

**LECTURES ON THE  
THEISTIC FAITH AND ITS  
FOUNDATIONS, AND ON  
THE BIBLE; PP.1-85**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649367832

Lectures on the Theistic Faith and Its Foundations, and on the Bible; pp.1-85 by Charles Voysey

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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(130)

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BY THE  
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LONDON:  
WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,  
14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.;  
20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH;  
AND BROAD STREET, OXFORD.

1895.

*Price One Shilling.*

4-2247 v. 7.

LETTERS and Remarks on these Lectures  
will be thankfully received by the Author,  
ST. VALERY, FINCHLEY ROAD, HAMPSTEAD, N.W.

J.A.



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3-27-39

## OUR FAITH AND ITS FOUNDATIONS.

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*A Lecture delivered 30th August, 1876,  
at Penrhyn Hall, Bangor.*

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I HOPE that I see before me an assembly of thoroughly earnest religious men and women, who, whatever be their creed and opinions, have but one object in life, viz., to please God and to do His will, possessed of a fervent desire to know and believe God's Holy Truth, so far as it is on earth and by men discoverable, and who are ready to embrace and follow that Truth, cost what it may and lead where it will. All who believe in and love God must have this desire at the bottom of their hearts, and therefore I can reckon with confidence on the patient attention of all those who are in this sense really religious. For, with every acknowledgment of my own shortcomings, I yet claim to be reckoned as one of yourselves—a firm and thankful and happy be-



liever in God our Father, and, so far as poor human nature will go, a devout seeker after His truth. In an assembly so large as this, however, it is possible that there may be some persons whose chief interest in life is not religion, but mere selfishness and worldly gain, who are outwardly conforming to the religious habits and practices which society requires of them, while they are inwardly destitute of all true faith, and living as it were "without God in the world." If there be any such here to-night, I do not address myself to them on the present occasion. My errand is to the religious people, to the hearty believers, first of all; and in the second place it is to those who, having become dissatisfied with the creed of their childhood, are yet uncertain what to believe, or how to set about in their search for a Faith that shall be compatible with reason, sustain them under the trials and temptations of life, and comfort them in the hour of death. To these I would fain speak, but I have no word now for the thoughtless, the frivolous, and the irreligious.

It is a fact too well known to be disguised or forgotten that the school of religious thought to which I belong, and which I have come here to represent, is an object of suspicion, dislike, and even detestation to a large portion of our Christian brethren. I do not wonder at this; I can even

find grounds on which this aversion may be excused. In the first place, ignorance, and in the second place, prejudice, are the causes of the aversion. Christians in general are profoundly ignorant of what we believe and teach ; and this ignorance is due partly to the fact that we have not had time or opportunity to explain our Faith to them, and partly to the wilful misrepresentations of our views by bigoted persons and publications. We need not recount the list of bad names given to us, any one of which, such as "infidel," "blasphemer," "atheist," would be enough to keep us from a fair hearing and to engender the deepest suspicion. No wonder then that, while this ignorance of our Faith prevails, we should be regarded with distrust and aversion.

But not only ignorance, but prejudice also, has much to do with the ill names we have borne ; for it cannot be denied that what we teach, however conformable it is to the best teaching of the Old Testament and of Jesus Christ himself, is in direct antagonism to much that is popularly believed in and recognised as orthodox. To have prejudices is perfectly natural ; to feel intense aversion towards all new and foreign opinions, especially in matters of religion, is the common characteristic of human beings ; and one has to rise to a considerable height of courage and con-

confidence in the truth before one can listen attentively and patiently to an attack upon one's own deeply-cherished convictions. On these grounds, then, I say frankly, the opposition we have met with is amply excused ; and I, for one, admit that, unless we had been justified by a strong sense of our duty to God and by a burning love for our fellow-men, the disturbance of men's minds on religious questions would have been both a sin and a cruelty ; as Professor F. W. Newman, the oldest and foremost expounder of our Theistic Faith in this age, observes :—

“ What is called Bigotry has its rightful place, though when duly corrected, we cease to call it Bigotry. For lightly to propound novelties is an evil work, and lightly to unsettle men's notions in things sacred is a grave social offence, much to be reprobated.”

You will, however, call to mind, that the greatest religious movement the world ever saw was met by precisely similar opposition ; that not even Jesus and his apostles were able to escape the penalty always inflicted on innovators and religious reformers ; and that the very sincerity of their hearts and devotion to their mission were sealed by their martyrdom. The Reformation of the Church three centuries ago affords another striking illustration of the same opposition ; while that which was effected in the last and present centuries by the grand exertions of the Wesleys