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LECTURES



ON THE

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY,

DELIVERED AT THE

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DURING THE SESSION OF 1860-1.

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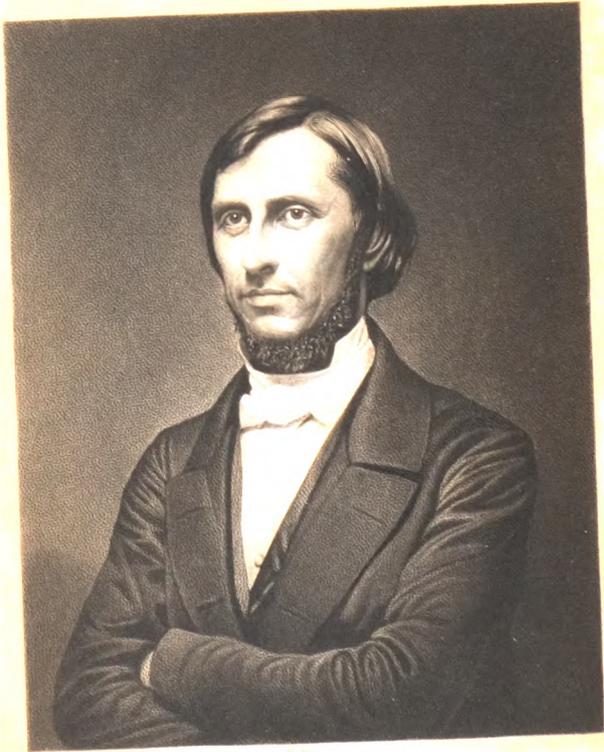
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Alfred S. Hoop

The Success of Christianity,

AN EVIDENCE OF ITS DIVINE ORIGIN;

WITH SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE CELEBRATED
SECONDARY CAUSES' OF MR. GIBBON.

BY

MOSES D. HOGG,

RICHMOND, VA.

I.

MORE than 1800 years ago, amidst the shadows of the night and the gloom of a narrow defile near the city of Jerusalem, there might have been seen the dim outline of a human form, prostrate upon the ground, uttering plaintive cries, and exhibiting evidences of the most overwhelming sorrow.

Presently lights were seen glancing through the foliage, and the heavy tramp of a company of men was heard. A band of soldiers, and others, bearing lanterns and torches and weapons, advanced, and took into custody the mysterious mourner. A little company of friends witnessed the capture, but they had neither the strength nor the courage to attempt a rescue, and seeing him in the keeping of the soldiers, they all forsook him and fled.

The next day a tumultuous crowd darkened the summit of a hill, on which three crosses had been erected. On one of these crosses, the captive of the preceding night was hanging in the agonies of death. But strange prodigies attended that crucifixion. All Nature gave signs of unwonted agitation. The earth, as if instinct with life, shuddered as the crimson drops trickled upon it. It became pervaded by an emotion which seemed to pierce its heart and thrill through its entire frame. Upon its quaking surface the forms of the shrouded dead were revealed to the eyes of the terror-stricken living, while over the opening tombs, the rending rocks, and the parting veil of the Temple, the sun wrapped himself in darkness, and thus pursued his journey.

Nor was the sympathy of nature wholly inarticulate. It found an interpreter in the Centurion, who, convinced by these prodigies of the Divinity of the sufferer, exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God." But strange as it may appear, while this heathen soldier is bearing such noble testimony to the character of the crucified Jesus, his own followers abandon all confidence in him. They *did* hope that he would prove the long-expected Deliverer—the light of Israel, and the salvation of the ends of the earth; but, now they believed themselves to have been cruelly deceived. It

was a bitter disappointment, but there was no help for it. Their fondly cherished hopes must be buried in the tomb in which they believed him to be sealed, the prisoner of death, until the final Judgment.

But soon after, a surprising change took place in the feelings and in the conduct of these timid, disheartened men. Having been scattered, they suddenly rally again, their hopes revive, their confidence is reanimated. They are no longer wavering or fearful; on the contrary they are decided and courageous. No argument can shake their faith—no terrors can daunt their resolution. Decision—intrepidity—the loftiest heroism characterize the men who a little while ago were appalled at the death of their Leader, and who trembled lest there should be any suspicion of their connection with him. They themselves furnish the explanation of this sudden and otherwise inexplicable change in their views and feelings. They assert that their crucified Lord is *alive*. Everywhere, at all times, in the face of all dangers, they persist in the declaration that they have seen him, conversed with him, and possess the most undeniable proofs that he has risen from the dead. So firmly has this conviction possessed them—so wonderfully does it animate them, that they prepare to traverse their own, and even foreign lands, for the sole purpose of proclaiming salvation through the crucified and risen Jesus.

Whether its earliest heralds were mistaken, or correct in their belief of the resurrection of Christ, is not now a point under discussion. The fact that such was their avowed conviction is all that concerns us at present. That they *did maintain* this doctrine—that they made it the basis of their creed—the theme of their proclamation, is equally admitted by the Christian and the Infidel. Now of the result of these labors we have two accounts—the one furnished by the friends of Christianity, the other by its foes. Both of these concur in two important particulars. They agree in their representations of the wonderfully rapid diffusion of the new faith, and of the feeble and inconsiderable instruments employed in its propagation.

We learn from the writers of the New Testament that the first triumphs of Christianity commenced in Jerusalem—the very city which had clamored for the crucifixion of Christ. A few days after his departure from the world there was an assemblage of disciples amounting to one hundred and twenty in number. In a little more than a week after, three thousand were converted in

Jerusalem under one sermon of the Apostles. This number was in a very short time increased to five thousand. Nor were the labors of the Apostles confined to Jerusalem. They traversed the whole land of Judea with wonderful success in gaining numerous disciples. Even a great company of *Priests* became obedient to the faith. Not to dwell upon particulars, it is sufficient to remark, that before the author of the Acts of the Apostles reaches the 23d chapter of his brief history of the infant church, he asserts that thousands (*μυριαδος, myriads*) of the Jews were zealous believers. And before he concludes his narrative, he informs us that the religion of the cross had penetrated Italy and Asia Minor, and had commenced its aggressions even upon the continent of Africa. In less than ten years from the time when Paul went forth on his missionary tour from Antioch, it was said of him and his companions that they had "turned the world upside down."

The Christian Fathers enlarge upon the triumphs of the cross, and dwell with exultation upon the splendid progress of the Gospel from land to land, and from continent to continent. Justin Martyr, who flourished in the beginning of the 2d century, asserted that there was not a nation, either Greek or barbarian, or of any other name, even of those who wandered in tribes, or lived in tents, among whom prayers and thanksgivings were not offered to the Father and Creator of the universe, through the name of the crucified Jesus. Tertullian, who lived about half a century later, exclaims, "In whom else have *all nations* believed, but in Christ who lately came?"

In his appeal to the Roman governors, he indulges in this exulting language, "We are but of yesterday, and we have filled all places belonging to you, your cities, islands, castles, towns, councils, the palace, senate and forum, we have left you only your temples." And he adds, that should the Christians withdraw in a body from the Empire, the world would be amazed at the solitude and desolation that would ensue.

Such is the testimony of the friends of Christianity—let us see how far these assertions are sustained by its foes.

About thirty years after the Crucifixion, Rome became the theatre of an imperial villany, which has scarcely a parallel in history. The emperor Nero became the incendiary of his own capital. To escape the odium of such an atrocity, he accused the Christians of having set fire to the city, and visited them with the most inhuman cruelties. Tacitus declares that those who bore

the vulgar appellation of Christians, derived their name and origin from Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, had suffered death by the sentence of Pilate: that for a while the dire superstition was checked, but it again burst forth, and not only spread itself over Judea, but was even introduced into Rome. Now no writer is more carefully guarded in his statements than Tacitus—none more sedulously free from exaggeration, and therefore we know it is no hyperbole in which he indulges, when he speaks of the “*bursting forth*” of the “superstition” as he would of the leaping flame of a conflagration, or the headlong rush of a torrent.—Nor would he characterize an inconsiderable number as a “*vast multitude*” within the very walls of the capital of the world. His account of the sudden revival, and triumphant progress of the Gospel, reminds us of the New Testament narrative of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the simultaneous conversion of the thousands of Jerusalem.

The elegant Pliny, governor of the remote provinces of Pontus and Bithynia, bordering upon the Euxine, found these distant regions so filled with Christians, that he addressed a letter to the Emperor Trajan, asking advice as to the proper mode of treating them. He complains that the number of the culprits was so great as to call for serious consultation; he declares that their superstition, as he characterizes it, had seized not only upon the cities, but upon the lesser towns, and open country; that the pagan temples had been almost deserted, the sacred solemnities suspended, and that scarcely any purchasers could be found for the sacrificial victims. Nothing asserted in the Acts of the Apostles more vividly illustrates the triumphant conquests of Christianity than do these statements of the pagan Pliny.

But it is needless to extend this testimony, either of the advocates or opponents of Christianity, with regard to its vast and unparalleled conquests in the primitive ages. It was of rapid growth. It was not slowly evolved from a germ like the Mythology of the ancients, originating in the dim antiquity of some remote and obscure tribe, to be developed and perfected by the accretions of long centuries,—but it sprang into being, and into vigorous maturity, before its enemies had any reason to apprehend its power or the impossibility of its overthrow. Or, to change the figure, it was not like the coral island insensibly emerging during the progress of ages from unknown depths of the ocean, imperceptibly rising above the surface, and expanding into a continent,

but was rather like the sudden vision of some newly-formed orb, springing fresh and glowing from its Maker's hand, and hung up in its symmetry and beauty to shine as a light forever in the firmament of Heaven. Certainly and delightfully true is it that CHRISTIANITY, with its celestial radiance, darted, as the beams of the morning sun from city to city, and from continent to continent, until kindreds, people, tongues, and nations, were blessed by the light, and warmed by the heat into a new and diviner life.

All the testimony which we have on the subject, from whatever source it comes, unites in illustrating the swiftly advancing and victorious march of Christianity to universal dominion. Its progress was signalized by the abolition of the corrupt and cruel institutions of heathenism, and by the establishment of order, harmony, and prosperity, in the place of misrule, dissension, and wretchedness. The bloody altars of superstition were overthrown. The temples of pagan deities were abandoned to solitude and decay. The most hallowed shrines grew mute—or as if smitten with sudden fear, uttered half-audible responses. Solemnly does the choral verse of Milton celebrate these desolations:—

“The oracles are dumb,
 No voice or hideous hum
 Runs thro' the arched roof in words deceiving;
 Apollo from his shrine
 Can no more divine,
 With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
 No nightly trance, or breathed spell
 Inspires the pale-ey'd priest from the prophetic cell.

 Peor and Baälim
 Forsake their temples dim,
 With that twice-battered God of Palestine;
 And mooned Ashtaroth
 Heav'n's queen and Mother both,
 Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine.
 * * * *

And sullen Moloch fled
 Hath left in shadow dread
 His burning idol of all blackest hue;
 In vain with cymbals' ring
 May call their grisly king
 In dismal dance about the furnace blue.
 * * * *

Nor is Osiris seen
 In Memphian grove or green.”
 * * * *

Thus was the advance of Christianity from zone to zone attested by the overthrow of idol gods and temples. And equally triumphant was it in conflict with *every* opposing force. At first ignored, then despised, then trampled upon by the civil power—it commanded respect—then inspired fear—then displayed its majestic might, and became terrible as an army with banners. It stretched forth its resistless hand, and took to itself the power. It enrobed itself in the imperial purple. The banner of the Cross floated from the dome of the world's capitol, and the triumphant Church placed upon her brow the diadem of the Caesars. The last page of Eusebius glowingly depicts the blessedness of the reign of Constantine, under whom had been extended the dominion not of pagan but of Christian Rome from the rising sun to the last borders of declining day, while his exulting subjects in chants, and hymns, extolled God the universal King, and gave him glory for the victories of his church.

But when we have asserted and illustrated the simple fact that Christianity did thus rapidly attain to universal diffusion, we have only entered upon the threshold of the subject. If we wonder at the celerity of its propagation, much more will our wonder be excited when we come to contemplate the numerous and formidable obstacles which opposed its progress—when we consider how every earthly influence combined to prevent its extension, how all the prejudices and powers of the world conspired for its annihilation, while there were no visible agencies at all adequate to the production of a result so stupendous, as its advancement from victory to victory, until it achieved the conquest of the world.

There is indeed one satisfactory method of accounting for the success of Christianity, viz.: by ascribing it to that power which built the worlds. But setting aside for the present this single method of explaining its triumphs, its success becomes the most inexplicable of all wonders.

Christianity is *now* an existing fact. We can review its history—we can trace its entire career from its origin, through all its struggles and victories, down to the present hour. But were our *stand point* the beginning of the 1st century, instead of the middle of the 19th century of the Christian era, and were we from *that* point of observation required to estimate the probabilities of its success, by all the modes of reasoning known to man, we would be forced to the conclusion that it never could prevail. Our verdict would be that its success would be contrary to all the

laws of mind, to all the experience of the past, to all the relations of cause and effect. There was a time when this *was* the verdict of all who had heard of the pretensions of Christianity, with the exception of a dozen obscure and illiterate individuals in the land of Judea. Even had Christianity commenced its career by adapting itself to the natural passions of the human heart—had it sought to allure men by the proffer of earthly power, wealth and pleasure—had it imposed no restraints and required no sacrifices—had it been advocated by philosophers and orators—had genius, art, and fashion lent it their fascinations—had rank and power afforded it their countenance and support, even then, in a world composed of nations and races so dissimilar in intelligence, tastes, interests, and habits, we could hardly have anticipated its universal prevalence—for when have all mankind agreed in any opinion, or become simultaneously subject to the same influence? Said Celsus, one of the early fathers of skepticism, "A man must be very weak to suppose that Greeks and barbarians can ever unite under the same system of religion!" But we proceed to show that Christianity, so far from possessing such natural attractions and adventitious aids as have been alluded to, commenced its career with pretensions, with demands, with advocates, with prospects, all calculated to excite scorn and opposition—calculated to bring it into direct and fierce collision with all established opinions and venerable institutions—with all the philosophy of the learned, with all the creeds of the superstitious, with all the jealousy of governments, with all the enmity of the natural heart, while the agencies employed for its extension were, to human appearance, not only *feeble*, but *repulsive*, and *despicable*.

The very birth-place of Christianity was inauspicious. The Jewish nation was the most unpopular branch of the human family. Their land was the Bœotia of the world. It was regarded as the native home of fanaticism, bigotry, and detestable superstition. We may learn from Tacitus in what estimation the Jewish people were regarded by their neighbors. He stigmatizes them as a race excessively depraved, prone to lust, and accounting no abomination as unlawful. He declares, that what others deem sacred, they reckon profane, and what others abhor, they freely tolerate. Now, a religion emanating from a people regarded with such aversion by the rest of mankind, would be prejudged and condemned without an investigation.

But how could Christianity originate among the Jews them-

selves? It is true that about the time of the birth of Christ there was among them a very general expectation of the advent of some extraordinary personage, whom their Prophets had denominated Messiah. In glowing terms they had described him as a mighty conqueror who should deliver his people from foreign domination, impart new splendors to the throne of David, and extend over the world the sceptre of universal empire. Hence the Jews, from whom civil independence was now departing, eagerly seized upon such declarations, and giving to them a literal interpretation, revelled in the anticipation of the national supremacy and glory to which their deliverer would exalt them. And although their Prophets had also spoken of the humiliations and woes of their Messiah, they would have readily forgiven him any failure in fulfilling *these* predictions, had he but possessed the power to elevate them to that temporal aggrandizement which they coveted.

But when they saw him enter their capital without pomp or pageantry, surrounded by publicans and fishermen, instead of a splendid retinue of courtiers, followed by the poor, the blind, and the halt—how great was their disappointment and chagrin—how bitter their derision of his kingly pretensions! Nazareth was his reputed home, and Galileans his chosen associates—but Nazareth and Galilean were names of reproach even in Jerusalem. A Nazarene our Messiah! A Galilean our King! No, exclaimed they, this is not he; when Christ cometh no man knoweth whence he is. Is not this the *carpenter's* son? And above all, when they saw him unresisting and deserted—spat upon, and derided—and then led away to ignominious crucifixion, they regarded this as a fit termination for so miserable an imposture. “AWAY WITH HIM!” “Crucify him.” “Let his memory perish!” And yet—astonishing to relate, and strangely true—multitudes of those who had joined in this cry, and who had witnessed his death on the cross, in a few days after, under the preaching of Peter, an obscure Galilean fisherman, were cut to the heart, and openly—exultingly—professed faith in the crucified Jesus, and became his devoted disciples!

How is this mighty revulsion of feeling, this total change of life, to be accounted for? How came it that the deep-rooted prejudices of thousands were annihilated in a twinkling, or exchanged for admiration and love stronger than death?

These very men had doubtless witnessed many of the wonder-

ful works of Christ—they had been spectators of his affecting death—they had seen the heaving of the rocks, and felt the quaking of the earth, and had been shrouded in the preternatural darkness: and was the preaching of the darkened heavens, and of the bursting tombs, and of the trembling earth, and of the Saviour's dying groans, less eloquent than the preaching of Galilean Peter? Surely not. How, why then, were the Jews *now* convinced? What overpowering spell so suddenly conquered their wilful prejudice, their determined unbelief? Surely here is mystery wholly inexplicable by all natural causes. Was it a mere human power, which thus conquered them? Then it was a human power also, which cleaved the rocks, and shook the earth, and clothed the sun with darkness.

Such was the first triumph of Christianity. But the heralds of the Cross do not confine their labors to Palestine. They visit pagan lands. They proclaim the resurrection of Christ, and the doctrine of salvation through him alone, to the most *barbarous*, and to the most *enlightened* nations of the Gentile world. They seem to make no distinction between savage and civilized people. They evince no preference for any particular field of labor, but visit with equal readiness the most refined and polished cities, and the most benighted and barbarous provinces. They are as confident and courageous in the proudest capital as in the obscurest hamlet. The early champions of the Cross did not hover about the outskirts of civilization, like *Cossacks* around the camps of disciplined armies, only to make sudden and irregular assaults—and then to flee to the wilds of the desert! It would indeed have been a suspicious circumstance, if Christianity had evinced a preference for the haunts of ignorant and savage tribes, and had it selected *these*, as the theatre of its first aggressions. Untutored and unreflecting men might easily have been made the dupes of an imposture, however base and impudent. But on the contrary—in the words of a venerable divine—"In this respect Christianity stands upon high vantage ground. Its Author first announced himself to an age celebrated in story and immortalized in song. His Apostles travelled over classic ground. They established churches in the land of Euclid, of Aristotle and Longinus; of Demosthenes, Solon, and Lycurgus: of Homer and Pindar, Atticus and Cicero, Sallust and Livy, Horace, Ovid, and Virgil." It was the Augustan age—an age distinguished for its constellation of poets, orators, and statesmen—an age eminent

among all others for its inquisitive researches, its ingenious disquisitions, its vast and varied erudition, its bold speculations, and unfettered freedom of opinion. Not only were Ephesus and Antioch, and other renowned cities of Asia, honored by apostolic labors, but another city—more renowned than all—a city where the merchant found his exchange, the student his university, the artist his studio—the pleasure-loving his paradise, and the wit his admiring audience—the classic capital of the most classic land—*there*, too, the Apostle proclaimed his message, in the hearing of the volatile, ingenious ATHENIANS (those true *Parisians* of antiquity)—and proclaimed it too with just as much confidence and expectation of success, as if, instead of the Areopagus, he had stood in the cottage of some Galilean fisherman! Nor did his labors terminate until his desire to see ROME also, was gratified,—until Cæsar's household heard from his lips the story of the Cross.

But what popular *doctrines* do the Apostles proclaim, as they journey from city to city, and from province to province, captivating and entrancing one quarter of the globe after another? How contrary to all that we might anticipate is the answer! Doctrines *most unpalatable* and *offensive*. The great burden of their proclamation is salvation through the merits of a crucified Jew!

We have already adverted to the estimation in which the Romans held the Hebrew race. And if such was their contempt and aversion toward that whole people—now that they were in the very act of wresting the sceptre from Judah, how could they be induced to acknowledge a plebeian of that nation, as a king,—a plebeian despised and rejected by the vast majority of his own countrymen?

Had Jesus been still living—had he advanced toward the capital, as an ambitious warrior at the head of a brave army—Romans might have respected him as a gallant foe; still the temple of Janus would have been thrown open, and mail-clad legions would have marched to meet the invader. But if no greater honor than *this* could have been shown him, how could the Romans, ignorant of prophecy and of the spiritual nature of his kingdom, receive him as a King and Saviour? Would they not despise him and deride his pretensions, even more than his own countrymen did previous to the day of Pentecost?

Accustomed as we have ever been to associate the Cross with all that is sacred and venerable, we can have no conception of the disgust which would arise in the Roman mind, at the proposal to

elevate a crucified man to the rank of a Divine Saviour—and withal a crucified *Jew*—a Jew who was born in a stable. What witticisms, what jeers, what scoffs would overwhelm the advocates of such a Divinity. No wonder that a Roman governor should have charged one of them with being “mad.” Should some one in this land assert the Godhead of an Indian who had been hanged upon a gallows, he would not more offend the moral sense of the community, than did this doctrine of the Apostles, the proud and polished people to whom it was addressed.

But what doctrines did the Apostles proclaim which were *not* opposed to the sentiments of the natural heart? It is no compliment to a man to tell him that he is totally depraved, utterly helpless, and justly condemned. It is an impolitic way to attempt to gain adherents to a cause by demanding of them heavy sacrifices, and painful self-denials. And no system of human invention, seeking the suffrages and applauses of the world, would have demanded as its *first* requirement, self-crucifixion, and a renunciation of all that is most dear to the natural heart. Yet such were the exactions of Christianity. It was never offered to men as a speculative creed, intended merely to occupy the intellect,—but it was urged as a rule of action, to control the outer and inner life of man—to regulate not only external conduct, but to prescribe imperative laws for the government of the thoughts, desires, and affections—condemning ambition, avarice, envy, intrigue, carnal ease, sensual indulgence,—and enjoining meekness, temperance, forgiveness, love to God, love to man, love to *enemies*, purity of life, holiness of heart.

Almost every precept of Christianity imposes a restraint, or demands the mortification of some passion or inclination of the heart.

By nature, man is proud and self-sufficient—Christianity declares him to be weak and dependent, and incapable of self-guidance. Though man is naturally obstinate and self-willed, Christianity demands the subjection of every faculty and power to the law of another. Though man is naturally selfish and intent on the gratification of his own wishes, regardless of the happiness of others, Christianity enjoins a philanthropy which is wholly disinterested, it demands a sacrifice of personal ease and interest for the promotion of the good of others, and ordains a charity which shall embrace in its arms the whole family of man. Though man is by nature prone to retaliation under a sense of

wrong—though for the moment revenge is sweet when it is glutted by the destruction of its victim, yet even when the bosom is swelling with rage—when furious passions lash the soul into a tempest, and drown the voice of reason—even then, the clear celestial tones of the gospel are heard, rising above the din of passion, saying, “Peace, be still.” “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath.” “If thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him drink !”

When Homer gave to the world his portraiture of the most renowned hero of antiquity—the prominent traits of whose character the great Latin bard has summed up in one nervous line,

“ Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,”

—epithets which might furnish names for four devils—he did not offend the moral sense of his countrymen by such a delineation ; neither was Greek nor Roman admiration of the character of this warrior diminished, even when he is represented as dragging the dead body of his gallant rival—bound to his chariot wheels—three times around the walls of Troy, and that too in the sight of his aged father.

How foreign to all the genius and spirit of the age which witnessed its triumphs, were the teachings of the Gospel. Plain unlettered men, without wealth, or rank, or influence (and with one or two exceptions), without address, or eloquence, went abroad proclaiming doctrines most novel, startling, unpalatable. “A crucified Christ was all their rhetoric,” and yet no doctrines ever promulgated, before or since that day, met with such universal favor—no teachings ever so penetrated and transformed human hearts, none ever gained a popularity so world-wide. But did Christianity obtain its unlimited supremacy over the hearts of men, did it triumph over principalities, did it ascend a throne, and issue its undisputed edicts to the subjugated nations—by forbidding all that corrupt humanity craved, by enjoining all that corrupt humanity was averse to—by waging war of extermination upon every depraved, and therefore cherished, passion, prejudice and propensity ? Leaving out of view the intervention of divine power, here is an enigma to be solved by some more gifted intellect than the world has yet been favored with.

Another obstacle to the progress of Christianity, was its *uncompromising exclusiveness*. It refused to come under the patronage of any other religion. It refused to take any other religion under

its patronage. It would not even enter into a friendly alliance. It would not even make a treaty of peace. It proclaimed eternal warfare upon every other faith. Its Janus was never to be closed while an enemy survived. It demanded the overthrow of every altar and temple of Paganism. Its aim was a total abrogation of all the religious systems of the world. It demanded the utter annihilation of institutions which the revolution of ages had rendered venerable and sacred in the memories of men. Claiming to be the only true religion, it would not receive the false into its embrace. To every proposed affiliation, its genius replied,—what communion hath light with darkness—what concord hath Christ with Belial? It declared to Paganism that its priests were jugglers, and its gods a lie. It declared to Judaism, that its mission had ended—that its glory had departed—that it was now only the worthless scaffold around some completed palace, and as such, fit only to be thrown down. It declared to the sage, that his profoundest speculations were vain janglings. It ranked the Epicurean with the beasts, and the Stoic with the stones of the field. It estimated the wisdom of the Scribe as lighter than vanity. It denounced the sleek and sanctimonious Pharisee as a disguised hypocrite, and rent in fragments the reverend garments whose hem men had stooped to kiss, and exhibited the wearer to the world, as a naked child of the Devil.

Such was the attitude which Christianity assumed toward the time-hallowed systems of the world. Such was the attitude of a novel religion—one which sprung from a subjugated people—whose founder was a carpenter, and whose greatest apostle was a tentmaker.

Far easier is it to change the kings than the gods—the government than the religion of any nation. Did exclusive, uncompromising, all-assuming Christianity adopt the right *policy* for effecting such a change?

Nor are we to suppose that Polytheism had a slight hold upon the affections and prejudices of men. It commended itself to the favor of the sensual by the indulgence it permitted. The fires of unhallowed lust were kindled upon the very altars of Paganism. It commended itself to the imagination of the refined, by the beauty of its mythology. It placed genial household gods beneath every roof. It animated all nature with propitious deities. It gave Naiads to every fountain, and Dryads to every grove. Aurora rode upon the beams of the morning, and Iris

clothed herself in the melting hues of the rainbow. Old ocean obeyed its trident-bearing God—the voices of spirits were heard along its flashing waves, and sportive Nereids gambolled upon its yellow sands.

It commended itself to the taste of the common people by its gorgeously attired priests, its showy temples, its jocund festivals, its stately processions, and brilliant ritual services, rendered more attractive by all the charms derived from an alliance with music, painting, and sculpture. How seemingly hopeless the aggressions of Christianity, without imposing rites, without altars, without sacrifices, or visible gods—and utterly devoid of all external attractions.

How can a religion of faith—a purely spiritual religion, overturn systems venerable for antiquity—deeply entrenched in prejudices of men—endeared by association—upheld by the homage and personal devotion of statesmen and warriors, who felt honored in exchanging the gown and the armor for the sacerdotal vestments, that they might personally assist in the sacred ceremonies? How shall a superstition commending itself to the bosoms and business of men—pervading all the ramifications of social life—interwoven with all the departments of government—under whose auspices Greece had attained her highest heaven of classic renown, under whose favoring smiles Rome had achieved the conquest of the world—how shall a system thus founded, and thus supported, be supplanted by an upstart faith which does not offer one attraction to worldly pride, pleasure, or glory, but which on the contrary, summons its votaries to a life of mortification and self-denial—to obloquy, and the ruin of all earthly prospects,—whose open confession is, “*If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable!*” With prospects like these, what earthly possibility is there of its triumph over the firmly established and fondly cherished institutions of Polytheism? Experience answers—reason, common sense answers, it cannot prevail—it must perish:—nevertheless it did prevail—it did triumph. It scattered Polytheism to the winds—it sent its idols to the moles and the bats—it laid its proudest temples in the dust, and on the ruins of the fallen fabric, it planted the immovable foundations, and reared the eternal pillars of the Christian Church. Is this august structure the work of human hands? A stone-mason can build a wall—but does it therefore follow that he can build a world?

We have now considered the obstacles to the success of Christianity arising from its innate offensiveness to human taste, prejudice, and reason, its failure to meet the exalted expectations of the Jews, the absurdity of its doctrines in the estimation of enlightened Pagans, the startling novelty of its precepts, its want of temporal rewards for its votaries, its unattractive spirituality, its destitution of all such sensuous charms as would captivate the vulgar, its uncompromising exclusiveness, and determined hostility to every other religion, and now it only remains to contemplate its triumph over one other obstacle, viz. over *the active external opposition* which it encountered on all sides—the desperate efforts of its enemies for its overthrow by means of slanderous tongues, and slanderous pens, and the dreadful sword of persecution.

The success of Christianity under *persecution* is a strange, and deeply interesting phenomenon. It would be impossible to specify all the forms of assault to which its enemies resorted. Wherever Christianity appeared, it excited the rage of various classes and orders of men, who opposed it from widely different motives.

Professing to be a universal religion, its proclamations must needs go throughout all the earth, and be heard in the ends of the world. Its voice must mingle with the soft murmur of the Mediterranean waves, and with the hoarse tempests which thunder along the bleak shores of the frozen sea. It must come in contact with every phase of human character, as varied by different climates, degrees of civilization, and forms of government, and hence it must excite an opposition as diversified as the abodes, customs, and interests of mankind. But for the present, leaving this extended field of observation, and confining our attention to the fortunes of Christianity in the Roman Empire alone, we can readily anticipate what a host of foes its aggressions would stir up among that people. Polytheism was the munificent patron both of the fine and mechanic arts. It gave employment to the painter, to the poet, and to the humblest artisan. It gave honor and emolument to the vast retinue of priests and officials in the service of the gods of every shrine and temple. It gave entertainment to the countless multitude in whose minds alternate emotions of awe, pleasure, and exultation, were enkindled by public games, processions, and festivals.

An innumerable sacerdotal throng of Pontifices, Augurs, Vestals,

and Flamens, derived their support from the revenues of the temples, and from the public treasury. But should the doctrines of Christianity prevail, who would believe their venerable lies? Who would make them donation visits? Whence could they obtain bread, the impostures of their craft once exploded? It is not agreeable either to a mercenary politician, or priest, to lose office. As a matter of course, all the satellites, and retainers, and dependants of Paganism would rouse all their energies to resist the inroads of the gospel, which took away at once their credit and their means of subsistence. The common people would be enraged at the loss of their favorite entertainments. The philosophers would gnash their teeth against a system which closed their schools, and rendered their teachings contemptible. The higher classes of society, men of rank and influence, senators and soldiers, men who derived new distinction by officiating at the ceremonials of religion, would indignantly frown upon a faith which mocked at their divinities and solemn mysteries. Kings and magistrates would regard with mingled fear and detestation such an overturning of the religion which was incorporated with the state, which was sustained by proscription and prejudice, which was so interwoven with the civil and military institutions of the country, that no warlike expedition could be ordered, and not even a seat taken in the senate, without accompanying religious ceremonies. Hence Christianity was regarded as *treason* against the state.

We cannot wonder, therefore, at the variety or the virulence of the assaults made upon so restless an agitator. The foulest slanders were verbally circulated, accusing Christians of dark, impure, and bloody rites. The acutest and most brilliant writers employed all their learning and cunning to bring Christianity into contempt. Among others, Celsus, Porphyry, Symmachus, and the Emperor Julian, wrote treatises, fragments of which have come down to us, from which we learn, that although they did not deny the miracles of the gospel record, yet they assailed Christianity with a malignity which rivalled the ingenuity of Spinosa, the wit of Voltaire, and the ribaldry of Paine.

But the final appeal of terrified and tottering Paganism was to the power of the government. The Roman monarchy, the greatest and strongest upon earth, directed all its might toward the overthrow, and if possible the extinction of the Christian Church.

A certain class of writers have indeed endeavored to create the impression that the Roman government was wonderfully liberal

and tolerant toward the religions of other nations. But a closer examination into the best authorities on the subject will lead us to a very different conclusion. It is true that some of the emperors were disposed to be lenient and indulgent. There were intervals during which the Church enjoyed seasons of comparative tranquillity. It is also admitted that *individuals* were permitted to express their sentiments with a great degree of freedom. For example, upon the stage, and in the writings of the satiric poets, the keenest ridicule was directed toward the thieves, murderers, and adulterers, facetiously styled the "Immortal Gods," and winked at, perhaps enjoyed by the magistrates themselves. The caustic irony of Plautus and Terence, the philosophic raillery of Cicero and Lucian might be indulged with impunity. It is also true that when the Romans wished to conciliate a particular people, they did not hesitate to express great reverence for the gods of that people. But Christianity was not the religion of any *nation*—but of a new sect. It was a religion demanding unconditional submission to its requirements, and refusing to enter into coalition with any form of idolatry. Hence, there was no motive, or policy, in treating *it* with conciliation. There was, on the contrary, everything to provoke jealousy and hatred. And when one of the emperors proposed to give Jesus Christ a place among the gods of the nation, the proposal was rejected by the senate.

Moreover, the Romans ascribed their greatness as a people, and the unexampled success of their arms, to the favor of their gods. It was the rhetorical boast of Min. Felix Octavius, that "because of exercising religious discipline in the camp, Rome had stretched her dominions beyond the paths of the sun, and the limits of the ocean." Hence, however theoretically tolerant of other religions there was often a political necessity for the exclusion of foreign rites. It was forbidden by law to pay religious honors to any deity, which had not been recognized by a legislative act. S. Æmilius Paulus, during his consulship, ordered the temples of two foreign deities, not legally recognized, to be destroyed. On several occasions the senate felt itself constrained to exert its power to prevent religious innovations. Livy quotes an eloquent speech of one of the consuls against foreign rites. Dion Cassius has transmitted to us a celebrated oration in which Mæcenas demonstrates to Augustus the danger of tolerating exotic religions, and even under the reign of Tiberius—that enemy of gods and men—the Egyptian ceremonies were prohibited. A Roman jurist

declares it to be a principle of their law, that those who introduced religions of new and doubtful tendency, if men of rank, were to be degraded, if plebeians, were to be punished with death! But of all the forms of faith known to the world, Christianity, for the reasons already mentioned, was most obnoxious to the jealousy of government. It could not be a *religio licita* of the Roman law. Its professors were liable to the charge of high treason. They were stigmatized as *irreligiosi—hostes Cæsarum, hostes populi Romani*.

Could any one unacquainted with the true nature of Christianity have foreseen the ominous clouds which were to gather around her, and the tempests of fire and blood which were to burst upon her, during the long night of her affliction, he would have deemed it impossible for her, even to maintain an *existence* upon earth—he would have predicted her speedy and utter annihilation.

In this our happy land, where none (*as yet*) dare lay trammels on freedom of opinion, and where the expression, *persecution for conscience' sake*, is hardly understood—since none have any experience of its meaning—we can form but an inadequate conception of the trials of those whose lives were liable at any moment to be terminated by bloody martyrdom—who in professing the name of Christ, provoked the wrath of principalities and powers—who had to pass by the stake on their way to the communion table. When the world respects the rites and institutions of religion, it is an easy matter to assume the name of Christian. But the profession of Christianity is a very different thing, when the official is seen disentangling the thongs of the knotted lash—when the headsman runs his nail over the keen edge of the gleaming axe—when the torturer stirs the fagots under the red bars of the iron griddle—when the executioner jags the nails, and clanks the spikes which are to mangle while they transfix the hands and feet to the cross—when the hungry lion howls round the amphitheatre—and famished dogs stand ready to gnaw the skulls which roll from the dripping scaffold—ah! then it is a different matter to espouse the cause which exposes its professor to terrors like these. But for the testimony of faithful history, we would not believe that Satanic malice could invent tortures, or that hellish cruelty could have been so unfeeling as to inflict torments, such as Christians of every age and sex were then compelled to suffer. It was not the *terror of death*—but the **DEATH OF TERROR**, which then

affrighted the soul. And if according to the testimony of Lactantius there were instances in which magistrates boasted that during their whole administration they had put no Christians to death, let Lactantius explain the secret of their boast, and inform us what credit is to be given to those who uttered it. He can teach us that there are punishments worse than death—that the most savage executioners are those who have resolved *not* to kill—that the most dreadful of all sufferings are those which are disguised under the name of clemency. “They give orders,” says he, “that strict care be taken of the tortured, that their limbs may be repaired for other racks, and their blood recruited afresh for other punishments!” Knowing that death would be a release to the sufferer, and that it would confer on him the glorious crown of martyrdom, and admit him to the reward of the blessed, “they inflict,” he adds, “the most exquisite pains on the body, and are only solicitous lest the tortured victim should expire!” So great was the variety of the tortures invented for them, that Domitius Ulpianus, a celebrated lawyer, wrote seven books descriptive of the different punishments that Christians ought to have inflicted on them. But if occasional instances occurred in which humane and justice-loving magistrates, yielding to the natural sentiments of pity, were willing, with Trajan, to advise that Christians should not be sought for, and that only such as *were* apprehended should be capitally punished—yet there were no such restraints upon the blind fury of the *populace*, whose appetite for blood was only whetted by each fresh view of the gory scaffold and the crimson sands of the arena.

But why should we dwell upon details which sicken the heart and harrow the feelings? It is sufficient to observe, that thousands upon thousands were the victims of those persecutions, and that the whole power of the Roman Empire, which had been sufficient to subdue the world, was exhausted in the effort to subdue the Church. And here a new phenomenon engages our attention. These persecutions, so far from extinguishing the Christian name and cause, served only to give to both new honors and triumphs. If power smiled upon the Church, it grew—if power frowned upon the Church, it grew still faster, and amidst indescribable terrors advanced with a heroism which could “smile at the drawn dagger, and defy its point.” Amid the dark glooms of persecution, there blazed forth the burning and shining lights of the world. The heroism of the soldier who fights in the pres-

ence of thousands, whose victory is celebrated by a nation's acclamations, or whose fall is hallowed by a nation's tears, is nothing to the heroism which supported the primitive martyrs through long months, and weary years of imprisonment, and which inspired them with a holy serenity when they stood upon the scaffold, surrounded, not by admiring and applauding thousands, but by the hootings and execrations of the infuriated rabble.

Do you wish for the most illustrious examples of unshaken fortitude which the world has known? Then search not for them on the bloody deck or on the embattled field—but go to the deserts to which the saints have been exiled—to the dungeons in which they have been immured—to the funeral piles from which they have ascended in chariots of fire, and there behold displays of true valor, infinitely transcending the bravery of those who seek the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth, or who rush on death, amid the clangor of trumpets, and the thunder of artillery!

The resignation of the martyr was no sullen stoicism yielding to inevitable necessity. It was not the savage pride of the Indian at the stake, who dies, and makes no sign of inward agony. It was cheerful acquiescence in the will of Providence. It was the deep and beautiful tranquillity of those who believed that to die in the arms of Jesus, was to live forever.

Like the trees which yield their precious gums, only when their sides are gashed—like the palm which lifts its head highest when the greatest weight is laid upon it—like the burning forest, which kindles with fiercer flame just as the tempest beats upon it—so Christianity, under the sword, under the heel, under the storm of persecution only the more mightily prevailed and grew. The good seed of the gospel had been sown over the field of the world, and upon that seed, the blood of martyrs fell like fertilizing showers—while over it the flame of persecution was but a torrid sun, quickening it into luxuriant development, and clothing it with a brighter verdure.

It is not Paul at liberty, but Paul in chains who bears testimony before kings, and as a captive makes converts in Caesar's household.

The enemies of Wiclif, years after his death, ordered that his remains should be disinterred and scattered. The more effectually to effect this purpose, his ashes were cast into one of the branches of the river Avon, and thus, says old Fuller, "this brook did convey his ashes into the Avon—and the Avon into the Severn—and

the Severn into the narrow sea, and this into the wide ocean—and so the ashes of Wiclif are the emblem of his doctrine, which is now dispersed all the world over.” So too in primitive times, the whirlwind of persecution scattered the good seed wherever there was a soil on which it could fall, and not only did it germinate in rich luxuriance on the banks of fertile rivers, and on the shores of sunny islands, but far away in the distant desert, there was the bloom and fragrance of the rose.

No arguments were so convincing as the patient sufferings of Christians, no miracles so overpowering as their prayers, invoking blessings on the heads of their tormentors.

Do mail-clad soldiers, inured to the atrocities of war, behold a young and beautiful female, possessed of all those charms which poets delight to celebrate, and sculptors to perpetuate, accused of no crime, but that of loving Jesus of Nazareth, do these men of iron mould, behold her driven through the streets of Rome stripped of her modest veil, scourged as she goes, and scarred with hot irons, until she sinks in the arms of death, with murmurs of pity and forgiveness upon her lips, and triumph in her eyes—then these before unmoved and prayerless men kneel down in the streets, and declare that if such are the victories of the Christian faith, they too are the disciples of Jesus, henceforth and forever—and there beside the body of the murdered girl, they swear allegiance to the cause for which she suffered martyrdom.

Does a little boy charged only with loving him who took little children to his arms and to his heart, clasp his hands together as he is fastened to the stake, and sing his infant hymn as the flames kindle around him, and pray to Jesus not to desert him in the fire—there too is a spectacle which makes iron-hearted veterans weep—which causes them to call upon the executioners to prepare the pile for them also—for say they, if a child can die thus exulting and go rejoicing to the skies in a whirlwind of fire—his faith must have come from the skies; let ours be such a death, and our last end like his.

Such was the result. The sword of persecution glancing off from the shield of Christianity, inflicted mortal wounds upon the body of him who drew it, and at last fell broken from the palsied arm which had wielded it.

Such was the triumph of Christianity over its mightiest foe. The Roman power, before which the nations had bowed in subjection, cannot overcome the fishermen of Galilee, but is conquered

by them. Historians have made the success of Alexander in subduing the Persian empire with an army of thirty thousand, the theme of their glowing eulogies—but what was this to the achievements of one little band of Apostles?

Christianity without arms, without allies, without wealth, without influence, without worldly allurements, goes forth from its lowly shed in Bethlehem—seizes upon Jerusalem, overcomes Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Alexandria, Rome—overturns idol, altar, and temple—sweeps away the religious formations of centuries—prostrates all enemies in the dust—places its foot upon the neck of persecution—ascends the imperial throne, and gives laws to the subjugated nations. Here is a mystery demanding a solution. Here is an effect, a stupendous effect, produced without any visible agency or discovered natural cause, at all adequate to such a result. Here is a consummation attained in defiance of all the ordinary laws which control the changes of society, in opposition to all the principles which govern the developments of human affairs. Behold the **CHRISTIAN CHURCH**—a symmetrical edifice—not a heap of building materials—but a structure, well cemented, admirably proportioned, and garnished after the similitude of a palace; exhibiting in all its parts evidences of deep design, and matchless skill, and resistless power. Whose hands reared these walls, yet strengthening, yet rising, waiting only for the capstone, and the accompanying shoutings of a multitude which no man can number? Who is the designer and builder of this temple? The Infidel as well as the Christian is bound to answer this question.

The Christian delights to trace in every polished stone, in every pillar and battlement of this august edifice, the handiwork of a Divine Architect. He clearly sees in all the mighty changes, and revolutions which Christianity has effected upon the earth,

“The unambiguous footsteps of the God
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds.”

And what is the response of the Infidel? We have it in the words of one who devoted the best powers of his brilliant genius, and the best years of his laborious life to the investigation. **GIBBON** has professed to solve the mystery of the triumph of Christianity, without the intervention of a God. To his solution infidelity has never suggested an amendment. With what success he has accomplished his undertaking we will proceed to determine.

II.

Were an infidel, possessed of the combined experience and cunning of all other infidels, to devote the best talents of his life to the elaboration of the most successful and irresistible method for bringing Christianity into disrepute, his deliberately matured and perfected plan would doubtless be *to write a history* of some prominent empire of the earlier centuries, in which he would introduce, incidentally, and with apparent respect, an account of the origin and primitive triumphs of Christianity. In the prosecution of his work, we would never find him directly denying the facts of the evangelical narrative, or openly assailing its doctrines, by argument or by ridicule, but contenting himself with placing the facts in such a light as to tempt his readers to question and deride them—avoiding all manifestation of a partisan spirit, and affecting the dignity of a candid and ingenuous inquirer after truth—carefully guarding against the appearance of prejudice and levity, yet under the guise of a grave and respectful witness, perpetually dealing in insinuations and a latent irony, provocative of distrust and merriment in the minds of others—never inventing calumnies, yet adroitly and with seeming reluctance retailing calumnies already invented—presenting in a plausible light the objections of the skeptic, and appending replies less impressive than the cavils—infusing a full measure of the bane, and but a small modicum of the antidote—too sedate to be witty himself, yet possessed of an ingenuity so rare, as to preserve his own gravity, and yet be the cause of wit in other men—never directly stating his own inferences, yet suggesting the train of reasoning which would inevitably lead his readers to make the desired inference for themselves—so cunningly summing up the evidence for and against the credibility of the sacred narrative, as to create an impression of his own impartiality, and at the same time to leave an overwhelming weight in the scale of incredibility—verbally admitting the divine origin of the Christian religion, yet exhausting all the resources of genius and erudition, in making it actually apparent that *secondary*, or merely human instrumentalities, were sufficient to account for all its triumphs! Such would be the most unanswerable, and the most dangerous of all assaults upon the Christian faith.

The author of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," brought with him to his task a combination of qualifications such as rarely falls to the lot of any historian. Possessing a mind stored with the choice treasures of ancient and modern learning, a genius singularly patient in research, a memory wonderfully retentive, an industry which never seemed to flag, united to a facility of expression which always rendered his meaning clear, notwithstanding a tendency to a style somewhat elaborate in its structure, and gorgeous in its coloring,—he chose for the exercise of these powers, a theme unrivalled in its dignity, and without a parallel in its dramatic interest. The result of his labors, was a history which for excellence of arrangement, comprehensiveness of design, and vividness of impression, entitles its author to rank among the most eminent historians either of ancient or of modern times. In the prosecution of a design so vast as that of representing by a panoramic view the decline and fall of the greatest power that ever bestrode the world—and then upon its ruins, the rise of new empires, and of a new civilization—events affecting nearly every nation of the earth, and requiring centuries for their enactment—it was impossible for the historian to overlook the influence of one mighty and ever-prominent agent in the development of these great issues. That "pure and humble religion" which he says, "insinuated itself into the minds of men," but which did not, as he states, grow up "in silence and obscurity," until its triumphs were complete, but which on the contrary, from its very birth, and in all places, aroused the passions and obtruded itself upon the notice of men—this new and powerful agitator, must have attracted his attention in every age and field of his investigations. A historian so philosophic in his character, could neither avoid the notice nor the explanation, of so singular a phenomenon. Christianity claimed a divine origin, and professed to owe its extension to a divine power. The historian was compelled, therefore, either to admit these assumptions, or denying them, to assign some satisfactory explanation of an anomaly, which, otherwise, would have remained inexplicable. The first, he does not presume directly to do. He nowhere explicitly denies to Christianity a divine original. On the contrary, to his own question, "By what means did the Christian faith obtain so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth," he replies, "To this inquiry an obvious and satisfactory answer may be returned, that it was

owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the overruling providence of its great Author." Had his inquiry been satisfied with this solution, and had he proceeded to illustrate the wisdom of divine providence in causing all human instrumentalities to subserve his plans for the government of the world, and for the establishment of the Church, then every Christian would have been grateful for the pious efforts of a great writer, making history the worthy vehicle of vindicating the ways of God to men, and of tracing his hand in all the changes which take place in human affairs.

But our historian having exhausted his candor by one admission, immediately proceeds to vitiate the force of that admission, by assigning certain causes merely secondary and human, with which to account for all the triumphs of religion, without the intervention of a God. If these natural causes are of themselves sufficient to solve the enigma, then a recognition of the agency of any *great first cause*, is a work of supererogation—and only confirms the propriety of the advice,

Nec Deus intersit nisi dignus vindice nodus.

Nor is this all. Our author having excluded all supernatural machinery from his drama, proceeds to impugn the characters of the acknowledged actors, and through them, the character of their principles. With a generous regret, accompanied by what would have been a *sigh*, had it not been converted into a *sneer*, he "must leave," as he remarks, "to the theologian, the pleasing task of describing religion arrayed in her native purity," while he himself discharges the more "melancholy duty of the historian, which is to discover the inevitable mixture of corruption, which she contracted during her long residence upon earth, among a weak and degenerate race of beings." And then in his severe and scathing exhibition of the corruptions and superstitions of Christianity in every age, he utterly confounds the boundaries between the Church and the world, makes the former responsible for the impieties of the latter, and imputes the errors of its professors to the imperfections of Christianity itself, which, he gently insinuates, may after all have had its birth in some Theological Utopia, whose golden age coincided with that of Pagan Mythology.

In all the covert and decorously-worded assaults of this writer, there is so little positive assertion, and so much latent insinua-

tion, accompanied with well-dissembled candor, that the difficulty of counteracting his dangerous policy arises not so much from what is boldly expressed as from what is evidently intended, not so much from his own recorded deductions, as from the inferences to which he adroitly leads the mind of his reader. This policy is unquestionably the perfection of infidel art. That brazen, rampant, domineering infidelity, which at once arouses and alarms every innate religious sentiment of the human bosom, and which excites all the enthusiasm of the popular faith, must, in the end, strengthen the cause which it thus rudely aims to overthrow; but that creeping, cringing, cunning thing, which deals in inuendo, and suggestion; which dreads nothing so much as manly, earnest inquiry leading the unbeliever to doubt his own skepticism; which insinuates itself along a tortuous and noiseless way, sensitive, watchful, crafty,

“With eye of lynx, and ear of stag,
And footfall like the snow—”

this is the infidelity which accomplishes its deadly mission before its presence is either dreaded or recognized.

It is painfully curious to observe, how a writer so singularly correct and impartial as Mr. Gibbon is, when uninfluenced by prejudice becomes uncandid and unfair the instant that Christianity is made the theme of his discourse. It is a singular psychological fact, that a man so little given to passion or prejudice, so beloved for his social virtues, so eminent for self-control, should, nevertheless, perhaps unconsciously to himself, exhibit to others a mental bias which leads him invariably to represent, at least one subject, through a colored and distorted medium. But however strange, it is no unaccountable phenomenon. There is an influence, not begotten by philosophy, which clarifies even the intellect, where spiritual truth is the object of its perception. There is a spirit which

“Doth prefer
Above all temples the upright heart—”

and which does *not* shed its illuminating power upon the understanding, when man's moral nature is not in unison with the divine. Gibbon does not present the only instance of a mind working vigorously and efficiently, when devoted to other subjects, yet displaying confusion, and strength unprofitably exerted, when

Christianity is the object of its contemplation. If the most convincing evidence of this moral inability to be candid and impartial when an uncongenial theme is the subject of consideration be demanded, we have it in the immediate change of tone and temper which we discover in our author, when he passes from the department of profane to that of ecclesiastical history, from the delineation of the character of a distinguished pagan to that of a distinguished Christian. He can find it in his heart to apologize for the superstition, licentiousness, and cruelties of paganism, but he scans Christianity with a severe and jealous eye. He waxes warm and eloquent in his eulogium of the noble bearing of the heathen soldier, but there is no impassioned burst of enthusiasm in his recital of the touching resignation, and undaunted firmness of the Christian martyr. The devoted allegiance, the all-sacrificing loyalty of the followers of the Roman eagles, fire his heart with admiration, and impart new fervor to his splendid diction, but he is frigid and insensate, or quibbling and querulous when he alludes to the zealous attachment, and death-despising fidelity of the soldiers of the cross. While the exploits of an Alaric, an Attila, a Zengis, or a Tamerlane, awaken all the magic power of his pen, he sees nothing noteworthy in the career of a Paul, a Stephen, an Ignatius, or a Polycarp.

Milman finely says, "The successes of barbarous energy and brute force call forth all the consummate skill of composition: while the moral triumphs of Christian benevolence, the tranquil heroism of endurance, the blameless purity, the contempt of guilty fame, and of honors destructive to the human race, which, had they assumed the proud name of philosophy, would have been blazoned in his brightest words, because they own *religion* as their principle—sink into narrow asceticism. The *glories* of Christianity, in short, touch no chord in the heart of this writer; his imagination remains unkindled; his words, though they maintain their stately and measured march, have become cool, argumentative, and inanimate. Who would obscure one hue of that gorgeous coloring in which Gibbon has invested the dying forms of Paganism, or darken one paragraph in his splendid view of the rise and progress of Mahometanism? But who would not have wished the same justice done to Christianity?"

But in the place of devoting his noble energies to the celebration of the virtues of confessors and martyrs—the *élite* of the earth—he gives his pity or his scorn to these, and reserves his

admiration for those who bounded all their aims and aspirations by the narrow horizon of life—and coming forth in the pomp of a diction that “dazzles to blind,” he seems to cast even the beautiful vesture of truth around sentiments false and dangerous.

With such address, and animated by such a spirit, he proceeds to exhaust the resources of his own gifted mind, and of infidelity itself, in the attempt to set in array such assignable human causes, as may forever obviate the necessity of referring the triumphs of Christianity to any supernatural power, by endeavoring to show that it was propagated in accordance with the ordinary laws which control human affairs, just as other systems and creeds had been, which had attained to great popularity and power among the nations. The spectacle of one enriched with extraordinary abilities, thus prostituting his genius to an undertaking so unworthy of such endowments, reminds us of a celebrated description, some of whose features, at least, we may apply to our distinguished author:—

“He seemed
For dignity composed, and high exploit,
But all was false and hollow: though his tongue
Dropped manna, and could make the worse appear
The better reason to perplex and clash
Maturest counsel.

Yet he pleased the ear
And with persuasive accents *thus began*.”

“We may be permitted,” says Mr. Gibbon, “though with becoming submission, to ask, not indeed what were the first, but what were the secondary causes of the rapid growth of the Christian church.” And he assigns as the first, “The inflexible, and if we may use the expression, the intolerant zeal of the Christians, derived, it is true, from the Jewish religion, but purified from the narrow and unsocial spirit, which instead of inviting, had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the law of Moses.”

It is conceded that the zeal of the primitive heralds of the Gospel was steadfast, ardent, undaunted by perils, and unconquerable by persecution; but there is not a shadow of a reason for deriving this zeal from a Jewish origin. The early advocates of Christianity belonged, most of them, to the Jewish race—but to ascribe the spirit which imbued them, as soon as they embraced a new faith, to their old principles, is as miserable an absurdity, as it would be to impute the hallowed enthusiasm of modern converts from heathenism, to their previously bigoted and intolerant

zeal for idolatry. The Apostles ascribed their fervor to their confident belief in the resurrection of Christ, and to their warm, constraining, entrancing love for him. But whatever its origin might be, its manifestations were very unamiable in Jewish eyes, for it was directed against Jewish as well as against Gentile prejudices, and was perhaps even more offensive to the Hebrew, than to the Greek or barbarian. The zeal of Peter would indeed impel him to the most active efforts for the salvation of his countrymen, but was it his fiery intolerance which made him so successful in gaining proselytes among them? When he stood in the very city which had witnessed the crucifixion of Christ, and addressed the very men who had enacted that tragedy, and said, "whom *ye* by wicked hands have crucified and slain," did the severity of the charge *frighten* them into faith in the victim of their rage? Or was there such an *attractive* power in this accusation as to bring over thousands of them in a single hour to the Christian standard? To derive such an effect from such a cause as the mere zeal, and above all the *inflexible* and *intolerant* zeal of the Apostle, would be a miserable *non sequitur*. The truth is, that neither the Jews who believed, nor the Jews who rejected, nor the Apostle who preached Christ, ever thought of ascribing such wonderful results to blind and pertinacious zeal. And when the Apostles turned to the Gentiles, although they were still so inflexible in their principles, and so intolerant of error, as to refuse either to accommodate the doctrines they proclaimed to the tastes of their hearers, or to adapt their forms of worship to the cherished preferences of idolaters, yet can it be supposed that this stern and unyielding attitude was calculated to conciliate the people toward whom it was assumed? Such a course was not only impolitic, but offensive to the last degree. Such have never been the tactics of false religions in making aggressions upon any people. Mahomet, indeed, was intolerant when the "Koran, death, or tribute," was his demand, but Mahomet preached at the head of an army, and cut his way through all objections with the edge of the scimitar. There is nothing more surprising in *his* rapid conquests, than in those of Tamerlane or any of the daring military usurpers who have so often changed the fortunes of the Eastern world. But the zeal of the primitive missionaries was not fortified or impelled by any earthly power. And exhibited in a character so unlovely as that represented by our author, without any adventitious aid, it must have disgusted and repelled. And if

the primitive Christians were, as Mr. Gibbon asserts, "not less averse to the business, than to the pleasures of this world"—if they "refused to take any part in the civil administration, or the military defence of the empire"—if they "displayed an indolent and criminal disregard to the public welfare"—if they would not tolerate the most innocent amusements—if, as he declares, "they shut their ears against profane harmony of sounds"—if affecting singularity in personal appearance and habits, they thought it sinful to "shave their beards," or sleep on "downy pillows"—(because Jacob had, some centuries before, reposed his head one night upon a stone.)—if they refused to mingle with the heathen either in the relations of business, or in the walks of social life, how was it possible for them to disseminate their religious opinions? What opportunity could they have enjoyed for making proselytes? What materials could their zeal act upon? How could it expend itself? Thus pent up, and yet raging, it must have consumed only the zealot. But if under such circumstances of grim seclusion, and non-communication, they *did*, nevertheless, by their mere zeal, succeed in proselyting thousands, there must have been some secret power in their zeal transcending the miraculous!

But Mr. Gibbon overlooks one important fact in his argument. He imputes this excessive zeal to the *weaker* party, and makes no allowance for the counteracting zeal with which it would be met by the numerous and formidable sects which, with one accord, bent all their energies not only upon the defeat of Christianity, but upon its destruction. Had Judaism, menaced with the overthrow of its venerable institutions, its splendid ceremonials, its imposing temple service, no conflicting zeal? Had Polytheism with its threatened loss of brilliant honors, and unbounded wealth, and gigantic power, no *resilient* countervailing zeal? Did both fall before the fanatical and intolerant phrensy of a feeble and despised sect?

We have already admitted that the propagation of Christianity was in a great measure instrumentally due to the energetic, persevering labors of its early advocates. But theirs was a "zeal" very different from the blind and mad phrensy which Mr. Gibbon has imputed to them under that name. It was a rational, well-founded zeal, tempered with charity, and attended by a regard for all the proprieties of life. While it was an instrumental cause—one of the subordinate agencies employed by Divine Providence for the extension of his Church, it was in itself an *effect*, produced

by a higher—the highest cause. It was the result of an unalterable conviction of the truth of Christianity, produced by a divine influence upon the minds and hearts of the heralds of salvation. Had it been anything else—above all had it been a mere emanation of senseless bigotry, it would have occasioned evils disastrous to the progress of religion. It would have been regarded only as raving fanaticism, at first amusing, then irritating, then exasperating. Had it been such a zeal as that described by Mr. Gibbon, it would for a time, have produced results exactly the opposite to those ascribed to it, and then being unsustained by any evidence of the truth of the system it advocated, it would of itself, like a fire unreplenished with fuel, have speedily burnt out. When was there ever so ridiculous a thing known, as for a rational man to change his favorite opinions, without any conviction of their erroneousness, merely because he came in contact with a more obstinate man than himself, of a different way of thinking? If headstrong and passionate ardor were sufficient to effect such changes, then, any Hotspur in controversy might obtain the victory over the most logical opponent, who chanced to be less stubborn than his adversary. Would Mr. Gibbon himself have abandoned his infidelity and become a champion for the Christian faith, had he been assailed day by day, by some unavoidable and flaming zealot? If so, it is unfortunate that this expedient was not adopted to secure the services of so accomplished a writer. Indeed he *was* pursued by Mr. Davis, of Oxford University, through all the devious paths of his great history, and by that ardent and pertinacious gentleman attacked on all sides, yet so far was this siege from making a convert of Mr. Gibbon, that, on the contrary, it provoked him to write a vindication of his history, in which he manifests no symptoms of conviction, and no kind regard for Mr. Davis.

Had the Apostles gone forth imbued with the principles, and governed by the policy, which actuated the disciples of Ignatius Loyola, instead of displaying to the world “an inflexible and intolerant zeal,” they would have adapted their teachings to the prejudices, habits, and even passions of their proselytes. They would have permitted them to retain their ancient superstitions, merely grafting upon them certain Christian rites and ceremonies. They would have profited by the credulity of the ignorant, and flattered the independent free-thinking of the educated—they would have been severe only upon the vices of the poor, and ever indulgent to the inclinations of the rich. They would have graduated their mo-

rality to the age, propensity, and rank of their neophytes. They would have imposed no heavy burdens either upon the consciences or callings of men—in a word, they would have made it a very convenient and pleasant matter to bear the Christian yoke. Had they not been penetrated and fired with the most irresistible conviction of their high and solemn mission, they never would have pursued the line of conduct which characterized their whole career, nor would their labors, severe and unremitting as they were, have been crowned with such sublime success, had they not been owned and signally blessed of Heaven. Their zeal was a divinely inspired zeal, and *mighty through God* to the pulling down of strong holds.

The second reason which our author assigns for the rapid propagation of Christianity, is, “The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth.” He specifies these favoring circumstances. One of them he declares to be “the universal belief that the end of the world, and the kingdom of Heaven were at hand”—the hourly “expectation of that moment when the globe itself, and all the various races of mankind, should tremble at the appearance of their Divine Judge.” But from whom could the early Christians have derived such an apprehension of the impending destruction of the world? Not from the Author of Christianity himself, for he, when speaking of the time of Judgment, expressly declares, “Of that day, and of that hour, knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in Heaven.” Nor could it have been derived from the chief of the Apostles, for his unequivocal language is, “We beseech you brethren by the coming of our Lord Jesus, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, nor troubled, neither in spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means.” He then proceeds to enumerate certain great events which must occur before the coming of that day—events, which are having their fulfilment even in our own generation. If the Apostle Paul had *no* supernatural insight into futurity, then he *accidentally* predicted a state of affairs which actually existed 1800 years after the prophecy was uttered. But if these coming events were supernaturally revealed to him, then he *could not* have been deluded by the belief of the speedy dissolution of nature, and his statements show how anxious he was to guard others from delusion.

Another of Mr. Gibbon’s “weighty circumstances” which he

supposes gave efficacy to the doctrine of a future life, was, the belief that the personal advent of Christ was at hand, (a millennium wholly unlike that which is *still* anticipated, when Christ shall extend his *spiritual* kingdom over all the earth)—“when the saints who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously preserved, would reign on earth until the time appointed for the last and general resurrection.” That such an expectation was in *existence*, is evident from the fact that some of the most eminent writers in the primitive church positively *denied* and *refuted* such a doctrine. But it was never taught by a single Apostle, nor generally received by the Church.

These “weighty circumstances” which Mr. Gibbon would convert into supports for his proposition, are themselves unsupported, and must fall to the ground. And as to the proposition itself, if no divine power attended the proclamation of a future life, what induced such multitudes to believe it? There being *no* associated circumstances arising from the delusions of men to give it efficacy, it was the simple doctrine of a future life, which myriads embraced. *Why* were they overcome by the presentation of this truth? What irresistible influence accompanied its publication? Are we to look back to the first cause assigned by Mr. Gibbon for that mysterious influence? Was it begotten by the “intolerant zeal” of the Apostles? Was this also potent in constraining a whole generation to embrace their revelations respecting futurity?

But our author overlooks some great *obstacles* to the spread of such a doctrine. The first is that the Apostles made this doctrine dependent on the resurrection of the dead.

In an age when the immortality of the *soul* was scarcely believed, no assertion could have been more provocative of ridicule and scorn, than that the *body* which had seen corruption, and returned to its native earth, would be revived, reanimated, and clothed with immortality. It was the annunciation of this doctrine which caused the Apostle to be regarded as a madman by the Roman. And when he visited Athens, whose inhabitants were ever eager “to hear some new thing,” he presented to their minds a novelty *too* strange and startling. When he spoke of Jesus and the resurrection, they characterized him as a “setter forth of strange *gods*.” So vague were their ideas of his meaning, that they seem to have regarded the resurrection (*Αναστασις*) as one divinity, and Jesus as another, and when more fully informed as

to the Apostle's meaning, they turned away in disgust from a tenet so incredible.

What! were they to be told that the bodies which had mouldered and mingled with their kindred dust, and then been dissipated by all the winds of heaven—that the bodies whose very *tombs* had crumbled to atoms, and vanished not only from the sight but from the remembrance of men—were to be raised to life again? Were they to be persuaded that the elements would ever disgorge the particles which they had swallowed up?—that not only the earth, but that the sea should give up its dead? that the forms of those who went down into the fathomless caverns of the deep, in the shock of battle and tempest, would emerge from their hidden chambers, and darken the blue bosom of the ocean as they arose to be judged with those who had slept in the earth? Would the warm pulses of life again throb in the scattered dust of Aristotle? Would Socrates, and Plato, and those ancient sages who had indulged rather in the fond hope, than in the confident belief of a future existence, again stand erect upon the earth, and gaze upon that sun which centuries ago had looked down upon their graves? No, a doctrine so startling and incredible was worthy only of mockery.

But there was another, and far greater obstacle to the prevalence of such a view of a future life as that presented by the Apostles. The *Heaven* which they revealed to the faith of mortals was no such Elysium as that which mythology had delighted to present; no flowery abode of sensual joys and pleasures ministering to the natural tastes and passions of men;—no Paradise where feasting and revelry ruled the hour, where black-eyed Houris reposed in every bower, and whose perfumed air ever vibrated with dulcet melodies, such as Mahomet promised to the faithful (and of which he permitted them to enjoy such large prelibations in this life)—but a world whose element was holiness, one which excluded all but the pure in heart, which did not offer one attraction to the covetous, the ambitious, the licentious, or the revengeful—one which could be attained only by a path narrow, rugged, and difficult of ascent.

Point out to men a heaven where the pleasures of sense may be enjoyed in a more exquisite degree, and enjoyed forever; a heaven to which *Dives* may go with his purple robes and rosy wine; where all the natural inclinations and unhallowed propensities may find unbounded gratification, freed from the restraints

of law and the checks of conscience ;—and men will rivet their eager eyes upon it, and if possible force the gates and scale the ramparts of a paradise so alluring. But discarding the doctrine of a divine influence, what could so change the natural heart of man as to cause it to aspire to the pure spiritual joys of a heaven like that revealed in the gospel? Whence did myriads obtain those tastes which gave them a relish for the hallowed enjoyments and employments of glorified beings? Whence did impure grovelling mortals derive those qualifications which prepared them for the exalted services of a world of purity, for the dignity and the dominion of kings and priests unto God? If such a heaven became attractive to the eyes and hearts of mortals, it was because their eyes were opened, by some divinely exerted power, to the perception of spiritual beauty to which they had been blind before, and their hearts to the reception and love of truths which otherwise had been objects of disgust and aversion.

But Christianity asserted the existence of a Hell. If its picture of heaven was not calculated to engage the affections of mankind, was there anything calculated to gain the *credence* of mankind in its representations of a world of torment and despair?

The ancients indeed prated of a Pluto and Tartarus, but before the publication of Christianity the belief in the future punishment of the vicious had almost become obsolete, not only among the learned, but it was openly denied in the forum in public arguments before the populace. This fact Gibbon admits, and forcibly states. "We are sufficiently acquainted," says he, "with the eminent persons who flourished in the age of Cicero, and of the first Cæsars, with their actions, their characters, and their motives, to be assured that their conduct in this life *was never regulated* by any serious connection of the rewards or punishments of a future state. At the bar and in the senate of Rome the ablest orators were not apprehensive of giving offence to their hearers by exposing that doctrine as an idle and extravagant opinion, *which was rejected with contempt* by every man of a liberal education and understanding." Such being the state of popular feeling, it is evident that before such an article in the Christian creed as the doctrine of a hell, could work upon the fears of men, it must be *believed*. But what is to compel their belief? The assertions of a company of ignorant, despised, itinerant Galileans?

If these humble fishermen had no other means of verifying

their assertions than their bare word, (and what was that worth, when made the vehicle of a most improbable and unwelcome statement?) would it not excite rather the taunts than the terrors of the proud Romans? Would it not exasperate rather than intimidate, when they observed how their deified heroes and sages were consigned to eternal flames, and that too for what they esteemed the most exalted virtues? And if it was true, as Mr. Gibbon asserts, that some of the early Christians were weak and wicked enough, loudly to rejoice in anticipating the torments of unbelievers, what reception would the whole community which witnessed such indecent and savage joy, give to the doctrine and its advocates? But it is notorious that these representations of futurity, improbable, and uncongenial as they were, *did* exert a controlling influence, a commanding power, over the minds and lives of thousands. What natural principle will account for a result so contrary to all that human foresight could predict? Have we not here another mark made by the finger of God?

The *third* cause assigned by Mr. Gibbon is, "the miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive church." Had he been pleased to say, the miraculous powers *conferred* on the Church, or *exercised* by the Church, then we could at once throw this reason out of the list, for miraculous power actually possessed, could have come only from God, and this would have been a *primary* and not a "secondary" cause of the success of Christianity. But apprehensive of such an inference, he hastens to throw every possible discredit upon the primitive miracles. With a Hume-like hatred of miracles he insinuates, although he does not assert, that they were the pretences of imposture, and he labors to make this impression on the minds of his readers by a variety of ingenious cavils and cunning suggestions, interspersed with a certain grave irony.

But let us bring the matter to a direct issue. The miracles performed by the Apostles were wrought by the power of God, or they were the legerdemain of cunning and wicked impostors. If they were produced by supernatural power, then they were real, and demonstrate Christianity to be of divine origin. If they were the impostures of men, could they have possibly escaped detection and exposure? If any one chooses to answer this question by asserting that simulated miracles have been employed successfully in imposing upon the credulity of men, as in the case of the pagan priests who made dupes of the multitude by their

lying wonders, we reply that there is no parallelism in the two cases. Pious frauds have never been successful except when they have been resorted to by a religion already in power, and when exhibited to the unenlightened multitude, already predisposed in their favor, and willing to be deceived. There is no analogy between such shams and the miracles of Christ and his Apostles. They went unattended by confederates, often alone, and always were surrounded by those whose prejudices were adverse, and not favorable. Their miracles were submitted to the scrutiny of envy, interest, wounded pride, and all the acumen which the most enlightened and skeptical nation in the world could bring to the investigation.

It is evident, then, that mere pretension to miraculous power would have been a suicidal policy: it would have been exposed and rebuked; it would have overwhelmed the already despised Apostles with ignominy; it would have annihilated the prospects of the infant Church. It has always been a ruinous policy when resorted to in enlightened communities, even when a powerful confederacy has been formed among the parties interested, to give them support and credit among the people. In the celebrated case of the alleged miracles at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, many circumstances conspired to give them the greatest possible *éclat* in the community. The memory of the Abbé was held in profound and affectionate veneration by the people. All the power of the adroit and influential Jansenists was concentrated in the attempt to give these miracles credit, and that too among persons prepossessed in their favor. And yet how simple a matter to suppress them! By order of the government, the tomb of the saint to whom these miracles were ascribed, was concealed by a wall, and then—the performance was ended! Soon after a placard was attached to the wall, on which was written the witty French couplet:—

De par le roy defense a Dieu
De faire miracle en ce lieu,

“By order of the King, God is prohibited from working any more miracles in this place.” The most stupid man could see the point of this epigram, for if these miracles were genuine, how could a brick-mason shut out Deity? But thereafter the ashes of the Abbé rested in peace, evermore. He could not work miracles through a wall.

After the most careful analysis of Mr. Gibbon's long disserta-

tion in support of his third "cause," we can discover but two propositions, with an *inference*, which he only hints at, but evidently hopes his readers will draw from the premises which he furnishes them. 1. If genuine miracles had been wrought by the early heralds of Christianity, men must have been convinced of its superior claims. 2. Miraculous powers were asserted by the primitive Church, but never really possessed. *Insinuated inference*—therefore, the Church grew because of the popular delusion that it was endowed with such power. A very unwarrantable and absurd conclusion, indeed, but such is the character and climax of our author's logic. We rest satisfied with another, and very different conclusion of the whole matter—that if the miracles of the primitive Church were *real*, they should have no place among Mr. Gibbon's assigned secondary causes; if they were false, they would have resulted in the extinction, and not in the extension of the Church.

We come now to the *fourth* of the enumerated causes—"the pure and austere morals of the Christians," which our author very properly ranks among the influences which gained for Christianity the respect of mankind. But the pleasure we experience from such an admission on the part of an adversary, is instantly checked when we find that in immediate connection with this concession, he retails the foul slander of their enemies, "that the Christians allured into their party the most atrocious criminals, who, as soon as they were touched by a sense of remorse, were easily persuaded to wash away in the water of baptism, the guilt of their past conduct, for which the temples of their gods refused to grant them any expiation." Mr. Gibbon condemns this calumny, and declares that it was a reproach suggested by the ignorance or malice of infidelity. Why then does he introduce it? How could he have been so unguarded as to jeopard his reputation for cautious prudence, as well as for candor, by resorting to a method of defamation *so common*, and so easily detected? It is an old and vulgar device to assail character by volunteering some malicious scandal, with the hope that it will make its impression, although the retailer of the libel attempts to screen his own character by disavowing all belief in it? And is it not easy to discover his motive when he adds in the same vein of pretended vindication, that "after the example of their divine Master, the missionaries of the gospel disdained not the society of men, and *especially of women*, oppressed by the consciousness, and very often by the effects of their

vices." The design of these insinuations, in such a connection, is obvious. As he could not deny the superior virtues of the Christians—affording as they do so powerful an argument for the truth of religion—he attempts to divert our attention from the elevated source of these virtues, by assigning low and ignoble causes for their existence, and by retailing calumnies calculated to diminish our estimate of their purity.

This habit of suggesting the malignant charges of others calculated to make an impression upon the memory, and to be associated with recollection of whatsoever things are lovely, pure, and of good report, we conceive to be one of the most criminal, and at the same time dangerous artifices of this historian. Were this of unfrequent occurrence, we might regard it as accidental, or fail to notice it altogether; but so perpetually does it recur, that whenever he makes any admission complimentary to the virtues of the early Christians, we *expect*, before the paragraph closes, to find something calculated to mar or defile the chaste image which had arisen in the mind.

While it is true that the proclamation of salvation through Christ, was freely made to all men, it is *not* true that the Apostles devoted themselves mainly to the reformation of the weak, the illiterate, or the abandoned.

They preached the same gospel, and its provisions were as necessary, to Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy counsellor, as to the wretched publican, to Dionysius, an Athenian judge, as to Bartimeus, the highway beggar, to Damaris, an honorable woman, as to Magdalen the sinner, to the treasurer of queen Candace as to the thief on the cross, to king Agrippa as to the jailer at Philippi. And if men whose crimes had been great, smitten with corresponding remorse, found in the provisions of the gospel a solace which they vainly sought in the institutions of Paganism, then this but invests the gospel with new glories. That single word, **UTTERMOST**, in one of the promises of the sacred Scriptures, has infused hope and joy into many a despairing heart. Terrible indeed are the scourges of a guilty conscience—fierce, burning, agonizing are the pangs of remorse. Men of old were tormented by demons, but what foul fiend ever tormented the soul like the demon-king, *remorse*? What are all the pleasures, the honors, the distinctions, the riches of the world, what is all the sympathy of friends, what all the endearments of love, to a soul racked with remorse? It permits no rest to the wounded spirit. It has made the unus-

pected man come forth and charge himself with crimes whose burden was too heavy to bear. It has compelled the judge to come down from the bench and take the place of the prisoner at the bar. It has made men prefer death—with all that lies beyond death—to a life maddened by invisible stings. It has driven men to rush unbidden on eternity, under the persuasion that its flames would be more tolerable than present anguish—that hell would prove a refuge, and damnation a release. Remorse cannot find any “expiation in the temples of the gods”—it defies all the consolations of earth, and mocks at their attempts to minister ease to the stricken despairing soul. To *its* victims the gospel alone can whisper comfort. It has a promise for the worst of men. The greatest criminals, when aroused to a sense of their guilt, are of all others, in greatest need of the consolations of the gospel. No wonder that such should avail themselves of a solace which Paganism could not offer. Ancient annals tell us of the restless anxiety which distracted Tiberius, of the phantoms of horror which haunted Caracalla, of the fearful visions which murdered the sleep of Nero—and other criminals of equal guilt, but less notoriety, have had their terrors too, which Paganism could not assuage. But no case was ever beyond the reach of “salvation to the uttermost.” There were converts from among debased and double-dyed transgressors. But Christianity did not go to the dens of infamy, and to the jakes of debauchery for her recruits. She found them chiefly among honest, industrious, virtuous poor. She never made selections among classes or characters. She uttered her voice in the streets, and her address was, “to you, *O men*, I call.”

But our author does not represent the virtues and the private lives of *any* class of Christians in an attractive light. Had the peculiarities of character, and of the habits of the primitive believers been such as he depicts, their exhibition would rather have extinguished than kindled the admiration of the world. In illustrating this view of his subject, Mr. Gibbon, according to custom, throws in so many dark hints and satirical comments, as quite to neutralize his admission with regard to the pure and blameless lives of the primitive Christians, and almost to stultify his own assignment of it as a cause of the diffusion of Christianity. He ascribes their exemplary deportment to most unworthy motives. He accounts for the sanctity of their lives by the smallness of their number, by the vigilant *espionage* which they exercised over each other, and by their desire to keep up the reputation of

their sect in the eyes of the world. In a word, he surmises that they abstained from sin rather through fear of detection than from love to virtue, and maintained their religious consistency from motives of policy and sectarian ambition.

In our author's sardonic merriment over their self-denial, their deadness to the allurements of sensual pleasure, their morbid tenderness of conscience, their immaculate chastity, their whimsical marriage rites, their occasional frailties, their spiritual pride, their aversion to business as well as to the amusements of society, —we have ample evidence of the inward derision and contempt which possessed him when he penned that acknowledgment of the pure and austere morals of the primitive Christians. It would be difficult to find in the writings of any infidel, condensed in so small a space, more disparaging reflections, bitter mockery, and derisive scorn, than Gibbon exhibits in his dissertation on the virtues of the infant Church. It is Mephistophiles grinning behind a grave-looking mask.

The *fifth*, and last cause which this historian assigns for the wide diffusion of Christianity, is what he calls "the union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an increasing and independent state in the heart of the Roman empire." Alas, that there should have been so little union in the Christian republic in any age. Even before the death of the Apostles there were numerous heresies, schisms, and divisions. If among the discordant voices of the first century there were multitudes heard exclaiming, I am for Paul, and I am for Cephas, and I for Apollos, so in all subsequent ages the Church has been vocal with the party watchwords of interminable sects arrayed under the banners of rival leaders. There has indeed been a delightful fellowship and bond of union among all evangelical believers, formed by their attachment to a common Saviour, but how could Gibbon seriously have ascribed to any organized confederation those rapid and unparalleled conquests of Christianity, which were achieved, according to his own showing, a hundred and fifty years before any such federative union was formed? Let us observe his own statement of the matter. "The societies which were instituted in the cities of the Roman empire were united only by the ties of faith and charity. *Independence and equality* formed the basis of their internal constitution." And then forgetting that he had made "the discipline" of the Church one of the great causes of its extension, in his zeal to

introduce something to its disparagement, he adds, "The *want of discipline* was supplied by the occasional assistance of the *prophets*, who were called to that function without distinction of age, of sex, or of natural abilities, and who as often as they felt the divine impulse poured forth the effusions of the spirit in the assembly of the faithful." But it is not the discipline, but the alleged federative union of the Church which now occupies our attention. What is his own testimony on the subject? "Every society formed within itself a separate and independent republic; and although the most distant of these little states maintained a mutual as well as friendly intercourse of letters and deputations, the Christian world was not yet connected by any supreme authority or legislative assembly." "Such was the mild and equal constitution by which the Christians were governed *more than a hundred years after the death of the Apostles*. But before one *half* century had elapsed, the gospel had spread not only throughout the Roman empire, but even to Parthia and India. It was not," says Mr. Gibbon, until "towards the end of the *second century* that the churches adopted the useful institutions of provincial synods," borrowing the idea, as he supposes, from the Amphictyon council, the Achæan league, or the Ionian assemblies. *After* this organization, "the Catholic church soon assumed the form and acquired the strength of a great federative republic." Now we need not consult Tacitus, or any pagan historian, we need not turn to church history, or to the sacred Scriptures themselves—we need only refer to Gibbon as our authority to be informed that the most splendid triumphs of Christianity were witnessed before any such federative union was formed, and yet he assigns this union as one cause of the rapid growth of the Christian Church! He is equally mistaken too when he refers this rapid increase to the strict discipline maintained in the Church. This might be effectual, to some extent, in retaining the members already within its fold, but how could the fear of ecclesiastical censures draw strangers and heathen into the pale of the Church? And even with regard to those who were already in connection with it, is it probable that the fear of ecclesiastical censures would be as powerful in keeping them within its fold as the fear of the racks and flames of persecution would be in driving them out of that fold?

These are the five famous natural or "secondary causes" of Mr. Gibbon, by which he seeks to explain the wonderful promulgation of the gospel independent of any supernatural agency. Some of these

assigned causes are wholly irrelevant; others are valid so far as they prove that Christianity was *greatly favored* by such circumstances, and such human agencies as God chose to make use of in establishing his Church; (for no believer in the Great Author of Christianity, doubts either that he adapted it to the world, or that he prepared the world by providential arrangements for its reception—compelling even “secondary causes” to further the great and glorious purposes of his grace;) but no candid man, with the simple facts of the case before him can be satisfied that Mr. Gibbon, with all his labored array of human instrumentalities has been able to solve *that mystery* of a church without worldly influence, wealth, learning, rank, or power, represented by men ignoble and despised—declaring open war upon all the vanities, vices, selfish interests, cherished propensities and deep-rooted superstitions of the world—yet triumphing over prejudice, argument, eloquence, philosophy, established religion, the sword of persecution, and finally clothing itself with the glory and the honor, the dominion and the power!

But make a single admission. Ascribe these victories to the superintendence and to the imparted aid of the Omniscient and Omnipotent, and then all wonder ceases—all mystery vanishes. Indeed, willing or unwilling, we are forced to this conclusion. There are no principles or causes of production and change in the worlds of spirit and of matter, which are not either natural or supernatural; but having seen that the former is insufficient to explain the phenomenon before us, we are forced back upon the supernatural.

Many of the causes enumerated by Mr. Gibbon were in fact *effects*—effects produced by a cause which it did not suit his purpose to recognize, and his method of explaining the creation of the Christian Church resembles the ancient Mythology which represented the earth as resting upon the back of a tortoise, but which did not inform us what supported the tortoise. Says Hume, “when we infer any particular cause from an effect, we must proportion the one to the other.” Here then is the great incontrovertible fact of a religion triumphant over a thousand obstacles, any one of which would seem sufficient to arrest its progress. To refer such an effect to a human cause, and above all to such feeble and inadequate causes, as infidelity with its best ingenuity has been able to assign, is certainly a shocking violation of the principle of the great skeptic. The *disproportion* is mon-

trous. A church resting upon its spire would be a novelty in architecture, but it would have as stable a foundation as that which infidelity gives to Christianity. Regarding the Christian church as an edifice whose maker and builder is God, we delight to contemplate the lofty spire springing *from* the temple, and pointing to heaven, to remind us of the Almighty architect. The divine influence to which the Christian ascribes the success of Christianity is sufficient to account for every anomaly, and adequate to the production of every effect. Sustained and developed by omnipotent power, we can see how Christianity, at first appearing as a twinkling star, surrounded by clouds and thickest glooms, should nevertheless increase in magnitude and splendor, and cleaving the surrounding veil of darkness shine forth as the meridian sun. Urged on by the hand that moves the worlds, it can understand how the greatest results were accomplished by the feeblest instrumentalities—we see that the selection of humble fishermen as the heralds of salvation, instead of men of rank, and genius, and eloquence, was because “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence,” and that the power might be seen to be of God. Plain men convinced by the miracles which they saw Christ perform of the truth of his doctrine, and able to convince others of the same truths, by the miracles which they wrought—with love to God and love to men throbbing in every pulsation of their hearts, and sending the thrill of a diviner life through every limb, impelling them to all daring, never flagging action—men thus inflamed and thus nerved, went forth into the field of the world, and sowed the good seed which has never perished, and from which thousands in all generations have reaped the harvest of life everlasting.

The *primary* cause of the success of Christianity was the operation of the Divine Spirit on the minds and hearts of men, giving to them spiritual perception—subduing their opposition to the truth, and endowing them with the expulsive and impulsive power of a new affection. “Tarry ye,” said our Saviour to his disciples, “in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.” This was doubtless a trying command to men in their situation, certain of the resurrection of their Lord, assured that his kingdom would one day fill the earth with its

glory, and knowing that the salvation of the race depended upon the reception of the gospel offer. With such tidings to communicate, with such a glorious King to proclaim, they must have longed to advance, at once, to the prosecution of their work—but the time had not yet come. A new and peculiar influence must descend from heaven and rest upon them ere they could be qualified for the undertaking. As the statue of Memnon on the shores of the sea stood tuneless and mute, until the rays of the morning sun gilded its brow, so these heralds of the gospel had neither gifts nor tongues for their sublime proclamation until the light and fire from heaven should descend upon their heads, illuminating and kindling them, and causing them in turn to illuminate and kindle others. But baptized by this heaven-descended influence, though ignorant, they became wise, though weak, they became resistless, though timid, they became animated with a courage, which nothing in life or death could daunt. By this supernatural agency, they were endowed not only with the gift of tongues, but with the power of working miracles. And now their most extraordinary successes are no longer inexplicable. What though they are obscure, unlettered men, standing perchance in the presence of rank and power, what is to prevent them from elevating the humble cross, and challenging the admiration and love of beholders for a crucified Saviour, while they bear in their hands the credentials of heaven, and by signs and mighty wonders are able to display to the senses and inmost convictions of men the evidences of an Omnipotent and present God, bearing miraculous testimony to the truth and importance of their doctrine? What is there longer unaccountable in the success of Christianity, the moment that the Son of the lowly Virgin is demonstrated to be the Son of God, and when his poor, unlettered, timid followers, are seen to be girded with strength from on high? What is to prevent the triumph of doctrines which exhibit the impress of the same Almighty hand which has left its autograph on every leaf of the Book of Nature? Should all other miracles be blotted from record, this miracle of the swift and universal spread of Christianity would remain a monument of its celestial lineage, immovable as the everlasting hills.

And to the same power which gave to Christianity its first victories, must we ascribe its *preservation* in the world during so many centuries, and its present existence, power, and progress. There was a period—we need not now trace the path which led to it—when all that was pure, and spiritual, and divine, in Chris-

tianity seemed to have been swallowed up, and buried under a mass of dead forms and living corruptions—when superstition and ignorance brooded over the earth as darkness did upon the face of the deep when the earth was without form, and void. But Christianity, though disastrously eclipsed, had not been utterly extinguished. Deep beneath the smouldering ashes a brand from the altar lay buried. It was glowing unseen, like the internal fires which are smothered in the deep abysses of the volcano, presently to burst forth and shoot up their flames to the empyrean. Through all the dark ages the religious element was working, and though misdirected, as in the case of the Crusades, it was not annihilated. The word of God, though bound, was not utterly silent, and even when its whisper was heard, the still small voice was glorified. There were not wanting even in the bosom of the apostate Church, witnesses for the truth as it is in Jesus. Claudius of Turin, in the 9th century, and Peter of Bruys, Arnold of Brescia, in the 12th century, Pierre Valdo, Wiclif, Jerome of Prague, Anselm of Canterbury, and Savonarola, in later times, all testified against the abuses which had corrupted the Church, and above all the Vaudois formed a long-continued chain of witnesses for the truth, holding up the cardinal doctrines of the gospel even as the Alpine mountains which they inhabited lifted up their summits above the plains to be bathed in the pure sun-light of heaven. The Waldenses nestling in the valleys of Piedmont, holding fast to their integrity, served God in ancient purity of worship, and never bowed the knee to Baal; and even when the sword of the persecuting foe smote among them, they were not destroyed, but when scattered, went forth into all parts of Europe sowing the good seed of the word of life. It was the noble heroism of this band which inspired that immortal sonnet of Milton, so truly descriptive of their wrongs, and of the fruit of their sufferings.

“AVENGE, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
 Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;
 Ev'n them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
 When all our Fathers worshipp'd stocks and stones
 Forget not; in thy book record their groans
 Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
 Slain by the bloody Piemontese, that roll'd
 Mother with infant down the rocks. Their monns
 The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
 To Heav'n. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow

O'er all th' Italian fields where still doth sway
 The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
 A hundred-fold, who having learn'd the way
 Early may fly the Babylonian woe."

When at last the light of the Reformation blazed forth, it was evidently kindled by the same spirit which came down in tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost. It was not by might, nor by human power, that the Reformation was accomplished.

Various temporal princes resisted Rome, but one after another (to use the fine metaphors of D'Aubigné) they broke in pieces at the base of the mighty colossus they undertook to overthrow. Learning too awoke and came to the rescue, but learning became subsidized, and kissed the feet of the power it attempted to dethrone. At last the apostate church undertook to correct its own abuses, but corruption could not purify corruption, nor could the festering wound originate its own cure. But finally the regenerative power which erected the church of the 1st century on the ruins of Polytheism, built up its demolished walls on the ruins of Babylon. The divine oracles, so long imprisoned, again spoke forth, and the word was life and light. Pure Christianity revived. Old things passed away and all things became new.

Since the glorious era of the Reformation, Christianity has illustrated her indestructibility by coming forth unscathed from the assaults of other foes. Even under its noon-tide radiance, and in the enjoyment of the richest blessings which the gospel has communicated to the world, there has arisen an order of men whose hearts are filled with rancorous hatred to its doctrines, and who have exerted all their powers in the attempt to dislodge its truths from the memories and affections of their fellows. Casting aside the old weapons of force, the assault has been not upon the bodies, but upon the minds of men.* In this campaign Infidelity has marshalled all its hosts, it has sent forth its ponderous tomes of grave scholastic argument, it has come forth arrayed in the imposing garb of philosophy. It has assumed to itself all the panoply of science. It has mingled its dogmas with the voice of

* Some years ago, the author of this Lecture found some remarks on the various guises and atrocities of Infidelity (as he thinks), in a newspaper or magazine. Being pleased with their animation he carelessly copied, or rather made a running paraphrase of them, never expecting to use the paper. The general drift of these remarks he has endeavored to give above. Were it in his power he would quote them accurately and doubtless in a more condensed and striking form.

history. It has infused its poison into the fountains of literature. It has blended its notes with the sweet cadences of poetry. It has chanted its blasphemies in softest strains of music. It has crept into every house in the garb of fiction. It has shot forth the polished arrows of satire, and decked itself with the charms of wit and sentiment. It has borrowed the livery of heaven, and transformed itself into an angel of light. It has pretended to be the only true friend and ally of freedom. It has spread its lures for the feet of the aged, and stolen with velvet tread into the chambers of youth and innocence. Since the era of the Reformation, it has joined hands as did Polytheism of old with persecuting power. It has again drawn the sword, and kindled the fagot, and quarried the prison, and set in order its implements of cruelty. It has thundered its denunciations against the heralds of the gospel, and armed its myrmidons against the followers of the meek and lowly Lamb. It has abolished the temples of the Most High, attempted to raze the foundations of the Church, and to overwhelm in a tempest of fire and blood, all who professed to be followers of the crucified Redeemer. And still the Church survives, God being her refuge and strength, and very present help in time of trouble.

There is another and very different illustration of the "success" of Christianity, to which we would fain advert, viz. to its instrumentality in relieving human wants and woes, its amelioration of the wrongs and evils of society, the solace it brings to the wounded spirit, and its happy influence on the temporal prospects of men. Wherever it has gone it has rebuked oppression, repressed violence, and compelled vice, abashed, to skulk in darkness. It has given to us, as a nation, the free institutions which command the admiration and excite the hopes of the down-trodden in all lands. It has given to Christendom the power which it now exercises over the destiny of the whole world. While Infidelity is like the molten lava which, spouting up from the infernal depths of the volcano, overwhelming vineyards and human habitations in its fiery sweep, then settles down upon the blackened ruins, hardening itself to stone—Christianity descends like the gentle dews of Heaven, steals through the silent valleys, diffusing fertility and fragrance as it goes, causing the dry land to become springs of water and the desert to blossom as the rose, while before it sighing and sorrow flee away, and in its train come thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

The author of that admirable little work entitled "The Bible True," remarks, that "there are two effects produced by the word of God on the hearts of those who embrace it, which are peculiar to revelation. One is elevated purity. This effect is not confined to the virtuous part of mankind, but is witnessed also in the desperate, and outrageous, and lawless, who are brought under its power. Men fierce as wild beasts, as cruel as death, and ungovernable as the storm, have often felt its purifying power. This has been the case from the first. An early Christian writer says, "Give me a man of a passionate, abusive, headstrong disposition; with a few only of the words of God, I will make him gentle as a lamb. Give me a greedy, avaricious, tenacious wretch; and I will teach him to distribute his riches with an unsparing hand. Give me a cruel and blood-thirsty monster; and all his rage shall be exchanged to true benignity. Give me a man addicted to injustice, full of ignorance, and immersed in wickedness; he shall soon become just, prudent, and innocent."

Such was the testimony of one who witnessed the power of Christianity in the primitive age. Let us content ourselves with a single illustration of its influence in modern times, as exhibited in the following narrative extracted from an annual report of the Bible Society, issued some years ago.

"In 1787, the ship *Bounty* sailed from England to the Pacific in quest of young bread-fruit trees to be replanted in the West Indies. On her way home the crew mutinied, placed the master and eighteen others in a frail open boat, with scanty provisions, and committed them to the mercy of the ocean. Strange to tell, that boat accomplished a voyage of more than 4,000 miles and reached England in safety. The mutineers, twenty-five in number, set sail for some island in the Pacific. They quarrelled and separated. About half of the whole number were captured by an English vessel-of-war, carried home and hung in iroas. Nine of these desperadoes went to Tahiti, took on board nineteen natives, seven men and twelve women, and sailed for some uninhabited island in the ocean. They found one, Pitcairn's Island. Shortly after landing, the Tahitian men murdered five of the mutineers, upon which the twelve women rose at night and killed their seven countrymen. Of the four remaining mutineers, one invented a distillery, and becoming delirious leaped from a cliff into the sea and was lost. Another was shot for attempting to destroy his messmates. Of the two then left, one died a natural death, and the other, named

John Adams, alone survived. Here their hiding-place was undisturbed until 1814, when it was visited, as also in 1825. Strange alterations had taken place. The number of inhabitants had increased to seventy. There was no debauchery amongst them. Good order prevailed. Filial affection and brotherly love pervaded the entire society. The blessing of God was invoked on every meal. Prayer was offered every morning, noon and evening. The laws of civilized society were in force. The rights of property were respected. A simple and pure morality was prevalent. How was this? What had made the change? Had vice wrought its own cure? Had there been some good principles combined with the mutiny and murder, the heathenism and devilish passions, which this gang had been guilty of? No. These evils never work their own cure, except by consuming, like a fire, their own materials. The cause of the change was this. Adams had saved, hid and preserved a Bible, and when his comrades were dead, he studied it, embraced its promises, believed God's testimony concerning his Son, was converted, read and taught its truths to his family and neighbors, and God blessed his word to their conversion also. That very Bible is now in this country. It is a small volume, printed in 1765. The salt sea and the salt tears of old Adams have taken away its gloss and dimmed its print; but it contains God's testimony of Jesus. That was the secret of its power. The worm has eaten it through and through. But the glad tidings to sinners can still be read in it. That Bible has travelled round the globe, has been the means of reforming a whole community of outlaws, and still lives to proclaim its divine Original and its life-giving power. When Adams was brought to his death-bed, he was old in years, but strong in faith. The friends of the old salt collected around him and asked: 'Well, John, what cheer?' 'Land ahead!' was his characteristic reply. After a few days they again gathered around him and said: 'Well, John, how now?' He replied: 'Rounding the point into the harbor.' At last he lay upon his dying pillow, and his relations were standing all around in tears, and yet in hope. One said: 'Brother, how now?' 'Let go the anchor,' was his dying exclamation, and he fell asleep."

Having taken this general but extended view of the rise, progress, and effects of Christianity, we may be permitted, in conclusion, to cast a single glance toward the future.

We have seen enough to convince us that our holy religion is

indestructible in its nature, possessing within itself no elements of decay, but the principle of immortality. The shield of God is spread over it, and the bosses of that buckler are eternal truth and power. There let infidelity hurl its darts until with nerveless, withered, wasted arm, it abandons the contest, with the confession that such assaults are more idle than casting straws against the impenetrable scales of Leviathan. Its past history gives the bright presage of its future victories. Amidst all the revolutions of ages, amidst all the desolations of time, amidst all the changing, vanishing creeds and institutions of the world, Christianity still survives; and rises to the view as beautiful and glorious, as on the day when arrayed in its primal loveliness, it came down from Heaven to redeem and regenerate the earth. "Scrapis fell with Thebes, Baal with Babylon, Apollo with Delphi, and Jupiter with the capitol, but Christianity has often beheld the demolition of her sacred temples without being convulsed by their fall." It derives its vitality from Him who only hath immortality, and its shrine is not material walls, but the living heart of the good man. When its temples have been overthrown, and its disciples compelled to flee the haunts of civilized life, its hymns have charmed the solitude of the desert, its prayers have hallowed the damp walls of the dungeon, its sacraments have been celebrated in the dens of the earth, its most illustrious triumphs have been witnessed upon scaffolds, its brightest glories have blazed forth from the funeral piles of its martyrs. Other creeds have been like the clouds, for a time piled up in dizzy heights and bathed in the golden beams of the sun, while Christianity, like the sun itself, shines undimmed and unwasted, with none of its original glory obscured. Every day its expansive power becomes increasingly manifest. Its missionaries now traverse all lands, dare all climates, and tempt all seas.

With each returning Sabbath the praises of its exalted Author are murmured from ten thousand tongues; the strain is caught up from church to church, and from land to land, until the music goes echoing round the world.

And can we for a moment believe, that a religion so benign, so adapted in its provisions to the necessities and woes of the world, teaching sweet lessons of resignation under present sorrow, inspiring such joyous anticipations of future blessedness, can ever perish? No—these celestial hopes whose untiring wings waft the soul above all that is terrestrial, these sublime aspirations, whose

angel fingers point to the illimitable sky, and cheer the spirit with the foretaste of a destiny full of glory, honor, immortality, eternal life—oh no—these can never perish—they are heaven-born and indestructible. They can never be supplanted by a sullen, cheerless infidelity, which submits because it must, to inexorable fate—which has no prospects, but a cold, bleak world around, and a rayless eternity beyond—whose best discovery is, *a grave without a resurrection, and a world without a God.*