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BY VARIOUS WRITERS.

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PREFACE.

THE reception which this new Series of Tracts has met with from the public during the first year of its existence, leaves no room for doubt that it meets a real and widely-felt need. Its purpose is to show the strong, impregnable foundations of the Christian religion, to explain and defend its doctrinal and ethical contents, and prove the authenticity and credibility of its sacred books; so that the doubts and difficulties which are felt by so many, in all classes of society, in the present day, may be removed, and the faith of Christians may be confirmed.

Christian Theism furnishes the most rational account of the origin of the universe, and the proved facts of science do not conflict with any of the fundamental facts or truths of Christianity. The most searching study of the primitive history and religions of the most ancient races and nations tends more and more to confirm the truth of the sacred records.

The unique and divine character of Christianity is made more clearly manifest the more carefully and impartially its rise, spread, and results are compared with those of other religions. Rightly understood, its doctrines and ethics commend themselves alike to the enlightened intellect and conscience, and are adapted to the whole nature and

life of man; while upon the personality and character of its Founder its claims may be rested with absolute confidence. None of the non-theistic systems that find favour with so many in the present day can meet man's need or be a substitute for Christianity.

These are the positions which these Tracts will maintain and defend. Some of them have been discussed in the Tracts already published. It is hoped that the Series will cover the whole ground thus marked out ere it has run its course. Writers whose names are a guarantee for a discussion of the various topics indicated, adequate to the subjects, and adapted to the needs of the times we live in, have given and promised their assistance; and the hope is confidently cherished that, with the blessing of God, the Series, as it is more and more fully developed, may find increasing favour with all classes, and be the means of convincing many unsettled, and confirming many believing minds, while conclusively showing that so far from the world having outgrown Christianity, the one paramount need of the world in every age is to come more fully and universally under its transforming and purifying power.

May, 1883.

CONTENTS



I.

CHRISTIANITY AND MIRACLES AT THE PRESENT DAY.

BY THE REV. PRINCIPAL CAIRNS, D.D.

II.

THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF THE RESURRECTION
OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD.

BY THE REV. PREBENDARY ROW, M.A.

III.

CHRIST THE CENTRAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY THE REV. PRINCIPAL CAIRNS, D.D.

IV.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE LIFE THAT NOW IS.

BY THE REV. W. G. BLAIKIE, D.D., LL.D.

V.

THE EXISTENCE AND CHARACTER OF GOD.

BY THE REV. PREBENDARY ROW, M.A.

VI.

THE SUCCESS OF CHRISTIANITY AND MODERN EXPLANATIONS
OF IT.

BY THE REV. PRINCIPAL CAIRNS, D.D.

CHRISTIANITY AND MIRACLES

AT THE PRESENT DAY.

BY THE

REV. PRINCIPAL CAIRNS, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "UNBELIEF IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY"
(Being the Cunningham Lecture for 1880.)



THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

The Argument of the Tract.

MIRACLES are shown to be, on the supposition of the existence of God, neither impossible in themselves, inconsistent with the order of nature, incapable of being proved by testimony, nor incapable of being decisively connected with God.

The marvellous character of the Bible, the transcendent character of the morality of the Bible, the harmony of the miracles of the Bible with its doctrine, are shown to be presumptions in favour of the miracles of Scripture.

The historical testimony to the miracles of the New Testament, and especially our Lord's Resurrection, is examined, and its bearing on this fact is shown. The Resurrection of Christ is shown to account for all the undeniable facts of the history, and the insufficiency of any theory that denies its reality to account for them is proved.

CHRISTIANITY AND MIRACLES

AT THE PRESENT DAY.



HE alliance between Christianity and miracles is of long standing, in fact is inherited from the Old Testament religion; and for eighteen centuries, friend and foe have been here agreed, the one rallying to this position as an entrenchment of their own; the other, though sometimes affecting to despise it, not less looking askance upon it as an adverse stronghold. In our unsettled time, when everything is questioned, and not a little rashly abandoned, the argument for the truth of Christianity from miracles is in some quarters less insisted on. There are even Christian minds that have begun to waver at this point; while others, on the opposite side, are perhaps nearer believing their own illusive difficulties than at any former period. I am persuaded, however, that this discrediting of miracles is a great mistake, and that no procedure could be less wise than that of writers in the Christian ranks who seek here to change front in the midst of action,

Inseparable
connection
between
Christianity
and miracles

Christianity—if it be worth anything as a remedy,—is so essentially supernatural in its inmost essence and provisions that it cannot be detached from miracles without losing its virtue; and though there may be shades and varieties as well as improvements, in the way of putting this argument, nay, lawful differences as to its ultimate value in relation to other grounds of Christian belief, it must still take rank as a leading proof; and the nineteenth century, not less than the first, must accept of Christ's own challenge, "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not." Persuaded then, with ever-growing conviction, of the solidity of this argument, and of the futility of the objections drawn from metaphysics, from history, and from science against it, I shall endeavour, within the compass of this tract, to set it forth in the light of the present day.

Definition
of a miracle.

It is necessary, in discussing this question, to begin with some definition of a miracle, so as to understand in what sense it is here employed. It may be spoken of then as an act of God which visibly deviates from the ordinary working of His power, designed, while capable of serving other uses, to authenticate a Divine message. This restricts the argument to theists. Unless there be belief in a God able and willing to make and attest a revelation, the whole argument from miracles is below the horizon. Had Hume

The argu-
ment re-
stricted to
theists.

Hume.

been more thorough-going he would have taken his stand against miracles as excluded by his scepticism as to God. Had Spinoza been more open in his earlier treatise, he would not, while professing to believe in God, have assumed that the wisdom of God did not admit of either a revelation or such a proof of it; for this belonged to his later pantheism. And had Strauss, in our own days, been a more strict controversialist, he would not have wasted so much of his life in criticising the discords of the evangelists, but would have rested in his fundamental exclusion of God, that made the whole scheme of Christianity from the first incredible and subversive of reason. No one has been here more candid than the late Mr. John S. Mill. He sees that miracles belong to, and only belong to, the supposition of theism; and whatever may be thought of his objections to them, as not sufficiently proved to have existed in God's actual world, he deserves great credit for having admitted that the belief in miracles is perfectly rational on the part of a believer in God, and that it is a question of evidence and not of *a priori* theory.

With this preliminary clearing up of the state, and even of the terms, of the question, a number of mistakes that have gathered round it fall away of themselves. Some of these may be briefly noticed. The first mistake is, *that miracles are*

Spinoza:

Strauss.

J. S. MILL.
His candour.Mistakes
about mira-
cles.

Miracles not
impossible.

impossible. To this much of the scepticism of our time verges, even where it does not bluntly assert it. Possibly this may be, because our unbelief has found by experience, that it is not safe to grant so much as the being of a moral and personal Deity. Miracles of course fall with the denial of the only Being who can exercise a moral government, who can, in connexion with that government, make a revelation, and who can so work in the physical world as to connect that revelation with His own Divine power. It is seen at once that if God be possible, miracles are possible; and that hence nothing can preclude them but abstract atheism, or pantheism, or such agnosticism as makes the knowledge of God hopeless. It is a great consolation to the Christian that his belief in miracles can only be uprooted by virtual denial of God.

Miracles
possible if
God be possible.

Miracles
not incon-
sistent with
the order of
nature.

A second mistake, not so extreme, but still serious, is, that miracles are *inconsistent with the order of nature*. In so far as this puts nature in the place of God, and keeps Him bound, as nature is without Him held to be, by absolutely invariable laws, this is the same denial of God that has been already considered. So far, however, as the position taken is, that God has chosen to act in ways so invariable as to exclude miracle, and has revealed to us that choice, the distinction thus drawn easily leads to the discovery of the mistake. There would need to be full and conclusive

evidence that it is God's will and choice to exclude miracle altogether from the realm of what is called nature, but which is only to a theist the field of God's own working. Is there, then, this full and conclusive evidence? It cannot be by revelation: for this would be to bring in revelation to exclude revelation. It can only be by what is called light of nature; and the question recurs, Does the light of nature absolutely exclude any possible deviation by God from the wonted sequences of His operation? This would exclude every beginning and end of the universe, and every cosmical change that was not in the strictest sense the working out of foregoing law. On what can a scepticism so rigorous be based? It has been attempted to base it on our primary belief in the uniformity of nature, which is thus regarded as the voice of God to us warning us against trust in miracles. But is this so? Philosophers still dispute as to how far the expectation of uniformity in nature is a rational principle of knowledge or a mere instinct. But one thing is clear, that it cannot exclude the weighing of evidence for miracle; otherwise, the origin or end of the world, considered as a scientific possibility, would be as summarily rejected as any hypothesis confessedly against reason. Canon Mozley has shown conclusively against Mr. Mill that the progress of science cannot exclude belief in miracle,

No evidence that God would exclude miracles from nature.

Consequences of such exclusion.

Uniformity of nature cannot exclude weighing of evidence for miracle.

Canon Mozley v. Mr. Mill.

Mr. Mill's
strange lan-
guage.

for the very principle of induction on which science builds involves itself this prior belief in the uniformity of nature, which can thus receive from science no greater strength than it has at first. Nothing is more strange than the language of Mr. Mill as to the growing impossibility of belief in miracle as science advances; for this would leave the belief a scientific one to Sir Isaac Newton, or even to Hume and Gibbon, and deny it as such to Professor Huxley or Renan; not to mention that this assertion is entirely opposed to facts, as some of the most eminent men of science are still believers in miracles; and Mr. Mill himself finds a consolation in clinging to their possibility and the supernatural mission of Jesus Christ. The admission of miracles does not at all depend on a lax or unscientific conception of the course of nature. In fact it can only build on recognized natural laws; and the discernment of these, and of exceptions to them, was as possible in the first century as in the nineteenth, as the words in the gospel history indicate: "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." This limited, exceptional, divinely regulated minimum of deviation, which leaves nature and science still standing as before, is all that Christianity asks in order to start this argument, and no principle of natural belief can pronounce the postulate inadmissible.

Admission
of miracles
can only
build on re-
cognized na-
tural laws.

Besides, it is to be remembered that while in one sense miracles set aside law, in another and deeper sense, they uphold it. The end of miracle, through the coming and works of Christ, is the restoration of moral order. The coming of Christ as a sinless Being is a miracle. Christianity is not an ordinary history, or even a great moral system incorporated with the life of its founder. It is, if it is anything, a system of Redemption, based on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, with a sequel of eternal results and issues, greater through union with Christ or separation from Him, than the ordinary immortality with its hopes and fears. This scheme is wrought out by the life and death, the dominion and influence, the second coming to judgment, and endless reign of Jesus Christ. Now, this whole plan and system transcends natural laws, in any common acceptation of the word. It is believed to be in harmony with the highest laws of the Divine nature, and to be the most glorious expression of them. But it is born of, and lives by miracle, so that to refuse faith in this, is to make sin the order of the universe. And if Christ needed to displace physical law, in order to vindicate and restore moral and spiritual law, the conception of the universe which would exclude this interference is really a materialistic superstition, and so far from exalting God as the

Miracles
uphold law.

Christianity
a system of
Redemption
based on in-
carnation.

It is the most
glorious
expression
of the high-
est laws.

God of order, it surrounds Him and His creatures with an outward barrier that shuts the way even to the "tree of life." It is by dwelling on the order of nature without that a prejudice against miracles has been created. A glance at the disorder of nature within restores the balance; and with the need, recalls the probability of a remedy, and of a remedy attended by miracle.

A *third* mistake as to miracles is, *that even if wrought they could not be proved by testimony.*

Hume's
argument.

This is the celebrated argument of Hume, first published in a set of his essays, in 1748, but which has not carried conviction, as he expected, and has even lately been declared by Mr. Mill to be inconclusive. Mr. Mill in his *Essay on Theism* (p. 217), says, "It is evidently impossible to maintain that if a supernatural fact really occurs, proof of its occurrence cannot be accessible to the human faculties. The evidence of the senses could prove this as it can prove other things."

Mr. Mill's
opinion of it.

Hume, however, never looks the senses in connection with miracles in the face. He dwells exclusively on testimony, and thus tacitly leaves it to be supposed that miracles are only matters of testimony; and this testimony he makes necessarily fallacious: for his argument is that our confidence in testimony being due entirely to experience can never warrant our believing any reported departure from experience. If Hume had gone farther back,

Hume's
fallacy.

and supposed an eye-witness dealing with a miracle, he could not have advised that eye-witness to reject the miracle, simply because the testimony of others had never reported anything like it; and then that eye-witness could not have been reasonably disbelieved himself, since testimony could not fail to convey what sense had vouched for. Hume, it is true, could not himself believe a miracle, because his philosophy left him in total doubt as to God. But it was otherwise with believers in God: and his assault on testimony had no value except as resting on his own premises. It may be added, that there is a shadow of Hume's error in the not uncommon objection to miracles, that they lose their force with time, and at length vanish away. Why should this be so with miracles more than with secular history? The death of Ananias and Sapphira is as near to us as the assassination of Julius Cæsar. Tradition loses its weight by successive removes, but not written history. Grant that the Apostle John is the author of the fourth Gospel, his testimony is as good to us as if we had received it orally from himself. There is a signal absence of the historical sense in this objection; and there is no reason to think that an historian like Hume, if he could have granted miracles as once credible, would have supposed them decaying, though this idea only carries his distrust in testimony to a more paradoxical extreme.

The cause
of Hume's
scepticism.

Miracles do
not lose their
force with
time.

The rela-
tive value of
tradition and
written his-
tory.

Miracles
appeal to
prior belief
in God.

Miracles
can connect
teaching
with God.

The con-
nection can
be decisively
established.

The author
of *Superna-
tural Reli-
gion*.

The three mistakes as to miracles which have been considered are all due to forgetfulness of the fact that miracle appeals to a prior belief in God; and they are redressed when His agency and relation to nature are recalled to view. The same thing holds true of a *fourth* mistake, and the last which we shall notice, which still exerts a disturbing influence on some judgments: viz., *that miracles cannot be so decisively connected with God as to lend any sanction to an alleged revelation*. There is evidently no force in the general allegation, that mere power can lend no support to teaching: for power is appealed to as a link to connect the teaching with God, and if such a connection be secured its authority is then boundless. All ages have felt this, and have re-echoed the simple confession of Nicodemus, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest except God be with him." But the complaint is that though the connection, if it could be made out, would serve the end, the connection cannot be decisively established, since works apparently miraculous may still be due to ordinary laws, and not to Divine interposition, or may even (so it is pleaded on Scripture grounds) be wrought by evil beings. This objection has often been taken, and is renewed among others by the author of *Supernatural Religion*.

Now, it may be granted that at times the

defenders of revelation have undertaken too much by speaking as if a line could in all cases be drawn to mark off miracle from nature, whereas it was enough to fix on the leading miracles of the Bible as decisively supernatural in their character, since with these alone was there any concern: and it may be also admitted that Christian writers have differed somewhat in their interpretation of those passages of Scripture which connect miracle, or the appearance of it, with evil agency. Neither of these circumstances, however, abates the evidential value of the Bible miracles. They still stand out as sharply as ever—distinguished from all natural phenomena. It is because rationalism could not reduce them to natural facts, that it tried to make them myths. No science can ever reduce to its uniformities, a fact, if fact it be, like the death of the first-born in one night. The cures of our Lord seem still as little like the fruits of secret medical knowledge as in His own day; while the most thorough-going scepticism rejects most scornfully the theory that His resurrection was a mere natural recovery from an incompleated death. There is thus in the miracles of the Bible—abating some obscure instances—a broad stamp of distinction from extraordinary, though still natural phenomena; while there is a plan, a method, a reigning spirit, which takes them completely out of the region of the mere random wonders and portents

Miracles
and nature.

Bible mira-
cles distin-
guished from
all natural
phenomena.

The reason
of the myth
theory.

Our Lord's
miracles as
inexplicable
as ever on
natural
grounds.

Distinguished
from mere
random won-
ders and por-
tents.

of Livy, or the childish marvels of the later ecclesiastical historians. It may be confidently affirmed that if the Bible miracles are not recognizably Divine, none can be so; and thus the extreme sceptical position would be reached, that a Being who wished to make a revelation, and sought to attest it by a seal, which the general sense of mankind has connected with such a communication, could not thus stamp it by any sign of distinctive power.

The theory
of evil
agency.

Equally futile is the objection that the alleged Bible miracles may be due to evil agency. The deniers of revelation do not themselves believe in such agency, superior to human, yet adverse to the Divine: but only bring it in to perplex and disconcert Christians. But if they borrow this Christian doctrine, to turn it against its own adherents, they ought to remember the limitation within which it is held. However Christians may differ as to the amount of confusion which evil beings may be permitted to introduce by working what may be mistaken for miracle, they all hold that under the government of God, sufficient light is granted to make the distinction possible to every humble and candid mind, either by the true power which is Divine visibly transcending every other, or by moral features in the revelation appealing to conscience, in a way which no pseudo-revelation can counterfeit. The Christian is thus not em-

The Chris-
tian doctrine
of evil
agency.

barrassed by this *argumentum ad hominem*, and what is equally important to the validity of this reasoning, neither is the theist.

The theist to whom the Christian offers the Bible, and with whom he argues on the ground of miracle, cannot deny that the supreme Power may be able to outshine, even to human eyes, on this field, all rivalry, and still more, to interweave the revelation professedly given with such moral features and accompaniments, that no fair observer can trace it up to an evil source. The reasoning of our Lord with the Pharisees, that Satan could not cast out Satan, was no doubt addressed to believers in revelation; but it is equally applicable to believers in God simply, who as such cannot believe in Him without believing that all agencies and events are under His control, and that He will not suffer the elements of nature to be so turned out of their course by evil beings as to mimic any supposed signature of God or defeat His purpose—if He has one—thus to confirm a revelation. Who ever heard of any theist who was prepared to say, “I admit an element of miracle, so far as God’s working, otherwise known to us, is concerned. I allow the credibility of miracles in the abstract, and I allow the moral features of the Bible to be reconcilable with a Divine origin; but I cannot decide that they have one, because the apparent signs may be due to

Our Lord’s reasoning about evil agency applicable to mere theists.

evil powers not sufficiently restrained." Now, it is with theists that we reason here, and not with the author of *Supernatural Religion*; and till he can bring us theists who are satisfied on other grounds, but take their last stand against the gospel on this, all his air-drawn difficulties go for nothing.

Presump-
tions in
favour of
Christian
miracles.

Having thus endeavoured to remove these mistakes as to miracles, it might be our next task, as it is our principal one, to go on to the evidence of fact and history, that the Christian miracles have actually been wrought. But in order to do justice to the argument, it is necessary first to state some presumptions, which lead up as it were to this conclusion, and pre-dispose the mind—great as the demand made upon faith by miracles is—to concede it. The considerations about to be named are of varying weight; and they are evidences of the truth of Christianity by themselves; nay, in one case, more central to the proof than even miracles; nor are they the only ones that might be named. But they are here brought forward only as leading up and lending help, to the direct argument drawn from miracle in the common sense of the word.

The won-
derful na-
ture of the
book in
which they
are recorded.

There may be mentioned then, *first*, as a presumption in favour of the reality of the Bible miracles, the wonderful nature of the book in which they are recorded. There is here what

may be called a *literary* miracle. I do not ask any one at this point to believe in inspiration, and from the self-evident inspiration of the Bible to accept this part of its contents,—though there can be little doubt that this self-evident superiority to all other books goes a long way to secure for the Bible claim to inspiration its wide acceptance. But it is not because the book is divinely true, that I ask it to be here regarded; but because it is outstandingly wonderful. This fact no one, even the most sceptical, can deny. The Bible is itself a phenomenon, embracing master-pieces in every department of literature, from the most unlikely hands. Renan, for slight reasons, denies that the Gospel of Matthew is the work of a Jewish publican; but he admits that it is of equally obscure origin, and yet says that, “all things considered, it is the most important book of Christianity, the most important book that ever has been written.”¹ The Gospel of Luke, he grants to be the work of its received author; and says, in regard to the Saviour’s birth, “This exquisite pastoral, traced with a gentle outline upon the front of Christianity, has never been surpassed by any strain more fitted to lull the woes of poor humanity;”² and in general, he says of this Gospel, “It is the most beautiful book in the world.”³ Of the Gospels as a whole, he also says,

Inspiration
not assumed.

Renan’s
opinion of
the Gospel of
Matthew.

Renan on
St. Luke and
the Gospels
as a whole.

¹ *Evangelica*, page 212.

² Page 278.

³ Page 283.

“The composition of the Gospels is, next to the personal action of Jesus, the capital fact in the history of the origin of Christianity,—I will add, in the history of humanity.”¹ It would be easy, were it necessary, to quote other tributes to the stupendous literary greatness of the Bible. One may be taken from Gibbon, where he contrasts the Book of Job with the Koran; and it is all the more remarkable as belonging to a century, in which, as Macaulay says, Voltaire decried Ezekiel in the same narrow spirit as he did Shakespeare. “The harmony and copiousness of style will not reach in a version the European infidel: he will peruse with impatience the endless incoherent rhapsody of faith and precept and declamation, which seldom excites a sentiment or an idea, which sometimes crawls in the dust and is sometimes lost in the clouds. The Divine attributes exalt the fancy of the Arabian missionary; but his loftiest strains must yield to the sublime simplicity of the Book of Job, composed in a remote age, in the same country, and in the same language.”² The Bible is confessedly the greatest classic in the English or German language: we may add, even in the French: and its influence has immeasurably transcended that of all others. Does not this agree with the supposition of miracle in connection with the system to which it belongs? Could the pre-

Gibbon on
the Book of
Job and the
Koran.

The Bible
a classic in
English,
German, and
French.

¹ *Evangelica*, p. 213.

² Gibbon (Bohn's Ed.), Vol. v. p. 474.

sumption be greater? and how world-wide is the contrast, as Gibbon acknowledges in regard to Mahometanism, with every other religion?

A *second* presumption, even stronger, for the reality of the Bible miracles, is the transcendent character of the morality with which they are associated. At no point has Christianity come out of the struggle of centuries stronger than here. The greatest of moralists like Kant have treated the New Testament as containing a full moral system; and attacks on the Christian morality, as erring, either by excess or defect, have to a large extent ceased. Mr. Mill, who, in his essay on *Liberty*, had charged Christianity on this head with at least incompleteness, has in one of his posthumous *Essays* made the remarkable statement, that no one could find a better rule of life than to act in every case so as that Christ would approve of his conduct. The only really influential objections to the Christian morality are those connected with its difficulty, and its failure to realize itself among professed Christians; and this has caused the gospel to suffer more than all other hindrances put together, for the inconsistencies of Christian nations and churches have been seen and read of all men, while the excuses for those failures, and even the attempts to clear Christianity from this reproach, have not been equally successful in impressing the general mind. Still it

The morality associated with Bible miracles.

Kant on New Testament morality.

Mill's admission.

Inconsistencies of Christian nations and Churches.

The effect
of Christian-
ity on the
world's
moral stan-
dard.

The Old
Testament.

Its relative
superiority
to contempo-
rary systems

The con-
nection of
the whole
system with
miracles.

is a great and singular thing for any system of morality to be complained of chiefly because it is too high and ideal; while at the same time all candid minds allow that Christianity has here been immensely effectual in elevating the moral standard of the world, and in bringing round a state of things when its own strictness and elevation shall seem less hopeless as a prevailing aspiration and attainment. What is true of the New Testament here is inclusive of the Old. They must be partial judges who deny here a radical identity, which Christ Himself and His Apostles, notwithstanding some difficulties of fact and interpretation, acknowledged between the earlier and later development of the same revelation. The Old Testament had something of the same height relatively to everything outside itself as the teaching and institutions of Christianity still have; for what could be found among ancient nations with anything of the same practical weight and impression as the Decalogue, the Psalms, the Book of Proverbs, and the moral lessons of the Prophets; while these have all been found capable of being taken up into, and mingling their force with, the mightier impulses of Christianity? That a great moral system like this should be connected with miracle, and gain its support, is something totally different from the transient, scattered, and for the most part legendary

and useless miracles that rise up out of the mere love of the marvellous, or under the spell of superstition. The purpose is truly great and god-like, worthy of miracle if miracle could help, and, taken in conjunction with the success which has so far followed, warrants the presumption that miracle has here been at work, and not in vain.

The *third* and the only other presumption which shall be noticed here for the reality of the Bible miracles, is their harmony with the doctrinal system which they are brought in to establish. It is a common fault of those who undervalue miracles to overlook this, and to treat the miracle and the doctrine as something belonging to different spheres, and only externally applied to each other, somehow as the royal stamp on a book is to its contents. But in point of fact, the whole of Christianity relatively to ordinary teaching is inward miracle; and out of this the miracle, commonly so called, grows as a product, and hence as a witness. The common Christian view of the birth of Jesus Christ—of the union in Him of the Divine and human natures—of His atonement and intercession, and of His exaltation to dispense the Holy Ghost and reign over the spirits of men in His Church, and even outwardly in the universe, all this is so far from being God's visibly ordinary way of action as disclosed in natural Providence, that it rises above the thoughts

Christian miracles and doctrines in harmony.

The whole of Christianity relatively inward miracle.

The scheme could not be carried through without miracles.

Miracle necessary to salvation.

Miracles integral parts of Christianity as well as evidences.

of men as far as the heavens are above the earth. Hence this scheme, in its whole texture supernatural, cannot be carried through without special acts occurring that have been distinctively called miracles, though they are not more miraculous than the rest. For one who is God incarnate to rise from the dead is not more miraculous than to be God incarnate; nor is it so to ascend to heaven, and thence to usher in the day of Pentecost, and to control and govern the Church by His Holy Spirit. There must be miracle, if there is to be salvation. The laws of human nature must be transcended by the Divine being united with the human. The human body could not be surrendered to defeat, and the incarnation so far be made void by the Saviour remaining in the grave. Nor could the same law that applied to others who were raised, limit the risen life of Christ, or detain Him upon earth. Miracles had thus, according to the true Christian conception, a deeper design than to be evidences of Christianity. They had to be vital and integral parts of Christianity. But this did not hinder them from being evidences too; and as evidences they have a reason and a credibility which would be wholly wanting if they were extraneous and supplementary parts engrafted upon an otherwise non-miraculous system. Take for example our Lord's so-called miracles of healing. Would it have been more credible that the Son

of God, invested with Divine powers, should stand in the midst of human disease and misery, without any outburst of mightier sympathy and help, and that He should be warned back by the very laws of nature that were His own creation? Or is it not credible that He should in these cures have revealed and imaged His deeper power to heal the soul? When from the starting-point of Christianity He could not be a Saviour at all without miracle, is there not in the expansion and development of this principle, and in the applying of it as He does to support His own claims, a beautiful inward harmony which is a presumption of truth, so that never could any religion set forth this evidence from so lofty and consistent a ground as that of Him who says, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works."

Incredible that Christ should not work miracles.

Miracles symbolical.

Conclusion from this argument

With these explanatory and introductory remarks, it is now time to consider the argument for the reality of the Bible miracles as positively attested by history. The argument is very extended, taking in the Old Testament as well as the New. But it has been universally felt that the strength of the argument lies most in the New Testament period, because, while the Old Testament wonders are sufficiently attested, and are

Historical proof of Bible miracles.

Old Testament miracles.

Their relation to New Testament miracles.

The miracles of Christ

The pre-eminent importance of His Resurrection.

The starting-point of the argument.

even vouched for in the New Testament, while also held up by the ever-increasing authority of the Old Testament in matters of ordinary history, there is not the same abundance of contemporary literature, nor reigning clearness in regard to the authorship of books, and similar matters affecting testimony. The question shall, therefore, be limited to the miracles of the New Testament, though every one can see that the miracles of the Old Testament are not to be looked on as a hindrance, but a help; and we can understand how different our position would have been had the New Testament revelation been confirmed by striking miracles, while the Old Testament oracles did not enjoy the help of so much as one. Again, among the New Testament miracles, those of Christ Himself are the most fitted to attract close and prolonged study; and among these, by universal consent, one stands out as pre-eminently important, the miracle of His Resurrection. Even an unbeliever may be impressed by the thought that Christ (as recorded) rested His claims on this sign, in preference to others; for it has turned out to be the strongest, and this by any natural means Christ could not have known.

In considering the evidence of Christ's resurrection, the same method is perhaps best taken which is employed in any other question of fact. Nothing is taken for granted, but that a miracle like the

resurrection may be a fact of history: all else is proved like any other matter which history may embrace. And this is proved by three sets of arguments:—*first*, the positive testimonies, more or less direct, to the fact of the resurrection; *secondly*, the agreement of this supposition with other facts in the history; and *thirdly*, the failure of every other supposition opposed to the resurrection to account for these facts.

Three sets
of argument.

In discussing, then, the testimonies, it is best to begin with those that are farthest off from the centre; and here there is to be placed in the outer circle the unanimous, unbroken belief of the whole Christian Church of the first century from the beginning. This indeed is not direct testimony; but it is testimony in so far as the consenting belief of contemporaries who are interested in a matter of fact, and have every motive to test it, is testimony to its historical reality. No Christian could become one without believing in the resurrection, and without avowing it. Christianity was thus built on alleged fact from the beginning, as if Mahomet had been held to have been killed in one of his battles, and to have returned to life. There are modern Christians, so-called, who think the resurrection of Christ unimportant; but not so then. The belief was universal, and was accounted vital. Celsus ridicules Christians for believing on so slender an evidence as that of

The belief of
the Church
in the first
century.

The belief
universal
and vital.

The admission of Celsus as to the belief.

Belief proved by observance of the Lord's Day.

A fact behind the belief.

The whole New Testament a voucher of belief

an excited woman; but he allows the uniformity of the belief. Nor did it grow up by degrees, but was as strong from the first, as we see among other proofs, from the observance of the "Lord's Day." This is mentioned in Rev. i. 10, as already in use in Asia Minor; and this writing is carried up by the most extreme critics of our time to a date before the fall of Jerusalem, and regarded by many of them who accept so little as apostolic, as the work of the Apostle John. Nothing but belief in a fact behind it—a fact which to their own mind they had sufficiently verified, could have led Jew and Gentile thus to break away from their old calendar, and put first in the new, a once despised and rejected name. It was on this "stated" day (*die stato*), as Pliny tells us, that the Christians met to sing hymns to Christ as God; and that, as Justin Martyr, about the middle of the second century, assures us, they dedicated the once pagan day of the sun as a memorial alike of the old and new creation. But it is needless to enlarge on this universal, immediate, unbroken, monumentally-confirmed testimony. The whole New Testament, besides what is specially devoted to express testimonies, is here a voucher of belief; for hardly a book of it but contains some distinct reference to the faith of Christians in this fundamental fact of Christianity.

When we pass beyond this widest circle, in-

cluding all Christian men, we come to a much narrower, made up of Christian writers, who attest the result of their enquiries, or their own actual knowledge in regard to the fact of the Resurrection. Those who state the results of enquiries are the two Evangelists, Mark and Luke; those who have been generally believed to have been eye-witnesses are the Evangelists, Matthew and John; while the Apostle Paul stands between the two classes, not originally a witness of the resurrection scenes, but having later intercourse with the risen Jesus. In examining this various testimony we have in arguing with others to leave out of account the inspiration of the writers as Christians believe in it, and consider only their capacities as recorders and witnesses of fact; and we have in the same way to accept the best conclusions, on ordinary historical grounds, as to the genuineness and antiquity of the four Gospels and the writings of Paul, which bear on this subject.

Testimony
of Christian
writers.

Mark and
Luke.

Matthew
and John.

Paul.

Inspiration
not assumed.

The questions of a critical nature as to date and authorship which arise, have naturally occupied much attention; but the results may be very briefly stated. The fundamental passage of Paul in 1 Cor. xv. is uncontested by the most extreme criticism. In like manner, the hasty allegations of Baur and Strauss as to a very late date of Mark and Luke, have been recalled, among others by Renan, who concedes that the Gospel of Mark

Results of
critical
studies.

1 Cor. 15.

Date and
authorship
of Mark and
and Luke.

is the work of the companion of Peter, and Luke that of the companion of Paul, who also writes the Acts. So also the whole of recent discussion is favourable to the genuineness of the Gospel of John. Sixty years ago Eichhorn, the leader of rationalist criticism in Germany, would not listen to any objections to the received view. Now, after a long and most earnest debate, the tendency—even of rationalism—is to return to the old position; while the highest names of the semi-rationalist school—Bleek and Ewald—have never countenanced this deviation; and more orthodox writers, like Beyschlag and Luthardt, have met it at every point—the aberration being all through in Britain and America wondered at, rather than followed. The Gospel of Matthew has also profited by recent criticism in Germany, which has floated it back to a much earlier date than was contended for by Strauss; and the old received opinion, that its author was an Apostle and an eye-witness, has not been essentially shaken, whatever difficulties may arise from the statements of early writers as to a separate Hebrew and Greek form of his Gospel, and the want of materials thoroughly to clear up this critical question. It may be added, that the case would not be vitally altered in regard to the Resurrection were the Gospel of Matthew—as all moderate rationalism admits—an ordinarily good historical record of the first century, and connected

Genuineness
of John's
Gospel.

The present
tendency of
rationalism.

Semi-ration-
alists.

Orthodox
writers.

The date
and author-
ship of St.
Matthew's
Gospel.

Admission
of Rational-
ism.

with the inner Christian circle, like the Gospels of Mark and Luke. Strauss, among others, uses Matthew as sufficiently trustworthy to found an estimate of the Saviour's life upon; and if unbelievers may use it historically for their purposes, why should its value cease in the hands of Christians?

Strauss treats St. Matthew's Gospel as historical.

What is now the bearing and worth of this mass of testimony? It is impossible to examine it in detail; but two main points, independent of each other, stand out,—the discovery on the morning of the third day that the tomb was empty, and the various appearances of Jesus to His disciples, by whom He was recognized. Paul vouches only for the appearances; but the evangelists also for the finding of the tomb empty. In regard to this latter point, the indications in Matthew and Mark are verified by the actual explorations in Luke and John; so that, if we attach any credit to these writers at all, the fact is proved. Nor did it need any special witness; for it was not in itself a miracle to find a tomb empty where a body had lain. But much more various, strong, and, as befitted the case, singular in their force as evidence, are the recorded appearances of the risen Saviour. There are appearances common to all the Gospels—that to Mary Magdalene, and if we grant the last verses of Mark xvi., that to all the Apostles, which is also affirmed by

The bearing of the testimony.

The empty tomb.

The appearances of the risen Saviour common to all the Gospels.

The part played by women.

Doubt and fear in connection with the Resurrection.

The process of conviction in the minds of the disciples visible.

Appearances recorded by separate writers.

An objection.

Difficulties.

Paul. There is in all the Gospels the similar part played by women. There is in all an original element of doubt and fear in connection with the fact of resurrection; and there starts up in all a most wonderful mental and spiritual likeness of the risen Saviour to His former self, as, for example, in Matthew and Mark (as supplemented), the apostolic commission,—in Luke, the discourse on the way to Emmaus,—in John, the scenes with Mary, with Thomas, and at the Sea of Galilee.

We can thus see for ourselves the very process by which the disciples were convinced, and can judge of its reasonableness; for, convincing as the bodily marks were, the evidence of Resurrection lies even more in identity of soul than of body, and we can feel how unspeakably beyond invention were these incidents and utterances, while also so full of the past and so pregnant with the future.

The argument is rounded off by the appearances that are recorded by separate writers—one or more—as in Paul those to Peter and James, in Matthew to the women, and so of others. It has been made an objection that there is not room for all the appearances; but this has never been proved, and, on the contrary, in forty days there was opportunity, as the narrative bears, for more. And however difficult it may be to harmonize all the accounts, especially as to the first day, this, as has often been remarked, is the inevitable accom-

paniment of all narratives, however authentic, that travel over the same ground. It is wonderful how much has been done by scholars to show the compatibility of one part of the various records with the rest; and though this is probably an insoluble problem, it is striking how slight hints in one Gospel or in Paul are borne out in some other place. Thus, our Lord's appearance to Peter in 1 Cor. xv. is confirmed by the message in Mark to Peter; the race of Peter to the sepulchre in Luke is enlarged in the fourth Gospel into that of Peter and John; and the appearances in Galilee, of which there is not a word in Luke, re-appear in the last of the Gospels. Incidents like these go a long way to balance alleged discords, and show that we are on the track not of fabrication or license, but of real, though various, history.

One great merit of this testimony is, that it is not carefully adjusted and dovetailed into a legal argument. Some critics have rashly wished for this, and have blamed the Gospels because they are not cast in the mould of a *procès verbal*, signed and counter-signed by witnesses and authorities. The Gospels were not written to prove a series of points, so much as artlessly to unfold the life, death, and victory of their great subject; and the delineation of character is more with them than the establishment of incident. But with all their disregard of legal dress and technical vouchers,

Incidental mutual confirmation of testimony by the writers.

The Gospel narrative not a *procès verbal*.

The purpose and method of the Gospels

The strength
of the proof.

how strong is the body of proof which these writers have piled up almost unconsciously into one of the clearest of moral demonstrations! Could the Apostle Paul have thrown out at random, when speaking with the solemnity of an oath, a set of impressions as to Christ's appearings, which he had rashly taken up,—even to the extent of asserting one made to more than five hundred persons at once, the most of whom are affirmed to be still, after a quarter of a century, alive, while others are known to be dead? De Wette could not resist this testimony, but says in his Commentary, "The testimony of the Apostle decides as to the certainty of the fact." But how many critics of inferior order have supposed that a writer like Paul, who was so entirely at home in every matter affecting what to him was the very centre of existence, could, when laying down the very articles of faith and hope, have been so ignorant or so careless as to have made the most circumstantial statements of fact without enquiry or foundation. Not less strong is Luke, who is admitted by Renan to have been the companion of Paul, and consequently with him, in Jerusalem and in Cæsarea, during his imprisonment of two years. How fresh must everything still have been, after the lapse of six or seven and twenty years, to an eager investigator, who doubtless met in Palestine with eye-witnesses of the Gospel history,

De Wette's
admission.

Renan's
admission as
to St. Luke.

and who in his Gospel claims to have "traced the course of all things accurately from the first." (*Revised Version.*) Mark likewise, whose authorship is not questioned, belongs to the most select circle of the companions of the Apostles, the friend and fellow-labourer of Paul and Peter, the nephew of Barnabas, and more even than Luke mixed up with the rise of the new faith, as a Jerusalem Christian, and one whose personal recollections went back to the time of the ministry and death of Jesus. Still stronger is the testimony of the fourth Gospel, as the work of an eye-witness, of a leading Apostle, and of our Lord's most intimate human friend. The deniers of the supernatural were bound sooner or later to have disputed this work: for it does not seem that their position can possibly endure its uncontested authority. But now that they have made the utmost effort in this direction,* and failed, the evidence of the resurrection comes forth all the clearer from one to whom the face and form of his Master were the most cherished of remembrances, who had been at the bottom of His empty grave, and who was fitted as none other to catch and to perpetuate the spiritual features, as well as the bodily, which re-appeared, brightened but not altered by the victory over death. The testimony of Matthew—another eye-witness, and from the more Judaic side of Christian teaching—confirms the record;

Mark's authorship unquestioned.

His relation to the Apostles.

The Gospel of John.

Its uncontested authority unendurable to deniers of the supernatural.

Matthew's testimony.

The resur-
rection as
necessary to
Matthew as
to John.

and it is worthy of notice, in reply to those who have sought by an alleged fundamental discord in doctrine, to invalidate the evidence for the resurrection and other Gospel facts, how the fact of the resurrection is as necessary to the first Gospel as to the fourth, leading in as it does the fullest statement of the Trinity, taking up the lessons of the Baptism and the Transfiguration, and harmonizing with itself utterances ever-recurring, as in Matt. xi. 25-30, of a grandeur and sublimity not distinguishable from those of the last of the evangelists.

The imme-
diate accept-
ance of the
Gospels by
the Church.

Let it be added, that we have not only in the existence of these written testimonies, but also in their reception and public use from the beginning in the Christian Church (which is something distinct from the universal belief in the resurrection), a powerful argument. The Gospels were used as soon as they existed. For this we have the testimony of Justin Martyr in his first Apology (chap. lxvii.); and all that has been said to shake this position, leaves their alleged coming into use between their origin and his day, which after all was in much less than a century, wholly unexplained. It was thus not a mere generality as to the resurrection that the Church took up, but particular narratives full, circumstantial, and capable at every point of contradiction or verification. No history has ever received such an

Justin
Martyr.

The account
of the resur-
rection be-
lieved in its
integrity.

adhesion, for the original witnesses and converts were but a handful; and every accession of new converts carried with it a guarantee never equalled for sincerity and conviction, and that on the part of men thoroughly competent to enquire for themselves.

This brings us to the *second* point necessary to be urged, in addition to the separate weight of the testimonies: viz., how far the admission of the resurrection accounts for other undeniable facts of the history. Amongst these, two stand out pre-eminent as rationally accounted for by the fact of the resurrection. The one is the change of mind produced on the disciples; and the other is the impression made on the world by the Christianity which began immediately to be proclaimed. The first of these facts is incontestable. We know indeed only from the Scripture narrative itself of the extreme depression of the Apostles, and of the joy and confidence which succeeded. But nothing was so natural as the shock given them by the crucifixion; and nothing was ever more naturally described. How then did this give place? Nothing so completely accounts for it as the great event which came between, and the operation of this is in the Gospels a beautiful mental study. It has been asked, indeed, why the Apostles were not more cheerful if Christ had promised to return. But the mistake as to the meaning of His death rather

The change of mind produced on the disciples by the resurrection.

Only a fact
could work
the change.

Baur's
mistake.

The impulse
to the Chris-
tian cause
from the re-
surrection.

overwhelmed them with disappointment than allowed hope to revive, and a new and joyful fact was the only thing that could work a change. There is a profundity, as well as a simplicity, in this part of the Gospel history which has always been admired; and when the resurrection is denied, the change to hopefulness sinks into mere weakness and enthusiasm. Dr. Baur, the leader of the Tübingen school, never missed the mark more than when he said, that it is of no consequence how the Apostles came by the belief of the resurrection: for the mere belief would anyhow do the same work. This is to build the world upon delusion, and to make groundless fancy as a moral force equal to the natural, steady, and effectual action of truth.

Still more impressive is the harmony between the resurrection, taken as a reality, and the start it gave the infant and apparently defeated Christian cause. Lessing was so struck with this, that in spite of all the difficulties which he found in the resurrection story as now before us, he felt that truth lay at the bottom of what so prevailed. The Church becomes the aggressor, and the world yields. It is lamentable, if, in such a case, humanity could not hold its own against mental weakness. Strauss has bitterly complained of belief in the resurrection as the "humbug of history." But the unreasonableness of belief in

it as not a fact, is the exact measure of the reasonableness of belief in it as a fact, which could not be gainsaid. It is the test of its suitability to solve the history. It explains the helplessness of the adverse party, the paralysis which hindered every effort at confutation or exposure as by the production of the Saviour's body, and the depression which shut up the Jewish opposition to silence or to unreasoning violence. It also accounts for such wild rumours as that the disciples had stolen the body. This has been charged home as a Christian slander on the Jewish authorities. But the Christians had no motive to invent such a calumny, which evidently comes from the other camp. And it must be remembered that much as this report has been scouted by recent unbelief, so scouted that it has been utterly denied to have had a place in the thoughts of the Jewish rulers, it was, though a weak invention, such a one as men fall upon when perplexed and baffled; and so late as last century, the truth of it was made by Woolston the basis of his attack on the credibility of the resurrection.

The resurrection explains all the facts of the history.

Having thus shown the sufficiency of the great fact of the resurrection to clear the field of history all round, it only remains to touch on our *third* point, viz., the discord with history which the denial of the resurrection introduces. So far as this is the opposite of what has been already

The discord produced by denial of the resurrection.

urged, it has been virtually considered. But there is more than a blank; there is a positive collision, when the denier of the resurrection goes on to give some positive theory of how the alleged resurrection originated, and seeks on the ground of that theory to explain the facts of the case. A rapid review then of negative theories of the Resurrection will close this paper.

The supposition of fraud falsifies the narrative.

The weakest of all the theories is that which traces up the current belief in the resurrection to fraud and imposture on the part of Christ's disciples. This is one of the controversies which the Christian Church has outlived; and though it survived from Celsus down to the Wolfenbüttel fragmentist of last century, there is no school of unbelief that would now give it, even as an alternative, a place on its record. This theory will suit nothing, not even the disappearance of the body. The narrative has to be falsified by the denial that the tomb was sealed and guarded; and the courage and daring of the Apostles has to be unhistorically exalted. The moral contradiction is still more outrageous. The greatest of moralists leaves his disciples capable of this infamy; and his influence, in spite of this scandal, through these impure instruments immediately begins to elevate the world.

Abandoned by unbelief.

A moral contradiction.

Equally incredible, though not quite so monstrous, is the theory that Christ did not really die, but only swooned on the cross, and that He

emerged from the grave and showed Himself alive to His disciples. This so far attempts, like the first theory, to account for the empty tomb, but goes beyond it in explaining also the supposed appearances. But it really violates the history at every point. It violates the history of the crucifixion, for our Lord received a special wound to make sure of His death ; it violates the history of the burial ; for even, if recovered from a swoon, He could have found no means of extrication ; and it violates the history of the appearances of resurrection, for Christ could not have thus suddenly recovered, and His disciples never suppose Him a returned survivor of the last penalty, but always one actually risen. This scheme disagrees with the character of Christ's enemies, who would not have done their work so slackly, of His friends, who could not have made such a mistake, or received such an impulse from a mere natural return ; and most of all, of Christ Himself, who could not have so acted as to have suffered such a delusion to arise as that His case was one of resurrection, and must have come out of His hiding-place to have exposed it. This theory is only worthy of the naturalism of a Paulus ; and though the genius of Schleiermacher has unhappily condescended to it, it is one of those eccentricities which do not even set a fashion, but after a day's wonder pass away.

The swoon theory incredible, and contradicts history.

It violates the crucifixion.

It violates the history of the appearances.

Inconsistent with the character of Christ's enemies, friends, and of Christ Himself.

The vision theory.

The only theory that is now seriously and widely held is what is called the vision theory, or that Christ's disciples, through the influence of love or faith, or some other principle distinct from wilful error, were led mistakenly to believe that their Master had returned from the dead, and propagated the accounts of these mere visions, as actual reappearances. This is the view set forth by Strauss and Renan in their well-known works, though Renan inconsistently adds on to this the theory of fraud, and supposes it conceivable that Mary Magdalene and the other women had something to do with the transfer of the body. These writers further differ, Strauss in supposing that the appearances, due to the action of imaginative love and longing, only began in Galilee, and that the disciples after a long interval returned to Jerusalem to start the report and found the Christian Church; whereas Renan makes all begin immediately in Jerusalem. Each of these writers in setting aside the other, attests the strength of the Christian position; for if all began in Jerusalem and began at once, by the appearances immediately happening, and being appealed to there, Strauss seems to feel that the resurrection must be a fact; while Renan probably realizes the difficulty of contradicting the evangelists here as to place and time, and yet founding anything anywhere on their testimony. As it is, the difficulties of Strauss, who is here the

Strauss and Renan.

Their differences.

The Christian position attested by them.

better advocate of unbelief of the two, are immense. He has not only to create in Galilee, amid disappointment and defeat, and with no prophecy of resurrection, a mood of mind that made belief in resurrection easy; but when the disciples return to Jerusalem, the appearances of the risen Christ are to be vouchsafed to meetings of any size, and after a long silence, to help them in reviving an unwelcome and fading memory; while thus excited and even fanatical, the Jewish Christians are to be so lofty and earnest in spirit as to shake the scepticism of Paul, and pre-dispose him to a similar vision and testimony; yet these visions of the Risen One are suddenly to end, and without them Christianity is to prevail in regions where neither risen Christ nor unrisen had ever been heard of or expected. If the resurrection demands faith it cannot be said that this theory, which is perhaps the best that can be offered, dispenses with it; and we see how little it fills up the gap in the fact that Baur prefers to leave the whole subject of the resurrection of Christ a mystery, and Keim, though otherwise disposed to leave out miracle, is prepared to grant its ingress here a last possibility, and to conceive that the glorified spirit of Jesus so acted on His disciples that they confounded it with His material presence. Against these visionary schemes the clear testimonies of the evangelists and of Paul maintain their place.

The difficulties of Strauss.

The demand Strauss' theory makes on faith.

Keim's position.

St. Paul's
vision of
Christ.

Attempts have been made to shake the authority of Paul by urging that his own vision of Christ, which he connects with the rest, was only inward.

But this is supported by nothing in his other references to this memorable event which in Acts affects to blindness his bodily sense; nor can we without license understand a visionary appearance extended to five hundred witnesses, or by any fairness of interpretation introduce this into an argument for the literal resurrection of the body, the very turning-point of which lies in Christ's resurrection being itself real and literal.

The historical
necessity
of Christ's re-
surrection.

We are here then, towards the end of the nineteenth century, as unprovided with any deliverance from the historical necessity of accepting the resurrection of Christ, and other Gospel miracles, as in the first century; and the whole process of criticism and philosophy has simply been to show that if the supernatural is cognisable and provable, it is here manifested and proved. No one can admit, or has ever admitted, the resurrection-miracle, without granting the others in the Gospel history. The Apostle who was most prominent in the succession, in words not contested by the most extreme criticism, claims to have wrought miracles in his own person, and claims this as what belonged to other Apostles. "Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders, and mighty

The accept-
ance of the
other mira-
cles follows
from the ac-
ceptance of
the resurrec-
tion.

deeds."¹ The miraculous element in the Old Testament will not be contested by those who admit it in connection with Christianity, or who allow a single prophecy of Christ, or indeed any revelation before His advent. Thus, where resistance is overcome at one point, it yields throughout; and though it is a quite lawful question whether some particular occurrences are held forth in Scripture as miraculous in character, the general reign of miracle is established.

The Christian Church, indeed, is far from saying that the mere historic belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or in other miracles, will of itself make any man a Christian, for he must add to this—or rather have added by a higher grace—a discernment of the Divine greatness of Christ as a Saviour from sin by His sacrifice, and a reliance upon this and the other provisions of the Christian remedy, which are all connected with Christ's death and resurrection. Nor is it held by the Christian Church that the argument from miracles is the only avenue by which the presence of God in support of Christianity may reveal itself, and lead up to that higher faith in which the more historical belief that is thus variously strengthened has its true and saving consummation. At the same time, it must be held that if the Christian scheme be not founded on fact, and attested by

The miraculous element in the Old Testament cannot be contested by those who admit it in the New.

Something more than mere historical belief needed to make a Christian.

The argument from miracles not the only way to the higher faith.

¹ 2 Corinthians xii. 12.

Historic dis-
proof would
unmake
Christianity.

historic evidence, its saving applications and influences must be cut off, and rendered through any other channel impossible; so that while the historic proof of Christianity does not make Christian faith, its historic disproof would unmake it. It is in this deep and important sense that the argument for miracles is contended for in this tract, and, as the writer rejoices to believe, by an ever-growing host of earnest apologists; and it is his prayer that however the cause must ever transcend the best powers of the advocate, it may not be contended for in vain.



THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE
OF THE
RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST
From the Dead.

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"CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE IN RELATION TO MODERN THOUGHT"
(Being the Bampton Lecture for 1877),

"THE JESUS OF THE EVANGELISTS," ETC.



THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

Basis of the Argument.

FOUR Epistles of the Apostle Paul—Galatians, Romans, Corinthians I. and II.—are universally admitted by learned unbelievers to be genuine, and to have been written within thirty years after the Crucifixion.

Taking these Epistles alone, the writer shows the impossibility of a belief in the Resurrection having arisen, spread widely, been accepted without doubt, and becoming the foundation of the Christian Church, on any other hypothesis than the reality of the fact.

.THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE
OF THE
Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead.



THE writers of the New Testament have staked the truth of Christianity on the actual performance of a single miracle—the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The resurrection the sufficient proof of the truth of Christianity.

If, therefore, this cannot be proved to be an historical fact, it is a mere waste of time and trouble either to attack any other of the miracles of the Bible, or to attempt to prove their truth. If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, all the other miracles, which are recorded in the New Testament, would not avail to prove that Christianity is a divine revelation. If He did, this one alone proves it; and is capable of supporting the weight of all the rest. As therefore this miracle constitutes the key of the Christian position, I challenge unbelievers to join issue on its truth; and invite believers not to allow their attention to be distracted to points of controversy, where the evidence is weaker, and which after all do not involve the real point at issue.

The proof of it carries with it all other miracles.

Challenge to unbelievers.

The treatment of the subject purely historical.

I shall treat this subject precisely as I would any point of secular history. I shall not ask the reader to believe that the New Testament is inspired. I shall use the Gospels, as I would any other memoirs. I shall claim no other authority for the letters of St. Paul than I would for the letters of Cicero. The reader, on his part, must not object that miracles are impossible; for whether they are so or not is a philosophical question which lies *outside the regions of historical inquiry*: and to assume that they are so is simply to beg the question which we are professing to discuss. In this tract I can only deal with historical evidence, not with *a priori* theories.

A priori theories ignored.

The resurrection rests on the highest form of historical evidence.

My purpose is, to prove that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact which rests on the highest form of historical evidence. In doing so, I shall assume that no one who reads this tract will deny the truth of certain facts, which are admitted by all the learned unbelievers of Europe; for to attempt to prove the truth of what they allow, would be a simple waste of time. I shall therefore take it for granted, that what such men as Strauss, Renan, Baur, and the whole Tübingen school of critics admit, those with whom I am reasoning will not deny. I shall assume then:

The facts assumed.

1. That Jesus Christ existed; that He collected around Him a body of followers, who believed in Him as the Messiah of popular expectation; and

that He was crucified by the authority of the Roman government.

2. That the three first Gospels were published in the form in which we now read them, not later than some time during the first twenty years of the second century; and one of them not later than the last ten years of the first century.

The three first Gospels.

3. That the four most important letters of St. Paul, viz., that to the Romans, the two to the Corinthians, and that to the Galatians, were unquestionably written by St. Paul himself; and that the latest of them cannot have been written at a later date than twenty-eight years after the crucifixion.

The four undisputed Epistles of St. Paul.

4. That before the end of the first century, *i.e.* within seventy years after the crucifixion, Christian churches were to be found in all the great cities of the Roman empire.

Christian Churches in the Roman Empire.

If any of my readers should refuse to concede these points, I appeal from their judgment to that of all the eminent critical unbelievers of modern Europe, and say, "Do not ignorantly deny to be historical facts what all your own great men affirm to have been so."

The facts conceded by all eminent critical unbelievers.

The first point of my proof is that the Christian Church has existed as a visible institution, without a single break in its continuity, for a period of more than eighteen centuries; and that it can be traced up to the date which Christians assign for

The Church eighteen centuries old.

The date assigned by Christians, the true one.

Its life after Christ's death due to the resurrection.

its origin by the most unquestionable historical evidence. Its existence therefore is a fact, and must be accounted for. What account, then, does this great society give of its own origin? It asserts, and ever has asserted, that the cause of *its renewed life after the death of its Founder, was the belief not in any dogmas or doctrines, but in a fact—that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead.*

Now observe the importance of the fact that the Christian Church is, and ever has been, a visible community. All communities must have had an origin of some kind. The supposed designs of its Founder were cut short by His execution by the authority of the Roman government. Yet it is certain that the institution which He founded was set agoing again after His death. Its present existence proves this. The Christian Church asserts in all its documents that the sole cause of its renewed life was not that *its followers found a new leader, but that they believed that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.* This therefore formed the foundation on which the society was reconstituted.

The resurrection a sufficient account of its origin.

But observe further, if Jesus Christ rose from the dead, this forms a rational account of the origin of this great institution. If the fact be denied, those who deny it are bound to propound some other rational account of its origin. We affirm that no other theory can account for it.

Let me illustrate the importance of the calling

into existence of a great historical institution, and of its continuous life up to the present time, as a proof of an historical fact. Let us take Mahometanism as an example. The church of Mahomet has existed as a visible institution since the seventh century. It affirms that it owes its origin to the preaching of Mahomet at Mecca, followed by his being acknowledged as prophet and king at Medina. The facts, as reported by his followers, are adequate accounts of its origin, and the continuous existence of the Mahometan church from the seventh century to the present day, forms the strongest possible corroboration of the fact, as it has been handed down by its historians, that its institution was due to Mahomet, and that certain occurrences, which his followers believed to have been real events in his life, were the causes of its existence. These events afford a rational and philosophical account of its origin.

Mahometanism.

Its origin.

The facts adequate to account for it.

But unbelievers have adopted a summary way of disposing of the question of the historical character of Christianity. In place of the account which has been accepted by the Church of its renewed life, they tell us that the three first Gospels consist of a bundle of myths and legends, interspersed with a few grains of historic truth, which were gradually elaborated in the bosom of the Christian society between A.D. 30 and A.D. 100. About the latter date, or shortly afterwards, three unknown persons

The origin of the Gospels according to unbelievers.

The date assigned by them.

The fourth Gospel.

The historical reality of miracles denied by unbelievers.

The early belief in the resurrection.

The Church founded on this belief.

made a selection out of a large mass of these stories, and published them in the form in which we now read them in the Synoptics. These gradually superseded all the other accounts, and were at length accepted by the Church, as the authentic account of the actions and teaching of Jesus. The fourth Gospel they affirm to have been a forgery, which first saw the light about the year A.D. 170. I need hardly add that they also affirm that every miracle which is recorded in the Gospels is devoid of all historical reality, and owes its origin to the imaginations of these credulous primitive believers.

My answer raises a distinct issue. Let it be fairly met. There is one of the miraculous narratives in the Gospels, which certainly could not have originated in this manner. This is the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ: which, whether it occurred as a fact, or the belief in it was due to the hallucinations of His followers, or was invented as a fiction, was believed in by the Church as a reality within an extremely brief interval after its Founder's death. This belief was the foundation on which the Christian Church was erected, and the cause of its renewed vitality. Now I ask the reader to observe that if it is no fiction, but an historical fact, all the theories that have been propounded by unbelievers as affording an adequate account of the origin of Christianity fall to the ground, and the account

of that origin which has been uniformly handed down by the Church is the only one which will endure the test of rational investigation. In other words, Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

No other theory than the truth of the fact will endure the test.

As it is allowed to be an historical fact by all the distinguished unbelievers of Europe, that an eminent Jew, named Jesus, collected a number of followers, who believed in Him as the Messiah of Jewish expectations, I shall not waste time in proving that which no one possessed of competent information will dispute.

Now it is evident that His public execution must have utterly extinguished their hopes, that He could ever fulfil the expectations which they had formed of Him. Such being the case, the community which He had attempted to found, must have gone to pieces, unless a new leader could be discovered, who was capable of occupying His place. But as its existence at the present moment proves that it did not perish, it is certain that it must have made a fresh start of some kind,—something must have happened, which was not only capable of holding it together, but which imparted to it a new vitality. It is no less certain that this was not due to a new leader, who stepped into the place of the original Founder; but to a new use which was made of the old one. Our histories tell us that this new impulse was imparted to the society by the belief that He had risen again from the dead. Whether

The effect of the Crucifixion on the disciples.

The source of the new impulse they received.

The belief must have sprung up soon.

this belief was founded on a fact, or was the result of a delusion, it is evident that it could not have occupied many years in growing; for while this was taking place, the original community founded by Jesus must have perished from want of a bond of cohesion adequate to maintain it in existence.

Evidence for belief in the resurrection.

This being clear, I now ask attention to the fact that we have the most unimpeachable historical evidence that this renewed life of the Church rested on the belief that its Founder, after He had been crucified, rose again from the dead. The proof of this must be derived from the four letters of the Apostle Paul, which all the eminent unbelievers of modern Europe admit to have been his genuine productions. As these letters form historical evidence of the highest order, I must draw attention to their importance.

Contemporary evidence independent of the Gospels.

It has been often objected by unbelievers, that we have no contemporaneous historical evidence. The first three Gospels, it is said, cannot be proved to have been written until seventy or eighty years after the events recorded in them, and the fourth is a forgery. I reply, that even if we allow this, *for the sake of argument*, to be a correct statement of the facts, which it is not, yet we are in possession of letters written by one who was both a contemporary and also the most active agent in founding the Christian Church. Now, contemporary letters of this kind are admitted by all

modern historians to be the most valuable of all historical documents. Of such we have an example in the letters of the great Roman orator and statesman, Cicero, which were collected and published after his death, about a century before St. Paul wrote his. They still exist, and it is not too much to say, that they form the most important documents which we possess, for giving us an insight into the history of Rome between B. C. 100 and B. C. 50. They contain a continuous reference to current events, in which the great statesman bore a part; and they enable us to estimate the secret springs of the events of the time, and the agencies which brought them about, in a manner which we should utterly fail to do, if we had nothing to trust to but the ordinary histories of the period. It is true that we could not compose a perfect history from them alone. Their allusions to current events are for the most part incidental; but the general facts of the history being known from other sources, they not only form the strongest attestation to them, but they enable us to form a correct estimate of their true character in a manner which it would have been impossible for us to do, if we had nothing but the histories to guide our judgment. In truth, Cicero's letters form the most important historical documents which have been handed down to us from the ancient world.

The value of contemporary letters. Cicero's letters.

Their allusions to current events.

A similar historical value attaches to all cel-

Contemporary letters sought after by historians

lections of contemporaneous letters. Modern historians are continually hunting them up in every direction, as the best means of throwing a clear light on the history of the past. They are far more valuable as a means of discriminating truth from falsehood, than formal histories, even when composed by historians who were contemporaneous with the events. Such are frequently written under a strong bias, as, for example, Lord Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*. But the incidental allusions in letters frequently put us in possession of facts and motives, which have been carefully concealed from the world. This is especially the case in confidential communications between friends.

Histories often written under strong bias.

The importance of the admission of modern critical unbelievers.

It is therefore impossible to over-estimate the importance of the concession made to us by the learned critical unbelievers of modern Europe, that beyond all question we are in possession of four documents of this description, carrying us up to the earliest days of Christianity. The latest date which can be assigned to them is *twenty-eight years after the crucifixion*. These letters put us into direct communication with the thoughts of the most active missionary of the infant Church, and of those to whom the letters are addressed. Their character is such that they present us with a living picture of the entire man who wrote them—what he did, what he thought, and what he believed, with a fresh

The latest date that can be assigned to the four undisputed letters.

ness, and a vigour, which is scarcely to be found in any other letters in existence. By their means we can hold direct communication with their author, and almost put him into the witness-box. They depict him as he lived, thought, and moved; and they render it indisputable that he was a man of the most unimpeachable veracity. It is of no little consequence then, that these letters thus admitted to be genuine, form the most important of those which have been attributed to the Apostle.

Our knowledge of the writer from them.

I rest my argument on these four letters alone. At the same time I must not omit to draw attention to the fact that no small number of eminent critical unbelievers admit the genuineness of four more; but the first four are amply sufficient for my present purpose, and I shall therefore rest no portion of my proof upon the disputed ones.

The argument rested on these four letters alone.

Having pointed out the value of contemporaneous letters, I now ask the attention of the reader to the fact that these four letters of St. Paul, were written within that interval of time after the date of the crucifixion, which the more rigid canons of criticism lay down as within the period of the most perfect historical recollection. There is no possibility of dating them eighty or ninety years after the events, as unbelievers for their own convenience endeavour to date the first three Gospels, in order that they may get time during which it might have been possible for a number of fictions

They were written within the period of the most perfect historical recollection.

to have grown up in the Christian Church, and superseded the genuine events of its Founder's life.

The Apostle's memory good for fifteen years earlier.

Not only were they written *within twenty-eight years of the crucifixion, by one whose activity as a missionary of Christianity had extended over the preceding twenty years, but who was then of such an age, that his historical recollections were good for at least fifteen years earlier.* Although he had not seen Jesus Christ before His crucifixion, he must have conversed with multitudes who had done so, and had heard Him teach. In these letters, therefore, we are in possession of a contemporaneous record of the highest order, amply satisfying the strictest rules laid down by the late Sir G. C. Lewis in his great work on the credibility of early Roman history, in which he has rigidly analyzed the value of historical evidence. As the subject on which he treats is one purely secular, and he is usually considered to be very rigid in his demands for historical evidence, I refer the reader to this work with confidence.

Sir G. C. Lewis' rule of historic credibility.

A practical test.

Let us test, by our own practical experience, the value of historical recollections that are only twenty-eight years old. This period of time is three years less than the interval which separates us at the present year 1882 from the *coup-d'état*, which made Napoleon the Third emperor of the French. Our recollections of that event are so lively, that it is simply impossible that we could become the prey of a number of legendary stories respecting it.

The *coup-d'état*. Our recollection of it.

Such stories can only grow up after considerable intervals of time, when the recollection of events has lost its freshness, and the generation which has witnessed them has died out. Let the reader observe then, that St. Paul, when he wrote these epistles, was separated from the crucifixion by an interval of time not so great as that which separates us from the event in question. Add three years more, and it will include the whole of our Lord's ministry.

The growth of legendary stories.

The latest possible date which can be assigned for the conversion of the apostle is A.D. 40, or ten years after the crucifixion. But this is far too late; and several concurrent probabilities fix it at five or six years earlier. St. Paul therefore had the amplest means of information as to what were the beliefs of the Christians at this early period; and must not only have had the most positive certainty respecting what it was, on which the renewed vitality of the Church rested, but he could not have failed to have known that his primitive followers also ascribed a number of superhuman actions to our Lord. Nor was this all. For some time previous to his conversion he had acted the part of the fierce persecutor of the Church. This fact we learn from his own pen. In acting this part, common sense would have suggested to him the necessity of minutely scrutinizing the tenets of the new society; and, above all, of investigating with the utmost care

The date of St. Paul's conversion.

His means of information as to the beliefs of Christians at the time.

His career as a persecutor.

He must have known the tenets of the Church.

the foundation on which it rested, viz., the alleged resurrection of its Founder. He must therefore have been fully cognisant of the beliefs of the Church in connection with this event; and as a vehement opponent, he must have done his utmost to expose any delusion respecting it.

What St. Paul's Epistles prove.

Having thus pointed out the value of St. Paul's Epistles as historical evidence, I will now state the chief facts which can be distinctly proved by them, and the nature of the evidence which they furnish of the historical truth of the Resurrection.

1. They make it certain that not only did St. Paul believe in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as an historical fact, but that he considered it as the foundation on which the life of the revived Christian community was based. Whatever may have been urged respecting his references to miraculous powers possessed by himself, his references to the miracle of the Resurrection are of the most unimpeachable character. They are too numerous for quotation here; I will therefore only refer to one. In the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, he expressly asserts that if the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a fact, Christianity is a delusion.

Christianity a delusion if Christ be not raised.

2. His mode of reference to this event proves that he not only himself believed in it as a fact, but that he did not entertain the smallest doubt that those to whom he wrote believed it as firmly

as himself. He refers to it in the most direct terms; he also refers to it in the most incidental manner, as the foundation of the common faith both of himself, and of those to whom he wrote. He evidently calculates that they would receive his statements respecting it without the smallest hesitation. Now, nothing is more valuable than incidental references such as these to an event. They prove that the writer, and those to whom he writes, know all about it, and have a common belief respecting it. I ask the reader to observe how this is exemplified in the ordinary letters which we write. When we are of opinion that our correspondent is fully acquainted with an occurrence, we simply allude to it, without entering into a formal description of it; and we feel sure that our view of the fact is accepted by him. Such is the manner in which St. Paul refers to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ throughout these letters, with the exception of 1 Cor. xv. and Gal. i. and ii., where his reference is for purposes directly historical and controversial.

3. But observe further: there are circumstances connected with these allusions which render this testimony stronger than any other in history. Party spirit raged fiercely in two of these churches. In the Corinthian church there were several parties, who were more or less adverse to St. Paul. He names three of them, viz., an Apollos party;

St. Paul's direct and incidental references to the resurrection.

The value of incidental references to events in ordinary correspondence.

Circumstances that enhance this testimony in St. Paul's case.

Parties in the Corinthian church.

another, which professed to be the followers of St. Peter; and a third, which claimed in a special sense to be the followers of Christ. Besides these, he specifies a fourth party, which was especially attached to himself. One of these parties went to the extreme length of *denying his right to the apostolical office, on the ground that he had not been one of the original companions of Jesus*. No small portion of the second epistle is occupied with dealing with this party, and defending his own position against them.

The party who denied St. Paul's apostleship.

Such being the state of affairs in this church, it is obvious that if the party in opposition to the apostle had held different views respecting the reality of the resurrection from himself, the demolition of his entire defence would have been certain. He puts the question, "*Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?*" I do not quote these words as evidence that he had really seen Him; but as a proof, that if his opponents had not been firmly persuaded that the resurrection was a fact, it would have been an unanswerable reason for affirming that his claim to apostolical authority, based on his having seen the risen Jesus, was worthless, because He had not risen. This reference also proves that the Petrine and the Christ party in this church, which latter doubtless claimed to represent the most primitive form of Christianity, must have been firmly persuaded that the original

The fact of the resurrection admitted by this party.

apostles had seen their risen Master. It is evident, therefore, that as far as the fact of the resurrection is concerned, St. Paul and his bitterest opponents in the church must have been agreed as to its truth.

St. Paul's bitterest opponents admitted the truth of the resurrection

4. The evidence which is furnished by the Epistle to the Galatians is still more conclusive. Here there was a powerful party, who not only denied St. Paul's apostleship, but who had so far departed from his teaching that he designates their doctrines by the name of a *different gospel*. This party had been so successful, that they had drawn away a large number of his own converts. No one can read this letter without seeing that the state of things in this church touched him to the quick. It is full of the deepest bursts of feeling. Yet the whole epistle is written with the most absolute confidence that however great were the differences between his opponents and himself, there was no diversity of opinion between them that the belief in the resurrection of Jesus was the foundation stone of their common Christianity. Hear his words at the beginning of the letter: "Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through men, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, *who raised Him from the dead*), and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia. I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from Him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel, which is not another

The Epistle to the Galatians.

No difference of opinion about the resurrection in that church.

gospel; only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema."¹

St. Paul's challenge vain if he and his opponents were not agreed about the resurrection.

If St. Paul's belief and that of his opponents, on the subject of the resurrection, had not been at complete accord, no man in his senses would have thrown down such a challenge as that which is contained in these words, and also in terms equally strong throughout the entire epistle.

5. But the evidence which is furnished in this letter goes far beyond the mere belief of the Galatian churches at the time it was written.

The testimony of two other churches involved.

It involves the testimony of two other churches, viz., that of the church of Antioch, and of the church at Jerusalem; the one, the metropolis of Gentile, and the other of Jewish Christianity; and carries us up to the briefest interval after the crucifixion. St. Paul's opponents were Judaizing Christians, who professed to be the followers of St. Peter and St. James. St. Paul, in the second chapter of this epistle, asserts that his teaching was in substantial harmony with that of these two great chiefs of the Jewish church. It follows, therefore, as their professed adherents concurred with him in believing that the resurrection was a fact, that these two apostles must have

St. Paul's teaching at one with St. James and St. Peter.

¹ Gal. i. (1-8). *Revised Version.*

been persuaded that they themselves had seen their risen Lord; and that the whole Jewish Church must have concurred with them in this belief. This same chapter also makes it certain that the entire church at Antioch did the same at the period when St. Peter and St. Paul jointly visited it, and involves the fact of St. Peter's direct testimony to the truth of the resurrection. This proves for certain that this belief was no late after-growth, but that it was coincident with the renewed life of the Christian Church immediately after the crucifixion.

St. Peter and St. James persuaded that they had seen the risen Lord.

The concurrence of the whole Jewish church in this belief.

6. Let us now consider the evidence furnished by the Epistle to the Romans.

The Epistle to the Romans.

If it be urged that St. Paul had founded the churches of Corinth and Galatia, and that even his opponents may have adopted his views on this point, this at any rate was a church which he had neither founded nor visited. It had evidently been in existence several years before he wrote his letter to them; and it was a church so large and important, that he felt that he was in no danger of being misapprehended when he said, that "*their faith was a subject of conversation throughout the whole world.*" It contained a large Jewish element; and from the number of strangers who visited the imperial city there can be no doubt that among its members must have been representatives of every variety of Christian thought. Yet he addressed

The composition of the Roman church.

The resur-
rection be-
lieved by this
church.

the church with the fullest confidence, that its members held the same views respecting the resurrection as himself. This is set forth in the opening words of the epistle: "Declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead;*"¹ and the same truth permeates the entire contents of the epistle.

The con-
current be-
lief of three
large and
widely se-
parated
churches.

We have thus fully proved, that within a period of less than twenty-eight years after the crucifixion, three large churches, separated from each other by several hundred miles, were all of the same mind in believing that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead; and that this belief formed the sole ground of the existence of the Christian community. I ask the reader to consider how long it must have taken for such a belief to have grown up among churches *thus widely separated*. It is useless, therefore, to assert that the miraculous stories of the Gospels grew up gradually during the first century, and that they thus became mistaken for history, for our evidence is simply overwhelming, that the greatest of all miracles was implicitly believed in by the entire Church within less than twenty-eight years after the crucifixion.

The belief
could not
have grown
up within
twenty-eight
years if un-
founded.

7. But further: this belief was not then one of recent growth. The mode in which allusion is made to it, proves that it must have been contem-

¹ *Romans i. 4.*

poraneous with their first belief in Christianity on the part of those to whom St. Paul wrote. Many of these, as we have seen, were Jewish Christians, who must have been very early converts, or have derived their faith from those who were. The allusions in the Epistle to the Galatians plainly include the testimony of St. James and St. Peter. We also find by a most incidental allusion in the Epistle to the Romans, that there were two members of that church who had embraced Christianity before St. Paul. The allusion is so incidental that it is worth quoting: "Salute Andronicus, and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also have been in Christ before me." Yet they were all agreed on the subject of the resurrection. St. Paul believed it from the time of his conversion, *i.e.*, within less than ten years after the date of the crucifixion. Andronicus and Junias believed it still earlier. Peter, James, and John also believed it from the first; for St. Paul tells us that he communicated to them the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles, and that they generally approved of it; and he informs us, in the fifteenth of the Corinthians, that both Peter and James had seen Jesus Christ alive after His crucifixion. The reader's attention should be particularly directed to the fact that in the Epistle to the Galatians he informs us, that three years

Many of the Jewish Christians early converts.

Converts before St. Paul.

St. Paul's conversion within ten years after the crucifixion.

His testimony concerning Peter and James.

St. Paul's visit to Peter and interview with James.

after his conversion, he paid Peter a visit of fifteen days, during which he was entertained by him, and that during this visit he had an interview with James. As it is incredible that they did not explain their views to one another respecting this fundamental fact of Christianity, we cannot therefore err in assuming that we have here the direct testimony of these two men, that they believed they had seen their Master risen again from the dead. It follows, therefore, that their belief in the resurrection was the foundation on which the Church was reconstructed immediately after the crucifixion.

St. Paul's statement as to the number of persons who had seen Jesus after His resurrection.

8. In the fifteenth of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul makes a very definite statement as to a number of persons who believed that they had seen Jesus Christ after He had risen from the dead. He tells us that on one occasion He was so seen by more than five hundred persons at once, of whom more than half were still alive, when he wrote the epistle. Now, consider how, in making this assertion, he must have put himself in the hands of his opponents, if this fact was not generally admitted to be true. They might have put an end to his reasonings then and there by simply exposing the falsehood of such a statement. The attempt of unbelievers to escape the force of this fact by the allegation that the apostle was careless of inquiry into the truth of such stories is here quite beyond the mark; for they forget

Easily refuted if untrue.

that it was made in the presence of those who would have been only too eager to expose his misstatements if they had been able. But if these five hundred persons really believed that they had seen Jesus Christ after His crucifixion, how is it possible to account for so singular a fact, otherwise than on the assumption of its truth?

The testimony of the five hundred unaccountable if untrue.

9. But further: there were members of the Corinthian church, who affirmed that a resurrection of the body was, if not impossible, yet a most undesirable event; and that all that was intended by the promise of a Resurrection was a great spiritual change. Yet, with singularly defective logic, they admitted that the Resurrection of Christ had been a bodily one.¹ The apostle presses them with the following reasoning, to which I invite the reader's attention: How can you deny a bodily resurrection hereafter, when you admit that Christ actually rose from the dead? If the resurrection of Christ had not been the foundation of the faith of the Church, they might have made short work of the apostle and his logic, by simply denying the truth of the bodily Resurrection of our Lord.

The inconsistency of St. Paul's opponents in the Christian Church.

But further: this allusion proves that there were persons in this church who were far from being disposed to accept with eager credulity the story of a resurrection from the dead.

Many in the Corinthian church unwilling to accept the story of the resurrection.

¹ Cor. xv. 14-17.

The miracle of the resurrection neither a myth, nor a legend, nor hallucination.

Undisputed documents appealed to.

The points proved.

I have therefore proved, on the most unimpeachable historical evidence, that there is at least one miracle recorded in the Gospels, which is neither a myth, a legend, nor even a mental hallucination which slowly grew during the latter half of the first century, but that it was fully believed in as a fact by those who gave the new impulse to the Christian Church immediately after the crucifixion of its Founder; and that it formed the one sole ground of its renewed life. Let it be observed that I have foreborne to quote the testimony of the Gospels, because unbelievers affirm that their date is comparatively late. I have, therefore, simply made use of historical documents, the genuineness of which they do not dispute. It remains, therefore, to inquire whether it is possible that this belief could have been the result of some species of mental hallucination on the part of the primitive followers of Jesus, for this is the only possible alternative to its historical reality. But before doing so, let me briefly set before the reader the points which have been proved on historical evidence of the highest order.

1. That within less than twenty-eight years after the crucifixion, the entire Christian Church, without distinction of party, believed that the one sole ground of its existence was the fact that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead.

2. That at that period there were more than

two hundred and fifty persons then living, who believed that they had seen Him alive after His crucifixion.

The points proved.

3. That the belief in the Resurrection was held in common by St. Paul and his most violent opponents.

4. That it is an unquestionable fact that the entire Christian Church believed in the Resurrection of its Founder, as the sole ground of its existence, within six or seven years after the date of His crucifixion.

5. That at least three of the original apostles asserted that they had seen Jesus Christ alive after His death.

6. That within a few months after the crucifixion the Church must have been re-constructed on the foundation of the belief that its crucified Messiah had been raised again from the dead. I say a few months, because if the interval had been longer, while the belief was growing, the Church must have perished in its Founder's grave.

Such being the facts of which the historical evidence is unquestionable, it remains for me to examine whether they are consistent with any other assumption than that the belief in the Resurrection was founded on a reality.

Are they consistent with any other assumption than reality of the resurrection?

Let the reader therefore observe that there are only three possible alternatives before us.

1 Either Jesus Christ actually rose from the dead.

The alternatives.

Alternative assumptions.

2. Or the belief in His Resurrection was the result of a deliberately concocted fraud.

3. Or the original followers of Jesus were the victims of some species of mental hallucination. Other alternative there is none.

It will be unnecessary to examine the second of these alternatives, because it has been abandoned as untenable by all eminent modern unbelievers.

Two theories propounded.

Two theories have been propounded as affording a rational account of the origin of the belief in the Resurrection of Jesus, on the assumption that it was due to the mental hallucination of His disciples. Of these the first is—

The theory of Visions.

That they were so intensely enthusiastic and credulous, that some one or more of them fancied that they saw Jesus alive after His crucifixion, and that they succeeded in persuading the others that it was a fact. This theory is technically called the theory of Visions. It has been propounded in many forms, but that of Renan may be cited as a fair illustration of it, that Mary Magdalene, in the midst of her grief and emotion, mistook the gardener for Jesus, fancied that He was risen from the dead, and communicated her enthusiasm to the rest.

The theory that Christ did not die.

The second is, that Jesus did not really die of the effects of crucifixion, but that He was taken down from the cross in a swoon, from which He awoke in the sepulchre; that He succeeded in

creeping out of it in an exhausted state, in getting to a place of retirement, and died shortly afterwards; and that His credulous followers mistook this partial recovery for a resurrection from the dead.

I must ask the reader to observe, that to impart to either of these theories the appearance of plausibility, it is necessary to assume a boundless, I may say an amount of credulity that surpasses belief, on the part of the followers of Jesus. But when we ask that some proof should be adduced of the existence of this extreme credulity, the only one which is forthcoming is, that the Jews of that period were habitual believers in supernatural and demoniacal agency.

An incredible amount of credulity needed to receive either theory.

I will deal with the second of these theories first:—

I allow that it was possible for a man who had been suspended for some time on the cross, if taken down, and carefully treated, to recover. This, we are informed by Josephus, happened to one of his friends, though it was the exception: for two out of three died under care. But in the case of Jesus, unbelievers must meet the fact that He was in the hands of His enemies, who, as a matter of course, would have seen to His burial as a criminal who had been publicly executed, and have thus put the possibility of His recovery in His grave out of the question. It is true that our Gospels

The theory that He did not die.

Difficulties
of unbelief.

inform us that Pilate surrendered His body to His friends; our sole knowledge of this fact is derived from their testimony, but unbelievers affirm that they are unhistorical, and they cannot therefore in this particular case claim the benefit of it. If, however, they accept the statements of the Gospels on this point they are bound also to accept their further assertion, that Pilate took care to ascertain that Jesus had actually died before he resigned possession of the body; and that it was afterwards consigned to a sepulchre, the entrance of which was closed with a large stone. But those who propound the above theory cannot help admitting that a sepulchre hewn in a rock, was a most unlikely place for a man who had been crucified to recover from a swoon, which could be mistaken for death; but even if this is conceded to be a possibility, they are met with the insuperable difficulty, of a man in this wounded and exhausted condition being able to get out of a place—the doorway of which was closed by a large stone—and then succeeding in taking refuge in the house of a friend, and there hiding himself from the eyes of his inveterate foes.

Admission of
unbelievers.

But as after the crucifixion Jesus disappears from history, except on the supposition that He rose from the dead, unbelievers are obliged to admit that He must have died from exhaustion shortly afterwards. Now it is certain that if He

left the grave alive He must have been kept in the closest concealment; for if those who had succeeded in procuring His crucifixion, had the remotest suspicion that He had done so, they would not have allowed Him to remain undisturbed, and consequently His disciples could not have ventured to have breathed a single word about a resurrection, until they had succeeded in conveying Him to some distant place of safety. This, as all practical men know, would have involved insuperable difficulties; and in this case one or more of the followers of Jesus must have been guilty of a conscious fraud.

Difficulties
of unbelief
insuperable.

But further. It is also evident that if Jesus lived in concealment, His followers either had access to Him or they had not. If the former was the case, it would have been impossible for them to have mistaken a wounded man's gradual recovery, for a resurrection; or one dying from exhaustion, for the Messiah of Jewish expectations. But if they never saw Him, the idea that they should have believed that He was risen from the dead, and on the strength of that belief, should have proceeded to reconstruct the Church on the basis of His resurrection, and that they should have succeeded in accomplishing it, is far more incredible than the belief that all the miracles recorded in the Bible were actual occurrences.

The dilemma
of unbelief.

The explanations
of unbelief more
incredible
than the
miracles of
the Bible.

But a Messiah, who crept out of His grave,

The expectations of Christ's followers.

The re-commencement of the Christian community.

Nothing but the resurrection can account for it.

took refuge in retirement, and afterwards died from exhaustion, was not one who could satisfy the requirements of the community, which had been crushed by His crucifixion. His followers had fully expected that He was going speedily to reign, and lo, the cross was His only throne, and all expectations of a visible reign must have been crushed. Yet it is the most certain of historical facts, that the Christian community commenced a new life immediately after its original groundwork that Jesus was the Messiah of popular Jewish expectation, had been subverted by His crucifixion. Nothing but a resurrection, or something which could be mistaken for it, could have served the purpose. Something must be done, and that quickly, or the Church must have perished in its Founder's grave. It was necessary, therefore, that the old Messianic idea should be immediately reconstructed, if the instant dissolution of the Church was to be averted. The Church had before it the alternative of finding a Messiah on a new basis, or perishing. If it be urged that Jesus recovered from the effects of crucifixion, and lived in retirement ever afterwards, and that His disciples mistook this for a resurrection, I ask in the name of common sense, even if it is conceivable that there was a single disciple capable of such credulity, how long would such a belief take in growing, so as to be accepted by the entire body, and to be embraced by them with

such ardour as to cause them to proceed to the work of reconstructing the Church on its basis? The truth is, that the requisite time is not to be had for the growth of such a delusion, for while the belief was growing, the Church would have become extinct from want of any bond to keep it united. Is it credible, I ask, that any body of disciples could have been induced to believe that their Master was risen from the dead, without being favoured with an interview with Him, and that He was the Messiah, while He continued to live in retirement, in order that He might keep Himself in safety from His enemies, or that they would have ventured to proceed to the work of reconstructing the Church on the basis of His spiritual Messiahship, knowing well the opposition they were certain to encounter, unless they had been persuaded that they had received their Master's direct instructions to do so, and that He was able to impart to the attempt the probability of success? Credulity, however great, certainly has its limits, and such credulity as has been presupposed, exceeds the limits of the possible. But besides all this, the theory cannot be made to bear the least appearance of plausibility, without assuming either the incredible fact that Jesus must have mistaken His partial recovery for a resurrection, or the alternative that He lent Himself to the perpetration of a conscious fraud, with which

The Master's instructions necessary to account for what the disciples believed and did.

The limits of credulity

The consequences of the theory that He did not die.

not even unbelievers have actually dared, except by insinuation, to charge the Holy One of God.

The theory
of visions.

Let us now proceed to consider the remaining alternative, that the belief in the Resurrection was due to the followers of Jesus having, under the influence of mental hallucinations, mistaken certain visionary appearances, the creations of their overwrought imaginations, for objective realities; and in consequence of this that they became firmly persuaded that they had seen and conversed with Him after He had risen from the dead. Before doing so, however, let me draw the reader's attention to the all-important fact which is so habitually overlooked in this argument, that the historical condition of the case requires *that those who propound this theory, as affording an adequate account of the origin of the belief in the Resurrection, should not only account for the origin of this belief as a mere belief, but for the erection of the Church on its basis.* It is impossible too strongly to press this last part on the attention of unbelievers.

What it must
account for.

Let us however assume, for the sake of argument, that the original followers of Jesus were to the last degree credulous and enthusiastic, only observing that we have not one atom of evidence for the assumption. I am fully ready to concede that a belief in a certain round of supernaturalism is one which is very widely diffused among mankind; and that large numbers of marvellous stories

are readily accepted on little or no evidence. It is comparatively easy to get men to believe that they have seen ghosts, and still easier to believe that others have seen them. But there is one marvel at which the most profound credulity stumbles; viz., that a man who has actually died, has been seen alive, and conversed with in bodily reality. I doubt whether an authentic instance can be found of any one who has positively affirmed that he has seen and conversed with another after he was dead, not as spirit, but in bodily reality. The old pagans who accepted supernaturalism enough, would have scoffed at such a belief, as lying beyond the bounds of the possible; and would have pronounced any one mad who had affirmed that he had done so. I am aware that there are a few old pagan stories about men who had been brought back from the other world; but these were wisely placed by the poets in the remotest ages of the past. But in the present case history refuses to allow of any sufficient time for the story of a resurrection to have grown up in this gradual manner under shelter of the remote past.

What then is the fact with which in the present case those who deny the reality of the resurrection must inevitably grapple? It is none other than this, that several persons must have believed that they saw the risen Jesus within a few days or weeks after His crucifixion, and what is more, conversed with Him separately and in companies.

Credulity confounded by the evidence for the resurrection.

The claim to have conversed with a risen man in the body never made.

Old pagan stories.

The fact to be grappled with by un-believers.

The amount of credulity demanded by unbelief.

Let the reader imagine for himself the amount of credulity which would be necessary to enable a number of men and women to believe that they had not only seen and conversed with one who had been publicly executed at Newgate, and whose body was still close at hand mouldering in its grave, but who actually proceeded to found a society on the basis of that belief, and that society the greatest, the holiest, and the most mightily influential of all the institutions that have existed on this earth; and what is more, that they could actually succeed in the attempt.

The conditions of mental hallucinations.

Three conditions have been laid down by those who have deeply studied the human mind, as necessary for the production of those mental hallucinations, which have resulted in causing subjective impressions to be mistaken for external realities. These are *pre-possession*, *fixed idea*, and *expectancy*. Now, nothing can be more certain than that, in the case of our Lord's disciples, these three principles, supposing them to have been existent in them, would have acted in a direction directly contrary to that which those who propound this theory as an adequate account of the facts above referred to require.

The pre-possession of the disciples.

1. Their pre-possession were all in favour of a Messiah visibly ruling and reigning, and most adverse to the idea of a crucified one. The very idea of a crucifixion dashed in pieces their dearest

hopes. Their pre-possession therefore ran directly counter to what this theory requires that they should have been, to have produced the requisite mental hallucinations.

2. Such fixed ideas as they possessed, instead of producing a visionary set of instructions from their risen Master, to re-construct the Church on the basis of His spiritual Messiahship, would have infallibly led them to see visions in conformity with the old Jewish Messianic conception. If fixed idea ever produces visions in credulous minds, these visions will certainly be on the lines of their old ideas, and will not generate new ones. Nothing can be conceived of as less revolutionary than "fixed ideas;" and therefore they will not aid us one single step towards the generation of the idea of a spiritual Messiahship, or to the re-construction of the Church on its basis.

Their fixed ideas.

3. Of expectancy of a resurrection, the followers of Jesus certainly had none. The only possible ground for supposing that they had any would be the assumption that our Lord had predicted the event in the most express terms. But this unbelievers do not venture to affirm, for to admit it would be inconsistent with their position. Some mere general utterance, such as that if He was martyred, He would live again in the future success of His cause, is one far too general to produce that enthusiastic state of expectancy which would be

The absence of expectancy on the disciples' part.

necessary to create such visions of Him risen from the dead as could be mistaken for objective realities, it being remembered that all the while His dead body must have been at hand in the grave in the custody of either His friends or His foes.

The failure of the vision theory.

Hopeless, therefore, is the attempt to produce the requisite visions by the aid of either of these three principles.

It is easy for a student in his closet to invent the theory that Mary Magdalene, in the midst of her grief and dejection, mistook the gardener for Jesus, thought that He was risen from the dead, and communicated her enthusiasm to the rest; but those who have practical experience of the realities of things will be confident that this is much easier to say than to do. What! are we to be asked to believe that an enthusiastic woman succeeded in persuading a number of others that a person who had been executed only a few days previously, and whose body was close by in the grave, had appeared to her in bodily reality, and that they therefore accepted the fact, that He was risen from the dead, without further inquiry?

Insurmountable difficulties of the vision theory.

Did they do so, I ask, without being favoured with a sight of Him themselves; or did they all, in the height of their credulous enthusiasm, take to seeing visions of the risen Jesus, and mistake them for objective realities, and all this while

the body was close at hand in the sepulchre? What next are we to be invited to believe in the name of philosophic history?

Further. Is it to be believed that His disciples without authority from Him ventured to proceed to reconstruct the Church on the basis of a spiritual and invisible Messiah, in the place of a temporal and visible one, to make His person the centre of the life of the new system, and to lay the foundations of an universal Church in place of the old theocracy? This brings us into immediate contact with the whole mass of insuperable difficulties with which the theory of visions is attended.

I must once more draw attention to the fact, that it is necessary that those who affirm that the belief in His resurrection was the result of a mental hallucination on the part of the followers of Jesus, should account not only for that belief, but for the erection of the Church on the new basis of a spiritual instead of a temporal Messiah, and the other all-important changes in the entire movement which resulted from this change of front. I know that it will be urged, that His credulous followers fancied that, although His body still continued in the hands of either His friends or His foes, He had been taken up into heaven, from whence He would come again after a short interval in His visible Messianic glory. But the Church

What is to be accounted for on the theory.

The necessity of a thorough reconstruction of the basis of the original society.

The disciples believed they had instructions from the Master.

The disciples singly or in bodies must have seen several visions.

had in the meantime to be kept together ; and this could only be done by reconstructing the Messianic conception on which it had been based. However, days, months, and years elapsed, and no return of Jesus took place. A thorough reconstruction of the entire basis of the original society became therefore more and more urgently necessary, if utter extinction was to be avoided. But it is an unquestionable historic fact that, instead of dwindling away, it grew and flourished immediately after its Founder's death. The reconstruction in question therefore must have been actually effected immediately afterwards. Are we to be invited to believe that the disciples would have ventured on such a step, unless they had been firmly persuaded that they had received definite instructions from their Master to make the transformation, or that a body of ignorant fanatics, such as is supposed, had wit enough to invent the mighty change which has resulted in the erection of the Catholic Church of Jesus Christ, and in the influences which from thence have issued on the world ?

Let us return to the theory of visions. What then are we to be asked to believe ? In place of the acceptance of the Resurrection as a fact—a fact, be it observed, adequate to explain all the subsequent phenomena of the history of the Church,—we are invited to believe that the belief in it originated in the followers of Jesus seeing visions of their Master,

after His crucifixion, and mistaking them for realities. In that case they must have seen not *one vision, but several, not only singly, and in solitude, but in bodies.* St. Paul's testimony on this point is express, and his means of information must have been ample. Will any one, with his epistles in his hands, venture to affirm that he wrote what he knew to be an invention of his own? He tells us that he had private interviews with Peter and James, and also that both these apostles believed that they had private interviews with the risen Jesus. Is it credible that he did not get this information from them, when he actually abode for a fortnight in Peter's house, and had a personal interview with James? He also tells us that on another occasion he had an interview with at least one more of the original apostolic body, John; and he gives us the further information that the eleven apostles, when assembled together in a body, believed that on two separate occasions they had interviews with their risen Master. He also tells us that, on another occasion, He appeared to no less than five hundred in a body. Were all these visionary appearances? Did all the disciples take to seeing visions together, and to mistaking them for realities? When they thus imagined that they saw their Master singly, and in bodies, did not one of them ask Him a question; and, if so, did he get a visionary answer? Is it credible

St. Paul's
testimony
indisputable

His inter-
views with
Peter,
James, and
John.

Christ's ap-
pearances to
His disciples

Their inter-
course with
Him.

I ask, that circumstanced as they were, they did not ask Him what future course He was going to adopt; or, in event of His removal, what course it was His pleasure that they should pursue with respect to carrying on the work which He had begun? That they should have put to Him no questions such as these is simply incredible. To such questions they either got answers, or they did not. If they got none, the bubble must have burst then and there. If they believed that they got answers, they must have been all visionary ones; and this must have involved a whole set of visionary conversations.

Christ's in-
structions to
His disciples
in His inter-
views with
them.

The fact that the Church was reconstructed shortly after the crucifixion, renders it absolutely certain that the followers of Jesus must have believed that they had conversations with their risen Master, and that in these conversations He gave them His directions both to reconstruct the Church and as to the mode in which they were to do so; for, as I have said, unless they had believed that they had received such instructions, it is simply incredible that they should have ventured on the attempt, and have dared to refound the Church on the basis of His resurrection and spiritual Messiahship, and that too in the face of all the opposition they were certain to encounter. But if their belief in His resurrection was the result of an hallucination, then the instructions which they

believed that they had received, and on which they successfully acted, must have been mere visions, the creation of their disordered imaginations. What is more, they must have all fancied that they heard similar utterances, or else there would have been a diversity of plans.

To enable us to accept theories like these as accounts of actual facts, requires on our part more than all the credulity which unbelievers ascribe to our Lord's primitive followers.

The credulity of unbelief.

But observe further: the belief in the resurrection was no idle belief, like that of a common ghost story or an ordinary marvel. Such beliefs begin and end in nothing; but this had an energy and power sufficient to reconstruct the Church in the face of the greatest difficulties and perils. It was therefore no sentimental belief entertained by individuals, who did nothing in consequence of it; but one which sustained the weight of an institution which has endured for eighteen centuries of time, and has acted more powerfully on mankind than any other known to history. This belief went on spreading, until within less than seventy years, it had firmly established itself in all the great cities of the Roman empire, and had shown itself capable of enduring the test of martyrdom. Where in history can be found an instance of a community which has been founded on the belief that a man who had been publicly executed, rose again from

The energy and power of the belief in the resurrection.

The duration of the Church founded on the belief.

The case without parallel in history.

the dead, and who was thus proved to be the King of the kingdom of God? Is it easy to persuade numbers of men and women to accept so astounding a fact? Where can be found an example of a great institution, which has lasted for centuries, which has wielded a greater influence for good, and a mightier power over the human mind than all other institutions put together, which has been erected on the foundation of a number of vulgar marvels?

Ghost stories and spiritualism have done nothing for men.

What, I ask, has the whole mass of ghost stories, marvels, and current spiritualism done to reform the world? We have heard much in these modern days of spiritualism, and its wonders; has there any great institution been erected on its basis, or is there any probability that there ever will? Are mankind, or any portion of them, the better or the wiser for its disclosures? To these questions there can be only one answer. Spiritualism, with all its alleged powers of penetrating into the secrets of the unseen world, and all similar marvels, have achieved nothing; they have made man neither holier nor wiser; nay, they have not effected a discovery which has enlarged the knowledge, or even made the fortune of any of its votaries. But respecting the Gospel of the resurrection, the great Christian missionary could write to those who had actual knowledge of the facts, in the first of his extant letters, dating only twenty-three years from

What the Gospel of the resurrection has done.

the crucifixion: "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father, . . . for our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power; . . . and ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord; . . . and how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom *He raised from the dead, even Jesus*;"¹ and as he wrote to another body of his converts, only four years later, after he had affirmed that before becoming Christians they had been guilty of some of the foulest vices which can disgrace mankind: "And such were some of you; but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."²

The first of our three alternatives is therefore the only possible one. Jesus rose from the dead. If this was an actual event, it satisfies all the facts of history, and affords a rational account of the origin of the Church. No other theory does anything else but make boundless demands on our credulity in the name of an unsound philosophy.

I am now in a position to assign to the Gospels their proper place as historical documents. The above facts having been proved on evidence which is quite independent of their testimony, it is useless for unbelievers to affirm, as far as the Resur-

The only possible alternative.

The resurrection an actual event, and accounts for everything.

¹ 1 Thessalonians i. 3-10.

² 1 Corinthians vi. 11.

The Gospel-
history
established.

The Gospels
true
memoirs of
Jesus Christ.

Written for
edification of
believers.

rection is concerned, that they were written by nameless authors, long after the events which they profess to record, for the truth of the Resurrection can be proved independently of their testimony. If, therefore, it is a fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, the *a priori* presumption against their miraculous narratives, the existence of which is the reason why unbelievers pronounce them unhistorical, is destroyed; nay, it becomes far more probable that Jesus Christ wrought miracles, than that He wrought none. The Gospels, therefore, may be accepted for what they profess to be,—memoirs of the ministry of Jesus Christ, composed by their authors with the design of teaching the fundamental principles of Christianity.¹ Their accounts are fragmentary, but are substantial narratives of facts. They were not written for polemical purposes, but for the edification of believers.² It has been objected that their accounts contain narratives which it is difficult to reconcile with one another in minute details. I admit that such is the fact, and that this results from the peculiar class of writings to which the Gospels belong, viz., not regular histories, but religious memoirs; which class of writings do not profess to furnish us with a complete and continuous narrative.

¹ See the preface to St. Luke's Gospel.

² This is a point which ought to be carefully noted by every student.

The last thing which occurred to their authors was to guard against the objections of opponents. In their accounts of the Resurrection, they satisfy all the conditions of the case. The events of Easter Sunday must have thrown the followers of Jesus into the greatest excitement. The accounts of them given in the three first Gospels are exactly such as we should expect from men and women under similar circumstances. They are broken, disjointed, without any attempt being made to weave them into a complete whole, yet, in all the main facts their testimony agrees, and they are fully corroborated by the more definite account of an eye-witness—the author of the fourth Gospel. This is exactly what they should be, if they contain the reports of genuine witnesses; and what they certainly would not have been if they had been written by men acting in mutual concert, and with the design of smoothing over difficulties, or answering objections. Let us hear on this point one of the highest authorities of modern scepticism. “It is useless,” says the *Westminster Review*, “to carp at small minor details. All histories contain variations, or if you like to call them, contradictions on minor points. This has been the case with every history that has been written from Herodotus to Mr. Froude.”

The Gospel accounts of the resurrection satisfy all the conditions of the case.

Exactly what they should be.

The testimony of the highest organ of scepticism.

Let unbelievers therefore join issue on the main facts of the Gospel history, just as they would

The issue for
unbelief to
decide.

with any secular history, and we will meet them. Above all, let them not carp at minor details about miracles; but let them join issue on the truth or falsehood of that great miracle, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, on the truth of which the writers of the New Testament have staked the existence of Christianity; for if its historical foundation can be proved to be baseless, the Christian Church must become a crumbling ruin. But if Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, Christianity must be a Divine revelation, notwithstanding all the objections which have been urged against it by unbelievers, or any amount of alleged discrepancies with which they charge the narratives of the Gospels.



CHRIST
THE
CENTRAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY
THE REV. PRINCIPAL CAIRNS, D.D.,
AUTHOR OF "UNBELIEF IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY"
(Being the Cunningham Lecture for 1880).



THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

Analysis of the Argument.

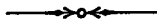
I. The Christ of the Gospels is a real person, because of the wonderfulness, originality, and unity of the conception of His character, which are admitted by the most eminent unbelievers; because of the harmony of the portraiture found amid all the diversities in the four Gospels; because of the failure of recent attempts to invalidate the historical truth of the Gospels, or produce a new reading of them which commands general acceptance.

II. The Christ of the Gospels is shown to be the centre and strength of every argument for the truth of Christianity. The miracles of the Old Testament all lead up to Him. The success of Christianity is due to Him. Prophecy derives all its coherence and significance from Him. The adaptation of Christianity is due to Him. The argument from the reflection of God's holiness and love centres in Him.

CHRIST

THE

CENTRAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.



It is becoming more and more apparent to friend and foe, in the great struggle between Christian faith and doubt, that the key of the position is the person of Christ Himself; and that so long as the obvious meaning of the Gospel narrative as to the life, character, and work of that grand central figure can be accepted as "fact, and not delusion," no weapon lifted against Christianity can prevail. It is a presumptive argument of truth in any system to have a centre; and in this tract I propose to show, confining attention chiefly to the four Gospels, that the life of Christ as there exhibited, is a reality, and is so fitted to bind all the Christian evidences together as to furnish an additional and independent evidence of the divinity of the Christian faith. Our question is twofold. Is the Christ of the Gospels a real person? If so, how does this concentrate, and thus strengthen all the evidences of Christianity?

Christ the key of the position in the struggle between faith and doubt.

The question twofold.

The Gospels
the foun-
tain head of
our know-
ledge of
Christ and
His work.

It is not necessary to go into any other part of the New Testament to find a sufficient answer to the question, what the Gospels really mean by their narratives of Christ's life and death and resurrection. No doubt most important and precious expositions are, as Christians believe, divinely added. But to the vast majority of Christians, it has ever seemed that the Gospels, not excluding the foregoing light of the Old Testament, are the very fountain heads of all Christian doctrine, and they are so because they contain the portrait of Christ Himself, and His own utterances as to His personal rank and character, and the aim and issue of His earthly mission. The sum of the teaching of Christ's recorded life and history may be given thus: that we have in Him as man, a perfect and sinless example; that He is truly God as well as man; and that as a Saviour, by His sacrifice on the cross, and other provisions of His redemption, He rescues men from the guilt and power of sin, and restores them to God.

The sum of
the teaching
of Christ's
life and his-
tory

Deeper statements of Christian theology are not here needed. These are concurred in by the immense majority of Christians as drawn from and founded on the records of Christ's own life. Nor by them only, for there are others of no small name, unhappily not themselves Christians, who grant that Christians have not here misinterpreted their own records, and that, whether true or false,

these are the conceptions of Christ's person, character, life, and influence, which the writers of these documents intended them to embody.

It will be granted, to begin with, that these conceptions of a human life, actually realizing perfection, nay, embracing an incarnation of God, and thus affording a complete and divinely sanctioned remedy for moral and spiritual evil, are the most remarkable, simply as conceptions, in all literature. The mere statement of them is enough to relieve us from the charge of vagueness and generality when we speak of the life, character, and work of Christ; we can therefore proceed to the argument of this tract, and show first that these are not mere conceptions, however great, but facts of a true and solid history; and then that all Christian evidence becomes, by this proof, strong with a new strength, and bright with a new light.

The Gospel conceptions of Christ's person and work.

The proof of my first point is more copious than can be fully stated; but the arguments for the historical reality of the life and character of Christ, as indicated, are such as follow:

Their historical reality.

1. The historical truth of the Christ of the Gospels is vouched for by *its transcendent wonderfulness and originality*. It is not the Christian Church only that speaks thus; for even those on its outer verge or beyond its limits give back Christian language here with a strange echo. Rousseau's picture of Christ—almost incredible

Proof from the wonderfulness and originality of the Christ of the Gospels.

Rousseau's
picture of
Christ.

from a man of such life, though he always claimed to be a Christian—is wound up in these words, “The Gospel has marks of truth so great, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that the inventor of it would be more astonishing than the hero.”¹ Nor can we say that Rousseau limits himself to the human side of Jesus, for he says, “If the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God.”²

¹ *Emile*,
Book iv.

² *Emile*,
Book iv.

Mr. J. S.
Mill's con-
cessions.

It is a lower testimony that Mr. Stuart Mill delivers, yet though he takes exception to the proper deity of Jesus, as not claimed even by Himself, he grants the originality of His character to be a proof of its historical truth. “Who among the disciples of Jesus or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee, as certainly not St. Paul.”³ The question then comes back on Mr. Mill, who it was that suggested to the Evangelists the more divine features of Jesus, or those which have led the Christian world to take Him for divine. According to Mr. Mill himself, “it is the God incarnate, more than the God of the Jews or of Nature, who, being idealised, has taken so great and salutary a hold on the modern mind.”⁴ But if the Evangelists could not have invented, as he grants, the human Christ, how much less could they have idealised Him into

³ *Essays on
Theism*,
p. 252.

⁴ *Essays on
Theism*,
p. 252.

God? A history which has led the vast majority of readers in all ages to feel that it was more than human, is confessedly beyond human construction. Christian theology itself is baffled when it tries to state in propositions the two natures of Christ, and the relation between them. The decrees of councils and the terms of creeds rather exclude error than grasp truth. Yet here admittedly, in the narratives of the Evangelists, the impossible is achieved. The living Christ walks forth, and men bow before Him. Heaven and earth unite all through: power with gentleness, solitary greatness with familiar intimacy, ineffable purity with forgiving pity, unshaken will with unfathomable sorrow. There is no effort in these writers, but the character rises till it is complete. It is thus not only truer than fiction or abstraction, but truer than all other history, carrying through utterly unimaginable scenes the stamp of simplicity and sincerity, creating what was to live for ever, but only as it had lived already, and reflecting a glory that had come so near and been beheld so intently, that the record of it was not only full of "grace," but of "truth."

A super-human history requires a super-human origin.

The Christ of the Evangelists.

The unity of the character of Jesus is one of the most singular features in each Gospel narrative. We apprehend this better when some great and admired writer in going over the same sacred ground falls, so to speak, out of the piece. An instance of this has struck me much in so con-

The unity of Christ's character.

Comparison
with
Goethe's
conception.

summate a master of description as Goethe; and it has struck me all the more that the injury is only done to the Saviour as His character is reflected in His disciples. In the admired Easter scene in the *Faust*, the chorus of angels bring the message of resurrection, and the women take up the language of disappointment, saying that they find Christ no longer here. This may be the result of lingering doubt; but when the message is sounded again by the angels, and taken up by the chorus of disciples, who now accept the fact, their first utterance is one of grief that their Master is raised to heaven, and they are left to suffer below, so that the angels need again to comfort them by the assurance of His continued and invariable presence. Now nothing is less like the Gospel scenes. The disciples suffer there only from the stroke of Christ's death, and the fear that His rising was too good news to be true. Their sense of joy and of triumph, of joy in, and of triumph with, Him, were He but risen indeed, was so great, that no room could possibly have been left, with Christ anywhere, for such lamentation as Goethe introduces; and thus these artless, unlettered men have drawn a truer Christ than this great genius, with their example before him, and with all Christian literature beside, was able to do.

Contrast
between the
two

The mani-
fold witness
to Christ.

2. A *second* argument for the historical reality of Christ's life and character, is found in the consent

of so many separate testimonies. I am not now urging the credibility of the Evangelists on the ordinary historical grounds of their nearness to the facts, and their integrity as witnesses. These considerations cannot, in their own place, be overestimated; and the whole strain of recent criticism is in the direction of confirming disputed points of date and authorship. I proceed now, however, rather upon the simple fact that so many separate writers, with visible independence, should have drawn essentially the same unparalleled character. One Gospel is a marvel, what shall we say of four, each with its distinct plan—its enlargements and omissions, its variations even where most coincident, its problems as yet unsolved, but always yielding something to fresh enquiry, and only making more manifest the unchallengeable oneness and divinity of the history? The difficulties of the Gospels from divergence are as nothing compared with the impression made by them all of one transcendent creation; and for my part, if I rejected inspiration, I should have reason to be still more astonished. Some slight mistake could so sadly have impaired perfection—or yet more easily lowered Divinity; some careless handling might have deranged the balance at the most critical point, or pulled down the structure in hopeless disaster. Yet, though we see how different the plan of each Gospel is, there is not any such trace of failure. The long discourses are

The oneness
of the four-
fold testi-
mony.

The differences and harmony of the Gospels.

left out by Mark; but in action his Christ equals that of Matthew. Luke has his own type both of parable and miracle; but the same inimitable figure starts up from all. The sorest trial to the familiar features comes from the fourth Gospel, without a parable and hardly a miracle like the foregoing, and with so great a flood of novelty, especially towards the end. But the unity in diversity is only the more marvellous. The Christ of the fourth Gospel is the Word of God; but He is still the Son of man. He utters no Sermon on the Mount; but He still preaches the Kingdom of Heaven. The sheep scattered abroad find in Him still the Good Shepherd. There is no exorcism; but the prince of this world is cast out. There is no transfiguration, but His glory is throughout beheld; no agony in the garden, but His soul is troubled. Mary and Martha reappear, but attended by Lazarus. He does not say, "This is My body," but He gives His flesh to eat; and words as heavenly, and in fuller measure, soothe the parting meal. He has the same night watches. He sheds the same tears. He walks the same waters, and ascends up where He was before. His prayer in all the Gospels is intercession—in the last most prolonged and tender. He returns from the grave to breathe the Holy Ghost, and to connect that name with the Father's and His own. His presence is the final hope of the earlier Gospels; His

The same person and life in all.

coming of the last; and the closing charge but repeats all former calls, "Follow thou Me." In the view of this vast and stupendous harmony, how small are all objections, as that the scenes in the fourth Gospel lie more in Jerusalem, though this also is met by the word in the other Gospels, "How often would I have gathered you;"¹ or that the chronology differs, though the last Gospel really aids us in solving chronological difficulties; or that the style tends more to self-assertion in the face of unbelief, though this is part of the self-revelation that enters into the idea of this Gospel, and is abundantly prefigured in the great denunciation of the Pharisees, and in the sad but lofty utterances of Capernaum, "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him;"² the exact parallel of the intercessory prayer, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me."³ With all these data, then, and many others, of the Gospel records, which are not conjectures but facts, the only rational conclusion is, that they embody reality, the greatest reality ever transacted on the scene of time; that the very diversities so often appealed to as an objection to this conclusion really strengthen it, and prove that writings which can so bring forth the one out of the manifold have in them not only truth but inspiration; and that the Christian

Trivial objections.

¹ Matthew xxiii. 37.

² Matthew xi. 27.

³ John xvii. 25.

Conclusion of the truth of the Gospels strengthened by their diversities.

Church stands in the centre of all history, divinely planted there, when she still proclaims as from the beginning, that Jesus is the Christ—the Son of God.

The failure of recent attempts to invalidate the historical truth of the Gospels.

3. A *third* argument, and the last here adduced by us, in favour of the strict and literal truth of the Gospel views of Christ is *the failure of recent attempts to set them aside*. If the Christ of the Evangelists were unhistorical, surely by this time some better reading of the story ought to have been established to the satisfaction of all. But as it is, the simple primitive records keep the field; and every new scheme is only brought to birth to find a speedy extinction. Let me illustrate this by two instances—the modern theories of Christ's moral excellence, and the alleged origin of superhuman views of His character and work.

Modern theories of Christ's moral excellence.

Take *first* the modern theories of Christ's moral excellence. They have at first a look of great liberality towards Christ and Christianity, and of almost unexpected concession and homage. Thus, says Renan, "This Sublime Person who daily presides still over the destiny of the world, we may call divine, not in the sense that Jesus absorbed all the divine, or to use a scholastic word, was adequate to it, but in the sense that Jesus is the individual who has made his species take the greatest step towards the divine." "Jesus is the highest of the pillars that shew to man whence he comes and

Renan's eulogy of Christ.

whither he ought to tend. In him is condensed all that is good and exalted in our nature." ¹ But then mark how all, in harmony with rationalism, is qualified. "He was not impeccable; he has conquered the same passions that we combat; no angel of God comforted him, save his own good conscience; no Satan tempted him, but only that which each carries in his breast." ²

¹ *Vie de Jesus*, pp. 457-8 (11th French edition). Renan's rationalism.

Page 455.

Exactly so is it with Strauss. He speaks in his second *Leben Jesu*, 1864, as if Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount brought to the world a genial revolution, "like a fertilizing rain in spring." ³ He grants "that in every respect Jesus stands in the first line of those who have developed the ideal of humanity," and "by embodying it in his own person has given it the most living warmth, while the society that proceeded from him has secured for this ideal the widest reception among mankind." ⁴ But he also, like Renan, soon makes exceptions, and speaks of sides of excellence that in Jesus "were only faintly indicated, or not even hinted at." ⁵

Strauss' description of Christ.

³ *Leben Jesu*, p. 204.

⁴ *Leben Jesu*, p. 625. His exceptions.

⁵ Page 626.

We see something, though less, of the same conflict in Mr. John S. Mill. "When this pre-eminent genius is combined with the qualities of probably the greatest moral reformer and martyr to that mission who ever existed upon the earth, religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching upon this man as the ideal representa-

Mr. J. S. Mill.

tive and guide of humanity; nor even now would it be easy even for an unbeliever to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract to the concrete than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life." ¹ Mr. Mill is indeed restrained from uttering the same qualifications as Renan and Strauss; but they lie in the context of his system, which excludes an absolutely perfect man as a miracle, just as Mr. Mill takes exception expressly to Jesus as divine.

¹ *Essays on Theism*, p. 255.

Mill denies Christ's divinity.

The Christ of Renan, Strauss, and Mill incredible.

The Christ of the Gospels faultless.

Christ claimed sinlessness.

Now, without raising the question of divinity, is it not plain that such a moral hero, great but still defective, as these writers have endeavoured to substitute for the Christ of the Gospels, is utterly incredible, if the Gospels are to have even so much historical worth as they themselves allow? What flaw have the Evangelists exposed in Christ, so as to have it generally admitted as in the case of the other great men of the Bible? While the biographers of Christ, with their severe simplicity, do not panegyricize Him, it is written on the face of their narrative that they hold Him faultless. And what is far more, Christ holds Himself so, and refuses to accept the eulogies, even the most gently qualified, that are now heaped upon Him. Any noble type of goodness that is still imperfect, is always painfully, exquisitely alive to the imperfection, confesses it before man, lays it open before God, and repels with utter abhorrence words that

savour of unlimited perfection. Had the character of Jesus been what these writers assert, could He have concealed it from Himself, or disguised it from His disciples? Must He not have uttered some note of warning, like the greatest of His followers, "Stand up, I myself also am a man." "We also are men of like passion with yourselves." Whereas Christ challenges the Pharisees: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?"¹

Christ's challenge to the Pharisees.

¹ John viii. 46.

Even in the most solemn act of prayer, and in the review of a completed life, He addresses the Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth. I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."² These, it may be said, are expressions drawn from the fourth Gospel, and in its peculiar strain. But do not the synoptists represent Jesus as fully accepting the professedly divine testimony, "Thou art My beloved Son: in Thee I am well pleased"? And does He not claim universal obedience and imitation, as in the words, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls"? We cannot but here admire the superiority of these simple writers to their modern improvers. The Gospel Christ without stain, without confession, without prayer for pardon, is in harmony with Himself and with every law of moral congruity; whereas this Christ of recent criticism, covering up under a fair exterior the blemishes which he must feel but never avows,

His address to the Father.

² John xvii. 4.

The Father's testimony.

The Christ of recent criticism violates truth and reason.

is not so remote from the whited sepulchres that he denounces ; and the picture violates every canon of truth and reason.

The origin of superhuman views of Christ.

The testimony of the Gospels.

The *second* instance where a departure from the Gospel scheme lands in incoherence and absurdity, is in regard to *the alleged origin of superhuman views of Christ's life and character*. According to the uniform testimony of the Gospels, Christ from the beginning understands His own dignity, and the nature of His mission as a Saviour by sacrifice ; whereas His disciples, notwithstanding His frequent teaching, have very vague notions of His true greatness, and wholly fail to take in the meaning and necessity of His death, and by consequence the certainty and importance of His resurrection. It is only when Christ returns from the dead, and teaches His followers on these points from Scripture, that they begin to understand His true design, and are lifted up from the depression into which they had fallen, so as to be henceforth, after He has left them, suitable witnesses of these great truths to others. No part of the Gospel narrative is more natural or more beautiful than this opening of minds blinded by prejudice, like the rest of their countrymen, to the real greatness of their Lord, and to the sacrificial character of the death which had so much afflicted them ; but which they now see, through the lesson of His resurrection and His own instructions, to have

The opening of the disciples' minds.

been the needful path to the saving of mankind, and to His own glory. But now mark how all this is, by modern criticism, dislocated and turned into utter chaos! According to some, Christ's own plan changes through stress of circumstances; and others, who save Him from this weakness or crooked design, credit His followers with a fertility of expedient and a flexibility of character that go into the regions of the unreal and monstrous. Without the help of miracle, or word of the returning Christ, or prompting of any spirit higher than their own invention or fancy, they suddenly believe in an imaginary resurrection. In the depths of the darkest midnight, when overwhelmed by the catastrophe which has wrecked for ever their worldly hopes, they start into creators of a moral world of boundless novelty. They not only devise a resurrection of which previously they had heard nothing from Jesus or any other, but they read this into the Old Testament, and with it an entirely new conception of their Messiah. They raise their dead Master not only to life but to divinity, finding for this also warrant in misapplied texts and oracles without number. They construct the Trinity, or at least its outline. They set up the Atonement, and make the failure of the Crucified the end of the law and the hope of the world. Thus these few dreamers, whose paralysed faculties construct in a few days out of nothing

Destructive
effects of
modern
criticism.

the gigantic scheme which has exercised all the theologians of Christendom, go forth with an invincible enthusiasm begotten of disaster to try it upon the world, and by a marvel greater than its own origin, to succeed. Verily this is the romance of history, where the conjurer's wand plays havoc with all reality, and laws of nature, to escape miracle, are so twisted off their hinges as henceforth to lose all power of being shut or opened.

The strength of the Gospel record.

We thus see the strength of the Gospel record when unbelief is challenged, instead of mere endless doubts, to produce its own solution, and this poor incoherent phantom starts from the grave to take the place and do the work of Him who was dead, and is alive for evermore.

Having thus briefly surveyed the massive foundation of proof, on which the reality of the time-hallowed Gospel story reposes, and which all the criticism and reconstructive hypotheses of our own age only bring into greater prominence, let us, as our *second* topic, endeavour to show how the personal Christ—living, sinless, divine—mingles with and adds strength to every argument for the truth of Christianity.

Every argument for Christianity strengthened by Christ.

1. If we begin with evidences resting on divine *power* as bearing witness to Christianity, Christ is the visible centre of them all. The miracles of the Old Testament all lead up to Him; those of the New all stream forth from His own person, or

The relation of Old Testament miracles to Christ.

The purity of the means,—and with pure means alone Christianity connects this argument,—recalls the simplicity, humility, and righteousness of the Founder of this kingdom. His Church breaks forth as the expansion of His own power, silent and gradual, but invincible; and thus there is a unity in the process, which can be felt not only by Christians, but by unbelievers, and the secret conviction is inspired by the march of history that all things are put under His feet.

The relation of the evidence from experience to Christ.

So is it with that argument from personal experience. Though it cannot be directly pleaded with unbelievers, it is with Christians the most signal of all acts of Divine power, and renews in every Christian life the deepest side of the miracle of Damascus. For there is here contact with the

The contact of the soul with Christ.

personal Jesus in His risen life and greatness, in His power to stamp His image and to convey His will, so that this most subduing of all evidences prolonged into the manifold experiences of a Christian life, and carrying with it a sense of liberty, peace, and nearness to God, otherwise wholly unattainable, so visibly centres in Christ, that it can not even be conceived of without Him, and is really the conscious reception and reproduction

The relation of Old Testament miracles to Christ.

of His own life and character. Nor is this argument so incommunicable as has sometimes been the case. For Christian experience has a power of the New Testament

to dark and unsightly places;

and wherever it goes it bears with it not only something of rebuke in Christ's name, but of hope to the most outcast and fallen, that the dead may yet live again, and the lost be found.

2. The evidences of Christianity that depend on Divine *knowledge* as exerted on the side of the gospel, are all equally related to Christ. Limiting ourselves here to the evidence from prophecy (though other indications of supernatural knowledge are found in Scripture), it is remarkable how natural prophecy becomes, as well as how much more forcible, when it ceases to be a mere heap of divinations or unconnected oracles, and points according to a settled and gradually developed plan to a central person in history—the Divine Saviour. The greater, purer, brighter, we make Christ, the more does the prophetic argument gain at every point. The Christ of the rationalist repels prophecy, not only from the prejudice against the supernatural, but quite as much because there is nothing in such a Christ to attract the eye of the whole world from the beginning. It is like kindling a star in the sky, and bringing the wise men all the way to Bethlehem to show them little, if anything, greater than themselves; and hence rationalism cannot for very shame accept the prophetic theory, but must seal up every ray of earlier Scripture that seems to point so far forward, and parcel out all the greatness that would naturally

The relation of prophecy to Christ.

Christ the strength of the prophetic argument.

Prophecy and rationalism incompatible.

be concentrated in Christ amidst all conceivable human subjects possible, with whom the prophets are supposed to have begun and ended.

The inadequacy of rationalistic views of prophecy.

It calls this guess-work of a human sagacity or longing, groping all round a limited horizon, and arrested everywhere by the local and temporal, a reasonable scheme. Yet it is put to sore distress, not only because the grand and sublime visions of the prophets burst at every point through this narrow environment, but also because rationalism itself wants larger anticipations of a coming Deliverer to operate with, so as even fantastically and unreally to create the picture of a great future, and a great world-monarch in the heart of it, which might in so far account for Christianity by misread and over-coloured fulfilment.

The perplexity of rationalism on the subject of prophecy.

This is one of the most perplexing problems of the rationalism of our time, unable as it is to believe in prophecy, but compelled to believe in anticipation, yet driven back from the anticipation in its fulness, and torturing it at every point to speak with bated breath lest it should openly proclaim Christ. Nor is this its only affliction, for whereas by the uniformity of nature, every religion should, like Christianity, have had another as its herald, and even every great personage a train of precursors to have, as in the case of Christ, opened his way, and forecast his history, the phenomenon stands here alone, and its solitude cannot be accounted for.

In striking contrast to this felt littleness of rationalism, when its Christ is seen through the inverted end of the telescope, is the greatness of the ordinary Christianity, when the anticipative world of prophecy comes into its view, shaded, abrupt, and often impenetrable, but with a light, a harmony, and a grandeur not only sufficient to warrant its own existence, but to attest the stupendous reality that was to come. It would have been possible to have given forth real prophecy that was remote from Christ. Some of it, in one sense, is so; as, for example, the predictions bearing on some of the ancient nations. But the strength of prophecy lies in its chain of references to Christ, from the first mention of the "Seed of the woman" to the virgin-born Immanuel; from the Sufferer, whose heel is bruised in terms of the earliest promise, to the "Man of sorrows" in the fifty-third of Isaiah; and from the peaceful Lawgiver of a yet uncrowned tribe, to the heir of David, who enters the long-established seat of rule as a king. Even the predictions that bear on the Church of God and its universal progress are but the sequel to those which foretell the personal Christ, and they then reflect the light of His exaltation; nor can the judgments on the Jewish nation be dissociated, as the depth of their fall is but the measure of the grace and truth that were in Christ, and for rejecting which they were to be cast away.

The greatness of ordinary Christianity in the light of prophecy.

The chain of prophetic references to Christ.

Old Testa-
ment pro-
phesy as
centralized
in Christ.

As detached
from Christ.

Evidence
from Divine
wisdom in
Christianity
gathers up
in Christ.

Argument
from design
in Christian-
ity.

The union of
Divine and
human in
Christ proof
of adapta-
tion.

Thus centralized in Christ, not only sinless, but Divine, and in the fullest sense a Sacrifice and a Saviour, the prophecy of the Old Testament has a meaning, a coherence, a majestic onward movement unparalleled in literature. But in proportion as it is isolated and detached from Christ, the more does all sink into twilight. When He is denied prophecy becomes a mere *ignis fatuus* made up of vain and abortive fancies, flickering in the wastes of a history as flat and stagnant in the Old Testament as in the New, where indeed there is neither old nor new, but, under the boasted name of evolution, an eternal sameness, and the reign of the dreary inevitable law, "Ex nihilo nihil fit."

3. It is not difficult to show how the mass of evidence in Christianity that builds upon the Divine *wisdom* as shining forth in it, must also gather around the person and work of Jesus Christ. If the argument from design leads us to trace a Designer in nature, it does so not less in the economy of revelation. Christianity has a work to do or a problem to solve; and though the unbeliever cannot enter into this survey as the believer can, yet even he may see contrivance in salvation, and be self-condemned for rejecting it.

Now, it is exactly in relation to Christ that this argument from adaptation comes in. The union in Christ of divinity and humanity is not a mere theological dogma or mystery, but an intelligible

and practical arrangement for gaining the ends of salvation. Every one can see that if such a conjunction be possible, however the abstract theism of Judaism, of Mohammedanism, and we may add, of a rationalized Christianity, recoils from it, there are many beautiful fitnesses instantly impressed upon any saving scheme. The very appearance of Divinity on the field indicates the greatness and danger of the crisis produced by sin; and this, being thus laid down to start with, in harmony with the deepest voice of conscience, carries the resources of Deity everywhere—its strength and its tenderness—to meet at successive points the exigency, and to afford the guarantee that these shall not be applied in vain.

The presence of Divinity in the field proves the greatness of the danger.

While the higher nature of Christ thus yields an unlimited reserve of power and grace, it is seen to be fitting that human sympathies and organs should also mingle in the work of man's redemption. How these were to be harmonized we could not have told beforehand; indeed we can hardly tell now that the God-man is before us. But that in this incarnation—the central and fundamental fact of Christianity—there is a wealth and a fulness of adaptation, otherwise altogether inconceivable, to remedial ends, the consent of the Christian Church in all ages attests. The so-called offices of Christ are filled in with a grandeur and completeness self-evidently true. Revelation rises to its highest

The fitness of the co-operation of human nature in the work of redemption

The culminating point of revelation
Vicarious suffering.

Universal dominion.

point in one who is not merely a messenger, but a partaker, of divinity. Vicarious suffering for sin becomes possible in human form, yet clothed with transcendent and illimitable merit. A universal dominion founded on grace enchains the affections, while it transforms the lives, of its subjects. These provisions of Christianity strike all fair and open minds by their wisdom not less than by their grandeur and tenderness; and though they are resisted and overborne by the very evil they are designed to remedy, they not less leave their witness, and widely diffuse the secret, though, alas! in how many cases ineffectual, conviction that this religion is divine.

Christ the strength of the whole system.

But is it not clear that the strength of this evidence is derived from the dependence of this whole system on Christ? It is made up of the power and sympathy of His incarnation, of the efficacy of His sacrifice, of the perfection of His example, and of the influence of His reign. And to deny that Christ, as He moves in the Gospel history, is the Author and Finisher of all, and to resolve all, were that possible, into some more obscure and transcendental action of the general divine will, would be to eclipse this whole argument from the manifold wisdom of God, and could only be exceeded in disaster by the denial of the end, not less than of this grand effectual means, so as to leave only a morality and a bare naturalism as the last issue of

the so-called Gospel dispensation, without anything of redemption at all.

The wisdom that shines in the remedial provisions of Christianity is not less discernible in its history. Redemption grows from the faintest outline as a revelation to the perfect day. The history of the world unconsciously prepares for it. A special people rise up to guard quite as much as to develop it. Every step in their history is singular, and the occasional periods of it that want the miraculous are like the silent pauses out of which it is again born. When Christ's advent has filled the old channels to overflowing, it has to burst upon the world; and this law marks all its subsequent expansions, that it is a return of the life-blood to the heart that sends it forth again in fresh and ever-widening diffusion. There is not the least doubt that all the successive steps of Jewish history, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to David, from David to the close of prophecy, and from the close of prophecy to the Incarnation, lead up to Christ, and become epochs from their relation to Him. So, also, if the history of the Christian Church teaches any lesson, it is that the recovery of clearness, of power, of victory, lies in His name, and that the greatness of every truly great age, in doctrine or in work, lies in its prominence.

Argument from the history of redemption.

Successive steps leading up to Christ.

The name of Christ the power of growth and recovery in the Church.

How could this be unless Christ were the key to the whole of this progress, for progress, in spite

Christ the key of the whole progress.

The solidity of the evidences from wisdom in Christianity.

of unaccountable stops and even recessions, we must call it; and is there not here in the history, as truly as in the doctrine, a veiled yet discoverable wisdom, which centres in the supernatural Christ, and shows Him to be alike the moving force and the last end of this apparently untraceable but really all-including system? The evidences from wisdom in Christianity and in connexion with it, may need reflection; but they are among the most solid, appealing to minds like Pascal and Butler, like Edwards and Neander, that can take in the sweep of a wide though in many parts inscrutable scheme; and of all the light that is in it—more than enough to counterbalance the darkness—the origin is to be found in Christ.

Argument from the holiness and love manifested in Christianity. The argument centres in Christ.

4. We now come to the *fourth* and crowning argument for the truth of Christianity, that drawn from the reflection in it of the moral attributes of holiness and love in God. Here, pre-eminently, the argument is wrought up with, and centres in, the life and work of Jesus Christ. We have here to start with the unspeakable advantage of a personal God in whom the moral law is enshrined. This is carried over from Judaism, with its faith alike in Jehovah and in the Decalogue; and thus religion and morality spring up together. A shadow of this is found in the teaching of Plato, who makes virtue the imitation of God, and in Kant, who makes it obedience to sovereign will: but in

Religion and morality

Plato and Kant.

the one, the element of law is too feeble; in the other, the personality of God is lost in moral order.

More wonderful perhaps is the glimpse of Plato amidst the darkness of paganism, into the indissoluble union between morality and religion, than the re-discovery by Kant, amid the obscured light of Christianity, of duty as an eternal, inviolable law. But Christianity starts with both a personal God and a moral law, and with both in their deepest principles and demands, which Christ has then to fulfil. He has to resemble or glorify God, not by the harmony of ordinary obedience, but by the bearing of penalty; for there is no law in the universe, if penalty can be lightly set aside.

Christ meets the demands of morality and law.

Those have totally mistaken the life of Christ, who, like Renan, have made it mainly genial or idyllic; or, like others, have seen in it only the evolution in normal circumstances of moral excellence. The solitude, the shadow, the cry proclaim the burden and the woe—a heart filled with all human discords and sorrows not its own, yet accepting all with meekness and love—a meekness and love that bow to the stroke of righteousness, and feel that to avert it from man is the greatest of divine tasks and favours. Thus the colour of Christ's virtue is all sacrificial—red with the mark of blood, and yet transcendently greater than had it borne other wrong and contumely, but not the sin of the world. Out of the depths of this

The true character of Christ's life.

Christ's virtue sacrificial.

His devotion
to God and
compassion
to man.

crushed and lonely heart there rises to heaven the fragrance of an unutterable devotion to God, and of an unfathomable compassion to man—a purity, a tenderness, a strength of sublime endurance, which float their influence downward through all time, and fill eternity with their memories. Ere long it is seen that this life and death, thus construed, are worthier of the Son of God, and adjust themselves better to the level of incarnation, than any other achievement of virtue; and while in the lower ranges of this history all human graces and sympathies find a home and a shelter, it is in this aspect that it towers to the very firmament, and sends down its floods of moral influence to make all things new.

Repentance
produced by
the penal
sufferings of
Christ.

It is the penal sufferings of the Lamb of God, and not the brightness of His other moral features, that strike the heart with the pangs of repentance, that melt the heart while they break it; and in reproducing something of His own agony in the soul, originate a moral crisis there which issues not in death, but in life. Then the attractions of obedience enchain the heart, when the sense of terror and of shame has given place to gratitude and moral admiration; and the imitation of Christ, so awful and even intolerable, when it lays upon the soul a new bondage of duty, becomes easy and irresistible when it is the effusion of love. No heart will open till the bar of guilt be first burst

The attrac-
tions of obe-
dience.

Guilt must
be removed.

asunder; and though there be also a key needed to turn the lock by which human nature and habit are fixed in evil, it is Christ who, by the power of His Spirit, can accomplish this further extrication, yet not by other instrumental means than by the lesson of His atoning life and death, divinely urged and made the watchword of moral freedom.

Deliverance
effected by
Christ.

Thus a perfect moral example, at the very point where it reaches its highest perfection, begins by its own surpassing charm of condescension and tenderness, to work on the lowest and most fallen, and to invite them up the steeps of its own grandeur and purity; whence we see the falsehood of the current idea, that the example which is most like ourselves, and the least raised above our own struggles and falls, is the best, at least for beginners in the race of holiness. The whole experience of the Christian Church refutes this. Who have acted with the greatest power on our degraded and criminal classes? Not their own companions, striving like themselves to raise their heads above the wide surrounding sea of evil; but the holiest men and women, who have come to them as ministering angels, who have recalled the image of good in all its loveliness, and by associating all with self-sacrificing kindness have given them the hope and the possibility of escape, otherwise almost as remote as if they had been abandoned for ever. Of this law of the attraction of

The effect of
a perfect
example.

The attraction of the holy.

the holy—if it be supremely kind, still more if it bring the news of pardon—Christ is the limit; and hence as of old to the publicans and sinners, and to all the wide family of the outcast and the miserable, He stretches down His loving arms, and high as He rises above them, He can still reach their level, and lift them upward with the call, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

Christ's example never removed from the cross.

It is a mighty proof of the blending of Divine holiness and love in Christ's remedial work, that His example never shifts away from those earliest lessons of the cross which first give peace to the troubled conscience, and then awake the trembling throb of a new and heaven-born existence. Christ has nothing greater to show, nothing more advanced to inculcate in the wide range of His own moral obedience. There has been a school even of Christian theology and morality which has hastened away from Christ's death to His life; as if in the region of moral precept, whether more rare or more familiar, when the awful eclipse of suffering were lifted off, divine excellence shone out with a more winning and cheering ray. This is, however, to forget that the loftiest virtues of Christ start from the vale of humiliation; that the eye which reads in His sacrifice afresh the promise of pardon, receives with equally new welcome the quick succeeding charge, “Follow

His virtues spring from this humiliation.

thou Me!" and that, while every virtue of Christ has its place and its lesson, those that come associated with the tenderest memories alike of His life and of ours must wing the soul nearest to heaven.

Here, then, is the problem for all moralists, reformers, teachers of the world, who deny the Divine Christ. By what miracle of selection were the Bible writers who have drawn that stupendous picture, led to connect all the transforming power of their system, not with separate precepts or laws of God, but with a living Saviour; and then how came it that when the more bright, serene, unshaded virtues of His life appeared to demand a more exhilarating and joyous pursuit, they with sure instinct, while not neglecting these, gave them the second place, and found the deepest, purest, most unfailing well of all moral aspiration and impulse beneath the dark, and as it might even seem repulsive, shade of the Cross and of the sepulchre! To this day this is to the world a mystery and a stumbling-block. But the laws of Christianity are not on that account suspended; their authority is not overthrown—"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live."

The last wonder of Christianity then, as a remedy, is that it sets forth in God; and in Christ as the image of God, the supreme demands, at first sight irreconcilable, yet truly reconciled, of holiness and of love. Amidst the storm and surge of sin, the

The problem for deniers of Christ's divinity.

Christianity reconciles holiness and love.

The holiness of God. holiness of God rises like a frowning wall to shut up every avenue to the regions of safety, and to wreck and dash in pieces every human hope. It is

Odysssey v. 441. as when Ulysses, flung from the broken ship, was tossed day after day upon the boiling ocean, more afraid even of the breakers which revealed the land than of the billows which formed the peril of the sea. It is the picture of a soul driven by the resistless tide of guilt against the eternal laws which guard the universe. But at length a rent is opened in the mighty barrier, where the gentle stream divides even the encircling rock; and by this unlooked-for inlet safety and shelter are found.

The victory of love. It is the emblem of Heaven's greatest discovery—of the soul's best deliverance, the victory of love, not by breaking down and overturning justice, but by opening a pathway through it to salvation, as wonderful as it is easy and effectual.

All evidence converges to the life and character of Jesus Christ. Here, then, is the summation of this cumulative argument, where every other evidence converges to the life and character of Jesus Christ. What other religion has such a mass of evidence in its favour, historic, prophetic, doctrinal, moral? What other religion, if it had any to adduce, could centralize all in the person of its Founder? Not Confucianism; not Buddhism (attractive though in one sense the record of its founder be); not Brahminism, which has no commanding personality in its history; and as little Mohammedanism. These religions lie

Contrast with other religions.

mainly outside the lives of their human authors. Why did not their authors in this way make these religions more strong, interesting, and likely to endure? They were as able on human principles as the original or secondary founders of Christianity, who here also strike clear off from philosophy, for what philosophy ever thought of constituting itself out of the biography of Socrates or Zeno, of Descartes or Hegel? If it had been a failure in the history of religion, the experiment would still have been singular. But it has been the secret of success, and could not fail to be so; for a religion, with the living God in the heart of it, could not rise to anything higher, more unchanging, more attractive than its one incessant theme of Divine Redemption, nor could the gracious Providence which presided over its origin fall short of making its development and career as effectual, while as unexampled, as its birth.

With philosophical systems.

Christianity a success because centralized in Christ.

When we speak of the wonderfulness of Christianity we must not neglect the future. It only among religions has at once an Alpha and an Omega. The future alone shall bring out its great proportions. It is said that in our century for the first time the master-works of Handel are fully disclosed as he conceived them. Their airs penetrate through vaster spaces; their choruses are borne up by mightier instruments and voices. So shall it be, if the comparison may be permitted,

The future of Christianity.

with that grander "Messiah" which is now, amidst incredible struggle, breaking out in living music throughout the world. We have been long in the earlier parts, awed no doubt and cheered by the glorious strains, "Unto us a child is born;" "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd;" Come unto Him, all ye that labour; but sunk also to the deepest minors, "Thy rebuke hath broken His heart," and perplexed in our strongest faith by the tremendous jars and discords, "All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn." But there shall come, like the sweep of innumerable armies, or the march of light, the unbounded, resistless advance, "Their line is gone out into all lands;" and the stupendous all-triumphant chorus shall shake earth and heaven: "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" In these "great voices" may it be given to us, not without earlier note of preparation, to bear a part; and may it be, though with broken utterance, yet with true and growing concord, that we—all unworthy—now rehearse this grandest burst of time and prelude of eternity: The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.

CHRISTIANITY

AND

THE LIFE THAT NOW IS.

BY THE
REV. PROFESSOR G. BLAIKIE, D.D., LL.D.,

AUTHOR OF

"BETTER DAYS FOR WORKING PEOPLE,"
"THE PERSONAL LIFE OF DAVID LIVINGSTONE," ETC.

'All things are yours; whether things present or things to come.'

I COR. iii. 21, 22.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

Analysis of the Tract.

Unbelieving misrepresentations of the effect of Christianity on its followers are stated.

Christianity is not ascetic. The Bible reproves the love of the world on moral grounds ; distinguishes between the use and abuse of the world ; presents God in opposition to the world as the heart's true treasure ; represents the world as made for and given to man, and though not his true home, as intended to be enjoyed, subdued, and governed by him, and used as a sphere of service to God and man. It is unfilial separation from God in the use of the world that the Bible condemns.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE LIFE THAT NOW IS.



ONE of the most common charges brought at the present day against Christianity, or any religion that lays stress on the life to come is, that it hinders material progress; it discourages all attempts to remedy temporal wrongs, and advance the temporal welfare of mankind. How can it be otherwise, it is asked, with a religion that is ever dwelling on the insignificance of time and the vastness of eternity; nay, that reconciles men to injustice and suffering in this life, on the ground that it will be all compensated a hundredfold in the life to come? Religion, it is said, teaches us to look with calm resignation on the evils that prevail in the world, instead of trying to remedy them; it stifles some of our best instincts, such as desire of property, love of nature, love of home, love of innocent joys and recreations; it makes us aim at an impossible life, at living in the future and the unseen, while we were intended to live mainly in the present and the visible; it

Common
charges
against
Christianity.

engages us to a warfare in which we cannot conquer, spurs us to a race in which we cannot win; and thus, through the constant mortification of defeat, makes us cross, sour, and miserable;—often less happy than many who are living without God, and without hope in the world.

Mr. W. R.
Greg's view.

Thus, the late Mr. W. R. Greg, one of the class of "serious sceptics" so characteristic of our day, remarks: "It is only those who feel a deep interest in, and affection for this world who will work resolutely for its amelioration; those whose affections are transferred to heaven acquiesce easily in the miseries of earth, give them up as hopeless, as befitting, as ordained, and console themselves with the idea of the amends which are one day to be theirs. If we had looked upon this earth as our only scene, it is doubtful if we should so long have tolerated its more monstrous anomalies and more cureable evils. But it is easier to look to a future paradise than to strive to make one on earth; and the depreciating and hollow language of preachers has played into the hands both of the insincerity and the indolence of mankind." To these remarks of his own, Mr. Greg subjoins a note furnished to him by a friend, to the effect, that when he counted up among his personal friends all whom he thought to be most decidedly given to spiritual contemplation, and to make religion rule in their hearts, at least three out of

four appeared to have been apathetic towards all improvement of this world's systems, and a majority had been virtual conservatives of evil, and hostile to political and social reform, as diverting men's energies from eternity.¹

The same view is constantly presented in the secularist tracts, which are so copiously circulated among our working people at the present day. Religious people, it is said, never help them to contend with the real evils that are making the poor poorer, and the rich richer; they are always urging them to be satisfied with things as they are, and to give all their thoughts and energies to a better life beyond. It is urged that the vast sums of money spent on church and chapel building, and on the maintenance and extension of religion, are just sums withdrawn from the real, solid interests of the working classes, and devoted to the advancement of pernicious shams and shadows. If the money and the effort spent on religion were spent in advancing the temporal welfare of the masses, their life would be twice as comfortable, it would be a life worthy of intelligent beings. All this tells against Christianity with considerable effect, in the present temper of a large number of people who are extremely sensitive to all that concerns their temporal welfare and progress.

Besides standing in the way of the temporal

Secularist
representa-
tion of Chris-
tianity.

¹ *The Creed of Christendom*, p. 251.

Mr. Greg's picture of a preacher addressing his congregation.

At home an hour after.

Charges of hypocrisy against spiritual persons.

good of society, spiritual Christianity is conceived by its opponents to be a great promoter of insincerity and hypocrisy on the part of those who affect it. They are regarded as ever professing to view this world and all its interests in a light which is not real and true. Mr. Greg, with the help of his imagination, draws a picture of a preacher urging his congregation "to despise this world and all that belongs to it; to detach their hearts from this earthly life as inane, fleeting, and unworthy, and fix them on heaven as the only sphere deserving the love of the loving, or the meditation of the wise." An hour afterwards, our preacher is seen snugly seated with one of his hearers at a well-spread table, enjoying all the comforts of life, fondling his children, discussing public arrangements or private plans in life with passionate interest; and yet both preacher and hearer look at each other without a smile or a blush for the hollow and unworthy profession they are regarded as having just made in church.

Often we find wholesale charges of hypocrisy flung out against persons professing great spirituality, based upon the difference between the way in which they practically treat this world, and the principles they profess to hold regarding it. It is insinuated, or boldly affirmed, that, in most cases, your very spiritual men know well how to look after their own interests, and that the great con-

tempt of the world which they affect is not apparent when they are concluding a bargain or maintaining a right. But, then, there is a natural unwillingness on their part to believe that what they do and what they feel is fundamentally at variance with that superiority to the world which they profess to have attained; hence (it is affirmed) a temptation arises to a course of sophistry that goes to vitiate conscience, and to make the light which is in them darkness. They are unwilling to let themselves believe that they really have a love for the good things of this world; they will not let themselves think that they have any enjoyment in money and the comforts of life; or in reading a tale of fiction, or in an athletic exercise, or in a secular amusement. They are tempted to forced and unnatural methods of explaining their sensations in connection with such things; an atmosphere of self-deception is created; their consciences become morbid; and, in many cases, the way is prepared for terrible departures from duty,—for those occasional outbreaks of corruption which give a triumph to the ungodly, and fill the hearts of Christians with horror and shame. I do not endorse these charges against spiritual Christianity. I merely report them as the assertions of secularists; while, at the same time, it is impossible to deny that there are some professors of spiritual religion whose conduct does give some pretext for the exaggerated picture.

Liability of spiritual persons to self-deception.

Their occasional falls.

Misconceptions of real Christians.

In the case of a very different class,—honest, humble, holy men and women, who day by day are endeavouring to live according to their conception of the spiritual life,—there is sometimes an uncomfortable uncertainty in their own minds whether or not they are right in the attention they bestow on the things of this world, and the pleasure they derive from them. There is a lingering notion that there is something essentially carnal and wrong in all those tastes and tendencies which are not directly of a religious nature. To crucify these tastes and tendencies is a course to which they have never made up their minds; but not being very sure about them, it is in a somewhat furtive and underhand way they gratify them, as if they were afraid to attract the observation of persons more spiritually-minded, and were conscious of an inferiority which they cannot defend. A life spent in this atmosphere of uncertainty can neither be a very comfortable nor a very influential one. The tread of such persons cannot be the firm and manly advance of those who walk in the day, but rather the hesitating motion of “him who walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth.”

Their misgivings concerning the things of this world.

Christianity assumed to be ascetic by many.

These taunts of enemies and misgivings of friends alike proceed on the notion that our principles as Christians should make us ascetics, that is, should make us deny ourselves every natural pleasure; but that we are too self-indulged to carry our

principles into effect. But ought our principles to make us ascetics? How or when did asceticism first arise in the Christian Church? Not in the first century and a half—the purest era of the Church. Not under St. Paul, who though ever ready for the greatest self-denial even in things lawful, felt free to live in another way; for he claimed power to lead about a wife, and he bade men trust in the living God who gave them richly all things to enjoy.¹ It was *as a combination of philosophy and Christianity* that asceticism began. It was as a modification of the Platonic or Pythagorean distinction between life according to nature, and life above nature. Men aimed to be, as one of the Fathers expressed it, more elect than the elect, or as we should say, more than perpendicular. Asceticism led to monasticism, and monasticism is ever associated with the degeneracy of Christianity. If it could be said with truth that Christianity duly applied would compel all men to be ascetics, it would be a very serious objection to Christianity. Self-denial in lawful things is often a duty; but the fact that they are lawful shows that it is not universally binding.

Rise of asceticism in the Church.

Asceticism a combination of philosophy and Christianity.

Asceticism and monasticism the degeneracy of Christianity.

All these considerations show how important it is to try to get a clear and simple view of what the Word of God really teaches on the relation of Christians to this world, and the bearing of spiritual

Importance of a clear view of Scripture teaching.

¹ 1 Timothy vi. 17.

The subject
not without
difficulty.

Christianity on social improvement and material progress generally. The subject is one of great practical importance, and it demands not a little delicate discrimination and careful handling. Our course lies between a Scylla and a Charybdis—between a morbid spiritualism on the one hand, and a vulgar secularism on the other; and we may well ask for the candid and impartial judgment of our readers. There are two sides to the question, but it is only one of these sides that we have directly to deal with. We hope it will not be inferred that we are indifferent to the other; or that, in showing how godliness really has the promise of the life that now is, we forget, or would lead others to forget, that its great inheritance is in that which is to come.

The doctrine
of the Bible
on the sub-
ject.

What, then, is the doctrine of the Bible as to the relation in which Christians should stand to this world, more especially—

I. *As to the sense in which the world is to be renounced and overcome?*

II. *As to the sense in which it is to be possessed and enjoyed?*

I.

Love of the
world re-
proved on
moral
grounds.

1. Our first remark, in reply to the former of these questions is, that in reproving the love of the world, and calling on Christians to renounce

it, the Bible does so *on great moral grounds*—not because the world is in itself a bad thing, or essentially unworthy of our regard; but because devotion to the world, in the form in which it is commonly found, tends to the destruction of our higher nature, and hinders the application of the great Divine remedy for our sin.

The world not essentially bad.

The Bible makes a distinction between using the world and abusing it; it encourages the one, while it denounces the other.

Use and abuse of the world.

What the Bible aims its thrust at is the abuse or idolatry of the world, and especially of its more material interests; putting these in the place of God; treating them as the chief good and the main chance for man; using them as the prodigal son used his share of his father's goods,—not along with his father, or under his wholesome influence, but away by himself, in a far-off country; thus making the world the occasion of an actual separation from the living God, and from those holy and blessed influences that come from Him.

Idolatry of the world condemned.

The uniform teaching of the Bible is, that when the world is thus treated, the soul of man is not only dwarfed and starved, but more and more corrupted and finally ruined. Its baser tendencies are stimulated; a grovelling and selfish character is promoted; reverence for anything high and holy disappears; the habit of correcting and elevating our ideas and impressions of things, by placing

Consequences of the idolatry.

Consequences of idolatry of the world.

ourselves beside God, and looking on them from His lofty stand-point, has no existence. The sense of the dignity of our being derived from the habitual contemplation of eternity is lost; that impression of our responsibility, and of the meaning and bearing of our life here which comes from viewing it in its relation to an endless existence, in which both we and all around us are to bear a part, never comes into play; the soul becomes numb and torpid, and degenerates into a kind of higher animal instinct, into a faculty that guides merely to present enjoyment. And with all this, there comes a growing aversion to a spiritual Saviour and His salvation, an unwillingness to be disturbed in present pleasures and pursuits, a disbelief in the reality of any future state, a guilty dread of God and shrinking from His presence, an inability to conceive of a higher life, and a horror at the thought of being born again.

Degeneracy in human relations consequent on departure from God.

Now, it is impossible for any one to depart so terribly from God without falling off, in a like ratio, in his relations to his fellow-men. Hence, under this process, the heart shrivels; and selfishness, in many of its most odious forms, becomes the ruling power of the soul. It would not be difficult to show that these are what the Word of God brands as the bad and dangerous elements of the love of the world. It is in this sense mainly that we are called to renounce and to overcome it. As God's

rival in its claim to our hearts, and in its offer of reward, we dare not listen to it; and when the tempter spreads before us the glittering prize, as he did before Jesus in the wilderness, we are called to repel him in the stern words of our Master, "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Matt. iv. 10.

2. Hence, secondly, we remark that in the Bible, the great antithesis to the world, the great object that claims the supreme place in our hearts as against the world, is God. The Bible does not simply substitute a *better* world for a *bad* one, as secularists allege; it does not bid us expel this poor world from our hearts, and admit a better; it bids us give God His due place in them—that place which the world so often usurps. Hence the great purpose of the redemption accomplished by the death of Christ is stated in these words—"Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, *that He might bring us to God*"—not merely that He might free us from punishment, or even restore us to our forfeited inheritance, but, including these, yet going far beyond them, "that He might bring us to God." The great end of redemption is to place man in a right relation to God, and thus to bring to bear on him all those purifying, elevating, transforming influences that come directly from his Father. Some writers

God the antithesis to the world in the Bible.

The purpose of Christ's redemption to bring us to God.

1 Pet. iii. 18.

have nicknamed religion as "other-worldliness," and represented that those who merely sought a world where they would be better off were really as worldly and selfish as any. What we maintain is, that this is not the aim or the great purpose of spiritual religion; its grand object is to bring men back to fellowship with God.

The case of
the prodigal
son.
Luke xv.

Thus it was that when the prodigal son came to himself, he saw as clear as mid-day that the one course for him to take was to rise and go unto his father. It was not to write to him for more money. It was not another and better inheritance somewhere else that would have satisfied him; this might have been his feeling at one time, but not "*when he came to himself.*" And so, in the Bible, it is coming back to our Father, coming into a blessed relation to God, God in Christ, that is presented to us as the better part, the pearl of great price, the substitute for the world as the true portion of our hearts. When we enter into that relation, not in theory only, but in practice, we come under the influence of all healing, purifying, elevating agencies. Whatever in us the world has corrupted, the influence of God's fellowship renews. We come under a fatherly training, of which we know that the issue is to be the complete restoration of the character of God's children, and the complete restitution of their privileges.

Coming back
to our Father
the better
part.

Privileges
enjoyed.

Even while this process goes on, some of these

privileges are enjoyed. Among other things, we are invited to have filial fellowship with God in the contemplation of His works in the world around us, and in the enjoyment of the good gifts of this life. In our present state, however, this privilege is guarded and limited, *because we are so prone to forget that filial spirit in which these gifts should be received.* We forget that it is as God's children we should go about the study of His works and the enjoyment of His gifts. But we are always getting glimpses of another state, where this proneness to forget our Father shall no longer exist, and these restrictions shall no longer be required. We are stimulated to patience and cheerfulness under the ills of this life by the hope of that better portion. But it is not merely *as a better inheritance* that it is made to animate us. It is not merely that the *place* is to be better, but that *we* are to be better—in a better spirit—under better influences—in our Father's house—under our Father's care.

We appeal to any intelligent reader of the Bible whether, in all its pictures of heaven, this thought is not uppermost. "I saw no temple there, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is,"

Fellowship
with God.

Enjoyment
of His gifts.

The spirit in
which we are
to enjoy
them.

The future
state a
stimulus to
patience and
cheerfulness
under the
ills of life.

Bible pic-
tures of
heaven.

Rev. xxi. 22

Phil. i. 23.

1 John iii. 2.

Scripture does not teach us to forego present good in order to enjoy more of the same kind of good hereafter.

Hence it is not a picture but a caricature that is given of the Scripture doctrine of the better life, when it is represented as teaching us to sacrifice everything that is good and pleasant here, in order that we may enjoy a larger share of the same kind of things hereafter. We are not encouraged to renounce this world and seek after heaven, simply because the one is a bad investment, and the other good. We are not called to be patient and content under loss and suffering here on the mere ground that, like money sunk in a deferred annuity, what we surrender at present will bring a great increase hereafter. We are not required to neglect the interests of time, because it will be more profitable to attend to the interests of eternity. In fact, neither the *interests* of the soul, nor the *interests* of eternity is a Scriptural phrase, often though the words occur among us; and their mercantile aspect makes them very misleading.

Unscriptural phrases.

Scripture does not exclude consideration of the future.

We grant that, as a motive to Christian obedience and diligence, the Bible does not exclude the consideration that in the future life God's children will have a far better portion than any that this world can bestow. We grant that it does present this as one ground of consolation for loss and suffering here. But we maintain that this is a subordinate consideration; it is by no means the leading view of the bearing of this life on that which is to come. The course which is set before

Christians in this life has ever for its chief recommendation, that in following it they are brought nearer to God, more under the direct influence of His grace and truth; that thus their character is elevated, and their influence upon others for good is increased; that more of the filial spirit is generated in them, and a greater capacity for enjoying the fellowship of the Father; and that all this will be for their good in the world to come, inasmuch as, by the gracious provision of God, the place of His children in heaven will be according to their attainments and services on earth.

Nearness to God the recommendation of the Christian course.

But perhaps it will be said, that when we study the New Testament, we find a strain of remark and exhortation that seems to imply that it is a mark of a true Christian to live far above all the comforts and enjoyments of this world; and that instead of having these to enjoy, he must lay his account with a continual experience of griefs and pains. He must lead a wilderness life in an enemy's country, a career of harassment and vexation, never to be terminated till he crosses the Jordan, and gets to his Father's house. Did not Christ say to His disciples, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me?" Did He not speak of a broad road that goeth to destruction, and a narrow way that leadeth unto life? Are we not told to go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His

Tribulation and cross-bearing of the Christian life.

The Saviour's exhortations
Matt. xvi. 24.

Matt. vii. 13

Heb. xiii. 13.

Godliness
and perse-
cution.
2 Tim. iii. 12.

Acts xiv. 22.

Matt. vi. 19.

2 Tim. ii. 3.

1 Tim. vi. 10.

The lot of
the Christian
a life of trial.

Justification
of such ex-
hortations
and descrip-
tions.

The will to
be subjected
to God's will.

reproach? Is it not said that they that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution, and that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God? Did not Christ dissuade His followers from laying up for themselves treasures on earth? Did not St. Paul call on Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ? Did he not tell him that the love of money was the root, or at least a root of all evil? And do not all such texts and expressions teach us that the lot of the faithful Christian must always be a self-denying one; that he ought not to desire nor attempt to make this life comfortable, but accepting it as necessarily hard and full of pain, expect neither rest nor happiness till he reach the better land?

To attempt an exhaustive examination of this class of texts would require a treatise instead of a paragraph.¹ If we were to go into the subject fully, we should probably find that the style of exhortation adverted to finds its justification,

1. In that need for *unceasing effort to subject his own will to the will of God*, under which every child of God lies, but which does not *necessarily* imply physical discomfort, or barrenness of worldly good.

¹ The reader may find the subject handled with great judgment and discrimination in a little treatise by the late Mr. John Sheppard of Frome, entitled, *Thoughts at Seventy-nine*, in the chapters on "New Testament Precepts." It will not be supposed that the admirable author of *Thoughts on Devotion* approaches the subject under the influence of a secular bias.

Self-control, mortification of the flesh, and keeping the body under when it claims a sovereign place, are always necessary if we would spend this life according to the highest rules of moral and spiritual health, and in such a case they would be necessary even were there no life to come.

Self control.

2. The effort required to resist our strong tendency to sin, in our way of handling worldly things, accounts for much of the strong language of Christ and His apostles. In handling money, for example, what constant care and self-denial are needed to drive away all taint of greed, injustice, dishonesty, pride, dependence on the creature, and not doing to others as we would that they should to us! What extraordinary care and self-discipline are ever needed to discharge that one department of stewardship! But we must see that we do the right thing. Our hearts are ever ready to substitute an outward penance for an inward discipline, and to resort to outward renunciations of worldly good when the essential thing is *inward separation from all taint of sinful lust*. Nothing could be farther from our desire than to obliterate the distinction between the broad road and the narrow, or to make out that it is much easier to be a Christian than many suppose; but it is very necessary to remember that what, in all ages and in all circumstances, must chiefly make the Christian path a narrow one, is the necessity of a constant watch and struggle

The way of handling worldly things to be watched.

Inward separation from evil necessary.

against sin in its more subtle as well as its grosser forms,—in the forms that are overlooked and tolerated in Christian society, as well as in those that are commonly stigmatised and denounced.

Peculiar
necessity
of primitive
times.

3. Still further the language of Christ and His apostles is accounted for by the peculiar necessity of the times. It was necessary to prepare the Church for the terrible era of persecution—the three centuries of fiery trial through which it had to pass. There are circumstances in which it becomes the duty of Christians, out of loyalty to Christ, to abandon every possession and pleasure, however lawful in itself. Though not the normal state of things, it is far from uncommon, and the spirit must be cultivated that will not shrink from the sacrifice. In times of trial, it is peculiarly necessary to call up this spirit, and to train Christians to a more than ordinary indifference even to the lawful joys and possessions of the world. The early ages of Christianity were emphatically such times. Hence much of what Christ and His apostles taught on the obligation of Christians to face life-long affliction and tribulation, with the loss of all that was dear to them in this world. Hence, too, the extent to which they drew on what may be called the *compensating* power of Christianity—its great reserve—its power, through faith's vision of the future, to supply a solace and refreshment under the miseries of the present.

The self-
sacrificing
spirit to be
cultivated.

The compen-
sating power
of Chris-
tianity.

Now, none of us can be sure that what befel the early Christians, will not befall us; therefore it is always incumbent on us to cherish this spirit, so that if we were called to choose between worldly comfort on the one hand, and poverty and persecution for Christ's sake on the other, we should not hesitate one moment as to our choice. And though in many ways there is more toleration now, yet the spirit of the world is unchanged, the enmity of the carnal heart to God remains, and who can tell but it may break out even yet in persecuting ways as wild as ever?

Christ to be preferred at all hazards.

And even when there is no persecution, the Christian must sit very light to the world; he is but a stranger and a pilgrim in it; he may be called at any moment to leave it, or he may find all its joys and comforts suddenly swept from his grasp. As the apostle has said, "The time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that buy as though they bought not, and they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." The cry of Micah must never rise from Christian lips—"Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" We are to enjoy the gourd while the gourd is given us, and rejoice in its pleasant shade; but when the worm comes in the night and makes it wither,

The Christian to sit lightly to the world.

1 Cor. vii 29, 30.

Judg. xviii. 24.

Thankfully to enjoy present good, and uncomplainingly part with it when it is taken from us.

no murmur must escape from us, for God Himself remains to us, "the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever."

The language of the Sermon on the Mount.

In regard to some of the particular expressions of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, if we would know their precise import, we must compare them with what He taught elsewhere on kindred topics. It has been said by secularists that no Christian ought to practise *thrift*, because our Lord taught, "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" All accumulation of property is sinful, for our Lord taught,

Matt. vi. 31.

Matt. vi. 19.

Revised Version

Restless anxiety forbidden.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth." Prayer, hearing the word, giving alms, are great duties, but serving like Martha, or labouring for the meat that perisheth are poor, unworthy occupations. Our revisers have sufficiently removed one of these objections by changing the translation from "take no thought for your life," into "be not anxious for your life." And in this way they have thrown light on that whole class of precepts. It is a cankering, absorbing, restless anxiety about temporal things that our Lord condemns. It is accumulating treasure *as treasure*, as the object of the heart's highest value, that He warns against. It is labouring for the bread that perisheth as if there were nothing higher to labour for, that He reproveth. Who will

pretend with any semblance of honesty that our Lord, who in the parable of the sower, the parables of vineyards, the parable of the drag-net, and the like, was always recognising industry in earthly callings as the fit condition of human life, really meant in the Sermon on the Mount to discourage it? That it was His conviction that the habit of improving one's talents—and here He used a word literally applied to *money*—was unworthy of a Christian? Why did He go about healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, if earthly conditions of comfort are in themselves rather a hindrance than a help to spiritual good? Why did He feed the multitudes, if the bread that perisheth is so absolutely worthless? Why did He attend the marriage-feast at Cana? Why did He come among men eating and drinking? Such perversions of the Sermon on the Mount and kindred teachings of our Lord, are a double sin; first, they are a sin against literature—against that peculiar Oriental idiom, which, to make a point very clear, expressed it in the most antithetic form that could be found; and second, they are a sin against Scripture and common sense, which cannot forget that man must eat his bread in the sweat of his face, and enjoin that if any man will not work, neither shall he eat.

Industry, improvement of material condition inculcated by Christ.

Christ's own example.

II.

Having now cleared the way by removing the misconception of many as to the meaning of the exhortations of Scripture to renounce and overcome the world, we go on to the more positive side of our subject,—to consider the sense in which the world is intended to be possessed and enjoyed by the children of God.

How the world is to be enjoyed.

God made and furnished the world for man.

1. Here let us consider, in the first place, how God has actually *made* this world for man, and given it to him; and how He has stored it with every thing that is fitted to minister to his advantage and enjoyment. Not only so, but He has furnished him with faculties, that in their most natural and legitimate exercise, seek for these things, and take pleasure in them. Can we suppose, then, that He who has thus stored the earth for man, and provided him with the faculties that crave these stores, can be ill-pleased with him when he is engaged in securing them?

An unfilial spirit in enjoying it displeasing to God.

Bear in mind—what we have already seen—how good cause God would have to be displeased if this were done *in the unfilial spirit of the prodigal son*,—if the gifts of God were severed from God Himself, and we were to separate Him from the provision He has made for our good. But we are supposing

a different state of things. We have returned to our Father's house. We never desire now to be absent from Him any more. We dread every thing that would tempt us to an unfilial spirit towards Him. What we find around us, we regard as His gifts to us, and it is as such that we would use and enjoy them. It is impossible that God can be anything but pleased with those that seek in this spirit to possess and enjoy the things of earth. You need not fear, in this spirit, to gratify the instincts that seek temporal good. You may gratify your love of property, your love of beauty, your love of comfort, your love of society, your love of recreation. Of course, there are limits to be observed in these pursuits: the limit imposed by the effect on our own highest good; and the limit imposed by the effect on the spiritual good of others;¹ but if, within these limits, you engage in them as pursuits and pleasures which God designs for you, for which He has adapted you, and in which He will bless you, you may do so without any feeling of uneasiness, or uncertainty whether you are right or wrong. He giveth us richly all things to enjoy. Every creature of God is good, and not to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. True, indeed, He may see it right at any moment to deprive us of them all; for "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." And if we

God is pleased with those who enjoy it in a right spirit.

Limits of enjoyment.

1 Tim. vi. 17.

1 Tim. iv. 4.

Heb. xii. 6.

¹ See 1 Cor. vi. 12, and 1 Cor. x. 23.

have the true spirit of children, we will bow in cheerful resignation to the will of Him who gave and who has taken away. We shall feel that the great thing is to have God Himself as our Father and our Friend, and be thankful that amid all changes of our outward condition, each of us can pray—

“O Thou who changest not, abide with me.”

The true
filial spirit.

Instead, however, of blackening and depreciating this world when it smiles upon us, it seems much more filial, more pious, and more wholesome, to dwell with delight on its manifold beauties and advantages, and rejoice in them as tokens of God's fatherly love for His children. What beautiful objects this world presents to our view—what lovely sights, what wealth of musical sounds!

The beauties
of the world.

What a glorious sky above us, what a sun to brighten it by day, what gems to sparkle in it by night! What a wonderful ocean to girdle our shore, what rivers, and streams, and prattling brooks and burns! What majestic mountains and smiling valleys! Yes, truly, “O Lord, the earth is full of Thy riches!”

Psa. civ. 24.

The social
enjoyments
of the world.

And how interesting and manifold are the lawful social *enjoyments* connected with this world! The joys of childhood, the merry sports of little children, the happy scenes of early home—the pleasures of friendship, your walks and talks with intimate friends to whom you can pour out every

thought and feeling of your heart—the happiness of congenial marriage, the brightness and freshness of domestic bliss, the interest connected with the birth and growth of children, especially if they turn out helps to their parents and blessings to the world—the pleasures of knowledge, of travel, of change of scene—the pleasures of taste and of fancy—the satisfaction there is in well-done work, the joy of doing your duty, the pleasure of earning your wages, or receiving your salary, or realising the profit of honest business (for we are not going to leave that out) — the still greater pleasure of helping the needy, cheering the hearts of the down-cast, receiving the blessing of him that was ready to perish—what numberless fountains of enjoyment has God provided for us in this life! If God does at times suddenly deprive us of any or all of these, it is certainly not because He grudges them to us; but only because our folly or our forgetfulness makes it necessary that for our good they should be taken from us.

The pleasures of knowledge, taste.

Work well done.

Beneficence.

It is plain, then, that it was and is the intention of the gracious Creator, that human life should be cheered and brightened by these manifold sources of enjoyment. A life spent in absolute darkness and barrenness is not wholesome. It is not for me, as a creature and child of God, to depreciate temporal blessings, or train myself to despise them. Rather let me thank Him for His goodness, and

God intends us to enjoy what He gives.

Gratitude
due to Him.

Duty to help
the needy.

The best
gift.

do what I can that others may share it, and bless His holy name. And if I find that by the existing social arrangements of the community, a large portion of my fellow-men are shut out from many or most of these cheering influences, and left to plod wearily and uncheered along hard and dusty highways, is it not my duty to try to get for them a share of the blessings which God designed for the sweetening and brightening of their life? True it is, these things will be real blessings to them only when they return to God in Christ as their Father, and accept of them as His kind gifts. In all Christian dealing with them, this ought ever to be put in the foreground: they should always be told that God's love and favour in Christ is far the best gift of any, even though the fig-tree should not blossom, and no herd should be in the stall. But let us not for this reason leave them without any share of temporal joys and refreshments. Let us not say to ourselves, "It is not good for these people to be too well off; when Jeshurun waxed fat, he kicked; we must let them feel that they are but pilgrims and strangers here." Let us leave that lesson in *God's* hands—the only hands in which it can be left with safety. Let us labour to supply our fellow-men with some of those earthly enjoyments for which their hearts are often blindly yearning; all the more, that if these be not supplied to them,

they are so liable to plunge recklessly into the deadly pools of drunkenness and sensuality.

2. But again, let us consider that God has not only given to man the earth *as it is*, to be possessed and enjoyed, but He has told him to *subdue* it and have *dominion* over it; thus giving him the prospect of getting much more out of it, if he investigate its laws and properties, and bend these to his use. The world we dwell in is an indefinitely improvable world; it is designed by God to be improved, and the improvement of it, now given to man to effect, is intended for the greater welfare of the human race. And this improvement can only be effected through investigation of its laws, and application of these to the nature and circumstances of man. This business of investigation and application would have been one of man's chief employments in an unfallen condition; and in his present state, a strong natural instinct is ever impelling him towards it.

The world to be subdued.

The world indefinitely improvable.

All persons, therefore, who are engaged in the investigation of nature, in any branch or form, or in the application of natural resources to the wants of man, are doing a work that has God's approval and blessing, if only they do it in a right filial spirit. Inquirers into the laws of matter, the laws of mind, the laws of health, the laws of taste, the laws of commerce, the laws of social order and

Investigation of nature a work approved by God.

Traders,
inventors,
authors, etc.,
further
this divine
plan of
human well-
being.

political well-being; promoters of intercourse between one part of the globe and another; travellers in unexplored regions; traders who bring the fulness of one region to supply the wants of another; devisers of improvements who make the resources of nature available for a larger measure of good; workers in the busy system by which the world's stores are spread over the whole earth; teachers, authors, writers, who scatter the light that has been already gathered, and give the impulse to seek for more,—all these, and all such as these, are in one way or other fulfilling the great command to possess the earth and have dominion over it, and aiding in accomplishing the great design of God for the increased comfort and well-being of man.

Many do it
blindly.

It is true, indeed—would it were not so!—that many of them—*how* many I do not like to think—are doing this blindly, not because it is God's will or God's design, but simply because their own unchastened instincts or their worldly interests urge them to this course. If only they did it in a filial spirit, seeking to work as God's children according to His will and for His glory, it would be in every way blessed work. The scenes of this busy world, our crowded thoroughfares, our hives of industry, our railways, our ships, our schools of learning and of science, how blessed it would be if the predominant idea suggested by them were—

A filial spirit
would make
the work
blessed.

not that of a race for riches, or a struggle for distinction, but that of a great scheme of filial duty, in which the whole army of workers were animated by a desire to fulfil a Father's design, and by subduing the earth at once glorify Him, benefit themselves, and bless mankind!

Now, this is the thought that Christianity must supply. Let us not disparage the work. Let us not be so ready as we sometimes are, to depreciate secular employments. Let us not shake our heads in despair at the secular activity of the age. Let us not turn pale at the discoveries of science. Let us not look askance at any of these things. The work in itself is good and right, part of a Divine scheme, the issue of which is to be greatly for the benefit of the world. But let us say to the busy workers, Do not carry on the work on an independent footing; do not labour for your ends merely; but try to work in a true filial and loyal spirit; work as God's workers, as labourers in God's vineyard. And seek to know Him and to love Him as the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; the God from whom you have wandered, but who invites you to return to Him; without whom life can never be blessed, but with whom all honest work will have a fresh and living interest; and will command the blessing that maketh rich, and to which He addeth no sorrow

Secular employments not to be depreciated.

Advice to busy workers.

Conditions limit the action of causes and may direct their activity.

spoken of as its cause. It may be the necessary condition of the existence of a thing *in that particular form*, but to designate it its cause is an inaccuracy of thought. The truth is, necessary conditions limit the action of causes, and may direct their activity into this or that channel; but to treat them as causes is absurd, for they neither do, nor can produce anything.

Law con-founded with force in scientific language.

4. Law is not a cause. The reader's attention cannot be too carefully directed to this fact, for, in scientific language, law is habitually used as the equivalent of force, and the greatest confusion of thought has been the result; nay, more, it is frequently personified even by those who refuse to allow that we have any means of knowing that the First Cause of the universe is a personal Being. Thus even scientific men are constantly in the habit of affirming that the laws of nature effect this or that; and that feeble man is unable to resist their overwhelming power. The truth is, that while the forces of nature effect much, the laws of nature can effect nothing. What are the laws of nature? They are merely expressions of the definite order of the occurrence of phenomena. What are the laws of a state? They are rules which prescribe or forbid particular classes of actions, in which certain penalties are denounced against the disobedient. Metaphorically, we are in the habit of speaking of the laws of a state

Laws are merely expressions of the order of the occurrence of phenomena or rules of action.

that we would most earnestly urge him to go ;
 "nearer to God" is the aspiration that should
 ever be on his lip ; and the nearer he comes, the
 deeper will be his satisfaction in the thought—
 "This God is our God for ever and ever ; He will
 be our guide even unto death."

Nearer to
 God is the
 true aspira-
 tion.

Psa. xviii.
 14.

3. Once more let us consider how, according to
 the Bible, Christians are called to use this world as
a sphere of service alike to God and to man. In this
 view we shall find that the principle of looking for-
 ward to the future life encourages the habit of
 diligence in our calling, instead of destroying it,
 and stimulates the desire to do good to our fellow-
 men in every available way.

The world a
 sphere of
 service to
 God and
 man.

If there were no vital connection between the
 two states ; if the ordinary employments of this
 world were utterly alien from the next ; if the one
 were quite unfitted to form or exercise the graces
 and habits appropriate to the other, it might be
 granted that the more you lived in the future, the less
 would you be fitted for the present. And hence,
 if you should hold that it is only when you are
 engaged in exercises directly religious that you are
 serving God or preparing for heaven, it would
 follow that the more religious men should become,
 the less interest would they feel in the ordinary
 work of the world. But, certainly, this is not the
 doctrine of the Bible. The Bible expressly and
 repeatedly exalts the lawful callings of Christians,

The vital
 connection
 between the
 present and
 the future
 state.

The Bible
exalts lawful
earthly call-
ings.

The disci-
pline of life.

Connection
of worldly
work and
heavenly
reward.

Possible
connection
between our
earthly and
our heavenly
service.

and encourages them to work on in them by the consideration, that fidelity to worldly duty is an act of service to the Lord. It teaches us to look on the whole surroundings of our worldly lot as a rough but wholesome school, where, by God's help, all manner of virtues and graces may be formed and exercised,—those virtues and graces that have their home in heaven. Faith in God, fidelity to Christ, love to man; truth, mercy, honesty, forbearance, generosity, meekness, and many more graces must gather strength and power from the very attributes of the climate in which they grow. Hence, the better a Christian does his worldly work, and the more he makes it the occasion of exercising such graces as these, the higher will be his reward in heaven. Nay, who can tell, but there may be a much closer connection than we know between the particular phase of our life here, and our form of service hereafter? In the case of King David, there was a connection between his early life as shepherd and his later life as king; in the case of the apostles, there was a connection between their first employment as fishermen, and their last as fishers of men; and who can tell whether, in the infinite wisdom of God, there may not be some important bearing, in the pursuits of Christian carpenters, merchants, students, teachers, and so on, on the particular mode of service in which God is to employ them hereafter?

If such be the case, to live much in the future entails no disregard of the duties of the present, but the very reverse. Does a youth at school or college pursue his studies less diligently that he often thinks of a glowing future, for which his education is fitting him? Does an apprentice do the drudgery of his office less carefully that he sometimes fancies himself a merchant-prince, remembering, however, that nothing but diligence and perseverance can ever make him one? More especially, if he have a strong filial spirit—a strong regard and love for his father; if the burden of every letter from his father be, “Do your present work well, never fancy yourself above it,—you may not see the advantage of it, but be sure that fidelity and diligence in youth are the certain and indispensable forerunners of success and honour in after life.” So with the spiritual Christian. God has given him a work to do in this world, and told him to do it well. God has encouraged him to look forward to a better life, and to draw hope and inspiration from the thought of it, and patience under the troubles and trials of time. If there be anything genuine in his religion, he will do his work well. He will do it all the better for living in the future, for walking by faith not by sight, for having his treasure in heaven. He will feel that he is entrusted with his Father’s honour; and the love he bears to Him will make him doubly

Influence of the future on present conduct.

The Christian encouraged to look forward to a better life.

careful that in all that he does, he may be found faithful.

Living in the future helps in earthly duty.

And thus, as spiritual Christianity, with its habit of living in the future, does not hinder but help a man in his own sphere of earthly duty, so neither does it hinder but help undertakings which have for their object to relieve temporal suffering, and promote temporal good. In spite of the confident remarks of secularists, we would appeal here to facts. In the preface to the late Mr. de Liefde's admirable work on *The Charities of Europe*, it is said, "I have been always of opinion that nowhere could a better proof of the Divine origin of Christianity and of the truth of the Gospel be found, than in the story, simply told, of some charitable institutions. Whatever the Christian religion may apparently have in common with other religions, this much is certain, that true, self-denying charity, which seeks the lost, loves the poor, and consoles the sufferer, is exclusively its own. There never were such things as charities known in heathendom, however civilized; nor were they even known in Israel before He appeared who taught His people to love their enemies, and to exercise charity towards the harlot, the publican, and the sinner."

Mr. de Liefde and *The Charities of Europe.*

Such charities unknown in heathendom

The real benefactors of the world.

And who, in modern times, are the men and women that compassionate the wrongs of the oppressed, dry up the fountains of human misery, and spend soul and body in struggles for their

good? Who laid the foundation of the Deaconness' Institution at Kaiserswerth, and sent over the world a noble army of Christian women to nurse the sick, instruct the ignorant, and care for the helpless? Who, in the days when prisons were a disgrace to civilization, spent his life going from jail to jail, and wandered over the world from country to country, proclaiming the miseries of the prisoners, till he fell a martyr to the cause in a far-distant land? Whose names shine brightest among those that fought the battle with the slave-trade and with slavery? Who are the Guthries and the Shaftesburys that have come to the front to rescue neglected children, and promote every other work of philanthropy? Who are the Frys and the Merediths that have visited their criminal sisters in their cells, and sought by every voice of love and goodness to win them from their wretched life? Who, in the American war, organized and worked the Christian Commission that brought cordials for the body and comfort for the soul to tens of thousands of the sick and dying? We go further back and ask, Who was it, in Scotland and England, that in the 17th century resisted the schemes of despotism, braved the stake and the scaffold, and laid the foundations of liberty both at home and on the American shores? All of these were men and women of spiritual character, who believed in another life, and cherished its

The Deaconness' Institution at Kaiserswerth.

Howard.

Guthrie and Shaftesbury

Fry and Meredith.

The Christian Commission in America.

The Pilgrim Fathers.

Good service
been done
by non-
Christians.

hopes and joys, and who, under the influence of their faith, learned to conquer this world and despise tyrants and all their power. We readily grant that there have been men of less spiritual faith who have done excellent service for humanity. They have struggled nobly for social blessings of great importance, and are now pronounced benefactors of their kind. What amount of impulse they may have derived from Christian views and considerations, we cannot say; all that we maintain is, that the foremost names in philanthropy are those of spiritual Christians, whose faith gave them "the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

The fore-
most philan-
thropists
have been
Christians.

Christian
endurance
as a remedy
for wrong.

So, also, facts might be supplied to show, that in some instances where spiritual Christianity has not supplied a remedy for human wrongs, but has encouraged sufferers to bear them patiently, and comfort themselves with the hope of the better life, it has more effectually removed these wrongs than if it had declared open war against them. Such was the course followed in the New Testament in regard to slaves and slavery, for example; and yet, as Isaac Taylor remarked many years ago, "the deep working principle of Christianity—its force of love, as it slowly develops itself, and becomes better understood, and takes a firmer hold of all minds, and raises the standard of humane feeling, must render slavery every year

Isaac Taylor
on the work-
ing principle
of Chris-
tianity.

less and less tolerable within Christianised communities—must at length expel it from the bosom of civilization—must drive it further and further outward into the wilds of society, and leave it, seen and confessed as such, a sheer curse, resting upon the heads and homes of its infatuated supporters; and at length bring it to be denounced by all but savages, as a nuisance in the world,—a nuisance insufferable, to be swept away at whatever risk.”¹

Slavery expelled by the force of love

So far, then, from admitting that spiritual Christianity, rightly understood, is the opponent, or even the lukewarm friend of secular progress, we hold that it is the very reverse. It smiles on the efforts of science, civilization, and social reformation; and it supplies the great moving spring of philanthropy, the unwearied heavenly love that goes forth, like its Master, to seek and to save that which is lost. The hope of the world, and especially of its down-trodden and suffering masses, lies in spiritual Christianity. Where, if you discard it, will you find a power to take its place? “Does it appear,” asks Mr. Taylor, “that civilization *alone*, with its intercourse and traffic, its arts and its useful sciences, its town-crowding industry, and its disorderly peopling of wildernesses, its hurry and impatience of restraint, its intensity of individual will, and its contempt

Christianity the friend of secular progress.

Christianity the hope of the world.

Mr. I. Taylor on mere civilisation.

¹ *Spiritual Christianity*, p. 120.

The impo-
tence of mere
civilization
to promote
happiness.

of authority, its uncontrollable sway of the masses, its unlooked-for upturns and reverses, its passionate pursuit of momentary advantages, and its appetite for such gratifications as may be snatched at in all haste,—does it appear that civilization *alone* (Christian influence not considered) is likely much to promote the personal and home-felicity of the millions it is summoning into life? Judging of what is future from what we see around us, dare we look to mere civilization as worthy to be trusted with the moral, or even with the physical well-being of the human family, and with the guardianship of the generation next coming up? Dare we, if we had the infant human race in our arms, dare we turn ourselves to that care-worn personage, our modern Civilization, sitting at her factory gate, and say to her, ‘Take this child, and nurse it for me?’”

Nay, verily. But if so, we must find the child’s true mother. And the true mother must care for her child.

We have shown that spiritual Christianity is not adverse but friendly to material progress. The question raised in Mr. Taylor’s concluding lines might tempt us to take up and test the claims of secularism as the friend of humanity. We cannot do so in this tract; but were we to address ourselves to that inquiry, we should pursue it in no

sneering spirit, but with the utmost desire to give all due credit to its friends for sincerity and truth. We believe, with the late Dr. John Duncan, that "Owen and Proudhon had a measure of truth in their sociology, and that red republicanism was not entirely false." Not less do we believe with him that "red republicanism was not the cure for humanity. Chalmers came far nearer the truth."¹ The two worlds, earth and heaven, matter and spirit, have wonderful affinities, and no plan for the one can ever be a success which disregards the other. Mrs. Browning's hero confesses his error, and the error of many more, in having disregarded the connexion of matter and spirit, body and soul, earth and heaven.

Dr. J. Duncan on Owen and on Proudhon.

Dr. Chalmers

Mrs. Browning.

"And verily many thinkers of this age,
Aye, many Christian teachers, half in heaven,
Are wrong in just my sense who understood
Our natural world too insularly, as if
No spiritual counterpart completed it,
Consummating its meaning, rounding all
To justice and perfection, line by line,
Form by form, nothing single nor alone,
The great below clenched by the great above."²

We may well say, "What God hath joined, let not man put asunder." The Author of Christianity is the Author likewise of the human soul and of human society, and it was His design that in their legitimate influence on one another, they should

The Author of Christianity the Author of the human soul and society.

¹ *Colloquia Peripatetica*, p. 136.

² *Aurora Leigh*.

Montes-
quieu.

be fitly framed together. A due study of the whole will bring us to Montesquieu's conclusion: —“Admirable! the Christian religion, which seems only to have for its object the felicity of another life, secures also our happiness in this.”



ON THE
EXISTENCE AND CHARACTER
OF
GOD.

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"THE JESUS OF THE EVANGELISTS," ETC.



THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

Argument of the Tract.

BELIEF in causation is one of the primary convictions of the human mind, and results from the constitution of human nature. The cause must be adequate to produce the effect. A first cause is a necessary assumption. God the only adequate first cause. The intelligence, moral character, freedom, and personality of God inferred from the phenomena of the moral universe. The belief in intelligence as the cause of order a primary conviction. The theory of unbelief inadequate and contradictory to reason and experience. The correlations and adaptations in the universe prove that there is a plan in it, and that it must therefore be due to intelligence. Theories of evolution. The atheistic theory utterly breaks down. The theistic view satisfies alike sound philosophy and common sense, and is the only adequate one. Conscience announces a moral law. Obligation implied in its dictates. Obligation centres in a person who must be God. God's revelation of Himself in Christ. Our Lord's own testimony.

ON THE EXISTENCE AND CHARACTER OF GOD.



THE opponents of Christianity during the last century for the most part assumed the truth of natural religion, or in other words, of the fundamental principles of theism. Those who have taken their place in the present century, on the contrary, rest their unbelief on principles which are essentially atheistic. I do not mean that any considerable number of them profess atheism, pure and simple; but that, if for the sake of avoiding logical difficulties, they admit the existence of a Being whom they designate God, yet their God is one of whom it is impossible to predicate personality, or any attribute which we designate moral. As a belief in such a God can exert no influence on the practical life of man, it is precisely the same as if He existed not, for such a Being can stand in no conceivable relation to human life. I am aware that the holders of these views object to the designation of atheists; but they can hardly help admitting that the term *practical atheism* is correct, as expressing their opinions.

Unbelief
last century
theistic.

Now essen-
tially
atheistic in
principle.

Atheism
pure and
simple not
avowed.

Practical
atheism.

Some non-Christian theists exist.

Theists undoubtedly exist who do not believe in Christianity as a divine revelation; but with the exception of these, who are not numerous, modern unbelief may be dealt with under two heads—

Twofold division of modern unbelief.

THEORETICAL ATHEISM
and
PRACTICAL ATHEISM.

The argument addressed to common sense.

In this tract I shall simply appeal to those obvious reasons for believing in the existence of God which address themselves to the common sense of mankind, under the deep conviction that those whom these fail to convince will not be persuaded by the more abstract and recondite ones.¹

Heads of argument.

My argument will be treated under the following heads:

Causation.

(1) The argument founded on the principle of causation.

Order.

(2) That founded on the order of the universe.

Final causes.

(3) That founded on its innumerable correlations and adaptations, commonly called the argument from final causes.

¹ It has been often urged that, if a God exists, His existence ought to be capable of demonstration. But this is to make a demand which the subject matter will not warrant. Surely any one who would refuse to act on the facts of ordinary life, because the evidence on which they rest is not demonstrative, but arises from the concurrence of a number of independent probabilities, would be justly considered to be the prey of a mental hallucination.

(4) That furnished by conscience, and the moral nature of man. Conscience.

Let us consider

I.—THE ARGUMENT FOUNDED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF CAUSATION.

The belief in causation is one of the primary convictions of the human mind. It will be unnecessary for the purposes of this argument to discuss its origin. It is sufficient that it is an indisputable fact that every rational being, whenever he witnesses a phenomenon, is fully persuaded that it is not self-produced, but that its existence is due to a cause adequate to its production. It is also certain that this conviction is not the result of any conscious process of reasoning. We acquiesce in it because we cannot help doing so. Any one may satisfy himself that this is the case, by trying whether it is possible for him to believe that any particular phenomenon has come into existence without a cause. Some, I know, affirm that this belief is the result of the observations and the experience of mankind at some early stages of their development; but, however this may be, we have only to do with the fact that man, in the present condition of his intellectual development, cannot help so believing; and further, if it were possible to believe otherwise, not only would all

Belief in causation a primary conviction of the human mind

Belief in a causeless phenomenon impossible.

The origin of the belief not material to the argument.

The certainties of practical life rest on the belief in causation.

intellectual progress be rendered impossible, but all the certainties of practical life would necessarily cease, for every one of these latter rests on the conviction that every effect has been produced by a cause adequate to its production. The belief, therefore, is as universal as man, that whenever we see phenomena—and every thing which we behold is a phenomenon—that they owe their existence to some previously existing cause. This belief, therefore, forms one of those primary intuitions of our nature, which exist anterior to all reasoning, and on which, as a trustworthy witness to the reality of things, all reasoning, whether it be inductive or deductive, is founded. These primary beliefs, intuitions, axioms, or by whatever name we please to designate them, form the groundwork of all our certitudes. It is impossible to attain to any greater certitude than these, for the obvious reason that they form the foundation on which every other certitude, whether it be the result of the observations of our senses, or of the deductions of our reason, rests.

The highest attainable certitudes derived from our primary beliefs.

These beliefs must truly represent things.

Further, these primary beliefs must be absolutely reliable, or correct representations of the realities of things. It is true that they have been frequently called in question by those who delight in metaphysical subtleties. But such persons have failed to observe that their assaults are merely a reiteration of the old story of the woodcutter, who in his

zeal to demolish the limbs of a tree, directed his blows against the one on which he was standing, and thus fell to the ground. In a similar manner those who argue against the validity of our primary beliefs subvert the foundations of their own reasonings, because they are either compelled to assume some belief of this kind to be a certitude, before it is possible to reason at all on the subject; or else, to deny that we can attain to any certitude at all, even of the proposition which they are attempting to prove, *i.e.*, they affirm that the attainment of truth on all subjects is alike impossible.

Denial of them fatal to all argument.

But further: the universal acceptance of these primary convictions as certitudes proves that our belief in them is the necessary result of the constitution of human nature, *i.e.*, as I have said, that we believe in them, because we cannot help so doing. Now, I ask the reader deeply to meditate on the following fact. Every one of our beliefs of this kind has something in the universe outside ourselves, which corresponds with, and is directly correlated to it, *i.e.*, the internal conviction and the external reality mutually correspond to one another, of which our belief in the external world forms an illustration. I shall not ask him at this stage of the argument to assume that this correlation is evidence that it has been planned by a previously existing intelligence. This will be more properly urged in another place. But here I simply ask him to

Acceptance of primary beliefs results from the constitution of human nature.

Correspondence between internal conviction and external realities.

This correlation a further proof of the trustworthiness of our primary beliefs.

observe that this correlation exists as a fact, whatever may be the true account of its origin, and is therefore an additional proof that the primary beliefs, of which we are speaking, are absolutely reliable, as constituting the highest certitudes to which we are capable of attaining, and which are incapable of being shaken by any amount of abstract reasoning. One of these primary beliefs is that every phenomenon must owe its existence to a cause adequate to produce it. This proposition therefore constitutes one of the highest certitudes which is attainable by man, and lies at the foundation of all reasoned truth.

What is a cause?

Such being the case, it becomes necessary to determine what we mean by the term "cause," not what philosophers mean by it, but what is the idea which the common sense of mankind attaches to it? Unless we are under the bias of some particular theory, we invariably associate the idea of efficiency with that of cause. We may frequently mistake non-causes for causes, but efficiency, *i.e.*, power to produce the effect, is the fundamental idea which underlies the conception of cause in the minds of ordinary men. However erroneously they may apply the word, as soon as they clearly understand that the idea of efficiency does not enter into the conception which they have been in the habit of designating a cause, they cease to view it to be a cause in the sense which they

The idea of efficiency always associated with it by men.

attach to that term. A cause, therefore, in this sense, is *an antecedent, or set of antecedents, which invariably precedes a particular consequent, which antecedent, or set of antecedents, has power to produce that consequent, and has actually produced it.* Efficiency therefore is inseparable from the true conception of a cause.

Definition of a cause.

This being so, the following important consequences follow.

1. Whatever exists in the effect, must exist either actively or potentially in the cause. Otherwise the effect would either produce itself, which is absurd, or it would be produced by some act of special creation, in addition to the cause, *i.e.*, another cause must be invoked to account for the effect.

All effects actively or potentially existent in the cause.

2. The cause of one effect may be the effect of some preceding cause. In this case the idea of efficiency enters into the conception of this cause, and so throughout a series of causes, until we reach the conception of a first cause.

One effect may be the cause of another.

3. Various things, which philosophers and men of science have designated causes, are not causes, but necessary conditions of the existence of a particular thing. Thus space is the necessary condition of the existence of extended bodies, but is certainly not the cause of their existence. In a similar manner, in the language of the Darwinian theory, the environment of a thing is frequently

Necessary conditions sometimes mistaken for causes.

doing this or that, and even as pronouncing sentence on a criminal; but if we use accurate language (and accurate language is all important in the theistic controversy), neither do the laws of nature, nor of the state, effect anything; but the forces which are behind them are the only things which operate efficiently. The laws of nature are simple expressions of the invariable order in which certain consequents follow on certain antecedents.

Metaphorical use of the term "laws."

Having settled these preliminary points, I shall now set before the reader the evidence which the principle of causation supplies in proof of theism. All that is essential in it admits of being stated in a brief space. The universe, as we behold it, consists of a mass of very complicated phenomena. Compelled by that belief in the principle of causation which each of us instinctively feels (I use the word instinctively in the sense above described), we are firmly convinced that not one of these phenomena is self-originated, but has been produced by a cause, or a set of causes (*i.e.*, forces or powers), adequate to its production. When we have ascertained by careful investigation what these are, we find that they are the effects of other similar causes, and so on indefinitely. But our minds are so formed that they are incapable of forming a conception of or of believing in a succession of finite causes, which are destitute of a beginning, *i.e.*, of an eternal suc-

The phenomena of the universe not self-originated.

They are due to an adequate cause.

Belief in an eternal succession of finite causes impossible.

A first cause must be assumed however remote.

The chain of causes must be finite.

Mr. H. Spencer on the existence of a first cause.

The first cause must be uncaused.

cession of such causes. We are therefore compelled to assume the existence of a first cause, which—*itself uncaused*—is the cause of the entire succession of causes and effects, to which the phenomena of the universe owe their existence, and of which they are the manifestations. It matters not, as far as this argument is concerned, how remote this first cause may be from existing phenomena, or how complicated may be the succession of intervening causes which interpose between them and this first cause. However long may be the chain, the constitution of our minds compels us to think it finite; and as an eternal succession of such causes is unthinkable, we are driven to the conclusion that a first cause, *itself uncaused*, exists. I cannot better express this truth than in the language of Mr. H. Spencer. “*The assumption of the existence of a first cause of the universe is a necessity of thought.*” This first cause theists call God.

I have heard it urged, that we must give an account of the origin of this first cause. But if this first cause could be conceived of as *itself caused*, it would cease to be a first cause; and so we should have to give an account of the origin of this cause, and then of its cause, until we arrived at a first cause, which is *itself uncaused*: or otherwise, to fall back on an eternal succession of finite causes, the belief in the exist-

ence of which is contrary to the first principles of our mental constitution. Far more plausible is the objection that a first cause, itself uncaused, presents nearly equal difficulties to formulate in thought, as a succession of finite causes, which has no commencement. One of these alternatives, however, must be true, notwithstanding any difficulties with which the conception may be attended; and I think that it will be a sufficient answer to this objection, to refer to the high authority of Mr. H. Spencer, the Coryphæus of agnosticism, that the belief in the existence of a first cause of the universe is a necessity of thought.

Difficulty of conceiving an uncaused first cause.

The belief necessary notwithstanding.

I will now present this argument in a somewhat different form. Modern science has rendered one eminent service to theism, in showing that the present universe has not existed from all eternity, and though the time may be indefinitely remote, that it will come to an end. The nebular theory which has found acceptance with many eminent men of science, teaches us that the present universe, at the earliest period to which science has been able to prosecute its researches, was once a fiery vapour cloud, which, under the influence of inherent forces, has, in the course of ages, gradually condensed into suns and planets, one of which—our earth—has become a fit habitation for living beings; it being highly probable that this is the case with others. But even in this case, a time once

The universe not eternal according to science.

The nebular theory.

was, however remote, when living beings existed not. With equal certainty it follows that the universe in its present form is gradually wearing out. Suns, as sources of heat and motion, are parting with their energies. The time, therefore, will arrive when the earth will become too cold to be a fit habitation for animal life. It will then become a desolation, like the moon. Owing to loss of energy, it, and every one of the planetary bodies, will be ultimately absorbed into the sun. The sun too, notwithstanding the fresh supplies of heat which will be imparted to it by these catastrophes, will, in the lapse of ages, get cooler and cooler, gradually losing its energies, until it too is absorbed by some mightier body. This mightier body too is destined for a similar fate; and so likewise is the whole existing universe, until all its energies being equalized, it becomes one vast homogeneous mass, alike destitute of life and motion, destined to be the region of eternal silence and desolation, unless some power external to it exists, which is capable of starting it on a fresh series of developments, by again imparting to it motion and life. Such is the teaching of science as to the origin and the ultimate destiny of the present universe of being.

The earliest state of things therefore to which any scientific theory professes to have penetrated is this fiery vapour cloud, which contained within itself, either actually or potentially, the germs and

The universe wearing out.

Suns parting with their energies.

The destiny of the sun.

Of the whole universe apart from the intervention of some external power.

The fiery vapour cloud.

possibilities of all future existence. Yet even this could not have been the primitive state of being, one must have preceded it, and caused it; and so on for ever, until we arrive at a first cause, itself uncaused. This is rendered evident from the simple consideration, that if this fiery mist had existed from eternity, it would have long since, in the depths of the eternal ages, have completed all its possible stages of development, and have passed into that state of homogeneity, silence, and desolation to which our present universe is doomed, and from which, having no power of its own to rescue it, it must continue throughout the eternity to come, unless there be some power external to it to intervene. As therefore it is inconceivable that this fiery mist could have been self-originated, or could have existed from eternity, it must have originated in some previous unknown condition of things; and that in another previous one, until at length we arrive at a cause, itself uncaused, adequate to its production, *i.e.*, a power independent of it, and distinct from it, who imparted to it existence, and breathed into its eternal silences motion, energy, and life. It follows also, if the hypotheses of modern science be trustworthy, that the existence of such a power is the only thing which can rescue the eternal ages of the future, after the energies of this existing universe have passed into quiescence, and its materials into a condition of homogeneity, from everlasting silence

The fiery vapour cloud could not have been eternal.

ali

Nor can be self-originated

An independent uncaused power reached at last.

Such a power necessary on the hypotheses of science to rescue future ages from everlasting silence.

God the cause of the universe.

and desolation. It follows, therefore, that the universe has sprung from a cause, itself uncaused, adequate to its production. This cause is God.

The universe a sufficient practical index of the infinity of Maker.

It will doubtless be objected that the proof that the universe has originated in such a cause does not prove that this cause is infinite. It may have been adequate to have produced the universe, and yet be short of infinite. But, as theists affirm that God is infinite, the proof of His infinity fails. In reply to this objection, I simply observe that for ordinary men who do not measure the realities of things by metaphysical subtleties, the power which could make this universe with all its wonders, will form a sufficient index of that infinity which it is necessary to ascribe to God.

The first cause must actively or potentially contain all effects.

I must now recur to one more point above referred to, as fraught with consequences of extreme importance. I have observed that the very conception of an efficient cause (and an efficient cause is the only one which satisfies the idea of real causation), involves the consequence that it must contain within itself, either actively or potentially, all the effects of which it is the cause; otherwise, such portions of the effects which are not inherent in the cause must be self-produced, which is a self-contradiction, or be produced by the energy of an independent Creator, a conclusion which the theist will readily accept. This being so, all the effects, or in other words, the phenomena.

which exist in the universe, must exist either actively or potentially in its first cause, *i.e.*, in God. Now, one of the phenomena of the universe is intelligence. Intelligence therefore must exist in God. Another of its phenomena is the moral nature of man, and the principles of morality founded on the moral law. God therefore must be a moral Being. Another of its phenomena is free agency as it exists in man. The first cause of man (*i.e.*, God) must therefore be a free agent. Another of its phenomena is will, for it exists in man. Volition therefore must exist in God. Another of its phenomena is personality, for it exists in man. Personality therefore must exist in God. Another of its phenomena is that its forces act in accordance with invariable law, from which action the order of the universe springs. Invariable law therefore must be an expression of the divine will, and the love of order must exist in God. This argument may be pursued to a much greater length; but this will be sufficient to indicate its character.

Phenomena of the universe.

Intelligence

The moral nature of man.

Free agency in man.

Volition.

Personality

Order.

All must exist in God

II.—THE ARGUMENT FOUNDED ON THE ORDER OF THE UNIVERSE.

This argument proves that its first cause (*i.e.*, God) must be possessed of intelligence.

The first cause intelligent.

It is one of the instinctive beliefs of our minds, when our rational powers have attained their full

Orderly
arrangement
implies in-
telligence.

The infer-
ence drawn
by the
perfect man.

The infer-
ence indis-
putable
unless the
mind be
biased by
some theory.

development, that whenever we contemplate an orderly arrangement of a complicated character, we instinctively draw the inference that it denotes the presence of intelligence. We feel that this is an inference which we cannot help drawing, for order and intelligence are in our minds mutually correlated. Observe, I make this affirmation under the qualification that we cannot help drawing this inference when our rational powers have attained to their full development. I do so because I maintain that the ideal of human nature and the testimony which its constitution affords to the realities of things, are to be found in the perfect and not in the imperfect man. It is therefore needless to inquire whether men in a savage, or a very imperfect civilized state, draw this inference; for they are only imperfect specimens of humanity. In point of fact, an orderly arrangement is one of the last things which men in this condition recognize or appreciate; still it is a matter of fact, that whenever man's mental powers are so far developed as to be capable of appreciating an orderly arrangement, he invariably draws the inference that it must have originated in intelligence. Be this, however, as it may, it is beyond dispute, that whenever he has attained to an advanced stage of civilization, he invariably draws this inference, unless he is hindered from doing so by a desire to maintain some particular theory respecting the origin of things. It

will doubtless be objected that this belief is the result of accumulated experience; *i.e.*, that all the orderly arrangements, the production of which we have actually witnessed, have been the result of human intelligence; and that we are therefore in the habit of inferring through an imperfect induction of facts, that all orderly arrangements must owe their origin to intelligence. For the purposes of this argument, however, it is a question of the utmost indifference how the conceptions of order and intelligence have become correlated in the mind of civilized man. The fact that they are so is amply sufficient; and the fact itself is indisputable.

For the purpose of this argument it is indifferent how this belief originated.

One point in connection with this argument is most satisfactory. There is no dispute between theists and their opponents as to whether orderly arrangements really exist in the universe, and these of a very complicated character. On the matter of fact they are agreed. So complete was the perception of this truth even in those early stages of civilization, when the Greek language acquired its settled meaning, that the Greek designation for the universe is *κοσμος*, *i.e.*, order. Since that period, this conviction has been greatly deepened, for the progress of scientific investigation has increased our knowledge of the universe to an extent which has utterly transcended even the dreams of these early thinkers, and everywhere

Complicated orderly arrangement in the universe admitted by all.

This conviction deepened by increased knowledge.

it proclaims the presence of orderly arrangements of the greatest complexity. In the boundless depths of the universe to which it has succeeded in penetrating, everywhere order reigns.

Intelligence
an adequate
account of
the origin of
the arrange-
ments of the
universe.

Such being the facts of the case, let us now address ourselves to the argument. The theist here is in possession of the ground for the assumption that the orderly arrangements of the universe have originated in intelligence, is an adequate account of their origin. This is simply undeniable. I ask the reader's careful consideration of this important fact in this controversy. It

Opponents
of theism
must furnish
an adequate
alternative
explanation.

becomes, therefore, necessary for the opponents of theism to prove that they can be adequately accounted for on any other principle. Even if this can be effected, it forms no disproof of theism.

Such an
explanation
does not dis-
prove theism

All it can do is to present us with two alternatives; and leave us the option of choosing which seems to us the most probable; for even the most extreme form of unbelief will not venture to affirm that the theory that this order has originated in intelligence is not an account of its origin which philosophy must pronounce an adequate one.

Objections
to the
theistic ac-
count.

The opponents of theism dispute the correlation of order and intelligence on two grounds.

First, they affirm that the conception is an anthropomorphic one, inapplicable to the works of nature.

Secondly, that the production of all the phenc-

mena of the universe by the unintelligent forces of nature, acting in conformity with laws from which they are incapable of varying, is an adequate account of these orderly arrangements.

With respect to the fact of these objections to the validity of our argument, I answer,

First, that our belief in this correlation between order and intelligence is not a relative, but an absolute belief, embracing all things, all places, and all times.

Theistic belief in the correlation between order and intelligence absolute.

Secondly, that even if the objection were valid, it makes no attempt to propound an alternative theory of the origin of these orderly arrangements. This, it is absolutely necessary that it should do, if it is entitled to a hearing; for the order is a fact; and its existence must be accounted for on every principle of sound philosophy. This, theism confessedly does, and the objection before us, does not. It therefore leaves theism in exclusive possession of the ground, as the only adequate account of the origin of the order which pervades the universe.

Theism in exclusive possession of this ground.

Thirdly, the affirmation that the alternative theory, viz., that all existing phenomena have been evolved by the action of the unintelligent forces of nature, in conformity with invariable law,—affords an adequate account of the existence of this order, contradicts alike our reason and our experience.

Evolution by unintelligent natural forces contradicts reason.

First, it contradicts our reason. What, I ask, is the conclusion which we draw, when we con-

The sug-
gestion of
chance.

What is
meant by
chance.

Complicated
arrange-
ments can-
not be due
to such a
cause.

template an orderly arrangement of a complicated character? I answer that we cannot help inferring that it has originated in intelligence. If the suggestion is made, that it is due to what is commonly called *chance*, we reject it with scorn. Scientific unbelief, I know, affirms that there is no such thing as chance. This is no doubt true, but to urge this is merely to raise a verbal question; for the word chance, as it is popularly understood, is no unfair representation of the scientific facts. What do we mean when we say that a thing has happened by chance? Not that it has been self-generated, but that it has resulted from the meeting together at a particular point of time and place, of a number of independent forces, by the concurrence of which at this particular point of time and place, a result has been produced, which never could have existed apart from this concurrence. This is a sufficiently accurate expression in scientific language of that of which chance is the popular designation. Now, when our minds are unbiassed by a particular theory, we are incapable of believing that a body of complicated orderly arrangements can have owed their origin to such a cause; but we invariably infer, as it were, instinctively, that they must have originated in intelligence.

Let me adduce one or two simple illustrations. Suppose a traveller had met in some foreign

country a *construction* (it is my misfortune, and not my fault, that I can only express myself in language which has the appearance of assuming the point at issue), which on examination he found to bear a striking resemblance to the machinery in the arsenal at Woolwich, and that no one could tell him how it had originated. Further, that he succeeded in setting it in motion; and that after carefully observing it, he discovered that all its movements took place in a constantly recurring definite order. Let us also further suppose, that on making inquiry how it got there, he was told that during some distant period of the past, a number of the unintelligent forces of nature, after a prolonged struggle, had succeeded in evolving this singular result. Would he, I ask, consider this an adequate account of its origin, or view it as an attempt to impose on his credulity? Illustration.

Or let us take a case nearer home, the library of the British Museum for example, or its collections of minerals or fossils. On walking round them he could observe that their contents were arranged in a certain definite order, yet he is entirely ignorant how they got arranged in this order. But he would scorn the idea, if it were suggested to him, that these arrangements were the result of the concurrence of a number of unintelligent forces, and would without a moment's hesitation draw the conclusion that they were due Illustration.

to the agency of intelligence. Of this he would feel as certain as of his own existence.

The above illustrations equally suitable to argument from adaptation.

These instances will be equally suitable as illustrations of the argument from adaptation. But it will be needless to multiply examples. I therefore ask if in these, and in an indefinite number of similar cases, we esteem this conclusion to be one of the most unquestionable of certitudes, why should the inference become inconclusive, when we observe similar arrangements in the phenomena of nature, the only difference being that the latter are on a vaster scale, and in an endless variety of complication? It follows, therefore, that the alternative suggested by unbelief contradicts the convictions of the reason of an overwhelming majority of civilized men. The only persons who are capable of accepting such an explanation as valid are a few men of science, who forsaking their scientific investigations, trespass into the regions which are the legitimate possessions, not of science, but of philosophy.

The alternative theory of unbelief contradicts the convictions of the majority of civilized men.

Nor does it derive support from experience.

Secondly, the alternative theory derives no support from experience. No one has ever witnessed an orderly arrangement issue from the meeting together of a number of the unintelligent forces of nature. It will doubtless be urged that many instances prove the contrary, such, for example, as crystallization, in which a concurrence of these forces, under certain

definite conditions, produce orderly arrangements of a most remarkable character. But to urge these is an obvious *petitio principii*, for the force of the objection is dependent on the assumption that the universe was not originally planned and constructed by intelligence, or that its forces are not at all times guided by its action. This being the very subject in dispute between theists and their opponents must not be covertly assumed by the latter, for what the theist affirms is that the very fact of such phenomena as crystallization prove the presence of intelligence, either as having originated the universe, or as guiding and directing the action of its forces. If we wish to ascertain what results natural forces can effect, when it is certain that they are not guided by intelligence, we must interfere with their natural action by the agency of man; and give them, as it were, a fresh start, in which it is certain that intelligence does not direct their action. Of this the act of throwing of dice may be cited as a fair illustration. If on throwing up twelve dice an equal number of times, they invariably fall in the same order, the conclusion is inevitable—they are loaded. In a similar manner the conclusion is equally inevitable, when we contemplate the orderly arrangements of the universe. They are loaded with a divine intelligence.

Crystallization not a proof to the contrary.

It proves the presence of intelligence.

The throwing of dice an illustration of what force not guided by intelligence can effect.

III.—THE ARGUMENT FOUNDED ON THE INNUMERABLE CORRELATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS WHICH EXIST IN THE UNIVERSE, COMMONLY CALLED THE ARGUMENT FROM FINAL CAUSES.

Numberless correlations and adaptations in the universe.

Here again theists and their opponents agree on that most important point, which we have referred to in the preceding argument, viz., the fact that these correlations and adaptations actually exist in the universe in numbers passing all human comprehension. In good truth, none have been more eloquent in describing the marvellous character of these adjustments than several of those scientists, who affirm that they afford no adequate proof of having originated in, or having been presided over, by intelligence. The point of disagreement between theists and their opponents here is, not the fact of their existence, or of the highly complicated character of the correlations themselves, but as to the cause which has produced them.

The cause of them is the point in controversy.

Advantage of the theistic position.

Here again, as in the former case, theists occupy a position of advantage. No one can deny that the theistic position affords a rational account of the origin of these correlations and adaptations. It follows, then, as before, that on the supposition of the adequacy of the nontheistic theory, we should have two alternative theories to choose between, equally rational, according to our judgment of their probability.

Against the sufficiency of our proof, Mr. J. S. Mill maintains that all that it would prove is the existence of an intelligence adequate to the production of the universe, but no more. But I repeat that the production of the universe, in its incomprehensible vastness, and in all the complexity of its adaptations, is for all practical purposes a sufficient index of infinite power and infinite intelligence.

J. S. Mill's objection.

The production of the universe a sufficient index of infinite power and wisdom.

There is no point in the theistic argument which is more fiercely disputed at the present day than that which infers the existence of an intelligent Creator, from the correlations and adaptations with which every part of the universe is so thickly strewn. The reason of this is that, if it is valid, it is impossible to deny its conclusiveness.

The principle on which this argument rests is very simple. It is as follows. The human mind is so constituted that when it contemplates a number of correlations and adaptations which have resulted from the convergency of a number of forces mutually independent of each other, at a particular point of time and place, it naturally draws the inference that they cannot have resulted from the fortuitous meeting together of a number of unintelligent forces, but that the correlations can only have resulted from the action of a power which is possessed of an intelligence adequate to their production. This conviction is

The principle on which the argument from final causes rests.

Numerous correlations and adaptations must be traced to intelligence adequate to their production.

The production of a particular result strengthens the conviction that the cause is an intelligent one.

The dependence of the result on the concurrent action of all the forces further strengthens this conviction.

The vast numbers of the correlations proportionately increase this conviction.

Two kinds of adaptation.

The human hand.

further strengthened by the consideration that these adaptations and correlations are fitted to produce a particular result, and actually do produce it, and that this result would fail to be produced if any one of the forces thus correlated had failed to meet at the suitable time and place; or, to put the same truth in a slightly altered form, if the forces of the universe which are thus correlated, had taken a different direction, however slight, its existing phenomena would either never have come into existence, or they would have been indefinitely varied from what they actually are. Further, when we consider that the correlations exist in numbers which surpass our powers of comprehension, and in forms of the greatest complication, and that many of them exist between remote regions of the universe, and are the means of blending it into a common unity, the strength of this conviction is indefinitely increased.

The argument from adaptation may be best exhibited under two heads. First, those adaptations which denote plan, or the realization of an idea through a gradual course of evolution; and, secondly, those adaptations by which a particular result is produced, and which alone render its production possible. To take an example of each.

The human hand, if contemplated as a piece of mechanism, is one of the most wonderful of con-

trivances. We all know the innumerable and the delicate functions which it is capable of executing. It consists of a number of parts marvellously adjusted and correlated together, which, if any one of them had been different from what it is, or had been differently correlated one to the other, the mechanism in question would either never have come into existence, or it would have failed to produce the results which it is now capable of accomplishing. This serves as an illustration of the argument from both kinds of adaptation above referred to. This marvellous instrument, as it exists in man, is found in embryo in the fore feet of the lowest form of vertebrate animals. Its parts are all found there, yet in such a form that they are utterly unable to produce the results which they do in man. They exist there in type only, or idea, of which the human hand is the realization. Before it has attained to this realization it has appeared in different orders of animals, each time making a nearer approach to the realization which the idea has received in the hand of man, and each time correlated to a corresponding advance in mind. Throughout the whole series of these improvements in the instrument, we recognize what in ordinary language we designate a *plan*, or, *the gradual realization of an idea*, commencing in a very rudimentary form, and gradually attaining to higher stages of perfection, until it has cul-

Its numberless and delicate functions.

It illustrates both kinds of adaptation.

It is found in embryo in the lowest form of vertebrate animals.

Improvements on the type.

A plan discernible.

A plan implies intelligence.

minated in the human hand. A process of this kind, when we witness it under ordinary circumstances, we designate a plan. But a plan implies the presence of intelligence. When therefore we see such plans carried out in nature, which only differ from ordinary ones in the multitude of the adaptations and correlations which are necessary to enable them to become realities, we may surely draw the inference that they must have originated in intelligence.

The hand an illustration of adaptation to produce a particular result.

But the hand forms an apt illustration of the other kind of adaptation. I have already observed that it is admitted on all hands to be a marvellous piece of mechanism, so constituted as to be capable of executing an almost endless variety of functions. The unbeliever, however, asks us to believe that this affords no proof that it has originated in intelligence. But if he were to fall in with an instrument devoid of life, which was capable of executing only half of the functions which are performed by the human hand, he would not only infer that it had had a contriver, but he would be loud in the praises of his ingenuity. Why then, I ask, should the contemplation of the one piece of mechanism afford unquestionable evidence of the presence of an intelligent contriver, and the contemplation of that of which it is the copy, only far more elaborate and perfect, afford none? The reason why the opponent of theism accepts the

It must have originated in intelligence.

one inference, and rejects the other, must be left to him to explain.

I will only adduce one further illustration, viz., our faculty of hearing, because this is effected by three sets of adjustments, each of which is entirely independent of the others ; and each of which consists of a number of complicated correlations. The first of these adjustments consists of the vocal organs, which form a musical instrument of a far more complicated character than has ever been invented by man. Be it observed also that this musical instrument is so constituted, that it subserves a multitude of purposes beyond the production of noise. Yet exquisite as this instrument is, it never would have produced a single sound unless it had been correlated to the atmospheric air, or the air to it, in such a manner that its waves should correspond with the different movements of the instrument. These correlations, in order that they may produce musical sounds, must be of the most complicated character ; and yet the one set are absolutely independent of the other. Yet both these sets of marvellous adjustments and correlations would fail to produce a single sound, except for the existence of another highly complicated set of correlations and adjustments, independent of both, viz., the human ear, adapted to receive the impressions of the waves of sound, the auric nerves, and the brain to perceive them, and the

The faculty of hearing.

The vocal organs a complicated musical instrument.

Waves of air correspond with the different movements of the instrument.

The human ear.

The auric nerves.

The brain.

The mind. human mind to interpret their meaning. Each of these is composed of a number of the most complicated adjustments; and unless the entire series, of which all three sets of adaptations are composed, had been mutually correlated the one to the other, with the utmost care, hearing would have been impossible, and the remaining complicated adjustments would have existed in vain.

The necessity of the correlation of the entire series.

The universe full of such adjustments.

I have only adduced these two examples for the purpose of illustrating the nature of the argument. The reader must estimate its force, remembering only that the universe is admitted on all hands to be full of similar adjustments, in numbers which surpass the powers of the human intellect even to conceive. What, then, must be the conjoint force of the whole?

The theory of an intelligent cause satisfies all the requirements of the case.

Let me draw the inference. Reason affirms that the theory that these adaptations, adjustments, and correlations, with which every part of the universe abounds, have originated in an intelligence which possesses a power adequate to their production, is an account of their origin which satisfies the requirements alike of common sense and a sound philosophy; or to employ the metaphor used above, these adjustments, adaptations, and correlations proclaim the fact that the forces of the universe are everywhere loaded with intelligence.

This argument acquires an additional conclusive-

ness, the amount of which it is difficult to estimate, from considerations derived from the mathematical doctrine of chances. I have already observed that these adjustments and correlations are conditioned on a number of the forces of the universe concurring in meeting together at the same time and place; and that if any one of them had failed to do so, the result produced by their correlation would have either not existed at all, or would have been a different one from that which would have been produced by the conjoint action of the whole. Now, it is obvious that if these adaptations, etc., have not been produced by a superintending intelligence, they can only have been the result of that fortuitous concurrence of forces which we have above described as constituting what is popularly designated *chance*. This being so, the production of those sets of complicated correlations, which I have above described as necessary for the production of that infinite variety of sounds which the ear is capable of distinguishing, by the fortunate meeting together of a number of independent forces at the same time and place, in accordance with the mathematical doctrine of chances, could only be expressed by a fraction, which, if its numerator is unity, its denominator would be some number followed by an array of ciphers, the length of which I must leave to the reader to conjecture. But this is only an inconsiderable part of the difficulty which

The argument acquires further conclusiveness from the mathematical doctrine of chances.

The chance that such correlations could be brought about by the fortunate concurrence of a number of independent forces infinitely small.

The process would need to be repeated in the case of every independent correlation.

besets the theory which I am controverting. This process would have to be repeated in the case of every independent correlation in the universe; and to get at the combined result, these fractions would have to be multiplied together; and the result would be a fraction whose numerator is unity, having for its denominator some number followed by an array of ciphers continued *ad infinitum*. According, then, to the mathematical doctrine of chances, it is an improbability, amounting to an impossibility, that these adaptations and correlations can have been the result of a fortuitous concurrence of the unintelligent forces of nature. They must then originate in intelligence.

The origin must be intelligence.

Theories of evolution.

What, then, is the theory which unbelief propounds as a rational account of the origin of these adaptations, adjustments, and correlations? It is the *atheistic* theory of evolution. All theories of evolution are far from being necessarily atheistic; and it has been most unwise to charge them with this character. On the contrary, it is quite as rational to believe that the Creator has acted in the production of the universe in conformity with a theory of evolution, as that He has produced each separate thing by an act of special creation. All that a theory of evolution really means is, that the power and intelligence which has produced the universe has acted in a certain definite order in His creative acts.

The real meaning of a theory of evolution.

The atheistic theory of evolution is that theory which affirms that all the phenomena of the universe have been evolved by means of a struggle of the unintelligent forces of the universe, with their environments, during the eternal ages of the past, without the intervention of a power guided by intelligence.

The atheistic theory of evolution.

From this theory even the Darwinian must be carefully distinguished; though it is an unquestionable fact, that not a few scientists both in this country and on the Continent, have imported it into the service of practical atheism. It commences with three postulates, which are essentially theistic. First, the existence of a power capable of producing the first germs of life. Secondly, with the assumption that these germs were endowed with a power of producing their like. Third, that while they were capable of producing their like, they were likewise endowed with the power of doing so with certain minute variations. It is true, that with these three things to start with, the theory professes to account for the existence of the adaptations and correlations of which we have been speaking, without the intervention of intelligence. But the three assumptions in question are essentially theistic. First, it starts with the assumption of the existence of a power adequate to produce the primary germs of life, and to endow them with a capacity of evolving all the complicated structures of the vege-

The Darwinian theory.

Its three postulates theistic.

Starting with these it dispenses with any further intervention of intelligence.

It assumes a power adequate to produce the primary germs with all their latent powers.

Assuming the existence of the germs the action of intelligence still needful to enable them to produce their like with variations from the original form.

Darwinian-ism powerless without these assumptions.

The Darwinian theory not accepted.

table and animal kingdoms. Secondly, assuming the existence of these germs, it far from follows that they would have been able to produce their like if they had originated in the action of the unintelligent forces of nature. They might just as likely have done the contrary, or even have produced nothing. Yet it is necessary to assume that they were endowed with such a power, or the theory will not move a single step in the direction of the production of existing organisms. But it is also to the last degree improbable that germs generated by the unintelligent forces of nature with a power of producing their like, should at the same time have been endowed with the additional power of producing their like, with a number of small variations from the original form. I must therefore ask the reader to note with the utmost care that without the aid of these three assumptions, the Darwinian theory would be powerless to evolve one single organism, and would therefore perish in its grave. But these three assumptions involve the principles of theism, *i.e.*, they assume the existence of an intelligent power, who originally called into existence these primary germs of life, and who endowed them with those powers which have rendered all subsequent existence possible. I have made these observations, not with the design of expressing acquiescence in the Darwinian theory, as affording a rational account of the phenomena of animated nature, but for the

purpose of guarding the reader against the dangerous uses which have been made of it by unbelievers as propounded by the author. It weakens the evidence of theism, and does not destroy it.

The reader guarded against abuses of it.

Darwinism weakens the evidence of theism.

The theory which opponents of theism ask us to accept, as affording a rational account of the origin of those adaptations and correlations with which the universe is full, is this. The forces of the universe have gone on energizing in conformity with laws from which they cannot deviate during the eternal ages of the past; and in their course have passed through every possible combination. The unstable ones have perished, and the stable ones have survived, and by means of this ever-reiterated process have at length emerged the order and adaptations of that portion of the universe which is destitute of life, without the intervention of intelligence. How these forces originated, and became endowed with their specific qualities, which have rendered them capable of effecting such marvellous results, we are asked to believe to be a secret into which the limitations of the human mind render it impossible for us to penetrate, and which must therefore remain for ever unknown.

The anti-theistic theory of the adaptations and correlations of the universe.

But with respect to the process by which animated existence has been evolved, its language is less vague. Its theory is as follows. The original germs of life, the existence of which it is

The theory of the evolution of animated existence.

The struggle
for existence

The survival
of the fittest.

The theory
of natural
selection

compelled to postulate, and which, in a manner wholly unaccounted for, became possessed of a most convenient power of generating their like, with a number of inconsiderable variations, produced a progeny greatly in excess of their means of subsistence. Hence originated among them a struggle for life, with the effect that the weaker living forms have perished, and the stronger, *i.e.*, those better adapted to their environment, have survived. This struggle has been continued during an indefinite number of ages. Let it be observed, that these theorists have the bank of an eternal past on which to draw, and that if a change cannot be brought about in one hundred thousand years, it is easy to ask for one hundred million, for the bank of eternity is in no danger of stopping payment—during which those variations which have given an advantage in the struggle for existence have survived, and the contrary ones have perished. Thus living forms have passed through successive stages of improvement, until they have attained their present complicated adaptations and correlations; and thus successive improvements will arise in the ages yet to come, until the unfavourable conditions set in, which will ultimately render the existence of life impossible in our globe. This theory is called the theory of natural selection, or the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence; and modern atheistic unbelief pro-

pounds it, aided by another theory, viz., that of sexual selection, and a third, viz., that of the accumulation of habits through a long succession of transmissions from remote ancestors, which have gradually become fixed, as an adequate account of the origin of all the adaptations and correlations which are presented in the existing forms of animal and vegetable life.

The theory of sexual selection.

Transmitted habits.

This theory utterly breaks down, as affording even a specious account of the origin of these adaptations and correlations at several points.

The failure of the theory

First, it fails to account for the origin of life, or to show that it is possible to produce living out of non-living matter. Until it can effect this, it is simply useless for the purposes of atheism. Strange to say, unbelief is now compelled to live by faith. It is confident that the discovery will be made hereafter.

It does not account for the origin of life.

Secondly, it fails to give any account of the origin of those qualities, which the original germs of life must have possessed, in order that a starting-point may be found for the course of evolution which it propounds.

It gives no account of the origin of the qualities of the original germs.

Thirdly, it assumes the concurrence of a multitude of fortunate chances (I use the word "chance" in the sense above described), so numerous as to approximate to the infinite, of what common sense and reason refuse to believe to be possible, and which hopelessly conflicts with the mathematical doctrine of chances and probabilities.

It assumes the concurrence of an infinite number of fortunate chances.

It demands an interval of time that cannot be conceded to it.

Fourthly, it demands an interval of time for the carrying out of this vast process of evolution, which although abstractedly possible, other branches of science refuse to concede to it as lying within the existing order of things.

It fails to bridge over the gulf between the moral and material universe.

Fifthly, it utterly fails to bridge over that profound gulf which separates the moral from the material universe, the universe of freedom from the universe of necessity. All that it can urge with respect to the origin of life and of free agency, is that it hopes to be able to propound a theory at some future time which shall be able to account for these phenomena.

It is a revival of the old doctrine of the production of the phenomena of the universe by the fortuitous concurrence of atoms.

Sixthly, the theory in question, including the Darwinian theory of the production of the entire mass of organisms that have existed in the past, and exist in the present, by the sole agency of natural selection, without the intervention of intelligence, is in fact a re-statement in a disguised form of the old theory of the production of all the adaptations and correlations in the universe, by the concurrence of an infinite number of fortunate chances—a theory which contradicts the primary intuitions of our intellectual being.

No instances of evolution of species but only limited variation recorded for 4000 years.

Seventhly, as a fact, the recorded observations by mankind for the last, say, four thousand years, show no instance of evolution of one species from another, but display variation, not infinite but limited, and recurrent to the original form.

Eighthly, as a fact, geology (Palæontology) shows the same absence of such evolution and of indefinite variation.

Geology shows the same absence of such evolution and indefinite variation.

Ninthly, all the ascertained facts point only to creation by a plan, or in accordance with a rule, which permits variability within discoverable limits, and requires adaptation, and therefore furnishes no evidence of evolution of species.

The facts point to creation by plan.

Let me set before the reader in two sentences the result of the foregoing reasonings. The atheistic theory of evolution utterly breaks down as affording a rational account of the origin of adaptations and correlations with which every region of the universe abounds. Consequently the theistic account of their origin, which satisfies alike sound philosophy and common sense, is the only adequate one; or, in other words, they have originated in an intelligence which is possessed of a power adequate to their production.

The theistic theory alone adequate.

IV.—THE EVIDENCE WHICH IS FURNISHED BY CONSCIENCE AND THE MORAL NATURE OF MAN.

The evidence we have been considering proves the existence of a first cause of the universe which is possessed of power adequate to call it into being, and of an intelligence adequate to the production of its order, its adaptations, and its correlations. Respecting the character of this first

The evidence proves the existence of an adequate first cause.

The personality of the first cause.

cause, however, the information which is furnished us by these various arguments is less distinct. Yet we are entitled to draw from them the inference that as a time must once have been when the existing universe was not, and consequently that it must have been brought into existence by the agency of this first cause, that the first cause of the universe must be possessed of the power of volition ; and as we can only conceive of such a power as residing in a personality that this first cause must be also a Person. A theory has been propounded that these adaptations and correlations may have originated in something which has been designated *Unconscious Intelligence*. But the idea of unconscious intelligence seems to me to be one which is incapable of being formulated in thought—a word and nothing more. An idea which can neither be apprehended nor comprehended may be safely relegated to the region of inanities.

The theory of unconscious intelligence unthinkable.

The primary presentations of our consciousness our highest certitudes.

I must draw the reader's attention, in the first place, to this truth which we have proved above, that no higher certitudes are attainable by us than the primary presentations of our consciousness. Respecting them we are absolutely certain ; and every other certitude to which we can attain must rest on some one or more of them as the ground of our conviction. The only question which admits of being raised is, whether there is an objective reality which corresponds to them. It has often

Objective realities correspond to the presentations of our consciousness.

been urged against the reliability of the presentations of consciousness that there are particular individuals the presentations of whose consciousness, while true to themselves as being such actual presentations, are often mere phantasies to which no objective reality corresponds. This must be conceded. But in the case of individuals, it is no less true that various other faculties, such as the senses of sight, hearing, and touch are unreliable, as informants respecting external realities. In truth a diseased condition of every faculty of man is not uncommon in individual cases. But this by no means destroys our trust in the general truth of their presentations. What do we do in such cases? We appeal from the consciousness of the diseased individual to that of considerable numbers of mankind, under the full assurance that when these concur in their affirmations there is always an objective reality which corresponds to them. Unless this were so all our knowledge, from whatever source derived, and all our certainties, would perish in the grave of a universal scepticism. This being so, I am justified in drawing the conclusion that the presentations of consciousness which are verified by the concurrent testimony of considerable numbers of men, constitute the highest certitudes which are attainable by man. I would mention our belief in the existence of an external world as an example, for

Diseased condition of their faculties in individuals.

Our faculties trustworthy.

Denial of their trustworthiness would plunge us in universal scepticism.

The case of the external world.

it is impossible to give a logical demonstration of its existence, yet mankind unanimously act on the assumption that it is an objective reality.

Conscience.

In speaking of the testimony of conscience, I am not required to discuss the question of its origin. In this argument we have to deal with facts only; and, apart from all theory, it is a simple fact that a conscience exists in man, when he has attained to the full development of his being, which speaks authoritatively on certain questions of right and wrong; and that a moral nature exists, which testifies directly in consciousness to certain primary principles. The opponents of theism have been wont to divert attention from the real point at issue, by referring to those imperfect human beings who are presented to us in savage life; and endeavouring to show that they possess at best only the rudimentary elements of a conscience and a moral nature, which differ little from that of the higher animals. But this is to evade the real point at issue. The real question is, what are the affirmations of conscience in man when perfectly developed? The appeal can only be justly made to man in an advanced state of civilization, and not to the imperfections of savage life.

It speaks authoritatively on questions of right and wrong.

Civilized and not savage man assumed.

Conscience announces a moral law.

What witness does conscience bear in each of us as individuals? It says to each of us authoritatively, You ought, It is your duty to do this; It is your duty to forbear from doing that; and, in

case of our failing to comply with its commands, it produces in us a feeling of self-condemnation, and tells us that the consequences which flow from our conduct are justly deserved. Speaking generally, it announces to each of us a moral law (I do not say, a perfect one), to which, whether obedience is rendered or not, we feel that obedience ought to be rendered; and if it is not, self-condemnation is the inevitable result. These affirmations of conscience are designated in scientific language the Categorical Imperative.

It follows, therefore, that that condition of our moral being, which we designate conscience (for I by no means rest the argument on the theory that our minds consist of a bundle of separate faculties), points to a state of things, not as they are, but as they ought to be; it propounds a law of duty as an ideal, which it behoves each of us to attempt to realize, irrespective of consequences to ourselves. Thus its utterances are not, You must do, or abstain from doing this or that, or it is pleasant for you at the present moment to pursue a particular course of action, or that it will be ultimately expedient for you to do so; but you ought, it is your duty to do so, or to abstain; it proclaims a moral law, to which each of us feels that we ought to yield obedience, irrespective of consequences. Such is the voice of conscience as it exists in the noblest and holiest of men. Further,

Conscience propounds an ideal law of duty.

Obedience irrespective of consequences in its demand.

Its judgments more certain than the certitudes of experience.

it follows that as conscience contemplates the ideal, and not the actual, things as they ought to be, and not things as they are, its judgments must pertain to a region of certitude higher than any of those certitudes which originate in experience.

Expressions implying obligation.

What, then, do we mean when we use the two expressions, You ought, It is your duty to do this or that? You ought to do, means, You owe it to do, or, it is right to do, and you owe it to do what is right. In like manner, It is your duty to do, can only mean, It is due on your part to do this or that. Both ideas are almost identical, and imply obligation. But obligation must be felt towards, and can only centre in, some person; for it is impossible that we can feel obligation to a thing.

Obligation centres in a person.

Who, then, is the person in whom this feeling of obligation centres, and to whom the debt of duty is due? It cannot be ourselves, for it is impossible that the same thing can be that which feels the obligation, and that to which the obligation is due. It is true that we not unfrequently speak of owing it to ourselves to do this or that; but in this case we use the words metaphorically. Besides, many duties involve great acts of self-sacrifice; and it is impossible that we can owe it to ourselves to make a sacrifice of ourselves. Nor can we owe it to men generally; for mankind can have no right in themselves to demand at our hands the sacrifice of ourselves. It follows, therefore, that as obligation

It cannot be ourselves.

exists, and as it can only centre in a person, it can only centre in a personal God, who is therefore the Author and centre of the moral law which conscience proclaims; and in whom, as the Author of our being, every obligation which we can feel must ultimately centre.

Obligation must centre in a personal God.

But further, conscience pronounces on the disobedient a sentence of condemnation. It declares that, whatever consequences may result from disobedience, they are justly merited. It even advances a step further, and not obscurely intimates to the sinner that consequences will follow on disobedience, and avenge the sin. This is the source of those terrible rackings of mind which are not unfrequently witnessed in what are called conscience-stricken men, who earnestly desire to annul the consequences of their actions; yet they feel that they cannot. This aspect of conscience therefore speaks to man of a being in the universe who is the punisher and avenger of evil and of sin; and if the punisher of sin, the rewarder of holiness. This idea has been developed in different forms, as, for example, in ancient times, in the form of an avenging Nemesis. But now that the increase of knowledge has swept away the imperfect conceptions of the past, and the unity of nature proclaims the unity of its Author, the facts above referred to point to one conclusion, and to one only, that this rewarder of virtue and

Conscience condemns the disobedient.

Conscience testifies to an avenger of sin in the universe.

The avenger can be none other than the Creator and moral Governor of the universe.

punisher of evil can be none other than the Creator of the universe; they therefore prove that God is the moral Governor of the universe which He has made; consequently, He must be both a moral and a personal being, the being in whom all moral obligation centres, and the Author of that moral law which conscience pronounces to be right and good.

I shall only deduce one further inference, but it is one of supreme importance. It is as follows:

Consciousness affirms our freedom.

Our consciousness affirms that we are free agents. I do not mean that we are free to do every thing which we wish to do, or that our wills can act independently of the motives which influence them, as some necessitarians have absurdly charged the believer in free agency with maintaining. But among several courses of action, we have the power of choosing one, which is commended to us by our reason, or which is suggested to us by our passions; and that when a particular course is suggested to us, it is in our power to enter on it, or to forbear. We are directly conscious that as long as we are free from the coercion of a force external to ourselves, we possess this power. Consciousness affirms it in the case of every one of our actions. We know that we possess it. It therefore forms one of our highest certitudes, our belief in which is incapable of being subverted by any amount of metaphysical reasonings, because such reasonings,

We have freedom of choice.

Our belief in our freedom one of our highest certitudes.

even at their best, can only rest on the validity of a similar certitude. It is, therefore, not a conclusion of reasoning, nor an opinion, but a matter of our most direct and certain knowledge, that in the case of each particular action it is in our power to do it, or to forbear. Such a power can only be subverted by habitual neglect to exercise it at the suggestions of our passions; for it will be at once understood that we do not suppose that it exists in cases of mental disease.

This testimony of consciousness is so decisive, that it is really unnecessary to adduce any further evidence in confirmation of it. One point, however, is too important to be omitted. The conviction that we are free agents is inseparable from a sense of responsibility. It is impossible to attach praise or blame to the action of a necessary agent. Why is this? Because a necessary agent cannot help doing what it does. If man is a necessary agent, devoid of freedom, his actions are no more deserving of praise or blame than those of a steam engine. Yet mankind universally attach praise or blame to actions. Therefore those who perform them must be free agents. Further, it is impossible to feel either repentance or remorse for an act which we cannot help doing. We may feel grief that the act has taken place, but we cannot blame ourselves as the cause of it. When, moreover, an act has been done to us by another, who has been used

Confirma-
tory evi-
dence need-
less.

Necessity
excludes
responsi-
bility.

Necessity
excludes re-
pentance
and remorse

as a mere instrument in its performance, we at once free him from all responsibility for the act in question, and attach it to the person who used him as an instrument. In a word, involuntary actions, which cause injury to others, are our misfortune, and neither our crime nor our sin.

Necessitarianism breaks down in practice.

Further, the theories of the necessitarian utterly break down the moment he enters the realities of practical life. Even the necessitarian holds man responsible, and fully believes that other men will hold him to be responsible. Let a necessitarian have a forgery committed on him for a large amount. What will he say to the plea of the forger, that he could not help committing the forgery, for he is a machine, in which nothing but necessary forces dominate; and consequently that he had no power over his actions? The plea would be rejected with contempt, even by the most rigid of necessitarians. It follows, therefore, that men are free agents. From this a further consequence follows. Two universes exist beside each other. One, in which the laws of necessity dominate; the other in which free agency is the essential factor. The first may be designated the material, and the second the moral universe. These are separated from each other by a gulf which no theory of evolution can bridge over. When the first free agent came into existence, a power essentially different from any which

Two universes side by side.

The first free agent a new power in the universe.

had preceded it was introduced into that universe, where necessary law had hitherto reigned supreme.

The question therefore presents itself, and demands solution: How did it originate? It could not have produced itself. It therefore issued from a cause adequate to produce it. That cause must ultimately resolve itself into the first cause of the universe, that is, God.

God the only adequate cause of the first free agent.

From this follow the following conclusions—

Conclusions.

Man is a free agent; therefore God must be a free agent.

Man free.

God free.

Man's free agency is limited by conditions; but God is not limited by conditions. Therefore His free agency is more absolute and perfect than the free agency of man.

Man's freedom conditional.

God's unconditional.

A moral universe exists. God is the cause of its existence. Therefore the essential principles of morality, as affirmed by conscience, and witnessed by the moral nature of man, must exist in God.

A moral universe exists.
God the cause of it.

Personality exists in man as an essential portion of his moral nature; therefore, He who framed man, *i.e.*, God, must be a person, who is at the same time the Creator, the Upholder, and the moral Governor of the universe which He has created.

Man a person.
God a person.

Such are the inferences which we are entitled to draw by the aid of our reason respecting the existence and the moral character of God. I fully allow that our information respecting this last

Our knowledge of God imperfect

God in
Christ.

The
Saviour's
testimony.

God in
Christ.

John xiv. 9-
11.

John i. 14-

subject is imperfect. But we Christians affirm that God has made another revelation of Himself, entirely distinct from that which we have been considering. This revelation is a revelation exclusively moral and spiritual. It is made in a man, but in a perfect man, Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose divine humanity both dwells and shines forth the fulness of the spiritual and moral perfections of God. This revelation is made, and must be studied in the Incarnation. This is the testimony of our Lord respecting it: "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me. My Father, who dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works," or to use the words of the prologue of this Gospel, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as from the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. . . . No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."



THE
SUCCESS OF CHRISTIANITY

AND
MODERN EXPLANATIONS OF IT.

BY
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AUTHOR OF "UNBELIEF IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY"
(Being the Cunningham Lecture for 1880).



THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

Analysis of the Argument.

Divine intervention in the history of Christianity is inferred from the extent, completeness, nature, and means of its success in the old Roman world ; from the wonderful moral and spiritual change which it wrought in the characters and lives of the early converts ; from its missionary and mental activity even during the "Dark Ages ;" from the power it displayed of renewing its youth at the time of the Reformation, and subsequently of entering into and becoming the creator of the modern world ; from the manner in which it has been able to resist and overcome persecution, and draw inspiration from its martyr history ; from the success with which it has repelled the assaults of unbelief and the powers of darkness, and subdued the native resistance of the human heart ; from its organization, ordinances, and literature which fit it in a unique manner for the work it has to do ; and from the motives with which it is furnished for the fulfilment of its mission ; and, lastly, from the manner in which its own predictions, both of its successes and corruptions, have been fulfilled.

The insufficiency of modern explanations of its early success is shown ; a mere general capacity for change in human nature without some adequate motive cannot account for it. Christ cannot be brought into connexion with Jewish Platonism ; nor is there anything in Platonism or Alexandrian philosophy to account for Christianity : the theory is refuted by the facts of early Church history. The support of rulers was fitted then rather to retard than help the spread of Christianity. It was impotent to restore Paganism or give victory to Arianism. The prevalence of hopes of a peculiarly earthly millennium is denied by many Christian writers, and is in itself quite inadequate to account for the conversion of Pagans at the expense of unspeakable present social loss and ruin. Priestcraft has been injurious to Christianity, and there was nothing in early Christianity on which it could feed.

THE SUCCESS OF CHRISTIANITY

AND

MODERN EXPLANATIONS OF IT.



HE attempt to found an argument for the Divine origin of Christianity on its success encounters some difficulties.

Difficulties
of the
argument.

We may frankly grant that it cannot rank among the first arguments; for a religion must first succeed by other and even deeper reasons in its favour before success can be pleaded on its behalf. We may grant also that this argument needs to be very carefully guarded; for a religion may prevail to some extent by a combination of causes, which involve nothing more than an appeal to the ordinary principles of human nature, including some of no very elevated character, such as superstition, fanaticism, or immorality. Other religions, in point of fact, seem to have flourished, and long maintained a place, such as classical Paganism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism, without being on that account

It needs to
be carefully
guarded.

Other
religions.

A special case must be made out for Christianity.

accepted by Christians; and hence the burden of making out a special case for themselves appears to rest on Christians, when they come forward with this argument.

Its history unique.

Still, Christianity is not silenced or put out of court by these preliminary points of difficulty. As elsewhere it claims to stand alone and unexampled, so here; and it has therefore to be fairly considered whether a singularity amounting to miracle really gathers around its history, such as no mere worldly ambition, or superstitious excitement, or fanatical credulity can reasonably explain. It is a case not for *a priori* dogmatism in the way of accepting or rejecting the alleged evidence, but for calm and accurate estimate of facts, and of their relation to mere human possibilities of explanation; and hence this Tract will endeavour to pursue this method of proof, setting forth in the history of Christianity what looks so exceptionally successful as to suggest Divine intervention, and then glancing at the abatements which recent doubt has advanced in attempting to reduce the whole to a mere earthly origin. This is the natural order for a Christian to follow. The undoubted facts which sustain his conclusion must first speak; the counter-theories must then be lawfully silenced.

The method of the tract.

I. The argument which meets us *first* in surveying the history of Christianity, and in

estimating the outstanding and singular features of its success, is *its early, wide, and, within certain limits, absolutely irresistible diffusion.* Other facts attest this; but I select one as to which there can be no controversy, the extirpation by it of idolatry such as it existed in the old Roman world. That system, from the Euphrates to the farthest shore of Britain, from the Nile to the forests of Germany, has utterly passed away. The whole regions around the Mediterranean, to the limits of civilization and beyond them, have "changed their gods;" and though something, as time advanced, may be claimed for Mohammedanism, the great, decisive, all-prevailing impulses have come from Christianity. The classic Paganism, Greek and Roman, the Syrian, the Egyptian, and North African, the Druidic, and ultimately the Teutonic, have all fallen to rise no more; and at this moment there is not on the face of the earth a single worshipper of "the great goddess Diana" or "the image that fell down from Jupiter," of Baal or Dagon, of Isis or Serapis, of Thor or Wodin. They are preserved in imperishable literature, and in equally imperishable art. Homer and the great tragedians have enshrined them; Virgil and Ovid; even Milton in his *Paradise Lost* and *Christmas Hymn*, to say nothing of that wonderful Book, which, in revealing their abominations, will be found to have carried farthest and widest their memory. But not

First
argument.

The old
Pagan
idolatry
utterly
abolished.

The old gods
enshrined
only in
literature
and art

Not a shrine
to the old
gods exists.

The
completion
of the
conquest.

An immense
power
needful to
work the
change.

a single shrine remains to them in the proper sense of the word, not even where the Apollo or Venus, the Minerva or Hercules, enchains universal admiration. They are abolished as idols, while immortalized as relics; and not even the exquisite beauty lavished upon them can hide the moral deformity to which they owe their downfall. It is long centuries since one single soul regarded them with anything of the feeling with which the African trembles before the rudest fetish, or the Hindoo before the most unsightly of his divinities. Another conquest so complete and absolute does not mark the history of the world. All ranks and classes passed through the revolution. The husbandman had to give up his offerings to Liber and Ceres, the sailor his votive tablets to Neptune, the soldier his chaplets dedicated to Mars. The youth had to forget his place in the procession, the virgin her part in the dance or secular games. The senator had to forego his libation on entering the senate; the general his search after the omens before battle; the very emperor, the honour of his own coins and titles of divinity. What but an immense and boundless power could have wrought this change, and wrought it not by constraint but willingly, through the force of persuasion? It cannot be denied that some of the later conflicts with paganism were unfair, and that Christianity denied to idolatry the civil justice which it had so

nobly and passionately claimed for itself by act and suffering. But in the decisive stages of the contest nothing prevailed, or could have prevailed, but moral influence; and the preacher, the apologist, the martyr, secured a pure and bloodless victory.

The prevailing power moral influence.

The difficulty of this gigantic task has been underrated by Gibbon, with his characteristic skill in finding some shadow of foundation for his assertions, and then exaggerating them beyond reason. The shadow of truth is the weariness of unsatisfied longing which idolatry had diffused. But this did not lead men to quit it, even nominally, any more than the weariness of men in the service of sin begets a universal repentance. The force of habit—even the returning fear of superstition—to say nothing of the dread of state convulsion and the bias of manifold selfish interest, upheld the great fabric long against all assaults; and even philosophy did its best, by surrendering so much of paganism, and trying to improve the rest, to avert the impending destruction. Idolatry died so hard that we find the emperor Julian, in the fourth century, still needing to be refuted by the very arguments, at the hands of Cyril of Alexandria, that had done service in the days of Clement and Origen; nor could Augustine, in the full blaze of Christian triumph, overlook the prejudice which traced the capture of Rome by the Goths to the anger of its

Gibbon's exaggerations.

Causes hindering the downfall of idolatry.

Its hard death.

Christianity
completed
its work
slowly and
alone.

Its victory.

Polytheism
for ever
gone.

The inward
transformation
it has
effected.

neglected deities. But though Christianity had to complete its work slowly, it did it, and did it alone; and thus there was ended a revolution greater than if the idolatries of India, China, and Japan—such as we know them in our days—were one and all to fall; for these are not the leading nations of the world, nor will their thought affect all time; whereas paganism then died in the very centre of the world's life and greatness, and the thought from the midst of which, as by a mighty hand, it was torn out—has lived on to affect all literature, and even the Christianity that overmastered it, to the end of the world. It is true that the victory of Christianity was not perfect, and that paganism shrunk back into a subtler and more spiritual form, waiting its opportunity again to rush forth amidst congenial darkness, and in the very name of Christ to enslave mankind. But the deliverance, though not final, was yet unspeakably great and blessed; and the unreason, the blight, the continued burden and shadow with which polytheism in its gross and open prevalence afflicts the nations for ever passed away.

II. The *second* argument in which the success of Christianity may be summed up is *the inward and radical transformation* which it has effected. Its extensive force has been the product of an intensive earnestness peculiar to itself; and this

perhaps shines out most in its first appearance upon the scene. When its enemies, even the most intelligent and candid, were blindly opposing it as an " execrable superstition," it was effecting a moral miracle on the " hidden man of the heart," and then on all human life and character, without parallel. This is sufficiently attested in the New Testament, where the novel precept stands confirmed by equally exalted practice. But perhaps the impression may be continued (it cannot be heightened) by some extracts from immediately succeeding literature, which show how startling was the change which Christianity had wrought. From many examples the following may be selected :—

The moral miracle unparalleled.

One of the most interesting features in the Apologies of Justin Martyr—presented to Roman emperors in defence of the new religion—is the light cast on the moral state of the Christian Church. In the First Apology, addressed to Antoninus Pius and his sons, about the year 139, Justin, whose own conversion as a Palestinian Greek, from philosophy to faith in Christ, is one of the brightest passages in early Christian history, dwells much upon the spread of the Gospel, which had just ended its first century; but he also gives prominence to its moral and spiritual effects. "After we were persuaded by the Word, we forsook the powers of evil, and now follow the one everlasting God by His own Son. We who

Examples.

Justin Martyr's conversion and testimony.

The effects produced by Christianity.

Moral and
spiritual
effects of
Christianity.

delighted before in fornication, now embrace only chastity. We who practised magic rites, have now devoted ourselves to the good and everlasting God. We who loved above everything the income we drew from stocks, and houses, and lands, now cast what we have into the common treasury, and give to every one that needeth. We who hated and slew each other in mutual feuds, and through diversity of customs would not even warm ourselves at the same fire with strangers, now, after the advent of Christ, sit at the same table; and we pray for our enemies, and strive to convert those who unjustly hate us, that they too living according to the glorious precepts of Christ, may have the same good hope of reward from the Lord of all."¹

Justin
Martyr's
testimony
continued.

Again, with reference to the word, "Let your light so shine," etc., Justin says: "We ought not to resist, for He has wished us not to be imitators of the wicked, but has exhorted us by patience and meekness to lead all away from the shame and lustful desire of evil things. And this we can point to in the case of many who have been among you; for they have been transformed from harshness and violence of character by seeing the self-command of their Christian neighbours, or having evidence of their patience under frauds, or other dealings in business;" and he adds, "Let

¹ *First Apology*, chap. xiv.

those who do not live as Christ enjoined, be known not to be Christians, whatever they may profess; and such who merely take the name of Christ, but live inconsistently with it, we give up to you to punish them as you please.”¹

Similar to this is the testimony of another ancient writing, which has been ascribed to Justin —though with little probability, and which has had a remarkable fate, having come down to us in a single corroded manuscript, without being referred to by so much as one author of early times. This is the Epistle to Diognetus, which general consent places in the second century, and possibly nearer the beginning than the end of it. The picture of the Christian life is here as vivid as if it had been taken yesterday: “Every foreign country is to them a home, and their home to them is foreign; like all, they marry and beget children, but they expose them not when born, . . . they are in the flesh, but they live not after the flesh. They abide on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, but in their lives far excel them. They love all, and by all they are persecuted. They are unexamined, yet condemned; they are killed, yet made alive. They are poor, yet make many rich; in want of all things, in all they abound. They are dishonoured, and in their dishonour glorified. They are blasphemed, and

The Epistle
to Diognetus

Its picture
of the
Christian
life.

¹ *First Apology*, chap. xvi.

Picture of
the Christian
life
continued.

yet justified. They are reviled, and they bless; insulted, and they honour. Doing good, they are punished as malefactors; and when punished, they rejoice as quickened. War is raised against them as aliens from the Jews; unrighteous suffering befalls them from the Greeks; and the cause of this enmity no hater of them can tell."¹

The creed of
this epistle.

Such is the change of character which this epistle ascribes to the Christian. Now see how in this early document the creed which wrought it is equally distinctive. "In whom was it possible for us to be justified—all sinful and ungodly as we were—save in the only Son of God? O, the sweet exchange, the unsearchable depth of counsel, the unlooked-for fulness of grace, that in the One righteous the sin of many should be covered, and the righteousness of One make many sinners just!"²

Tertullian
and Cyprian.

If now we turn from the Greek-speaking Church to the Latin, we find the evidence of the same wonderful change. Tertullian shall speak for it as to the Christian in life, and Cyprian in death. The one writes as an apologist of Christianity in North Africa, in the end of the second century; the other, as a bishop there, soon to be a martyr, about half a century later. Thus Tertullian pleads with more than his usual rugged beauty: "We are not Brahmins or gymnosophists, dwellers in

The Christian
life
according to
Tertullian.

¹ *Epistle to Diognetus*, chap. v. ² *Epistle to Diognetus*, chap. ix.

woods and exiles from life. We remember what we owe to God our Creator. We reject no fruit of His works. We use without abusing, that we may not use amiss. Therefore, not without forum and market-place, not without your baths, shops, factories, inns, fairs, and other means of commerce do we live in this world. We sail with you, and go out to war, and work in the country, and make bargains; we fully mingle our skill with yours, and lay open our labours for your service. How we should be useless to those with whom and by whom we live, I cannot understand. If I frequent not your religious ceremonies, yet on every holiday I am still a man. . . . I buy not a sacred chaplet for my head; but if I pay for flowers, why should I not let them hang loose as nature made them; or is a wreath itself worse applied to the nostril than to the hair? We are not found in theatres; but if we want anything there sold, we can get it better in its own place. We are charged with buying no incense; but if Arabia complains, let the Sabeans know that more spices are buried with the Christian dead than burned to the gods. But, you tell us, we waste the temple revenues, as hardly any one now casts a mite thither. Well, we cannot help both needy men and your pauper gods too, or give to any but those who can ask us. Let Jupiter hold out his hand, and we will fill it; not to

Tertullian
on the
Christian
life.

Christian
practices.

Charges
against
Christians
refuted.

Defence of
Christians
from false
charges.

mention that our charity spends more in the street than your religion with all the help of your temples. Other public funds are more grateful to the Christians, who pay their state dues with the same loyalty with which they abstain from defrauding their neighbours; and thus if one should calculate how much the nation loses by your dishonesty, it would be the measure of the compensation which we supply. . . . Many are the heads under which your criminals are enrolled, which of them is also a Christian? No one, save where this is his only offence; or if anything besides, he has lost the Christian name.”¹

Cyprian
on the
Christian in
death.

Of the Christian character as raised above the fear of death, Cyprian thus grandly speaks, amidst the ravages of a pestilence in Carthage. In this closing part of his sermon here extracted we may note already some outlines of the *Te Deum* :

“Paradise we have begun to count our home, the patriarchs our fathers. Why do we not haste and run to see our country, and to salute our parents? There the mighty host of our dear ones awaits us, the ample crowd of fathers, brothers, sons, desire us, certain of their own bliss and now only concerned for ours. What shall our commor joy be, theirs and ours, to come to each others’ sight and embrace? What delight in these celestial realms without fear of dying, and in the

¹ *Apologeticus*, chap. xlii-xliv.

eternity of living what supreme and perpetual felicity! There is the glorious chorus of the apostles, there the fellowship of exulting prophets, there the innumerable army of martyrs crowned for their victory in the strife and suffering; there the rejoicing virgins, who have quelled the lust of the flesh by the strength of purity; the merciful rewarded, who did works of righteousness by their gifts and bounties to the poor, and who at Christ's word have turned the inheritance of earth into the treasures of heaven! To them, my beloved brethren, let us haste with eager desire, and long to be soon with them, that we may find ourselves soon with Christ. Such an aspiration may God behold in us, such a purpose of heart and faith may Christ our Lord discern in us, who shall give us all the brighter rewards of His glory, the more our desires have been set on their possession." ¹

The joys and society of paradise.

It will be remembered that the moral and spiritual elevation described in these extracts is not claimed merely by Christians, but admitted by Gibbon, who ranks as his fourth secondary cause of the success of Christianity, "the pure and austere morals of the Christians."² The same argument—not as Gibbon puts it for a mere natural success, but for a Divine intervention to produce first the new piety and morality in which the success mainly

Gibbon's admission concerning Christian character.

Christian morality supernatural in origin.

¹ Cyprian *De Mortalitate*, chap. xxvi.

² *Decline and Fall*, chap. xv.

The argument for Divine intervention always valid when the same features are seen.

consisted, and then whatever outward influence flowed from it,—is valid wherever Christianity has in succeeding ages presented the same unworldly features. Attention has been concentrated on this moral and spiritual transformation: because perhaps it is brightest at its origin, and also because the argument, though cumulative, is essentially the same in all the periods of the living history of the Church of Christ.

The power of revival belonging to Christianity.

III. The *third* feature of the success of Christianity, which also belongs to it alone, lies in *its power of revival and restoration after every declension and decay*. Nothing like this has been seen at all in Mohammedanism. It has admitted of support by new blood as a temporal kingdom; but not as a great spiritual institution. After the decay of its Saracenic form,—when but for the incursions into the West, first of the Seljukian and then of the Ottoman Turks, it would have died of exhaustion within a few centuries of its birth,—it has not revived with any commanding moral force or productive energy; and its literary chronicle—scanty enough at the best—has been enlarged by no great accessions. With Christianity it is entirely different: no part of its history is more wonderful than its power to “renew its youth.” The deeper exploration of the Middle Ages, the study of the beginnings of national literature in a Christian

Mohammedanism destitute of this power.

form, even the manifested continuity of the western sacred language, and whatever still redeemed the barrenness of the Byzantine Greek, reveal the fertility of Christianity under the most adverse influences of superstition and barbarism; while the continued conversions of northern races, and the active thought of schoolmen all through, rising to the grandeur of spiritual life in an Anselm and a Bernard, show with what limitation the darkness of these transition ages is to be understood. Ere long, anticipating even the renascence of classic literature, Christianity becomes the guide and the awakener of modern Europe; and in the struggles of Wycliffe, Huss, and other Reformers before the Reformation, renews the flame that had never wholly expired. It has been finely said by Isaac Taylor, that amid the immense expansion of the human mind in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when so much was new—not only an outbursting modern literature, but a discovered ancient—and even a literal new world unveiled, it might have been expected that Christianity, if effete, would have been exploded and left for ever behind. The opposite issue certainly was one of the strongest tributes to the vitality of the Gospel ever given. But we may go farther, and say that Christianity not only was capable of entering into the new and modern world, but was more its creator than any other force. The mere literary impulse—strong

The fertility of Christianity.

Conversions of northern races.

The schoolmen.

The renascence of classic literature.

Isaac Taylor on the human mind in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Christianity the creator of the modern world.

The forces of nationality could only have destroyed mediæval despotism.

Philosophy could not have done the work of religion.

Christianity alone could play the central part in human affairs.

A reformation indispensable.

The Reformers and their teachings.

as it was—would have degenerated into paganism and materialism. The mighty forces of nationality, in which modern liberty was to find its expression, would have broken up the mediæval despotism in Church and State without any principle of faith and reverence to take its place. Philosophy in any of its classical shapes, or in the new departures associated with the names of Bacon and Descartes, could never have satisfied the deepest longings of the heart, or done the work of religion. It was the glory of Christianity, that in this most critical and testing period, it could play the central part in human affairs, and so adapt itself to one of the world's great epochs as to avert the worst dangers, and bring back blessings that through its corruption had been almost lost. For this end a Reformation was indispensable, and through leaders cast in a gigantic mould by the Spirit of God it came. There started up in many lands, as at one loud summons, men to whom Christianity had become a new revelation and a fresh life—a true gospel of eternal redemption centred in a crucified and living Saviour, who returned as at a bound to the theology of Paul, and who even completed that of Augustine, carrying his doctrine of grace into justification as well as sanctification, and by the realized blessedness of faith and universal priesthood of believers, extricating the Christian society at once from caste and despotism, and ending the

long reign of formalism and oppression under which it had groaned.

Equal in the highest examples to the greatest humanists in learning, to the best thinkers in philosophy, and to the ablest statesmen in those gifts of administration which raised them to be the counsellors of princes and commonwealths, they added that Divine experience and inward light which made their work a mission of salvation, and not a human dictatorship, and fitted them to be the evangelists and teachers of the poor, the neglected, and misguided, whose souls were everywhere groping in the shadow of death. Thus the movement which they headed, and in relation to which they had to do in some sort the work of the prophet as well as of the apostle, was not a mere protest against tyranny, or a transfer to a new centre of ecclesiastical power, but a great spiritual awakening, running in new and popular channels of speech and song and rite, no longer magical but rational, yet essentially grounded on faith, and due to that mighty Book which they brought forth from its hiding-place, and gave to the people; and in which, unsealing a literature which had nothing to fear from contrast with Homer or Plato, not to speak of outgrowths on its own soil like Dante or Shakespeare, and which transcended their own best creations as far as they did the scholasticism which they supplanted, they found anew the impelling and

The natural and spiritual qualifications of the Reformers.

The nature of the movement which they headed.

The impulse and force due to the Bible.

regulative force of that revived Church which they restored, and which henceforth, thus governed itself, was to govern the history of the world.

The Reformation connected with everything great since it took place.

It is certain that whatever has since been great in the history of mankind, has more or less directly connected itself with the Reformation. The nations that rejected it have fallen utterly behind, and are only slowly and with difficulty recovering some mutilated part of its inheritance. It has made Britain; it is also making America. It has given to France, with all the penalties of revolution, the only imitation of itself which that people will accept. It has given to Protestant Germany—fallen alas from a higher strafe—material pre-eminence in Europe. Wherever there is a Bible, a Sabbath, a regulated liberty, a national education, a pure and manly literature, the Reformation is its fountain-head; and there the names of its great heroes are still as household words, and lead the van of human progress. In its past results it has repelled the calumny that it preached a barren faith, as in its perpetual alliance with a learned criticism and speculation, it has refuted the charge of hard and stereotyped tradition. It has been the mother of successive revivals, as in the great Methodist one of last century—numbering now its converts by millions, and influencing for good the whole English-speaking world. It has recalled the mission spirit and work of apostolic times,—slowly

What it has done for Britain, America, France, and Germany.

It has been the mother of successive revivals.

indeed, and by an unfortunate interval, but which will not be too sternly judged by those who remember its own difficulties, and the tremendous odds against which it has had to save itself from extermination. Its work in the old world and in the new, and in the newest, where the best fruits of religion and liberty are also its children, is far from exhausted; and if ever a time come which seems to be distant, that shall as far transcend it as it has transcended the mediæval and patristic Christianity which has paled before it, that will at once bring to it a more just and reverent appreciation, and will exalt the greatness of that Divine religion, which draws out of its exhaustless treasures things new and old, and spreads the fulness of its immeasurable riches over all the progressive cycles of human history. We live in a period when the Reformation suffers alike from Traditionalist reaction, and Rationalist licence, which have equally maligned its name and obscured its works. But these are only eddies in the great current which the Reformation, however intermittently, is still pouring out upon the nations; and those who look for its decay and disappearance may as soon expect the drying up of the Nile, or of the mighty streams that from distant Alpine sources, which the Reformation itself recalls, water half the lands of Europe.

Its work not exhausted.

Present reaction and licence only eddies in the current.

In connection with the perpetual revival of Christianity, it is impossible not to notice the

The perpetual revival of Christianity.

The rise of bright and select names irrespective of outward divisions.

Hymn-writers.

Missionaries

The power of resistance to assaults displayed by Christianity.

rising up from age to age of bright and select names which seem to restore all that is most distinctive of Christian character. This is independent of the outward divisions of Christianity; for to all genius and piety have been allied, as in Francis Xavier, Blaise Pascal, Archbishop Fenelon, in John Arndt, Paul Gerhardt, Spener, Zinzendorf; in Samuel Rutherford, Richard Baxter, John Bunyan; in our English cloud of hymn-writers, George Herbert, Bishop Ken, Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, John Newton, William Cowper; while in the great lights that have risen and still rise in the missionary firmament—Carey, Martyn, Heber, Judson, Duff, Livingstone—Christianity looks as little as possible like an exhausted religion. Female greatness, even in a heroic type, has in our own century, as always in the past, attested its power, as in Mrs. Fry, in Mrs. Judson, in Amalie Siveking, in Florence Nightingale.

IV. A *fourth* argument necessary to be taken note of is, *the resistance which Christianity has been able to offer to successive assaults*. Of course, it is not peculiar to Christianity as a religion, or as itself an aggressive and disturbing force, to be assailed. It has here but shared the common lot; but it stands alone in having been so passionately, variously, persistently assailed, and yet in having turned each onset into an argument for its Divine strength. It

was at first but little likely that this obscure provincial growth would ever test the energies of the Roman empire. Our Lord's word might even have seemed to claim too much in expecting that it would be brought in any way before rulers and magistrates. But it lived to weaken by its endurance the mighty power that struggled to crush it; and not without reason, Gibbon ranks it among the causes of the decline and fall of Rome. We cannot indeed sum up so exactly as the old chroniclers a tale of ten persecutions, or authenticate all the data of martyrology. But we have enough in the brief notices of Tacitus as to the Neronian persecution,—in the invaluable circular of the Church of Lyons as to the outbreak there even under a Marcus Aurelius,—in the letters of Cyprian to the confessors of North Africa,—and in the sketches of Eusebius as to the sufferings, which he saw and so far shared, of the martyrs of Palestine, in the last and worst conflict of all,—to make it perfectly certain that the Roman empire could not have done more to extirpate the new faith, and that its final triumph, all the more after the pause under Julian, was a political necessity. And if at that time, when the empire was divided against itself, we are almost awed by the courage and endurance of the Christian witnesses, what must it have been at the first, when on the wide surface of the Roman earth there seemed neither sympathy

Its obscure origin

Its endurance and power.

The efforts to extirpate the new faith.

The earliest
martyrs.

nor help, and every land that could have opened a refuge was controlled by that one great despotism? Luther at Worms, backed by great princes, and with a rising current of national feeling on his side, does not look half so forlorn as Paul before Nero, or (if the story be accepted) Ignatius before Trajan. When Christianity itself comes into power, and in its worst period and form of corruption takes up and wields the darkest resources of pagan tyranny, inventing new tortures, and making the Inquisition a more regular and organized force of repression, the living Christianity that had fled from such companionship, and was disowned and hunted to death, did more to redeem and vindicate the honours of the Christian name, than its pursuers to sully and discredit it. The long roll of Protestant martyrs, and even of earlier martyrs like these in Albigensian and Waldensian days, gathered at length out of almost every land in Europe, and not without traces in America—has equalled, if not exceeded every other, and brought home anew with touching power the sacred words, "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy,) they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

Corrupted
and
persecuting
Christianity.

Protestant
martyrs.

Most of the living Christianity in the world

draws its roots from these sad and dark scenes of resistance unto blood for Christian truth and liberty; and the faith and patience of these saints of other days still glows in many a memorial and work of their children. They justly ask if all this was done and suffered without heavenly strength; and while a milder spirit of charity has softened much of the bitterness of these recollections as bequeathed from an earlier age, they are not willing to renounce the conviction that God by nerving their forefathers with so much of the martyr spirit, thus decided between them and their persecutors, and calls on them still "to hold fast that they have, that no man take their crown."

The present influence of the ancient martyrs.

The power of God nerved the martyrs.

The argument of Divine help and succour in handing down what is most unworldly and characteristic in the Christian faith, is, without presumption, applicable also in dealing with unbelievers, who may be challenged to produce any similar confirmation given by suffering on a large scale—not only to unbelief, but even to natural religion; for while it may be true that every religion has had its martyrs, no martyrology but that associated with the Bible records, exalts whole masses and even nations; nor have the martyrs of doubt and negation been conspicuous either by their numbers or by their fortitude.

Unbelievers challenged to produce similar testimony to unbelief.

Among the other assaults also which Christianity has had to endure and to surmount, is that from

Controversy. unbelief itself, not often happily by force, but by the weapons of argument and criticism. Of these Christianity would be the last to complain; and on the contrary it registers their failure as a fresh evidence of Divine help and protection. Nor can it be reasonably affirmed that Christianity up to this day has been worsted on this field of battle. The Christian defenders, from Grotius downwards, have at least given as good as they received. The deists of England have left a century and a half of vigorous Christian life behind them, and have fallen themselves into dust and shade. Voltaire is disowned by Renan; Strauss clears out Paulus, to deepen his own foundation. The German rationalist has to turn his face somewhat reluctantly to materialism, and hail the socialist as a brother. The atheist is certain that from his point of view all religion has fallen; the non-Christian theist gathers his own out of the wreck; while the pantheist, from the indifference-point between, reconciles both by a religion which makes affirmation and negation the different sides of each other. Amidst the general confusion hardly any one seems to prosper but the agnostic; but he in his confidence oversets himself, and the victory of his ignorance is its discomfiture. It can hardly be said that these discordant hosts have as yet driven Christianity to its tents, or divided the spoils of its camp among them. The serious word of Butler is as well-

Christian
apologists.

The
confusion
among the
opponents of
Christianity.

grounded as it was more than a hundred years ago :
“ Whereas some imagine the supposed doubtfulness
of the evidence for revelation implies a positive
argument that it is not true, it appears on the
contrary to imply a positive argument that it is
true. For could any common relation of such
antiquity, extent, and variety (for in these things
the stress of what I am now observing lies), be
proposed to the examination of the world ; that it
could not in an age of knowledge and liberty be
confuted, or shown to have nothing in it, to the
satisfaction of reasonable men, this would be
thought a strong presumptive proof of its truth.”

Bishop
Butler on
the alleged
doubtfulness
of the evi-
dence of
revelation.

Analogy,
Part II.
chap. vii.

Christianity has given good and valid replies to the special objections urged in a period of English history and literature which shows as yet no traces of decline. But the best answer has been simply to live on and do the work of the Christian Church at home and abroad, as if unbelief had never lifted its head ; and this Christianity has confessedly done to a degree which neither Butler nor all the assailants, whose points he received on his one shield, could by any stretch of fancy have anticipated.

The best
answer to
objections

Nor is it to be lost sight of that there are deeper objections to Christianity than those which unbelief—formally so called—has to avow. There is in every human heart a force of native resistance stronger than anything urged by Celsus or Porphyry, by Collins or Tindal. The pride and self-right-

The deepest
objections to
Christianity.

The native
resistance of
the human
heart to
Christianity.

The new
creative
power of
Christianity.

Evil
spiritual
powers.

Christianity
equal to and
triumphant
in the
conflict.

Fifth branch
of the
argument.

eousness, the lust and worldliness of human nature have to be conquered, even where the intellect and the conscience may be so far subdued. The continued creation of humble, grateful, pure and spiritually-minded Christians is the greatest measure of the force of Christianity as an overcoming power, and this witness of the Spirit, which is essentially the work of the Spirit, all apologists place deeper than anything else. Nor is it to be overlooked that Christians who feel truly the adverse influences that contend against them, include also the hostility of evil spiritual powers. This indeed cannot be made evident to the world, but may rather provoke its ridicule. Still it is of weight, as showing to others the impression on the Christian mind of the various and formidable strength which needs to be subdued, and which works against Christianity in more fallen races than one. That Christianity, in the estimate of those who know it best and see farthest into its range, is equal to the conflict with all these "rulers of darkness," is an argument at least of the courage and hopefulness with which, from age to age, it inspires all its followers, and rallies them after every apparent repulse, so that they are "able to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand."

V. A *fifth* branch of the argument from the success of Christianity is the way in which it is

especially armed with means and motives for self-propagation. Some religions, like most of the ancient pagan and the modern Hindoo, have never been proselyting; others, like the Jewish, have lost the proselyting impulse. Only the Buddhist and the Mohammedan have so far, on this side, resembled Christianity. But Christianity has, and turns to account, facilities for propagation, such as no other religion has ever displayed. There is behind all a solid and definite organization. Christianity is not merely an impulse, a sentiment, or even a school of thought. It is formed into an institution, a church, with definite doctrines, sacraments, worship, discipline, and government. In regard to these there have been and are diversities; but though the full advantage of unity has thus been lost, the idea of organization in different shapes has remained; and perhaps the life connected with freedom and variety has been some compensation for the loss of cohesion thus entailed. Christianity has thus had a visibility in the world, beyond what could ever belong to a sect of philosophy, or a mere self-sprung association; for it has traced its order to its Head and Founder, and maintained its outward existence as a confession of His name and a homage to His authority. Christianity has thus had a visibility eminently favourable to its diffusion. Its converts could at once find a home; it could itself, and the world

Special means and motives for self-propagation.

The Church

The idea of organization survives all divisions.

Order in the Church traceable to Christ, and is a confession of His name.

Advantages
of Church
order.

Stability.

Christianity
and
education.

The family
and Sunday-
school.

with it, see and be moved by its own progress. Its great ordinances of preaching and other worship, its initiations and commemorations, its observance of the Lord's day, its ministries and acts of government, have given it, though not a kingdom of this world, a visible place, wider, deeper, more secure than that of any earthly kingdom. For, visibility has been associated with stability, even amidst succession and change in civil and national history, and by the presence of the same Word of God—with creeds and interpretations founded upon it,—the fixity of tradition has, at least in the best instances, guided, without impairing, the capacity of progress. For Christianity to have thus laid a hold upon the past—all the more that it was no blind or fruitless veneration—has been immensely helpful in conquering the future. And here every one must acknowledge the enormous superiority of Christianity in dealing with the young, and in allying itself everywhere with the cause of education, so that, what is well-nigh a blank in other religions, what does not seem a possibility in connection with any so-called outgrowth of religious reason that is to supplant Christianity, has long been realized in the Christian home, and more recently in the Sabbath-school, where truths, the most touching, the most consoling, the most pure and elevating, are in the most attractive form brought near the youthful heart. From the plac³

of advantage which it has once gained as a permanent and organized society, Christianity is also fitted to act on those without—even to the greatest distances—as no other religion can do. Its very ordinances—observed for the sake of its converts, and for what is called in Christian language, *edification*—have the strongest tendency, through the power of speech, the solemnity of prayer and sacrament, and not least, the charm of sacred song, to move and win others; so that in the very nature of things, and to a degree far beyond anything in Judaism, Christianity, by its very presence in the world, is an appeal to all to enter by its ever open gate—a gate of which the entry to the Gentile proselyte was a very imperfect figure.

And now that the religion of redemption is complete, and divested of every local and national rite or usage that fettered its universality, there is not only the impulsion, but the positive obligation to carry it outward into “the regions beyond,” and to preach it as a Gospel of divine and all-embracing love to every creature. With the visibility of a column, with the stability of an inscription, there is thus given the transmissibility of a message, overleaping every barrier of race and clime, printed off or sent with electric speed to the ends of the earth. The wonderful adaptation of the Bible to march at the head of this evangelism, to be the inspiration of all its oral teaching, the

The influence of Christianity on the world.

The influence of Judaism not to be compared with it

The obligation to evangelize the world.

The adaptation of the Bible to the work to be done.

The influence of the Bible.

Christian literature.

The literature of other religions not self-renewing.

foundation of all its literature, the text-book of its new philosophy, and the code of its highest laws and ordinances, can only be expressed in utterances of its own. "Its line is gone out into all the earth, and its words to the end of the world." The whole of Christianity moulded by one Book, knit together by one sympathy, embraced in one harmony of song, which binds up the dissonances of earth and foreshadows the communion of heaven, is a phenomenon unparalleled in literature and in religious experience; and the longer that Christianity lasts, gathering up the traditions of ages, and the farther it goes into outlying and desolate regions, encircling them with its light and fruitfulness, the grander is the testimony to its worldwide mission and destiny. Not only do the Christian Scriptures reach through all time, and scatter their seed over the whole field of the world, but there are other great books laden with their influence that diffuse and multiply the blessing, giving "seed to the sower, and bread to the eater" in ever widening succession. We read almost nothing of the spreading and self-renewing effects of the literature of other religions; and human culture, in its lower range, has here its limits. But words of Augustine, of Thomas à Kempis, of Howe or Butler, shot down into after centuries, have struck some great mark and decided some momentous victory. The final conversion of John

Wesley was helped by Luther's *Preface to the Romans*. A work of Baxter influenced Doddridge; he again, Wilberforce; and Wilberforce, Chalmers. The transmissibility of Christian truth is connected with a re-transmissive impulse. The pulse of a distant success throbs back to the heart of the living Church; and the youngest child born into the family awakes the freshest joy.

The transmissibility and re-transmissive impulse of Christian truth.

The means, so amply and wonderfully provided for propagating the Gospel, are thus reinforced by the purest and strongest motives to use them. The greatness and urgency of salvation, as needed by every creature, appeals to all that is tender in sympathy and benevolence. The memory of personal obligation stirs up the sense of gratitude. The command of Christ makes a missionary spirit a duty, the imitation of His example a privilege. Zeal for the glory of God, who is dishonoured and defied in every false religion that keeps the field against His will, concentrates all that is deepest in piety on this enterprise; while reliance on the Holy Spirit, where grace alone can shake the strongholds of evil and darkness, rouses to the work all the forces and energies of faith and hope. These motives are not matched in anything else that claims to be a religion of the world. We have only to look at them, as well as at the whole structure of the system to which they belong, to see how radically different the success of Christianity,

The motives to use the means of propagating the Gospel.

No other world-religion has such motives.

Mohammed-
an and
Christian
successes
contrasted.

thus attempted and wrought, is from anything in Mohammedanism. Some better elements may mingle in that colossal scheme of conquest,—some regard to the souls of the vanquished, some fanatic sense of duty, some wild inspiration of zeal. But where is the true sense of redemption as a moral and spiritual deliverance? Where the imitation of Christ weeping over the fallen, and raising them by suffering and self-sacrifice? Where the heaven of pure affection in one enhanced by the joy of others gathered in to share it? Names mean here such different things, that only contrast is possible; and the wonder is that the success of Mohammedanism has ever been held forth as a set-off against that of Christianity. Those who know Buddhism best as an extant religion—extant in very diverse shapes—will agree that whatever its diffusive power in earlier ages may have been, the parallel wholly fails at present between it and Christianity, and that stagnation and corruption, externalism and apathy, are its most prominent features.¹

The present
state of
Buddhism.

Thus Christianity alone keeps the field as a

¹ It is hardly supposed that this estimate of the present decay of Buddhism will be contested. As to Mohammedan revival in Africa and India, the important testimony of Deutsch, in his *Literary Remains* (1874), and of writers with warmer sympathies towards Christianity, may be accepted, to the extent of proving that this religion is still strong enough to displace paganism: but this is very different from the moral creations of Christianity.

religion of high, vigorous, and ever-advancing aspiration. It deals its blows in every part of the world, and receives very few in return. It brings in the western hemisphere to raise the fallen churches of the East, and to unite with Europe in ending the dreary Moslem reign. It assails the polytheism of Asia from two opposite sides, and hastens the day when the Christian lines shall meet. It prepares a work in Africa, where repeatedly the last explorer is the first missionary. It may be fitful, it may be transient, in touching so many points at once, like the early sunbeams, which tinge the summits only apparently to fade. But the promise of the dawn is in the first glimmer, and it will not go back till the full unbroken day has come.

Christianity unique in its character.

The work of Christianity in various parts of the world.

VI. The *sixth* and last head under which the success of Christianity as an argument for it may be comprised, is the *harmony of this success with its own predictions and anticipations*. If the argument from prophecy be of value, when taken by itself alone, it acquires, so to speak, a compound value, when combined with any other true evidence of Christianity. Thus if a miracle is an evidence, a miracle predicted, like the going back of the shadow, or the resurrection of our Lord, is so much more wonderful; and so is it with the whole argument drawn from the character and life of Christ, which, astonishing in itself, is unspeakably

Christianity anticipated and predicted its own success.

The evidential value of miracle enhanced by prediction.

The success of Christianity—a Divine sign in itself—enhanced in value as evidence by prediction.

more so when we find all sketched before in the pages of prophecy. But the argument is hardly anywhere more striking than in connection with the success of Christianity, which, being so marvellous as to be a Divine sign in itself, is thus by foregoing prediction complicated into a knot harder still for unbelief to untie. This argument can only be touched; but the following points may be noted.

The prediction of success early and long-continued.

First, the prediction of success is *early and long-continued*. In the very first oracle of mercy after the fall, the victory of the Christian cause is by almost all Christians held to be announced to our first parents; and it will be difficult for rationalism to put any other construction on the words, that in Abraham "all the families of the earth shall be blessed," than that they are an anticipation of spiritual good proceeding from a Jewish source, which is unaffected by all modern criticism as to the date and origin of Genesis. So is it with the notices of the Prophets, like the 11th of Isaiah, and the 2nd and 7th of Daniel. The 2nd, 72nd, 98th, and many other psalms concur in the same prediction of a universal religion. These our Lord takes up, and in terms of them, even by the admission of Strauss, foretells the success of His own cause, and this strain continues to the last New Testament writing. It is not therefore a momentary gleam which thus professedly lights up the future, but a long and steady ray.

The Prophets.

Secondly, the predictions are *express and definite*. It is announced that this movement should be connected with a descendant of Abraham and of David, who first suffers and then is exalted to reign; that it should start in some way from Jerusalem and Zion, whether these words are to be taken literally, or as emblems of the Jewish faith and worship; that it should have a peaceful and humanizing tendency, as in the image of wild beasts transformed, and war coming to an end; that it should abolish idolatry, and spread the faith of one God; that it should be gradual but effectual, as in the figures of the mustard-seed and leaven; and that it should at last be universal, covering the earth like the waters of the sea, and uniting all nations in sacrifice and praise. These are anticipations which cannot be blotted out, and which are so like to prophecies that they cannot be explained away; and even if it be denied that they have been entirely fulfilled (which is perhaps the most plausible thing that can be said), still they are the descriptions of a religion on the way to fulfilment, and such fulfilment as to suggest nothing but Christianity.

The predictions express and definite.

Predictions of the success of Christianity.

Thirdly, these anticipations are *very unlikely to have been set forth by mere human sagacity*. Not to mention the unlikelihood of a suffering person and cause being ultimately so successful, and that not by violence (as is predicted), but by persuasion and

The events predicted, humanly speaking, improbable.

Unlikeli-
hood of the
predicted
events.

The
rejection of
the Jews
and the
calling of
the Gentiles.

Jews and
rationalists.

The Jews
have lost
the religious
leading of
the world;
the Gentiles
have gained
it.

gentleness—not to mention the great improbability of any wide cessation of idolatry or reign of righteousness—there are two features of especial unlikelihood in these notices being ever sent forth as they are given, and then accomplished. The *first* is the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles. There was the greatest unlikelihood of this anticipation having been ever started. The Jews have never been in the deepest sense a cosmopolitan people, and at this day are as national as ever—as little disposed to accept their own inferiority or exalt other nations. But this evidently is the turn taken both in the Old Testament and in the New. The Jews and rationalists here disagree as to the Old Testament—the Jews denying that anything in it could give a plausible warrant to the Apostle Paul and his adherents to universalize Judaism, the rationalists granting that he could draw much in the Prophets to his side. But as to the actual history of the world there can be no doubt that it has followed the apparent strain of prophecy, and the clear sense of the Apostle of the Gentiles. How, then, is this to be accounted for? The Jews have lost the religious leading of the world; the Gentiles have gained it. The Old Testament is a mightier power among Christian nations than in the synagogue itself; and they have carried and are carrying the name of Jehovah along with that of Christ, where, but for

them, idolatry would still reign, and the Decalogue be unknown. That Christianity should thus have turned round the history of the world is the wonder; that the fact should be anticipated not only in its documents, but in those of Judaism, is the phenomenon which Jew and unbeliever alike fail to explain.

The *second* unlikely feature of prophecy is the *anticipation of the corruptions of Christianity*. How could Christ and His apostles have connected their expectation of success on any natural principles with so much of corruption? The parable of the tares among the wheat cannot be denied to be an utterance of Christ by those who allow the Gospels any authority whatever. So is it with the repeated assertions of Paul as to a dark and evil power about to rise. So with the statements of the Johannine Epistles as to Antichrist. Nor is any construction of the Apocalypse so reasonable as that which sees in it the struggle of Christianity, not only with other adversaries, but also with its own corruptions. How, then, is this sketch of the future, in all these cases, so true and so lifelike as to have foreshadowed the unlikely reality? If Christianity was to be drawn beforehand by human hands, would so much of darkness have entered the picture? Or could the Divine strength that was to outlast all and derive glory from all, have been so forcibly appealed to and trusted in, as we see in these sober-minded

The anticipation of the corruptions of Christianity.

The parable of the tares.

The rise of Antichrist.

The Apocalypse.

Absence of enthusiasm and despondency in the prediction of success.

and yet solid anticipations? There is an equal absence of enthusiasm and of despondency; and this is to be accounted for by those who have to face the resemblance of the prediction to the history, as well as by those to whom the corruptions of Christianity, though neutralized as an objection by being thus foretold, are the chief argument for its rejection.

Explanations of the early success of Christianity.

II. Having now endeavoured as fairly as possible to state the arguments legitimately deduced from the success of Christianity as an argument for its Divine origin, it now remains to glance at some of the recent explanations of that success which ascribe all to mere natural principles. Here it is to be noticed that the arguments for the revived and continued success of Christianity are almost wholly passed over, and that its early period receives nearly exclusive attention. This is said not with a view of evading reply to such explanations; for in no part of the field does the ground of the Christian defender seem more secure.

The general capacity of change in human nature.

Some writers who deal with the success of Christianity on natural principles do little more than appeal to a *general* capacity of change in human nature, fortified perhaps by mention of such conversions as those in the history of other religions. This, however, is not enough to repel the argument from the success of Christianity. That men have

been converted from one false or merely human religion to another, as Christians judge of religions, no more proves that conversions to Christianity have in them nothing special, than it proves that because one or many religions are false, therefore none is true. A mere general power of change no more accounts for conversion, than a mere general power of acting accounts for acting in a particular manner. Even those who believe most firmly in a general freedom of will, believe also in the place of motives; and nothing is rationally accounted for until some motive or power adequate to work a change is brought into the field. The Christian is prepared to adduce special reasons—all merely human—for the success of Mohammedanism or Buddhism; so must the unbeliever bring *special* reasons for the triumph of Christianity. The attempt accordingly has been made; and some of these special reasons may be considered.

1. Of all these theories of the success of Christianity none has been perhaps so much relied on as that which traces it to *its affinity with Greek philosophy, especially as acting on Christianity through the Jewish Platonism of Alexandria*. This is hinted at by the Jewish scholar Trypho, in his dialogue with Justin Martyr, and by Celsus as replied to by Origen; it is more fully urged by Bolingbroke and Voltaire in the last century; and it has been revived in this century by the Tübingen school, and

The capacity for change an insufficient explanation.

The Christian prepared to explain the success of Mohammedanism and Buddhism by special human reasons.

The alleged affinity of Christianity with Greek philosophy through Jewish Platonism.

Trypho and
Celsus.Bolingbroke
and Voltaire.Strauss and
Zeller.*Leben Jesu.*
(1864), p.
167.The affinity
of Chris-
tianity with
philosophy.

particularly by Strauss and Zeller. These writers, indeed, are of very unequal weight in this question. Trypho and Celsus rather bring it as a reproach against Christianity than a formal cause of its success, that it borrowed from the Greeks. Bolingbroke and Voltaire are now universally confessed to have been unequal to this discussion, reading only the Greek philosophy in translations; so that Strauss and Zeller, and others who share their learning and philosophic culture, alone represent with any authority this theory. The language of Strauss may be quoted; and it will be seen that he brings in not only philosophy, but the whole Alexandrian influences, due to Alexander the Great, to make his solution easier. "The marriage of the East and West, which was the work of the great Macedonian, must precede, and in Alexandria its bridal bed must be prepared, before the appearance of Christianity was conceivable. 'Had Alexander not preceded, Christ had not followed,' may sound to theological ears a blasphemy: but as soon as we remember that the hero too has his mission from God, its offence ceases."

It is impossible, however, that this scheme—which brings in Plato, with his alleged Trinity, as influencing Philo, the Alexandrian eclectic, with his fusion of philosophy and Jewish tradition, and then finds in the Hellenistic world, as prepared by Alexander the Great, a field for this kind of

speculation, in its successive types of Paul, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Fourth Evangelist—can reach more than a fanciful and distorted resemblance to reality.

First, there is wanting to begin with the connection of all this with the Author of Christianity Himself. Neither Strauss nor Zeller bring Christ Himself into contact with this speculation; and thus the insuperable difficulties which lie in the way of a Christianity transformed and made more popular by inferior agents, bar the path of such an explanation.

The connection of Christ with Alexandrian philosophy cannot be proved.

Secondly, there is nothing in the Platonic or Alexandrian originals which can account for Christianity. To say nothing of other points, such as the lower view taken even by that philosophy of the evil of sin, and the slighting estimate of the body, there is in regard to the point chiefly relied on, the doctrine of the Trinity, no solid accordance. The doctrine is with Plato too shadowy. Even in Philo, though helped by Old Testament forecasting, it has not the definiteness of coherent doctrine. Above all, it is not wrought into a great system of redemption through incarnation, atonement, and effectual grace, as in the Gospels and Epistles, and is entirely disjoined from that support in a living history of a Divine Saviour which Christianity supplies. Grant all that you will to the alleged prototypes, Christianity as a developed scheme

Nothing in Platonic or Alexandrian originals to account for Christianity.

Christianity immeasurably transcends Platonic and Alexandrian philosophy.

immeasurably outreaches them; and the genius (to use so low a word) which would have been required to correct, to perfect, to vivify them, would have been able to dispense with their aid.

An independent Christian philosophy existed early in the second century.

Thirdly and lastly, this theory is refuted by the entire history of early Christianity. Instead of Platonism, or its Philonic counterpart, having originated the development which ended in the Nicene Creed and in the victory of orthodox Christianity, there was a Christian philosophy, as in Justin Martyr, which had come out of Platonism, and held itself entirely superior and distinct by the early part of the second century. The great fathers that were most Platonizing, like Origen and his disciple, Eusebius of Cæsarea, were recognized as thereby so far imperilling their Christian completeness as to the Trinity; and the revived and later Platonism, which perfected or attempted to perfect, the earlier in its own line, became, through Porphyry and Julian, the most passionate upholder of idolatry and assailant of the entire Christian faith. It is easy to bring forward the general allegation, that Christianity by giving God a Son assimilated itself to paganism, and thus secured its own victory. But those who hastily say this, whether Jews or unbelievers, forget the world-wide differences of this sonship and all that rested on it; and their deductions are as like the mistaking of a shadow for a substance as anything to be found in

The later Platonism upheld idolatry.

the philosophy of history or of religion. We may add to this consideration, that when Christianity was first brought into proximity with philosophy at Athens, the relation was not one of visible dependence. Strauss and Zeller, indeed, make little enough of the Acts; but here the Tübingen disdain has outlived its day. It is true that only the Epicureans and Stoics are represented; but had the Platonists been there, would they have hailed Paul as a brother, and as a new-born propagandist, though in barbarian guise, of their doctrines? Paul was too honest to flatter either the vulgar thought or the philosophic, and his strain, as the heaven-sent revealer of that which both had missed, is as historically just as it is itself sincere and sublime.

The relations of Christianity and philosophy when brought into proximity at Athens.

2. Another special cause which has been assigned for the success of Christianity in the early years is *the influence of rulers, and especially of Constantine*. This is a supposition which, after Voltaire, has been repeated in our time by Mr. F. W. Newman. But on the face of it, this view has not much plausibility. It is like casting the iron sword of Brennus into the scale, when the gold of philosophy was too light to affect it. There can be no serious question of any earlier political influence than that of Constantine; and when we come to him, amidst all the difficulties of his relation to Christianity, there can be none as to the fact that his ultimate support was in no proper sense the cause of its

The alleged influence of rulers as a cause of the success of Christianity.

Constantine's influence.

Constantine's support not intelligent.

His measures not the best in the circumstances.

His influence not the decisive impulse in favour of Christianity

triumph. Even if we grant that his support was sincere, it certainly was not intelligent, as we see from the delay of his baptism and his vacillations as to the Trinity; and it will probably now be agreed on almost all hands, that in the divided state of the Roman empire, those measures which he took in favour of Christianity that were of the nature of special succour, and still more of repression and coercion, would have been advantageously replaced so far as the farther conversion of pagans was concerned, by simple protection of its worship and liberties. In this way the reaction under Julian might have been avoided, and Christianity spared the reproach of some actions under Constantine's reign, of which, from his association with it, the new religion had to bear the burden. But if this be a just historical estimate, then the influence of Constantine for good as a whole must have been less than this supposition, which is now examined, takes for granted; and can hardly be thought by any fair mind the decisive impulse in favour of a religion which had subsisted and struggled for nearly three hundred years. Two instances of the nature of tests make this still more clear. Had the opinion of the Roman world been merely decided in favour of Christianity by one emperor, it might equally have gone back to paganism under the prompting of another. But we all know how futile the

zealous efforts of Julian in that direction proved, and how rapidly after his failure the conversions to Christianity multiplied, with other evidences of its unabated and irresistible progress. The other instance is equally striking—the total miscarriage of the Roman emperors to give victory to Arianism. Had the minds of men as to religion been so flexible, it would have been much easier to turn an ordinary Christian into an Arian, than a pagan into a Christian. We know how earnestly this was tried, and how numerous the creeds were, which, under the patronage of emperors like Constantius and Valens, to say nothing of Constantine himself, were framed and circulated to make the orthodox believe that Arianism repeated with a slight difference their own faith. But the perspicacity and zeal of Athanasius and his followers in all parts of the Roman world defeated the attempt; and in Theodosius the empire had to confess its weakness, and again submit. It shows ignorance, therefore, of the currents which ultimately determine human opinion in moral questions, to overrate the influence of earthly potentates; and Christianity has often enough, even its corrupt forms, defied kings and emperors, to suppose it in its greater purity and strength dependent on them for existence or triumph.

The failure of Julian to restore Paganism.

The failure of Roman emperors to give victory to Arianism.

It shows ignorance to overrate the influence of rulers.

3. A *third* special cause which has been relied on as accounting for the success of Christianity in

The hope of an earthly millennium alleged as the cause of the success of Christianity.

Gibbon.

Renan.

Millennarianism and morality.

its early period, is *the hope which it awakened of an earthly millennium*. This hope has been painted in lively colours by Gibbon, and after him by Renan, together with the alarm excited in pagan minds by the prospect of an impending end of the world. One can hardly read the passages in Gibbon that bear on this subject, where the irony is of the keenest, without feeling that he is inwardly laughing at the credulity alike of the early Christians in cherishing such hopes, and of the pagans in so readily accepting them. Hence Renan seems to judge it necessary to bring in something more solid to sustain these millenary fancies; and this he finds in the exalted Christian morality, which, with the vision of a millennium, he alike traces back to Christ. "It was this contradiction which assured the success of his work. The millennarian alone would have produced nothing durable, the moralist alone would have produced nothing powerful. Millennarianism gave the impulse, morality assured the future. Thus the union of the two re-united the conditions of great success in this world—a revolutionary start, and the possibility of life."¹

In canvassing this speculation, it is not necessary to inquire what the actual views of a millennium, held from the beginning in the Christian Church, were. Multitudes of Christian writers deny such a prevalence of these hopes or fears of a peculiarly

¹ *Vie de Jésus*, p. 126.

earthly tinge in the Christian Church, as Gibbon and Renan have accepted as realities. Even those Christian writers who have perhaps exaggerated any tendencies of this kind, have yet refused to allow that the future was to the early Christian mind so deeply pre-occupied with the temporal side of glory or of change, and have not altogether left out of account the counter-indications of belief in a long-standing future of the world, such as was needful to realize Christ's own predictions of growth and of corruption and decay in His religion. But even if we should grant (which is an enormous concession) that to those who were already Christians these terrestrial hopes were all that Gibbon and Renan have pictured them, where was the lever in this by which to move the pagan mind, and bring it round to Christianity? There was to begin with unspeakable social loss, and even ruin; there was an utter sacrifice of worldly prospects, to be compensated in the near or distant future by temporal gains and honours. But who vouched for these? A "sect everywhere spoken against," proscribed, derided, the least credible to pagan minds of all heralds of the future, or pathfinders to glory—themselves deceived, on the supposition of unbelief, by a barbarian founder who was crucified, and had never since been seen in the clouds of heaven or anywhere else. The nearest parallel to such credulity would be that of Kaffirs slaughtering

The prevalence of earthly millenarian hopes denied by many Christian writers.

Conceding what Gibbon and Renan allege, the hopes afford no leverage sufficient to bring Pagans to Christianity.

A modern parallel to the supposed credulity of the early Christians.

their cattle at the voice of witch-doctors, in the hope of emancipation thereby from the British yoke, nay, prevailing on British settlers to share a coming glory at the same sacrifice; or of Mormons breaking all their ties in Europe, and emigrating to some unknown centre, which had as yet no locality, and which only a prophet's vision assured them would one day be found, and found blooming like a paradise. How different the actual Mormon emigrations have proved, resting no doubt on much delusion, but also on much solid fact and geographical knowledge,—on much that appeals to the love of adventure and moral laxity,—on much that belongs to the unrest of real humanity, with a sufficient background of ocular testimony and professed experience to give it play, every one can judge. And yet Mormonism has not yet lasted through the changes of centuries, or moved the civilized world as Christianity has done, to make the parallel, which is after all so radically adverse to this hypothesis, other than almost an insult to the Gospel of Christ. The longer we reflect on this explanation, the more does it seem almost to demand an apology for its production; and that the Christian morality should be associated with this dream, and give it weight, is one of those combinations which are found so easy to the genius of Renan, but which so little reflect the sobrieties or even the caprices of history. Let it be added that

The millenarian explanation quite insufficient.

hope deferred would here soon have made the heart sick ; and in what a mood Christians would have been to practise that morality, which is all, after the failure of their "revolutionary start," that Renan leaves them, it is more easy than pleasant to conjecture.

4. A *fourth* explanation of the success of Christianity, it is only needful in the briefest way to touch upon, that which ascribes all to *priestcraft*. This scheme, after the English deists, has hardly any supporters, or only those who are so far down in the literary scale as to command in this century but little sympathy. The Christian advocate has indeed to confess that this has too often, amid the corruptions of Christianity, been a *vera causa* of the success of particular devices and the currency of special usages that were supposed to be helpful to, or connected with, the success of Christianity. But it must be contended, on the other hand, that nothing of the nature of pious fraud, or even of the superstitious exaltation of mere rites and offices, has in the long run helped Christianity, but rather burdened it and impaired its authority. Even those necessary accompaniments of Christianity—its sacraments and its Gospel ministry—have through undue claims and estimates often provoked a reaction ; and, generally speaking, it may be said that Christianity has suffered by what lay under the suspicion of priestcraft far more than

The alleged influence of priestcraft as a cause of the success of Christianity.

Pious fraud and superstition injure rather than help Christianity.

Christianity
has suffered
from priest-
craft.

Nothing in
early Chris-
tianity on
which priest-
craft could
work.

The
objection
untenable in
the present
day.

it has drawn from this source to its advantage. And if not only real priestcraft must be discounted as loss, but all that could with any colour be ascribed to it must be regarded as on human calculations of success a doubtful help, what shall we say where even the conditions of priestcraft coming into play did not exist beforehand at all? This whole argument must be excluded from the early history of Christianity, where confessedly priestcraft had no previous faith in itself to work upon and to bend to its selfish and impure purposes. Men will be duped to their own undoing where a prior acceptance of certain tenets, or trust in certain rites or persons, blinds their eyes; but to suppose them, without any previous acceptance of Christianity, so prepared for the snare, either proves them a great deal more silly, or the preachers of Christianity a great deal more artful than is consistent with historic fact. In short, this explanation falls out of the context of the nineteenth century; and though more respectable writers are not always consistent with themselves, and sometimes mix up the old hypothesis of imposture and falsification with the more new and plausible one of heated fancy and enthusiasm, these require to be rigorously separated; and when this is done, the supposition of cold and wary paganism being seduced by the wiles and machinations of primitive Christianity, that had little to offer it but loss and martyr-

dom, is too incoherent to endure farther examination.

Such are some of the best attempts that have been made to explain the success of Christianity at its origin; and the reader must be left to judge of them or any similar ones that may be adduced. But as already remarked, they would only explain the ancient, not the continued and recent success of the Gospel. Where is now any school of philosophy in the whole world from which Christianity can be said specially to borrow, or on which to lean? Where is there any Constantine, with commanding and overshadowing power, who is the great world-wide confessor and patron of the Gospel? Where the kindling, absorbing hope of an earthly millennium at the door, proclaimed in all Christian hymns and sermons, and heard with awe in all non-Christian circles? Where is the visible alliance of Christianity with priestcraft, when in almost all its sections—at least Protestant—it is finding even a regular ministry a mark widely shot at, and brings the laity to the front to meet the assault? The deniers of Christianity in our day must prepare at this point entirely different theses, and undergo a change in their whole line of controversy, such as Christianity has never yet had to submit to, in regard to any considerable article either of its faith or evidence.

Meanwhile, Christianity still advances. It will

The continued and recent success of Christianity inexplicable on any unbelieving theory of its original successes.

Unbelief must completely change its front to-day.

The advance
of Chris-
tianity.

Christianity
appeals to
the test of
personal
experience.

Pascal's
saying.

not abate its successes because the world cannot explain, or even tries to ignore, them. If this were a mere intellectual problem, it might forbear to multiply new difficulties before the old were solved and put away. But where would be, then, its own philanthropy, if it left mankind unhealed, because the cure was inexplicable or even denied? Happy if those who cannot account for the fact in others, would put it to the test in personal experiment. It might become then soluble, when the point of survey was altered, and also the exploring organ, according to the deep philosophy of all true Christian insight: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." The "credo ut intelligam" of Anselm would then light up the whole success of Christianity with a sense of sympathetic brotherhood, not otherwise to be attained or even conceived. And the victory of the past would be at once a personal and a collective guarantee of the future, according to the sublime saying of Pascal, which applies equally to the Christian and to Christianity, "that it is pleasant to be in a ship beaten by storms, provided there be the certainty that amidst all it can never sink."¹

¹ *Pensées*, i. 324. Faugère's Edition.

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