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Or if our Saviour had appeared as the possessor and distributor of immense wealth; if He had lavished bribes and bounties to induce men to embrace His doctrines, then the world would say: 'There is no miracle here, for men were drawn to the Christian faith not by 'the pearl of great price,' but by the gold which glitters.' But when we behold the religion of Christ established by the weapons of weakness, humility, and poverty, we are forced to exclaim: 'The finger of God is here.'

Replies to Gibbon.

The historian Gibbon was obliged to omit the wonderful growth of the Christian religion in the first three centuries. But he endeavored to explain the phenomenon on purely natural grounds. He ascribes the spread of Christianity to these five great causes: First, the indomitable zeal of the primitive Christians; second, their pure and blameless lives; third, their unshaken belief in the immortality of the soul; fourth, their alleged power of working miracles; fifth, their admirable organisation. There is no doubt, indeed, that these causes exerted a powerful influence on the propagation of Christianity, but I maintain that they were secondary and not primary causes. They were the effects of a great cause. If you behold a beautiful, placid lake in your travels through Switzerland or the Adirondack Mountains, your curiosity may lead you to discover the streams which feed it. Your investigation is rewarded by finding five rivulets flowing into it. In pursuing your investigation still further, you find that these streams have their source in the snow-capped mountain in the distance. Let us apply this illustration to the subject before us.

Who Inspired Them?

Who inspired the primitive Christians with their unquenchable zeal and enthusiasm—an enthusiasm enduring for centuries and extending over the known world; an enthusiasm in an unpopular and hated cause? Who raised them to that high plane of moral rectitude? Who impressed them with that unclouded faith in the immortality of the soul and in a future destiny? Who imparted to them the power of working miracles? Who gave them that indissoluble organisation cemented not by force, but formed by the golden bonds of love? Who was it but the Lord of Hosts? It was He Who said: 'Go teach all nations, and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.' 'Fear not, I have conquered the world.' It was He Who said: 'The race is not

to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.' It was He Who said: 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain.'

'My brethren, imitate your forefathers in the faith by your unclouded belief in an immortal destiny. Imitate them by the rectitude of your lives and by your zeal for the honor of God and His Church. Imitate them, above all, by working miracles of grace and mercy, by your charity and compassion for the sufferings of your fellow-beings.'



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