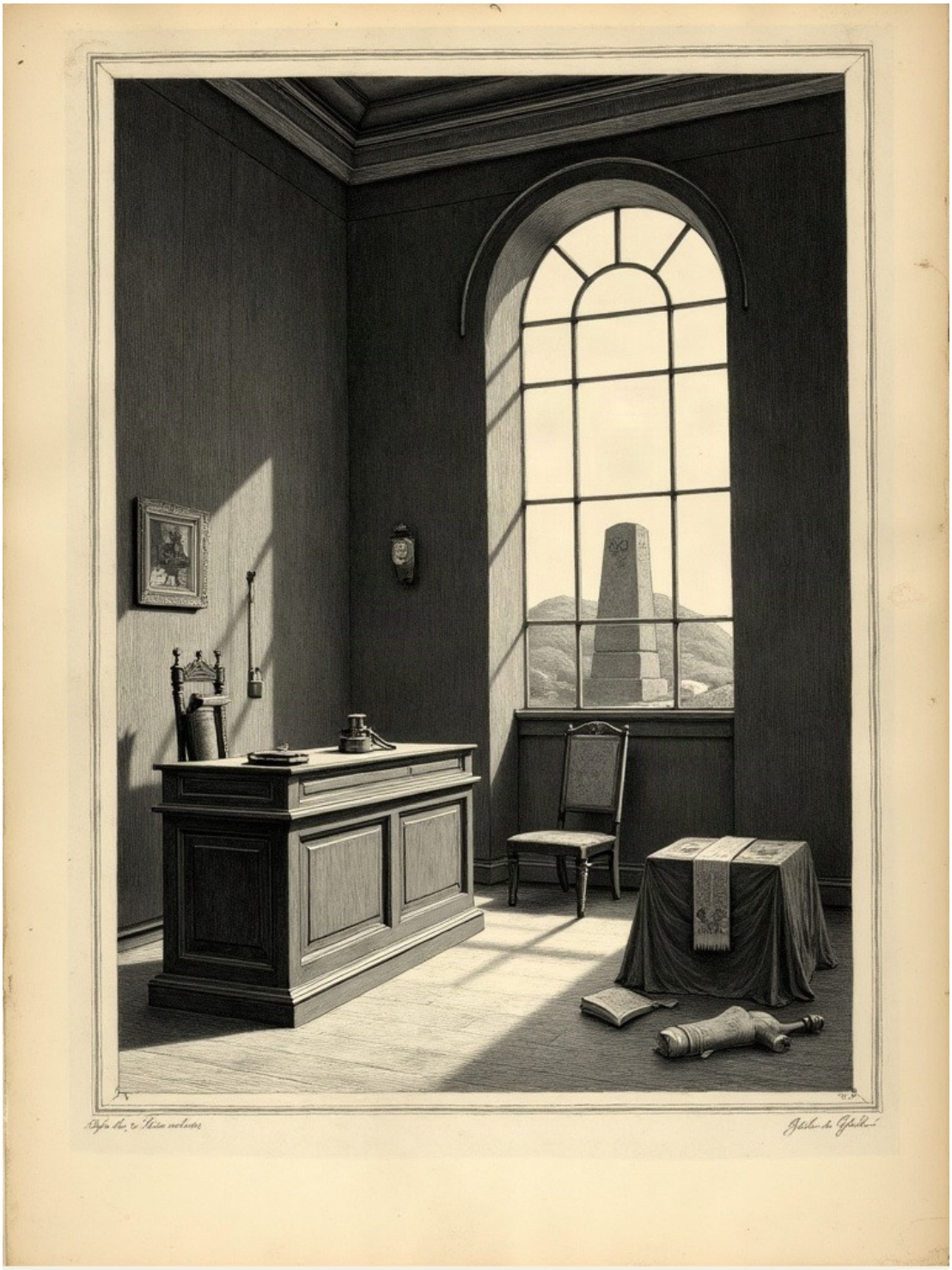


The Tryal of the Witnesses

of the Resurrection — by Thomas Sherlock, 1729

The Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus

by Thomas Sherlock

A Modern-English Edition

by Thomas Sherlock

Originally published in 1729

Prepared for the
Wednesday Evening Bible Study
Church of Christ

A Note on This Edition

This is a complete, unabridged rendering of Thomas Sherlock's The Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus into contemporary English. Nothing in Sherlock's original argument has been cut, condensed, or summarized — every objection, answer, and aside in the 1729 edition appears here, in the same order Sherlock gave it.

What has changed is the surface: eighteenth-century spelling, punctuation, and sentence construction have been smoothed into the kind of English a reader today can move through without constantly stopping to untangle the grammar. Long, nested periodic sentences have sometimes been broken into two or three shorter ones for clarity, but no content has been lost in the process.

Scripture quotations follow the King James Version, which was Sherlock's own translation of choice and remains the version most familiar to this congregation. Where Sherlock's rendering of a quotation was a loose paraphrase rather than a verbatim citation, it has been matched to the actual KJV wording of the verse referenced, consistent with his own stated practice of quoting Scripture directly.

Sherlock, later Bishop of London, cast his entire argument as a mock trial: a judge, a jury, and two opposing counsel — "Mr. A" arguing that the resurrection was fraud, and "Mr. B" defending the evidence — modeled on a real controversy of his day, the deist Thomas Woolston's published attacks on the Gospel miracles. That trial format, including the speakers' original labels, is preserved here exactly as Sherlock wrote it.

This edition is a companion to the modern-English editions of Gilbert West's Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and George Lyttelton's Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul, both originally published in 1747 and modernized in the same manner — Sherlock's Tryal, written nearly two decades earlier against the same controversy, is in many ways the forerunner of both.

Not long ago, several gentlemen of the Inns of Court were together—men so well acquainted with one another that no one's presence kept anyone else from speaking his mind freely on whatever subject came up in conversation. The meeting was unplanned, and the talk, as usual on such occasions, ranged widely. Among other things, we fell to discussing Woolston's trial and conviction, which had taken place a few days before. That led to a debate over how the law rules in such cases, what punishment it imposes, and more generally, whether the law ought to intervene at all in controversies of this kind. We did not agree on these points. One man, who took Woolston's side, showed a strong liking for and approval of his writings against the miracles of Christ, and seemed to think his arguments unanswerable. Another replied, "I'm surprised that someone of your ability, trained in a profession that teaches us to weigh evidence and judge its proper worth, could hold that opinion. I'm sure you'd be unwilling to decide a property dispute over five shillings on the strength of evidence you now consider sufficient to overthrow the miracles of Christ."

As you might expect, this opened the door to a great deal of argument, and set the course of conversation for the rest of the evening. The dispute touched on nearly every point raised in Woolston's writings, though the thread of it kept breaking off into digressions and side issues that came up along the way. At last one of the company said, good-humoredly, "Gentlemen, you don't argue like lawyers. If I were judge in this case, I'd hold you closer to the point." The company took him up on it and called out that they'd be glad to have the case reheard with him as judge. The gentlemen who had thrown themselves with such energy and spirit into a dispute that had come up by accident now seemed very reluctant to be drawn into a formal debate. The gentleman who had argued against Woolston in particular thought the matter had grown too serious for him, and begged off from taking up a controversy in religion—of all subjects, the weightiest. But he was told that the argument would be limited strictly to the nature of the evidence, and that this could be considered without entering into the kind of controversy he wanted to avoid. To keep the matter within bounds and focused on one question, the evidence for Christ's resurrection, and the objections raised against it, would be the sole subject of the conference. Persuaded by this, he let himself be talked into it, and promised to meet the company and their newly appointed judge two weeks from that day. The judge and the rest of the company wanted to bring the case on a week sooner, but Woolston's counsel took up the matter and said, "Consider, sir—this gentleman isn't going to be arguing out of Littleton, Plowden, or Coke, authors he knows well. He'll have to draw his authorities from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and a fortnight is little enough time, in all conscience, to grow familiar with new acquaintances." Then, turning to the gentleman, he said, "I'll call on you before the two weeks are up, to see how reverend an appearance you make, with Hammond on the New Testament behind you, a concordance in one hand, and a folio Bible with cross-references in the other." "You'll be welcome, sir," the gentleman replied, "and

perhaps you'll find some company more to your own taste there. A lawyer who studies only one side of a question is a poor lawyer indeed—so I'll have your friend Woolston, T——l, and C——s on hand to entertain you, when you do me the honor of a visit." On this we parted in good humor, all pleased with the arrangement made—except the two gentlemen who were to provide the entertainment.

The Second Day

The company met at the appointed time. But as often happens in such cases, word of the meeting had reached some friends of certain members who had not been part of the group the first day, and the gentlemen who were to debate the question found they had a larger audience than they had expected or wanted. The one in particular who was to argue for the evidence of the resurrection began excusing himself, saying he had to disappoint their expectations because he wasn't prepared. He kept on excusing himself this way, until the strangers, realizing how things stood, offered to leave—which the gentleman would not allow at all. When they insisted on going, he said he would much rather throw himself on their good judgment, unprepared as he was, than be so rude as to force them to leave the company. At this, one of the company said, smiling, "It's fortunate our numbers have grown. When we last met, we appointed a judge but entirely forgot a jury—and now, I think, we have good men and true enough to make one." This idea was carried further with several allusions to legal proceedings, which raised some laughter and had the happy effect of dispersing the overly solemn mood that the mutual compliments about the earlier difficulty had created, restoring the ease and good humor natural to gentlemen's conversation.

The judge, sensing the company was in the right mood, thought it a good time to begin, and called out, "Gentlemen of the jury, take your places," at once seating himself at the head of the table. The company sat around him, and the judge called on Woolston's counsel to begin.

Mr. A. Counsel for Woolston, addressing the judge, said:

May it please your lordship, I believe the gentleman on the other side ought to begin, and lay out his evidence, which he intends to maintain, before the court. Until that's done, there's no point in my raising objections. I may well object to something which he won't admit to be part of his evidence at all; and so I think the evidence ought first to be clearly stated.

Judge. Mr. B. What say you to that?

Mr. B. Counsel on the other side:

My lord, if the evidence I'm to maintain were some new claim—if I were trying to gain something I don't already possess—the gentleman would be right. But this evidence is old; it's a matter of record, and I've long been in possession of everything I claim under it. If the gentleman has anything to say

to dispossess me of it, let him produce it. Otherwise, I have no reason to put my own title in question. And this, I take it, is the well-known way of proceeding in such cases: no man is required to produce the title to his possession; it's enough if he defends it when it's called into question.

Mr. A. Surely, my lord, the gentleman mistakes the case. I can never admit that I am out of possession of my own understanding and reason. Since he wants to dispossess me of that, and compel me to accept incredible things on the strength of the evidence he maintains, he ought to set out his claim—or else leave the world to be guided by common sense.

Judge. Sir, you'd be right if the truth of the Christian religion itself were the point at issue. In that case it would be necessary to produce the evidence for the Christian religion. But the matter now before the court is whether the objections raised by Mr. Woolston carry enough weight to overthrow the evidence for Christ's resurrection. So, you see, the evidence for the resurrection is taken as a given on both sides, and the question now before the court is the value of the objections—so those must be set out. The court is bound to take notice of the evidence, which both sides admit as a fact. Go on, Mr. A.

Mr. A. My lord, I submit to the court's direction. But I can't help observing that the gentleman on the other side, reluctant as he seems to state his evidence, didn't forget to lay claim to prescription—which is perhaps, in truth, though he's too skilled to admit it, the very strength of his case. I'll grant that the gentleman maintains nothing but what his father, his grandfather, and his ancestors beyond living memory maintained before him. I'll also grant that prescription makes a good title in many cases—but only on the condition that the thing in question is capable of being established by prescription in the first place. And I insist that prescription cannot run against reason and common sense. Customs may be claimed by prescription, but if, once the custom is shown, something unreasonable appears in it, the claim of prescription fails—because length of time does nothing to establish something that could never have had a lawful beginning. And if this objection is enough to overthrow every prescriptive claim to a mere custom—mischief that may affect only one poor village, and touch them in nothing greater than their right of common on some scraggly mountainside—shall it not prevail far more strongly when the interest of all mankind is at stake, in a matter no less than a man's happiness in this life and all his hopes for the next? Besides, if prescription is to be allowed in this case, how will you deal with it in others? What will you say to the ancient Persians and their fire-altars? Indeed, what will you say to the Turks, who have been in possession of their faith long enough to plead—

Mr. B. I beg pardon for interrupting the gentleman, but it's to spare him the trouble. He's heading into his favorite stock argument, and has already taken us from Persia to Turkey—and if he keeps on, I know we'll end up

following him around the whole globe. To save us that long journey, I'll give up any advantage from the antiquity of the resurrection and the widespread acceptance the belief in it has found in the world, and I'm content to treat it as a fact that happened only last year, never heard of by either the gentleman's grandfather or mine.

Mr. A. I wouldn't have had to take quite so long a journey as the gentleman imagines—indeed, no one needs to go far from home to find examples to the purpose I was making. But since he's willing to give up that advantage, I'm just as willing to spare myself the trouble as he'd like me to be. Still, I suspect there's some art even in this concession, fair and candid as it looks. I'm persuaded that one reason—perhaps the main reason—why people believe this history of Jesus is that they can't imagine anyone attempting, let alone succeeding at, such a scheme on the mere foundation of human cunning and calculation. And it would be worth going round the globe, as the gentleman put it, to see various examples of the same kind, in order to remove this prejudice. But I stand corrected, and will go directly to the point now before us.

Mr. B. My lord, in defending his first argument, the gentleman has slipped into another of a quite different kind. I think he's aware of it: in appearing to give up one of his favorite stock arguments, he's actually making an artful retreat from another one—one that has cut a fine figure in a good deal of recent writing, but that won't hold up anywhere its defender can be asked questions about it. I gave up the mere antiquity of the resurrection, because if the evidence wasn't good to begin with, it can't be good now. The gentleman says he's willing to spare us his history of ancient errors, and hints that on that account he's passing over many instances of fraud comparable to the case before us. I wouldn't want the main strength of his case betrayed out of courtesy to me. Nothing could matter more than showing a fraud of this kind that succeeded universally in the world. Christ Jesus declared himself a prophet, and staked the proof of his mission on this: that he would die openly and publicly, and rise again on the third day. This was surely the hardest plot in the world to carry off—and if there is even one instance of this kind, or anything resembling it, by all means let it be produced.

Mr. A. My lord, there has hardly been a single false religion in the world that hasn't furnished an instance like the one before us. Haven't they all claimed inspiration? On what basis did Pythagoras, Numa, and others establish themselves? Didn't they all claim to converse with the gods and to deliver oracles?

Mr. B. This only shows that, by the common consent of mankind, revelation is the very best foundation for religion—which is why every imposter claims to have it. But can a man's hiding in a cave for some years and then emerging into the world again be compared to a man's dying and rising

again to life? Far from it—you and I, and every man, could do the first, but no man can do the second.

Mr. A. Sir, I take it we can agree that going to heaven, conversing with angels and with God, and then coming back down to earth again, is as great a feat as dying and rising again. Now, this is exactly what Mohammed claimed to have done, and all his followers believe it. Can you deny this fact?

Mr. B. Deny it, sir? No. But tell us, who went with Mohammed? Who were his witnesses? I expect, before we're done, to hear about the guards posted over Christ's tomb, and the seal on the stone. What guard watched Mohammed on his journey there or back? What seals and credentials did he have? He himself claims none. His followers offer nothing but his own word for it. We're here to weigh the evidence for Christ's resurrection, and you propose to match it by producing a case for which no one ever claimed there was any evidence at all. All you have is Mohammed's word—and no man ever told a lie without having his own word for the truth of what he said. So you needn't go round the globe to find examples of that sort. But this story, you say, has won great credit and is accepted by many nations. Very well—and how was it accepted? Wasn't every man converted to that faith with a sword at his throat? In our case, every witness to the resurrection, and every believer in it, was in hourly danger of death. In the other case, whoever refused to believe died, or, just as bad, lived on as a wretched, conquered slave. Will you really claim these cases are alike? There is, in fact, one case within living memory that comes somewhat close to the one before us. The French Prophets staked the credit of their mission on the resurrection of Dr. Emmes, and gave public notice of it in advance. If the gentleman would care to make use of that instance, it's at his service.

Mr. A. The instance of Dr. Emmes serves my purpose this far: it shows to what lengths enthusiasm can carry people. And why couldn't the same thing have happened at Jerusalem that happened only a few years ago in our own country? Matthew and John and the rest of them simply managed the affair with more skill than the French Prophets did, so that the resurrection of Jesus gained credit in the world, while the French Prophets sank under their ridiculous pretensions. That's the whole difference.

Mr. B. Is that so? It's a very wide difference indeed, I assure you. In one case, everything happened that was fitting to convince the world of the resurrection; in the other, the outcome exposed the whole thing as a cheat. And having looked at these circumstances, you think it's enough to say, with such coolness, "That's the whole difference." Why, what difference do you expect between truth and falsehood? What distinction—

Judge. Gentlemen, you're forgetting you're in a court, and slipping into back-and-forth banter. Courts don't allow for idle chatter. Look here—the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is before the court, recorded by Matthew, Mark, and the others. You must take it as it stands; you can neither

improve it nor damage it. These witnesses stand accused of giving false evidence. Come to the point, and let's hear what you have to offer to prove the charge.

Mr. B. Do you mean, sir, that the objections should be laid out and argued all together, with the answer addressing the whole at once? Or would you rather have the objections argued one at a time, each answered separately as it comes?

Judge. I think this court may dispense with the strict forms of legal procedure here, so I'll leave this choice to the jury.

After the jury had conferred together, the foreman rose.

The Foreman of the Jury. We'd like to hear the objections argued and answered separately. We'll be better able to form a judgment by hearing the answer while the objection is still fresh in our minds.

Judge. Gentlemen, you've heard the jury's opinion. Go on.

Mr. A. I am now going to lay before you a scene more surprising than any other. "The resurrection has long been talked of, and, to the amazement of every free-thinking person, has been believed throughout every age of the church." This long-standing and widespread belief creates, in most minds, a presumption that it must rest on good evidence. In other cases, the evidence is what supports the credit of the history; but here the evidence itself is simply assumed, on the strength of the credit the story has gained. I wish the books the ancient Jews wrote against Jesus had not been lost, for they would have given us clear insight into this scheme. But it's fortunate for us that the very account given by the supposed witnesses to this event is enough, by itself, to destroy its credibility.

The resurrection was not something contrived for its own sake. No—it was undertaken to serve larger purposes, for the sake of the great consequences meant to follow from it. So it will be necessary to lay those purposes before you, so that you can better judge this part of the scheme once you have the whole picture in view.

The Jews were a weak, superstitious people, and, as is common among such people, put great faith in certain traditional prophecies about their own country. They also had some old books, which they regarded as the writings of certain prophets who had lived among them long before, and whose memory they held in great veneration. From these old books and traditions, they built up a number of extravagant expectations, among them the belief that, sooner or later, a great victorious prince would arise among them, conquer all their enemies, and make them masters of the world. In the time of Augustus they were in a low state, reduced under the Roman yoke, and since they never needed a deliverer more, the eagerness of this hope, as happens with weak minds, hardened into a firm expectation that he would come soon. This

proved a temptation to certain bold men, and to certain cunning ones, to pass themselves off as the expected prince. And "nothing is more natural, or more common, as a way to foment rebellion, than to ground it on new prophecies, or new interpretations of old ones—prophecies being suited to popular superstition and carrying the force of religion." Accordingly, a number of such imposters rose up, claiming to be the long-awaited victorious prince, and both they and the people who followed them perished in the folly of their attempt.

But Jesus, knowing that victories and triumphs cannot be faked, that the people could not be delivered from the Roman yoke by any sleight of hand, and having no hope of actually standing up to the Emperor of Rome in a real contest, took a different and more successful approach to carry out his design. He took upon himself the role of the prince foretold by the ancient prophets, but then insisted that the true meaning of the prophecies had been misunderstood—that they referred not to the kingdoms of this world but to the kingdom of heaven; that the Messiah was not to be a conquering prince but a suffering one; that he was not to come with war-horses and chariots, but was to be meek and lowly, riding on a donkey. In this way he secured the common and necessary foundation for a new revelation, which has to be built upon an earlier one.

To carry out this design, he chose twelve men of no fortune or education, men of such limited understanding that there was no risk they would see through the plot. And—most remarkable of all, and a great testament to their ability—while their master was preaching the kingdom of heaven, these poor men, still unweaned from the prejudices of their country, expected every day that he would declare himself king, and quarreled among themselves over who would be his chief minister. This expectation served the cause well, since it kept them faithfully attached to their master.

I must also point out that the Jews held strange notions about supernatural powers. Since their own religion rested on the belief in certain miracles supposedly performed by their lawgiver Moses, they were always chasing after wonders and marvels, ready to accept any story of that kind. Now, since something extraordinary was needed to back up Jesus's pretensions, he skillfully took advantage of this weakness in the people and set himself up as a worker of wonders. His disciples were well suited to receive this impression: they saw, or thought they saw, many strange things, and were able to spread reports of them far and wide.

This approach had the success he wanted. The whole country was stirred up, buzzing with news that a great prophet had appeared among them. They were too caught up in their own imaginations to pay attention to talk of a kingdom of heaven. Here was someone mighty in deed and word, and they concluded he must be the very prince their nation was expecting. Accordingly, they once tried to make him king, and on another occasion

escorted him in triumph into Jerusalem. This natural outcome reveals the real design behind the attempt. Had things gone on successfully to the end, it's likely the kingdom of heaven would have been turned into a kingdom of this world. The design did fail, though, owing to the impatience and over-eagerness of the crowd, which alarmed not only the Jewish leaders but the Roman governor as well.

Once matters reached this point, and Jesus saw he could not escape being put to death, he declared that the ancient prophets had foretold that the Messiah would die on a cross, and that he would rise again on the third day. Here was the foundation for keeping the plot going, which would otherwise have died with its author. This was his legacy to his followers, who, along with their successors, managed it so well that it has finally produced a kingdom indeed—a kingdom of priests, who have governed the world for many ages and have been strong enough to defy kings and emperors. But it happens that the ancient prophets appealed to are still with us, and since there are no such prophecies of the Messiah's death and resurrection to be found in them, they stand as permanent evidence against this story. Just as he expected, so it happened—he died on a cross—and carrying the scheme forward was left to his disciples and followers to manage. Their part is next to be considered—

Mr. B. My lord, since it's your view that the objections should be considered one at a time, and the gentleman has carried his account down to the death of Christ, I think he's reached a natural stopping point, and that it fits your intention that I should now be allowed to answer.

Judge. You're quite right, sir. Let's hear your answer to this charge.

Mr. B. My lord, I didn't want to interrupt the gentleman by breaking in on his account, or I'd have reminded him that this court sits to examine evidence, not to be entertained with fine fancies. You've had a scheme laid before you, but not a single piece of evidence to support any part of it—not even so much as a pretense of evidence. The gentleman, if I recall, was very sorry that the old Jewish books were lost, which, he supposes, would have set out all this business; and I agree with him that he has good reason to be sorry, given how scarce his proof is. And since I've brought this up, so as not to have to return to it later, let me ask the gentleman now: how does he know there ever were such books? And since, even if there were, they're lost, how does he know what they contained? I expect I'll have frequent occasion to ask questions like this. It would, in fact, be answer enough to the whole argument simply to repeat the various suppositions that have been made and call for the evidence they rest on—that alone would plainly expose every part of the story as mere invention. But since the gentleman has clearly tried to bring together, under one view, the many insinuations lately spread about by various hands, and to work the whole into one consistent scheme, I will, if your patience allows, examine this plot and see to whom the credit for devising it really belongs.

The gentleman begins by expressing his "amazement that the resurrection has been believed in every age of the church." If you ask him why he's amazed, his answer must be: because the account is a forgery—since surely it wouldn't amaze him that a true account should be widely accepted. So this remark really stems from confidence rather than amazement, and amounts only to this: that he's sure there was no resurrection. And I'm equally sure that this is no evidence that there wasn't one. Whether he's mistaken in his confidence, or I in mine, the court must judge.

The gentleman's observation—that the widespread belief in the resurrection creates a presumption that it rests on good evidence, and that people therefore look no further, but follow their fathers just as their fathers followed their grandfathers before them—is largely true, but it's a truth that does nothing for his case. He grants that the resurrection has been believed in every age of the church, that is, from the very time of the resurrection onward. So what persuaded those who first accepted it? They certainly weren't following the example of their fathers. Here, then, is the real question: how did this fact first gain credit in the world? That it has gained credit is beyond doubt. If people nowadays come to this belief through habit, example, and the company they keep, they're doing in this case no more, and no differently, than they do in every other case. And it can't be denied that truth may be accepted through what's called "prejudice"—that is, without examining the proof or the merits of the matter—just as readily as falsehood can. What general truth is there whose merits the whole world, or even a hundredth part of it, has actually examined? It's been cleverly said somewhere that the priest only carries on what the nurse began. But the wit of that remark lies entirely in the neat contrast between nurse and priest, and it owes far more to how it sounds than to what it actually means. Is it possible that children should not hear something of the common, popular opinions of their country, whether those opinions are true or false? Isn't this also how they learn the common principles of reason? Perhaps every man first learned from his nurse that two and two make four, and whenever she divided an apple among her children, she instilled in them the "prejudice" that the whole is equal to the sum of its parts, and all the parts equal to the whole. And yet Sir Isaac Newton—shame on him!—look what he built, what a structure he raised on the foundation of this nursery learning! As for religion, there has never been, and never will be, a religion, true or false, publicly held in any country, without children hearing more or less about it from those around them. And if this is, and must always be, the case regardless of whether the religion is true or false, then it's thoroughly absurd to lean on this observation when the question concerns the truth of any religion, since the observation applies equally to both sides of the question.

We have now, I think, worked through the stock arguments that seem destined forever to accompany questions of this kind, and are coming to the actual merits of the case.

And here the gentleman on the other side saw fit to begin with an account of the Jewish people, the people in whose country this event is set, and who were originally—and in some respects chiefly—affected by its consequences.

They were, he says, a weak, superstitious people, living under certain supposed prophecies and predictions, and on this basis had, some time before the appearance of Christ Jesus, formed great expectations of the coming of a victorious prince who would deliver them from the Roman yoke and make them all kings and princes. He goes on to observe how exposed the people were, in this state of affairs, to being deceived and led into rebellion by anyone bold enough to pass himself off as the expected prince. He further observes that, in fact, many such imposters did arise, and deceived great numbers of people, to their own ruin and destruction.

I've gathered these points together because I don't intend to dispute them with the gentleman. Whether the Jews were a weak, superstitious people swayed by false prophecies, or whether they actually possessed true prophecies, isn't material to the present question. It's enough for the gentleman's argument if I grant the facts as he's stated them: that they did expect a victorious prince, that they were therefore exposed to being preyed on by pretenders, and that in fact they were often so deceived.

With this foundation laid, it was natural to expect—and I believe your lordship and everyone present did expect—that the gentleman would go on to show that Jesus seized on this opportunity, fell in with the popular opinion, and declared himself to be the prince who would bring about their deliverance. But it turns out this is far from the case. Instead, the charge against Jesus is that he took the opposite course, setting himself up against all the popular notions and prejudices of his country; that he interpreted the prophecies in a sense entirely different from what his countrymen did; and that, by his teaching, he took away all hope of their ever seeing the victorious deliverer they wanted and expected so badly.

I don't know how to reconcile the gentleman's premises with his conclusion; at present they seem to be flatly at odds. If the surest way for an imposter to succeed is to build on the popular opinions, prejudices, and prophecies of the people, then surely an imposter could choose no worse method than to set himself up in opposition to all his country's prejudices and prophecies. Where, then, was the cunning or artfulness in taking this approach? What could be expected from it but hatred, contempt, and persecution? And did Christ, in fact, meet with any other treatment from the Jews? And yet, when he found—as the gentleman himself admits he did—that he was bound to perish in this venture, did he change his tune? Did he come around and drop any hints suited to popular expectation? No one claims that he did. In any other case that has ever happened, this would be taken as a plain sign of great honesty, or great foolishness, or both. In this case alone, it's taken as art, policy, and scheming.

But, apparently, Jesus didn't dare set himself up as the expected victorious prince, because victories cannot be faked. I hope it was no crime in him that he refused to take on this false role and try to exploit the people's credulity—if he had done so, that certainly would have been a crime, so on this point at least he's innocent. I don't suppose the gentleman imagines the Jews were right to expect a worldly prince. So when Christ opposed that notion at the clear risk of his life, since he plainly had the truth on his side, the natural presumption is that it was for the sake of the truth that he put himself at risk.

No—we're told instead that what he wanted was the common and necessary foundation for a new revelation: the authority of an older one to build on. Very well. I won't ask how common or how necessary such a foundation actually is for a new revelation, because, whatever the case may be there, it's plain that in the course Christ actually took, he neither had, nor could have had, the supposed advantage of any such foundation. Why is this foundation supposed to be necessary in the first place? One of the gentleman's own allies will tell you: "Because it must be difficult, if not impossible, to introduce among men—who, in every civilized country, are raised believing in some revealed religion—a revealed religion that is entirely new, or that has no connection to one that came before; for that would mean fighting against men on far too many fronts at once, rather than building on a sufficient number of principles that those receiving the first impressions of a new religion are already prepared to accept." You can see now why this foundation is supposed to be necessary: it's so that the new teacher can take advantage of old, popular opinions and plant himself in the prejudices the people already hold. Did Christ have any such advantages? Did he even seek any? The people expected a victorious prince; he told them they were mistaken. They held the traditions of the elders sacred; he told them those traditions nullified the law of God. They prized themselves as God's peculiar people; he told them that people from every corner of the world would be God's people, and would sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom. They believed God could be worshipped only at Jerusalem; he told them God could, and should, be worshipped everywhere. They were superstitiously strict about the Sabbath; by their own reckoning, he broke it repeatedly. In short, their hand-washing and vessel-washing rituals, their superstitious distinctions about food, their public prayers, and their secret wrongdoing were all rebuked, exposed, and condemned by him—and the outcry against him grew fierce, that he had come to destroy the Law and the Prophets. Now, sir, what advantage did Christ gain from this supposedly common and necessary foundation? What sufficient body of principles already held by the people did he build on? If he held to the old revelation in its true sense—or, which is enough for the present argument, in a sense the people did not accept—then that was, in truth, the greatest difficulty he had to contend with. So what could have driven him to take on so many difficulties he might otherwise have avoided, if not a pure regard for the truth, when he

could simply have kept silent about the old revelation and left the people to their own imaginings?

We're told that, to carry on this plot, the next thing Jesus did was to choose suitable persons as his disciples. The gentleman has already given us their character, but since I expect he has more work for them before he's finished, I'd like to put off considering their abilities and conduct until I hear what task he has in mind for them. I'll only note that, so far, this plot differs from every one I've ever heard of. Imposters generally take advantage of the people's prejudices, and generally choose cunning, capable men to carry out their plans under them. But in this case, Jesus opposed every notion the people held, and, it seems, chose simpletons to carry out his schemes.

But what design, what actual end, was being pursued all this while? Why, the gentleman tells us, the very thing he disclaimed—the temporal kingdom—was the real aim hidden under this disguise. He told the people there was no basis for expecting a worldly deliverer, and warned them against anyone who made such claims; he declared there was no ground in the ancient prophecies for expecting such a prince. And yet, we're to believe, by these very means he was working his way toward an opportunity to declare himself the very prince the people wanted. We're still in the realm of the marvelous; every step opens up new wonders. I don't blame the gentleman—what else can possibly be imagined to account for this conduct attributed to Christ? However unlikely it may be, it's the only thing that can be said. Had Christ been charged merely with enthusiasm, there would have been no need to assign any reason for his conduct—madness is unaccountable; it refuses to be handled by reason or method. But when design, cunning, and fraud are the charge, carried so far as to suppose him a party to arranging a sham resurrection for himself, then it becomes necessary to say what end all this cunning was aimed at. We're told it was aimed at a kingdom—and indeed the temptation was modest enough, considering that the chief architect of the plot was crucified for his trouble. But were the means he used at all likely to achieve that end? Yes, says the gentleman, that can't be disputed, because they really did have this effect: the people would have made him king. Very well—why wasn't he king, then? Why, as it happens, he unfortunately refused the offer, withdrew from the crowd, and stayed hidden until they dispersed. It may be said, perhaps, that Jesus judged the situation better than the people did, and saw that it was not yet the right time to accept the offer. Granted—let's see, then, what follows.

The government grew alarmed, and Jesus came to be seen as dangerous to the state. He had discernment enough to see that his death was settled and unavoidable. So what does he do? Why, to make the best of a bad situation, and to preserve the benefit of his whole undertaking for those who were to succeed him, he pretends to prophesy his own death, which he knew could not be avoided—men don't normally play tricks at the point of death, but this plot, we're to understand, had nothing ordinary about it. But what if it turns out that, after foretelling his death—supposedly out of despair at his prospects—

he still had it in his power to make himself king once more, and once again refused the chance? Men in despair grasp at the smallest help; they never refuse the greatest. And that is exactly what happened here. After foretelling his crucifixion, he entered Jerusalem in the triumphant manner the gentleman mentioned; the people strewed his path with branches and flowers and were entirely at his command; the Jewish authorities held back out of fear of the crowd. Why wasn't this opportunity seized to take the kingdom, or at least to save himself from the shameful death he expected? For whose benefit was he willing to die? For whose sake did he devise this scheme of his own resurrection? He had no wife or children; his closest relatives gave him little credence; his disciples weren't even fit to be trusted with the secret, let alone capable of making use of any advantage it might bring. And yet, the gentleman tells us, a kingdom did arise out of this plot—a kingdom of priests. But when did it arise? Some hundred years after Christ's death, against his express will, and nearly to the overthrow of his own religion. And still we're asked to believe this kingdom was what he had in view all along. I rather suspect the gentleman himself is convinced that the dominion he complains of runs contrary to the spirit of the gospel—I know some of his own allies have gone to great lengths to prove exactly that. How, then, can it be charged as the gospel's own intention to bring it about? Whatever the truth of the matter, it surely can't be suspected that Christ died in order to create popes and cardinals. The changes that have taken place in the doctrines and practices of churches since the Christian religion was first established by those with genuine authority to establish it are entirely beside the point when the question is the truth of the Christian religion itself. Christ and his apostles never vouched for the truth of everything that would later be taught in the church; indeed, they foretold and warned the world against such corrupt teachers. It's therefore absurd to put the religion of Christ on trial because of corruptions that have spread among Christians. The gospel has no more to do with them, and ought no more to be blamed for them, than it should be blamed for the doctrines of the Quran.

There's only one more observation, I think, that the gentleman made under this heading. Jesus, he says, appealed to the authority of ancient prophecies to prove that the Messiah was to die and rise again; those ancient books are still with us, and, he says, no such prophecies are to be found in them. Now, whether or not the gentleman can find these prophecies isn't material to the present question. It's granted that Christ foretold his own death and resurrection. If the resurrection was carried out by fraud, then Christ himself was certainly party to that fraud, since he foretold the very fraud that was to take place. Disprove the resurrection, then, and we'll have no further need to discuss prophecy. On the other hand, by foretelling the resurrection, he plainly staked the proof of his mission on whether that event actually came true. Whether or not it is, in fact, the character of the Messiah according to the ancient prophets that he should die and rise again, there's no doubt that Jesus is not the Messiah if he did not rise again—because, by his

own prophecy, he made that part of the Messiah's defining character. If the event bore out the prediction, that is evidence no reasonable, sensible person can reject. One would naturally think that foretelling his own resurrection, and giving such public notice of it in advance—so that even his fiercest enemies were fully aware of the claim—carried with it the strongest possible mark of honest dealing. So far, at least, it stands clear of any suspicion of fraud. And had it sprung merely from enthusiasm and an overheated imagination, the dead body, at the very least, would have simply remained in the grave, and that alone, with no further evidence needed, would have disproved such claims. But since the dead body was not only carried openly to the grave, but was also watched and guarded there, and yet could never afterward be found, never again heard of as a dead body, there must necessarily have been, in this case, either a genuine miracle or a great fraud. Enthusiasm dies with the man and has no power over his dead body. There is, therefore, no middle ground here: you must either admit the miracle or prove the fraud.

Judge. Mr. A., you're free either to reply to what's been said on this point, or to continue with your case.

Mr. A. My lord, the observations I laid out were only introductory to the main evidence on which the merits of this case must actually rest. The gentleman concluded that there must be either a real miracle or a great fraud —a fraud, he means, in which Jesus himself was complicit during his lifetime. There is, he says, no middle ground. I beg to differ. Why couldn't it have been enthusiasm on the master's part that produced the prediction, and fraud on the servants' part that carried it out?

Mr. B. My lord, this is new matter, not a reply. The gentleman originally presented this whole affair as a fraud from start to finish. Now he supposes Christ to have been an honest, if misguided, enthusiast, and only the disciples to have been the cheats.

Judge. Sir, if you introduce new matter, counsel on the other side must be allowed to answer it.

Mr. A. My lord, I have no such intention. I was only observing that the account I gave of Jesus was meant simply to introduce the evidence that is to be laid before the court. No one can expect me to know all the secret designs behind this scheme, especially given that we have only brief accounts of the affair, and those passed down through the hands of friends and parties to the plot. In such a case, it's enough if we can form some idea of what the motives probably were—and in such a case, too, it must be very easy for a capable gentleman to raise contrary notions and argue plausibly from them. But the gentleman has rightly observed that if the resurrection is a fraud, then every claim, good or bad, that was meant to be supported by it comes to nothing. So I'll go on to prove this fraud, which is one of the main points this case must settle.

Allow me to remind you that Jesus, during his lifetime, foretold his death and that he would rise again on the third day. The first part of this prediction came true: he died on the cross and was buried. I won't trouble you with the details of his crucifixion, death, and burial—it's a well-known story.

Mr. B. My lord, I'd like to know whether the gentleman is alleging any fraud in this part of the history. Perhaps he'll soon be suggesting there was some sleight of hand in the crucifixion, and that Christ merely faked his death.

Mr. A. No, no, you needn't worry about that. He wasn't crucified by his own disciples, but by the Romans and the Jews, and they were in deadly earnest. I'll prove beyond contradiction that the dead body was indeed laid in the tomb—and you'll be doing well if you can get it back out again just as honestly.

Judge. Go on with your evidence.

Mr. A. My lord, once the crucifixion was over, the dead body was carried to a tomb, and in the general opinion, that seemed to be the end of the whole affair. But the Jewish authorities, watchful for the safety of the people, remembered that Jesus, during his lifetime, had said he would rise again on the third day. It may seem strange, at first glance, that they would pay any attention to such a prophecy—a prophecy so full of confidence and presumption that, to any person of common sense, it carried its own refutation within it; and "there is no other nation in the world that would not have dismissed such an empty prediction from a known imposter." But they had reason to be on guard. Not long before, the people "had very nearly been fatally deceived and taken in by him in the supposed raising of Lazarus." They had fully uncovered the trickery in the case of Lazarus, and had narrowly escaped its dangerous consequences. And although Jesus was now dead, he still had many disciples and followers living, who were quite ready to join together in any fraud needed to make their master's prediction come true. Should they succeed, the authorities foresaw, the consequences this time would be even more disastrous than those they had just barely escaped before. For this reason they went to the Roman governor, explained the situation, and asked him to grant them a guard to watch the tomb—assuring him the duty wouldn't last long, since the prediction limited the resurrection to the third day, after which the soldiers could be released from the assignment. Pilate granted the request, and a guard was posted to watch the tomb.

That wasn't all. The chief priests took another measure to prevent any fraud, and it was the best one possible: sealing the door of the tomb. To see the purpose of this precaution, you need only consider why doors, boxes, or documents are sealed in the first place. Isn't it so that all parties concerned can be satisfied that things remain as they left them, once they return and find the seals unbroken? This was the same method Darius used when Daniel was thrown into the lions' den—he sealed the door of the den. And for what

purpose? Wasn't it to satisfy himself and his court that no trick had been used to keep Daniel safe? And when he came and found Daniel unharmed, and his seal untouched, he was satisfied. And indeed, if we think the matter through properly, a seal used this way amounts to a covenant. If you hand sealed documents to someone, and he accepts them as such, your delivery and his acceptance imply an agreement between you that the documents will be returned with the seal intact—and should the seal be broken, that would be a clear case of fraud and breach of trust. In fact, this covenant is implied so strongly that no special agreement is even needed; it's a compact men are bound by through the law of nations and the common consent of mankind. When you send a sealed letter to the post office, you don't have a special agreement with everyone whose hands it passes through that it won't be opened by anyone but the person it's addressed to—yet people know they're bound by this restraint, and that it's unlawful and dishonorable to break it.

Now, since the tomb was sealed, and since the seal implied a covenant, consider who the parties to that covenant must have been. They could be none other than the chief priests on one side and the apostles on the other. No special agreement need be shown to prove this. On one side, there was a concern to see the prophecy fulfilled; on the other, a concern to prevent fraud in its fulfillment. The substance of their agreement was naturally this: that the seals would be opened at the time appointed for the resurrection, so that all parties could see for themselves and be satisfied whether the dead body had come back to life or not.

Now, what would any reasonable person expect to come of these arrangements? Don't you expect to hear that the chief priests and the apostles met at the appointed time, opened the seals together, and settled the matter in dispute beyond all controversy, one way or the other? But see how it actually happened: the seals were broken, the body was stolen away in the night by the disciples, and none of the chief priests were present, or even summoned, to witness the seals being opened. The guards, when questioned, were forced to confess the truth, though it came bundled with an admission of their own guilt, which exposed them to punishment from Pilate. They confessed that they had fallen asleep, and that meanwhile the body had been stolen away by the disciples.

This testimony of the Roman soldiers, together with the far stronger evidence arising from the secretive way the seals were broken, provides sufficient proof of fraud.

But there's another circumstance in the case of equal weight. Though the seals didn't prevent the trick entirely, they did effectively give the lie to the prediction. According to the prediction, Jesus was to rise on the third day, or after the third day. At that time, the chief priests intended to be present, and would probably have been accompanied by a large crowd. This made it impossible to play any tricks right then, so the apostles were forced to move

up the timetable of the plot—and accordingly, the resurrection happened a day ahead of schedule, since the body was buried on the Friday and was gone early in the morning on the Sunday.

These are plain facts—facts drawn from the very accounts given by those who themselves believe in the resurrection. The gentleman won't call these mere imaginings, or complain that I've offered him theories instead of evidence.

Mr. B. My lord, I'll now turn to the part of the argument the gentleman leans on most heavily. He has given us his evidence—plain evidence, he says, unmixed with and free of all theories and imaginings. In one respect, at least, he has been as good as his word: he has proved beyond contradiction that Christ died and was laid in the tomb, since, without doubt, when the Jews sealed the stone, they took care to make sure the body was actually there—otherwise their precaution would have been pointless. He has also proved that Christ's prediction about his own resurrection was publicly known throughout Jerusalem, since he himself admits this is what prompted all the precautions taken against fraud. If this open prediction implies a fraudulent design, then the evidence favors the gentleman strongly. But if it turns out to be what it really was—the strongest possible mark of sincerity and plain dealing in the whole affair—the evidence will remain just as strong, only its weight will fall on the wrong side for the gentleman's purposes.

Next, the gentleman seems quite at a loss to explain why the chief priests gave any credence at all to the prediction of the resurrection, as shown by the precautions they took against it. He thinks the prediction was in itself too extravagant and absurd to deserve any regard, and that no one would have paid attention to such a prediction in any other time or place. I agree with the gentleman entirely—but then I must ask him to explain why the chief priests were concerned about this prediction at all. Was it because they had plainly discovered him to be a cheat and an imposter? That's impossible—such a discovery would only have convinced them of the folly and presumption of the prediction, not worried them about it. It must be, then, that they had noticed something in the life and actions of Christ that raised this suspicion, and made them take seriously, in his case, a prophecy they would have despised coming from anyone else. And what could this be, except the secret conviction, produced in them by his many miracles, that he possessed extraordinary powers? This vigilance of the chief priests over his dead, helpless body is therefore a lasting testimony to the mighty works Jesus performed during his lifetime—for if the Jews had truly been persuaded that he worked no wonders while alive, I don't think they would have feared seeing any worked by him after his death.

But the gentleman thinks otherwise. He says they had uncovered a plain cheat in the case of Lazarus, whom Christ had claimed to raise from the dead, and that this was why they took all these precautions against a similar trick.

Now I find myself wanting for evidence; I'm not allowed to call this mere imagination, though I hardly know what else to call it. There's not the slightest hint anywhere in the historical record that there was any cheat in the case of Lazarus, or that anyone even suspected one. Lazarus went on living in that region after being raised from the dead, and although his life was secretly and shamefully plotted against, no one ever had the nerve to bring him to trial for his supposed part in the fraud. Perhaps it will be said the authorities were too frightened to act. Very well—but they weren't frightened when they had Christ himself in their custody, when they brought him to trial. Why didn't they charge him with this cheat then? It would have served their purposes very well. Instead, they accused him of plotting to tear down their temple, of undermining their law, and of blasphemy—but not a single word about any fraud in the case of Lazarus, or in any other case. But not to get into the merits of this case, which has too many circumstances in it for you to weigh just now, let us take the case to be exactly as the gentleman states it—that the fraud in the case of Lazarus was found out. What consequence should we expect from that? In every other instance, impostors, once exposed, become hateful and contemptible, and quite incapable of doing further harm; people regard them so little that even when they happen to tell the truth, they are ignored. Was it so in this case? No, says the gentleman: the Jews were all the more careful that Christ should not cheat them again in his own resurrection. Surely this is a most peculiar case. When the people thought him a prophet, the chief priests sought to kill him, supposing that his death would put an end to his claims; when they and the people had found him out to be a fraud, they thought him unsafe even dead, afraid he might yet prove a true prophet and, according to his own prediction, rise again. A needless, preposterous fear!

Next, the gentleman tells us how proper was the care the chief priests took. I agree with him entirely. Human ingenuity could not have devised a more fitting method of guarding against and preventing any fraud. They handed over the sepulcher, with the dead body inside it, to a company of Roman soldiers, who had orders from their officer to watch the tomb. Their caution went further still: they sealed the door of the sepulcher.

On this point the gentleman has explained what seals mean when used for such purposes. They imply, he says, a covenant—that the things sealed will remain in their present condition until the parties to the sealing agree to open them. I see no need to go into the finer points of the law of seals; let it stand as the gentleman has explained it. What follows from that?

Why then, it seems, the apostles and the chief priests were under a covenant that there would be no resurrection—or at least no opening of the door—until they met together at an appointed time to view and unseal it.

Your Lordship and the court will now consider how likely this supposition is. When Christ was seized and brought to trial, his disciples fled, out of a

reasonable fear that if caught, they would be put to death along with their master. Peter did follow him for a while, but his courage soon failed, and it is well known how he denied him. After Christ's death, his disciples were so far from being ready to vouch for his resurrection, or to enter into terms and agreements about how it should be carried out, that they themselves did not believe it would ever happen. They gave up all hope and thought of it, and rather than entering into arrangements with the chief priests, their whole concern was to keep themselves hidden from them. This is a well-known matter, and I will not trouble you with detailed citations to prove it. Can any man in his right mind now believe that the disciples, in these circumstances, entered into this covenant with the Jews? I believe the gentleman does not think so himself, which is why he says that seals used in this way imply a covenant even without any special agreement. Very well, let that stand—but then it must also be granted that the apostles had no more to do with these seals than any other man in the country, and were no more answerable for them, since on this reasoning the covenant applied to everyone equally, none of them being under any special contract.

But I beg your pardon for spending your time unnecessarily, when the simple, plain account of this matter best answers all these suspicions and misgivings. The Jews were plainly quite anxious about this affair; that is why they obtained a guard from Pilate in the first place. And once they had one, they were still suspicious that their own guards might deceive them and conspire against them. To guard against this, they sealed the door, and required the guards to hand the sepulcher back to them sealed exactly as it was. That is the natural and true account of the matter. Just consider a parallel case. Suppose a prince set a guard at the door of his treasury, and the officer who posted the guard sealed the door and said to the soldiers, "You will answer to me for this seal if I find it broken": would not everyone understand that the seal was meant to guard against the very soldiers who, though posted to keep others out, might well be tempted to pilfer the treasury themselves? This is simply a necessary precaution in all such cases. You may post guards, and once you have, everything rests in their power: and who is to guard the guards themselves?

But it seems that, despite all this care, the seals were broken and the body was gone. If you have a complaint about that, sir, seek satisfaction from your guards; they alone are answerable for it. The disciples had no more to do with it than you or I.

The guards, the gentleman says, have confessed the truth, and admitted that they were asleep, and that the disciples meanwhile stole the body away. I wish the guards were here in court; I would ask them how they came to be so precise about what happened while they were asleep. What led them to believe the body had been stolen at all? What led them to believe it was stolen by the disciples, since by their own confession they were asleep, and so saw nothing and can testify to nothing? But since they cannot be produced, I

would like to put the same questions to the gentleman, and ask whether he can cite any case in point to show that any man was ever admitted as a witness in any court, to prove a fact that occurred while he was asleep. I see the gentleman is uncomfortable; I will press the matter no further.

As this story has no evidence to support it, neither does it have any plausibility. The gentleman has described the disciples' character to you: that they were weak, ignorant men, full of the popular prejudices and superstitions of their country, which clung to them even after their long acquaintance with their master. The apostles are not much wronged by this description. Is it likely, then, that such men would undertake so desperate a scheme as stealing away the body, in defiance of the combined power of the Jews and the Romans? What could have tempted them to it? What good could the dead body do them? And even if it could have done them some good, what hope did they have of succeeding in the attempt? A dead body cannot be removed by sleight of hand; it takes many hands to move one. Besides, the great stone at the mouth of the sepulcher had to be rolled away, which could not be done quietly, or by men walking on tiptoe to avoid detection. So even if the guards really had been asleep, there was still no encouragement to attempt this enterprise, for it is hardly possible to suppose that rolling away the stone, moving the body, and the commotion of carrying it off would not have woken them.

But suppose the thing were practicable—still, the attempt is one the disciples, consistent with their own beliefs, could not have undertaken. The gentleman says they continued, through their master's whole lifetime, to expect that he would become a temporal prince; and a friend of the gentleman's has observed, equally truly, that they held the same expectation even after his death. Now consider their situation. Their master was dead, and they are supposed to contrive to steal away his body. For what purpose? Did they expect to make a king out of a dead body, if they could get hold of it? Or did they think, if they had it, they could raise it to life themselves? If they trusted their master's prediction enough to expect his resurrection (which I think it is clear they did not), could they still believe the resurrection depended on their possessing the dead body? On any view, it is absurd. But the gentleman supposes that they meant to carry on the scheme for their own benefit, in their master's name, if only they could persuade the people to believe him risen from the dead. He fails to consider, though, that this supposition strips the disciples of their whole character at a stroke, and presents us with an entirely different set of men. The earlier disciples were weak, simple men; these would be bold, shrewd, and scheming. The earlier ones were full of their country's superstitions, and expected a prince on the authority of their prophets; these would be scorners of the prophets and of their countrymen's beliefs, scheming to turn such fables to their own advantage—for it cannot be supposed that they believed the prophets, and at the same time intended to fulfill or defeat them by so plain a fraud, one which they themselves, at least, would have known to be false.

But let us set aside these suppositions and see how the real evidence in this case stands. Guards were posted, and they did their duty. But what are guards and sentries against the power of God? An angel of the Lord opened the sepulcher; the guards saw him and became like dead men. This is the account they gave to the chief priests, who, still persisting in their stubbornness, bribed the guards to tell the contradictory story instead—that they had been asleep, and the body had been stolen.

I cannot help pointing out to your Lordship that all these circumstances, so heavily questioned and suspected, were necessary circumstances if the resurrection is true. The seal was broken, the body came out of the sepulcher, the guards were posted in vain to prevent it. Granted—but I would like to know whether the gentleman thinks the seal put God under covenant, or could prescribe to him a method for performing this great work, or whether he thinks the guards were posted to uphold the seal against the power of God. If he will maintain neither of these, then the breaking of the seals, despite the guard set over them, stands as evidence not of fraud but of the power behind the resurrection; and the guards will have nothing to answer for, except that they were not stronger than God. The seal was a proper check upon the guards—the Jews had no other purpose in it; they could hardly have been foolish enough to imagine that this device could thwart the designs of providence. And it is surprising to see these very circumstances used to prove the resurrection a fraud, when they could not help but occur, supposing the resurrection to be true.

But there is yet another circumstance which the gentleman considers very significant, and on which, I find, great weight is placed. The resurrection happened, we are told, a day sooner than the prediction required. The reason given for this is that carrying out the plot at the appointed time had become impractical, because the chief priests, and probably large numbers of the people, were prepared to visit the sepulcher at that time, and so the disciples were forced to move their plot forward.

This observation is entirely inconsistent with the very supposition on which the argument rests. The gentleman has all along assumed that the resurrection was managed by fraud, and not by force. And indeed, force—had there been any opportunity to use it—would have accomplished nothing: beating the guards and removing the dead body by violence would have destroyed any claim to a resurrection. Now surely the guards, assuming them sufficient in number to withstand any violence, were at least sufficient to prevent or expose fraud. What need, then, was there to hasten the plot for fear of crowds gathering at the tomb, since there were always people present in sufficient number—the guards themselves—to expose any fraud, which was the only method that could have been used in the case?

Suppose, then, that we could not give a satisfactory account of how the time was reckoned from the crucifixion to the resurrection; even so, we can

still say that the resurrection took place while the guards had the sepulcher in their keeping, and it is impossible to see what opportunity this could give to fraud. Had the time been delayed, the guards withdrawn, and a resurrection then pretended, there might have been some plausibility in asking: Why did he not come within his appointed time? Why did he choose to come after it, when all the witnesses who had patiently waited out the appointed hour had already left? But as it stands, what is there to object to? You think he came too soon. But were not your guards at the door when he came? Did they not see what happened? And what other satisfaction could you have had, supposing he had come a day later?

In saying this, I do not mean to brush aside the gentleman's objection, which rests on a misunderstanding of a manner of speaking common to the Jews and other peoples: when they name a number of days or years, they count both the first and last day or year toward the total. Christ, referring to his own resurrection, says, In three days I will raise it up. The angels report his prediction this way: The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. Elsewhere it is said, After three days; and again, that he was to be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. These expressions all amount to the same thing, for we always count the night as part of the day when reckoning by days. If you agree to do something ten days from now, you allow for the nights as well as the days; and so, in this kind of reckoning, two days, and two days and two nights, are the same thing. That the expression "after three days" means inclusive days is shown by Grotius in his notes on Matthew 27:63, among others. The prediction, then, was that he would rise on the third day. Now, he was crucified on Friday and buried; he lay in the grave all through Saturday, and rose early on Sunday morning. But the gentleman thinks he ought not to have risen before Monday. Consider what ordinary usage requires in a similar case. Suppose you were told that your friend fell ill on Friday, was bled on Saturday, and died on the third day—what day would you suppose he died on? If you have any doubt about it, put the question to the first plain, ordinary person you meet, and he will settle it for you. The Jews could have no doubt in this case, for this was their practice in one of the most important points of their law. Every male child was to be circumcised on the eighth day. How did they count the days? The day of birth was one, and the day of circumcision another; and though a child was born toward the very end of the first day, he could still be circumcised at any time on the eighth day. So it is neither new nor strange that the third day, in our case, should be counted in, even though Christ rose at the very start of it. It is even more unusual to reckon whole years in this manner; and yet this is the constant method used in Ptolemy's canon, the most valuable work of ancient chronology, next to the Bible, still in existence. If a king lived over even the first day of a year, and died the week after, that whole year is still reckoned to his reign.

I have now gone through the several objections on this point. What credit they may gain in this age, I do not know; but it is plain they had no credit when

they were first put about. Indeed, it is evident that the very people who first spread this story of the stolen body did not believe it themselves. And, not to dwell here on the plain fact that the guards were bribed by the chief priests to tell this lie, it will appear from the chief priests' own later conduct that they were well aware the story was false. Not long after the resurrection of Christ, the disciples, having received new power from above, appeared publicly in Jerusalem, and in the very temple, and testified to the resurrection of Christ, even before those who had murdered him. What did the chief priests do then? They seized the apostles, they threatened them, they beat them, they scourged them, all to stop their mouths, insisting that they should say no more on the matter. But why, when they had the disciples in their power, did they not charge them directly with their blatant fraud in stealing the body, and expose them to the people as impostors? This would have served their purpose far better than all their threats and ill usage, and would have done far more to undeceive the people. But not one word of this is said. They try to murder them, enter into plots to assassinate them, prevail upon Herod to put one of them to death—but not so much as a charge against them of any fraud in the resurrection. Their orator Tertullus, who could hardly have passed over so fine a topic for his speech had there been so much as a suspicion to support it, is entirely silent on this head, and contents himself with the stock charges of sedition and heresy, profaning the temple, and the like—trifling matters indeed compared to the other accusation, had there been any ground to make use of it. And yet, as it happens, we know for certain that the very question of the resurrection did come under debate: for Festus tells King Agrippa that the Jews had certain questions against Paul concerning one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. After this, Agrippa hears Paul himself; and had he suspected, much less been convinced, that there was any fraud in the resurrection, he would hardly have said to Paul at the end of their conversation, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

But let us see what the council and senate of the children of Israel thought of this matter, in the most solemn and serious deliberation they ever held about it. Not long after the resurrection, the apostles were seized; the high priest thought the matter of such weight that he summoned the council and senate of the children of Israel. The apostles were brought before them and made their defense. Part of their defense runs in these words: The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. This defense was indeed a heavy charge against the senate, and in the heat of their anger their first impulse was to put them all to death. But Gamaliel, one of the council, stood up and told them that the matter deserved more consideration. He recounted to them the history of several impostors who had come to ruin, and concluded, with respect to the case of the apostles then before them: If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. The council agreed to this advice, and after some rough treatment, the apostles were released. I ask now, and let any man of common sense answer: could

Gamaliel possibly have given this advice, and supposed that the hand of God might be with the apostles, if he had known that a fraud had been exposed in the resurrection of Jesus? Could the whole senate have followed this advice, had they believed the fraud had been discovered? Was there not among them one man wise enough to say, How can you suppose God to have anything to do with this affair, when the resurrection of Jesus, on which everything depends, was a notorious fraud, and plainly proved to be so? I would only weaken the force of this point by saying more, and so I will rest here, and give way to the gentleman to go on with his accusation.

Mr. A. My Lord, before I proceed any further, allow me to say a few words in reply to what the gentleman has just offered on this point.

The gentleman thinks that the exposure of the fraud in the case of Lazarus ought to have made the Jews entirely unconcerned about Jesus, and confident as to the outcome of his own resurrection. He is quite right—supposing their concern had been only for themselves. But rulers have another responsibility on their hands: the care of their people. It is not enough for them to guard against being deceived themselves; they must also be watchful to protect the multitude from frauds and deceptions. The chief priests were indeed satisfied of the fraud in the case of Lazarus, yet they saw the people deceived by it; and it was for this reason, and not for their own peace of mind, that they took the precautions regarding the resurrection of Jesus which I laid before you earlier. In doing so, they are well justified, and the inconsistency charged against them on the other side—between their opinion of Jesus and their fear of being taken in by his pretended resurrection—is fully answered.

The next point concerns the seal upon the sepulcher. The gentleman thinks the seal was used as a check upon the Roman soldiers. But what reason did the Jews have to suspect them? They were not disciples of Jesus; they were servants of the Roman governor, employed in the service of the Jews; and I leave it to the court to judge whether the Jews set the seal to guard against their friends, or their enemies. But if the seals really were used to guard against the soldiers, then the breaking of the seals is proof that the guards were corrupted—and if so, it is easy to see how the body was removed.

As for the disciples, the gentleman observes that the part assigned to them in managing the resurrection requires an unaccountable change in their character. It will not be long before the gentleman himself needs just as great a change in their character, for these same weak men, you will find, were soon employed in converting the world, and sent to appear before kings and princes in the name of their master; soon you will see them grow wise and capable, fully qualified for their vast and important work. The only difference between me and the gentleman on the other side will turn out to be this: that I date this change a little earlier than he does. A small matter, surely, on which to settle the right of this controversy.

The last point concerns King Agrippa's courtesy to Paul, and Gamaliel's advice. I cannot answer for Agrippa's meaning, but he certainly meant very little; and if this matter is to be judged by his opinion, we know that he never did become a Christian. As for Gamaliel, it is likely that he saw great numbers of the people engaged zealously in favor of the apostles, and thought it prudent to let the matter pass in silence, rather than push things to extremes. This is a common case in every government: the multitude and their leaders often escape punishment, not because they do not deserve it, but because, in some circumstances, it is not prudent to exact it.

I pass over these things lightly, because the next point contains the great question—to us, indeed, who live at this distance in time, the only great question. For whatever reason the Jews had to believe the resurrection, it means nothing to us, unless the story has been conveyed to us upon evidence sufficient to support the weight placed upon it.

My Lord, we now come to the last and main article of this case: the nature of the evidence on which the credibility of the resurrection rests. Before I inquire into the qualifications of the particular witnesses whose word we are asked to take in this matter, I would ask: why was this evidence, which plainly concerns the most essential point of Christianity, not placed beyond all exception? Many of Christ's miracles are said to have been performed in the streets, even in the temple, in full view of everyone; but nothing of the kind is even claimed here. Indeed, we have it on the confession of Peter himself, the leader of the apostles, that Christ appeared not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God. Why pick and choose witnesses in this case more than in any other? Does this not suggest some suspicion, raise some doubt, that this case could not bear the light of public scrutiny?

I would ask more particularly: why did Jesus, after his resurrection, not appear openly to the chief priests and rulers of the Jews? Since his commission concerned them in a special way, why were his credentials not laid before them? The resurrection is acknowledged to be the chief proof of his mission—why, then, was it concealed from those who, more than anyone else, were concerned in the outcome of that mission? Suppose an ambassador from some foreign prince came to England, made his public entry through the city, paid and received visits, and at last refused to show any letters of credence or to wait upon the king—what would you think of him? Whatever you would think in that case, you must think in this one, for there is no difference between them.

But we must take the evidence as it is. It was thought proper, in this case, to have select, chosen witnesses; and we must now consider who they were, and what reason we have to take their word.

The first witness was an angel, or angels. They appeared like men to some women who went early to the sepulcher. If they appeared like men, on what grounds are we to take them for angels? The women saw men, and so they can

witness only to the seeing of men. But I suppose it is the women's judgment, not their evidence, that we are to follow in this case. Here, then, we have a story of one apparition used to support the credibility of another apparition—and the first apparition does not even have the evidence of the women to support it, but is grounded only on their superstition, ignorance, and fear. Every country can supply a hundred instances of this kind, and there is this common to them all: as learning and common sense gain ground in a country, such stories die away and are heard of no more.

The next witnesses are the women themselves. The wisest men can hardly guard themselves against the fears born of superstition; poor, simple women, then, must surely make unimpeachable witnesses, fit to be counted among the chosen witnesses to attest this fact! One part of the account given of them is quite believable: that they were surprised and frightened beyond measure; and I leave it to your Lordship and the court to judge how well qualified they were to give a true account of what passed.

After this, Jesus appears to two of his disciples as they were on a journey. He joins them, and brings up a conversation about himself, spending much time, until it began to grow dark, in explaining the prophecies concerning the death and resurrection of the Messiah. All this while, the disciples did not know him. But then, going into a house to lodge together, at supper he broke bread and gave it to them; immediately they knew him, and immediately he vanished. Here, then, are two more witnesses. But what will you call them—eyewitnesses? Why, their eyes were open, and they had full use of their senses, when he reasoned with them and they did not know him. So, to that extent, they are witnesses that it was not him. Tell us, then, on what grounds you reject the evidence of their senses before the breaking of the bread, and insist on it afterward. And why did Jesus vanish the moment he was recognized—which has far more the air of an apparition than of the appearance of a real man restored to life?

Cleopas, one of these two disciples, finds the apostles, to report to them what had passed. No sooner was the story told, than Jesus appears among them. They were all frightened and confounded, and thought they saw a ghost. He rebukes them for their unbelief, and their slowness in believing the prophecies of his resurrection; and though he had refused before to let the women touch him (a detail I ought not to have left out), he now invites the apostles to handle him, to examine his hands and feet, and inspect the wounds of the cross. But what body was it they examined? The same one that came in when the doors were shut; the same one that vanished from the two disciples; the same one the women were not allowed to touch; in a word, a body quite unlike a human body, which, as we know, cannot pass through walls, or appear and disappear at will. What, then, could their hands or eyes tell them in this case? Besides, is it credible that God would raise a body imperfectly, with the very wounds still in it of which it died? Or, if the wounds were such as

would have destroyed the body before, how could a natural body survive with them afterward?

There are further appearances of Jesus recorded, but they are so much of the same kind, and so open to the same difficulties and objections, that I will not trouble your Lordship and the court with listing them one by one. If the gentleman on the other side finds any advantage in any of them beyond those I have mentioned, I shall have the chance to consider them in my reply.

It may seem surprising to you, perhaps, that a matter of this importance was entrusted to evidence like this; but it will seem still more surprising to consider that the several nations who received the gospel, and submitted to the faith of this article, did not even have this much evidence. For what people or nation had the evidence of the angels, the women, or even of all the apostles together? Far from it—every country had its single apostle, and received the faith upon the credit of his word alone. We have followed our ancestors without examining the matter ourselves; and if you trace the thing to the bottom, our belief was originally built upon the word of one man.

I shall trouble you, sir, with just one more observation, which is this: that although in everyday life we act, in a thousand instances, upon the faith and credit of human testimony, the reasoning for doing so is not the same in the case before us. In ordinary affairs, where nothing is claimed but what is probable and possible according to the usual course of nature, a reasonable degree of evidence ought to be enough to persuade any man, for the very probability or possibility of the thing lends support to the evidence; and in such cases we have no doubt that a man's senses qualify him to be a witness. But when the thing testified is contrary to the order of nature, and, on the face of it at least, impossible, what evidence can be sufficient to overturn the constant evidence of nature, which she gives us in the uniform and regular course of her operations? If a man tells me he has been in France, I ought to have a reason for not believing him; but if he tells me he has come from the grave, what reason can he give me why I should believe him? In the case before us, since the body raised from the grave differed from ordinary natural bodies, as we have already seen, how can I be sure that the apostles' senses qualified them to judge at all of this body—whether it was the same body that was buried, or not? They handled a body which could nonetheless pass through doors and walls; they saw it, and sometimes recognized it, and at other times did not. In a word, this seems to be a case exempt from human evidence altogether. Men have limited senses and a limited reason: when they act within those limits, we may give credit to them; but when they speak of things removed beyond the reach of their senses and reason, we must set aside our own, if we are to believe theirs.

Mr. B. My Lord, in answering the objections raised under this heading, I shall find myself obliged to change the order in which the gentleman thought fit to place them. He began by complaining that Christ did not appear publicly

to the Jews after his resurrection, and especially to the chief priests and rulers, and seemed to argue as if such evidence would have put the matter beyond all doubt; but he concluded with an argument to prove that no evidence in this case can be sufficient—that a resurrection is a thing impossible in nature, or at least impossible to be proved to the satisfaction of a rational inquirer. If this is so, why does he demand more evidence, since none can ever be sufficient? Or to what purpose is it to vindicate the particular evidence for the resurrection of Christ, so long as this general prejudice—that a resurrection is incapable of being proved—remains unanswered? I am obliged, therefore, to deal with this objection first, so that it does not sit as a dead weight upon everything else I have to offer in support of the evidence of Christ's resurrection.

The gentleman allows that it is reasonable, in many cases, to act upon the testimony and credit of others, but thinks this should be limited to cases where the thing testified is probable, possible, and in keeping with the usual course of nature. I do not suppose the gentleman claims to know the full extent of all natural possibilities, much less supposes them to be generally known; and so his meaning must be that the testimony of witnesses should be received only in cases that appear possible to us. In any other sense we can have no dispute, since mere impossibilities, which can never occur, can never be proved. Taking the observation in this sense, then, the proposition is this: that the testimony of others ought not to be admitted except in such matters as appear probable, or at least possible, to our own understanding. For instance: a man who lives in a warm climate, and has never seen ice, ought, upon no evidence whatsoever, to believe that rivers freeze and grow hard in cold countries, for this is improbable, contrary to the usual course of nature as he knows it, and impossible according to his notion of things. And yet we all know this to be a plain, manifest fact, discernible by the senses of men, who are therefore qualified to be good witnesses to it. A hundred such instances might be named, but it is needless, for surely nothing is more plainly absurd than making one man's ability to discern, and his honesty in reporting, plain facts depend upon the skill or ignorance of the hearer. And what has the gentleman said here against the resurrection, more than any man who never saw ice might say against a hundred honest witnesses who swear that water turns to ice in cold climates?

Yet it is very true that men do not so easily believe, upon the testimony of others, things that seem to them improbable or impossible; but the reason is not that the thing itself admits no evidence, but that the hearer's preconceived opinion outweighs the credit of the reporter, and casts his honesty into question. For instance, it is natural for a stone to roll downhill, and unnatural for it to roll uphill; but a stone moving uphill is just as much an object of the senses as a stone moving downhill, and all men in their right minds are just as capable of seeing, judging, and reporting the fact in the one case as in the other. Should a man, then, tell you that he saw a stone go uphill of its own accord, you might question his honesty; but you could not say the

thing admits no evidence, because it is contrary to the law and usual course of nature—for the law of nature you have formed for yourself, from your own experience and reasoning, is quite independent of the matter of fact which the man reports. Whenever you see with your own eyes facts that contradict your notions of the law of nature, you admit the facts, because you believe yourself; when you refuse to admit similar facts upon the evidence of others, it is because you do not believe them—not because the facts, in their own nature, exclude all evidence.

Suppose a man were to tell you that he had come back from the dead, you would be inclined to suspect his account. But what would you suspect? That he was not alive when you heard him, saw him, felt him, and conversed with him? You could not suspect this without giving up all your senses, and acting in this one case as you act in no other. Here, then, you would question whether the man had ever actually been dead. But would you say that it is incapable of being established by human testimony that this or that man died a year ago? That cannot be said. Evidence of this kind is admitted in all courts, constantly.

Look at it the other way. Suppose you saw a man publicly executed, his body afterward wounded by the executioner, and carried off and laid in the grave; and suppose that after this you were told that the man had come to life again—what would you suspect in this case? Not that the man had never been dead, for that you saw with your own eyes; but you would wonder whether he was now alive. But would you say that this case excludes all human testimony, and that men cannot possibly tell whether someone they conversed with familiarly is alive or not? On what ground could you say this? A man rising from the grave is an object of the senses, and can give the very same evidence of being alive as any other man in the world can give. So a resurrection, considered only as a fact to be proved by evidence, is a plain case; it requires no greater ability in the witnesses than that they be able to distinguish between a man dead and a man alive—a point on which, I believe, every living man thinks himself a competent judge.

I do allow that this case, and others of like nature, require more evidence to make them credible than ordinary cases do. You may, therefore, require more evidence in these than in other cases; but it is absurd to say that such cases admit no evidence at all, when the things in question are plainly objects of the senses.

I allow further that the gentleman has rightly stated the difficulty on the footing of common prejudice, and that it arises from this: that such cases appear contrary to the course of nature. But I would like us to consider what this "course of nature" really is. Every man, from the humblest countryman to the greatest philosopher, forms for himself, out of his own experience and observation, a notion of a course of nature, and is ready to say of anything reported to him that contradicts his experience, that it is "contrary to nature."

But will the gentleman say that everything is impossible, or even improbable, that contradicts the notion men form for themselves of the course of nature? I think he will not say it. And if he does, he must also say that water can never freeze, for this is utterly inconsistent with the notion of the course of nature held by people who live in warm climates. And so it appears that when men speak of "the course of nature," they are really speaking of their own prejudices and imaginings, and that sense and reason are not nearly so much involved in the matter as the gentleman supposes. For I ask: is it from the evidence of the senses, or the evidence of reason, that people in warm climates think it contrary to nature for water to grow solid and become ice? As for the senses, they do indeed see that, where they live, water is always liquid, but none of their senses tell them it can never grow solid. As for reason, it can never inform them of any such thing either, for right reason can never contradict the truth of things. Our senses inform us rightly what the usual course of things is; but when we go on to conclude that things cannot be otherwise, we outrun the information our senses actually give us, and the conclusion rests upon prejudice, not upon reason. And yet it is exactly such conclusions that make up what is generally called "the course of nature." And so, when men, upon proper evidence and information, come to admit things contrary to this presupposed course of nature, they are not, as the gentleman puts it, giving up their own sense and reason—they are, in truth, giving up their own mistakes and prejudices.

In the case before us, the case of the resurrection, the great difficulty arises from just this kind of prejudice. We all know by experience that all men die, and rise no more; and so we conclude that for a dead man to rise to life again is contrary to the course of nature. And certainly it is contrary to the uniform and settled course of things. But if we argue from this that it is therefore contrary and repugnant to the actual laws of nature, and absolutely impossible on that account, we argue without any foundation to support us, either from our senses or our reason. We cannot learn from our eyes, or our touch, or any other sense, that it is impossible for a dead body to live again; if we learn it at all, it must be from our reason—and yet what single maxim of reason is contradicted by the supposition of a resurrection? For my own part, when I consider how I live—that all the animal motions necessary to my life go on independently of my will, that my heart beats without my consent and without my direction, that digestion and nutrition are carried out by processes of which I am not even conscious, that my blood moves in a perpetual round which seems contrary to all known laws of motion—I cannot but think that the preservation of my life, in every moment of it, is as great an act of power as would be needed to raise a dead man to life. And whoever reflects enough upon his own being to acknowledge that he owes it to a superior power must surely conclude that the same power which gave life to senseless matter at the beginning, and set all its springs and movements going in the first place, can restore life to a dead body as well. For surely it is

no greater thing to give life to a body once dead, than to give it to a body that never was alive at all.

Next must be considered the difficulties which the gentleman has laid before you concerning the nature of Christ's body after the resurrection. He has cited certain passages which, he thinks, imply that the body was not a real, natural body, but a mere phantom, or apparition; and from this he concludes that, there being no real object of the senses involved, there can be no evidence in the case at all.

Presumptions carry no weight against positive evidence, and every account of the resurrection assures us that the body of Christ was seen, felt, and handled by many people, who were called upon by Christ himself to do so, so that they might be assured he had flesh and bones, and was not a mere ghost, as they had, in their first surprise, imagined him to be. It is impossible that those who give us this account should mean, by anything they report, to imply that he had no real body; it is clear, then, that when the gentleman makes use of what they say for this purpose, he uses their words against their plain meaning—for it is nowhere claimed that they say Christ did not have a real human body after the resurrection, nor is it claimed that they ever thought so, except only in the first moment of surprise at seeing him, before they had examined him with their own eyes and hands. But there is something they have said which the gentleman, according to his own notions of philosophy, thinks implies that the body was not real. To clear this up, then, I must lay before you the passages in question, and consider how fairly the gentleman reasons from them.

The first passage concerns Mary Magdalene, who, the first time she saw Christ, was going to embrace his feet, as was the custom of the country. Christ says to her, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them—and so on. From this the gentleman concludes that Christ's body must have been of a kind that could not bear to be touched. But how does he draw that conclusion? Is it from the words "Touch me not"? It cannot be, for thousands of people say this every day without giving the least suggestion that their bodies are incapable of being touched. The conclusion, then, must rest upon the other words: For I have not yet ascended to my Father. But what have these words to do with the reality of his body? It might have been real or not real, for anything that is said here. There is a genuine difficulty in these words, and it may be hard to pin down their exact meaning; but there is no difficulty at all in seeing that they have nothing to do with the nature of Christ's body, for of his body nothing is said. The natural sense of the passage, as I gather it by comparing it with Matthew 28:9, is this: Mary Magdalene, upon seeing Jesus, fell at his feet, took hold of them, and clung to them as though she meant never to let go. Christ said to her, "Touch me not," or "do not cling to me now; you will have other chances to see me, for I am not yet going to my Father: lose no time, then, but go quickly with my message to my brothers." I am not committed to defending

this particular reading of the passage; it is enough for my purpose to show that the words cannot possibly bear on the nature of Christ's body, one way or the other.

The next passage concerns Christ joining two of his disciples on the road and conversing with them without being recognized by them. It grew dark; they urged him to stay with them that night; he went in with them, broke bread, blessed it, and gave it to them, and then they knew him, and immediately he vanished.

The matter of his vanishing I will take up under the next heading, along with other objections of the same kind. For the present, I will only examine the rest of this story, and ask whether it gives any grounds to conclude that Christ's body was not a real one. Had this story been told of anyone else, I do not think such a suspicion could ever have arisen. For what is there unnatural or unusual in this account? Two men meet an acquaintance whom they believed dead. They converse with him for some time without suspecting who he is; indeed, their very conviction that he was dead contributed greatly to their failure to recognize him. Besides, he appeared in different clothing and form than they were used to seeing him in; he met them on a journey and walked beside them, a situation in which no one in the group gets a full view of the others. Afterward, when they were together at supper, and lamps were brought in, they plainly recognized who he was. At this point the gentleman asks what sort of witnesses these are—eyewitnesses? No, says the gentleman: before supper they were eyewitnesses that the person they saw was not Christ, and then he demands a reason for our rejecting the evidence of their senses when they did not recognize Christ, while insisting on it once they did.

It is not uncommon for men to catch themselves and others with such clever, pointed questions, and to be carried off by the liveliness of their own imagination, away from the road of truth and common sense. Allow me to tell the gentleman a short story, and then put his own question back to him. A certain gentleman, who had spent some years abroad, happened, on his way back to England through Paris, to meet his own sister there. She had no expectation of seeing him there, nor he of seeing her; they spent much of a day together with other company, at a public house, without recognizing one another. At last the lady began to show clear signs of distress: her color came and went, and the eyes of the company were drawn toward her; and then she cried out, "Oh, my brother!" and nearly fainted. Now suppose this lady were to testify under oath, in a court of law, that she saw her brother in Paris; I would ask the gentleman whether he would object to her evidence, and claim that she was just as good an eyewitness that her brother was not there as that he was, and demand of the court why they would reject the evidence of her senses from the time she did not recognize her brother, while being ready to believe it from the time she did. When that question has been answered in this case, I ask only to have the benefit of the same answer in the case now before you. But if you are of the opinion that some extraordinary power was at work

on this occasion, and are inclined to think that the phrase "their eyes were holden" implies as much, then the case falls under the next heading. In which

we are to consider Christ's vanishing out of sight; his coming in and going out when the doors were shut; and other such passages—which, since they fall under one consideration, I shall address together.

But it is necessary first to see exactly what the apostles affirm in their accounts of these facts, for I think more has been claimed on their behalf than they ever said, or ever meant to say for themselves. In one place it is said, he vanished out of their sight—a phrase which the margin of our Bibles corrects to read, he ceased to be seen of them; and the original language means no more than that. It is said in another place that, the disciples being together and the doors shut, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them. How he came is not said; much less is it said that he came through the door, or through the keyhole; and for all that is said to the contrary, he might have come in at the door, the disciples simply not seeing the door open, or him, until he was standing in their midst. But the gentleman thinks these passages prove that the disciples saw no real body, but an apparition. I am afraid that the gentleman, for all his contempt of apparitions and the superstition on which they rest, has fallen into the very same trap himself, and is arguing on no better principles than the common notions ordinary people hold about ghosts. Why else does he imagine these passages to be inconsistent with the reality of Christ's body? Is there no way for a real body to disappear? Try the experiment: simply put out the candles, and we shall all disappear. If a man falls asleep in the daytime, everything disappears to him; his senses are all shut off; and yet everything around him continues to be real, and his senses continue to be perfectly sound. Just as shutting out all rays of light would make everything disappear, so cutting off the light from any one particular body would make that body disappear. Perhaps something like this was the case; or perhaps something else, which we do not know. But whatever the explanation, the gentleman's conclusion rests on no sound principle of true philosophy, for it does not follow that a body is not real simply because I suddenly lose sight of it. I may be told, perhaps, that this way of accounting for the passages is just as extraordinary, and just as far outside the ordinary course of things, as the alternative. Perhaps it is—and what of it? Surely the gentleman does not expect that, in order to prove the reality of the greatest miracle that ever occurred, I must show that there was nothing miraculous about it at all, and that everything happened according to the ordinary course of things. My only concern is to show that these passages do not imply that the body of Christ, after the resurrection, was not a real body. I am surprised the gentleman did not carry his argument a little further, and try to prove that Christ, even before his death, had no real body—for we read that when the crowd intended to throw him down from a cliff, he went through the midst of them, unseen. Now, nothing that happened after his resurrection is any more inexplicable than this event that happened before it; and if the argument holds good at all, it will prove that there never was such a man as Jesus in the

world. Perhaps the gentleman thinks this is proving a little too much—and if he does, I hope he will give up the argument in the one case as readily as in the other, for there is no difference between them.

Up to this point we have been called upon to prove the reality of Christ's body, and that it was the same body after the resurrection that it was before. But the next objection complains that the body was, if anything, too much the same as that which was buried—for the gentleman thinks it still bore the very same mortal wounds, open and uncured, from which he had died. His observation rests on the words Christ uses to Thomas: Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side. Is it actually stated here that Thomas did put his hand into the wound, or so much as see the wounds fresh and bleeding? Nothing of the kind; it is merely supposed, from Christ's words—for, the reasoning goes, if he had no wounds, he would not have invited Thomas to probe them. Now, the meaning of Christ's words will best appear from an account of the occasion that prompted them. He had already appeared to his disciples, in the absence of Thomas, and shown them his hands and feet, which still bore the marks of his crucifixion. The disciples reported this to Thomas; he thought the thing impossible, and expressed his disbelief, as men do when they are being stubborn, in rather extravagant terms: "You talk," he said, "of the print of the nails in his hands and feet; well, for my part, I will not believe it, except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side." Now, in the first place, nothing is said here about open wounds; Thomas speaks only of putting his finger into the print—that is, the scar—of the nails, and thrusting his hand into his side. And in ordinary speech, to thrust a hand into someone's side does not mean to thrust it clean through the side into the internal organs. On this reading of the words, which is the plain and natural one, the gentleman's objection disappears entirely. But suppose Thomas did mean what the gentleman takes him to mean—in that case the words of Christ are plainly meant as a sharp rebuke to him for his unbelief: "Here," says Christ, in effect, "are my hands and my side; take the proof you demanded; thrust your fingers into my hands, your hand into my side"—throwing Thomas's own words back at him, and holding him to his own terms, which, to a man just beginning to see how far he has overreached, is the sharpest rebuke of all. Expressions of this kind are used on many occasions, and are never understood to mean that the thing proposed is proper, or even always practicable. When the Greek women reproached their sons for cowardice, and called to them, as they fled from the enemy, to come and hide themselves, like children, in their mothers' wombs, no one would seriously ask whether the women actually believed they could take their grown sons back into their wombs again.

I have now gone through the objections which had to be cleared away before I could lay out the evidence in this case. I am aware that I have taken up too much of your time; but I have this to say in my defense: that objections built on popular notions and prejudices are easily conveyed to the mind in a

few words, and, conveyed that way, make a strong impression; but whoever sets out to answer them must contend with all the notions to which they are attached, and from which they draw their strength, and counts himself fortunate if, even with many words, he can gain a fair hearing.

I come now to consider the evidence on which our belief in the resurrection rests. And here I am stopped again. A general objection is raised against the evidence, that it is incomplete and unfair, and the question is asked: why did Christ not appear publicly to all the people, especially to the magistrates? Why were some witnesses picked out and chosen, and others left out? It may be enough to say that, where there are witnesses enough, no judge and no jury complains for want of more; and so, if the witnesses we have are sufficient, it is no objection that we do not have others besides.

If three credible men attest a will—which is as many as the law requires—would anyone ask why the whole town was not called upon to put their names to it too? But why were these particular witnesses picked and chosen out? Why? For this reason: that they might be good ones. Does not every sensible man choose suitable witnesses for his deeds and his will? And does not a good choice of witnesses lend strength to any such document? How does it come about, then, that the very thing which removes all suspicion in every other case should, in this case alone, be of all things the most suspicious? How much reason there is to complain on the Jews' behalf may be judged, in part, from what has already appeared. Christ suffered openly in their sight, and they were so well informed of his prediction that he would rise again that they set a guard on his tomb—and from their own guards they learned the truth. Every soldier was, to them, a witness of the resurrection of their own choosing. After this they did not have merely one apostle (which the gentleman observes was the case for other peoples), but all the apostles, and many other witnesses besides, within their power. The apostles testified to the resurrection before them—not only to the people, but to the elders of Israel assembled in council. To support their evidence, they were empowered to work, and did work, miracles openly in the name of Christ. These people, therefore, have the least reason to complain, and had, of all others, the fullest evidence—evidence of a kind that, in some respects, none but themselves could have had, since they alone were the keepers of the tomb. I believe that if the gentleman were to choose for himself the ideal evidence in a like case, he would ask for nothing more than to keep the sepulchre, with a sufficient number of guards.

But the argument goes further. It is said that Jesus was sent with a special commission to the Jews, that he was their Messiah, and that since his resurrection was his principal credential, he ought to have appeared publicly to the rulers of the Jews after he rose. In doing otherwise, it is said, he acted like an ambassador who claims authority from his prince but refuses to produce his letters of credence.

I was afraid, when I allowed myself to be drawn into this argument, that it would lead me into matters better decided by men of another profession than lawyers. But since there is no help for it now, I will lay before you what seems to me the natural and plain account of the matter, leaving it to others better qualified to give a fuller answer to the objection.

It appears to me, from the accounts we have of Jesus, that he held two distinct offices: one as the Messiah particularly promised to the Jews, the other as the great high priest of the world. With respect to the first office, he is called (Hebrews 3:1) the apostle of the Hebrews, the (Romans 15:8) minister of the circumcision, and he says of himself (Matthew 15:24), "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Accordingly, when in his lifetime he sent out his apostles to preach, he expressly forbade them to go among the Gentiles or Samaritans, but said (Matthew 10:6), "Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Christ continued to discharge this office throughout his earthly life, until he was finally rejected by the Jews. And it is worth noting that, according to St. Matthew's account, the last time he spoke to the people, he solemnly took his leave of them and closed his commission to them. He had been among them a long time publishing glad tidings, but when all his preaching and all his miracles had proved to be in vain, the last thing he did was to pronounce the woes they had brought upon themselves. Matthew chapter 23 records these woes, and at the end of them Christ takes this passionate leave of Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." It is remarkable that this passage, as recorded twice over by St. Matthew and St. Luke, is fixed by its context to refer to the near approach of his own death and to the extreme hatred the Jews bore him. The words "ye shall not see me henceforth," therefore, are to be dated from the time of his death, and plainly mark the end of his particular mission to the Jews. From the point of this declaration, as it stands in Matthew, his discourses are addressed to his disciples, and chiefly concern the miserable and wretched condition of the Jews, which was now decreed and soon to come to pass. Let me now ask: in this state of affairs, what further credentials of Christ's commission to the Jews could possibly be demanded or expected? He had been rejected, his commission to them was at an end, and with it the fate of the nation was sealed as well—so what further use would more credentials have served? As for appearing to them after his resurrection, he could not do so without contradicting his own prediction: "Ye shall see me no more, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The Jews were not in that disposition after the resurrection, nor are they in it yet.

The resurrection was the foundation of Christ's new commission, which extended to the whole world. It was then that he declared that all power was

given to him in heaven and on earth. Then he gave his disciples a new commission, no longer confined to the house of Israel, but to go and teach all nations. Under this new commission the Jews retained this one privilege, that the gospel was everywhere offered to them first—but on no different terms than it was offered to the rest of the world. Since, then, this commission, founded on the resurrection, extended equally to the whole world, what grounds are there to demand special and particular evidence for the Jews? The Emperor and the Senate of Rome were a far more considerable part of the world than the chief priests and the synagogue—why, then, does the gentleman not object that Christ failed to show himself to Tiberius and his senate? And since all men have an equal claim in this matter, why might the same demand not be made on behalf of every country, indeed of every age? The gentleman might just as well bring the question nearer home and ask why Christ did not appear in England in King George's reign. Nothing, to my mind, is more unreasonable than to neglect and despise the plain and sufficient evidence already before us, sit down to imagine what kind of evidence would have satisfied us, and then turn the absence of that imagined evidence into an objection against the truth—a truth which, upon careful examination, would be found to stand well established.

This observation about the resurrection of Christ naturally leads to another, which will help explain the nature of the evidence we have on this great point. Since the resurrection opened a new commission in which the whole world had an interest, it was naturally a concern to have evidence proper to establish this truth—evidence that would carry equal weight for all. This did not depend on the satisfaction given to private individuals, whether magistrates or not, but on the conviction of those whose office it was to bear testimony to this truth in the world. In this sense the apostles were chosen to be witnesses of the resurrection—because they were chosen to bear testimony to it in the world, not because they alone were permitted to see Christ after his resurrection, for in fact that is not the case. The gospel, concerned as it is to set forth the evidence on which the world's faith was to rest, is very careful to record the eyewitness demonstration the apostles had of the resurrection, and it mentions others who saw Christ after his resurrection only incidentally, as the thread of the history happens to lead to them. Yet it is certain that many others had this same satisfaction besides the apostles. St. Luke tells us that when Christ appeared to the eleven apostles, there were others present with them (Luke 24:33); who they were, or how many, he does not say. But it appears in Acts, at the choosing of an apostle to take the place of Judas, that the chief qualification required was that he be capable of being a witness of the resurrection, and that there were a hundred and twenty people present so qualified (compare Acts 1:15, 21, and 22 together). And Saint Paul says that after his rising Christ was seen by five hundred people at once, many of whom were still living when he appealed to their testimony. So the gentleman is mistaken in imagining that only a few were chosen to see Christ after he rose from the grave. The truth of the

matter is that, out of all who saw him, some were chosen to bear testimony to the world, and for that reason were given the fullest demonstration of the truth, so that they might be the better able to satisfy others. And what was there in this arrangement to complain of? What in it to raise any jealousy or suspicion?

As for the witnesses themselves, the first the gentleman takes notice of are the angels and the women. The mention of angels led naturally to talk of apparitions, and the women were dismissed as "poor silly women"—and so, it was suggested, their evidence is settled. But speaking seriously: will the gentleman undertake to prove that there are no intelligent beings between God and man, or that they are not ministers of God, or that they were improperly employed in this great and wonderful work, the resurrection of Christ? Until some of these points are disproved, we may rest easy, for the angels were ministers, not witnesses, of the resurrection. And it is not on the credit of the "poor silly women" that we believe angels were involved, but on the report of those who wrote the gospels, who set it down as a truth known to themselves, and not merely as a report taken from the women.

But as for the women, what shall I say? Silly as they were supposed to be, I hope at least they had eyes and ears, and could tell what they heard and saw. And in this case they tell us no more than that. They report that the body was not in the tomb—but far from reporting the resurrection, they did not even believe it, and were anxious to find out to what place the body had been removed. Beyond that they were not employed, for, I think, the gentleman rightly observes elsewhere that they were not sent to bear testimony to any people. But suppose them to be witnesses; suppose them even to be improper ones—the evidence of the men is surely no worse for the fact that some women happened to see the same thing they saw. And if only men are to be admitted as witnesses, we have enough of them to establish this truth.

I will not spend your time enumerating these witnesses, or setting out the demonstration they had of the truth they report. These things are well known. If you question their sincerity, they lived wretchedly and died wretchedly for the sake of this truth—and what greater evidence of sincerity can a man give or anyone require? And what is more, they were not mistaken in expecting to be ill-treated, for he who sent them out told them beforehand that the world would hate them and treat them with contempt and cruelty.

But leaving these weighty and well-known circumstances to your own reflection, allow me to lay before you another piece of evidence passed over in silence by the gentleman on the other side. He observed that a resurrection is so extraordinary a thing that no human evidence could support it. I am not sure he is wrong. If twenty men were to come into England with such a report from some distant country, perhaps they would not find twenty more here willing to believe their story. And I am rather inclined to think the gentleman may be right, because in the present case I can see clearly that the credit of

Christ's resurrection was not entrusted to mere human evidence alone. What evidence it was entrusted to, we learn from his own declaration: "The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye also"—speaking to his apostles—"shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:26-27). And so, although the apostles had conversed with him for forty days after his resurrection, and had received his commission to go and teach all nations, he expressly forbade them to begin the work until they had received power from on high (Acts 1:14). And St. Peter explains the evidence of the resurrection in this way: "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32).

Now, what were these powers the apostles received? Were they not the powers of wisdom and courage, which enabled them to stand before rulers and princes in the name of Christ; the power of miracles, even of raising the dead; by which they convinced the world that God was with them in what they said and did? Regarding this evidence, St. John says, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater" (1 John 5:9). Add to this that the apostles had the power to pass these gifts on to believers. Can you wonder, then, that men believed in the reality of powers they themselves possessed and were conscious of in themselves? It is with respect to these communicated powers, I take it, that St. John speaks when he says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10)—appealing not to some inward testimony of the Spirit in the sense some modern enthusiasts mean, but to the powers of the Spirit which believers received, and which were visible in the effects that followed.

It was objected that the apostles separated to the work of the ministry, one going to one country and another to another, so that the belief in the resurrection was originally received everywhere on the testimony of a single witness. I will not dispute the fact; suppose it to be so. But did that one witness travel alone, when he was accompanied by the powers of heaven? Was not every blind man restored to sight, and every lame man made to walk, a fresh witness to the truth reported by the first? Besides, when people from different countries later came to compare notes, and found that they had all received the same account of Christ and his teaching, surely the evidence of these distant witnesses, now brought together, became stronger than if they had told their story jointly from the start—for twelve men examined separately make a far stronger proof of the truth of any matter than twelve men agreeing together on one story.

If the same thing were to happen in our own time—if one or two men were to come into England and report that a man had been raised from the dead, and, as a result, taught nothing but that we ought to love God and our neighbors; if, to confirm their report, they were, before our very eyes, to cure the blind, the deaf, the lame, and even raise the dead to life; if, possessed of all these powers, they lived in poverty and distress and patiently endured all

the scorn, contempt, and malice that could be devised against them; and at last sacrificed even their own lives in vindication of the truth of their report; and if, upon inquiry, we found that every country in Europe had received the same account, supported by the same miraculous powers, attested in the same way by sufferings, and sealed with the blood of the witnesses—I should like to know what any reasonable man would do in such a case. Would he dismiss such evidence? I think he would not. And whoever thinks otherwise must be saying that a resurrection, though possible in its own nature, is nonetheless the sort of thing in which we ought not to believe, whether on the word of God or of man.

Judge. Have you finished, sir?

Mr. B. Yes, my lord.

Judge. Go on, Mr. A., if you have anything to say in reply.

Mr. A. My lord, I shall trouble you with very little. I will leave the objections and answers under this head to the judgment of the court, and beg leave only to make an observation or two on the last part of the gentleman's argument.

First, as to the sufferings of the apostles and disciples of Jesus, and the argument drawn from them for the truth of their doctrines and claims, I beg leave to point out that there is not a false religion or pretense in the world that cannot produce the same credential, and show many instances of men who have suffered even unto death for the truth of their various professions. If we look only at modern history, we find Papists suffering for popery and Protestants suffering for their religion. And among Protestants, every sect has had its martyrs—Puritans, Quakers, Fifth Monarchy men. In Henry VIII's time, England saw both popish and Protestant martyrs; in Queen Mary's reign the persecution fell upon Protestants; under Queen Elizabeth, papists and Puritans were sometimes, though rarely, put to this test. In later times, sometimes churchmen and sometimes dissenters were persecuted. What, then, are we to say? Not all these sufferers had truth on their side—and yet, if there is any weight in this argument from suffering, they all have an equal right to claim it.

But I may be told, perhaps, that although men's sufferings do not prove their doctrines true, they at least prove their own sincerity—as if it were impossible for a man to dissemble at the point of death. Alas, how many instances are there of men denying facts plainly proved, or asserting facts plainly disproved, even with the rope around their necks? Must all such men pass for innocent sufferers, for sincere men? If not, then it must be granted that a man's word at the point of death is not always to be relied upon.

Another observation I would make concerns the evidence of the Spirit, on which so much weight has been placed. It has been insisted all along that the

resurrection was a matter of fact, and a fact of a kind properly supported by the evidence of the senses. How is it, then, that this evidence—the proper evidence—is now given up as insufficient, and a new, improper evidence brought in its place? Is it not surprising that one great miracle should need a hundred more to prove it? Every miracle is itself an appeal to the senses, and therefore admits no evidence but that of the senses. And there is no connection between a miracle done this year and one done last year. It does not follow, therefore, that because Peter cured a lame man (granting the fact), Christ therefore rose from the dead.

But even granting the gentleman everything he demands, what is that to us? Those who had the witness within themselves may well have done right to trust it and take his word; but how am I, or anyone else who does not have this witness within us, any the better for it? If the first ages of the church saw all the wonders the gentleman describes, and believed because of them, that shows, at least in his own view, that such strong evidence was necessary to produce the belief he requires. Why, then, does he require this same belief of us, who do not have that strong evidence?

Judge. Very well. Gentlemen of the jury, you have heard the proofs and arguments on both sides, and it is now your task to give a verdict.

Here the gentlemen whispered among themselves, and the foreman stood up.

Foreman. My lord, the case has been long, and consists of several points; the jury therefore hope your lordship will give them some direction.

Judge. No, no; you are quite capable of judging without my help.

Mr. A. My lord, consider, if you please, that you appointed this meeting and chose this office for yourself. Mr. B. and I have each done our part, and have some claim on you to do yours.

Mr. B. I must join, sir, in that request.

Judge. I have often heard that every honor carries a burden with it, but I did not expect it in this office, which I conferred upon myself. But since it must be so, I will call the debate to mind, and lay its substance before you as well as I can.

Gentlemen of the jury, the question before you is whether the witnesses of the resurrection of Christ are guilty of giving false evidence, or not.

Two kinds of objections, or accusations, are brought against them. One charges fraud and deceit in the transaction itself; the other charges the evidence as forged, and insufficient to support belief in so extraordinary an event.

There are also three periods of time to be considered.

The first covers the ministry of Christ, and ends at his death. During this period the fraud is supposed to have been devised.

The second reaches from his death to his resurrection. During this period the fraud is supposed to have been carried out.

The third begins at the resurrection, and takes in the whole ministry of the apostles. Here the evidence they gave the world for this fact is the chief consideration.

As to the first period, and the fraud charged upon Jesus, I must point out to you that this charge was supported by no evidence at all; indeed, all the facts reported of Jesus stand in direct contradiction to it. To suppose, as counsel did, that such a fraud might come to light if we had some Jewish books written at the time, is not to produce proof but merely to wish for it: for, as was rightly observed on the other side, how does Mr. A. know that any such books ever existed? And since they are lost, how does he know what was in them? Were such books still in existence, they might well prove, beyond dispute, the very facts recorded in the gospels.

You were told that the Jews were a very superstitious people, much given to expecting prophecy, and in particular that around the time Christ appeared they had a strong expectation that a victorious prince would arise among them. This is set up as grounds for suspicion, and you are told that, in fact, many impostors arose by trading on these popular notions, from which it is inferred that Christ built his own scheme on the strength of these same popular prejudices. But when this claim came to be examined on the other side, it appeared that Christ, far from falling in with these notions and exploiting the people's credulity, made it his central aim to correct these very prejudices and oppose these superstitions—and it was by doing exactly this that he fell into disgrace with his countrymen, suffering as one who, in their view, had destroyed the Law and the Prophets. As for worldly power, so far was he from seeking it that he refused it when it was offered him; so far was he from holding out any hope of it to his disciples that he called men to follow him on quite different terms: to take up the cross and follow him. And it is worth noting that, after he had foretold his own death and resurrection, he went on warning his disciples of the hardships they were to suffer, telling them that the world would hate them and mistreat them—which surely, to common sense, hardly looks like a man then contriving a fraud, or encouraging his disciples to carry one out.

But poorly supported as this charge is, it could not be avoided; necessity, not choice, drove the gentleman to it. For since Christ had foretold his own resurrection, if the whole thing was a fraud, he must certainly have known it, and so the plot must have been laid in his own lifetime. And yet to suppose Christ aware of such a fraud under these circumstances runs contrary to all probability. It is very improbable that he, or any man, would, without any motive, contrive a fraud to be carried out after his own death. And even

supposing this, it is highly improbable that he would give public notice of it beforehand, thereby putting everyone on their guard—especially considering that there were only a few women and twelve men, of modest means and little education, to carry out the plot, against the whole combined power of the Jews and the Romans.

Mr. A. seemed aware of these difficulties, and so was inclined to alter the charge, making Christ an enthusiast and his disciples mere cheats. This was not properly put forward, and so was not debated; for that reason I shall pass over it with this brief observation: that enthusiasm is just as foreign to the whole character and conduct of Christ as fraud itself is. Besides, even if this notion were granted, it would apply only to Christ's own part in the matter, and would leave the full charge of fraud still resting on the management of events from the time of his death onward—so it is of no use unless fraud afterward can be shown. For if there truly was a resurrection, that alone sufficiently answers the charge of enthusiasm.

I pass on to the second period, to consider what happened between the death and resurrection of Christ. Here it is agreed that Christ died and was buried. So far, then, there was no fraud.

To understand the charge here properly, we must recall an important detail reported by one of the evangelists, namely this: after Christ was buried, the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate, the Roman governor, and told him that this deceiver (meaning Jesus) had, in his lifetime, foretold that he would rise again after three days; that they suspected his disciples would steal away the body and pretend a resurrection, and that then the last deception would be worse than the first. They therefore asked for a guard to watch the tomb, to prevent any fraud. Their request was granted; accordingly, they set a watch over the tomb and sealed the stone at its entrance.

What came of this, the same writer tells us. The guards saw the stone removed by angels, and out of fear became like dead men. When they came into the city, they reported to the chief priests what had happened. A council was called, and it was resolved to bribe the soldiers to say that the body had been stolen while they slept; and the council undertook to make their excuses to Pilate for having fallen asleep while on duty.

That is how the matter stands in the original record. Now, counsel for Woolston maintains that the story the soldiers told, after being bribed by the chief priests, contains the true account of this supposed resurrection.

The gentleman was aware of a difficulty standing in his way: how to account for the weight the Jews gave to Christ's prediction. For if, as he claims, they knew him to be an impostor, what reason would they have had to take any notice of his prediction at all? Indeed, this very caution betrays their underlying concern, and shows that they were not at all satisfied his claims

were groundless. To get around this, he says that they had earlier discovered one great fraud in the case of Lazarus, and so were suspicious of another in this instance. He was answered that the discovery of a fraud in the earlier case ought rather to have put them at ease, and made them quite confident that this new prediction would likewise come to nothing. In reply, he says that the chief priests, however satisfied of the fraud themselves, had found that it had taken hold among the people, and that, to keep the people from being further deceived, they took the precaution they did.

That is the substance of the argument on both sides.

I must point out to you that this reasoning from the case of Lazarus has no foundation in history. There is no basis at all for saying that the Jews, in this whole affair, had any particular regard to the raising of Lazarus. And if they truly had such a well-founded suspicion, why was it never mentioned at the trial of Christ? There was then every opportunity to expose the whole fraud and undeceive the people. The Jews had a plain law for punishing a false prophet, and what could be stronger proof than such a fraud laid bare? Why, then, was this advantage never taken?

The gentleman builds this observation on the words, "so the last error shall be worse than the first." But is anything said here about Lazarus? No. These words are a proverbial turn of phrase, and were probably used without reference to any particular case. But if a particular meaning must be assigned to them, it is more likely that, being spoken to Pilate, they carried a meaning suited to him. Now, Pilate had been drawn in to consent to the crucifixion for fear the Jews would set up Jesus as their king in opposition to Caesar. So the chief priests say to him: if once the people come to believe Jesus risen from the dead, the last error will be worse than the first—that is, they will be more inclined and emboldened to rebel against the Romans than ever. This is the natural sense of the words, used as they were to persuade the Roman governor to grant them a guard. Whether Lazarus was dead or alive, and whether Christ had come to destroy the Law and the Prophets or to establish and confirm them, mattered little to Pilate. Plainly, he was moved by none of these considerations, and refused to involve himself in the affair of Christ until he was alarmed by the suggestion of danger to the Roman state. That was the fear that first moved him—must not this second fear, now suggested to him, have been of the very same kind?

The next circumstance to consider is the seal placed on the stone of the tomb. Counsel for Woolston supposes some agreement between the Jews and the disciples over the setting of this seal. But there is no evidence for such an agreement; indeed, to suppose it contradicts the entire thread of the history, as the gentleman on the other side observed. I will not go into the particulars of this debate, as it is unnecessary. The plain, natural account given of the matter rules out all other suppositions. Mr. B. pointed out to you that the Jews, having set a guard, added the seal to prevent any collusion among the

guards to deceive them—which seems a plain and satisfactory explanation. Counsel for Woolston replies that whatever the seal's intended use, it is plain the seals were broken; and if they were meant as a check on the Roman soldiers, then presumably the soldiers consented to the fraud, which would easily explain how the body was removed.

I must point out to you here that this suspicion agrees neither with the account given by the evangelist, nor with the story put about by the Jews, so that it is wholly unsupported by any evidence.

Nor is it at all probable. For what could have moved Pilate and the Roman soldiers to spread such a fraud? He had crucified Christ for no other reason than fear that the people would revolt from Rome; perhaps he even agreed to post a guard at the tomb in order to put an end to the people's hopes in Jesus. Is it likely, then, that he would turn around and consent to a fraud designed to make the people believe Jesus risen from the dead—the very thing which, by his own reasoning, he was most bound to prevent?

The next circumstance offered as proof of the fraud is that Jesus rose from the dead before the time he had appointed. Mr. A. supposes the disciples hastened the plot for fear of running into crowds of people who were merely waiting for the appointed time to come to the tomb and see for themselves. He was answered that the disciples neither were nor could have been involved, or even present, at the moving of the body, since they were scattered and hiding for fear of the Jews; and that hastening the plot would have served no purpose anyway, since the resurrection took place while the guards were still at the tomb—guards who were probably numerous enough to prevent any violence, and certainly numerous enough to detect it, had any been used.

This difficulty, then, rests entirely on the reckoning of time. Christ died on a Friday and rose early on a Sunday. The question is whether this counts as rising on the third day, as predicted. I will leave the authorities cited on this point to your own recollection, and add only one observation, to show that it was indeed the third day according to the reckoning used by the people of that country. When Christ spoke with the two disciples who did not recognize him, they gave him an account of his crucifixion and of their own disappointment, telling him, "Today is the third day since these things were done" (Luke 24:21). Now, this conversation took place on the very day of the resurrection. And the disciples were thinking of nothing less than answering an objection against the resurrection, which as yet they did not even believe. They simply recount a matter of fact, reckoning the time according to the custom of their country, and call the day of the resurrection the third day from the crucifixion—which is plain evidence of how the Jews reckoned time in this and similar cases.

Since the objections in this matter are founded on the story put about by the Jews and the Roman soldiers, Mr. B., in his answer, tried to show, from

certain historical passages, that the Jews themselves did not believe that story.

His first argument was that the Jews never charged the disciples with this fraud, or with the part they had in it, even when the disciples were in their power—and yet who does not see that this was very much their intention? To this there is no answer.

The second argument was drawn from King Agrippa's treatment of St. Paul, and his words to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian"—words which, he argues, could not have been spoken by a prince to a man he knew to be carrying out a known fraud. To this the gentleman replies that Agrippa never actually became a Christian, and that too much weight should not be placed on his courtesy toward his prisoner. But even granting that there was something of mere humanity and civility in the remark, such civility could hardly have been extended to a known impostor. There is a fitness even in civility. A prince may be civil to a rebel, but he will hardly compliment him on his loyalty; he may be civil to some poor sectary, but if he knows the man to be a cheat, he will scarcely flatter him with hopes that he may one day join his own party.

The third argument was drawn from the advice Gamaliel gave to the council of the Jews, to leave the apostles alone, lest they themselves be found fighting against God—a supposition which the gentleman considers wholly inconsistent with Gamaliel, or the council, being persuaded that the apostles were guilty of any fraud in managing Christ's resurrection.

The gentleman replies that Gamaliel's advice concerned only the great numbers of people who had been deceived, and amounted merely to a statement of his opinion that it was not prudent to go to extremes until the people were in a calmer mood. This deserves consideration.

First, I observe that Gamaliel's words are explicit—"lest ye be found even to fight against God"—a reason that concerns God, not the people. The assumption behind it is that the hand of God might possibly be at work in this business, a thing he could never have said, nor the council have accepted, had they believed the resurrection to be a fraud.

Second, it is remarkable that the miracles worked by the apostles after Christ's death—especially those that led to the calling of this very council—had a far greater effect on the Jews than even the miracles of Christ himself had had. They had held out against all of Christ's wonders, and were constantly plotting his death, not doubting that this would put an end to all their trouble. But when, after his death, they saw the same powers continuing with the apostles, they could see no end to the matter, and began to think in earnest that there might be more to it than they were willing to admit. And on hearing reports of the apostles' works, they gave the matter serious thought, uncertain where it would all lead. And though in their anger and vexation they

considered desperate remedies, and were inclined to kill the apostles as well, they nevertheless listened willingly to Gamaliel's advice—advice that, at another time, might have been dangerous for the one giving it. So it appears from the history that the whole council shared the same doubt Gamaliel had, that the hand of God might possibly be in this matter. And could the Jews, had they clearly uncovered the fraud of the resurrection only a short time before, have entertained any such suspicion?

The last period begins at the resurrection, and covers the evidence on which belief in this fact rests.

Counsel for Woolston, among other difficulties, raised one which, if well founded, would exclude all evidence whatsoever from this case. Since the resurrection is a thing outside the ordinary course of nature, he holds that the testimony of nature itself—seen in her constant, unvarying way of working—is stronger evidence against the possibility of a resurrection than any human testimony can be for the reality of one.

In answer to this, it was said, on the other side:

First, that a resurrection is a thing to be judged by the senses, and this cannot be doubted. We all know when a man is dead, and should he come to life again, we could judge whether he was alive or not by exactly the same means by which we judge the people around us to be living.

Second, that the notion of a resurrection contradicts no principle of right reason, and conflicts with no law of nature; and that whoever admits that God gave man life in the first place cannot possibly doubt his power to restore it once it is lost.

Third, that appealing to the settled course of nature refers the matter in dispute not to the rules and principles of reason and sound philosophy, but to the prejudices and mistaken notions of men—which vary endlessly, and sometimes differ according to the climate people live in, because men form their notion of what is natural from what they happen to see. Thus in cold countries everyone judges it to be according to the course of nature for water to freeze, while in warm countries they judge it unnatural. It follows that it is not enough, to prove something contrary to the laws of nature, merely to say that it is usually, or constantly, otherwise in our own observation. And so, although men in the ordinary course of things die and do not rise again—which certainly creates a prejudice against believing in a resurrection—does this amount to an argument against its possibility?

Another objection was raised against the reality of Christ's body after it rose from the grave. These objections rest on passages reporting that he appeared and disappeared before his disciples' eyes at will; that he came in among them while the doors were shut; that he forbade some to touch him while inviting others to do so; that he still bore, fresh and open, the very

wounds of which he had died; and the like. From this, counsel concluded that it could not have been a real body, since it was sometimes visible and sometimes invisible, sometimes able to be touched and sometimes not.

On the other side it was answered that many of these objections rest on a mistaken reading of the passages referred to—particularly the passage in which Christ is thought to forbid Mary Magdalene to touch him; another, in which he invites Thomas to examine his wounds; and probably a third, concerning Christ's conversation with his disciples on the road, in which they did not recognize him.

As for the other passages, which speak of his appearing and disappearing and coming in when the doors were shut, it is said that no conclusion can be drawn from them against the reality of Christ's body: such things could happen in any number of ways and the body still be real, which is the only point to which this objection extends. There may well have been, and probably was, something miraculous in it, but nothing more wonderful than what happened on another occasion during his lifetime, on which occasion the gentleman who raises this objection grants that he had a real body.

I mention these points only briefly, simply to bring the course of the argument back to your memory.

The next objection arises from the fact that Christ did not appear publicly to the people, and in particular to the chief priests and rulers of the Jews. It is argued that his commission concerned them in a special way, and that it seems strange that the chief proof of his mission—the resurrection—should not have been displayed before them, but that witnesses should instead be picked out and chosen to see this mighty wonder. That is the force of the objection.

To this it is answered, first, that Christ's particular commission to the Jews expired at his death, and therefore the Jews, on that account, had no claim to any special evidence. And it is maintained that Christ, before his death, declared that the Jews should not see him again until they were better disposed to receive him.

Second, that since the whole world had a stake in the resurrection of Christ, it was necessary to provide evidence suited to the whole world—which could not be achieved by giving any particular satisfaction to the Jewish people or their rulers alone.

Third, that as for the chosen witnesses, it is a mistake to suppose they were chosen as the only ones to see Christ after his resurrection; in truth, many others saw him as well. Rather, the witnesses were chosen as fit persons to bear testimony to all people, an office to which many others who saw Christ were simply not appointed. Choosing proper and credible

witnesses, far from being grounds for legitimate suspicion, is in every case the most proper way of excluding suspicion.

The next objection is directed against the evidence of the angels and the women. It is said that history reports the women saw young men at the tomb, and that these were elevated into angels merely through the women's own fear and superstition; that, at best, this is nothing but a story of an apparition —something much talked of in times of ignorance, but never heard of in an age of knowledge.

In answer to this it is said that the angels are not properly counted among the witnesses of the resurrection; they were not among the chosen witnesses sent to bear testimony in the world, but were rather ministers of God appointed to attend the resurrection. That God has such ministers can hardly be reasonably doubted; nor can it be objected that they were improperly employed, or that it was beneath their dignity, to attend on the resurrection of Christ. We believe them to be angels not on the report of the women, but on the authority of the evangelist who affirms it. What is said here about apparitions may pass for wit and ridicule, but it supplies no reason or argument.

The objection to the women was, I think, simply that they were women— an objection strengthened only by calling them silly women.

It was answered that women have eyes and ears just as men do, and can tell what they see and hear; and that in this case, so far from being credulous, the women did not even believe the angels, and scarcely believed their own report. In any case, the women are not among the chosen witnesses; and even if they were, the evidence of the men cannot be set aside merely because women happened to see the same thing.

This is the substance of the objections and the answers.

Counsel for the apostles further insisted that they gave the world the greatest assurance possible of their sincerity, by enduring every kind of hardship and at last death itself, in confirmation of the truth of their testimony.

Counsel for Woolston, in reply, told you that every religion, true or false, has had its martyrs; that no opinion, however absurd, can be named for which some have not been willing to die; and from this he concluded that suffering is no evidence of the truth of the opinions for which men suffer.

To clarify this matter for you, I must point out how the case stands. You have heard often, in the course of this argument, that the apostles were witnesses chosen to bear testimony to the resurrection, and for that reason had the fullest evidence themselves of its truth—not merely by seeing Christ once or twice after his death, but through frequent conversations with him over forty days before his ascension. That this was indeed their proper

business appears plainly from history, where we find that to ordain an apostle was the same thing as ordaining a witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:22). If you look further, to the preaching of the apostles, you will find this was the great point they insisted on (Acts 2:22; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30). And St. Paul understood the weight of this point, and the necessity of teaching it, when he said, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14). You see, then, that the thing the apostles testified, and the thing for which they suffered, was the truth of the resurrection, which is a plain matter of fact.

Now consider how the objection stands. Counsel for Woolston tells you that it is common for men to die for false opinions, and in that he tells you nothing but the truth. But even in those cases, their suffering is evidence of their sincerity, and it would be very unfair to charge men who die for a doctrine they profess with insincerity in professing it. They may be mistaken, but not every mistaken man is a cheat. Now, if you grant that the suffering of the apostles proves their sincerity—which you can hardly refuse to do—and consider that they died for the truth of a matter of fact which they had seen with their own eyes, you will see how strong the evidence is in this case. In matters of doctrine and opinion, men are mistaken constantly, and it is no reason for me to adopt another man's opinion merely because I am persuaded he is sincere in holding it. But when a man reports to me some uncommon fact —one that is, by its own nature, a plain object of the senses—if I do not believe him, it is not because I suspect his eyes or his sense of touch, but simply because I suspect his sincerity. For if I were to see the same thing myself, I would believe my own eyes; and so my doubt does not arise from any inability of the human senses to judge the matter, but from a doubt about the sincerity of the one reporting it. In such cases, therefore, nothing remains to be proved but the sincerity of the reporter. And since willingly suffering for the truth is at least proof of sincerity, the sufferings of the apostles for the truth of the resurrection amount to full and unobjectionable proof.

Counsel for Woolston was aware of this distinction, and so added that there are many instances of men suffering and dying in stubborn denial of facts plainly proved. This observation, too, is true. I recall a story of a man who endured with great resolve all the tortures of the rack, denying the very fact with which he was charged. When he was later asked how he had managed to hold out against all that torment, he answered, "I had painted a gallows on the toe of my shoe, and whenever the rack stretched me, I looked at the gallows, and bore the pain, to save my life." This man denied a plain fact under great torture, but you can see the reason behind it. In other cases, when criminals persist in denying their crimes, they often do so—and there is reason to suspect they always do so—in hopes of a pardon or reprieve. But what are these instances to the present purpose? All such men suffer against their will, and for their own crimes, and their obstinacy rests on the hope of escaping punishment by moving the government to compassion. Can the gentleman produce any instance of persons who died willingly in support of a

false fact? We have had in England some men foolish enough to die for the pope's supremacy, but do you suppose a man could be found to die affirming that the pope actually sits on the throne of England?

Now, the apostles died asserting the truth of Christ's resurrection. It was always within their power to withdraw their testimony and save their lives. Even their bitterest enemies, the Jews, demanded no more of them than that they be silent (Acts 4:17; 5:28). Others have denied facts, or asserted facts, in hopes of saving their lives when under sentence of death; but these men affirmed a fact at the cost of their lives, which they could have saved simply by denying the truth. So between criminals who die denying plain facts and the apostles who died for their testimony, there is this crucial difference: criminals deny the truth in hopes of saving their lives, while the apostles willingly gave up their lives rather than deny the truth.

We come now to the last, and indeed the weightiest, consideration.

Counsel for the apostles, having granted in the course of the argument that more evidence is needed to support belief in the resurrection—being so extraordinary an event—than is necessary in ordinary cases, sets out in the latter part of his defense the extraordinary evidence on which this fact rests. That is, the evidence of the Spirit—the Spirit of wisdom and power given to the apostles, enabling them to confirm their testimony by signs and wonders and mighty works. This part of the argument was well made by the gentleman, and I need not repeat everything he said.

Counsel for Woolston, in his reply, raised two objections to this evidence.

The first was this: since the resurrection has all along been argued to be a matter of fact, an object of the senses, to turn to miracles as proof of it is to remove it from its proper kind of evidence—the evidence of the senses—and rest it instead on a kind of proof that cannot properly apply to it. For, he says, witnessing one miracle is no evidence that another miracle was worked before it; healing a sick man is no evidence that a dead man was raised to life.

To clear up this difficulty, you must consider by what chain of reasoning miracles come to serve as proof in any case at all. A miracle, by itself, proves nothing except this one thing: that there exists a cause equal to producing the effect we have witnessed. Suppose you were to see a man raise someone from the dead, and he then went away without saying anything to you—you would find that no fact, and no proposition, had been proved or disproved by that miracle. But suppose instead he declared to you, in the name of the one by whose power the miracle was worked, that the worship of images was unlawful—you would then be in possession of proof against image-worship. But how so? Not because the miracle itself proves anything about the point in question, but because the man's declaration is backed by the authority of the one who worked the miracle in confirmation of his teaching. Miracles,

therefore, are directly proof of the authority of persons, not of the truth of propositions.

To apply this to the case before us: if the apostles had worked miracles and said nothing about the resurrection, the miracles would have proved nothing about the resurrection one way or the other. But since, as eyewitnesses, they testified to the truth of the resurrection, and worked miracles to confirm their own authority, the miracles did not directly prove the resurrection itself; rather, they confirmed and placed beyond all suspicion the proper evidence—the evidence of eyewitnesses. So there is no shifting here from proper evidence to improper evidence; the fact still rests on the evidence of the senses, only confirmed and strengthened by the authority of the Spirit. If a witness calls on his neighbors to vouch for his honesty, they prove nothing about the fact in question itself, but only confirm the credibility of the witness. The case here is the same, though there is simply no comparing the authority brought to confirm this evidence with that of any ordinary witness's neighbors.

The second objection was that this evidence, however good it may be of its kind, is nothing to us. It was well enough, the gentleman says, for those who had it—but what is that to us, who do not have it?

To settle this difficulty, I must point out to you that the evidence now under consideration was not some private evidence of the Spirit, or inward light, of the kind the Quakers of our own day lay claim to, but evidence displayed in the plain, visible works of the Spirit—evidence capable of being passed down, and which has in fact been passed down to us on unquestionable authority. To grant that the evidence was good in the first ages of the church, but not in this one, seems to contradict the plain rules of reasoning: for if we can see enough to judge that the first ages had good reason to believe, we must at the same time see that it is reasonable for us to believe as well. Since the question before us concerns only the nature of the evidence, it was not necessary to bring forward from history the many instances showing how abundantly this evidence was granted to the church. Whoever wants this further satisfaction may easily obtain it.

Gentlemen of the jury, I have laid before you the substance of what has been said on both sides. It is now for you to consider it, and give your verdict.

The jury conferred together, and the foreman rose.

Foreman. My lord, we are ready to give our verdict.

Judge. Are you all agreed?

Jury. Yes.

Judge. Who shall speak for you?

Jury. Our foreman.

Judge. What say you? Are the apostles guilty of giving false evidence in the case of the resurrection of Jesus, or not guilty?

Foreman. Not guilty.

Judge. Very well. And now, gentlemen, I resign my commission, and am your humble servant.

The company rose and began paying their compliments to the judge and counsel, but were interrupted by a gentleman who went up to the judge and offered him a fee. "What is this?" said the judge. "A fee, sir," said the gentleman. "A fee to a judge is a bribe," said the judge. "True, sir," said the gentleman, "but you have resigned your commission, and will not be the first judge to leave the bench without any loss of honor. Now, Lazarus's case is to come on next, and this fee is to retain you on his side." A confused babble of voices followed, all speaking at once to persuade the judge to take the fee; but since the trial had run on longer than I expected, and I had let the time slip for an appointment on business, I was forced to steal away, and whether the judge was prevailed upon to undertake the cause of Lazarus or not, I cannot say.

FINIS