

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES FOR  
LAYMEN:  
STUDIES IN THEOLOGY;  
LECTURES I-XII**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649431229

Religious Studies for Laymen: Studies in Theology: Lectures I-XIII by Charles Elmer Beals

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**CHARLES ELMER BEALS**

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES FOR  
LAYMEN:  
STUDIES IN THEOLOGY;  
LECTURES I-XII**



# RELIGIOUS STUDIES FOR LAYMEN

STUDIES IN THEOLOGY

BY

Charles Elmer Beals

Minister of the Central Congregational Church  
Eastport, Maine

LECTURES I-XIII

Printed and published for the author by  
COCHRANE PUBLISHING CO.  
Tribune Building, New York

1911

C. E. B.  
Doctor F. Brown  
1-20-30

## PREFACE

The purpose of these lectures is to present in a form which will be acceptable to the layman a systematic and constructive outline of such subjects as are usually taken up in textbooks on Theology. There is a mass of theological and other closely related material not now accessible to the layman. It is my belief that the adult members of our Churches and Societies ought to have access to this fund of knowledge. Therefore, the attempt is made in these lectures to present in language that can be understood by the average individual the facts and the results of modern study.

I do not doubt that many facts which hitherto have been unknown to many laymen will be presented. The aim is always to find the truth, and then to build upon it. I can see no reason why the privileged few should be the only persons to have access to these facts. Therefore, the present work is not primarily an attempt to make a new contribution to knowledge. It is merely an attempt to present in clear and concise form what hitherto has been available only to the scholar.

These lectures were first prepared for an adult Bible study class connected with my own parish. I hope other pastors and leaders of Bible study classes will find them useful. The lectures are also recommended to Young Men's Christian Associations, Literary Clubs, and so forth. In these and other ways I hope the lectures will find a place and fill a need. The greatest reward of my labor will be to know that this modest effort assists the layman in his private study.

C. E. B.

Eastport, Maine, March, 1911.

09-29-30 C. E. B.

C. E. B.

## LECTURE I

### THE CREATION OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD

I. THE FACT OF THE CREATION.—Our first knowledge of the world comes to us through the senses. We receive impressions by means of the sense organs, and then construct in terms of thought an idea of the outer world. The next step is to inquire how the world came into existence. There have been several answers to that question. Some have said there was no outside world. What seems so to us is only our thought that it exists. Others have said the outside world is real. If so, the question arises as to the manner of its creation. Was there a time when matter did not exist? Was it made out of nothing? Did it form by chance? Has the Universe been created by an Intelligent Being? To account for the creation, myths have arisen, the forces of nature have been personified, and the world has been peopled with good and evil spirits. All religions have creation stories, and account for the fact of the creation by saying it was caused by the gods or a Superior Being. Thus there is substantial agreement as to the fact. The impressions received from the outer world lead men everywhere to look from nature to a God of nature.

II. THEORIES AS TO THE METHOD OF CREATION.—It is important to distinguish carefully between the fact of the creation and the method of it. The question now to be considered is as to the method.

1. *Theories as to the Origin of Matter.*—There are two possible views as to the origin of matter. The first is that matter was made out of nothing. There was a time when matter did not exist. It has been claimed that God need not have created the world, and that when he did he might have made a different kind of world had he so decided. Such a created world, then, would have no necessary connection with the past eternity of God. It would be something entirely new, not being formed from any previously existing thing. God would create it and set it to run its course much as a man would make a clock. When there was need of it God might suspend a natural law or perform a miracle. Otherwise such a physical world must run its course until it ran down and the whole created physical universe became a cold lifeless mass. The difficulty with this view is that it places God too far from the world. If a world could suddenly be created from nothing once, it could be done again. Such a thing is unthinkable, for the very term "Universe" implies there can be nothing outside of it. There is one thing God cannot do. He cannot create a world independent of himself. The processes of creation must, therefore, be a movement within God. The creation cannot have come out of nothing.

The second view is that matter is a physical form of something not material. Matter as we know it, exists in three forms, solid, liquid and vapor. These differences in form are not absolute. Iron can be heated until it becomes a liquid. Air can be compressed and frozen until it becomes a solid. Matter changes its form. But is matter itself a changing form of something else? If so, there was a time when matter as we know it did not exist. From a scientific point of view every physical



event has a preceding physical cause. There is a cause for the exact position of every grain of sand. All physical changes are but passing phases of one physical energy. Matter changes only its form. The amount of energy in the universe remains the same forever. Matter as we know it may be a temporal and passing form of an Eternal Energy, and matter itself may finally vanish away and not be, even as it was not before God created it. Otherwise we must think of matter as eternal. Matter is either eternal or it is a passing form of divine creative activity. In either case God is the Eternal Energy that sustains and controls all.

2. *The Theory of Special Creation.*—The first chapters of Genesis describe the appearance of different orders of created things on successive creative days. The question arises whether these "days of creation" were short or long periods of time, and whether in the process of creation each order of things appeared suddenly, independently and fully matured, or through a gradual process of development. The theory of special creation holds that each thing was created separately by a direct special creative act. According to this view God created all things according to type forever unchangeable and incapable of any further physical development beyond that involved in the perpetuation of the species. After God had thus created all things the work of creation ceased.

3. *The Theory of Evolution.*—What is known as "the theory of evolution" is advanced by modern science to explain the method of creation. The term is applied usually to the development of life. Yet in a broader sense the whole physical world is in a process of evolution. The physical world is evolving. Astronomers believe

there was a time when our world was a hot molten mass of material drawn together by gravitation. This mass gradually cooled. An atmosphere was formed. Rains began to fall. Land appeared. In due time when the climate had become stable, life appeared. Thus the world is running its course. Other planets have gone through similar evolutions already, and now are cold and motionless and lifeless. So will our earth run down, for all the physical world is in process of change.

The theory of evolution applies especially to the development of life. There are three theories as to the origin of life; there was life in the original matter of which the earth was made; life was brought here from some other planet; living matter originated spontaneously from the non-living. The first two are inconceivable. The third, while not impossible, reduces life to physical and chemical processes. We cannot ignore any physical aspects or possibilities in accounting for the origin of life, but after all we must confess as most leading scientists do that we cannot lift that veil. The theory of evolution accepts as its working principle the belief that all forms of life are related. From an original simple form through long processes of evolution the present complexity has resulted. Creation, then, has been a slow process of gradual development which has not yet ceased.

III. THE PROOF OF EVOLUTION.—The ancient Greeks believed in evolution as the method of creation. The idea was also accepted by early Churchmen and by the philosophers of the Middle Ages. The theory is now the basis of modern science, and is increasingly accepted everywhere. The proof of evolution, then, is a scientific question.

1. *Observations Proving Evolution.*—Geologists have found many fossils in the strata of the earth. It has been observed that fossils of the simpler forms of life are always found in the oldest strata, while the more complex are always found in strata of later formation. From these remains it is possible in some cases to trace the development of a species. For instance, in some very old deposits, fossils of a small animal about the size of a fox and with five toes have been found. There are also fossils of this same animal as it developed in later geological periods. We can trace clearly the line of development from this small animal with five toes to the modern horse. What has taken place in the case of the horse has taken place in the evolution of other forms of life. Similarities of structure also show definite relationship between different species. For instance, a comparison of the skeletons of Man, Orang, Gibbon, Chimpanzee and Gorilla shows similarity of structure. It is, therefore, scientifically logical to assume there is some anatomical connection. Besides this there are biological facts concerning the development of each individual which prove beyond question the ancestry of the species. In his development the individual quickly repeats the history of the race. Rudimentary organs and "reversion to type" are further convincing proofs. Scientific observations in both the animal and vegetable world show how all forms of life may have developed from earlier simpler forms. However, the supreme proof of evolution is to be found in what we may observe right around us all the time. There is development everywhere. The theory of evolution is but an attempt to apply to the entire history of the world what we can observe at any time in the growth of a single individual.