to propagate their religion in whatever way they might think best, would naturally have been so eager to make converts that they would not have insisted very much on a strict moral life in those who did but show great zeal in their Master's cause; but would have allowed active services to their party to make amends for some neglect of other duties. Mahomet accordingly declared that the highest place in the Divine favor belonged to those who fought bravely in his cause. And in almost all sects and parties you may see the same disposition in men to reckon zeal in their cause as a virtue so great that it will excuse many and considerable faults in private life.

This mode of judging, which is so natural to man, is just the opposite of what we find in Jesus Christ and his Apostles. They not only taught their followers to be pure and upright [righteous], and kind and humble, but taught them also that nothing they could say or do in the cause of the Christian faith could make up for the want of these Christian virtues, or would be at all accepted by their Master. He not only compares a man who should hear his precepts without acting upon them, to one who "built a house on the sand," and reproaches those

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TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

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who called Him "Lord! Lord!" and "did not the things which he said," (Matt. vii. 26, Luke vi. 46,) but He also declares that those who had "preached in his name," and in his name even "done many wonderful works," should be disowned and rejected by him, if they were "workers of iniquity." (Matt. vii. 22, 23.) And the Apostles in like manner taught their converts that their professing the Christian faith was a reason for requiring, not the less, but the more, strictness of morals from them, (1 Cor. v. 11;) and that even the miraculous powers bestowed on them were worthless, if they had not that charity which is humble, gentle, patient, and self-denying. (1 Cor. xiii.)

All this is what we might have been expected from teachers sent from God. And experience shows how different it is from what might have been expected of mere human teachers, acting according to their own judgment and their natural feelings.

LESSON XII.

INTERNAL EVIDENCES, PART II.

You may observe, again, that the *kind* of moral duty which Jesus and his Apostles taught, was not what was the most likely to gain them popularity with their hearers. The Jews had a great deal of national pride in being God's holy and peculiar people; they looked on the Gentiles as unclean and outcasts; and had a particular hatred and contempt for the Samaritans. The Romans, again, were no less proud of their military glory, and political power; and the Greeks of their superior wisdom and refinement. And all were zealous for the glory, and greatness, and superiority, each of his own country. It was not acceptable to any of these to be taught to "love their enemies,"—to return good for evil,—to be humble and forgiving,—patient under persecution,—gentle and kind to all men; and lastly, to consider men of every race, and of every station, as on a level in respect of the Gospel promises; and that in God's sight there was to be "neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free." (Col. III. 11.)

Moreover, party-spirit ran very high among the Jews; especially between the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Now, an enthusiast would have most likely been a zealous partisan of one of these sects; and a scheming impostor, if he did not join one of them, would have been likely to aim at the favor of both, by flattering each in turn, and gratifying each by exposing the faults of their opponents. Jesus, on the contrary, in his discourses to each party, sets before them their own errors; (Luke xi. 42, &c.; xx 27;) and He does the same in respect of the Jews and Samaritans. (Luke x. 33; John iv. 22.)

All this is worthy of a "teacher sent from God," and is quite different from what we might expect of mere human teachers. Many men, it is true, would be ready to praise and to recommend a life of *greater* purity and uprightness than their neighbours, or they themselves, are accustomed to practise. Several of the ancient heathen philosophers wrote moral treatises containing some excellent precepts, and describing a much higher degree of virtue than was commonly found in the lives of the heathen generally, or even in the lives of those very philosophers themselves. And if the New Testament writers had been men of the higher and more educated classes,

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accustomed to converse with the learned, and to study philosophical works, instead of being, mostly, poor and ignorant Jewish fishermen and artizans, it would not have been wonderful that they should have taught a higher degree of morality than what men in general practised.

But the Gospel went beyond, not merely what men *practised*, but what they approved. It was not merely *better* than men's *conduct* ; but, in several points, *contrary* to their *principles*. For instance, "to love one's enemies,"—"to return good for evil"—"to be meek and lowly in spirit,"—"not easily provoked,"—but "forbearing, submissive, and long suffering ;" all this was not merely *not practised* by the ancient heathens and Jews, but it was not even *admired* : on the contrary it was regarded with scorn, as base and mean-spirited. And what is more, even now, we may often find professed Christians, while they hold in reverence the very books which teach such lessons, yet not only *practising* but *approving*, the very opposite. We may find some who value themselves on a quick resentment of affront (calling it "indignation," &c.), on using what they call "strong language," towards opponents ; that is, reviling and insult. And even fierce strife and bitter persecution will often be admired as "manly and

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spirited conduct,” and as a noble Christian zeal. And you will find all this even in men who venerate the very Gospel which relates how Jesus rebuked his Apostles for offering to call down fire from heaven on his enemies ; and told them that they “knew not what manner of spirit they were of.”

Since, then, Christianity is opposed not only to men’s natural *inclinations*, but also, in some points, to their *ideas* of what is dignified and praiseworthy, you may see how incredible it is that mere ordinary human beings should have contrived a religion, which condemns, not only men’s *conduct*, but their *principles*.

Then, again, if you look to the style of writing in the historical books, (the four Gospels and the Acts,) you will observe that neither the miracles nor the sufferings of Christ or his Apostles are boastfully set forth, and eloquently described and remarked upon ; as would have been natural for writers desirous of making a strong impression on the reader. There is no endeavour to excite wonder, or admiration, or compassion, or indignation. There is nothing, in short, such as we should have expected in writers who were making up a marvellous story to produce an effect on men’s feelings and imaginations. The miracles performed, and the instances of heroic forti-

tude displayed, are all related briefly, calmly, and drily, and almost with an air of indifference, as if they were matters of every-day occurrence, and which the readers were familiar with. And this is, indeed, one strong proof that the readers to whom these books were addressed—the early Christians—really *were* (as the books themselves give us to understand they were,) familiar with these things; in short, that the persecutions endured, and the Signs displayed, by the Apostles, really were, in those times and countries, common and notorious.

You should observe, also, the candid and frank simplicity with which the New Testament writers describe the weaknesses and faults of the disciples; not excepting some of the most eminent among the Apostles. Their “slowness of heart,” [that is dullness of understanding,]—their want of faith [trust] in their Master,—and their worldly ambition and jealousy among themselves, are spoken of without reserve, and as freely as the faults of their adversaries.

This, and some of the other points, in the New Testament, that have been noticed, would be very remarkable if met with in any *one* book; but it is still more so, when you consider that the same character runs through *all* the books of the New Testament, which are no less than twenty-seven distinct

compositions, of several different kinds, written apparently at considerable intervals of time from each other and which have come down to us as the works of no less than eight different authors. You might safely ask an unbeliever to point out the same number, or half the number, of writers in behalf of any Sect, Party, or System, all of them, without a single exception writing with the same modest simplicity, and without any attempt to excuse, or to extol, and set off themselves.

In this respect, and in many others, both the Christian religion itself, and the Christian Scriptures, are totally unlike what they might have been expected to be if they had been from man. They appear too simple, candid, and artless, to come from impostors ; and too calm, sober, and wise, for enthusiasts. And yet if Christianity were the device of men, these men must have been either the most deliberate, artful, and wicked of impostors, or else, by far the wildest and maddest set of enthusiasts that were ever combined together ; since they did not (as many crazy enthusiasts have done) appeal merely to their own inward feelings, and their dreams or visions, but to matter of fact coming under the evidence of the senses ; in which none but a complete madman could be mistaken, and most of which their adversaries were free to judge of as well as themselves.

LESSON XIII.

INTERNAL EVIDENCES, PART III.

THESE few heads, then, of internal evidence, which have been here briefly sketched out, would, even alone, furnish good reason for believing that the Gospel did not, and could not have come from man; and that, therefore it must have come from God. And yet these internal marks of truth, which have been here pointed out by way of specimens, are but a very small part of what you may hereafter make out for yourself; and are not even selected as being the principal and most conclusive, but only as those which could the most easily be put before you in a small compass. At some future time, when your power of judging is improved, you will feel the very character of our Saviour as described in the Gospels, to be (as I have hinted to you,) one of the strongest

proofs, and the most satisfactory and delightful proof of the truth of His religion. But this is rather to be felt than described ; and you will feel it only in proportion to your sincere desire and endeavour to conform your own character to the purest and best pattern you can find. The more, indeed, you learn of mankind, and of the Gospel, and the more you study, with a sincere desire to know what is true and to do what is right, both other books, ancient and modern, and also the Christian Scriptures, the more you will perceive (as has been above said,) how unlikely the Christian religion is to have been devised by man, and how well suited it is to meet the wants of man and to improve his nature.

But when you do come to perceive the force of the internal evidence for the truth of Christianity, you will find though it may be one of the best reasons to *have*, it will often not be the best to *give*. A great part of this kind of evidence is better fitted to furnish a consoling satisfaction to the mind of a believer, than to convince an unbeliever. For there is much of the excellence of the Christian religion that can only be learned fully from experience. Sincere believers perceive in it a wisdom and purity, and nobleness of character, which are not completely understood, nor thoroughly liked and relished by any one till he

has *become*, in a great degree, what the Christian religion is designed to *make* him : till he has something of such a character as the Gospel does not *find* in man, but *forms* in him.

And this seem to be that *Christian experience* which the Apostles,—especially St. John and St. Paul,—often appeal to as an evidence, (not indeed to unbelievers, who could not have had this experience ; but) in addressing their converts. “ The Spirit itself,” (says St. Paul, Rom. viii. 16,) “ beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God,” &c.

It seems, indeed, to have been designed that man’s conscience should bear witness not only *against* what is *wrong*, but also in *favor* of what is right. And hence, a Christian who has for some time been laboring to conform himself to the Gospel, and who finds his religious notions becoming clearer, and that he is growing better, and holier, and happier, gains, by this, an experimental proof, which confirms the other proofs, of the truth of his religion. His conscience testifies that he is practically influenced and “ led by the Spirit of Christ ;” and thus he is “ filled,” (as St. Paul says, Rom. xv. 13,) “ with all joy and peace in believing.”

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come, to such a Christian, stronger and stronger the more he "grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." But this proof from personal experience, is fitted (as has been said,) not so much for the first conversion of an unbeliever, as for the confirmation of a practical Christian: because no one else can feel, or fully understand and value it.

A life of genuine Christian virtue does, indeed, meet with some degree of approbation from most men, even though unbelievers; and it appears accordingly to have been, in the earliest times, a help towards the conversion of some of them. (1 Peter II. 12.) And it is for you to bring before the minds of those you live with, this kind of testimony to Christianity from its moral excellence, not so much by talking of it, as by setting it forth in your life, and "letting your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven." (Matt. v. 16.) But you must not expect that any one will completely feel all the force of this kind of internal evidence of Christianity, till he shall have become himself a believer and a sincerely practical believer. It is not easy to give a clear description of the inside of a well-built and commodious house, to one who is on

the outside and has never been in such a house, but has always lived in a tent, like the wild Arabs, or in a smoky, slovenly hovel. But you may be able to point out to him enough of what is on the outside, to induce him to come in: and when he *has* done this, he will gradually be able to judge for himself, and by the habits of neatness, order, cleanliness, and decency, which he will be likely to acquire by living in such a house, will gain more and more the power of perceiving the commodiousness of it. And so it is with the evidences of Christianity. As soon as a man has seen enough, as he easily may do, of good evidence to convince him that it is from God; if he will then be induced to *come in*, and heartily embrace it, and endeavour to understand it, and to apply it to himself so as to be the better for it in his life, he will then be rewarded by a fuller and clearer view of many other evidences which he could not at first take in. And such a person will thus obtain the fulfilment of that promise of our Master, “If any man is willing to do [will do], the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” (John vii. 17.)

Observe, then, that this last is a kind of evidence which *all* Christians ought to have, and will have more and more, in proportion as they fairly try the

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experiment of conforming themselves to the Gospel. Different persons may have been led by different kinds of proof, to embrace the Gospel: but when they *have* embraced it, they may all hope for this *confirmation* of their faith, by this further proof from experience. Suppose, for instance, some one should offer to several persons, suffering under a painful and dangerous disease, some medicine which he declared would relieve their sufferings, and restore them to health: it would be natural and reasonable for them to ask for some testimony or other proof, to assure them of this, before they made trial of the medicine: then, suppose them all to be so far convinced,—some by one proof, and some by another,—as to make trial of the medicine; and that they found themselves daily getting better as they took it: they would then have,—all of them,—an evidence from experience, confirming the former proofs that had originally brought them to make the trial.

But these persons, if they were wise would be convinced of the virtues of the medicine, not from its being immediately pleasant to the taste, or from its suddenly exciting and cheering them up, like a strong cordial; but from its gradually restoring their strength, and removing the symptoms of the disease, and advancing them daily towards perfect health. So, also,

Christian experience, you should remember, does not consist in violent transports, or any kind of sudden and overpowering impressions on the feelings ; but in a steady, habitual, and continued improvement of the heart and the conduct.

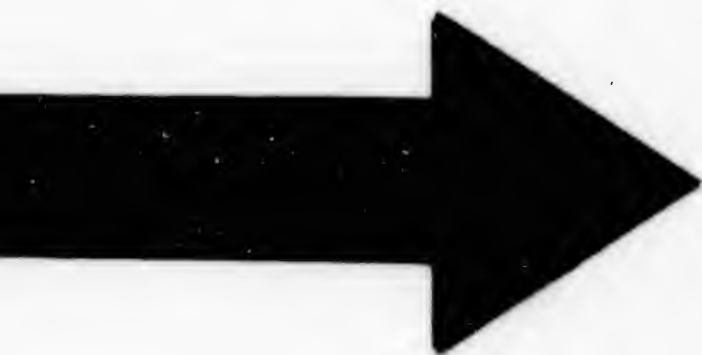
We do not say, you will observe,—that you or other Christians, may not experience such sudden transporting impressions as those just alluded to. But it is a settled habit,—an improved and improving character,—that is the Christian experience which we find described and alluded to in the New Testament Scriptures ; which thus afford an additional internal evidence of their having been written by sober-minded men.* For, the Apostles, if they had been wild enthusiasts, would have felt, and have taught their converts to expect, the sudden excitement of vehement emotions ; and would have referred to some immediate, single, and momentary impression of that kind, as Christian experience. But what they do teach, and perpetually impress on us, is, “ He that is Christ’s, hath crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts : ”—the test they refer to is, a “ growth in grace and knowledge, ”—a calm,

* See 2 Pet. i. 5 ; and 1 Thess. iv., 1 : and Galat. iv. 9, &c.

gradual, and steady advancement in "bringing forth fruit with *patience*;" (Luke VIII. 13.) For "**PATIENCE** (says St. Paul, Rom. v. 4,) worketh **EXPERIENCE**; and Experience, Hope; and Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given unto us."

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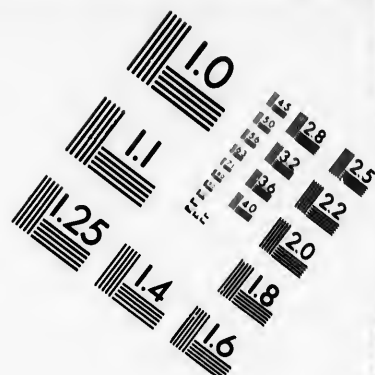
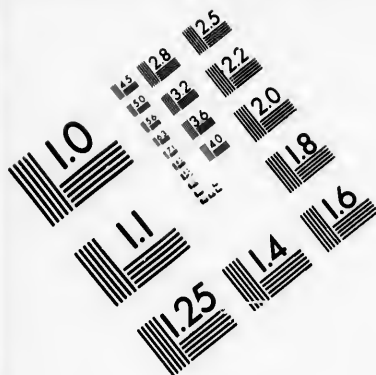
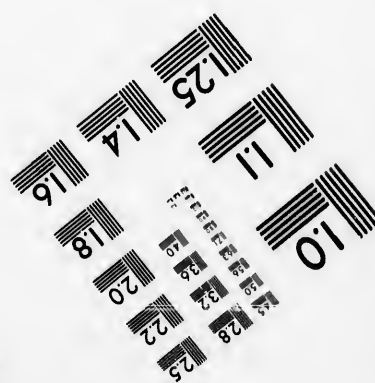
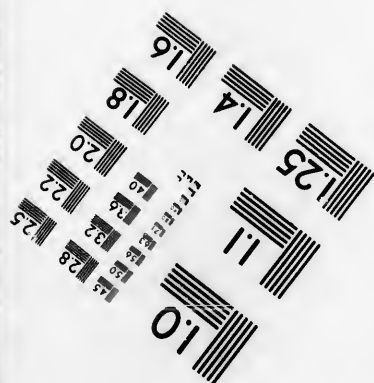
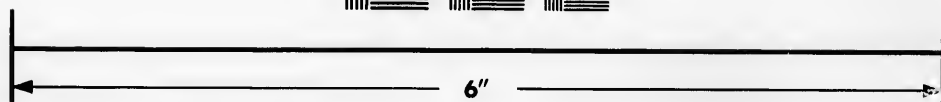
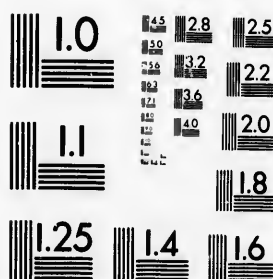


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LESSON XIV.

GOOD EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY.

ONE of the best arguments, then, that any man can use, either to his own mind or to other persons, is, that Christianity has made him a good man : that it prevents him from lying, stealing, slandering his neighbour, or doing violence to any one ; that it keeps him from drunkenness and all filthiness of language or of behaviour, and teaches and induces him to fulfil his duty to all around him—his parents, his brothers, his sisters, his wife, or his children ; and, indeed, if he cannot say with truth, that Christianity does this for him, it would be vain for him to stand forward as the supporter and defender of Christianity. He must admit that he knows nothing practically of the truth of Christianity, and all his professions of being a Christian would be answered by any infidel that might encounter him in this manner :—" If you be a Christian, why are you not acting as Christianity requires you to do ? You pretend to be a Christian, and yet your conduct seems to show that you do not

believe Christianity ; because you do not follow its directions. You say, Christianity directs you in the way of heaven, but you are going out of the way that Christianity directs." For, let it be remembered, that a true Christian is not one who merely professes to believe in Christ, but one who obeys Christ, and is like Christ in his character—who is humble, devout, meek, gentle, upright, obedient to the laws, who performs all his duties to his parents, his wife, his children, his relations, or his neighbours, as Christ requires him to do. "If any man," says the Scripture, "has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Not that any one can be *equal* to the Saviour in these respects ; but, although he cannot equal him, he may be like him in his character, and the more like he is to him, the more certain it is that he is truly a Christian. You say, that you are a disciple, that is, a scholar of Christ. Are you then learning from Christ how to conduct yourself?

When Christianity opens a man's understanding to his duty and induces him to fulfil it, the effect may be compared to the opening of the eyes of a blind man, so as to enable him to see his way.

Sometimes you may find a Christian who can say, "I well remember when I was blind—when

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I imagined that I might find some happiness in putting away all fear of God, in giving up myself to swearing, drinking, lying, and every abomination, when I imagined that I was making myself a great man, setting myself above vulgar prejudices, by thus throwing off all restraints of the law of God. Then I was blind and ignorant, and in my ignorance was degrading myself, rendering myself and every one about me unhappy, and ruining my soul ; but now I see my way clearly, Christianity has taught me to shun those wicked acts in which I once indulged, and God has helped me to resist temptation, because I have asked him for the sake of Jesus Christ ; and I now feel that I am happy in myself, and all my dear and best friends tell me how comfortable happy I now make them."

Or, if he cannot mention any such great change in his own character, he having, it may be, been well brought up, and never having given himself over to such vices ; he cannot but be able to say, "I see many others blind about me, vainly imagining that they are enjoying some happiness in drunkenness and riot and violence, in lying, stealing, and filthy language and conduct ; whereas, I can see that they can get nothing but mischief to themselves in that way, and do nothing for those who

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ought to be dear to them, but must render them miserable. Christianity has taught me this. It is because I am a Christian that I can say, that whereas they are blind, I see." If any man's Christianity does not produce this effect upon him, he is not a true Christian, and therefore he is not a fit person to set himself forward to argue with any one else about the truth of Christianity.

Now, if it can be shown that Christianity has produced great and extended effects of this description, correcting what is evil among men, introducing among them what is good and right, we shall have an evidence, of a more extended nature, of its Divine origin. And in order to do this, it is only necessary to compare the state of the heathen world with the state of those countries in which Christianity is professed.

There are crimes commonly practised in all heathen countries, which are not tolerated in any country professing Christianity. For example, in China, which is usually considered one of the most civilised and polished of heathen countries, it is a common practice for parents who do not wish to bring up a numerous family, to smother their children when they are infants. So common is this practice, that in the great city of Pekin, carts

are sent round every morning to gather up the bodies of the infants that may have been smothered and thrown into the streets during the night, that that they may be taken away and buried. In some districts of India, as well as in all the islands of the Pacific Ocean, it is a common thing to murder female children in their infancy, because the people think it more difficult to provide for them than for boys. In some districts of India, also, it is the practice when a man of any rank dies, that his widow is burned to death along with his corpse. In general, throughout the whole heathen world, women are oppressed and degraded, merely because men, being stronger, have it in their power to oppress and degrade them. Whereas, in Christian countries, women are treated with respect; in most of them it is considered a mark of politeness and propriety of conduct for men to yield the precedence to the women, and to consult their comfort in preference to their own, because women are weaker, and cannot maintain equal rights by force. This, then, is another evidence of the great blessing, and, consequently, of the Divine origin of Christianity.

War is at all times, and under all circumstances, horrible, letting loose the passions of men, and ex-

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citing them to deeds of blood and rapine, which, in
 a time of peace, many would shudder to think of;
 yet it is interesting to see, that although Christianity
 has not yet put an end to war, even in professing
 Christian countries, it has greatly mitigated its horrors.
 In the wars of the heathen no mercy is shown to
 the conquered. When an enemy's army passes
 through a country, it carries fire, and devastation;
 and murder everywhere in its track. When towns
 are taken by force there is usually a general mas-
 sacre of the inhabitants, young and old, male and
 female, with the exception; perhaps, of some that
 may be spared to be kept or sold for slaves. In
 the wars of the South Sea Islands, when a battle is
 won, it is the constant practice of the victors to
 send a detachment to murder the wives and children
 of the vanquished, and, in such cases, those misera-
 ble persons are treated with the most relentless bar-
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 read the recitals of the manner in which such per-
 sons are treated.

But these barbarities are, to a great extent at
 least, banished from warfare among those who pro-
 fess to be Christians. Most European soldiers,
 would consider themselves degraded by the imputa-
 tion of making war on women and children; and

it is the universal maxim, that, as far as it is possible, these are to be spared. A Christian soldier considers it rather his duty to protect females and children and old men from violence. There is no such thing now as murdering thousands of prisoners in cold blood, and the soldiers ornamenting themselves with their bones, as was practised by the ancestors of almost all European nations.

And this fact can be traced directly to the influence of Christianity. Our own forefathers in these islands were as guilty of such atrocities as any nation on the face of the earth. It is not a great many centuries since human sacrifices were offered up to the heathen idols that were worshiped in many parts of Europe, and the deeds of cruelty and treachery that were perpetrated in their wars have scarcely been outdone among the savages of the South Sea Islands. But, on the introduction of Christianity, a striking change took place; orders of knighthood were established, usually having some connexion with religion, for the protection of the weak and helpless, and these orders of knighthood contributed much to the ameliorating of the horrors of European warfare.

But the most remarkable fact is, that although Christianity has produced so great an effect in

far as it is possible, Christian soldier protect females and children. There is no doubt thousands of prisoners ornamenting the walls was practised by many nations.

Directly to the influence of fathers in these atrocities as any

It is not a great thing if sacrifices were offered to the gods, or were worshiped in temples, or deeds of cruelty committed in their wars, or the savages of the world, or the introduction of the Christian religion took place; orders were given, and all having some protection of the laws of knighthood, and of the horrors

is, that although it had an effect in

softening and refining the manners of European nations, yet comparatively few act under its genuine influence. A great many act from ideas of honor, propriety, humanity a juster view of the means of securing their own happiness. It is the general light that has been diffused by the introduction of Christianity on the whole subject of duty that has produced the effect. It has been the example, and the advice of the comparatively few who really do feel the power of Christianity, and act upon it, recommending itself to the judgment and consciences of the others, that has so far reformed the state of society; and from what has been done by the very imperfect reception which Christianity has hitherto met with in the hearts of men, we may learn what effect it will produce when it shall be universally understood and obeyed. We can see at a glance, that if any city or country were brought under the full influence of Christianity, there would at once be an end of all lying, theft, drunkenness, adultery, violence, and all uncleanness;—of all cruelty and carelessness in parents, disobedience in children, contention, evil-speaking, malignity of every description, and that that city or country would be at once in perfect peace and harmony,—every man living in security, none seeking to injure him or to make him afraid.

Can there be, therefore, any stronger evidence of a religion having come from the all-wise God that made us, than its fitness for producing such effects? If but your clock or watch went out of order, and you received such instructions as enabled you to put it perfectly into order again, you would admit that the instructions came from a person who thoroughly understood the mechanism of clocks or watches. So when we find instructions that, so far as they have been acted upon, have corrected the disorders of society, and which, we can see clearly, if they were fully and strictly adhered to, would perfectly cure these disorders, and reduce the whole world to peace, and comfort, and joy; should we not also admit, that such a religion must be from the God that made us, and who thoroughly understands the nature of the souls that he has made?

Or, to recur to the comparison of giving sight to the blind, what should we think of a medicine or a mode of treatment that would not merely give to one man his sight who had been born blind, but that should give sight to a whole nation of blind men, nay, and impart the faculty of seeing, not only to them, but to their children after them? Just such a medicine has Christianity been to Europe. It has not indeed fully restored

Europeans to the use of their moral sight; because they do not thoroughly apply it; but it has enabled them to see the way of duty so much more clearly than their forefathers did, or than the heathen around them do, that it may truly be said of them, that whereas their forefathers were, and their heathen neighbours are in darkness, with respect to duty, they can see their way with tolerable clearness.

LESSON XV.

OBJECTIONS, PART I.

As there are persons who reject the Christian religion, you may perhaps suppose that they have undertaken to refute the proofs of it; and that they have found answers, such as satisfy themselves, to the evidences and reasons on which it is believed: or at least to some of the principal of the reasons, such as have been just put before you.

But you are not likely to meet with any one who will undertake this, At least up to this time, no

such attempt has been made, in any book that has been hitherto published. Unbelievers, though they had nearly eighteen centuries to try, have never yet been able to show, or even attempted to show, how it could be that so many marks of truth should be found in the Gospel history, supposing it false. Of these marks of truth, even that portion (though far short of the whole) which has been just laid before you, are such as certainly never met together at least in any *known* false story ; and how it is that they are found in the Gospel history, if that be not true, has never been explained. No one has ever explained in what way the first disciples of Jesus, circumstanced as they were, succeeded, or could have succeeded, in propagating, as we know they did, such a religion as theirs, supposing it to be, not from God, but from man.

And yet many persons have written and spoken against Christianity. How then have they proceeded ? Instead of accounting for the introduction of Christianity by natural causes, and on the supposition of its being a mere human device, they are accustomed to put forward various difficulties, and start *objections* against several points in the religion. And unlearned Christians often find themselves hard pressed with these objections ; and suppose that they

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are called upon either to find answers to everything that can be urged against the Christian religion, and give a satisfactory solution of every difficulty that is pointed out, or else to abandon their faith; or, at least, confess that they cannot defend it.

Now you have, indeed, been taught that it is a Christian's duty, to be "ready to give an answer to every one that asks a reason of the hope that is in you." But this is a very different thing from being prepared to answer every *objection*. If a person asks you why you are a Christian, or, on what grounds you would call on a Pagan to embrace Christianity, this is quite a different thing from his asking you, "How can you explain this?" "and how do you reconcile that?" "and how do you remove such and such difficulties?"

I am not saying, (you will observe,) that no such questions as these ought ever to be asked; or that there is no occasion to seek any answers to them; but only that they are not at all the *same thing* as the other question,—the inquiry for a reason of our Christian hope. And it should also be observed, that it is not the most natural and reasonable way of examining any question, to *begin* with looking to the objections against any system, or plan, or history, before we inquire into the reasons in its favor. And

yet it is thus that some people are apt to proceed in the case of the Christian religion. Having been brought up in it from childhood, and received it merely as the religion of their fathers, they, perhaps, meet with some one who starts objections against several points ; and then they think themselves obliged to find an answer to each objection, and to explain every difficulty in the Gospel-system, without having begun by learning anything of the positive evidence on which it is founded. And the end of this sometimes is, that their minds are disturbed, and, perhaps, their faith overthrown before they have even begun to inquire into the subject in the right way.

Some persons will advise you, for fear of having your mind thus unsettled, to resolve at once never to listen to any objections against Christianity, or to make any inquiries or converse at all on the subject with any one who speaks of any doubts or difficulties ; but to make up your mind once for all, to hold fast the faith you have been brought up in, on the authority of wiser men than yourself, and never to attend to any reasoning on the subject.

You have already seen, that if our forefathers had gone upon this plan, we should at this day have been Pagans like them : and that if all the world had

proceeded thus when the Apostles first appeared, all men would have kept to the religion of their fathers, (as the chief part of the most learned and most powerful among them did,—see 1 Cor. i. 26,) and Christianity would not have existed at all. And you ought to observe also that when a learned man says that ordinary Christians had better shut their ears against all doubts and arguments, and be satisfied to take the word of the learned for the truth of the religion, a suspicion is often raised that he does not really believe it himself, but wishes to support it for the sake of the lower classes; and considers that the less they think, and reason, and inquire, the less danger there is of their being undeceived. Such appears to have been generally the state of mind of the educated classes among the ancient heathen, in respect of their religion. They thought it useful for the vulgar to believe in the fables about their gods; and being aware that these would not stand the test of examination, they did not approve of any inquiry on the subject.

But it is likely that many of those who discourage ordinary Christians from using their reason on the subject of Christian evidences, are not themselves unbelievers, but are merely timorous and distrustful, and see the dangers on one side, while they overlook

those on the other. They see that there is a danger of men making an ill use of their reason : which there certainly is, as well as any other gift. The servant, in the parable, (Luke xix. 20, Matt. xxv. 25,) who was intrusted with one talent, might have employed it ill, and lost it ; but it was not, therefore, the safe course to lay it by in a napkin. There is danger of the misuse of money, or of food. We know that many shorten their lives by intemperance. Yet food was bestowed for the support of life, and not for its destruction. And so, also, God has provided evidence to prove the truth of Christianity, and has given us the faculty of reason, by which we can understand that evidence ; and what is more, He has expressly directed us (1 Peter iii. 15,) to make that use of the faculty. But in the use of all his gifts there is danger ; which we cannot escape without diligent caution. And those who would guard men against the danger of doubt and disbelief, by discouraging the use of reason, are creating a much greater danger of the same kind, by the distrust which they manifest :—by appearing to suspect that their religion will not stand inquiry.

But is it, then, to be expected that you should be prepared to answer every objection that may be

brought against your religion? By no means. You may have very good reason for believing something against which there are many objections; and objections which you cannot answer, for want of sufficient knowledge of the subject. In many other cases besides that of religion, there will be difficulties on both sides of a question, which even the wisest man cannot clear up; though he may, perhaps, plainly see on which side the *greater* difficulties lie; and may even see good reasons for being fully satisfied *which* ought to be believed. Thus, in the case before mentioned, of the beds of sea-shells found far above the present level of the sea, there are strong objections against supposing either that the sea was formerly so much higher than now, or that those beds were so much lower, and were heaved up, many hundred feet, to the height where they now lie. And yet no one who has examined and inquired into the subject, has any doubt that those beds of shells do exist, and must at some former time have been the bottom of a sea.

To take another instance: the astronomer Copernicus first taught, about three hundred years ago, that the earth (which had formerly been supposed to be at rest in the midst of the universe, with all the heavenly bodies moving round it,) travels round the

sun in the course of a year, and is at the same time turning also on its own axis,—that is, rolling over like a ball—every twenty-four hours. This theory of his, (which has long since been universally admitted,) was at first met by many objections ; several of which neither he, nor any one else in those days, were able to answer. Many years afterwards, when astronomy was better understood, some objections were answered, and difficulties explained. But there were others, of which no explanation could be found, till a very short time ago, in the memory of many persons now living. Yet, long before that time, notwithstanding the objections, there was no one at all acquainted with the subject who had any doubt of the earth's motion.

Again, it is perfectly well established, that aerolites, —that is, stones from the sky,—have fallen in various countries, and at different times, to a considerable number. They are composed of iron, or a peculiar kind of iron-stone, and are of all sizes, from a few ounces to several hundred weight. No explanation has been given of them that is at all satisfactory. There are strong objections against supposing them either to have been thrown out by volcanoes in the moon, or to be fragments torn off from some other planets, or to be formed in the air. In

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future generations, perhaps, when chemistry and astronomy are much improved, more may be known about these wonderful stones. But, in the mean time, the fact of their having fallen is so well attested by numerous witnesses, that, in spite of all the difficulties, no one who has inquired into the subject, has any doubt the thing has really occurred, how-ever incredible it may have appeared.

Then, again, if we look to human transactions, we shall find several portions of history, even those which no one has any doubt of, full of such strange events, that difficulties might be pointed out in the accounts of them, and strong objections raised against the history, even when it rests on such satisfactory evidence as to be believed in spite of those objections. In the history, for instance, of Europe for the last forty years, there are many events so improbable in themselves,—especially all that relate to the wonderful rise, and greatness, and overthrow of the Empire of Napoleon Buonaparte,—that it would be easy to find objections sufficient to convince many persons that the history could not be true, were it not that it is so well attested as to be believed notwithstanding all the difficulties.

Numberless other examples might be brought, to show how many things there are which men be-

lieve,—and believe on very good grounds,—in spite of strong and real objections, which they cannot satisfactorily answer; these being outweighed by more and greater difficulties on the opposite side.

As for the particular objections which have been brought against the Christian religion, and the Christian Scriptures, it would, of course, be impossible to put before you, in a short compass, even the chief part of them, together with the answers that have been given. But what is of the most importance is, to lay down, generally, the right way of viewing objections, either against our religion, or against anything else; namely, first, that you should not *begin* by considering the objections to any statement or system, before you are acquainted with the evidence in favor of it; and secondly, that you should not think yourself bound to renounce your faith, if you cannot answer every objection; and clear up every difficulty that may be raised; but should remember that many things are believed, and must be believed, against which there are strong objections that have never been completely answered, when there are stronger objections against the opposite belief.

LESSON XVI.

OBJECTIONS, PART II.

Of the objections that have been brought against Christianity, there are some which ordinary Christians may learn enough to be able to refute for themselves. There are others, again, to which learned and able men have found answers, but which the generality of Christians cannot be expected to answer, or even to understand; and, again, there are other objections which no man, however learned, and however intelligent, can expect to answer fully, on account of the imperfect knowledge which belongs to man in this present life. For you are to observe, that when we speak of any one as having much knowledge and intelligence, we mean that he is so comparatively with other men; since the best informed man knows but few things, compared with those of which he is

ignorant ; and the wisest man cannot expect to understand all the works, and all the plans of his Creator. Now this is particularly important to be kept in mind in the present case ; because Christianity, we should remember, is a scheme imperfectly understood. What is revealed to us, must be, (supposing the religion to be true,) but a part, and perhaps but a small part, of the whole truth. There are many things of which at present we can know little or nothing, which have, or may have, a close connexion with the Christian religion. For instance, we are very little acquainted with more than a very *small part* of the *universe* ; of the *whole* history, past and future, of the *world* we inhabit ; and of the whole of *man's existence*.

This earth is but a speck compared with the rest of the planets which move round the sun, together with the enormous mass of the sun itself ; to say nothing of the other heavenly bodies. It is likely that all these are inhabited ; and it may be, that the Gospel which has been declared to us may be but one small portion of some vast scheme which concerns the inhabitants of numerous other worlds.

Then, again, we have no knowledge how long this our world is to continue. For aught we know, the Christian religion may not have existed a fifth

part, or a fiftieth part, of its whole time ; and it may, perhaps, have not produced yet, one-fiftieth of the effects it is destined to produce.

And we know that as it holds out the hope of immortality beyond the grave, it is connected with man's condition, not merely during his short life on earth, but for eternity.

Seeing, then, that Christianity, if true, must be a scheme so partially and imperfectly revealed to us, and so much connected with things of which man can have little or no knowledge, we might have expected that difficulties should be found in it, which the wisest of men are unable to explain. And men truly wise are not surprised or disheartened at meeting with such difficulties, but are prepared to expect them from the nature of the case.

The view which we have of any portion of a system, of which the whole is not before us, has been aptly compared to a map of an *inland country* ; in which we see rivers without source or mouth, and roads that seem to lead to nothing. A person who knows anything of geography, understands at once, on looking at such a map, that the sources and mouths of the rivers, and the towns which the roads lead to, are somewhere beyond the boundaries of the district ; though he may not know

where they lie. But any one who was very ill informed might be inclined presumptuously to find fault with the map which showed him only a part of the course of the rivers and roads. And it is the same with anything else, of which we see only a part, unless we recollect that it is but a part, and make allowance accordingly for our imperfect view of it.

There is much truth, therefore, in the Scotch proverb, that, "children and fools should never see half-finished works." They not only cannot guess what the whole world will be when complete, but are apt to presume to form a judgment without being aware of their own ignorance. If you were to see for the first time the beginning of the manufacture of some of the commonest articles, such, for instance, as the paper now before you, you would be at a loss, if you had never heard the process described, to guess what the workman was going to make. You would see a great trough full of a liquid like pap; and would never think of such a thing as a sheet of paper being made from it. And if you were to see the beginning of the building of a house or a ship, you would be very unfit to judge what sort of a work it would be when completed.

And the same holds good, only in a greater de-

gree, in respect of the plans of Divine wisdom. So small a portion of them is made known to us, that it would be strange if we did not find many difficulties,—such as man cannot expect to explain,—in that portion which we do see.

Although, however, you must not expect to be able to answer all objections that may be brought, you will be able, in proportion as you improve in knowledge, and in the habit of reflecting and reasoning on the subject, to find satisfactory answers to many which at first sight may have appeared very perplexing. And in particular, you will find that some difficulties in the Christian religion, which have been brought forward as objections to it, will appear to be, on the contrary, evidences in support of it. They may, indeed, still continue to be *difficulties* which you cannot fully explain, and yet may be so far from being *objections* against your faith, that they will even go to confirm it.

For instance, the bad lives of many Christians, who profess to expect that Jesus Christ will judge them, and yet act in opposition to what He taught, and to the example He gave, is an objection which has often been brought forward by unbelievers, and which probably influences their minds more than any other. Here is a religion, they say, which pro-

fesses to have been designed to work a great reformation in man's character, and yet we find the believers in this religion living as if there were no world but the present, and giving themselves up to all the base and evil passions of human nature, just as the heathen did. And besides those who are altogether careless and thoughtless about their religion, we find (they say) many who talk and think much of it, and profess great Christian zeal, and who yet live in hatred against their fellow-Christians, indulging in envy, slander, strife, and persecution of one another; and all the time professing to be devoted followers of One who taught them to love even their enemies, to return blessing for cursing and to be known as his disciples by their love towards each other.*

Now it is certainly most mortifying and disheartening to a sincere Christian to find that his religion has produced hitherto so much less improvement among mankind than he might have been disposed to expect from it. And you should consider deeply what a double guilt Christians will have to answer for, whose life is such as to bring an ill name on their religion; and who thus not only rebel against

* John xiii. 34.

their master, but lead others to reject him. But when the evil lives of so many Christians are brought as an objection against the Christian religion, you may reply, by asking whether this does not show how unlikely such religion is to have been devised by man. If you saw in any country the fields carefully ploughed and cleared, and sown with wheat, and yet continually sending up a growth of grass and thistles, which choked the wheat wherever they were not weeded out again and again, you would not suppose wheat to be indigenous (that is, to grow wild) in that country; but would conclude that if the land had been left to itself, it would have produced grass and thistles, and no wheat at all. So also, when you see men's natural character so opposite to the pure, and generous, and benevolent, and forgiving character of the Gospel, that even after they have received the Gospel, their lives are apt to be quite a contrast to Gospel-virtue, you cannot think it likely that such a being as man should have been the inventor of such religion as the Christian.

It is, indeed, strange that we should see men seeking to make amends for the want of Christian virtue by outward religious observances, and by active zeal,—often, bitter and persecuting zeal,—

in the cause of Christianity ; when the very Founder of our faith has declared that He abhors such conduct ; so that such Christians, in professing to be followers of Him, pronounce their own condemnation. This is certainly very strange ; but it shows, at least, how strong man's natural tendency is to that error ; and it shows, therefore, how much more incredible it is that men should themselves have devised a religion which thus condemns their principles. All men, in short, and especially Christians, when they are leading an unchristian life—I mean, a life on unchristian principles—(see page 79,) are so far bearing witness that Christianity could not have come from men.

And the same may be said of the absurd extravagances into which some fanatical enthusiasts have fallen ; and which have given occasion to unbelievers to throw ridicule on Christianity. There is nothing of this wild and extravagant character in our sacred books. On the contrary, their sobriety and calmness of tone presents a striking contrast to what we see in some enthusiasts. So that their absurdities, instead of being an objection against the Gospel, are a proof, on the contrary, what a different thing the Gospel would have been if it had been the work of enthusiasts.

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To take another instance; it has been brought as an objection against Christianity that it has not spread over the whole world. It professes to be designed to enlighten and improve all mankind; and yet, after nearly eighteen centuries, there still remains a very large portion of mankind who have not embraced it. All the most civilized nations, indeed, profess the Christian religion; but there are many millions unconverted; and the progress of the religion among these appears to be very slow. This may be thought very strange and unaccountable; but at least it shows that the religion could not have been originally founded and propagated by mere human means. The nations professing Christianity are now far more powerful and intelligent, and skilful in all the arts of life, than the rest of mankind; and yet though they send forth many active and zealous missionaries, the religion makes less progress in a century than it did in a few years, when it was preached by a handful of Jewish peasants and fishermen, with almost all the wealthy, and powerful, and learned, opposed to them. We cannot come near them in the work of conversion, though we have every advantage over them, except in respect of miraculous powers. And, therefore, we have an additional proof, that if they had not

had such powers, they could not have accomplished what they did.

Again, it is sometimes objected that our sacred books do not give any full and clear revelation of several very interesting particulars which men would naturally wish and expect to find in them. For example, there is a very short and scanty account of the creation of the world, and of the condition of the world before the flood; there is little said about angels; and what is more remarkable, there is no full and particular description given of a future state, and of the kind of life which the blest are to lead in heaven. All these, and especially the last, are very curious and interesting matters; and being beyond the reach of man to discover, it appears very strange to some persons that books professing to contain a divine revelation, should give so very brief and scanty an account of them; and leave such a natural curiosity unsatisfied.

Now this is a difficulty which you may *hereafter*, on attentive reflection, be able completely to explain. You may find good reason for deciding that this absence of all that goes to gratify mere curiosity, is just what might be expected in a revelation really coming from God. But you may perceive *at once* that it is *not* to be expected in a pretended revelation

devised by *men*. An impostor seeking to gain converts by pretending to have received a divine revelation, would have been sure to tempt the curiosity of the credulous by giving them a full description, of matters interesting to human minds. He would have sought to excite their feelings, and amuse their imaginations, by dwelling with all his eloquence on all the particulars of a future state, and on the nature and history of good and evil angels, and all those other things which are so scantily revealed in our Scriptures. And a wild enthusiast, again, who should have mistaken his dreams and fancies for a revelation from Heaven, would have been sure to have his dreams and fancies filled with things relating to the invisible world ; on which a diseased imagination is particularly apt to run wild.

Even though you should be unable, therefore, to understand why the Scriptures should be such as they are in this respect, supposing them to come from God, you may, at least, perceive that they are not such as would have come from man. In this, as well as in many other points, they are just the reverse of what might have been expected from impostors or enthusiasts.

Lastly, it is worth while to remember that all the difficulties of Christianity, which have been brought

forward as objections against it, are so far evidences in its favor, that the religion was introduced and established in *spite of them all*. Most of the objections which are brought forward in these days, had equal force,—and some of them much greater force,—at the time when the religion was first preached. And there were many others besides, which do not exist now ; especially what is called “the reproach of the cross ;” the scorn felt towards a religion whose founder suffered a kind of death reckoned in those days the most disgraceful ; and whose followers were almost all of them men of obscure station, of low birth, poor, unlearned, and without worldly power.

Yet in spite of all this, the religion prevailed. And that it should have made its way as it did, against so many obstacles, and difficulties, and objections, is one of the strongest proofs that it must have had some supernatural means of overcoming them, and that therefore it must have come from God.

LESSON XVII.

MODERN JEWS, PART I.

ONE of the difficulties with which the minds of some Christians are perplexed is, that Jesus Christ should have been rejected by the greater part of his countrymen, the Jews; and that they who had been, according to our Scriptures, for so many ages, God's favored and peculiar people, should be now, and for about seventeen centuries, without a country, and scattered as outcast strangers through the world.

Their present condition and past history are, indeed, something very extraordinary, and quite unlike what has befallen any other nation. But though we may not be able to explain all the circumstances relative to this wonderful people, it will be found on reflection that they furnish one of the strongest evidences for the truth of the very religion which they reject.

You know that when the Jews received the law through Moses, they were promised success and

prosperity as long as they should obey the Lord; and that heavy judgments were denounced against them in case of disobedience. It was foretold that they should be defeated by their enemies, driven from their country, scattered abroad, and continually harassed and oppressed. These threats are set forth in various parts of the books of Moses, and most particularly in the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy. "Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all the nations whither the Lord shall lead thee. The Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues of long continuance. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other.—Ver. 37, 59, 54.

And the same is to be found in various parts of the writings of several of the prophets who lived some ages after. In particular, there is one in Ezekiel, which agrees most remarkably, in one very curious particular, with the state of the Jews at this day; namely, where he declares that they should in the midst of their sufferings, remain a distinct people, unmixed with, and unlike other nations although it appears that in his time, they were very much disposed to unite themselves with the rest of mankind, so as to become one of the Gentile nations

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 "That which cometh into your mind shall not be at
 all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the
 families of the countries, to serve wood and stone,"
 (Ezekiel xx. 32.)

Now we find in the Old Testament, that, in
 several instances, these judgments did fall on the
 Jews, and especially when they were carried away
 captive to Babylon. And some persons may sup-
 pose that these instances were all that Moses and the
 prophets had in view. But whatever any one's
opinion may be, it is a *fact*, of which there can be
 no doubt, that the Jewish nation are actually suf-
 fering, at this day, such things as Moses and the
 prophets predicted. Whether Moses and Ezekiel
 had in view what is now taking place, or not, may
 be a matter of opinion ; but it is a matter of fact, that
 what is now taking place does agree with their pre-
 dictions. Jerusalem and its Temple were taken and
 burnt by the Romans, about forty years after the
 crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Jews were driven
 from their country and never allowed to settle in it
 again. Hundreds of thousands were sold as slaves ;
 and the whole people were cast forth as wanderers
 among the Gentiles ; and they have ever since re-
 mained a nation of exiles, unsettled, harassed, and

oppressed, in many instances most cruelly, not only by Pagans and Mahometans, but also (to our shame be it spoken) by Christian nations ; and still remaining a distinct people, though without a home.

One of the most remarkable points relative to these predictions respecting the Jews, and their present condition, is this : that the judgments spoken of by Moses, were threatened in case of their departing from the law which he delivered, and especially, in case of their worshipping false gods ; and yet, though in former times they were so apt to fall into idolatry, they have always, since the destruction of Jerusalem, steadily kept clear of that sin ; and have professed to be most scrupulous observers, of the law of Moses. And what is more, all the indignities and persecutions that any of them are exposed to, appear to be the *consequence* of the keeping to their religion, and not of their forsaking it. For a Jew has only to give up his religion, and conform to that of the country he lives in, whether Christian, Mahometan, or Pagan, and lay aside the observances of the law of Moses, and he immediately ceases to be reproached as a Jew and an alien, and is mingled with the people around him. So that the Jews of the present day seem to be suffering for their *observance* of the law, just the penalties threatened for their *departure* from it.

At first sight this seems very hard to explain ; but on reflection, you will find the difficulty cleared up, in such a way as to afford a strong confirmation of your faith. First, you should observe, that the Jews themselves admit that a Christ or Messiah was promised them ; and that to reject Him on his coming would be an act of rebellion against the Lord their God. Moses foretold that the Lord should raise up from among them a Prophet like Moses himself ; and "whosoever should not hear that Prophet," God "would require it of him ;" and "that he should be destroyed from among the people. (Deut. xviii. 15—19 ; Acts iii. 22, 23.) This is generally understood (as it is applied in the Acts,) to relate to the Messiah, or Christ ; whom the other prophetic writers of the Old Testament (as both Jews and Christians are agreed) more particularly foretold and described. Now we hold that the Jews have been guilty of this very act of disobedience, in rejecting the Christ. And though they, of course, do not confess themselves thus guilty, because they deny that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Christ, yet they so far agree with us as to acknowledge that the rejecting of the true Christ, on his coming, would be such a sin as would expose them to the judgment which Moses threatened.

To us, therefore, who do believe in Jesus, this affords an explanation of their suffering these judgments.

But, secondly, besides this you will perceive on looking more closely, that the Jews of these days do *not* really observe the law of Moses, though they profess and intend to do so. They have indeed kept to the *faith* of their forefathers, but not to their religious *observances*. For the chief part of the Jewish worship consisted in offering sacrifices distinctly appointed by the Lord Himself, in the law delivered by Moses. There was a sacrifice appointed to be offered up every day, and two on the Sabbath; besides several other sacrifices on particular occasions. Now, the modern Jews, though they abstain from certain meats forbidden in their law, and observe strictly the Sabbath and several other ordinances, yet do not offer any sacrifices at all; though sacrifices were appointed as the chief part of their worship.

The reason of this is, that they were strictly forbidden to offer sacrifices except in the *one place* which should be appointed by the Lord for that purpose. And the place last fixed on for these offerings having been the Temple at Jerusalem, which was destroyed about seventeen hundred years ago, and

has never been restored, the Jews are now left without any place in which they can lawfully offer the sacrifices which their law enjoins.

The Jews, accordingly, of the present day, plead that it is not from wilful disobedience, that they neglect these ordinances; but because they cannot help it. But to say that it is not their own fault that they do *not* observe the ordinances of the religion, is quite a different thing from saying that they do observe them. They may explain *why* they cannot keep the law of Moses; but they cannot say that they do keep it.

Now Christians hold that the ceremonies of that law, were not originally designed to be observed by all nations, and for ever—that “the law had only a shadow of good things to come,” (Heb. x. 1.) that is, of the Gospel; and that it was designed that the sacrificing of lambs and bullocks should cease at the coming of the Christ. A Jew, on the contrary, will not allow that these were designed ever to cease; but he cannot deny that they *have* ceased; and that, for above seventeen centuries. Let a Jew explain, if he can, how it is, that, for so long a time, Providence has put it out of the power of the Jews to observe the principal part of their religion, which they maintain was intended to be observed for ever.

And this also is very remarkable ; that the religion of the Jews is almost the only one that *could* have been abolished *against the will* of the people themselves, and while they resolve firmly to maintain it. *Their* religion, and theirs only could be, and has been, thus abolished in spite of their firm attachment to it, on account of its being dependent on a particular *place*—the Temple at Jerusalem. The Christian religion, or again any of the Pagan religions, could not be abolished by any force of enemies, if the persons professing the religion were sincere and resolute in keeping to it. To destroy a Christian place of worship, or to turn it into a Mohometan mosque, (as was done in many instances by the Turks,) would not prevent the exercise of the Christian religion. And even if Christianity were forbidden by law, and Christians persecuted, (as has in times past been actually done,) still if they were sincere and resolute, they might assemble secretly in woods or caves ; or they might fly to foreign countries to worship God according to their own faith ; and Christianity, though it might be driven out of one country, would still exist in others. And the same may be said of the Pagan religions. If it happened that any temple of Jupiter, or Diana, or Woden, were destroyed, this would not hinder

the worshippers of those gods from continuing to worship them as before and from offering sacrifices to them elsewhere.

But it was not so with the Jews. Their religion was so framed as to make the observance of its ordinances impossible, when their Temple was finally destroyed. It seems to have been designed and contrived by Divine Providence, that as their *law* was to be brought to an end by the Gospel, (for which it was a preparation,) so all men were to *perceive* that it did come to an end, notwithstanding the obstinate rejection of the Gospel by the greater part of the Jews. It was not left to be a question, and a matter of *opinion*, whether the sacrifices instituted by Moses were to be continued or not; but things were so ordered, as to put it out of man's power to continue them.

LESSON XVIII.

MODERN JEWS, PART II.

It is likely that when Jerusalem and its Temple were destroyed, several of the Jews who had till then rejected the Gospel, may have been at length converted, by the strong additional evidence which was thus afforded. They saw the heavy judgment that fell on their nation; and that it was such as to make the observance of their law impossible. They saw, also, that the event agreed with what Jesus had predicted forty years before. And they saw, too, that those of his followers who had been living in Jerusalem, had been enabled to escape destruction by following his directions, and fleeing to the mountains as soon as they saw Jerusalem encompassed by an army. It is, therefore, likely that several may have been led by this additional evidence, to embrace the Christian faith. But of this we have no records; as the book of Acts takes in only an earlier period. And in that book we have no par-

particulars of the numbers of those Jews who were converted; though it appears they must have amounted to many thousands; indeed, many *myriads*; that is, tens of thousands; as is said in the original Greek of Acts xxi. 20. But still these made but a small portion only of that great nation. And as the Jewish Christians would soon become mingled with the Gentile Christians, and cease to be a separate people, hence, all those who are known as Jews at this day, are the descendants of those who rejected the Gospel.

These are computed to amount, at the present time, notwithstanding the prodigious slaughter of them, at the taking of their city, and on several other occasions, to no less a number than 4,800,000, scattered through various parts of the world; everywhere mixing and trading with other nations; but everywhere kept distinct from them by their peculiar faith and religious observances. And everywhere they preserve and read with the utmost reverence their sacred books, which foretell the coming of the Messiah, or Christ, at a time which (by their own computations) is long since past, namely, about the time when Jesus did appear. Their books foretell, also, such judgments as their nation is suffering; and foretell, too, what is most remark-

able, that notwithstanding all this they shall still remain a separate people, unmixed with the other nations.

You should observe, too, that these prophecies are such as no one would ever have made by guess. Nothing could have been more unlikely than the events which have befallen the Jewish nation. Nothing like them has ever been foretold of any other nation ; There are, indeed, many cases recorded in history, of one nation conquering another, and either driving them out of the country, or keeping them in subjection. But in all these cases the conquered people who have lost their country, either settle themselves in some other land, or if they are wholly dispersed, generally become gradually mixed and blended with other nations ; as, for example, the Britons and Saxons, and Danes, and Normans, have been mixed up into one people in England.

The only people who at all resemble the Jews, in having been widely dispersed, and yet remaining distinct, are those commonly called Gipsies, and whose proper name is Zingaries, or Jingaries. It has been made out that they are an East-Indian nation, speaking a Hindoo dialect. And they are widely scattered through the world, keeping up their

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language, and some customs of their own, and in all the countries through which they wander. They are certainly a very remarkable people; and if there had been any prophecy (which there was not) of their being thus dispersed, we might well have believed that such a prophecy must have come from inspiration.

But in some remarkable points their condition differs from that of the Jew, and is less unaccountable.

First, they do not (like the Jews) live in towns among other men, and in houses; but dwell in tents, by the road-sides, and on commons; leading the life of strolling tinkers, pedlars, and fortune-tellers. This roaming life, of course, tends to keep them separate from the people of the countries in which they are found.

But the chief difference is, that the Gipsies are always ready, when required, to profess the religion of the country, whether Christian or Mahometan, or any other; seeming to have no religion of their own, and to be quite indifferent on the subject. The Jews on the contrary, always, when they are allowed, settle in towns along with other men; and are kept distinct from them by their religion, and by nothing else. They are the only people who are

everywhere separated from the people of the country in which they live, entirely by their peculiar faith and religious observances; and *that* too, though their religion is such (which is the strongest point of all) that the most important part of its ordinances,—the sacrifices ordained in their law,—*cannot* be observed by them.

The Jews, therefore, in their present condition, are a kind of standing miracle; being a monument of the wonderful fulfilment of the most extraordinary prophecies that were ever delivered; which prophecies they themselves preserve and bear witness to, though they shut their eyes to the fulfilment of them. No other account than this of the present state and past history of the Jews ever has been, or can be given, that is not open to objections greater than all the objections put together that have ever been brought against Christianity.

This, then, as well as several other difficulties in our religion, such as have been formerly mentioned, will be found, on examination, to be—even when you cannot fully explain them—not so much objections against the truth of your religion, as confirmations of it.

And when you do meet with any objections which you are at a loss to answer, you should re-

member, (as has been above said,) that there are many things which all men must believe, in spite of real difficulties which they cannot explain, when there are much greater difficulties on the opposite side, and when sufficient proof has been offered.

And in the present case, you have seen that it is not only difficult, but impossible, to account for the rise and prevalence of the Christian religion, supposing it not to have come from God. It certainly was introduced and propagated (which no other religion ever was; for the religion taught by Moses we acknowledge as a *part of our own*;) by an appeal to the evidence of miracles. Nothing but the display of supernatural powers could have gained even a hearing for the Apostles; surrounded as they were by adversaries prejudiced against their religion by their early education, and habits of thought, and inclinations, and hopes. And these supernatural powers were, as you have seen, acknowledged at the time by those adversaries, who were driven to attribute the Christian miracles to magic arts.

And you have seen, too, that the religion itself, and the character of Jesus Christ as drawn in the Christian Scriptures, and the whole of the narrative of those books, are quite different, and, indeed, opposite to what might have been expected from impostors or enthusiasts.

And, lastly, you have seen that many of the difficulties that have been brought as objections against Christianity, turn out, on careful inquiry, to be an additional evidence of its truth.

Among others, this is remarkably the case with the difficulties relating to the history and condition of the Jewish nation. Though you may not be able fully to explain all the circumstances relating to that wonderful people, you may learn from them, what they refuse to learn from themselves, a strong proof of the truth both of their Scriptures and of the Gospel which they obstinately reject. It is so ordered by Providence that even that very obstinacy is made to furnish an additional proof of Christianity, by setting *them* forth before all the world as a monument of fulfilled prophecy.

There are several other instructions and warnings also, which you may learn from attentively reflecting on the case of the Jews; and I will conclude by shortly mentioning a few of these.

First,—You should remember that when you see the Jews, both formerly and now, obstinately keeping to the faith of their forefathers, merely because it is what they were brought up in, and refusing to listen to any reasoning on the subject of religion, a Christian has no right to wonder at, or to blame them,

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if he does the same thing himself ; that is, if he is
satisfied to take upon trust whatever he may have
been told, and is resolved neither to seek nor to listen
to any arguments that may enable him "to give a
reason of the hope that is in him." And the same
may be said of Mahometans and Pagans, as well as
of the Jews. Though the Christian happens to
have a religion that is right, *he* is not more right than
they, if he goes on the same plan that they do. At
least, he is right only by chance, if he holds a faith
that is true, not *because* it is true, but merely be-
cause it is that of his forefathers.

Secondly,—You should remember that we are
apt to make much less allowance for the unbelieving
Jews than for the Christians who lead an unchristian
life ; and that we *ought* to do just the contrary.

It is difficult for us, of these days, to understand
and fully enter into the great difficulty which
the Jews had (and still have,) in overcoming all the
prejudices they had been brought up in, and which
were so flattering to their own nation as God's favored
people. It was a hard task for them to wean them-
selves from all the hopes and expectations of tem-
poral glory and distinction to that nation ; hopes
which they and their ancestors had cherished for so
many ages. No doubt it was a grievous sin in them

to give way to those prejudices and reject the Christ as they did. But it is a greater sin to acknowledge Him, as some Christians do, as their Lord and Master, and to "believe that He shall come to be our judge," and at the same time to take no care to obey his precepts, and copy the pattern of his life.

This is more truly impiety than that with which an infidel is chargeable. For suppose two men each received a letter from his father, giving directions for his children's conduct; and that one of these sons, hastily, and without any good grounds, pronounced the letter a forgery, and refused to take any notice of it; while the other acknowledged it to be genuine, and laid it up with great reverence, and then acted without the least regard to the advice and commands contained in the letter: you would say that both of these men indeed were very wrong, but that the latter was much the more undutiful son of the two.

Now, this is the case of a disobedient Christian, as compared with infidels. He does not like them, pronounce his father's letter a forgery; that is, deny the truth of the Christian revelation; but he sets at defiance in his life, that which he acknowledges to be the Divine command.

Lastly,—You should remember that no argument

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you can bring against unbelievers will have greater weight with most of them, than a Christian life ; and nothing again will be more likely to increase and confirm their unbelief than to see Christians living in opposition to the precepts and spirit of the Gospel ; and especially to see them indulging bitter and unkind, and hostile and uncharitable feelings towards their fellow creatures, and even their fellow-Christians.

The objections thence raised against the Christian religion, is indeed (as has been above said) not a real and sound one, but still it will be raised ; and therefore, you cannot too carefully consider how much you have to answer for, if you contribute to bring an ill name on your Christian faith ; and if you do not, on the contrary, endeavour to the utmost, "to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, in all things."

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