

**DEISM OR  
CHRISTIANITY?  
FOUR DISCOURSES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649019533

Deism Or Christianity? Four Discourses by N. L. Frothingham

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**N. L. FROTHINGHAM**

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FOUR DISCOURSES,

BY

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BOSTON:  
WM. CROSBY & H. P. NICHOLS.

1845. *L*

## PREFACE.

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IN publishing these Discourses, which were composed without such an intention and in the ordinary course of ministerial service, the author thinks to discharge a debt to the religious denomination with which he is connected, and to the cause of which he is set for the defence. At the same time, since subjects of this kind are by their nature incapable of exact demonstration, and therefore always open to debate, he will not feel called upon to enter into any controversy with those who may choose to assail his positions. Here are his thoughts. Let them pass for the value that each one on his conscience may assign to them.

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## EVIDENCE.

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For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.  
—COLLOSS. i. 19.

THIS passage is supposed by some to refer to that plenitude of power and grace with which the Son of God was endowed. God gave not the spirit by measure unto him. Others explain it of the whole great body of believers, his church, which is elsewhere called his fulness. The first interpretation seems to be the most natural. Both convey a true and an important meaning. According to one, Christ is represented as possessing every possible excellence, that can appear in our nature or adorn the high office that he sustains towards our race. According to the other, the whole vast multitude of believing souls is brought up before the mind, — Jew and Gentile together, — united under one head, the



Saviour, and dwelling in him of whose fulness all receive and grace upon grace. But it is under neither of these forms that the present discourse proposes to find its subject. The text has been chosen for a different purpose. Its language suggests, even if it did not intend, the thought that the religion of the Son of God contains in itself the full wisdom of the ages that went before and of the ages that were to follow, and was to receive testimony from all the dispensations of heaven to the human family. This idea is as just as it is sublime. I regard the Gospel as an abounding source of sacred truth and holy influences for the whole world; receiving into itself whatever ancient experience could supply, and distributing from itself whatever the exigencies of the coming times can require. The lessons of earliest days looked forward to it to complete their instruction, and the inquiries of the latest will continue to look back upon it as a sufficient guidance and a divine supply. It is connected with the ways of Providence behind and onward, and they combine to bear witness to it. This is the idea, that I would offer a few considerations to establish, believing that it will lead us to some valuable practical conclusions.

We are apt to conceive of the evidences of Christianity as a subject standing apart from all others, and having little connexion with any general views of truth or life. We are apt to conceive of Christianity itself as a single, insulated object, confined within a certain circle of its own. We either view it as a short series of events, that took place under one or two high priests and Cæsars not far from two thousand years ago, or else as a system of doctrines and institutions which at that time was set up on the earth. When the question is asked, then, — Is it true? we either bring proof that those events actually transpired; thus showing that the peculiar agency of God was indeed manifested in the wondrous facts which the New Testament records; or else we examine the form of the faith itself, and show that it is worthy of such a marvellous interposition, and wears upon its front the evidences of a divine origin. This is well. It is deserving of all attention and all praise. Not in vain has learned research been employed so earnestly as it has on these important themes. If they have been occasionally treated with shallowness or too great an ingenuity, they have been treated also with convincing ability, to the

perfect satisfaction of the profoundest and most cultivated minds. In some quarters serious persons have allowed themselves to speak slightingly of such investigations, but the slight is unwise. Let us give honor to those who in the minutest way have endeavored to strengthen the evidences, even where they did not need to be strengthened, of our blessed faith. But I would here take a wider survey, and present that evidence for it which is derived from an historical Providence; or Providence apparent in history. By this I mean that the courses of the heavenly administration over human affairs point from all sides towards this great centre of spiritual life; thus vindicating its claim to our reverence. The general annals of the world, and not the Scripture accounts only, — the general fortunes of the world, and not those only which lie within the scope of the Bible, — hold it forth as a word of command and of hope for humanity; reminding us that, in a further sense of the text than any usually assigned, it has pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell in him whom he sent.

Begin with the story of the old nations that preceded the Saviour's advent. The most