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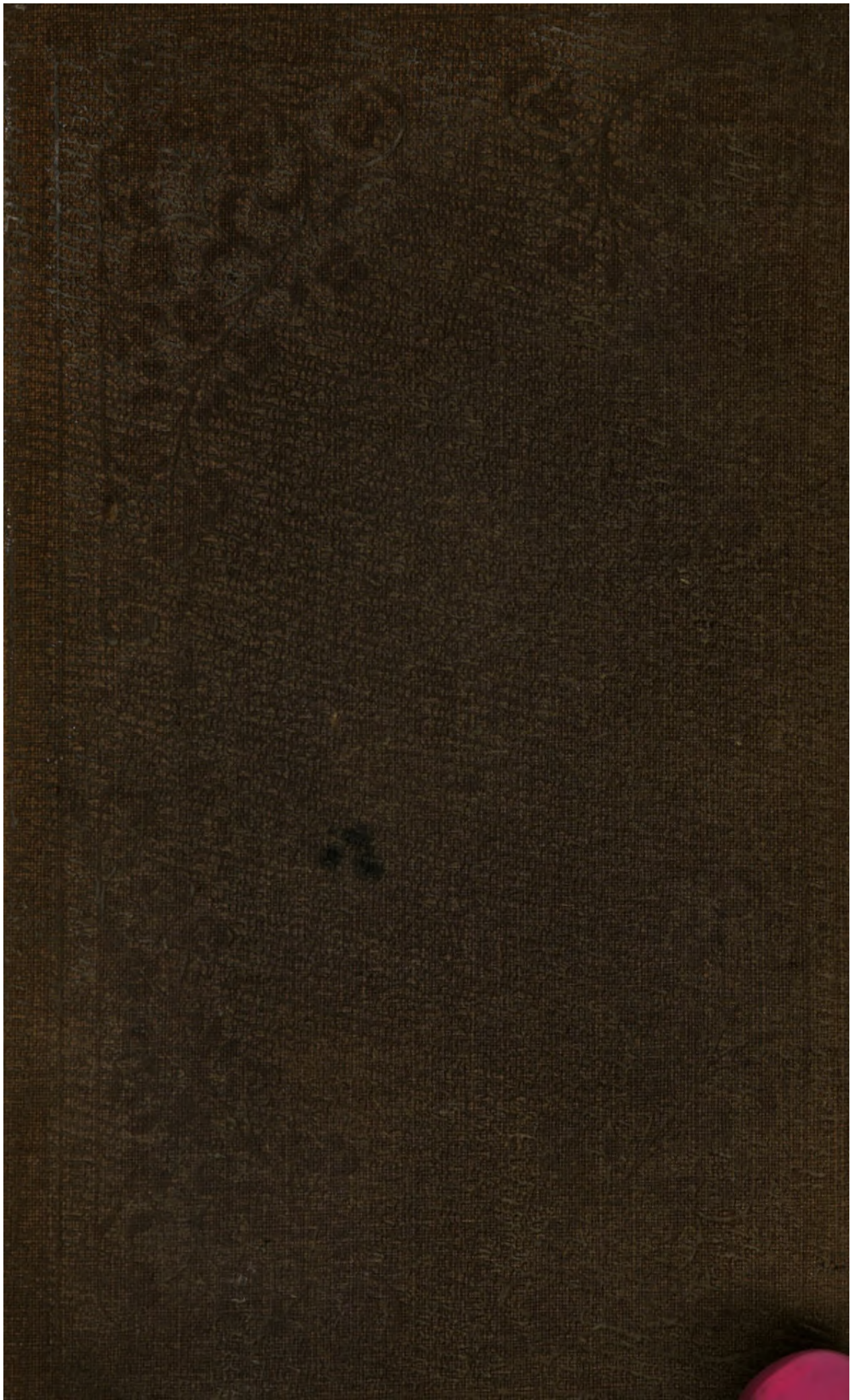
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JONSON J. 2015

THE BIBLE
AND ITS EVIDENCES.

BY

ROBERT COOPER.

“The time I think is approaching, or is already come, when Christianity will undergo a more severe investigation than it has ever yet done.”—BISHOP WATSON.

LONDON:
E. TRUELOVE, 240, STRAND, TEMPLE BAR.
1858.



P R E F A C E.

A PORTION of this volume originally appeared under a different name; but having been entirely re-written, to incorporate new matter, and many omissions made not absolutely essential to the object now in view, it may justly claim to be considered a *new* production.

It has often been affirmed, with some appearance of truth, that though many desultory essays have appeared impugning the Evidences of Christianity, no special work, of a popular character, has been published, professing to state and refute the arguments of the more distinguished divines, who have discussed this prolific theme. The following pages, it is hoped, will supply this want.

The intention of the author has been to confine himself strictly to a *popular* exposition of the subject, and by this he would wish his efforts to be judged. Perspecuity and force are the first requisites in any composition intended to be read and understood by the masses. That this condition has been observed, the contents of the volume will evince.

PREFACE.

The author has much pleasure in recording his obligations to antecedent and contemporary writers. The numerous marginal references indicate these acknowledgements.

Of late the Orthodox have circulated large impressions of "The Bible Hand-Book," "Paley's Evidences," and other able Text-Books explanatory of their side of the question. Should the present work serve as a "Hand-Book" to those who conscientiously take the other side, the author will feel amply compensated for his somewhat arduous labours.

London, 1858.

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THE BIBLE AND ITS EVIDENCES.

INTRODUCTION.

AMONG the peoples of Europe the pregnant conviction is growing stronger every hour that their real salvation can only be accomplished by themselves. Trusting to altars and to thrones has proved a fatal policy. The mitre and the sceptre have both betrayed them. Nothing can now save them from continued thralldom but the most fearless exercise of their own reason upon *every* question involving the progress and destiny of a nation. They must cease to think by proxy, or all endeavours to establish the liberties of the world will, as hitherto, be strangled at their birth.

How, then, are the people to be trained to rely on their own power? *By exposing the pretensions of those who have kept them in slavery.* The political aspect we leave in other hands. Be it our task to deal with the religious.

Whence the influence of our churches? By what agency have they awed the masses into silence, and even thrones into obedience? By what means have they succeeded in sowing sectarianism, setting man against his fellow, and threatening eternal infamy to all who would not kneel at their dark and dominant shrine? *The Bible! Faith in the supernatural origin of that book is the secret source of priestly ascendancy throughout Christendom.* While *that* delusion prevails, there is no hope for true freedom in Europe. It is idle to affirm that this remark cannot apply to Protestant countries. In *all*, Papal, Lutheran, or Greek, whether under the Western or Eastern hierarchies, the many are subject to the few, and the few rule the many by enforcing contentment and submission on the authority of its 'inspired' pages.

How, therefore, is this fallacy to be met? *By assailing it in its*

strongholds. Wound any enemy where he knows it is not mortal, and he is only the more implacable.

Consistently with this view we have endeavoured, in the following work, to meet the theologian on his own ground, and calmly, though unsparingly, test the evidences upon which he calls upon mankind to endorse the authority of the Old and New Testament. We have shown no anxiety to evade the most forcible points. We have met them the more readily *because* they were esteemed invulnerable. It shall not be complained we are not understood. It shall not be said we wish to retreat in a cloud of ambiguities. Neither shall it be surmised that we are solicitous to give or accept a compliment for an argument. Just and honourable we aim to be; but the struggle between truth and error, in these days, is too grave and momentous to be diverted by gratuitous amenities. Frank, earnest, and unequivocating, we shall invoke the power of reason alone.

Able and devoted friends of the people may differ with us in our mode of combatting the superstitions of the age. Some think a side blow is the most convenient. Others that we should attack error piecemeal—exhaust and confound the enemy by skirmishes. To this strategy we have always conscientiously demurred; not from a wanton, reckless desire to provoke antagonism, but that in contending with a great adversary—and superstition is confessedly the greatest—your only chance of victory is in weakening his *centre*. While *that* is intact, he is invincible. You may assault him in the flank, or the rear, but with his stronghold unshaken, he sets you at defiance. Not dreading, he despises you. Wellington once said, ‘A great nation ought not to have a little war.’ Might it not be pronounced, with equal verity, that a great party ought not to expend its strength in trifles? Organise your means, discipline your forces, concentrate your power, and, with one united blow, *strike at the vital part*, and success may attend you. The strongest post overturned, the rest succumb. Faith in the superhuman authority of the Bible once exploded, the reign of superstition on the civilised globe is at an end, finally and irrevocably.

CHAPTER I

THE NECESSITY OF A REVELATION.

THAT the human race *needed* a revelation, is the preliminary assumption of all Christian evidence writers since the time of Paley. A Divine Being must have *some* means of communicating with his creatures, and, therefore, it is rational to infer a revelation, and the probability of the Bible being true. It is scarcely requisite to premise that this argument, though highly popular, is inadmissible when professing to answer the anti-theist. To prove one dogma by another, both of which are challenged, is only begging the question. Reasoning in a circle is alike inconclusive and interminable. Moreover, the Christian can derive no advantage from such 'preparatory considerations.' The Hindoo, the Mahomedan, or even the Latter-Day Saint, might deduce, from the same premises, the probability of *their* scriptures being divine. The peculiar claims of the Old and New Testament must consequently be settled by other tests.

But if there be a necessity for a revelation, is it not equally necessary that revelation should be *effective*? Omnipotence having spoken, the universe *must* have been convinced. To believe otherwise, is to imply a *failure* in divine effort, or such dispensation is not 'necessary.' Instant and universal conviction, we repeat, must of 'necessity' have succeeded the promulgation of the *divine* will. A God omniscient would have known *HOW* to convince mankind; a God munificent would have *WISHED* to convince them, if 'necessary' to their eternal welfare; and a God *omnipotent* would have had the *power* to effect what his infinite wisdom and goodness dictated; therefore human belief must have *uniformly* followed. Is it so? Not more, indeed, than one-fourth of mankind have accepted the Bible, notwithstanding the prestige of the strongest and richest governments, ecclesiastical and secular. We have thus no alternative but to presume such a Being has *not* spoken through the scriptures, or that he cannot be endowed with the attributes ascribed to him. It clearly appears that he *would* not, or *could* not, accomplish his own ends. In the former case, infinite love is compromised; in the latter, infinite intelligence and influence. Which alternative will the Christian take? Consistency precludes the possibility of maintaining both.

To endeavour to escape the difficulty by affirming that omnis-

science gave man a 'free will,' by which he can accept or reject the scriptures at his own pleasure, only enhances the embarrassment, for in the very volume the pretensions of which this statement is intended to confirm, the reverse is emphatically taught. We are there assured—'For it is *God* which worketh in you both TO WILL and to *do* of HIS good pleasure.*' It is often alleged that the sceptic ought to study the Bible before he opposes it. Might it not be observed that the Christian ought to read it before he defends it?

Would it not have been more consonant with infinite love and mercy to have inspired *all* men to believe *rightly*? A kind, considerate parent, having it in his power to prevent his offspring going astray, and did not do so, would not be esteemed reputable or laudable. What is *immoral* in man cannot be *moral* in God, who is always represented to stand in relation to the great human family as a father to his child.

It is maintained a revelation was necessary, because mankind were ignorant. Dr. Paley observes—'I have met with no serious person who thinks that, even under the Christian revelation, we have too much light, or any degree of assurance which is superfluous.†' If a revelation was needful on the ground of human ignorance, why withhold it till the days of Moses and Christ? Why allow millions to be born, go astray, perish, and *then* send the 'light?' Why not sooner? Why not at *first*? Was a revelation *not* a 'necessity' *before* that time? If so, *why then*?

Precisely on the same view might it be assumed that we need a revelation *now*, for 'even under the Christian revelation we have not too much light.' Have we not *too little*? Have we *any* in reference to the *supernatural*—the special subject of those revelations? Nay, does not the Christian revelation positively aver that we *cannot* have light on divine polity, such ways being 'past finding out?' The only 'light' we receive from this dispensation is to tell us we are all in darkness, and must remain so! A revelation to *explain* the *natural* would have been of service: one enforcing faith in the *supernatural* is simply **ADDING** to 'ignorance.'

If the Jews and Christians received an *inspired* law because **THEY** had not 'too much light,' may not the Mahometans have received

* Phil. ii., 13. See also 2 Cor. iii., 5; Isa. xxvi., 12; Prov. xx., 24; Prov. xvi., 4.

† 'Evidences of Christianity: Preparatory Observations,' p. 1.

a similar favour for the like reason? Thus all 'divine revelations' are true, and the 'necessity,' therefore, is, to believe *all* or *any*; and the modest assurance of Dr. Paley, that 'the question lies between this religion (Christianity) or *none*,' is a mistake.

The learned archdeacon, in reply to the objection before stated—that no *human* understanding could fail of being convinced of the truth of that dictated by *omniscience*, and promulgated by *omnipotence*—is forced to the concession that 'the advocates of Christianity do not pretend that the evidence of their religion possesses these qualities.*' Why then preach that it is divine? Why assume those Scriptures to be inspired by God which do not possess that evidence which is alone consistent with his wisdom and power? A more damaging admission is not to be found in theological literature. Unrivalled for skill, shrewdness, and plausibility, the doctor would have escaped the strength of this objection had it been possible. The apology he makes is as pitiable as the concession. In a subsequent sentence it is stated—'The question, therefore, is not whether Christianity possesses the highest possible degree of evidence, but whether the not having more evidence be a sufficient reason for rejecting that which we have.' And he then proceeds to show that evidences in favour of revelation 'labour under no *defects* but what apparently belong to other dispensations.' What does such special pleading imply? Simply that since the evidence of revelation is no more unsatisfactory than any other dispensation, we are to accept it as *satisfactory*, and acknowledge our contumacy!! Is it possible such *nisi prius* sophistry could so long have been esteemed valid and conclusive? With respect to the query 'whether the not having more evidence be a sufficient reason for rejecting that which we have,' the point at issue in the present controversy is, *whether we have that evidence which can alone emanate from an OMNIPOTENT AND OMNISCIENT BEING?* To admit 'defects' in the dispensations of omniscience, is to weaken 'the probability of a revelation,' *inspired and infallible*. The *fact* of its being 'defective' is *the* proof of its non-divine origin. Dr. Paley and his successors thus destroy the foundations of their own citadel.

We now proceed to other important topics.

* 'Evidences,' part iii., c. 6.

CHAPTER II.

THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES HISTORICALLY CONSIDERED.

CONNECTED with the history of the Old and New Testament are many incidental considerations adverse to their claim to divine origin. We will discuss the more pertinent and interesting. In this chapter we shall confine ourselves to the Hebrew records.

Already have we urged that it is rational to premise that any revelation emanating, directly or indirectly, from divinity, must have been immediately and universally known, and produced prompt and uniform conviction. So far from this being true, however, the early history of the Old Testament is involved in impenetrable obscurity—a casualty that could only have attended an ordinary work. With the single exception of a small section—the Jews—it was entirely unknown to those for whom it is now said it was intended—the human race—until so late a date as 287 B.C. The oldest poets and historians of antiquity—Homer, Hesiod, Sanchoniathon, and Herodotus, do not name the Jewish Bible. In Bishop Cumberland's translation of Sanchoniathon, it is alleged that he mentions a people called 'Isroyl.*' We reply, the existence of their *scriptures* at this early period, and not the Jews, is the question—a mistake sometimes conveniently made by our opponents. If Sanchoniathon *did* mention the 'children of Israel,' and *not* their Bible, it is only additional testimony to the soundness of the position we shall subsequently establish—that the Pentateuch is more modern than Moses.

Our declaration that the Old Testament was unknown to the world, except the Jews, till 287 years before the Christian era, remains unanswered. If, therefore, this work was so obscure—confined to a mere tribe, is it reasonable or consistent to suppose that it was inspired by a Supreme Being, who deemed its acceptance essential to the happiness of *all* mankind? Intended for all, why not given to all?

Sensible of this difficulty, it has been affirmed that the Old Testament was only intended for the Jews. This aggravates the incongruity; for if a belief in that book saved *them* from eternal misery, why should it not have saved others? Was it just or humane to give them the 'monopoly' of salvation? Were the

* Two Orations by W. J. Spry.

majority of mankind created to be damned, and the minority saved? A God who had 'no respect of persons,' could surely have had no connection with such a revelation.

Admirably has it been observed* :—'What should we say of a father who had a numerous offspring, who should waste all his fondness upon one child, and never admit the rest to his presence, and then punish them for having no knowledge of his person? Would not such a conduct denote caprice and cruelty? Would he not be guilty of an injustice that we have never heard of in the most depraved and unfeeling of our species? How could a father think of punishing a child for not doing his will, which he thought proper to conceal from him? We must, therefore, conclude that a particular revelation pre-supposes not a good and equitable God, but an unjust and whimsical tyrant, who, if he be lavish of his favours to a few, is at least cruel and unjust to the rest. Revelation, in this case, does not prove the goodness, but the caprice, of a being, whom religion declares to be the perfection of wisdom, benevolence, and justice, and the common father of all the common race. If self-interest should carry a few to admire the hidden ways of the Almighty, what ought the many to think who are made the victims of his injustice and partiality? Assuredly pride alone could ever have induced a particular people to fancy themselves the privileged of their race, and the only favoured of heaven. Blinded by vanity, they perceived not the wrong they offered their Creator, in presuming that all his creatures, being equally the work of his hands, were not equally the objects of his care and affection. It is, nevertheless, upon particular revelations that all the religions in the world are founded. As every man has the vanity to think himself of more importance than his fellow, so has every nation conceited that they were the exclusive favourites of the Author of Nature. If the Indians believe that Brahma spoke for their instruction alone, the Jews and the Christians are persuaded that the world was created for them, and that God has manifested himself for them only.'

But who were these Jews who *alone* enjoyed the privilege of the 'Holy Word?' A great, a philanthropic, a noble people? No; but on the contrary they were held in sovereign contempt by every nation who became acquainted with them. It was said of them that they were the most trifling of all the *barbarians*, and were the only people *who had never found out anything useful for*

* 'Preservative against Religious Prejudices.'

life. Dr. Burnet* observes 'they were of a gross and sluggish nature—of a dull and heavy disposition—bereft of humanity—a vile company of men—an assembly of slaves, brought out of Egyptian prisons, who understood no art but that of *making bricks!*' Josephus himself confesses that his countrymen never held intercourse with their learned neighbours. No people of antiquity were more ignorant, credulous, intolerant, and wretched, than the Jews. While the ancient Chaldeans, Egyptians, Grecians, and Romans, produced their men of science and erudition, the Jews added nothing to the glorious pyramid of human knowledge. And yet we are to believe, even in the nineteenth century, that a being said to be 'all-wise' and 'all-good,' selected such a race as his 'chosen people'—the people who were *especially* entrusted with his 'divine word.'

That the standard of civilisation among the ancient Jews was no higher than their contemporaries, is shown from their own history. When the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem they took with them to Babylon such of the Jews as they conceived would be of use to them as artificers, etc. The rest they left to cultivate the land; but we do not read of any having been wantonly put to death. The Jews, on the contrary, spared no one who opposed them. If their enemies fell into their hands, they immediately put them to death. 'And Amaziah strengthened himself and led forth his people, and went to the valley of salt and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand. And other ten thousand left alive, did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them up to the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock that they all were broken to pieces?'†

So utterly insignificant were the 'chosen people' in a literary, moral, and political sense, in every quality which could lead an 'all-wise' and 'all-benevolent' power to select them as the special depositaries of his divine word, that even their existence as a people was little known to learned nations of that epoch. Josephus naturally labours to raise the reputation of his countrymen; but his *ex parte* statements have been unanswerably refuted by Wyttenbach.‡ He observes:—'But I will undertake to show

* 'Archæologiæ Philosophiæ.'

† 2 Chron. xxv., 11, 12.

‡ Wyttenbach's 'Opuscula,' vol. ii., p. 416. Amsterdam. 1821. *De Unitate Dei.*

that the Jews were first noticed by the Greeks, after the time of Alexander the Great. Many of the Greeks, their chief men of learning and talent, Thales, Solon, Pythagoras, Democritus, Plato, led by the love of wisdom, visited remote countries, as Egypt, Phœnicia, and Babylon. How happens it that the writings of these eminent men, the accounts transmitted to us of their sayings and doings, contain no mention of the Jews whatever? The times of Thales, Solon, Pythagoras, are coincident with the reinstatement of the Jews after the Babylonish captivity. At that period, Cyrus subdued Crœsus and the Lydians, transactions which were nearly connected with the affairs of Greece, so that it is hardly possible the deeds and expeditions of Cyrus should have been unknown to the Greeks, especially to their sages who travelled over to that part of Asia. If, therefore, at that period the Jews had any reputation among other nations, would not Solon, and the other wise men we have mentioned, inflamed as they were with the love of letters, have visited Judea, as well as Egypt and Chaldea? Would not Homer, the contemporary of Solomon, the most famous among the Jewish kings for wisdom and knowledge—would not Homer, the most learned of poets, who had collected by travelling so much knowledge of foreign and remote nations, and who has noticed in his poems so many things that fell under his own observation, or which were told him by others, who not unfrequently mentions the Egyptians and Phœnicians, would not he have noticed the Jewish people? Yet he mentions nothing whatever concerning the Jews. Those who believe in the personal meeting of Pythagoras and Ezechiel, commit a shameful chronological error, and bring together persons separated by many years: others believe that Plato acquired a knowledge of the trinity from the sacred books of the Old Testament; but nothing can be more silly than this attempt to trace Grecian learning from Judea: and those who know the least of this subject, are the most hardy in their assertions.

‘Let us dismiss the poets, most of whom abounded in learning, and show it in their writings. Let us dismiss the followers of that day, of whom the writings of Aristotle and Plato, the chief of them, have reached our times: is there one Jewish notice to be found in any part of them? Yet Plato travelled into Egypt for the sake of knowledge. Aristotle, also, so well versed in the history of the times, so inquiring, who had not only Alexander himself as his correspondent, but those also who were companions of Alexander’s expedition, and who communicated to him

whatever was worthy of notice in foreign countries and among foreign nations. If therefore any of them had visited the Jews, or considered that nation who worshipped one God only, as a circumstance new and proper to be related, would not some of them have communicated this fact to Aristotle? There was room enough to notice the Jews, in the works of that philosopher, who has described the public transactions of the Greeks, and of other nations. But there is no mention of the Jews in any part of the works of Aristotle that have come down to us, or in the fragments of such as have been lost.

‘Let us review the historians, who have touched upon the public affairs of the Egyptians, Persians, and other nations connected with them. Out of a great number two only, but of great repute, have descended to us—Herodotus and Xenophon. The former carefully travelled over these countries, and diligently mentions whatever he had observed personally, or had heard from others. The other, in the course of his military expedition was well acquainted with Persia, and that part of Asia, which was in the immediate vicinity of Judea: which of these historians has made any mention of the Jews? We may make the same inquiry as to Ctesias, Eudoxus, and others, whose works are lost. Of the truth of this remark, one argument, and that conclusive, is, that Josephus, and, after Josephus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Eusebius, and the other ancient fathers, who have anxiously collected from the Greek writers whatever testimonies are extant concerning the Jews, have not been able to adduce one passage authentic or worthy of credit. I shall speak again of this, after having noticed the writers of the age of Alexander. For my former suggestion that the Jews were first noticed by the Greeks after that period, has not the same force as if the Jews suddenly at that time acquired a name among the Greeks. So in fact it was. For slight and obscure was the knowledge of the Jews among the Greeks, until their country was frequently visited in consequence of the wars between the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ, and colonies were transported into Egypt and Syria.

‘All the historians of the transactions of Alexander who are worthy of any credit, are totally silent as to the Jews. Yet this was the time and the occasion when the Greeks might have put an end to their long ignorance, and acquired some knowledge of that people. Alexander, having taken Syria, and sacked Tyre, went toward Egypt. He passed through Palestine, whose city, Gaza, garrisoned by the Persians, alone made any opposition to

his progress. Therefore, *having passed through Judea*, and having been retarded in his passage by the necessity of taking Gaza, so little did he think of the Jews, that his thoughts were exclusively occupied by the capture of Gaza, and his intended occupation of Egypt. For as to the story related by Josephus, and those who copied him, of the visit of Alexander to Jerusalem, it can easily be shown to be a Jewish fabrication, in consequence of the chagrin of the Jews that no mention is made of them. This is acknowledged by all the best critics on history, and in particular it has been demonstrated by the diligence of the Marquis de St. Croix, in his "Examen Critique des Historiens d'Alexandre le Grand" (p. 68 *et seq.*, *et non.* 13). It must be strange to everybody but a Jew, that no mention is made of that nation by the writers who had recorded the transactions of Alexander the Great, when the barbarous and before unheard-of names of the Dahæ, Aspî, Malli, Sabracæ, Arachosii, are met with! The Jews, it may be said, voluntarily submitted to Alexander, that no force might be used against them; nor did he do anything that his historians thought it necessary to relate in this respect. Yet the same historians do not pass over in silence the other nations who submitted; but speak of their character, manners, and history.'

We could continue the translation from this valuable book, but it is unnecessary, our argument being, not that the Jews did not exist at that period, but they were insignificant and unknown—a fact irreconcilable with their pretensions. Had the leaders of this people been divinely inspired, could they have remained so long in obscurity and contempt? Was divine revelation only given them to be *less* enlightened, *less* humane, *less* tolerant, *less* conspicuous, than surrounding nations? Does the civilisation of a people advance in an inverse ratio to their inspiration? Such reflections must lead the dispassionate inquirer to the belief, that the history of such a race can be no more 'divine,' than the legends of their contemporaries.

In a work recently sent to us, written by a clergyman of the Established Church,* it is remarked, 'Suppose that, for the sake of argument, we admit the Israelites to have been the most ignorant, brutish, and superstitious that ever lived on earth; that would not invalidate their testimony. Even then, could they have fancied the occurrence of events which never did occur?

* 'Two Lectures,' etc., by the Rev. J. D. Massingham, B.A., p. 17.

and that wonders happened which never did happen?' Of course they could! Substitute the name of those of his fellow-Christians whom the reverend gentleman is so fond of denouncing—the Catholics—for that of Israelites, and how does he relish the force of his own reasoning? Does not Mr. Massingham himself aver that the 'victims of popery' are 'ignorant,' 'superstitious,' &c., and have not *they* 'fancied the occurrences of events which never did occur, and that wonders happened which never did happen?' On the very ground that he and the Protestant clergy reject the Catholic miracles, he accepts the Jewish! But more of miracles in their proper place. Mr. Massingham adds—'Besides, there was a peculiar propriety in the selection of the Jewish people. The Israelites were placed in a convenient situation between Egypt and Assyria and Chaldea, the most remarkable countries then on earth.' If so *conveniently* situated, why not have become 'master of the situation?' especially under such 'distinguished patronage?' Notwithstanding being 'placed in a convenient situation,' their 'divine' mission was unknown to the world. My opponent must not have perceived that his own statement strengthened our position.

Consulting another discourse,* also forwarded to us, we find it announced that the Greeks could not have noticed the Jews before the Babylonish captivity, because the return from that captivity was completed B.C. 530, 'and Herodotus, the father of profane history, was not *born* till eighty-one years afterwards.' It strikes us the reverend disputant perpetrated a quibble, rather than confuted his late opponent.† Were there no Greek writers *before* Herodotus likely to notice the Jews, had they attained that renown their pretensions entitle us to expect? Moreover, if Herodotus flourished so soon *after* that 'great event,' why does not the 'father of profane history' give the particulars? He narrates occurrences in other nations, and was the return of the 'children of God' an event so *very* 'important' that he omitted all notice of it? 'But,' continues Mr. Savage, 'the Greeks knew nothing of Judea until the conquest of Alexander the Great, one hundred and eighty years after that event; that is, only two hundred and ninety-six years before Christ!' Why, this is *our* argument! The Jews and their 'Word of God' were so little known to the most cultivated nation in

* 'The Rise and Progress of Christianity,' by the Rev. J. A. Savage, p. 96.

† The late Mr. C. Shackleton.

ancient times, they were unrecognised till found out by *Pagan* conquests! We say of Mr. Savage as of Mr. Massingham, 'he must not have perceived his own statement strengthens our position.' The allegation of the former gentleman, that China and India must also have been 'insignificant,' because unnoticed by the Greeks till the Alexandrian era, has not the same force, Judea being *rather* nearer Greece than both those empires. And yet Mr. Savage believes the Jewish Bible, and rejects the others! We reject them all as *inspired* records, considering no nation, ancient or modern, has acquired that peculiar eminence, alone compatible with *divine* favour. Mr. Savage's parallel is, therefore, inutile. Let it always be remembered in this controversy, that we contemplate the subject in dispute from this point of view—*supernatural* origin. We cannot allow our reverend antagonists, *when convenient*, to descend from this high ground, and discuss the subject as ordinary history. That is virtually proclaiming their discomfiture. Admitting the Old Testament to be a *common* production, having no connection with Deity, we can readily account for its primitive obscurity.

The boast that the Jews 'will bear a comparison with any other nation of antiquity,' in 'patriotic wars,' 'history,' 'statesman-like qualities,' 'poetry,' etc.,* is again placing them and their writings *on the same ground as other nations*—the precise position we maintain they occupy! Will the clergy allow that Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Saul, David, etc., were *common* men? Will they admit that the Pentateuch, Judges, Kings, Psalms, etc., are *common* records? Will they confess that the Jews were not the 'chosen people' of an infinitely wise and benevolent God? If not, why exult that they will 'bear a comparison' with *common* people and *common* writings? Did the divine patronage of the Jews eventuate only in their not being *worse* than other people, or, if you will, a trifle better?

But will they bear this comparison? Allowing their records to be authentic, in war they were the most cruel, in history the most obscene, in statesmanship the most crafty, and in poetry the most rhapsodical. On this we shall comment more elaborately in our chapter on biblical morality.

Quoting Strabo, Tacitus, Longinus, Justin, Eusebius, etc., to prove that the Jews had a reputation, does not meet our demurs. Does it demonstrate that the early Israelites and their inspired literature, were famous amongst their contemporaries and immediate

* *Ibid*, p. 97.

successors, so generally known to mankind as their extraordinary claims suggest—to quote passages from the writings of men who lived during the *Christian* era? We want the testimony of *their* era, or near it. Most corroborative, indeed, of Moses, Joshua, etc., to adduce the admissions of authors who wrote 1500 or 1800 years *after* their time!

Having shown that the Old Testament remained unknown to the general world till a comparatively recent era, and that even the Jews, as a people, were obscure and impotent—circumstances inimical to their assumption of divine interposition—we shall now notice an historical incident no less suspicious.

Not only were contemporary nations unacquainted with records pretending to concern the welfare of humanity at large, but the Israelites* themselves were by no means familiar with their contents. How strange that the very people who were the 'chosen' recipients of the 'Divine Word' should have known so little about it! Those portions declared to be the oldest and most important—the presumed writings of Moses—are not named, *even by his own followers*, during a period of many centuries! From Joshua to Solomon—an interval of 500 years—there is not a particle of evidence, *in the Bible itself*, of the existence of such documents. And even during the reign of Solomon, at the solemn dedication of the temple, *no writings of Moses* were found save 'two tables of stone.'† On that great occasion, had such books been current among the Israelites, they would certainly have been read. Indeed, till the reign of Josiah—800 years after Moses—*no compositions at all, such as those now said to be the inspired productions of the great Jewish lawgiver*, are mentioned by the Jews themselves! We do not need to be told‡ that if we 'had looked a little more into the history' we should have found that Jehosaphat had ordered the reading of the 'book of the law.' The expression is so vague we defy the clergy to construe it into a reference to the Pentateuch—to such a 'book' as that now offered to us as the 'writings of Moses.' The meaning of the phrase 'book of the law,' we shall examine elsewhere. But if Jehosaphat did name such a work, it was 600 years *after* Moses! How some clerical apologists will catch at a straw!

* We use the term 'Israelites' in a general sense, as including *all* the early followers of Moses.

† 2 Chronicles, v., 10.

‡ 'Christianity and its Evidences,' by J. G. Rogers, B.A.

The story of finding that 'book' which could never have been lost, had it contained the revealed will of an *omnipotent* being, and been deemed by him 'necessary' to the salvation of any of his creatures, is given in 2 Chronicles, xxxiv., 14-30:— 'And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiyah, the priest, FOUND a book of the law of the Lord, given by Moses. And Hilkiyah answered and said unto Shaphan, the Scribe, *I have found the book of the law* in the House of the Lord. And Hilkiyah delivered the book to Shaphan.....Then Shaphan the Scribe told the King, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath given me a book; and Shaphan read it before the King. And it came to pass when the King had heard the words of the Lord, *that he rent his clothes*.....And the King went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small. And he read in their ears *all* the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord.' Is it not exceedingly strange if the 'book of the law' was known to the Jewish people at this time (628 B.C.) they should have manifested such astonishment? Even the kings were ignorant of its contents! How they appreciated the Holy Word!

It is a question whether the 'book of the law' found by Hilkiyah really meant the Pentateuch, as we shall hereafter consider; but if it did, what authority have we that it was genuine? What proof is advanced the 'book' was 'given by Moses?' What authority, indeed, have we that Hilkiyah did not write it himself, or, if he really 'found' it, that he did not make what alterations suited his purpose?

From the cunning with which he acted on this occasion—his employing a scribe to make it known to the youthful king, makes it very probable he was really the author of the book he pretended to have found, and took this opportunity of imposing it upon the mind of the young king. At all events, it is manifest that there was only *one* copy then in possession of the *whole* Jewish nation, and they were indebted for this copy to a *priest* who offered no evidence of the truth of his statement but his own word! Presuming, however, that the Israelites were familiar with the 'book of the Lord' anterior to its being found by the priest Hilkiyah, is it not a matter of amazement such a precious book should have been lost at all, much less for so long a period?

There are some circumstances, however, which lead to the

opinion that the story of Hilkiah finding the book, and its being read to the people, is a mere fiction. I will appeal to every person in the slightest degree acquainted with language, whether any man could read off, at once, a book written 800 *years before*. The phraseology would necessarily be so altered by time, as to render it comparatively unintelligible at the first glance. Suppose any person of the present day was to produce a book of laws written in the time of King Ethelbert, of England, and promulgated by his authority, would not the learned world require a full and particular account of the book, and the discovery of it, and undeniable evidence of its authenticity, before they would believe it? Here is a book claiming to be the autograph of the great national lawgiver of the Jews—the only code of laws, religious and civil—the only authority for the claims of the priests—a book that ought to have been periodically read to the people by the clergy appointed so to do—that ought to have been familiar to their men of learning and rank—produced, after an interval of 800 years, by a man who gives no other account of it than—*I found it*. Exactly the same reason could be alleged in favour of the divinity of the Mormon ‘book.’ Smith pretended to have *found it!!*

Professor Cooper very judiciously observes, when referring to the account of Hilkiah finding this book:—*“Now, of this book, no account whatever is given but this—*Hilkiah has found a book*. We are not informed where it was hidden and found, on what materials it was written, in what dialect or character, in what kind of preservation it was, whether it was an autograph of the Jewish lawgiver, or some recent copy, what its contents were, and what time it took to read it; we are furnished with no information to authenticate it, nor is any inquiry made concerning it. Shaphan reads it off as if it were written recently. All this is done under the very suspicious circumstances of the workmen being bribed by having no reckoning made with them as to what they had earned, but the money was delivered to them in a lump—2 Chron. xxxiv., 17—without check or inquiry, or any questions asked. It appears, also, from Josiah’s remarks, that neither the Jews of that day, or their *forefathers*, knew anything about the law, or used any observance of it. It appears, from the whole account, that Hilkiah had enlisted his pupil, the young king, in support of the Jewish priests, against the priests of Baal; and as the Jews knew nothing of the law of

* ‘Geology and the Pentateuch,’ p. 48.

Moses, something of the kind was necessary as a system of religious ceremonies. *He* composed a book of the law, and *pretended* to have found it in the temple, after bribing his workmen to silence and secrecy. No wonder, under these circumstances, that, when the book was produced, no inquiry was made, and no question asked. The whole is a concerted plan, which the prophetess Hulda is brought over to authenticate. I say no impartial reader can put any other construction on this manifest contrivance, as described in the books of Kings and Chronicles. This account amounts to full proof that the book of the law, whatever it was, rests upon the credit, not of Moses, but Hilkiah. It is Hilkiah's book of the law, according to the narration as it stands, for it is not attempted to trace it backwards to any one else.'

That the priests of this age were not incapable of practising a 'pious fraud' for the 'benefit of the church,' has been ably shown by Professor Newman.* 'How far the first four books of the Pentateuch may be said to have been now first composed, or what changes they underwent by the process of compilation, is a much-debated question, respecting which the historian can confidently affirm little. The arguments which avail to show the recent origin of Deuteronomy, forbid us to imagine that the sacerdotal party of the day, however well-intentioned, could feel any such hesitations and scruples, as would affect even the commonest minds among ourselves, in compiling from mixed sources an authoritative and sacred book. When we know what a Cyprian and a Chrysostom thought of "pious frauds," and how greedily a Justin Martyr could snatch at Sibylline forgeries which helped a Christian advocate, it would be vain to expect our own standard of simplicity in an Hilkiah, or any clear-sighted criticism in the Jewish people. Nor is there the slightest ground for ascribing to Hilkiah and the priests around him any high or sensitive virtue beyond that of hating cruel and sensual idolatries. In the latter, the most unscrupulous of the clergy of Europe who have ever attained public eminence, would vie with him; but nothing is more uncommon in men than a delicate anxiety concerning the means which we are to bring about good ends. The testimony of Jeremiah is indeed throughout unfavourable to the priests of Josiah's day, even of those whom he found in power in his earlier years of prophecy; which may seem by no means to except the chief priest himself:—"The

* 'A History of the Hebrew Monarchy,' p. 317.

prophets prophecy falsely, *and the priests rule by their means* ;”* and although there is not the least ground for imagining the remark to be peculiarly directed against Hildah the prophetess, and Hilkiab the priest, it is quite gratuitous in a modern commentator to treat these personages as wholly superior to the temptations of their class.’

An eminent Christian doctor admitting the gross negligence and indifference of the Jews in reference to those books they now aver were entrusted to their special care (!), labours to explain away the fact of the copy found by Hilkiab being the only one thus:—† ‘A single fact shows that the sacred autograph of Moses had well nigh perished in the idolatrous reigns of Manasseh and Amon, but was found during the reign of the pious Josiah, among the rubbish of the temple. It cannot, however, be reasonably supposed, that there were no other copies of the law scattered through the nation. It does indeed seem that the young king had never seen the book, and was ignorant of its contents, until it was now read to him; but while the copy in the temple had been misplaced, and buried among the ruins, many pious men might have possessed private copies.’ May we not add, and they ‘might’ *not*. No testimony, indeed, is adduced to show ‘private copies’ were current. It is a pure conjecture of the learned divine, unsupported by a tittle of evidence. To *invent* facts is to degrade controversy and ignore rational argument. Supposing the king to be ignorant of the copies of a book so important, had they been in the possession of ‘many pious men,’ is simply absurd. The priesthood and the state are the most likely parties to have known of such records. Why, then, such amazement when the contents were read? Besides, the bare assertion of Hilkiab that the book found by him was the one ‘given by Moses’ eight hundred years before his time, is only assuming the point to be proved.

The averment of the crude controversialist‡ that the copy ‘written by the fingers of Moses’ was ‘ever guarded with the greatest care,’ is in contradiction to the very volume he undertakes to defend. We have shown *no* copy of the law is mentioned for five hundred years, and the ‘book’ ‘given by Moses’

† Jer. v., 31.

† ‘The Canon of the Old and New Testament Scriptures,’ by Archibald Alexander, D.D., p. 17.

‡ The Rev. J. D. Massingham, p. 30.

for at least six hundred years, if not eight hundred years. Surely if 'guarded' with such extraordinary solicitude it would have been appealed to *rather* oftener, and its injunctions more religiously observed. Where was this copy, so highly prized, at the solemn dedication of the temple, during the time of Solomon? Do we not read it was *not* 'deposited in the ark,' nothing being found in it *save* two tables of stone? Were *they* the '*writings* of Moses?' Were they the Pentateuch? The supposition is inadmissible. Had the Israelites protected with such singular reverence the inspired books of Moses, they could not so frequently have forgotten or disregarded them. Were they not constantly led astray to the worship of the local deities, Chemosh of the Moabites, Ashtoreth of the Sidonians, Milcom of the Ammonites, Moloch and Baal?

The assurance, 'When the Jews were carried away as captives into Babylon for seventy years their records were still preserved,'* does not meet our position. What the Jews did at a more recent period, does not demonstrate the same thing for eight hundred years before that time. Our opponent may designate it a 'monstrous supposition' to conceive that the 'book of the law of the Lord given by the hand of Moses' was lost, but is it not true? Nay, does not his own divine authority say so? If it had not been *lost*, how could Hilkiyah have '*found*' it? Was it not lost, too, at the dedication of the temple? Is it not a more 'monstrous supposition' to imagine that the Jews profoundly regarded their records, when they never named them for centuries, and acted in direct opposition to their instructions? But is it correct that the Jews preserved their inspired record during the Babylonian captivity? Let us see.

In Esdras† we read that the 'law' was again lost, and during this same captivity! 'For thy law is *burnt*,' says Esdras. And the same book informs it was not restored till Ezra was inspired to re-write it little more than four hundred years before Christ. It is there recorded that Ezra dictated the holy books during forty successive days and nights to five scribes. The Protestant may consider Esdras an apocryphal book, but the *majority* of Christians do not. The whole of the Eastern Christian Church and the Catholics of the Western Church declare it genuine. Upon such a subject, so far as we are concerned, we have as much right to take the opinion of the Greek and Catholic

* Mr. Massingham, p. 29.

† 2 Esdras xiv., 19, etc.

Christians as the Protestant. We do not quote the story as believing such 'inspired' fables, but to show that according to a book endorsed by *Christians* the 'law' was again destroyed. Even Protestants accept the account in a qualified form. Dr. A. Alexander, though discrediting the book of Esdras, remarks that at the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Nebuchadnezzar, 'this precious volume was, in all probability, destroyed with the ark, and all the holy apparatus of the sanctuary.'* Dr. Milman allows that† 'much of the Hebrew literature was lost at the time of the captivity.' Admissions, from authors of distinction, independently of Esdras, are a sufficient reply to the flippant dogmatism of Mr. Massingham.

Testimony is available not only that the Jews 'lost' that which they affirm God entrusted to their peculiar preservation, but that some portion of the Divine Word was *never* restored. I find that 'The Book of the Wars of the Lord, the Book of Jasher, the Book of Nathan the Prophet, the Book of Gad the Seer, and several others, are referred to in the Old Testament, manifestly as of equal authority with the book which refers to them, and as full in point of information. Yet these are, to all appearance, IRRECOVERABLY LOST.'‡ Dr. Milman makes a similar declaration.§ The learned Du Pin also observes:—'St. Eucharius says, it is evident why we have not remaining the books which the Holy Scriptures approve of, *because Judea having been ravaged by the Chaldeans, and the ancient bibliothèque being burnt, there remaining only a small number of books, which at present make up the Holy Scriptures, and which were collected and re-established by the care of Ezra.*'|| Granting for a moment, therefore, that all the books which comprise our present canon are genuine, it cannot be said that we are in possession of the *real* 'Word of God,' inasmuch as many of the sacred books have been 'irrecoverably lost!' Far from 'guarding with the greatest care,' the Christian historian, Simon, in his elaborate work,¶ quoting Chrysostom, says, 'The Jews having been at

* 'The Canon,' etc., p. 17.

† 'History of the Jews,' vol. ii., p. 25.

‡ Dr. Campbell's Introduction to the 'Gospel according to St. Matthew.'

§ 'History of the Jews,' vol. ii., p. 25.

|| 'A complete History of the Canon,' etc., vol. i., c. i., p. 26.

¶ 'Critical History of the Version of the New Testament.'

sometimes *careless* and at others *profane*, they suffered some of the sacred books to be *lost* through their carelessness, and have *burnt and destroyed* others! What says our Derby critic? Will he answer his Christian brethren?

A question, however, has been raised in connection with the historical consideration of the Jewish Scriptures, which we will discuss before opening other subjects.

It is alleged that the *Samaritan Pentateuch* was used at the separation of the ten tribes in the days of Jeroboam, and was preserved at the captivity, as the obscure people of Samaria were not carried captive to Babylon, and thus their copy, in the old Hebrew character, has been handed down to the present day uncorrupted! The Samaritan Pentateuch, we are assured, has existed in a form separate from the Jewish, and in a character different from that in which the Hebrew Bible has been for many ages written. The posterity of the Samaritans still inhabit the land of their forefathers, and, though hostile to the Jews, preserved an original copy of the Pentateuch.* This copy it is maintained, is of extraordinary antiquity. Being written in the old Hebrew language, or Phœnician character, which is the same as the Samaritan, it must be older than the time of the captivity, for during that period the Jews lost the knowledge of the old Hebrew language,† and Ezra and the priests were obliged to instruct the people in the scriptures by the Chaldee character, *which is the present HEBREW character*, the old Hebrew not having been used since that era. In further confirmation of this theory, it is observed that the character found in the Samaritan Pentateuch is very similar to the inscriptions occurring on ancient Israelitish coins.

We will now examine this popular argument. In the first place, what *proof* have we that the Samaritan copy is so ancient or genuine? It is only two hundred years that the Samaritan Pentateuch has been known to Europe! Is not this testimony

* 'Is the Bible a genuine Record?' by the Rev. T. Carpenter, p. 29.

† Mr. Spry, in his 'Two Orations,' anxious only to disparage his adversary, treats very cavalierly the observation that the Jews lost their own language during the captivity, though the same circumstance is mentioned by Marsh, Prideaux, and others. Now it seems the value of the Samaritan Pentateuch rests upon this very fact!

against its antiquity? Because the inhabitants of Samaria *believe* their scriptures so old and uncorrupted, does it therefore follow they are so? The Hindoos say the same thing, and yet do Christians believe them? The presumption that Ezra transcribed the Samaritan Pentateuch into the Chaldee character is groundless. The Samaritan is *later* than Ezra. This we will now establish. Collins, in his masterly reply to Whiston,* upwards of one hundred and thirty years ago, develops the question very clearly:—‘Whereas, if the ten tribes, that under the conduct of Jeroboam set up a worship at † Dan and Bethel, had a Pentateuch among them (which may justly be suspected and cannot be proved), yet that proves nothing in relation to the present Samaritans and those from whom they are derived. For the ten tribes were all carried ‡ captive by Shalmanesser into Assyria, where they were § dispersed and lost; and those who were sent to inhabit Samaria in their stead, and had soon the name of Samaritans, appear || not for a long while to have had the Pentateuch among them. For they were all ¶ heathens, and continued so for many ages, as the Bible informs us; which represents them as idolators at first, and as being like what they were in the beginning at the time when the second book of Kings was published; and the Jerusalem Jews constantly gave them the name of Cutheans, as coming from Cuthah in Assyria, thereby signifying them to be idolators and heathens, as well as originally heathens. “Had the Samaritans,” says** Prideaux, “received the law of Moses from the first (that is, from the time of the Israelitish priest being sent †† by Eserhaddon among them, as is supposed by many), and made that the rule of worship, which they paid the God of Israel, they could not have continued in that gross idolatry, which on all hands it

* ‘A Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion.’ 1724. Pp. 184—209.

† 1 Kings, xii., 28.

‡ 2 Kings, xvii., 6—18.

§ Simon ‘Hist. Crit. du V. T.,’ p. 66.

|| *Ib.*, p. 65.

¶ 2 Kings xxiv., 29—41. See Prideaux’s ‘Connection,’ vol. i., pp. 416, 417.

** Prideaux, *Ib.*

†† 2 Kings xvii., 28.

is agreed they did, till the building of the temple on Mount Gerizim in the time of Alexander the Great." But in relation to the Samaritan Pentateuch, I would ask Mr. Whiston whether that has not the same account of Moses's death and burial and comparison between him and the succeeding prophets in Israel, together with the other allowed interpolated passages which are to be found in the vulgar Hebrew and Septuagint Pentateuch; which interpolated passages are usually (upon tradition or conjecture) attributed to Esdras, who, on his return from the Babylonish captivity is supposed to have published the Old Testament, or a great part of it, corrected and enlarged. And if it has them, how can that Pentateuch be derived from a copy extant several hundred years before the time of Esdras? Must it not be from a copy made long after the separation of the ten tribes, even long after the first return from the Babylonish captivity? "All the passages," says Simon,* "which I have produced to prove, that Moses was not wholly the author of the Pentateuch, as we now have it, are exactly the same in the Samaritan Pentateuch, and therefore we cannot say that the Samaritans have kept a copy of the original as it was before the captivity of the Jews." To derogate yet further from the authority of the Samaritan Pentateuch, I observe with the learned Prideaux, that though that Pentateuch be said to be written in the old Hebrew (or Phœnician, or Canaanitish) character, and so may seem to have some advantage over the vulgar Hebrew Pentateuch, which is written in the Chaldee character, yet is that Pentateuch, according to him, but a transcript from the vulgar Hebrew out of the Chaldean into the old Hebrew character. "For,"† says he, "first, it has all the interpolations that Esdras's copy (that is, the vulgar Hebrew) hath; whereas had it been ancients than Esdras's copy, it must have been without them. Secondly, there are a great many variations in that copy, which are manifestly caused by the mistake of the similar letters in the Hebrew alphabet; which letters having no similitude in the Samaritan character, this evidently proves those variations in the Samaritan copy were made in transcribing that from the vulgar Hebrew, and not in transcribing the vulgar Hebrew from the Samaritan.'

* Simon, 'Hist. Crit. du V. Test.,' p. 66.

† Prideaux's 'Connection,' vol. i., p. 416. See also Simon 'Hist. Crit. du V. Test.,' pp. 66, 67.

From whence it seems past doubt that the Pentateuch, such as it now is, was not in being among the Samaritans till after the compilation of the vulgar Hebrew Pentateuch by Esdras, and transcript of it into Chaldean characters. How long after I pretend not to determine. Dr. Prideaux supposes,* or conjectures, that Manasseh, “when he fled to the Samaritans with other apostate Jews and settled in Samaria, first brought the law of Moses among them,” which was not long after the supposed compilation of Esdras, and was about four hundred years before Christ..... But after all, supposing with † Simon and many other learned men, that the present Jewish (which is, the Chaldean or Assyrian) character, was the character always in use among the Jews; and that the Samaritan (that is, the Phœnician or Canaanitish, or, as it is also called, the old Hebrew) character was never used by the Jews before the captivity, in any manner, either in books or medals; it will then follow that the Samaritan Pentateuch, as written in the Samaritan character, could not be the Pentateuch in its *original* character, but must have been transcribed into that character, either to give it a pretence to antiquity, or to distinguish it from the Jews’ Pentateuch, or to render it legible to the inhabitants of Samaria, who, upon the Pentateuch’s being first introduced among them, might be versed in no other character but the Samaritan character. And therefore the Samaritan Pentateuch is of less authority and antiquity for being written in the Samaritan character, and must, for that very reason, have been transcribed from the Pentateuch of the Jews written in the Chaldean or Assyrian character, to say nothing more here of the other reasons to prove it was so transcribed. So that I think I may venture to conclude that Mr. Whiston has not the least ground to date the Samaritan Pentateuch so high as the times of Jeroboam, against which there have appeared several demonstrative arguments, and for which he has as little colour as the Samaritans themselves have for a manuscript copy of their Pentateuch ‡ pretended to be derived to them from the times of Phineas, contemporary with Moses, whereby they

* Prideaux, *Ib.*, pp. 416, 417.

† Simon ‘*Bibl. Crit.*,’ vol. ii., pp. 389—435. Toinard apud Le Clerc ‘*Bibl. Univ.*,’ tom. xxi., p. 131. Allix apud Spanhemii ‘*De Numism.*,’ vol. i., p. 69, etc. Rhenferd ‘*Opera Philog.*,’ pp. 225—253. See Basnage ‘*Hist. des Juifs*,’ l. 6, c. 24.

‡ Simon ‘*Hist. Crit. du V. Test.*,’ p. 130.

are equally absurd with the Jerusalem Jews and others, who make Moses author of the account of his own death and burial, and of the comparison between himself and the prophets in Israel, who succeeded him, to say nothing of the absurdity in pretending to have a manuscript of a* book, whereof it will be difficult to find one of above 600 or 700 years old!

The admissions of Dean Prideaux referred to by Collins are of much importance. We give the Dean's words entire †:—'The Samaritans receive none other scriptures than the five books of Moses, rejecting all the other books which are in the Jewish canon. And these five books they still have among them written in the old Hebrew or Phœnician character, which was in use among them before the Babylonish captivity, and in which both these and all other scriptures were written, till Ezra transcribed them into that of the Chaldeans. And this hath led many learned men into a mistake, as if the Samaritan copy, because written in the old character, were the true authentic copy, and that of Ezra's was only a transcript; whereas, in truth, the Samaritan Pentateuch is no more than a *transcript, copied in another character from that Ezra, with some variations, additions, and transpositions made therein*. That it was copied from that of Ezra, is manifest for two reasons. For, first, it hath all the interpolations that Ezra's copy hath; and that he was the author of those interpolations is generally acknowledged; and therefore had it been ancients than Ezra's copy, it must have been *without them*. Secondly, There are a great many variations in the Samaritan copy, which are manifestly caused by the mistake of the similar letters in the Hebrew alphabet, which letters have no similitude in the Samaritan character; this evidently proves those variations were made in transcribing the Samaritan from the Hebrew, *and not in transcribing the Hebrew from the Samaritan*. It seems from hence to be beyond all doubt that *Manasseh, when he fled to the Samaritans, first brought the law among them*..... There is an old copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch now shown at Shechem (or Naplous as they now call it), the head seat of that sect, which would put this matter beyond all dispute were that true which is said of it. For they tell us, that therein are written these words: "I, Abishua, the son of Phineas, the son of Eleazer, the son of Aaron the high priest, have transcribed this copy at the door of the

* *Ib.*, p. 512. † 'Connection,' etc., vol. i., p. 416. 1719.

tabernacle of the congregation, in the thirteenth year of the Children of Israel's entrance into the holy land." But Dr. Huntington, late Bishop of Rapho, in Ireland, having while chaplain to the Turkey company at Aleppo, been at Shechem, and there examined this copy upon the spot, found no such words upon the manuscript, *nor thought the copy ancient.*'

The testimony of Prideaux is confirmed by Gesenius, one of the highest names among the learned of Europe. We repeat, therefore, the Samaritan Pentateuch is neither 'un corrupted' nor so ancient even as Ezra.

Relative to the *coins*, Mr. Stuart, Associate Professor of Sacred Literature in the Institution of Andover, gives an opinion which shows they must have been struck *after* the Babylonish captivity. He emphatically states* :—'The present square form of the Hebrew letters is not the most ancient one; as is evident from inscriptions on Hebrew coins, *stamped in the time of the Maccabees*, which have characters such as are designated in alphabet No. 111 [alluding to his table of alphabets, in which No. 111 gives the *Samaritan* letters]. The present square letter is evidently derived from the Aramœan forms of letters, and probably originated some time after the birth of Christ.'

We need not pursue this subject more in detail. Stamped 'in the time of the Maccabees,' these coins can be little older than the *Christian* era.

Briefly recapitulating our argument, it has been indicated that the Jewish Scriptures were unknown to mankind except the Israelites, till a comparatively recent date, and that even the Jews, as a people, were little noticed, though the 'chosen people' of an omnipotent power, and their writings his 'inspired' word. We have further shown that the Israelites themselves were not very familiar with their own 'divine records,' often displaying the greatest ignorance of them, often forgetting them, occasionally losing them, and frequently acting in direct violation of their most 'essential' tenets. We will now advance a step further.

Not only was the Jewish portion of the 'Word of God' in obscurity till the third century before Christ, but no 'Canon'—that is authorised collection of those writings—was established till even subsequently. It was not till the synagogue under the Maccabees—*only two hundred years before the appearance of*

* 'Grammar of the Hebrew Language,' etc. Fourth edition. Oxford, 1831.

Christ—that the Jews could settle among themselves which books really were ‘canonical!’* How very satisfactory! Can any dispassionate and unbiassed mind believe that any book with which Divinity had the least association could remain so long in obscurity and doubt? Had it been *His* word, would it not have been settled *at first*, and its claims placed beyond the possibility of dispute? Could he have sent that as a *guide* which led only to confusion? Incredible however, though it may seem, we are told by the same venerable authority that at this same assembly, the books of Job, Ecclesiastes, and Ezekiel were rejected as ‘contradictory’ to the law of God; but a certain Rabbi having undertaken to reconcile them, they were preserved as ‘canonical!’ Thus these three books are confessedly presented to us as altered by a Jewish priest! Are *they* the ‘word of God.’ Are *any*?—for what proof have we that the men who made this canon were infallible, or had any inspiration by which *they* could distinguish inspired books from those which were not inspired? Can it be conceived that an ‘all-wise’ being could act so *unwisely* as to leave his will in doubt. Everything, indeed, connected with the history of this book indubitably testifies its non-divine origin.

It now becomes an interesting question—How were the Jewish Scriptures raised from their long obscurity? How was the ‘monopoly’ of the Jews abrogated? The facts are these. About the year 280 before Christ, the Egyptian king, Ptolemy Philadelphus, having many Jews in his kingdom who had been made captives, and who had since settled and learned the Greek language, which was generally spoken in Alexandria, commanded the High Priest of Jerusalem to make a Greek translation. A number of learned men, who understood the Hebrew and Greek languages, were appointed for that purpose. Hence the appearance of the first translation called the Septuagint. Some writers have asserted that Ptolemy’s admiration of the Bible led him to desire a copy. This is by no means probable, as the Jews granted the request reluctantly. A learned English divine† says, ‘The seventy did that work *unwillingly* and for fear.’ Be it as it may, a translation was made. Whether this translation contained the Pentateuch only, or more, we shall not discuss here. The main query is—*Was this a reliable translation*, seeing that

* ‘The Talmud’—a book of authority among the Jews.

† Lightfoot’s Works, vol. i., p. 488.

so many subsequent versions have depended upon it? We answer, and upon high Christian authority, in the negative.

Before establishing this point, we will show the nature of the Hebrew language, and the great difficulty experienced in translating it. Simon, alluding to the meaning of the Hebrew words, remarks—‘It is *unquestionable* that the greater part of them are *equivocal*, and their signification *utterly uncertain*. Even the most learned Jews doubt almost *everything* about their proper meaning.’* Bishop Marsh† declares that ‘The Old Testament is the *only* work which remains in the ancient Hebrew, nor have we anything like a lexicon, or glossary, composed while it was yet a living language.’

One of the most profound Hebraists has declared that no two translators would agree in rendering any verb from the Hebrew. ‘I am quite certain that I shall be able to show—to prove—that every letter of the Hebrew language has *four*, and probably *five*, meanings.’‡ What an accommodating language for the priests, truly!

The Christian Father, St. Jerome,§ states that ‘When we translate the Hebrew into Latin, we are sometimes guided by *conjecture!*’ As an instance of the *guessing* abilities of our interpreters, take that chapter in Genesis giving an account of Noah’s ark. With respect to the materials of which the ark is said to have been composed, our modern version interprets it *gophir wood*. Onkilhos translates it *cedar*; Castellus, *juniper wood*; the Arabic commentators, *box wood*; the Persian, *pine wood*; Bochart, *ebony*; Dr. Geddes, *wicker work*; Dawson, *bullrushes daubed with slime!* Such are the singular difficulties attending the translation of the Hebrew text, and the contradictory interpretations given to the same words by different writers.

While upon this subject we may remark that till the *fifth century* the Hebrew language was utterly destitute of any method of punctuation, as well as void of *vowels*. It was a mere mass of words without order or system. To ascertain the true signification was next to impossible. A learned professor|| observes—‘The Hebrew alphabet is composed of twenty-two letters, as

* ‘Critical History,’ etc.

† ‘Lectures,’ 14.

‡ Godfrey Higgins.

§ ‘Commentary on the Fortieth Chapter of Ezekiel.’

|| Du Pin, vol. ii.

well as those of the Samaritans, Chaldeans, and Syreneans. But besides these letters, *none of which is, at present, a vowel*, and, by consequence, they cannot determine the pronunciation, the Hebrews have invented *points*, which, being put under the letters, *serve instead of vowels*. These vowel-points serve not only to fix pronunciation, but also the *signification of a word*, because the words being differently pointed, signify things *wholly different*. This is the circumstance which has made the question as to the antiquity of the points seem of consequence, and hath, therefore, been treated of very prolixly. Some have pretended that these points are as ancient as the Hebrew language, and that Abram made use of them. Others make Moses the author of them. But the most common opinion among the Jews is, that Moses having learned of God the true pronunciation of Hebrew words, this science was preserved in the Synagogue by oral tradition until the time of Esdras, who invented the points and accents to preserve it. Elias Levita, a German Jew of the last age, and very learned in the Hebrew Grammar, hath rejected this sentiment, and maintained that the invention of points was much later. He ascribes it to the Jews of Tiberius, about the five hundredth year of Christ, and alleged that this art was not perfected until about the year 1040, by two famous Massorits, Ben Asher and Ben Napthali.'

Not until the *eleventh century* was anything like *certainty* given to the signification of *that language in which it is said God thought proper to convey his ideas and wishes to his creatures!* Wonderfully strange that he should have revealed his 'Will' in the most imperfect and ambiguous language in the world!—a tongue which the most erudite could not clearly comprehend! Common sense would have suggested the selection of the plainest and most perfect language possible. If it was intended we should understand his Word, why not have revealed a tongue we could not *misunderstand?*

Now for my proof as to the Septuagint. Du Pin remarks, in the work before quoted, 'In short, we must confess that there are *many differences* betwixt the Hebrew text and the version of the Septuagint, which arose from the *corruption* and *confusion* that are in the Greek version we now have. It is certain that it hath been *revised divers times*, and that several authors have taken the liberty to *add* thereunto, to *retrench*, and to *correct* divers things!' He further observes:—'It is mere *superstition* to assert, as some authors do, that the Hebrew text which we have at present *is not corrupted* in any place, and that there is no *fault*

nor anything left out, and that we must indispensably follow it at all times. This is not only to speak *without all evidence*, and *contrary* to all probability, but *we have every good proof to the contrary*. For, in the first place, there have been differences betwixt the oldest of the Hebrew copies, which the Massorites have observed, by that which they call *Keri*, and *Ketib*, and putting one of the writings in the text, and the other in the *margin*, we have the different readings of the Jews of the East and the Jews of the West—the Ben Asher and the Ben Napthali.’

My next authority is Bellamy.* He denounces in no qualified terms, the Septuagint version, and points out numerous errors and discrepancies of the most flagrant character. In Genesis, xv., 11, there is a sentence ‘drove them away,’ which ought to have been, ‘*remained with them.*’ In the sixth chapter, fifth verse, there is an expression, ‘it grieved him at his heart,’ which should be, ‘he idolised himself at his heart.’ The sentence in the xx., 16, stating that ‘thus she was *reproved,*’ should have been translated ‘thus she was *justified,*’ meaning the very reverse to that we are trained to believe. The notorious exclamation of Jeremiah, in the 20th chapter of his book, ‘O Lord, thou hast *deceived* me, and I was *deceived,*’ should have been rendered, ‘O Lord thou hast *persuaded* me, thus I was *persuaded!*’ These and many other blunders the learned Bellamy exposes, and concludes by declaring that the authors of the Septuagint *did not critically understand the Hebrew language*. And yet the translations of such fallible men we are called upon to esteem as the *infallible* ‘guide to truth and salvation.’

Archbishop Usher, a man of vast biblical acquirements, goes further than either Du Pin or Bellamy. He maintains, as quoted by Bellamy in his introduction, that the version known as the Septuagint, is not only replete with the most serious errors, but that it is only a *SPURIOUS copy!* The real Septuagint was never circulated, being lost at the destruction of the Alexandrian Library, in which it was then deposited. This eminent divine affirms, ‘The Septuagint translation continually *adds to, takes from, and changes* the Hebrew text *at pleasure,*’ and that ‘the original translation of it was lost *long ago,* and what has ever since gone by that name, is a *spurious copy, abounding in omissions, additions, and alterations* of the Hebrew text.’ If the opinion of the learned prelate be correct, it follows that the Christian world

* ‘New Translation of the Bible—Introduction.’

have been propagating that as the genuine word of God, which is nothing but a forgery—a pious fraud—an imposition! After all, it is not *quite* the 'safest to believe.'

Such were the Jewish Scriptures historically considered.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES HISTORICALLY CONSIDERED.

WE have brought our historical review to the Christian era. This introduces us to a new field of discussion. We have now to consider a more recent production—*The New Testament*. This modern portion of the 'Word of God' is esteemed by Christians eminently valuable. Many are disposed to admit, that just and reasonable suspicion may be entertained of the authenticity and genuineness of some books of the Old Testament, but the evidence in favour of the New is irrefragable. To this opinion we demur. We question indeed whether it is at all superior to the Old. In some respects, the Old Testament has the advantage, for the most important portion of that division of the 'Holy Word' is *said* to have been written by the person more immediately connected with it—*Moses*; but Christ, the hero of the New Testament, never wrote a line of it, nor, according to Du Pin, did he order any one else to write it. Neither the Old nor the New Testament, however, have the advantage of the Koran. Mahomet declares he received his Bible *direct from Heaven*, chapter by chapter! Now the Christian Scriptures are confessedly second-hand. We only know what other people have thought proper to report of the divine mission.

But *when* did they write these reports? Nobody knows! The same uncertainty attends the history of the Christian, as the Jewish records. All is doubt and speculation! This state of things is utterly irreconcilable with the assurance that these writings were inspired by a Being infinitely wise, benevolent, and powerful. Wisdom and power *could* have prevented that very uncertainty which it is necessary should not exist, and benevolence *would* have done so, if it more readily secured that belief indispensable to human weal. To say that we have no right to form a judgment upon such a question, is to repudiate reason and inquiry, except on one side. It is Popery under the

mask of Protestantism. Controversy is at an end. How short-sighted and inconsistent are the exponents of orthodoxy! They *do* 'form a judgment,' and pronounce the difficulty—'incomprehensible!' Have not we as much right to 'judge' the obscurity fatal to the theory of *divine* origin as they that it is not? *They* decide that it in no manner compromises such a doctrine, but when we decide differently, it is dogmatically asserted, *we* have no right to decide! It is blasphemy!

On all hands is it admitted that no portion of the New Testament was written during the life of Christ. The *earliest*, as conjectured by Christians themselves, was not written till the year 64—30 years after his death. But this is *only* conjecture. 'The history of the New Testament,' says a great writer on this subject, 'is attended with many difficulties.'* Of this there is no question, especially in reference to that part which ought to have been the most clear and conclusive—the four gospels.

Even Dr. Alexander is under the necessity of confessing that 'With respect to the time when the gospels were written, *no precise information can be obtained.*'† Should this be? Should the history of the 'Son of God' be 'attended with many difficulties?' Should it be that 'no precise information can be obtained' on the very point necessary to settle all discussion—at least as to the *genuineness* of the gospels?

It is a fact no less surprising than embarrassing that the gospels of the present canon—the inspired history of Christ as *now* circulated in Christendom—the *four* gospels, as written by 'Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,' are not *named* as such till 150 years after Christ! The Christian Father, Irenæus, was the first to name 'four gospels.'‡ This was in the year 182,§ or 192,|| after Christ. We distinctly call for *proof* to invalidate this fact. An empty denial is beneath notice. Let us not be misunderstood. We say the *four* gospels, now found in the New Testament, were not *named* till 150 years after Christ.

Had these four books been current at the close of the first, and beginning of the second century, or, at all events, had they been considered sacred and inspired, why are they not *named* as now?

* Dr. Lardner, Vol. 1, p. 136.

† 'The Canon of the Old and New Testament Scriptures,' p. 162.

‡ Irenæus against Heresies. § Dr. Lardner. || Tillemont.

Can it be possible they could have been the only 'divine authority,' and yet Christians themselves not even name them? It is a paradox 'inconsistent with reason and the moral sense, and condemned by experience.' That they did not name them is admitted by Christian divines of reputation. Dodwell says* :— 'We have at this day certain most authentic ecclesiastical writers of the times, as Clemens Romanus, Barnabas, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, who wrote in the same order wherein I have named them, and after all the writers of the New Testament. But in Hermas you will not find *one single passage, or any mention* of the New Testament, *nor in all the rest* is any one of the Evangelists named.'

I repeat, then, that *Irenæus* is the *first* who mentions the *four* gospels, which circumstance did not occur until 150 *years after the death of Christ*. And upon what authority does Irenæus present these four gospels as genuine? His own *only*. Now let us put a case. Charles the First succeeded to the throne in 1628—some two hundred years ago. Suppose that now, *for the first time*, a priest should say that certain accounts of a man endowed with miraculous powers, who lived in London in 1628, and who worked miracles there, were published by Matthew Bay, Mark Randall, Luke Faust, and John Johnstone (*persons not heard of before, or mentioned by any writer of the time*), of something miraculous that happened under Charles the First. What credit ought to be ascribed to such a narration? Yet on such kind of evidence is Christianity founded.

Conscious of the inconclusive and unsatisfactory character of 'Christian Evidence' on this critical question, a large amount of erudition and ingenuity has been displayed by the ablest writers to make it appear that the four gospels, though not named, were known and circulated from the earliest times. Dr. Paley and Dr. William Lindsay Alexander are the most plausible writers we have consulted on this subject. The latter gentleman has re-stated the argument of Paley with considerable force, but with no greater clearness, and manifests a fair spirit, anxious to reason and not abuse, though occasionally the dogmatism of the pulpit shows itself. His book has recently appeared, and professes to be a reply to Strauss.† The ground of

* 'Dissertation upon Irenæus.'

† 'Christ and Christianity; a Vindication of the Divine Authority of the Christian Religion,' etc. By William Lindsay Alexander, D.D. Edinburgh: A. and C. Black. 1854.

defence by Christian divines is, that facts and sayings are to be found in writers before Irenæus similar to those in the gospels, and therefore they must have known them. *Why therefore?* Could they not have acquired a few stray incidents and aphorisms by *tradition*? Seeing the references are so vague and scanty, is not this the more reasonable view? This must be allowed, or they could not have regarded the four gospels at that time as they are regarded now.

Is it possible that a true believer could quote the four gospels, and *never* name them? Considering their writers *inspired*, would he *never* use their name to give weight to his averments? Dr. Alexander explains the anomaly—at least to his own satisfaction. He supposes the Christian fathers presumed their readers were so familiar with the scriptures, there was no necessity for being very formal and definite in their quotations! He says,* ‘Now this appears to me a singularly unfortunate objection. Instead of invalidating the evidence contained in these allusions in favour of the antiquity of the gospels, this peculiarity in these allusions furnishes the strongest argument in favour of that antiquity. For when does an author feel himself at liberty to deal general allusions to other writings, and, instead of formally citing them, to invigorate his own style, or point his own sentences, by a few words borrowed from them, or a passing hint at something they contain? Is it not when he may safely take for granted the familiarity of his readers with the authors he thus passingly lauds? and does not this feature in the writings of any author invariably prompt the inference, that he has in preparing his works assumed the fact of such familiarity? and would not a critic be held to have offered a just stricture upon a work which was interlarded with fragments of passages borrowed from, and continual passing allusions made to, writings with which his readers could not be acquainted, if he condemned it as pedantic and unintelligible? Take, for instance, a volume of Hazlitt’s æsthetical works, besprinkled, as these are, all over with phrases from Shakspeare, and allusions to his plays; put this into the hands of an intelligent foreigner who understands our language, direct his attention to the fact that these phrases are to be found in Shakspeare, and that these allusions are to scenes in his dramas, though Hazlitt hardly ever gives a reference or makes a formal citation to guide the reader to this fact; would not the just and natural inference of the stranger be not only that Hazlitt was himself well versed in Shakspeare, but that before such a style of writ-

* ‘Christ and Christianity,’ p. 36.

ing could be at all tolerated by the public they, too, must have been well acquainted with the writings of the dramatist?

With no desire to be disrespectful, we cannot but feel amused that so clever a divine as Dr. Alexander should have taken it for granted that the 'public' of the *second* century were as 'familiar' with 'writings' and 'works' as we of the *nineteenth*! Editors and authors in those times could not have had 'numerous' readers. Surely if a knowledge of the gospels were so *very* 'general,' *some one* would have named their authors. Does Hazlitt never name *his* author, though so 'familiar' to his readers? Besides, was Shakspeare inspired? Was Hazlitt 'a holy father' expounding the 'Word of God?' 'Now this appears to me a singularly unfortunate'—parallel.

Dr. Paley, with equal speciousness, introduces the argument thus:—'The medium of proof stated in this proposition is, of all others, the most unquestionable, the least liable to any practices of fraud, and is not diminished by the lapse of ages. Bishop Burnet, in the "History of his Own Times" inserts various extracts from Lord Clarendon's "History." *One* such insertion is a proof that Lord Clarendon's "History" was extant at the time when Bishop Burnet wrote; that it was received by Bishop Burnet as a work of Lord Clarendon's, and also regarded as an authentic account of the transactions which it relates! and it will be proof of these points a thousand years hence, or as long as the books exist.'

Unfortunately for this popular exponent of Christian evidences, his comparison between Clarendon and the histories of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, is neither happy nor conclusive. We challenge the force of the references found in the early fathers, because they are *not* given as 'extracts' or quotations from the four gospels. Had this been, the similitude would have been so far legitimate, but the archdeacon omitted to show they *were* 'extracts,' or *meant* as such. He thus *assumes* and does not *settle* the point at issue—a course characteristic of this skilful pleader. For one writer to narrate a saying of a distinguished personage which may be found in another author, is surely no proof that the former quoted from the latter, much less that the latter writings must have been in existence. If this is true in *our* day, how much more likely to be true before the age of printing? Again: though Burnet might have quoted Clarendon, even without naming him, can that satisfactorily account for the fathers citing the four gospels

* 'Evidences,' etc., c. ix., sec. 1.

and not naming them? Was Clarendon esteemed a *divine* authority? Was his 'History' an *inspired* book? Would naming Clarendon have given extraordinary weight, dignity, or solemnity to Burnet's narration? Where then is the fairness of the comparison? To deduce the pretensions of an *inspired* work, from circumstances which might establish the claims of a common production, is inconsistent in principle, fallacious in argument, and disingenuous in spirit.

The author of the 'Christian Records,' agreeing with the learned Eichhorn, that the passages in the fathers were taken from oral and not written tradition, has developed the reverse views to Lardner, Paley, and their successors, with unquestionable lucidity:—'If the four gospels and other books were written by those who had been eye-witnesses of Christ's miracles, and therefore apostolical fathers had conversed with the apostles, it is not to be conceived that they would not have named the actual books themselves which possessed so high authority, and would be looked up to with so much respect by all the Christians. This is the only way in which their evidence could be of use to support the authenticity of the New Testament as being the work of the apostles; *but this is a testimony which the five apostolical fathers fail to supply.* There is not a single sentence, in all their remaining works, in which a clear allusion to the New Testament is to be found. It is in vain that their evidence to the facts of Christianity has been cited by Paley and other advocates of the authenticity. This is not the point at issue. Few persons will be found to dispute the facts of Christ's history, but they contend, and with truth, that the accounts of them which have come down to us in the New Testament, were not put together as we now have them *until many years had elapsed*—sufficient time, in short, to explain the vagueness with which some of the facts are recorded, and even the contradictions which lie between the different evangelists in their narratives of the same transaction.....That the treatises ascribed to Barnabas, Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Hermas, are based upon the same story as the books of the New Testament, is not to be denied. The events related in the history of Christ passed current in tradition among the Christians long before they were set down in writing; and the sayings of Christ were no doubt treasured up like household jewels by his disciples and followers. Why, then, may we not refer the quotations of Christ's words, occurring in the apostolical fathers, to an origin of this kind? If we examine a few of those quotations,

the supposition, just stated, will expand into reality. In the epistle attributed to Barnabas, chapter v., we read, "But when he (Christ) chose his own apostles, about to preach his gospel, and who were lawless beyond every kind of sin, that he might show how he came not 'to call the righteous but sinners to repentance,' he then displayed himself to be the Son of God." Here is not necessarily an allusion to either of the four gospels which we now have, but only to a remarkable apophthegm of our Lord, which may have been current universally among the Christians long before it was perpetuated in the gospels. The same may be said of every single sentence found in any of the apostolical fathers, which on first sight may be thought to be a decided quotation from one of the gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. It is impossible to deny the truth of this observation, for we see it confirmed by the fact that the apostolical fathers do actually quote Moses, and other Old Testament writers, by name, "Moses hath said," "But Moses said," etc., in numerous passages; but we nowhere meet with the words "Matthew hath said in his gospel," "John hath said," etc. They always quote, not the words of the evangelists, but the words of Christ himself directly, which furnishes the strongest presumption that, though the sayings of Christ were in general vogue, yet the evangelical histories into which they were afterwards embodied were not then in being.*

So much uncertainty attends the primitive records of Christianity, though more modern than the Jewish scriptures, and therefore ought to be less liable to this objection, that the genuineness of the writings of the apostolic fathers—those who are said to have conversed with the apostles—is far from indubitable. Dr. Paley, before boasting of their testimony, ought to have placed *their* productions beyond dispute. What says the author of the preceding work?—

'The foregoing remarks have been made on the supposition that the writings which remain under the names of Barnabas, Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Hermas, were really written by persons who bore those names, and that those persons not only lived in the first century, but were intimate, more or less, with the apostles and their companions. But such admission is, unhappily, more than the cause of truth will warrant. The writings of the apostolical fathers labour under a more heavy load of

* 'Christian Records,' pp, 50—52. London: Whitaker and Co., 1854.

doubt and suspicion than any other ancient compositions, either sacred or profane. In former times, when the art of criticism was in its infancy, these writings were ten times as extensive as they are now, and they were circulated without the slightest doubt of their authenticity. But, as the spirit of inquiry grew and the records of past times were investigated, the mists which obscured the horizon of belief were gradually dispersed, and the genial sun of truth began to shed beams of unexpected light upon the toilsome progress of mankind. Things which had chained and enslaved the mind for ages, dissolved and faded into nothing at the dawn of day; and objects that once held the most unbounded sway over the belief, proved to be unreal beings, phantoms of the mind, creatures of superstition, if not of fraud, placed, like the ghostly lions in the path of the pilgrim, to deter him from proceeding on the way that leads to the heavenly city of truth.

‘I have said that the writings of the apostolical fathers were once ten times as bulky as at present. The assertion does not pass the bounds of truth; for under that title were once included the works of Dionysius the Areopagite mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, occupying two large folio volumes. When these works, consisting of religious dissertations, had for many hundred years passed for authentic throughout all Christendom, and had even been painfully translated into Latin by Rufinus, the celebrated presbyter of Aquileia, a sudden shock was given to the feelings of those who believed in these mysterious volumes. Truth laid its magic wand upon the ponderous tomes, and they at once disappeared from the sight, leaving to their author the narrow limits of fame which he occupies in the Acts of the Apostles—limits beyond which he should never have been compelled to go; for, as an enlightened man, and one of the first to recognise the truth of Christianity, his reputation is more brilliant than all the theological treatises in the world, even if authentic, could bestow. The works of Dionysius the Areopagite were found out to be forgeries, put together, perhaps, by some pious but ill-principled devotee, who thought that the paucity of writings in the first century of the Christian era was a defect which had better be supplied by fraud than the void be suffered to remain. With the works of Dionysius nine-tenths of primitive Christian writings were withdrawn from the regions of authenticity; and about two hundred and fifty pages, as given in the edition of Hefele, were now all that remained of what had once been ascribed to the pens of the contemporaries of the apostles. But the process

of exhaustion was not yet ended. The Shepherd of Hermas, a contemptible train of allegories, and all that remained of their supposed author, soon followed the lucubrations of the Areopagite. The Shepherd, also, was declared to be a forgery—or, if not an *intentional forgery*, at all events to have been written by another Hermas, who lived many years later, and not the contemporary of the apostles. This fact is now no more disputed than the spuriousness of Dionysius; no one ventures to say that the work of Hermas is genuine—unless, perhaps, some solitary critic, possessing more credulity than ratiocination, sturdily rebuilds upon a blind faith the edifice which the free use of reason had demolished. With Hermas a hundred and thirty more pages of testimony were cancelled, and the enemies of the authenticity rejoiced in the destruction which their onslaught had made in the ranks of their orthodox opponents. But the defenders of the early Christian writers were not dismayed by the process which had thinned their ranks. There were four apostolical fathers remaining of the six, and the credit of these could not be shaken. The victory was still theirs, with the compact body of evidence which these four undoubted witnesses supplied. Alas, how weak is the strength of man! above all, of the dogmatist, who quenches the light of reason, and calls on us blindly to follow where a blind guide had gone before! It is painful to contemplate the issue which inevitably awaits an examination of the four apostolical fathers which were left. It is hard to find words in which to relate the sentence that has already been passed on Barnabas. Hefele, the enlightened and orthodox editor of these writings, has passed the judgment, and we will give it in his own words:—

“No one will deny that the testimonies are in favour of its authenticity [*i.e.*, of the Epistle of Barnabas]. Nevertheless, we are induced for grave reasons to deny that it is the production of the apostolic father. 1. If it had been considered authentic by the ancients, it would have been read in the churches, as Augustine said of the apocryphal writings ascribed to Andrew and John: ‘If written by them, they would have been received by the church.’ 2. The epistle was written after the destruction of Jerusalem, as may be conjectured from chap. xvi. But, as we have shown above (lit. 1) there is no doubt that Barnabas was then dead. 3. In chap. v. the apostles are called ‘lawless beyond every kind of sin,’ which I think Barnabas, who had been the companion of the apostles, would hardly have uttered. Such hyperbolical expressions rather suit a rhetorician of the second

century. 4. The marvels related in chap. x. about the hare, the hyæna, &c., savour of some allegorising trifler rather than of an apostle. 5. Barnabas, who had travelled over all Asia Minor, and lived many years at Antioch in Syria, ought to have known the falsehood of that which is stated in chap. ix., that the priests of the idols and all the Syrians were circumcised. 6. There are numerous allegorical trifles, particularly in chaps. v.-xi., which could not have been written by him who, for the vivacity of his eloquence, was called by the apostles Bar-Nabas, **THE SON OF CONSOLATION**. 7. There are some errors in chaps. vii. and viii. respecting the Jewish sacred rites, which could not have been committed by Barnabas, who was a Levite, and had dwelt long at Jerusalem. 8. Numerous other inconsistencies are found in the same epistle, &c."

'A similar train of reasoning has led Hefele to ascribe the Epistle of Barnabas to some writer who lived in the early part of the second century. We need not repeat those reasons, but it is important to remark that, if the work be correctly ascribed to that later period, its making no mention of the four gospels would equally show that the canon of the New Testament was not even then formed; nor is this inconsistent with our view of those histories. There is no evidence that they existed earlier than the middle of the second century, for they are not named by any writer who lived before that time.

'The sentence pronounced upon Barnabas leaves little more than a hundred pages for all that remain of the works of Ignatius, Polycarp, and Clement of Rome. But the work of elimination is not yet ended. 1. As regards Ignatius, hear the words of Hefele:—"Fifteen epistles pass under the name of Ignatius..... Of these, **EIGHT, BY THE UNANIMOUS DECISION OF THE LEARNED, ARE PRONOUNCED TO BE SPURIOUS!**" 2. As regards Polycarp, to whom one epistle is ascribed:—"The authenticity of his epistle has been called in question by the Centuriators of Magdeburg, by Dallæus and others, and defended by Nicholas de Nourry, &c." 3. As regards Clement, the reputed author of two epistles:—"We agree to the opinion of Grabius and Möhler, that the so-called second epistle of Clement was one of the homilies falsely ascribed to him, &c. Wocher thinks it was written by Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth. But Grabius considers it a spurious work of the middle of the third century."

'Thus, not one of these primitive writers has escaped suspicion. The three survivors, Polycarp, Clement, and Ignatius,

present a very feeble phalanx, quite incompetent to maintain the communications between A.D. 60 (about the date of Paul) and A.D. 150, when Justin Martyr and others come to the rescue in continuing the process of tradition; and, as we have seen, not one of these has been allowed to pass unquestioned. A heavy blow has, within the last few years, been dealt on the most important even of these—Ignatius. His works, long disputed, because they contained passages supporting certain ecclesiastical ordinances, and in the opinion of many savouring of a more recent date, when those ordinances were better established, had given much labour to Pearson and others to defend their authenticity. At length some ancient MSS. have been brought to Europe from the East, and published by the Rev. W. Cureton. In those MSS. many of the disputed passages are not found!

‘In this way is the boasted testimony of the apostolical fathers reduced to the shadow of a shade. Humbled from the high office of speaking in the cause of the truth, they have to fight for their own existence. From the stately magnificence of two folios, they have dwindled to about the quantity of matter which would fill fifty pages of the present volume; and still, in this concentrated form, they give no indication that, in their day, the books of the New Testament were in being.’*

Whether genuine or spurious, the apostolic fathers do not name the four gospels now said to contain the only inspired history of Christ; and, therefore, our statement at the commencement of this chapter is corroborated. Their testimony, indeed, fails to demonstrate either the existence of the gospels at that time, or that they were of that authority we are taught at this age to esteem them.

The only fathers of note now left before Irenæus, are Papias and Justin Martyr. To what fact do they depon?

First of Papias. We read in Paley, † ‘Papias, a hearer of John, and companion of Polycarp, as Irenæus attests, and of that age, as all agree, in a passage quoted by Eusebius, from a work now lost, expressly ascribes the respective gospels to Matthew and Mark; and in a manner which proves that these gospels must have publicly borne the names of these authors at that time, and probably long before; for Papias does not say that one gospel

* ‘Christian Records,’ pp. 53-58.

† ‘Evidences,’ c. ix., sect. 1.

was written by Matthew, and another by Mark; but, assuming this as perfectly well known, he tells us from what materials Mark collected his account—from Peter's preaching, and in what language Matthew wrote—in Hebrew. Whether Papias was well informed in his statement or not, to the point for which I produce this testimony—namely, that these books bore these names at this time, his authority is complete.'

Such is the much-vaunted testimony of Papias *according to the archdeacon's rendering*. Papias mentions *two* of the four gospels—Matthew and Mark. This, however, was not till early in the *second* century. But who states Papias names them? What authority have we such a reference was really made by him, seeing his writings are 'lost?' Eusebius says so. Eusebius! On the veracity of this Christian father, as well as Irenæus, we shall comment in our next chapter. The authority is not 'complete' till it is proved to be reliable. The allusions of Papias, if they ever were made, include only *part* of the gospels, and are of little significance, when it is remembered that fathers who preceded him do not name *any* of the four. Dr. Paley, however, in his anxiety to make out the appearance of a case, has acted more the part of a dexterous lawyer than an unprejudiced and enlightened inquirer. He has neither stated the fact accurately, nor drawn the proper inferences. The writer observes, on the word of Irenæus, that Papias was a hearer of John, yet the author upon whom he depends for his quotation from Papias—Eusebius—declares he was not, and gives what he calls the words of Papias to substantiate his denial! The passage in Eusebius runs*:
 —'These are the words of Irenæus. Papias himself, however, in the preface of his works, shows that he was by no means a hearer and witness of the holy apostles, but teaches us that he received the things of the faith from those who were known to them [the apostles]. He (Papias) says—"But I will not hesitate to set down in writing to you whatever things I formerly well learnt from the elders and well remembered, maintaining the truth about them. For I did not take pleasure, like most men, in those who spoke the most, but in those who taught the truth; not in those who quoted the commands of others, but those who delivered the commands given by our Lord in the faith and the truths that came from it. But if by chance any one came who had followed the elders, I examined the words of the elders, what says Andrew, or Peter, or Philip, or Thomas, or

* Euseb. Hist. Ecc. iii., 39.

James, or John, or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples? and what Aristion and the elder John, our Lord's disciples say. For I did not consider that what came out of books would benefit me so much as what came from the living and abiding voice."

Then, again, with respect to the assertion that the reference of Papias to the writings of Matthew and Mark meant the two gospels we now have under that name. Here is the statement of Papias, as given by Eusebius* :—"And this the elder said. Mark became the expounder of Peter, and wrote accurately whatever he delivered, not indeed in a regular order, such things as were either said or done by Christ. For he was neither a hearer nor a follower of Christ. But afterwards, as I said, he followed Peter, who delivered his teachings as occasion served, but did not make a regular arrangement of our Lord's words: so that Mark made no error, thus writing some things as he delivered them. For he took forethought of one thing, not to leave out anything of what he heard, or to make a mistake about anything therein." These things are related by Papias about Mark. But about Matthew these are his words—"Matthew, then, in the Hebrew dialect, wrote the oracles; and each person interpreted them as he was able."

Accompanying these quotations from Eusebius, I find the following criticism in the 'Christian Records,'† which we deem 'complete':—"It is clear from this account of Papias given by Eusebius, who lived about 320, that not one of Paley's assertions about him is correct. The evidence, indeed, which we have about him, is mostly at second-hand: Eusebius and Irenæus differ in their accounts of him: the latter says that Papias was a hearer of John; Eusebius denies this, and proves by the testimony of Papias himself that he was not contemporary with the apostles, but received the rudiments of the faith from an intermediate generation. Neither does Papias "expressly ascribe the respective gospels to Matthew and Mark." On the contrary, he tells us that Matthew wrote a gospel in the Hebrew language; and there is no proof that the Greek gospel, now extant, is a translation from a Hebrew original. This explanation rests purely upon conjecture, and cannot be supported by any figure of logic whatever. In the absence of positive proof, we may be allowed to indulge in a harmless conjecture, but not to erect that conjecture into a certainty, or to build an inference and a theory upon so weak a foundation. The notice of St. Mark bears a

* *Ibid.*

† Pp. 64, 65.

sense still more opposed to that which Paley has attributed to it. Papias tells us that Mark gathered up the various stories which dropped from the mouth of Peter, he did not make a regular arrangement of our Lord's words, but 'writing some things as he [Peter] delivered them.' This shows that the gospel according to St. Mark, which we now have, is not the work which was compiled by St. Mark; for it *is* a 'regular arrangement of our Lord's words, it *is* written in a regular order, and not a collection of anecdotes, written down promiscuously as they fell from the mouth of Peter. It is highly probable that all the four gospels now in existence were compiled out of such scraps as had been gathered from the first apostles, and handed down by tradition; but there is no evidence to show that the four gospels were, any of them, written by the apostles themselves. One word more, and we shall have done with Papias. Granting, for the moment, that he alludes pointedly in the extracts quoted from Eusebius, to those very gospels which we still have, bearing the names of Matthew and of John; why has Paley passed over in silence the Gospel of the Hebrews, which Papias mentions with quite as much respect as those of Matthew and Mark? The argument proves too much; for, if the words of Papias show the early existence of the canonical gospels, they also show that the uncanonical ones were equally ancient; and it leaves us in a most distressing state of embarrassment if we attempt to distinguish the one from the other.'

W. Lindsay Alexander, D.D., referring to the circumstance that Papias affirms Matthew wrote his gospel in *Hebrew*, observes, 'But though Papias says that Matthew wrote in the Hebrew language, he does not say that he did not also write in the Greek; so that we are perfectly at liberty to suppose, as far as his testimony goes, that the Hebrew was a translation from the original Greek; or that Matthew, having first written in Hebrew, afterwards wrote in Greek; or to make any other supposition of the same sort, which appears to us most eligible.*'

What convenient logic! How agreeable to INVENT probabilities which appear 'most eligible!' If 'the case' be 'a question of evidence,' as our author himself maintains, why not take evidence, *and evidence only*, and not urge 'supposition' as fact? The *evidence* is that Matthew wrote in HEBREW. Why, therefore, insist he wrote in Greek? What a transparent begging of the question! What an assumption *contrary* to evidence!

* 'Christ and Christianity,' p. 41.

Though well read in divinity, this popular author is not profound in law. In no court in Europe would a judge adjudicate on assumed facts, not given in evidence. We are, therefore, 'perfectly at liberty' to pronounce this 'a singularly unfortunate objection.' The attempt to explain away the alleged words of Papias, when speaking of Mark, is no less infelicitous. Their utter inapplicability to the gospel bearing his name is so palpable, that nothing but the veriest quibbles and evasions can be advanced in reply. The doctor puts the point in this form. 'A witness is asked by the judge: "Do you know that A. B. wrote this book?" He answers, "Yes, A. B. wrote it; he got the materials of it from C. D., and put them together, though not in such good order as he might." "There," replies the judge, "you are mistaken; the arrangement is very good; but that is not the point which you are called to attest; all we want to know from you is, whether A. B. wrote the book or not?" '*

In legal parlance, this is clearly a 'misdirection' on the part of the 'judge.' The point at issue *rests* on the 'arrangement' of the book. The Christian theologian declares that Papias names our present gospel, bearing the name of Mark. Now how are we to know this but by comparing it with the description given by Papias. We do so, when it is discerned that the gospel of Mark we have now is not like the writings described by Papias. We, therefore, adjudge that he could not mean *our* gospel. This is the fair and honest way of putting the case. The 'witness' (Papias) is not asked 'Do you know that A. B. (Mark) wrote it (our present gospel), and the answer was 'Yes.' He simply says that the writings he calls Mark's were of a particular character. We now find they are *not* of that character, and, consequently, the 'witness' (Papias), is wrong, or the 'plaintiff' (Christian) must be *non-suited*. We do 'stand amazed' that so able an adversary should, in this instance, endeavour to pass perversion for argument. May we not retort 'Such an extravagance of religious zeal may be safely left to work its own overthrow.'

Now of Justin Martyr. This writer does not name even one gospel, much less the four. We need not, therefore, expatiate upon his 'testimony,' after our elaborate animadversions on the apostolic fathers, except to confirm our former reasoning, by stating, in the language of Bishop Marsh, that 'we cannot consis-

* *Ibid*, p. 47.

tently refer to him for quotations from them.* Let Paley, however, state his side. 'We meet with quotations of three of the gospels within the compass of half a page: "And in other words he says, Depart from me into outer darkness, which the Father hath prepared for Satan and his angels" (which is from Matthew xxv., 41). "And again he said, in other words, I give unto you power to tread upon serpents, and scorpions, and venomous beasts, and upon all the power of the enemy" (this from Luke x., 19). And before he was crucified he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the Scribes and Pharisees, and be crucified, and rise again on the third day" (this from Mark viii., 39). In another place, Justin quotes a passage in the history of Christ's birth, as delivered by Matthew and John, and fortifies his question by this remarkable testimony:—"As they have taught who have written the history of all things concerning our Saviour Jesus Christ: and we believe them."..... All the references in Justin are made without mentioning the author; which proves that these books were perfectly notorious, and that there were no other accounts of Christ then extant; or, at least, no others so received and credited as to make it necessary to distinguish these from the rest. But although Justin mentions not the author's name, he calls the books "Memoirs composed by the Apostles and their Companions;" which description, the latter especially, exactly suits with the titles which the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles now bear.†

Now read the opposite side—the school of Christian divines who believe the words of Christ were transmitted by oral tradition:—"From this notice of Justin Martyr, the hasty reader might be led to infer that the books of the New Testament were, at all events in Justin's time, perfectly well known and formed into a canon, as we now have them, to the exclusion of all other unrecognised gospels, of which a great number were even then or within a few years known to be in being..... The works of Justin Martyr do not fall in the way of one in a hundred thousand of our countrymen. How is it then to be deprecated that erroneous statements should pass current about him! How is it to be censured that his testimony should be changed, and he should be made to speak a falsehood! Does he once name a single writer of the eight who are said to have written the books of the New Testament? No; the very names of the

* Lecture xxiii.

† 'Evidences,' chap. xix., sect. 1.

evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are never mentioned by him—do not occur once in all his works. It is therefore childish to say that he has quoted from our existing gospels, and so proves their existence, as they now are, in his own time. It is *possible* that they were then in being; but, if so, they did not pass under the names by which they are now known, nor were they held in the same estimation as now, or they would certainly have been quoted, not vaguely, but specifically, by Justin Martyr. That they were “perfectly notorious,” and that Justin therefore has not named their authors, is a rhetorical flourish on the part of Paley; for Justin has not even named the books themselves, much less their writers. He has nowhere remarked, like those fathers of the church who lived several ages after him, that there are *four gospels* of higher importance and estimation than any others, forming a canon of Christianity, so that whatever was not read therein or might be proved thereby, was not required of any man to be believed as an article of Christian faith. All this was the creation of a later age, but is wanting in Justin Martyr, and the defect leads us to the conclusion that our four gospels had not then emerged from obscurity, but were still, if in being, confounded with a larger mass of Christian traditions which about this very time were beginning to be set down in writing. The age of Justin Martyr, we must remember, was the very age in which the unscrupulous Peregrinus, whose history is given by Lucian, professed himself a Christian, and beat the Christians at their own weapons—expounded their books for them—wrote others himself—and ended by deserting the brotherhood as hastily as he had entered it. The age of Justin Martyr was the age when books would naturally begin to be written; for the obscurity of the first generation of Christians had given way to a more flourishing condition. The sect was emerging into consequence, and it behoved them to collect together their traditions, and to store them up for the use of future times. A multitude of gospels, acts of different apostles, epistles, and revelations then swarmed into life. Many of these have come down, either wholly or in substance, to our times; and Justin Martyr has actually mentioned facts and sayings of Christ which are found in such uncanonical gospels only.*

This learned author further observes:—‘I shall now copy word for word the first ten sentences of Justin Martyr, which seem to be taken from our four gospels, and place in parallel

* ‘Christian Records,’ pp. 70-72.

columns the passages of similar import from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which Justin Martyr is said to have quoted. The object of this comparison will be to show that Justin Martyr gives us Christ's sayings in their traditional forms, and not in the words which are found in our four gospels; it is evident that this argument addresses itself to the learned reader alone: as the identity of quotation can be proved or disproved, not in a translation, but in the original language only.*

He then gives the words of our gospels and those of Justin in Greek, placing them in juxtaposition, and infers that Justin quotes Christ's sayings 'as delivered by tradition, or taken down in writing *before the four gospels were compiled.*'

Had *our* four gospels been familiar to Justin Martyr, why did he not name them properly? Could he have had those books before him and not have quoted them *exactly*? If a freethinker, on citing scripture, should not give the precise word and every particular to the greatest exactitude, even to the orthography of obsolete names, he 'perverts' the gospel, and is derided in terms by no means classical. Yet disputants, endowed with a fine sense of propriety when the Bible is referred to by their opponent, can excuse Justin Martyr—a *Christian* father—an exponent and historian of Christianity, for perpetrating a much greater enormity.† Justin does not *name* them correctly or *quote* them correctly, much less gives *chapter and verse*—an indispensable test of veracity in these days of high-toned controversy!

Dr. W. Lindsay Alexander, in replying to Eichhorn and Bishop Marsh, submits that it was not necessary Justin should name the gospels, as he was addressing a heathen emperor and those 'without the pale of Christianity.'‡ Not necessary to give your authority accurately when addressing an emperor, and especially on 'sacred' subjects? What an 'insult' to court morality! Surely that 'ought' to be *the* time for the most punctilious care. This opinion of Dr. Alexander's, if not 'inconsistent with reason,' is 'condemned by experience.' Had Justin known our four gospels, had he believed that they were written by four *inspired* men—distinguished disciples of Christ—would he not, especially under such grave circumstances, have named them, at least to give authenticity, if not dignity and solemnity, to his statements? The remark, 'Would it not have been absurd to cite Chris-

* *Ibid*, p. 83.

† 'Christ and Christianity,' etc., p. 56.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 54.

tian books by titles known only to Christians,* is a very absurd apology, and contrary to the every-day practice of our Christian missionaries. A Christian *minister* should have been the last to tender such a plea. Would not Antoninus Pius have known as much, nay more, by calling the gospels by the *right* as the wrong title, when no offence could have been given, and additional authority secured? But the climax of this refined casuistry is displayed in the following sentence:—‘Very probably he was led to select the term “Memoirs” from this having been the title affixed by Xenophon to his “Narrative of the Discourses of Socrates,” a work with which doubtless the emperor, himself not averse from the studies of philosophy, was familiar.’ How far-fetched! How *probable*!

We now resume our history.

At the time when Irenæus first mentioned our four gospels, there were other writings in circulation, and which were read in Christian churches and held to be of authority, *but which are not in our present canon*. Why are they not? If Christians believed them *then*, why not *now*? Despite the dicta of early councils, some respectable Christian writers of modern times maintained they ought to be in our canon. This awkward fact is little known to the ordinary reader. What says Dr. Whiston? ‘Can any one be so weak as to imagine Mark and Luke and James and Jude, who were *none* of them more than *companions* of the apostles, to be our sacred and unerring guides, while Barnabas, Thaddeus, Clement, Timothy, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, who were equally companions of the same apostles, to be of *no authority at all!*’† The Rev. J. Martineau observes:—‘If we could recover the gospels of the Hebrews, and that of the Egyptians, it would be difficult to give a reason why *they* should not form a part of the New Testament; and an epistle actually exists by Clement, the fellow-labourer of Paul, which has *as good a claim to stand there as the Epistle to the Hebrews or the Gospel of Luke*. If none but the works of the twelve apostles were admitted, the rule would be clear and simple; but what are Mark and Luke, who *are received*, more than Clement and Barnabas, who *are excluded?*’‡ And Archbishop Wake actually translated from the Greek the apostolic

* *Ibid*, p. 54.

† ‘Exact Time,’ etc., 1749, p. 28.

‡ ‘Rationale of Religious Inquiry,’ p. 13.

fathers St. Barnabas, St. Clement, St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp, and St. Hermas, and strongly recommended them to the Christian world as ‘containing an *authoritative* declaration of the gospel of Christ to us.’*

The epistle of Christ to Abgarrus has been published as genuine by Dr. Case and Dr. Parker. The Quakers procured a translation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Laodiceans. In the Eastern Christian churches the gospels of St. James and St. Thomas are received as inspired; and in Abyssinia, the Apostolic Constitutions. The Syrian Christians have in their canon the apocrypha, with the book of Josephus on the sufferings of Eleazar with Shemoon and her seven sons. To this the Travancore MS. adds the Recognitions of Clement.† Whiston received the Apostolic Constitutions as ‘the most sacred of the canonical books; and instead of twenty-seven books of the New Testament, he acknowledged no fewer than fifty-six, including various works of the early Christian writers, still preserved to us by a most happy providence.‡

Dr. Paley is obliged to admit, though with that reluctance indicative of a biassed mind, that the gospel according to the Hebrews is quoted by Clemens Alexandrinus, ‘who lived, the reader will remember, in the latter part of the second century,’ also the ‘Preaching of Peter’ and the ‘Revelation of Peter.’§ Dr. Archibald Alexander likewise concedes that|| ‘notwithstanding these decrees, and the opinions of learned fathers, there were some pieces read in some of the churches which were not eanonical. Thus Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, in the second century, in a letter to the Church of Rome, tells them, “That they read in their assemblies, on the Lord’s day, Clement’s epistle.” And Eusebius declares, “That in his, and the *preceding* times, it was almost universally received and read in most churches.” He says also, “That the Shepherd of Hermas was read in many churches,” which is confirmed by Athanasius and Rufin. Whilst these books, which are not now in the canon, were publicly read in many churches, the book of Revelation was not, according to Cyril, read in the churches, nor commanded to be read by the council of Laodicea.’

* ‘Apostolic Fathers,’ p. 13.

† ‘Report of Church Missionary Society,’ 1817.

‡ ‘Life,’ p. 344.

§ ‘Evidences,’ c. ix., s. 11.

|| ‘The Canon,’ etc., p. 149.

The assertion of Dr. Paley that 'there is no evidence that any spurious or apocryphal books whatever existed in the *first* century,'* is only, so far, a confirmation of the opinions of those divines who hold that no *written* records of Christ existed at that time, not even *our* gospels. To affirm that no apocryphal books were current during the first century, because none are named or quoted, is the argument by which Eichhorn and others prove that our present gospel histories were not then extant. Yet the reasoning, when applied against *their* genuineness, is discarded as gratuitous and fallacious!

From the time of Justin and Irenæus to the close of the fourth century, a large number of gospels, epistles, acts, revelations, etc., appeared, all professing to be 'inspired.' The following are the names of most of those of any moment:†—

The Acts of Andrew.	The Book of the Helkesaites.
The Gospel of Andrew.	The False Gospels of Hesy- chius.
The Gospel of Apelles.	The Book of James.
The Gospel according to the Twelve Apostles.	The Acts of John.
The Gospel of Barnabas.	The Gospel of Jude.
The Gospel of Bartholomew.	The Gospel of Judas Iscariot.
The Gospel of Basilides.	The Acts of the Apostles by Leucius.
The Gospel of Cerinthus.	The Acts of the Apostles by Lentitius.
The Revelation of Cerinthus.	The Acts of the Apostles by Leuthon.
The Epistle of Christ to Peter and Paul.	The Acts of the Apostles by Leontius.
The Epistle of Christ produced by the Manichees.	The False Gospel of Lucianus.
A Hymn which Christ taught his Disciples.	Traditions of Matthias.
The Gospel according to the Egyptians.	The Gospel of Matthias.
The Acts of the Apostles used by the Ebionites.	The Acts of the Apostles used the Manichees.
The Gospel of the Ebionites.	The Gospel of Marcion.
The Gospel of the Encratites.	The Gospel of Merinthus.
The Gospel of Eve.	The Gospel according to the Nazarenes.
The Gospel according to the Hebrews.	The Gospel of Perfection.

* 'Evidences,' c. ix., s. 11.

† *Vide* Jones, Alexander, Dupin, and others, on the canon.

The Acts of Paul.	The Gospel of Thaddeus.
Preaching of Paul and Peter.	The Gospel of Truth.
The Revelation of Paul.	The Acts of Thomas.
The Acts of Peter.	The Gospel of Thomas.
The Doctrine of Peter.	The Revelation of Thomas.
The Gospel of Peter.	The Gospel of Valentinus.
The Judgment of Peter.	Letter of King Abgarrus to Christ.
The Preaching of Peter.	The Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans.
The Revelation of Peter.	The Epistle of Paul to Seneca.
The Apostolic Constitutions.	The Epistle of Clement.
Acts of Philip.	The Protevangelion of James.
Gospel of Philip.	The Gospels of our Saviour's Infancy.
Gospel of Scythianus.	The Gospel of Nicodemus.
The Acts of the Apostles by Seleucus.	The Shepherd of Hermas.'
Revelation of Stephen.	
The Gospel of Tatian.	

Notwithstanding all the efforts of the predominant sect, the denounced scriptures still continued to be popular. 'It would be endless,' says Archbishop Wake, 'to insist on all the spurious pieces which are attributed to St. Paul only; the books ascribed to St. Peter, as his Acts, his Gospel, his Preaching, his Revelations, were of much greater authority *even to the time of Eusebius.*'*

We now approach a material portion of our inquiry. Not only is the early history of the New Testament 'attended with many difficulties,' but from the era of Christ until the latter end of the fourth century there was no *canon* established—that is, no authoritative collection of the Christian records. The general impression among the people at this day is, that the New Testament has existed from the first as we have it now. This is an egregious misapprehension. The New Testament did not exist as a book till centuries after Christ. The Christian writings floated about uncollected, unstamped with 'canonical' authority, accepted or rejected according to party predilections. We may justly ask, if all was unsettled in the *third* century, can it be all certainty in the *nineteenth*? If *Christians* disputed *then*, why not sceptics question now? How paradoxical, that the nearer we approach the alleged 'apostolic' age the greater is the uncertainty of the canon of the New Testa-

* Archbishop Wake's 'Apostolic Fathers.'

ment; and the further we recede from that period, it assumes more certainty and stability! It is evident that some apocryphal books were used as authority with those now called canonical. At length the latter acquired complete ascendancy, and the former by degrees fell into oblivion. The party who endorsed the canonical were those who 'had adopted the pagan idea of the pre-existence and incarnation of a celestial being in the person of Jesus, as it is most likely should happen amongst the converts from paganism.* I find that about the middle of the third century, Origen, the celebrated Christian father—a man who had almost unlimited power in the church—made a selection from the great number of books then current among the Christians. This selection included the canon in circulation at this day. Through the dominant influence of Origen and his party, his collection became more general, and had a deciding influence over subsequent councils. Dr. Archibald Alexander says†:—'The first regular catalogue of the books of the New Testament which we find on record is by Origen.' Dr. Paley makes the same statement.‡ This catalogue, nevertheless, is made on Origen's own authority—an authority, we shall show in our next chapter, *not to be relied on.*

The first time however our present canon was accredited was at a council of bishops at Laodicea, in the year 363; but even they rejected the Book of Revelations. Some say the council of Nice was the first to settle the canon. Whether this meeting was antecedent or subsequent to that of Laodicea cannot now be determined. Mosheim states:—'The ancient writers are neither agreed concerning the time nor place in which it was held.'§ Very unsatisfactory, as usual! The most interesting events are the least attested! Laodicea is the first council, according to Paley, which delivered our 'authoritative catalogue.'||

A grave problem here suggests itself.—How did this council of Laodicea or Nice decide that our present canon of the New Testament was the true 'Word of God,' to the exclusion of all other books?

* *Vide* Evanson's 'Letter in Defence of his Dissonance,' p 101. 1794.

† 'The Canon of the Old and New Testament Scriptures,' p. 138. 1833.

‡ 'Evidences,' c. ix., s. 10.

§ Vol i., p. 337.

|| 'Evidences,' c. ix., sec. 10.

Did they receive a special intimation from heaven on the subject? Did they receive that proof which was beyond all possibility of denial? No; but this vital matter was decided as a town council would decide upon a police force, or the House of Commons upon a tariff, or as the council of bishops just held at Rome settled the question of the 'miraculous conception' by a—*majority*. Human beings like ourselves presumed to pronounce certain books inspired, and others not! In other words, the claims of our *infallible* Bible were determined by *fallible* men!! Can such anomalies be much longer received? Is it rational or just to condemn a human being to everlasting agony who cannot believe those books divine which a body of bishops thought proper to select as such? To reply that you care not for those councils, you will judge for yourselves, is to adopt the Secularist view. If you insist on forming your own judgment, why not I? If, from a careful study of the books themselves, you conclude that the Bible *is* the word of God, may not I decide that it is *not*? Clerical disputants, indeed, now affirm that we ought to read the Bible as we would any other book. *We* always have done so. Will *they*? When we peruse a book, we accept what we think is true, and *reject what we think untrue*. Must we do so with the *Bible*? The clergy will not allow us to follow their own advice. We may *accept*, but not *reject*, or contumely here and damnation hereafter is the penalty. And this is reading the Bible as we would any other book!! To return to our history.

William Penn, the celebrated Quaker, in arguing that the Bible cannot be the rule of faith and practice, says—'I demand of our adversaries if they are well assured of those men who first collected, embodied, and declared them (the scriptures) authentic, by a public canon which we read was in the Council of Laodicea, held 360 years after Christ? I say, *how did they know that these men rightly discerned true from spurious?* Now, sure it is that some of the scriptures taken in by one council, are rejected by another for apocryphal; and that which was left out by the former for apocryphal, was taken in by the latter for canonical. Now, visible it is that they contradict each other, and as true that they hath erred respecting the present belief.*

It is manifest the whole matter rests merely on *human dicta*, and not *divine interposition*, and therefore the pretensions of the Christian world to the divinity of their scriptures are unwarrantable.

* Penn's Works, vol. i., pp. 302-304. London, 1782.

Presuming this a legitimate mode of determining the divinity of scripture, a further question has to be considered—*whether the men who composed these councils were competent to decide such critical matters.* We must be assured they were enlightened and unprejudiced, and disposed to discuss the subject dispassionately. We must be certain they examined, *minutely and deliberately*, all the evidence in reference to the gospels, acts, epistles, and revelations, claiming to be genuine scripture. For if they were not persons of this high character, acting in the enlightened spirit proposed, no confidence can be placed in their decisions.

Now I aver most fearlessly they were not men so distinguished and estimable. They were, on the contrary, excessively bigoted, prejudiced, and credulous—indissolubly wedded to their own party. Their conduct, indeed, in these ‘holy councils,’ was often disgraceful. I shall first quote from an eye-witness, upon the authority of the *Christian* writer, Tindal.* ‘St. Gregory Nazianzen, in his letter to Procopius, tells him “that he fled all assemblies of bishops, because he never saw a good and happy end of any council, but that they did rather increase than lessen the evil, that the *love of contention and ambition always overcomes their reason!*”’ Pretty men to determine questions of such vital moment!

But listen further to the words of the pious Nazianzen. He reiterates his determination of not going to any council, ‘*because nothing is to be heard there but geese and cranes!*’ who fight without understanding one another.’ A unique, pious, and *rational* assembly, truly! We are here informed by one who was *present* at these councils, that there was nothing to be heard but ‘*geese and cranes.*’ Little do these ‘geese and cranes’ know the *deference* paid to their *rational* and *enlightened* dicta!

Alluding to the memorable Council of Nice, at which the Emperor Constantine presided, Tindal observes—‘And if these accusations and libels which the bishops at the Council of Nice give in of one another to the emperor, were now extant, in all probability we should have such *rolls of scandal*, that few would have much reason to boast of the first œcumenical council, where, with such heat, passion, and fury, the bishops *fell foul of one another*; insomuch, that had not the emperor by a *trick* burnt their church memorials, probably they must have broke

* ‘Rights of the Christian Church,’ p. 195.

up in confusion! After that council was over, the bishops made so great a *bustle* and *disturbance*, and were so *unruly*, that the good emperor was forced to tell them "that if they would not be more quiet and peaceable for the future, he would no longer continue his expedition against the infidels, but must return to keep *them* in order." 'Indeed,' continues Tindal, 'the confusion and disorder were so great amongst them, especially in their Synods, *that it sometimes came to blows*; and for instance, Dioscorus, Bishop of Alexandria, *cuffed and kicked* Flavianus, Patriarch of Constantinople (at the second Synod of Ephesus), with that *fury* that *within three days after he died!*' Such are the men upon whose *judgment* the Christian world depend for their *creeds* and their *scriptures!*

So much for their *bigotry* and violence. A word as to their *consistency*. Tindal observes—'For though they were most *obstinate* as to *power*, they were most *flexible* as to *faith*; and in their councils complimented the emperor with whatsoever creeds they had a mind to, and never scrupled to *recant* what they had before enacted, or to *re-enact* what they had before recanted. Nay, so very *variable* were they, that St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, says "that *since the Nicene Synod*, we do nothing but write creeds; that while we *fight* about words; while we raise questions about novelties; while we quarrel about things doubtful, and about authors; while we contend in parties—there is almost none that is Christ's. We decree every year of the Lord *a new creed concerning God*; nay, *every change of the moon our faith is altered.*"' Flexible indeed!

'The moment you had pronounced him one,
Presto! his face changed and he was another;
And when that change was hardly well put on,
It varied, till I don't think his own mother
(If that he had a mother) would her son
Have known, he shifted so from one to t'other.'

The following fact, mentioned by Pappius* in his Synodicon to the Council of Nice, is, however, worth all the preceding, valuable and curious though they be. Pappius informs us of the manner in which the true gospels were selected from the false at

* Dr. A. Alexander, in 'The Canon,' &c., p. 141, calls this writer Popus. He says, 'This story is related in the Synodicon of Popus.'

that memorable council. This was done 'by placing all the books under a communion table, and upon the prayers of the council, the *inspired* books jumped upon the table! while the false ones remained under it!' What a test of truth! What a proof of inspiration! It is quite a *stirring* argument. Who, after this, will venture to doubt the authenticity of the scriptures?

From St. Cyril's 'Letters,' we learn that when the people of Ephesus were informed that the fathers of the council had declared that they might call the 'Virgin Mary' the 'Mother of God,' they were transported with joy; they kissed the hands of the bishops—they embraced their knees, and the whole city resounded with acclamations. Happy creatures! After this no one will doubt that 'ignorance is bliss.'

Subsequent to the council of Laodicea, in the year 363, there were two other great councils, one in the year 406, and the other in 680. The council of 406 still rejected books now deemed canonical, but the council of 680 acknowledged them. Thus were the 'sacred writings' tossed like a battledore from sect to sect, and altered as the spirit of faction might dictate.

From this period to the fifteenth century, when printing was invented, the New Testament remained in pious seclusion. It was locked up in monasteries in the exclusive possession of monks. The people were forbidden to read it. If they were detected in such an '*impious*' act they were punished most severely. The priesthood at this period, therefore, had every opportunity to do what they liked with the Bible—to alter, add, or omit, as most *convenient*. So greatly, in fact, were the priesthood afraid of the people reading the Bible, that a bill was actually introduced into parliament to prohibit any one reading the scriptures except those who were *authorised*.

When printing became general, the Bible, despite the anxiety of the clergy, was more accessible to the laity; and what was the consequence? Did it decide the grand question which of these numerous scriptures were genuine? By no means. It only enhanced the doubt and confusion which previously existed. It split up the European world into numberless petty sectaries.

Up to this moment there are no two of the leading sects of Christendom who entirely agree upon any one of the versions of the New Testament, or even of the Old. Luther himself rejected the epistle of James, and Erasmus and Calvin the Revelations. The Unitarians, headed by Lardner, regard the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James, the 2nd of Peter, the 2nd and 3rd of John, Jude, and Revelations, as doubtful, and

not '*fit*' to be alleged as affording sufficient proof of *any* doctrine.

The New Testament published by the learned Evanson, in 1807, contains only the gospel of St. Luke, Acts, ten of Paul's epistles, and Revelations, and even *those* are said to 'abound with manifest and numerous interpolations.' The gospel of Matthew, Mark, and John, he *contemptuously* rejects as 'spurious fictions of the second century.' The Swedenborgians admit only the four Gospels and Revelations. The German Baptists and the followers of Servetus do not receive the Gospel of St. Matthew, and Professor Bauer, in 1803, denounced it as an absolute 'forgery.' The second Epistle to Timothy and Titus were rejected by Dr. Eichhorn, and the first Epistle to Timothy, in 1807, by Dr. Sliermacher. The Gospel of St. John was rejected, in 1820, by Dr. Britschnieder, and the first chapter of Matthew and Luke are denounced by the Unitarians in the *Monthly Repository* as 'absolute falsities!' The Catholic Bible, say the Protestants, abounds with innumerable gross errors, and, in a great number of places, exhibits the most shocking barbarity of style, and the most impenetrable obscurity with respect to the sense of the inspired writers. Yet this Bible was pronounced authentic by a decree of the Council of Trent. The Protestant Bible, in return, is denounced, even so lately as in 1816, by the Pope of Rome, as 'pregnant with errors;' and the old Protestant Bible is repudiated by the critic Broughton, who was himself a Protestant, as 'perverting the text of the Old Testament in 848 places, and cause millions to reject the New, and to run into everlasting flames!' As for the present version, 'its translators,' say the Catholics, 'ought to be abhorred to the depths of hell.' The Canticles have been denounced as forgeries by Dr. Whiston, and the books of Jonah and Daniel have been repudiated by Drs. Aitkin and Eichhorn, as mere 'legends and romances.'

And we are denounced as 'dangerous men' because we cannot believe that to be divine upon which such contradictory opinions exist among the very people who profess to acknowledge it!

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS.

WE must now expatiate upon a section of our inquiry intimately connected with the history of the Bible. We allude to *the character of those individuals in whose hands the Christian scriptures originally reposed*—the fathers.

It is a matter of the utmost moment to ascertain if those men were trustworthy and consistent. *It is upon the authority of these 'holy fathers' we are called upon to believe the scriptures genuine.* If, therefore, it can be demonstrated their authority is exceptionable, we at once overturn the corner-stone of Christian evidences. Laboured attempts have been made to ignore the fathers. When their veracity has been impugned, clerical disputants have exclaimed 'We can do without the fathers.' Can you? Why every particle of historical evidence as to the genuineness of the Christian records depends upon them! As well might it be asserted that a pyramid would stand without its base. Will our opponents inform us what they know of the early history of Christianity except through the fathers? Do not they appeal to them when it is *convenient* and pronounce their evidence 'complete?' Who are the authorities upon whom our ecclesiastical historians—Lardner, Du Pin, Simon, Tillemont, Jones, Mosheim, etc.—depend? *The fathers.* Du Pin admits we have only the testimony of the fathers for the genuineness of the gospels, and Tillemont and our ecclesiastical writers generally declare that without Eusebius we should scarcely have had any knowledge of the first ages of Christianity, or of the authors who wrote at that time. To ignore the fathers is to ignore the evidences of Christianity, and consequently this idle bravado is suicidal.

To show further how much depends upon the fathers, it must be remembered that the *originals* of the New Testament are lost. Michaelis, as translated by Bishop Marsh, states that our most ancient MSS. were written so lately as the sixth century—that is, nearly 500 years after the time the originals are said to have been composed.* The originals, indeed, have not been seen, says that high au-

* 'Introduction to the New Testament,' v. ii., p. 161.

thority, *by any writer extant*, nor do they record that any one of their contemporaries had seen them. 'None of the most early fathers, as Ignatius or Tertullian, appeal to the originals, or had seen them.' Professor Du Pin remarks :*— 'We do not find that the two greatest men of the church, I mean Origen and St. Hierom, who had searched the ancient copies of the scriptures with so much care and diligence, and have visited so many churches in the east, have ever spoken of the originals of the New Testament, written with the hands of the apostles, which they would not have failed to do if there had been any in their times.' Again: 'But it hath been already made appear elsewhere that it is no wonder that the primitive Christians, who had not a regular body of a state in which they lived, and whose assemblies were, on the contrary, *furiously* disturbed by the Jews and Pagans, had **LOST** the originals of their books!' Dr. Campbell also observes: 'The autographs (the originals) it is acknowledged on all hands are nowhere to be found. What we have in their stead are the *copies of copies* (through how many successions it is impossible to say) which were originally taken from these autographs.'† Since, then, the originals of the New Testament are absolutely lost, and, according to Michaelis and Du Pin, have not been seen by *any* writer extant, or any of their cotemporaries, it is manifest *we have nothing to depend upon but the copies these holy men have thought fit to hand down to us*. I repeat, therefore, it is a question of vital importance—the question, indeed, to ascertain if they are worthy of credit.

We unhesitatingly denounce them as persons unworthy of reliance. Deception was their common practice. To deceive the people they considered a 'virtue.' In short, the class upon whom the Christian world rely for the genuineness of their scriptures were notoriously guilty of fraud.

This may be considered a rash declaration. Let those, however, who labour under such a conception read our proofs. I shall first quote from the most able ecclesiastical historian of modern times—Mosheim. 'The interest of virtue and true religion suffered yet more grievously by the monstrous errors that were almost *universally* adopted in this century (the fourth), and became a source of innumerable calamities and mischiefs in the

* 'History of the Canon,' etc., vol. ii.

† 'Introduction to the Gospels,' p. 117.

succeeding ages. The first of these maxims was, "*that it was an act of virtue to DECEIVE AND LIE*, when by that means the interest of the church might be promoted;" and the second, equally horrible, though in another point of view, was, "that errors in religion, when maintained and adhered to after *proper* admonition, were punishable with civil penalties and corporeal torture." The former of these erroneous maxims was now of *long standing*, it had been adopted for *some ages past*, and had produced an incredible number of ridiculous fables, fictitious prodigies, and *pious frauds!* to the unspeakable detriment of that glorious cause in which they were employed. And it must be frankly confessed that the greatest men, and most eminent saints of this century, were more or less tainted with the infection of this *corrupt* principle, as will appear evident to such as look, with an attentive eye, to their writings and actions. We would willingly except from this charge Ambrose and Hilary, Augustine, Gregory Nazianzen, and Jerome, but truth, which is more respectable than these venerable fathers, obliges us to involve them in the general accusation.*

Mosheim is a writer to whom all sects and all parties in modern times appeal with perfect confidence in his learning and honesty. No more honourable testimony can be afforded of this than that such inveterate opponents as Priestley and Horsley should deem it sufficient to appeal to Mosheim without stating their original authorities. Mosheim, in his commentary, 'De rebus Christianis ante Constantinum Magnum' ('Concerning Christian Affairs before Constantine the Great'), at the close of his account of Hermas, at the end of the first century, observes, in a note, as follows:†—"Several things, which I cannot well enter into in this place, conspire to impress me with the opinion that Hermas had never been so far the dupe of a heated imagination as to fancy that he saw and heard things which in reality had no existence, but that he knowingly and wilfully was guilty of a cheat, and invented those divine conversations and visions which he asserts himself to have enjoyed, with a view to obtain a more ready reception for certain precepts and admonitions which he conceived would prove salutary to the Roman church. At the time when he wrote, it was an *established maxim* with many of the Christians, *that it was pardonable in an advocate for religion to avail himself of fraud and deception, if it were likely they*

* 'Eccles. Hist.,' part ii., c. 3.

† Vide 'Vidal's translation, vol. i., p. 285, note (o).

might conduce toward the attainment of any considerable good. Of the host of silly books and stories to which the erroneous notion gave rise, *from the second to the fifteenth century*, no one acquainted with Christian history can be ignorant. The teachers of the Romish church themselves, appear to have considered Hermas as having written this work on this principle, and not to have altogether disapproved it.'

Confirming the extraordinary exposures of Mosheim, Dr. Chapman observes:—'The learned Mosheim, a foreign divine and zealous advocate for Christianity, who, by his writings, has deserved the esteem of all good and learned men, intimates his fears that those who search with any degree of attention into the writings of the fathers and most holy doctors of the fourth century, *will find them all, without exception, disposed to lie and deceive whenever the interests of religion require it.*' Dr. Chapman ought to have added, and '*before the fourth century.*' Mosheim says this maxim was of 'long standing,' and 'had been adopted for some ages past.'

Simon also remarks—'We ought not easily to give credit to the first originals of churches [meaning the fathers], every one strives to advance their antiquity as much as possible, and they make no scruple on such occasions to *counterfeit* acts when they have none that are true.'†

Dr. Conyers Middleton, a distinguished Cambridge professor, in his able work, has given a most elaborate and unanswerable *exposé* of the tricks of these 'Fathers in God.' He confesses that—'From all these considerations taken together, it must, I think, be allowed, that the forged miracles of the fourth century give us just reason to suspect the pretensions of *every other age, both before and after it.*‡

M. Daille, a man whose learning and impartiality have never been impeached, unreservedly affirms:—'We find them [the fathers] saying things which they did not themselves believe. They are mutually witnesses against each other, that they are not to be believed absolutely on their own bare word.'.....'Origen, Methodius, Eusebius, &c., have written largely against Celsus and Porphyry. Do but observe their manner of arguing, and what slippery problems they used. They alleged

* 'Miscellaneous Tracts,' p. 191.

† 'Critical History,' vol. i., p. 20.

‡ 'A Free Inquiry concerning the Miraculous Powers of the Christian Church in the First Three Centuries.'

against the Gentiles, *not what they believed*, but what they thought necessary. Jerome adds, I forbear mentioning the Latin writers, as Tertullian, Cyprian, Victorinus, Lactantius, Hilary, lest I should rather seem to accuse others than defend myself.' Daille avers emphatically the fathers 'made no scruple to *forge whole books*.*' His work was published in 1628, and translated by T. Smith, of Cambridge—the translation from which these extracts are taken.

M. Blondell, another learned French Protestant, affirms that—'The *second* century of Christianity, whether you consider the immoderate impudence of impostors, or the deplorable credulity of believers, was a most miserable period, and exceeded all others in pious frauds. To the disgrace of Christianity, there was more aversion to lying, more simplicity in adhering to truth, and more fidelity, among profane than among Christian authors.†

I could refer to a host of other authorities, all of the most respectable character; but the following must suffice. It is from a periodical accessible to all. 'When we consider the number of gospels, acts, epistles, revelations, traditions, and constitutions which were put in circulation during the first three centuries, and which are *unquestionably spurious*, we find sufficient reason for examining with care, and receiving with extreme caution, productions attributed to eminent men in the primitive church. Some of the early Christians *do not appear to have possessed, on some points, a very nice sense of moral obligation*. The writing of books under false names, and the circulating of fables, were not accounted violations of duty; or, if the impropriety of such conduct was felt, the end proposed—the promotion of the Christian cause—was thought to justify the means employed for its accomplishment.‡ A divine religion, truly, that could require or would 'justify' such ignoble practices!

We will now refer to 'cases.' The preceding quotations are only in general terms.

Origen. This man had immense influence among the Christians of his time. He lived in the third century. It was Origen who collected our present canon of the New Testament. He was also one of the earliest to furnish

* 'The Use of the Fathers,' book i., c. 3 and c. 6.

† 'Epist. ad C. Arnold.' 1701.

‡ *Eclectic Review*, p. 479 1814.

Christians with the Old Testament canon.* What, then, was the character of this person through whom we received our present catalogue? The question is one of the deepest importance, Origen being unquestionably the ablest defender of Christianity at that age. Of his great influence Bishop Marsh informs us:†—‘It is a certain fact that several readings in our common printed text are nothing more than alterations made by Origen, *whose authority was so great in the Christian church, that emendations which he proposed, though, as he himself acknowledged, supported by the evidence of no manuscript, were very generally received.*’

The policy of one who exerted such sway greatly affects the value of Christian evidences. Now, Bishop Horsely expressly and deliberately charges Origen in these terms:—‘Origen was not incapable of asserting in argument what he believed not, and *that a strict regard to truth in disputation was not one of the virtues of his character.*’.....‘Time was when the practice of using unjustifiable means to serve a good cause was openly avowed, and *Origen himself was among its defenders.*’‡ An exemplary character to be one of those upon whose ‘authority’ we receive the Divine word!

Now of Eusebius. Few of the ancient fathers are more celebrated. He is considered a very eminent authority among Christians. Tillemont declares, ‘Without Eusebius we should scarce have had any knowledge of the history of the first ages of Christianity, or of the authors who wrote at that time. All the Greek authors of the fourth century, who undertook to write the history of the church, have begun where Eusebius ended, as having nothing considerable to add to his labours.’§ What is the character of this man, upon whom such dependence is placed? He was one of those men who thought falsehood a *convenience* and a *virtue*. In the 12th book of his ‘Evangelical Prepara-

* Dr. Alexander says:—‘The first regular catalogue of the books of the New Testament which we find on record was by Origen.’.....‘Origen furnishes us with a catalogue of the books of the Old Testament, which perfectly accords with our canon, except that he admitted the minor prophets.’ (‘The Canon of the Old and New Testament Scriptures,’ pp. 26, 139. Also, Paley’s ‘Evidences,’ c. ix., s. 10.)

† Vol. ii., p. 368, ‘Michaelis’ Introduction to New Test.’

‡ ‘Reply to Priestley,’ pp. 23, 160.

§ ‘Eccles. Hist.,’ vol. xvi.

tion,' chap. xxxi. he discusses the question:—'How far it may be *proper* to use falsehood as a *medicine*, and for the *benefit* of those who *require to be deceived*.* Strange medicine, truly!

Eusebius *justifies* the use of falsehood and dissimulation by the example of the sacred writers of the Old Testament! He also refers to Plato. Such is the honourable character of the first great Christian historian!

Another eminent father is Irenæus. We have already shown he was the first to name our four gospels. Of him and Papias, Dr. Whitly speaks as having 'handed down the actions of the apostles and their disciples from paltry rumours and dubious reports,' and having 'scandalously deluded the world with fables and lying narrations!† Eusebius himself calls Papias 'a very very little-minded man.‡

Of Justin Martyr, Mosheim distinctly states that 'much of what Justin says is wholly undeserving credit.§ The Rev. Jer. Jones also observes, that 'to make use of testimonies out of forgeries and spurious books to prove the very foundation of the Christian revelation, was a method much practised by some of the fathers, especially Justin Martyr, Clemens Alex., and Lactantius.¶

Jerome, who stands high among the Latin fathers, mentioning a story circulated by the Christians at Jerusalem about the blood of Zacharias staining certain stones amid the ruins of the temple, says—'I do not find fault with an error which proceeds from a hatred towards the Jews and a pious zeal for the Christian faith?¶

According to this high-minded priest, if it be only for the *benefit of religion*, an individual may utter as many 'errors' as he thinks proper!

* We refer to the edition of the 'Evangelical Preparation,' by Francis Viger, p. 607. Paris, 1628. A literary friend, learned 'in Greek and Latin,' and late Fellow at Oxford, has furnished me with the following literal translation from Eusebius: 'That falsehood may be sometimes used as a medicine for the good of those who have need of this kind of speaking.'

† De Scrip. Interpret., p. 73.

‡ Eccl. Hist., iii. 38.

§ 'Commentaries,' i., p. 112.

¶ 'New and Full Method of settling the canonical authority of the New Testament,' part ii., p. 34.

¶¶ 'Opera,' tom. iv., p. 113.

Gregory Nazianzen, surnamed the 'divine,' candidly admits to Father Jerome that 'a little *jargon* is all that it is necessary to impose upon the people. The less they comprehend the more they admire! Our forefathers and doctors of the church have often said not what they thought, but what circumstances and necessity dictated to them.*

Bishop Heliodorus modestly admits 'a falsehood is a *good* thing when it aids the speaker, and does no injury to the hearers.†

Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais, early in the fifth century, records—'The people are desirous of being deceived; we cannot act otherwise respecting them. Such was the case with the ancient priests of Egypt; and for this reason they shut themselves up in their temples, and there composed their mysteries out of the reach of the people's eye; for had the people been in the secret they might have been offended at the deception played upon them. In the meantime, how is it possible to conduct one's self otherwise with the people, so long as they are the people? For my own part, to myself I shall always be a philosopher, but with dealing with the mass of mankind shall be a priest.‡ There is no doubt of it, *holy* Synesius! The whole rationale of priestcraft is explained in these lines.

We need not pursue the theme. Fraud, falsehood, and deception were evidently the 'maxim' of the early Christian Church. In the most unmitigated sense may it be pronounced an 'organised hypocrisy.' Its most illustrious members, Origen, Eusebius, Irenæus, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Jerome, Hermas, Gregory Nazianzen, Synesius—all systematically perverted truth, and imposed upon the people. The foundation of all direct historical proof rests upon the testimony of men who deemed it 'an act of virtue to deceive and lie!' What a substratum! Can the superstructure itself be safe? We shall see anon.

* 'Hieronym ad Nep.'

† 'Romance of Theagnes and Charicles.'

‡ Cave's 'Ecclesiasticæ,' p. 115.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE.

SUPPOSING our remarks in reference to the fathers, from whom we receive the scriptures, were incorrect, we are still not justified in accepting the Bible, now offered to us, as the *real* 'Word of God,' inasmuch as they have so altered it to suit their convenience—to promote party or sectarian purposes—there is no possibility of detecting the *genuine* from the *spurious*, since the originals are lost. Hence the Bible, as we now read it, is as likely to lead us *from*, as *to*, the truth, and, therefore, altogether inoperative for the great purpose for which it is designed—the salvation of mankind.

Our authorities are so numerous we could quote indiscriminately, and each reference would be 'complete.'

Michaelis. 'It is to be lamented that various readings which, as appears from the quotations of the fathers were in the text of the Greek Testament, are to be found in none of the MSS. which are at present remaining; hence it appears that readings which existed in the fifth century have been omitted in later MSS.; and this might be the fate of many that were really genuine.'..... 'Of all the sources of various readings, the most productive of spurious passages in the New Testament is the practice of altering parallel passages, so as to render more perfect their conformity with each other. No books have suffered in this respect so much as the gospels.*'

Du Pin. 'It is certain that it (*Old Testament*) hath been *revised divers times*, and that several authors have taken the liberty to *add thereunto*, to *retrench*, and to *correct* divers things.....It is mere *superstition* to assert, as some authors do, that the Hebrew text which we have at present *is not corrupted* in any place, and that there is no *fault*, nor anything left out, and that we must indispensably follow it at all times. This is not only to speak *without all evidence*, and *contrary* to all probability, but *we have every good proof to the contrary*. For, in the first place, there have been differences betwixt the oldest of the Hebrew copies, which the Massorites have observed, by that which they call *Keri* and *Ketib*, and putting one of the readings in the text, and the other in the *margin*, we have the different readings of the Jews of the *East*,

* 'Introduction,' &c., ii., p. 160.

and the Jews of the *West*—the Ben Asher, and the Ben Napthali.' 'There is a great discrepancy between the copies, which must be attributed either to the negligence of the scribes, or to the *audacious perversions* of others, or to those who correct the text by *arbitrary additions* or *omissions*, who oftentimes have *put in and left out as they thought* it most convenient.' Here we are told by one of the fathers themselves that matters were 'put in or left out' of the Bible just 'as it was most *convenient*.' This shows how much we have to depend upon the fathers for the correctness of the Word of God. 'It cannot be said that no *fault* has crept into the scriptures by the negligence or inadvertency of the transcribers, or *even by the boldness* of those who have ventured to *strike out, add, or change* some words which they thought *necessary* to be *omitted, added, or changed*. Necessary indeed!.....' However, it must be acknowledged that even *from the very first* there were a great many differences between the Greek copies of the New Testament, as Origen, and St. Jerome, the author of the "Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans," and several other fathers, have owned, and as may be made appear by the different ways whereby several Greek fathers have read one and the self-same passage. That these varieties have been very much increased since by the great numbers of copies that have been made of the Greek Testament, both in the east and west, as those many differences to be met with in the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament which we have at present do abundantly testify. Lastly, that since there are so many differences between manuscripts, it necessarily follows that there must be some faults and defects both in Greek and Latin, so that it cannot be absolutely said that the Greek is free from faults, *unless we could be assured which of the various selections is the true one*. The faults which have crept into the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, as well as into all other books, are owing generally to these two causes—viz., to the negligence of the copiers, and to the boldness of those who have ventured to reform the ancient copies. The carelessness of the copiers may occasion omissions, errors, and sometimes additions. These omissions may happen through inadvertency or distraction, which might have caused the transcriber to have omitted several words or entire sentences. This frequently happens with respect to particles or stops. When two periods which come one after another begin or end with the same words, the transcriber might easily omit one of the sentences. The inadvertency of the copiers may likewise produce

the repetition of the same words or phrases, but then it is such an error as is easy to be discovered. The alterations happen by the carelessness of the copiers when they take or put one letter for another, or one word for another, by reason of the resemblance there is between the letters or words, in their figure or sound. Lastly, this carelessness is the cause of *very considerable additions, when they insert into the text the notes which were in the margent* of the manuscripts which they copied, without heading that these were such explications as ought not to be added to the text.....St. Jerome makes frequent mention of the *additions, corrections, and substractions*, made in the version of the Septuagint by Origen, and of the *bars and asterisks* he made use of for that purpose. "When Origen," says Jerome, "saw there was less in the Greek than the Hebrew, he did supply it from the version of Theodotion, and put an asterisk or star to it to signify that this was to illustrate what was obscure!" By the carelessness of the transcribers, and sometimes of those who set them to work, the asterisks of Origen, being misunderstood, or entirely left out, in some places the *additions of Theodotion were confounded with the version of the Septuagint*. 'It might have so happened that even the orthodox themselves meeting with difficult passages which they thought to be contrary to the analogy of faith, or to the other gospels, might, through an indiscreet zeal, have reformed these passages. 'Tis upon this account that St. Epiphanius observes, that some of the orthodox have struck out that passage in St. Luke (xix., 41) where 'tis said that Jesus wept over Jerusalem, because this seemed to them to be unbecoming our Saviour. Others upon the same motive have added to the genealogy of Jesus Christ the kings which St. Matthew had omitted, in order to render it conformable to the New Testament. Lastly, 'tis very usual to find one evangelist reformed from another evangelist, and that added to or retrenched from one gospel which is either added or left out in another. By the same motive (if St. Jerome be credited in the case) were these wise men moved who have left out of the thirty-fifth verse of the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel the name of the prophet cited in that place; because the name of Isaiah is there inserted instead of that of Asaph, and because that prophecy was not Isaiah's, *they were afraid lest the evangelist should have been supposed to have cited a falsehood*. Perhaps 'tis upon the same account that, in the beginning of St. Mark's gospel (i., 2), the name of Isaiah has been struck out, because the prophecy there cited begins with the words of Malachi.

.....‘ There have been some copies wherein have been inserted several additions taken out of apocryphal books, and particularly some there were in St. Matthew’s gospel taken out of the gospel of the Hebrews. Origen produces an instance of this in St. Matthew (xii. 12), where these words were inserted : “Jesus therefore said, I was weak because of the weak, I was hungry because of the hungry, and I was thirsty for the sake of those who were thirsty.” We have already mentioned several other instances of those additions taken out of the apocryphal gospels.

‘ From what we have related hitherto may be inferred that the gospel St. Matthew wrote in Chaldee *did not continue long in its purity*; that the Nazarenes made several additions thereunto; that afterwards the Ebionites altered and changed it; that the copies which St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and St. Jerome made use of, were those of the Nazarenes; that St. Epiphanius saw a copy of the Ebionites’; and that the original of St. Matthew itself was not extant in its purity in their time. We have not now in being that gospel augmented by the Nazarenes or altered by the Ebionites, and the versions that St. Jerome made of it in Greek and Latin have not descended so low as our times. We have two versions of the gospel of St. Matthew in Hebrew, the one by Tilius and the other by Munster; *but it is certain that ’tis neither the original of St. Matthew, nor that of the Gospel of the Nazarenes.* The Syriac published by Widmanstadius is neither the original of St. Matthew, which was lost long ago, nor the Gospel of the Nazarenes or Ebionites, since none of those additions or alterations observed by the fathers are found therein; and besides, it appears that the text was translated from the Greek.’*

Whether we can rely upon our present gospel of St. Matthew as being *a pure emanation* from the Deity, this extract will enable us to judge. We have not only lost, according to Du Pin, the original of St. Matthew, by which Du Pin means a copy as Matthew wrote it, and not the original gospel itself written by Matthew, for this is out of the question, but we have lost also the corrupted copies, which were used by Heretics, the Nazarenes, and Ebionites, the former of whom were the first who possessed this gospel. And the versions, says Du Pin, which St.

* ‘ Complete History of the Canon and Writers of the Books of the Old and New Testament,’ vol. ii., c. 2 and 3.

Jerome made of it in Greek and Latin, have not descended so low as our time.

What satisfaction! What certainty!

Of the corruptions of scripture since the Reformation, we cull some particulars from a curious work* :—

'Luther writes to Zuinglius and his sect, calling them "fools, asses, antichrists," &c., in matter of divinity (Zuing., vol. ii., ad Luther, 388); and Zuinglius thus writes to Luther:—"Thou corruptest the word of God, O Luther, thou art seen to be a manifest and common corrupter and perverter of the holy scripture" (Zuing., vol. ii. *ad*. Luth). Beza calls Castalio's translation wicked, sacrilegious, and ethnical. Molinus again abuses Calvin's, saying, he makes the text "leap up and down," and adds to it; he also as truly says of Beza's, that he changes the text. Beza abuses Castalio, and Castalio retorts; Bucser abuses Luther's, Luther abuses Munster; Calvin burns Servetus, while Eniserus and Staphylus point out 1400 heretical corruptions in Luther's translation alone. These were the Bibles on which were established the Reformation; and for England, James I., in one application to him, was told that, in addition, subtraction, and alteration, the book of Psalms alone differed "from the truth of the Hebrew in at least 200 places."....."Dr. Jebb (Sac. Liter., p. 104) says that Matthew has improved the Hebrew, by leaving out words: and he also tells us that Dr. Blayney, in his translation of Jeremiah, 'very properly expunges whole lines, as carrying marks of interpolation;' and while he allows that, perhaps, in Matthew's time it had the words he left out, his rejection of them argues critical skill." Horne and others have affirmed that there was no word in Chaldee signifying to "represent or denote" in the supper. Dr. Wiseman has produced about forty of them. The subscriptions to the epistles are now given up as forgeries. See 1 and 2 Thessalonians, which says they were written from Athens, instead of Corinth; the 1st Cor. at Philippi (see xvi., 8-19); he was in Asia. So Gal. is from Rome, whereas he did not go to Rome till ten years after the conversion of the Galatians. 1 Tim., Phrygia, Pacatiana, or *Phrygia the First*, whereas the province was not divided in two till the fourth century; and when these forgeries are known, who is to trust the rest? 1 Tim., iii., 16, is allowed to have been Os (he), not

* 'A Few Hundred Bible Contradictions,' &c. (Truelove, Strand), pp. 226, 300.

Theos (God). What difference a full stop will make in Rom. ix., 5! There is no divinity then.

'Which is the true faith in these various Bibles? The translations of Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Beza, Zuinglius, Castalio, Theodore, Bibliander, Jerome, Ecolampadius, Junius, Munster, Tindal, Olivetan, Coverdale, Parker, the present English, the Tigurnine, and Basilian copy? Capinon (or Rabbi Nathan) declares that many of the translations had better never have seen the light. Luther, to favour his sectarian views, avowed adding the word "alone" to Rom. iii., 28, after the word "faith." "I know well that this word 'alone' is not found in the text of Paul; but should a papist annoy you, upon it, tell him at once, without hesitation, that Dr. Martin Luther would have it so, and that a papist and an *æ*s are synonymous" (t. v., Jena. edit., p. 141-144). See Zuinglius (t. ii.), who put "signifies" for "it is," in the accounts of the last supper. His own brother reformers condemn Melancthon. Castalio condemns Beza for corruptions more than would fill a volume (see his Testament). Beza returns the fire, calling Castalio's book "sacrilegious, wicked, and ethnical."

The Protestants, while accusing each other of 'corrupting' the scriptures, are most unmeasured in their allegations against the Catholics. Here is a specimen. 'Let us pass a step or two further, and inquire whether they have not corrupted the Bible in like sort, or worse rather, if it be possible, a degree of impiety beyond the degrees of comparison, and yet so plainly to be proved against the papists, as he that hath but one eye to see, shall plainly discover it, and thence be induced to suspect the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, sitting in the holy place, and admiring himself as it were above the Holy of Holies. He shall observe infinite *varieties, contrarieties, and contradictions*, and oppositions between two Bibles set forth by two Popes, within *two* years; both commanded to be read and followed upon such forms as are mentioned in the briefs. You shall see the Popes *breathe hot and cold, say and unsay* the same thing *twice*, and, in fine, they have truly verified the Bible *to be a nose of wax!* plied and wrought into fashion for their own advantage. *A shame it is* that any Christian should presume to add, or to take away aught from the Word of God; *yet, O! intolerable fraud*, not any simple Christian or layman, but the Bishop of Rome, chief pastor of the church, sole judge of all controversies, whose lips should preserve knowledge, and his tongue speak no deceit, hath audaciously presumed to

*add and take whole sentences, to change the words of the holy writ, into a clear contrary meaning, to make as it were white black, and black white !**

Unitarians denounce both Catholic and Protestant versions. 'Trinitarians never have referred, nor ever will refer, to a single place throughout the whole Testament which could ever suggest the idea of the doctrine of three persons in one essence besides the controverted verse, the 7th of 1st John, c. v., which they declare an "*impious forgery*," and it appears to be little less than blasphemy to retain it in a book which is represented to be inspired.'† Similar charges are made by the Unitarians against all the verses in the first chapter of Luke after the fourth. The whole of the second chapter is denounced as 'spurious,' and only 'to serve the purposes of certain sects.' The same with the first of Matthew, after the seventeenth verse; and the whole of the second.

Relative to the notorious interpretation of the Trinity, even the author of the 'Christian Records' is compelled to remark:—'Notwithstanding all this, however, it is well known that the text of our books has been tampered with in certain passages; and interpolations have been made, for sinister purposes, which show the necessity of our relaxing none of that vigilant criticism by which the whole truth may be ascertained on points so closely affecting our temporal and eternal interests. It would add greatly to the proposed extent of this work, if we were here to enter minutely into the consideration of the various words and passages which have been proved to be interpolations, and not from the first genuine portions of the original text. The most important of them is the verse (1 John, v., 7)—"There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." The authenticity of this passage had long been disputed in the church, and has at last been thoroughly sifted by the learned and justly-celebrated Professor Porson, who, in his able work, "Letters to Archdeacon Travis," has set the question at rest, and clearly shown the much-canvassed passage to be a forgery.'‡

Mr. Bellamy declares that the story in the Old Testament about *Balaam and his ass* is a misinterpretation, and ought to be 'immediately revised.' He concludes:—'Really it is time you

* 'Corruptions of the Scriptures,' p. 272.

† 'Monthly Repository,' 1826.

‡ 'Christian Records,' p. 27.

should get rid of such childish notions. To say any more on such absurd conclusions would be a waste of time. Depend upon it, that, whatever they do *now*, asses never spoke in the days of *Balaam*.*

Even the Methodists, through their biblical scholar, Adam Clarke, demur to those passages in Genesis iii. which represent Eve as being tempted by a *serpent*. The doctor thinks it should be an *ourang-outang*!†

We could fill this volume with clerical avowals that alterations *have been*, or *ought to be*, made in those books which comprise our 'canon,' and for rejecting which the 'unbeliever' is exposed to such onerous penalties. It has been estimated that there are no less than 150,000 different readings of scripture. Nevertheless, this book, about which such innumerable and serious differences exist, and that, too, among the most learned of its expounders, is the *only* guide to everlasting truth and joy! Can that which is itself 'full of errors' lead mankind solely to the truth? Which is *the* guide?—the Protestant, Catholic, or Unitarian version?—the canon of the Western or Eastern Church?

Du Pin gives the following list of books. Received as canonical by some Jews, and rejected by others:—Esther, Ruth. Books excluded from the Jewish canon, and reckoned as apocryphal by some of the ancient Christians, but allowed as canonical of late by the Church of Rome:—Baruch, Tobit, Judith, the Book of Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, the Two Books of the Maccabees, the Song of the Three Children in the Fiery Furnace, the History of Susanna, the History of Bel and the Dragon. *New Testament*. Books questioned, but afterwards admitted by the church as canonical:—The Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of St. James, the Second Epistle of St. Peter, the Second and Third of St. John, the Epistle of St. Jude, the Apocalypse; or, Revelations of St. John, which was a long time before it was admitted as canonical, the end of the last chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, the History of the Angel, and the agony of our Saviour, related Luke xxii., the History of the Woman taken in Adultery, related in the eighth chapter of St. John's Gospel, the end of St. John's Gospel, the passage concerning the Trinity, taken out of the fifth chapter of the First Epistle of St. John.

'It may be mentioned as a fact of minor, but still of some, importance to our present subject, that these books are not always

* 'New Translation,' &c.

† 'Commentary,' &c.

placed in the same order; the Greek translation, called the Septuagint, and the Latin, called the Vulgate, differ in their arrangement from the Hebrew and English Bibles, and from one another. Neither do they agree wholly in their contents; for the Hebrew Bible excludes all those books which in England are called apocryphal; the Vulgate or Latin version admits only Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, with the first and second books of Maccabees; the Greek Bible admits the first book of Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and the two books of Maccabees, to which is added a third book of Maccabees, not to be found in either the Hebrew, Latin, or English Bible.*

All these various readings, versions, and canons, cannot be right and *safe*, or why differ? and who is to settle the question? 'Let the people judge for themselves,' is the reply. It is so self-evident that none but the most obtuse or perverse can mistake it. 'One of its chief glories is, that it is for *all*; that unlike the obscure and mystified teachings of philosophy, its truths are so simple, that the unlettered masses of men can appreciate their meaning and feel their force.† We rejoin, First agree what *are* 'its truths.' As to the 'unlettered masses' judging for themselves, abler men than Mr. Rogers have pronounced differently. Dr. Adam Clarke tells us 'It would be the easiest thing among ten thousand to prove that there are multitudes of texts in that blessed book which no man can explain who has not a tolerable knowledge of history, chronology, geography, astronomy, anatomy, and chemistry. If this be the case (and it would be easy to demonstrate it), what pretensions can an ignorant person have, however pious, to explain that book? He certainly cannot, without *immediate inspiration*, explain and apply the deep things of God.‡

Michaelis says, 'No man is capable of understanding the New Testament, unless to an acquaintance with the Greek he joins a knowledge of at least Hebrew, Syriac, and Rabbinic.' Professor Campbell asserts 'that the Hebrew and Greek are *absolutely* necessary to him who is desirous of ascertaining the genuine meaning of the sacred volume.' He further remarks, 'To understand the scriptures we should get acquainted with

* 'Hebrew Records,' p. 20.

† 'Christianity and its Evidences,' by J. G. Rogers, B.A., p. 31.

‡ 'Letter to Preacher,' 1812, 3rd ed., p. 20.

each writer's style. 2nd. Inquire carefully into their character, office, and situation, and the *time, place,* and occasion of their writing, and the people for whose use they wrote. 3rd. Consider the scope, etc., of the book. 4th. Where the phrase is obscure consult the context: this will not always answer. 5th. If not, consider if it be any of the writer's peculiarities; if so, inquire what is the acceptation of it in other places. 6th. If this fail, have recourse to parallel passages. 7th. If this fail, consult the Old Testament and Septuagint, where the word may be used. 8th, and the classic writers. 9th, and the fathers. 10th, and the ancient version, modern scholiasts, annotators, and translators. 11th. The analogy of faith, and the etymology of words, which must be used with *caution.*' In addition to these, or similar general rules, the Rev. H. Horne and others, furnish us with *ten* rules for investigating the original meaning of scripture words, *five* for that of emphasis, with which the scripture abounds, and *eight* for parallelisms, of which *three* kinds are specified; then *seven* rules for discovering the sense by the subject matter, and by the context, and *seven* more for discovering it by historical circumstances, including *ten* particulars, such as the order, title, date author, place where written, chronology, occasion, scope, analysis, biblical antiquities, etc.! Then for investigating the scope itself, *six* rules, and for the analogy of faith, *eight!* For the *historical* interpretation, *seven* rules, interpreting of *figurative* language, *twelve*; one of which rules is that *the literal meaning of the words is to be given up, if it be improper, or involve an impossibility, or is contrary to common sense.*

St. Augustine decides—'If we meet with anything there [meaning the Bible] that seems absurd, it is not lawful for us to say that the author of that book strayed from the truth; but we must say that the copy is faulty, the translator is mistaken, or that we do not understand it.'*

Besides these rules, others are given for interpreting the four kinds of metonymies occurring in scripture; others for the metaphors; others for the allegories, the parables, the proverbs, the figures, the spiritual interpretations, the prophecies, the types, legal, prophetic, and historical, and no fewer than twenty-two for the interpreting of doctrines!! Still the Bible is self-evident! A man may study a life-time before he can

* Du Pin, vol. ii., c. i., s. 8.

understand it, and after all be mistaken! Well may it be affirmed that 'narrow is the way that leadeth to everlasting life, and few there be that *find* it.'

CHAPTER VI.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCES.

MODERN theologians divide Christian evidences into *External* and *Internal*. We shall only deal with the former in this chapter. The external evidence in support of the scriptures is a favourite topic with the generality of divines. They usually resort to it when forced to debate their claims.

Popular though this mode of determining the divinity of scripture undoubtedly is, its sophistical character is apparent. Such evidence is incompetent to decide the truth of any system; for if the historical authorities were *liable to err*, their testimony on a question of this kind must be received with consummate circumspection, if it be not altogether rejected. Were the whole of the external evidence usually alleged by the Christian churches unquestionably true, I still maintain they have not established the *divinity* of their book. If it can be proved that the Bible contains contradictions and immoralities, all the external evidence in the world is of no avail. No external evidence can make that true which is palpably false—that consistent which is grossly inconsistent—or that moral which is manifestly immoral. The insufficiency, therefore, of this testimony to decide the question at issue is obvious. Dr. Middleton candidly remarks:—'Examining the external evidence is certainly losing time, and beginning at the wrong end, since it is allowed on all hands that if any narration can be shown to be false, any doctrine irrational and immoral, 'tis not all the external evidence in the world that can, or ought, to convince us that such a doctrine comes from God.*' Dr. Vicesimus Knox also confesses, that†—'It is certain that the argumentative mode of addressing unbelievers, and a reliance upon external evidence, has hitherto failed, and will never convince them. Notwithstand-

* 'Free Inquiry,' &c.

† 'Christian Philosophy.'

ing the stupendous labours of the writers of evidences, continued with little intermission, the great cause which they maintained *is on the decline*. Many of the most learned and able men of modern times, who were capable of understanding the historical, logical, and metaphysical defences of Christianity, have read them without conviction, and *laughed at their laborious imbecility*.' John Wesley is also obliged to admit that "traditional evidence for Christianity is of an extremely complicated nature, necessarily including so many and so various considerations, that only men of strong and clear understanding can be sensible of its full force."* Such is the uncertain and dubious nature of external evidence, *admitted by Christians themselves*.

We will show, however, the external evidence they *do* prefer is spurious, inadmissible, or suicidal.

In this discussion, we have only to consider those writers who are actually said to have mentioned Christianity. In reference to the rest, we may premise that it is a very *suspicious* circumstance they should remain silent upon the subject. Some of them were the greatest writers of antiquity, and could not possibly have omitted noticing all extraordinary events. If Christ and his disciples, therefore, performed the wonders asserted by their modern followers, *why are they not noticed, favourably or unfavourably, by these distinguished historians?* Philo, the most eminent of the *first* century, and *contemporary with Christ*, gives an elaborate account of the state of the Jews, and their afflictions under Augustus, Tiberius, and Caius Caligula—the *very period embracing the whole extent of Christ's life*—but makes no allusion to Christianity. This 'great fact' is more remarkable, when we remember that Philo was sent by the Jews as ambassador to Rome; *only eight years after the death of Christ*. Nay, there is *every reason to believe if such a person as Christ was crucified*, it must have been *about the very time Philo was at Jerusalem or Rome*. The silence of this historian, with the taciturnity of other eminent authors, is, at least, presumptive proof that the pretensions of Christians to the *divine* influence of their master, are perfectly indefensible.

With respect to those writers who are said to have mentioned Christ and his disciples, the *first* in order is Josephus. He was born in the year 37. The passage in which he is represented as alluding to Christ, will be found in his great

* 'Letter to Warburton,' p. 108.

work.* ‘At that time lived Jesus, a wise man, if he may be called a man; for he performed many wonderful works. He was the teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many Jews and Gentiles. *This was the Christ.* And when Pilate, at the instigation of the chief men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, they, who before had conceived an affection for him, did not cease to adhere to him. *For on the third day he appeared to them alive again,* the divine prophets having foretold these and many wonderful things respecting him; and the sect of the Christians, so called from him, subsists *to this day.*’ This passage, so strikingly in favour of the Christian system, and so highly and so exultingly prized, is the most arrant interpolation ever foisted into the writings of any author. It is supposed to have been introduced into the writings of Josephus about the fourth century, not being mentioned *before* that time. The first to disseminate such an imposition, was the Christian father and historian, Eusebius. This conduct is consonant with his character. Tranquil Faber, a distinguished Christian critic, was the first to detect the forgery. The following quotation† will display the singular *integrity* of this ‘holy father,’ and the deliberate audacity with which he refers to this passage, :—‘Now when, as this historiographer (meaning Josephus), by blood an Hebrew born, hath of old delivered in writing these, and the like things concerning John the Baptist, and our Saviour Christ, what refuge or shift now have they, but that they be condemned as *impudent persons*, which of their own brain have feigned commentaries contrary to these allegations.’ Thinking Josephus’s great name might have influence in silencing the enemies of Christianity, Eusebius circulated this fraud. Well might he inquire ‘*how far falsehood might be used as a medicine?*’ Dr. Lardner admits the anxiety of the Christians to obtain the testimony of this learned Jew‡—‘*They (the fathers) were fond of having his testimony, whether there was ground for it or not.*’ Modest and honest, assuredly! We find that immediately after the period of Eusebius, this notorious forgery was advanced as ‘glorious’ proof of the divinity of Christianity! The fathers were remarkably ambitious of citing it. No one could doubt the divinity of Christ after it had been admitted by so great an historian as Josephus!

* ‘Jewish Antiquities.’

† ‘Euseb. Ecc. Hist.,’ b. ii., c. 12.

‡ ‘Jewish and Heathen Testimonies,’ vol. i., p. 116.

Enlightened divines, however, of modern times are ashamed of the tricks of their pious predecessors, and tacitly abandon the evidence of Josephus. Bishop Warburton disowns it with contempt. He shrewdly observes, as quoted by Dr. Lardner,* ‘If a Jew *owned* the truth of Christianity, he must needs embrace it. We, therefore, certainly conclude that the paragraph where Josephus, who was as much a Jew as the religion of Moses could make him, is made to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ in as strong terms as words could do it, is a *rank forgery, and a very stupid one too.*’ Du Pin, Blondel, Vandal, and Lardner, have also repudiated this passage. Dr. Lardner, indeed, has entered into an elaborate and laborious refutation of this reputed testimony of Josephus. His reasoning is masterly, and irrevocably settles the question. In his well-known and voluminous work, he remarks,† ‘This passage is received by many learned men as genuine. By others it is rejected as an interpolation. It is allowed on all hands that it is in all the copies of Josephus’s works *now extant*, both printed and manuscript. Nevertheless it may be, for several reasons, called in question. They are such as these:—This paragraph is not quoted nor referred to by any Christian writer before Eusebius, who flourished at the beginning of the fourth century. If it had been originally in the works of Josephus, it would have been highly proper to produce it in their disputes with Jews and Gentiles. But it is never quoted by Justin Martyr, or Clement of Alexandria, nor by Tertullian or Origen, men of great learning, and well acquainted with the works of Josephus. It was certainly very proper to urge it against the Jews. It might also have been fitly alleged against the Gentiles. A testimony so favourable to Jesus in the works of Josephus, who lived so soon after our Saviour, who was so well acquainted with the transactions of his own country, who had received so many favours from Vespasian and Titus, would not be overlooked or neglected by any Christian apologist. This passage was wanting in the copies of Josephus which were seen by Photius in the *ninth* century—I make a distinct article of this writer because he read and revised the works of Josephus *as a critic*. He has, in his “Bibliothèque” no less than *three* articles concerning Josephus, but takes *no notice of this passage*. Whence it may

* Vol. i, p. 163.

† ‘Jewish and Hebrew Testimonies,’ vol. i., c. iv., p. 150.

be concluded it was wanting in his copies, or that he did not think it genuine. But the former is more likely. This paragraph concerning Jesus interrupts the course of the narrative, and, therefore, is not *genuine*, but an *interpolation*. In the preceding paragraph Josephus gives an account of an attempt of Pilate to bring water from a distant place to Jerusalem, with the sacred money, which occasioned a disturbance, in which many of the Jews were killed, and many others were wounded. The paragraph next *following* this about which we are now speaking begins thus:—"And about the same time, another sad calamity gave the Jews great uneasiness. That calamity was no less than banishing the Jews from Rome, by order of the Emperor Tiberius, occasioned, as he says, by the misconduct of some Jews in that city." This paragraph, therefore, *was not originally in Josephus; it does not come from him, but is an interpolation inserted by somebody afterwards.* The powerful reasoning of the doctor to this day remains uninvalidated.

If, then, the testimony of Josephus is to be abandoned, *the main prop of Christian evidence is annihilated.* The orthodox have no authority during the first century—the very time when authority is wanted.

This *universal silence*, therefore, at this period, indicates that the Christian system is no more divine, than the rest of the religions of the world.

The learned author of the 'Christian Records' supports the objections to the genuineness of Josephus with considerable skill:—

'If it had been genuine, we might be sure that Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Chrysostom would have quoted it in their controversies with the Jews, and that Origen or Photius would have mentioned it. But Eusebius, the ecclesiastical historian (i., 11), is the first who quotes it; and our reliance on the judgment, or even the honesty of this writer, is not so great as to allow of our considering every thing found in his works as undoubtedly genuine.

'Besides the extract already quoted, there is another short notice of Christ, which, in the words of Paley, "is allowed by many, though not without considerable question being moved about it." The main point of the narrative is very brief; but it is best to give the context from the beginning of the chapter:—"Cæsar sends Albinus as eparch [GOVERNOR] into Judea, when he learnt that Festus was dead. But the emperor took away the high priesthood from Joseph, and gave to the son of

Ananus, who was also called Ananus, the succession to the office. The elder Ananus is said to have been a most lucky man; for he had five sons, and it happened that they all were God's high priests, whilst himself also had before enjoyed that dignity for a very long time, which never was the case with any other of our high priests. But the younger Ananus, whom we just named as having been appointed to the high priesthood, was of a very bold and enterprising character; he followed the sect of the Sadducees, who are severe in their judgments beyond all the other Jews, as we have already shown. Ananus, then, being such a man as I have described, thinking that he had met with a fitting opportunity, seeing that Festus was dead, and Albinus was still on his journey, appoints a sanhedrim [meeting] of judges, and bringing before it [the brother of Jesus who is called Christ, named James] and some others, accused them of having broken the law, and gave them over to be stoned."

'The words enclosed in brackets, *the brother of Jesus, &c.*, are probably an interpolation* in the text, introduced, like the preceding, by some dishonest copyist, in order to set aside the unfavourable consequences deduced from the silence of Josephus. Many reasons may be given for looking upon the words in question as an interpolation. I shall, however, be content at present to rest the case upon internal evidence; reserving until a future chapter the consideration of the relationship between Christ and James—for there is a remarkable obscurity on this point in all the texts of the New Testament where it is noticed. The internal evidence of the words before us is against their authenticity. For if the longer passage quoted from Josephus be rejected as spurious, the few words now before us are incomplete: they clearly refer to a more full account of Jesus which had preceded. If, however, we admit the former extract as genuine, the latter is inconsistent with it; for, in the former, Jesus is called *the* Christ, equivalent to "the Messiah;" but in the latter he is called simply "Christ," a name having no spiritual signification, and importing nothing more than an ordinary surname. This inconsistency

* 'Mr. Hartwell Horne, in his "Introduction," &c., says of this passage, "the authenticity of which has NEVER been disputed or suspected;" yet we read in Paley's "Evidences," c. vii.—"In another passage allowed by many, although not without considerable question being moved about it, we hear of James, the brother of," &c.'

could not have proceeded from Josephus, to whom the Greek and Hebrew languages were equally well known. It is extremely improbable that Josephus would use the term *the Christ*, without further explaining its signification; it is equally improbable that he would have used the surname *Christ*, without showing that it originally had a spiritual derivation; but it is doubly improbable that he would have used both expressions, for the same individual, without stating that it indicated the Messiah whose coming the Jewish people were daily expecting.....If it be admitted that his notice of Christ is genuine, it is certain that we find nowhere in his works *any mention of the Christian books.**

From Josephus and Philo, the only Jewish writers coeval with Christ and his apostles, we turn to the Gentile world—the Grecian and Roman authors. Though the remains of Grecian and Latin profane literature, which belong to the first and second century, are enough to form a library of themselves, **THEY CONTAIN NO ALLUSION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT,**† and, consequently, the testimony which they render is of little moment to the question concerning the divinity of that book. The existence of *Christians* at that period is not here challenged. But we will proceed with our notice of the evidence upon which our churches profess to rely.

Pliny the younger. The reference which he is said to have made to Christians will be found in his letter to Trajan, written during the year A.D. 110. It commences:—

‘Pliny, to the Emperor Trajan, wisheth health and happiness.

‘Sir,—It is my constant method to apply myself to you for the resolution of all my doubts; for who can better govern my dilatory way, or instruct my ignorance? I have never been present at the examination of Christians (by others), on which account I am unacquainted with what uses to be inquired into, and what and how far they used to be punished; nor are my doubts small, whether there be not a distinction to be made between the ages of the accused, and whether tender youth ought to have the same punishment with strong men? whether there be not room for pardon on repentance? or whether it may not be an advantage to one that had been a Christian, that he has forsaken Christianity? whether the bare name, without any crime besides, or the crime adhering to that name, be to be punished? In the meantime I have taken this course about those who have been brought before

* ‘Christian Records,’ pp. 30-33.

† ‘Christian Records,’ p. 36.

me as Christians. I asked them whether they were Christians or not. If they confessed that they were Christians, I asked them again, and a third time, intermixing threatenings with the questions; if they persevered in their confession, I ordered them to be executed, for I did not doubt, let their confession be of any sort whatsoever, this positiveness and inflexible obstinacy deserved to be punished. There have been some of this *mad sect* that I took notice of in particular as Roman citizens, that they might be sent to that city. After some time, as is usual on such examinations, the crime spread itself, and many more cases came before me. A libel was sent, though without an author, containing many names (of persons accused). These denied that they were Christians now, or ever had been. They called upon the gods, and supplicated to your image, which I caused to be brought to me for that purpose, with frankincense and wine; they also cursed Christ, none of which things, as it is said, can any of those that are really Christians be compelled to do; so I thought fit to let them go. Others of them that were named in the libel, said they were Christians, but had ceased to be so some three years, some many more; and one there was who said he had not been so these twenty years. All these worshipped your image, and the image of our gods; these also cursed Christ. However, they assured me that the main of their fault, or of their mistake, was this—*that they were wont, on a stated day, to meet together before it was light, and to sing an hymn to Christ, AS TO A GOD, alternately*; and to oblige themselves, by a sacrament (or oath) not to do anything that was ill, that they would commit no theft or pilfering, or adultery; that they would not break their promises, or deny what was deposited with them when it was required back again; after which it was their custom to depart, and to meet again at a common but innocent meal, which yet they had left off upon that edict which I published at your command, and wherein I had forbidden any such conventicles. These examinations made me think it necessary to inquire by torments what the truth was, which I did of two servant maids, which were called *deaconesses*, but still I discovered no more, than *that they were addicted to a bad and an extravagant superstition*. Hereupon I have put off any further examination, and have recourse to you, for the affair seems to be well worth consultation, especially on account of the number of those that are in danger; for there are many of every age and every rank, and of both sexes, which are now here and hereafter likely to be called to account, and to be in danger; for this superstition is

spread like a contagion, not only into cities and towns, but into country villages also, which yet there is reason to hope may be stopped and corrected. To be sure the temples, which were almost forsaken, begin already to be frequented, and the holy solemnities, which were long intermitted, begin to be revived. The sacrifices begin to sell well everywhere, of which very few purchasers had of late appeared; whereby it is easy to suppose how great a multitude of men may be amended, if place for repentance be admitted.'

I have given the whole of this letter that no parties may presume we are anxious to suppress the real facts. And what does it demonstrate? Does it show the *scriptures* are *divine*? Does it even name them? It would be well if the orthodox would first establish the genuineness of this letter. Whether genuine or spurious, however, *our* argument is not impugned by it. We may mention, as in the case of Josephus, that Christian writers have repudiated it. 'Dr. J. S. Semler, of Leipsic, one of the most accomplished German professors, adduces nine arguments against its genuineness. His celebrated work appeared in 1788.* Semler was strongly supported by Corrodi.†

The principal argument in favour of this letter is, that it is cited by Tertullian and Eusebius. Now the period between Tertullian and Eusebius was notoriously the age of Christian forgery. Nor was there any more difficulty in the interpolation of this letter than the interpolations in Josephus, which, till within this last century, have been successfully palmed upon the Christian world. Eusebius was the first to cite the testimony of Josephus, now admitted to be a forgery. Eusebius was the first to boast of the letter of Abgarus, Prince of Edessa, to Christ, and the reply of the latter, also abandoned as a fraud. Respecting this unblushing forgery, Dr. Lardner concludes his remarks upon it in these terms:‡— 'The observations which have already been made are sufficient to show that the letter of Abgarus to Jesus Christ, and our Lord's rescript, cannot be reckoned genuine. The whole history is the fiction of some Christian at Edessa, *in the time of Eusebius, or not long before*. The people of Edessa were then generally Christians, and they valued themselves upon it. And they were

* 'New Evidences to Enlighten further the History of the Church of the Early Centuries,' vol. i.

† 'Contributions for the Advancement of Rational Logic in Religious Matters.'

‡ 'Jewish and Heathen Testimonies,' vol. i., p. 297.

willing to do themselves the honour of a very early conversion to the Christian faith.' Eusebius participated too in the circulation of other 'testimonies' now acknowledged to be spurious, as shown in this chapter. We have just ground, therefore, to suspect anything which depends upon his veracity and judgment.

The following is one strong objection to the genuineness of this letter. Pliny is made to say to Trajan that the Christians were accustomed to meet very early in the morning, and 'sing an hymn to Christ, *as to a God.*' Now this would have been a custom of which no Christian in Pliny's or Trajan's time would have been guilty. The earliest Christians were *Jewish* Christians—the Ebionites and Nazarenes. Their gospel, seen by Epiphanius and Jerome, as they themselves relate, did not contain *the two first chapters of Matthew.* The early Christians among the Jews *did not believe that Jesus Christ was anything more than a mere man.* They rejected with abhorrence his equality with God. *The doctrine of the divinity of Christ was not established till the council of Nice, in the fourth century.* We state these points as settled since the great controversy between Priestley and Horsley.

Seutonius. If the early Christians really were such as this historian describes them, it is evident they had no more right to call their system inspired, than the followers of Courtenay or Smith. Seutonius thus speaks of them:—'The Christians—a race of men of a *new and villanous, wicked or magical superstition*—were visited with punishment.' May I ask the orthodox if they deem this the *true* character of their predecessors? I trust they will not boast either of the '*wisdom*' or the '*virtue*' of their ancestors. Seutonius has another passage. Alluding to the Emperor Claudius, he remarks†—'He drove the Jews from Rome, who were constantly *rioting*, Crestus being their leader.' What has this to do with the divine origin of the New Testament? It does not even confirm the divinity of Christ, but represents him as a disturber of the public peace—a common rioter. Some writers have held that the latter passage particularly does not refer to Christians at all, but the Jews.

Of the same character is the testimony of Tacitus. After describing the great fire at Rome during the reign of Nero, he observes:‡—'But neither all the human help, nor the liberality of the emperor, nor all the atonements presented to the gods, availed to abate the infamy he lay under of having ordered the city to

* 'Life of Nero.'

† 'Life of Claudius.'

‡ 'Annals,' b. xv., c. 44.

be set on fire. To suppress, therefore, this common rumour, Nero procured others to be accused, and inflicted exquisite punishments upon the people, *who were held in abhorrence for their crimes*, and were commonly known by the name of *Christians*. They had their denomination from *Christus*, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a *criminal* by the procurator Pontius Pilate. This *pernicious superstition*, though checked for awhile, broke out again, and spread not only over Judea, the source of this evil, but reached the city also, *whither flow from all quarters all things that are vile and shameful*, and where they find shelter and encouragement. At first they only were apprehended who *confessed* themselves of that sect; afterwards a vast multitude discovered by them, all of which were condemned, not so much for their crime of burning the city *as for their enmity to mankind*. Their execution was so contrived as to expose them to derision and contempt. Some were covered over with the skins of wild beasts, and torn to pieces by dogs. Some were crucified; others, having been daubed over with combustible materials, were set up as lights in the night time, and thus burned to death. Nero made use of his own garden as a theatre upon the occasion, and also exhibited the diversions of the circus, sometimes standing in the crowd as a spectator in the habit of a charioteer, at other times driving a chariot himself. Till, at length, these men, *though really criminal, and deserving exemplary punishment*, began to be commiserated as people who were destroyed, not out of regard to the public welfare, but only to gratify the cruelty of one man.'

According to Tacitus, so far from Christianity being 'divine,' it was a '*pernicious superstition*;' so far from its early teachers and disciples being inspired, 'they were held in abhorrence for their *crimes*;' so far from the early Christians endeavouring to do good, they were abhorred for their '*enmity to mankind*;' and so far from being unjustly punished, 'they were *really criminal, and deserving exemplary punishment*.' What evidence is there here in *favour* of Christianity? There are reasons for believing that even this memorable passage is an interpolation, introduced only to meet the objection that no profane author of eminence had *mentioned* Christianity: but as the existence of Christ is not challenged in our controversy, we withhold them. It has been so much the practice of clerical adversaries to seize upon points not immediately relevant to the argument of the present work, we shall give them as little opportunity as possible to indulge in such unfairness.

Gibbon, with that dignity and force which distinguishes his pen, has remarked:—‘We stand in need of such reflections to comfort us for the loss of some illustrious characters, which, in our eyes, might have seemed the most worthy of the heavenly present. The names of Seneca, of the elder and younger Pliny, of Tacitus, of Plutarch, of Galen, of the slave Epictetus, and the Emperor Marcus Antoninus, adorn the age in which they flourished and exalt the dignity of human nature. They filled with glory their respective stations, either in active or contemplative life; their excellent understandings were improved by study; philosophy had purified their minds from the prejudices of the popular superstition; and their days were spent in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue. Yet all these sages (it is no less an object of surprise than of concern) *overlooked* or *rejected* the perfection of the Christian system. Their language or their silence equally discovers their contempt for the growing sect, which, in their time, had diffused itself over the Roman empire. Those among them who condescend to mention the Christians, consider them only as obstinate or perverse enthusiasts, who exacted an implicit submission to their mysterious doctrines, without being able to produce *a single argument that could engage the attention of men of sense and learning.*’*

We have thus shown that Josephus is a forgery, ‘and a stupid one, too.’ Pliny, *if* genuine, does not touch the point at issue, and Suetonius and Tacitus directly militate against the claims of Christianity as a divine scheme; while Philo—the writer who, above all others, ought to have noticed in detail, favourably or unfavourably, the movements of Christ, if they created the sensation pretended in the gospels—makes no mention of the matter at all! We have, therefore, we submit, given a fatal blow to the fabric of external evidences.†

* ‘Decline and Fall,’ vol. i.

† We will avail ourselves of this opportunity of casually stating that the Rev. J. A. Savage, of Wilsden, in his carping, testy reply (‘The Rise and Progress of Christianity’) to the late Mr. C. Shackleton—a self-taught man, and therefore one whom the reverend gentleman ought to have respected, and not derided—calls the silence of Philo ‘trivial!’ We deem such a criticism too ‘trivial’ for formal refutation. We do not deny ‘that a man in writing a book can only introduce such things as he is acquainted with,’ but Mr. Savage ‘ought to have known’ that it is *because* such an

We now proceed to meet the next 'evidence'—Pontius Pilate. For many centuries the testimony of Pilate was held in high repute, being esteemed so conclusive, that it placed all doubt beyond the range of possibility. It was first quoted by Justin Martyr, in the second century. Subsequently by Tertullian, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, and others—'holy fathers,' and therefore 'all *honourable* men.' Eusebius, of all the manufacturers of 'pious frauds,' the most extensive and successful, seems perfectly enraptured with Pilate. Certainly if this testimony could have been relied on, it might have had some weight, as Pilate, above all others, having sat in judgment on the case, ought to be familiar with it. Unfortunately, however, for the 'good of the church,' it must take its place among the category of 'inventions.'

This supposed testimony is contained in some letters which it is stated Pilate, in his official capacity of governor, addressed to Tiberius, Emperor of Rome. In those Epistles, Pilate is represented as speaking very favourably of the divinity of Christ, his miracles and his resurrection. The language in which the communications are expressed, and the statements therein affirmed are so hyperbolic and absurd, *and entirely unsupported*

historian as Philo was *not* acquainted with the movements of Christ that it is inferred they were not of that *extraordinary* or *divine* character assumed by 'modern Christianity.' Mr. Savage's disingenuous attempt to convey the impression to his readers that Philo could not have heard much, if anything, of Christianity, because Christianity had not found its way to Egypt A.D. 40, is 'trivial.' Could he not have heard of it in Judea or Rome, for 'Mr. S. ought to have known' that Philo was not only an eminent philosopher and historian, but an ambassador, and had visited foreign courts. Besides, is Egypt so *very* distant from Jerusalem that the news of the 'miraculous' events of Christ's life and death should be so long in arriving there? 'At such trifles do some men catch, though straws are not spars even to drowning men.' Though our argument does not go so far as our late friend's, we will add that the want of a manly and candid spirit on the part of his clerical antagonist is further seen in his sneer at Mr. Shackleton for maintaining that if Joseph used the expression 'if it be lawful to call him a man,' he must have regarded Christ as a divine character. 'Mr. S. ought to have known' that Dr. Lardner and Dr. Du Pin, two of the greatest ecclesiastical writers of any age, say the same thing!

by any writer or historian of the time, it is manifest they are the mere compositions of those fanatical and unprincipled men who deemed it 'a virtue to deceive and lie.' We supply an extract or two. Who could believe that a Roman governor would write a passage like the following:—

'There was,' alluding to the crucifixion, 'darkness over the whole earth, the sun in the middle of the day *being darkened*, and the *stars* appearing, among whose lights the *moon* appeared *not*, but as if turned to blood it left off shining.' He proceeds to say, referring to the resurrection, 'early in the morning of the first of the Sabbath, the resurrection of Christ was announced by a display of the most *astonishing* feats of divine omnipotence ever performed; at the third hour of the night, the sun broke forth with such splendour as was never before seen, and the heavens became enlightened seven times more than any other day.' As a climax to this rhapsody, he is represented as exclaiming that 'an instantaneous chasm took place, and the earth opened and swallowed up all the unbelieving Jews, their temples and their synagogues; *all* vanished away, and the next morning there was not so much as one of them left *in all Jerusalem*, and the Roman soldiers who had kept the sepulchre ran *stark staring mad*.' Such an unparalleled convulsion is only mentioned in these contemptible epistles. No historian, great or small, who lived at the time, makes the least reference to it. Josephus, who flourished at this period, and who, *as a Jew*, took peculiar interest in the welfare of his countrymen, is perfectly silent upon the subject, which would have been impossible if such events really transpired. The elder Pliny, who, about the year 75, wrote the 'History of his Own Times,' in thirty-one books, and was the most celebrated historian of that period, is equally silent upon this wonderful occurrence, which, had it really happened, could not have escaped his observation. The younger Seneca, too, a voluminous writer, who must have been at Rome at the time, makes no mention of this phenomenon. Gibbon expresses the greatest contempt and indignation at these statements. 'Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth, or, at least, a celebrated province of the Roman empire, was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, or the devotion, of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history. It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence, of the prodigy.

Each of these philosophers, in a laboured work, has recorded all the great phenomena of nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the moral eye has been witness since the creation of the globe. A distinct chapter of Pliny is assigned for eclipses of an extraordinary and unusual duration; but he contents himself with describing the singular defects of light which followed the murder of Cæsar, when, during the greatest part of the year, the orb of the sun appeared pale and without splendour. This season of obscurity, which cannot surely be compared with the preternatural darkness of the passion, had been already celebrated by most of the poets and historians of that memorable age.*

The more respectable Christian divines are ashamed of the audacious impositions of their predecessors. Du Pin, of France, and Lardner, of England, have questioned this epistle. Du Pin says:†—‘We have in the *orthodoxographa* next to the epistle of Lentulus, a letter attributed to Pilate, as written to Tiberius, which contains the same things; *but it is difficult to determine* whether this letter was *extant* in Eusebius’s time, or whether it was not *forged* from his narration. Let this be how it will, there are several learned men who *question* the *genuineness* of this history, which has very little probability at the *bottom* of it. For how is it *likely* that Pilate should write such things to Tiberius of a man whom he *himself* had condemned to death; and though he *might* have done so, yet is it probable that Tiberius should have proposed to the senate, the placing of such a man among the number of the *gods*, upon the bare relation of a *governor*? And if he had proposed any such thing, who can imagine that the senate would have submitted to it? Wherefore, though we cannot *absolutely* charge this narration with falsehood, yet, it may, at least, pass for a *doubtful* piece.’ *Very doubtful*, Dr. Du Pin. Dr. Lardner more than *doubts*. He declares that ‘the acts of Pontius Pilate, and his letter to Tiberius, which we *now* have, *are not genuine*, but *manifestly spurious*!’‡

Publius Lentulus, predecessor of Pilate, as procurator of Judea. The testimony of this individual was, at one time, popular. Liv-

* ‘Decline and Fall.’ vol. i.

† ‘History of the Canon,’ etc., vol. ii., c. 7.

‡ ‘Jewish and Heathen Testimonies,’ vol. i., c. ii., p. 316.

ing, as he did, during the early career of Christ, and officiating as governor of the locality in which his movements are said to have occurred, his evidence was deemed pre-eminently important. It will be found in the 'History of Christ,' originally written by Xavier. 'Lentulus, Prefect of Jerusalem, to the senate and people of Rome, greeting.' The letter proceeds to furnish us with a most glowing description of the person of Christ. 'At this time, there hath appeared, and still lives, a man endowed with great powers, whose name is Jesus Christ. Men say that he is a mighty prophet—his disciples call him the Son of God. He restores the dead to life, and heals the sick from all sorts of ailments and diseases. He is a man of stature, proportionably tall, and his cast of countenance has a certain severity in it, so full of *effect*, as to induce beholders to *love*, and yet still to *fear* him. His hair is of the colour of wine, *as far as to the bottom of his ears*, without *radiation* and *straight*, and from the lower part of his ears it is *curled* down to his shoulders, and bright, and hangs downwards from his shoulders [how precise]; at the *top* of his head it is parted after the fashion of the Nazarenes; his forehead is *smooth* and *clear*, and his face *without a pimple*, adorned with a certain *temperate* redness, his countenance *gentlemanlike* and agreeable, his *nose and mouth* nothing amiss, his beard thick, and divided into two *bunches*, of the same colour as his hair; his eyes *blue* and *uncommonly* bright. In *reproving* and *rebuking*, he is formidable; in teaching and exhorting, of a bland and agreeable tongue. He has a *wonderful* grace of person, united with seriousness. No one hath ever seen him *smile*, but *weeping*, indeed they have. He hath a lengthened stature of body, his hands are straight and turned up, his *arms* are *delectable*. In speaking, deliberate and slow, and sparing of his conversation—the *most beautiful of countenance among the sons of men.*'

Who after this will not be enamoured of Christianity? It must be a matter of unspeakable lamentation that some of the leading Christian evidence-writers are growing dissatisfied with this flattering testimony of Lentulus, and now discard it. The French ecclesiastical historian, Du Pin, regardless of the admiration of his forefathers, disposes of this celebrated letter in the following style:—'There is no need of showing the falsity of a letter attributed to Lentulus, written to the senate and people of Rome, concerning the actions of Jesus Christ, since the *forgery* of it is *self-evident.*' In what an off-hand manner these reverend historians speak of the forgeries of their pious forefathers!

‘They make Lentulus to write in the character of governor of Jerusalem, though *he never had that employ*. It is directed to the senate and people of Rome, whereas after the commonwealth was changed into a monarchy, the governors *usually wrote to the emperors*. That which is contained in that letter is *ridiculous*: therein is a mean and contemptible description of the person of Jesus Christ, therein it is said that our Saviour had light coloured hair, long and loose after the mode of the Nazarenes. The style wherein it is written does not suit with the purity and politeness of Augustus’s time; in a word, *not one of the ancients hath made mention of that letter.*’* Then I presume, Dr. Du Pin, it must go with the rest of the frauds.

Phlegon. We need say little respecting his evidence, the more learned Christians now acknowledge it to be a ‘stupid’ forgery. If true, it is of no moment, the following brief passage being all that is said upon the subject:—‘In the fourth year of the two hundred and second Olympiad, there was an eclipse of the sun, greater than ever known before, and it was night at the sixth hour of the day, so that even the stars appeared, and there was a great earthquake in Bythinia that overthrew several houses in Nice.’ Gibbon says:—‘The celebrated passage in Phlegon is now *wisely* abandoned.’ We doubt not the Christian priesthood will find it equally ‘*wise*’ to abandon the remainder.

The testimony of the ancient opponent of Christianity, Celsus, is very popular with our platform adversaries. It is said that in his work, ‘The True Word,’ Celsus argues as if all the events recorded in the scriptures had *really* transpired, but denies they were brought about through *divine* interposition. He believed they were produced by magic, as the tricks of the Egyptian priesthood, from whom, he affirms, Christ learned the secret art of imposture. Celsus, it is asserted, admitted Christ to have lived only a few years before—was born of a virgin—that angels appeared to Joseph—that the Holy Ghost descended on Jesus like a dove when he was baptised by John, and that a voice appeared declaring him to be the Son of God, etc. Now upon what authority are we to believe that Celsus admits such things were *mentioned* in his time? Have we the works of Celsus? Confessedly not. We have only what Origen, his antagonist, thought fit to furnish. The works of Celsus were *destroyed* by the Christians, publicly *burnt*—a fact which will ever remain an indelible stigma upon the early propounders of Christianity. The testimony,

* ‘History of the Canon,’ etc., vol. ii., c. 7.

therefore, of Celsus, rests solely upon the *ipse dixit* of Origen. And is *he* to be relied on? Allow us to remind the reader of the real character of Origen, given in chapter four. Bishop Horsley says he 'was not incapable of asserting in argument what he believed not, and that a strict regard to *truth* in disputation was not one of the virtues of his character;.....'time was when the practice of using *unjustifiable* means to serve a good cause was openly avowed, and Origen himself was amongst its defenders.' Can the statements of such a person be accepted? Can he who 'was not incapable of asserting in argument *what he believed not,*' have given a fair representation of his opponent?

Before the clergy exult over 'the testimony of Celsus,' let them prove it *is* his testimony. The early Christians would never have *burnt* his writings had they contained any concessions to their advantage. Most convenient indeed to destroy every vestige of an opponent's works, and *then* insist upon his having made certain fatal admissions! Why not allow them to have remained for the 'benefit of the church,' and a 'confirmation of Christian evidences?' Instead of being the testimony of Celsus, it is, in fact, the testimony of Origen, who was one of the 'defenders' of that reliable practice 'of using unjustifiable means to serve a good cause!' Such a witness, on any other subject, would not be listened to in any court in Europe by Christians themselves! Upon what principle of honour, justice, or consistency, therefore, can they call upon the sceptic to believe him? *Ex parte* statements *against* Christianity are ignored, and why not *for it*? Doubtless if a freethinker is to allow a Christian to state his views for him, more especially when, like Origen, 'a strict regard to truth in disputation was not one of the virtues of his character,' they would be so 'perverted' as to promote 'the interests' of 'a good cause.' We know the mantle of Origen has fallen upon *some* of his modern admirers. We repeat, let it first be established that the concessions Origen ascribes to Celsus *were* made by him.

We hasten to expose the alleged testimony of another celebrated Christian adversary—Porphyry, who flourished about a century after Celsus. He was a philosopher of the Platonic school, and a man of extraordinary talent, learning, and virtue. As a writer his style was singularly elegant, dignified, and chaste. So renowned was he for his probity, that he was surnamed '*The Virtuous.*'

Dr. Lardner, a *Christian*, says of Porphyry, the 'infidel:—

‘ Porphyry, as Eunapius assures us, had a wife named Marcella, a widow, with five children, to whom he ascribed one of his books, in which he says he married her, not for the sake of having children by her himself, but that he might educate the children which she had by a former husband, who was his friend. Which showed a *virtuous and generous* disposition. Nor, indeed, do we meet with any reflection made upon his conduct. Cyril, of Alexandria, in his answer to Julian, makes honourable mention of Marcella, as a woman of a philosophical turn of mind, and for that reason esteemed by Porphyry.’*

About the year 250, Porphyry published a voluminous work (30 vols.), in refutation of the Christian system. It produced, as might be presumed from the high character and attainments of the writer, a strong sensation. Answer it the fathers could not. What, then, must they do? They were not long in devising a scheme which should refute the writings of Porphyry most effectively. Having, by this time, ingratiated themselves into the good graces of the Emperor Theodosius, whom they were in the habit of addressing in the fulsome language of ‘ Theodosius the *Great!*’—‘ Theodosius the *Wise!*’—Theodosius the *Impartial!*’ &c.; they prevailed upon that *fanatic* to issue a decree against the writings of this enlightened man; at the same time deeming it advisable to include the writings of *every individual who had had the ‘audacity’ to oppose Christianity.* The works of Porphyry, and all other heretics, were thus destroyed. The following is an extract from the decree:—‘ We decree, therefore, that all writings whatever, which Porphyry, or any one else, hath written against the Christian religion, in the possession of whomsoever they shall be found, shall be *committed to the fire!* for we would not suffer any of these things so much as to *come* to men’s ears, which tend to provoke God to wrath, and to offend the minds of the pious.’ The same decree proceeds to enforce a belief in the *trinity*, and declares that if any person will not believe it, ‘ that besides the condemnation of *divine* justice, they must expect to suffer the severe penalties which our authorities, guided by *heavenly wisdom*, may think proper to inflict upon them.’† O! those were glorious days for the priesthood. How unfortunate we cannot have a ‘revival!’ How lamentable that the writings of an Owen, a Volney, a Voltaire, a Paine, a Gibbon, and a Hume, should be allowed ‘ to come to men’s ears, provoke God

* ‘ Jewish and Heathen Testimonies,’ vol. iii., p. 124.

† Lardner, vol. iii., p. 111.

to wrath, and offend the minds of the pious!' Why are *they* not 'committed to the fire?' Alas! those days are gone by. Thanks to the glorious advancement of mind and civilisation, *despite* of the Christian church. Thanks to the mighty power of the printing press. O! it arose, and priestcraft trembled. The rusty chains of mental bondage fell from their hands. The omnipotence of superstition was doomed!

The 'holy fathers' having so admirably disposed of the genuine writings of that powerful author, thought it 'convenient' to get up a work in Porphyry's name, containing something favourable to Christianity. To manufacture a 'pious fraud' was 'a virtue,' and therefore, during the days of that respectable forgery-maker, Eusebius, a work appeared, entitled the 'Philosophy of Oracles,' purporting to be written by Porphyry. This work contained many expressions highly complimentary to Christianity, a few of which were the following:—'What we are going to say may perhaps appear to some a paradox; for the gods (meaning the heathen gods) declared Christ to be a person *most pious*, and became immortal—moreover they speak of him *honourably*.' 'He (Christ) was, therefore, a pious person, and went to heaven, *as pious persons do*, for which cause you ought not to speak evil of him.' These passages were cited by the Christian fathers with the most exquisite exultation. Eusebius, again, was in ecstasies, and refers to the passage in the following terms:—'We will not insist upon the testimony of friends, which might be of little value, but those of strangers not of our body. And of all the Greek historians and philosophers that ever were, none can be more fitly alleged than that very friend of demons (Porphyry), who in our time has gained so much reputation by the falsehoods he has published against us. In the work which *he* (!) has writ of the philosophy from oracles, he has made a collection of the oracles of Apollo and the other gods and good demons.'

The 'Philosophy of Oracles,' however, cannot stand the scrutiny of honest criticism. Du Pin *abandoned* it, though he endeavoured to palliate the conduct of Eusebius. But Dr. Lardner disposes of it most conclusively. He discusses the subject at great length,* and concludes his arguments as follows:—'The conclusion to be made from the whole is, that it is *not* a work of Porphyry's, a heathen philosopher, and an

* 'Jewish and Heathen Testimonies,' pp. 219-221.

enemy to Christianity, but of a *Christian* and PATRON of *Christianity*!! 'It is the artifice or *forgery* of some Christian, *designed and contrived to save the interests of Christianity* in general, and possibly likewise of some particular notion of the author himself.' Alluding to the priest who forged it, the doctor observes:—'Having formed a design to exhibit a correct testimony in behalf of Christianity, in the name of some learned heathen, and to bring it into oracular answers of heathen deities, he supposed that *no fitter name could be taken than that of Porphyry, who was in great repute for learning*, and who had published the bitterest invectives against Jews and Christianity, and the strongest arguments that have ever been alleged against the Scriptures, and he hoped by this work to overthrow Porphyry's long work against the Christians, which had done so much mischief.'

Such is the history of this audacious imposture so often quoted as a triumphant admission of the divinity of the Christian scheme. It is equal to the rest of the forgeries exhibited in this chapter.

In detail have we reviewed those external evidences said to be corroborative of Christianity. Do they corroborate it? Are they even reliable? Do they not display a mass of 'perversion,' 'fraud,' and 'deception' unparalleled in the literature of civilised Europe? Not isolated passages merely, but whole books have been deliberately forged and palmed upon Christendom as genuine. Did space permit, we could expatiate upon other frauds, of which even the Christian church are now ashamed. To one of the most remarkable we will briefly allude. This forgery was employed in the days of Justin Martyr to convert people to Christianity! We refer to the books of the Sybils. Du Pin,* commenting upon 'the profane records which were formerly made use of in favour of the Christian religion,' states:—'We begin with the verses attributed to the Sybils, which the ancients have often cited, to convince the Gentiles of the truth of the Christian religion. But before we enter upon the examination of them, it will be proper to premise something concerning the Sybils and their books.....It is something difficult to give you the true and exact etymology of the word Sybil. Lactantius, and after him St. Jerome, say that the Sybils were so called because they were the interpreters of the councils of the gods, and that their name was derived from two Greek words which signify the council of God, and which, being written ac-

* 'A Complete History of the Canon,' etc., vol. ii., c. 7.

ording to the Æolic dialect, make up the word Sybil. Some have derived it from a Hebrew word, and others from an obsolete Latin adjective which signifies sharp and crafty; but this last conjecture is erroneous, since the Greeks made use of the word Sybil before the Latins. The most probable opinion is, that the name of Sybil, which was the proper name of a famous prophetess of Delphi, became afterwards the common name of other prophetesses, just as the name Cæsar, which was the proper name of Julius, was afterwards applied to all the emperors. In the first place, I say that the books of the Sybils which the fathers cited were not really the same with those that were so carefully kept by the Romans. For to say nothing of these letters being kept a secret, as not a copy of them could be had, so far were they from being so common as those which the fathers have cited, and which were in everybody's hands; I say, not to mention anything of this, 'tis certain that they contained such things as differ very much from those we meet with in the writings of the fathers. In the former, there were only profane matters which related to the superstitions of the Pagans, whereas these last were full of predictions and instructions relating to Christianity.'

The reader will observe that the books of Sybils, of which the fathers made use to convince persons of the truth of Christianity, 'were full of *predictions* and instructions relating to Christianity;' and those forged predictions were circulated as the genuine inspiration of heaven. Christian advocates wrote certain things *after* Christ's birth, and then pretended they were written by prophets hundreds of years *before* that event! If they were capable of such conduct in this instance, why not in others? Let it not be forgotten that it was in the same century the gospels were first mentioned. Du Pin says, 'Upon the whole it ought to be looked upon as a thing certain that the writings of the Sybils were forged in the second century.' Seeing the early Christians introduced spurious predictions in the Sybils, why not in Matthew or any other book? That the first exponents of the church were obliged to support Christianity by forgeries, destroys all confidence in those records now remaining. *Truth needs not error to support it at any time.* The forgery of the Sybils—the forgery of the correspondence between Christ and Abgarrus—the forgery of the letters of Paul to Seneca—the forgery of the books attributed to Hystaspes and Trismegistus—the forgery of Josephus, Pontius Pilate, Lentulus, etc.—the forgeries of whole Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelations, previously enumerated, all justify the enlightened and unprejudiced inquirer in

doubting the genuineness of those writings now in common use. *They came through those parties who perpetrated these notorious interpolations and fabrications.* Fraudulent in other cases, is it consistent to demand from the sceptic implicit belief in the genuineness of our present Scriptures?

Of this subject we shall now remark *in extenso*.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

OUR present theme introduces us more immediately to the internal evidence of the Scriptures. In this and subsequent chapters, we will test orthodoxy by its own criteria.

The Rev. Jeremiah Jones, a great authority, thus propounds these *criteria* :—*

That book is apocryphal which contains any contradictions.

Or, any histories contrary to those known to be true.

Or, any doctrines contrary to those known to be true.

Or, relations ludicrous, trifling, fabulous, or silly.

Or, *which mentions facts which occurred later than the author to whom it is ascribed.*

Or, whose style is manifestly different from the known style of its supposed author.

Or, which is written in an idiom or dialect different from that of the author to whom it is ascribed, or different from the idiom of his country.

Or, that manifests a disposition different from the known disposition of the supposed author.

To all these rules we fully subscribe. Let our *present* canon be judged by them, and the result will be apparent.

We will first test the *Pentateuch*, commonly called the Books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Confessedly the most important division of the Jewish records, they demand especial consideration.

* New and Full Method of Settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament. Oxford, 1798. Vol. I.



It is decided by the Rev. Jeremiah Jones that that book is apocryphal, or spurious, which mentions facts *later* than the time of the supposed author.

Anachronisms, it is conceded, are fatal to the genuineness of any book. Let us put a case. Suppose a play, published as Shakspeare's, contained allusion to the Battle of Wáterloo. Would not the anachronism of the Battle of Waterloo prove *Shakspeare* did not write that play? Would not the whole literary world at once pronounce it apocryphal? Would not all parties conclude that some one must have written it who lived *after* the battle? Apply this reasoning to the Pentateuch.

In Genesis c. 36, v. 31, we read, 'And these are the kings that reigned in Edom, *before* there reigned *any* king over the children of Israel.'

It is evident this passage could not have been written until *after* a king began to reign over Israel. To any person of ordinary comprehension, it must be palpable these words could not have been composed until, at the very earliest, the days of *Saul*, the *first* king of Israel—that is, 357 years *after* the *death of Moses*. To assert, therefore, that Moses was the author of a book referring to events which did not happen till *centuries* after he was snugly reposing in the 'valley of Moab,' is to affirm something more than an absurdity.

It is curious to observe the attempts to explain away this anachronism, by supposing Moses himself was a sort of king over Israel. Calmet, Patrick, and other commentators say, 'though he (Moses) was *king*, in an inferior sense, yet he did not *reign* in the stronger sense!' What a distinction! Christian divines will never establish Christianity upon such puerile quibbles. Dean Prideaux,* and the more enlightened school of Biblical critics, candidly acknowledge the anachronism, but account for it in a mode we shall subsequently notice.

In Genesis xii., v. 6, it states, 'And the Canaanite was then in the land.' † This, of course, implies a period when the Canaanite was *not* in the land, which did not happen till long after Moses. The sentence is unmeaning if the Canaanites were *still* in the land when these words were written. As the Canaanites were one of the nations against whom Joshua fought, after Moses was dead, it is evident that Moses could not have written these words, but they must be referred to an author who

* 'Connection,' vol. II., p. 409.

† See also c. xiii., v. 7.

lived when the Canaanites had been exterminated. Divines who are determined to maintain the Pentateuch to be the work of Moses in contempt of all evidence, have proposed to *alter* the text. They have introduced the word 'even' before 'then,' which completely reverses the sense. It would read, 'For the Canaanite was even then in the land.' This is 'perversion.' The learned author of the 'Hebrew Records,'* is sufficiently candid to observe—

'This is puerile, and has nothing to do with the question. The introduction of the little word *even* into the text, without any authority, derived from the original Hebrew, is unwarrantable. The expressions, "And the Canaanite was then in the land," "And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land," seemed to have been introduced by the writer for no other purpose than to show that the land was at that time occupied by *strangers*, that Abraham and Lot were not its masters, and therefore were obliged to conduct themselves with more restraint than their descendants who drove out these people and had the land all to themselves. If the translators of our Bible understood the passages in the same sense as Dr. Graves, why did they not adopt a less ambiguous mode of rendering it into English, by inserting the word *even*, or by placing the word *then* in such a manner that it might have the force of *even then*? To give it this meaning, they ought to have placed it the last word in the sentence; thus—"The Canaanite was in the land *then*." But they have not given it this signification, neither have the translators of the Septuagint and the Vulgate understood the word *then* in that sense. The former translates the passages thus:—"But the Canaanites then inhabited the land." The Latin Vulgate also conveys the same signification:—"But the Canaanite was then in the land."'

Exodus xvi., v. 35, records, 'And the children of Egypt did eat manna forty years until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.' Here is an allusion to an event—the ceasing of the manna, which did not happen till after the death of Moses. By referring to Joshua, c. v., v. 12, we find 'The manna ceased on the morrow *after they had eaten of the old corn of the land*' (Canaan).

In Genesis, c. xiv., v. 14, we are told that Abram pursued his

* Page 139.

enemies unto *Dan*. Now there was no place named *Dan* until after the death of Sampson—that is, more than 300 years subsequent to the days of Moses. The place called *Dan* in the Bible was originally a town of the Gentiles, called *Laish*; and when the tribe of *Dan* seized upon this town, they changed its name to *Dan*, in commemoration of *Dan*, who was the father of that tribe. In proof of this statement, see Judges c. xviii., v. 27—29. It there says—

‘And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto *Laish*, unto a people that were quiet and secure; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. And there was no deliverer, because it was far from *Zidon*, and they had no business with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by *Beth-rehob*. And they built a city and dwelt therein. *And they called the name of the city Dan*, after the name of *Dan* their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit, *the name of the city was Laish at the first.*’ This account of the Danites taking possession of *Laish*, and changing it to *Dan* is placed in the book of *Judges*, immediately after the death of *Sampson*. The death of *Sampson* occurred 1120 B.C., and that of *Moses* 1452 B.C., and, therefore, according to the historical arrangement, the place was not called *Dan* until 332 years after the death of *Moses*. It is manifest, then, that *he* could have had nothing to do with the authorship.

Assumption and evasion have again been employed to account for this anachronism. Bishop *Watson** says, ‘I desire further to have it proved, that the *Dan* mentioned in *Genesis* was the name of a town, and not of a river.’ Now the ‘burden of proof’ lay with the bishop. *He* should have proved that either a town or a river was called *Dan* in the days of *Moses*. The Rev. *J. G. Rogers* resorts to another ‘expedient.’ ‘The mention of a city “*Dan*” in the northern part of the land, has been supposed to present an insuperable objection, inasmuch as the name of *Dan* was only given to *Laish* in the time of the *Judges*; but the difficulty is obviated by the evidence of the existence of a second *Dan* in 2 *Samuel*, xxi., v. 6, which may be the city alluded to in the earlier records, situated, as it evidently was, in the same part of the land.’†

When doctor’s differ, who is to solve the problem? Bishop *Watson* suggests it ‘may’ be a river, while Mr. *Rogers* supposes it ‘may’ be another town! and yet the latter writer felici-

* ‘An Apology for the Bible.’ Letter III., p. 23.

† ‘Christianity and its Evidences,’ p. 75.

tates himself that the Bible is 'unlike the *obscure* and *mystified* teachings of philosophy!'^{*} 'I desire further to have it proved,' there was a place called '*Dan*' in the time of *Moses*, and not Samuel. The author of the 'Hebrew Records' differs with both these critics. 'We cannot doubt that, in the time of *Josephus*, the name Dan was well known to the Jews, whether applied to the tribe of Dan in the south of Palestine, to the little town formerly called Laish, but afterwards Dan, or to the fountain of the Jordan, which seems to have been called Dan, because it was in the immediate neighbourhood of the town. *This does not interfere with the question*, whether the word Dan, as applied to these places, could have been in existence *in the time of Moses*. If it was not then known, *as we have the best evidence to prove*, we must infer that the Pentateuch was written or compiled after the name of Dan was given to the town of Laish; *i.e.*, some time during, or after, the government of the Judges.' †

More anachronisms of a similar character are pointed out by this learned writer, to which we beg the attention of the reader.

'Many names of places occur in the Pentateuch which were not given to those places until long after the time of Moses. This proves either that the book was written after those places had received the names by which they were then known, or that some later writer has inserted into the original work of Moses the names by which those places were known in his own age. The latter supposition is wholly untenable: it would be an outrage upon the integrity of a book like the Bible, which derives its importance from its being an immaculate record. The number of such passages is so great (several hundreds altogether), that a large part of the whole must be cut off as not genuine, if such texts are interpolations. It would, moreover, be a positive infringement of that very law which Moses delivered to the Israelites; for we find in Deuteronomy iv., v. 2, it is expressly forbidden to make any change whatever in the covenant which God gave through Moses.

'Deut. iv., v. 2. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you.

'If it should be replied that the mere insertion of the name of a place into the historical part of the Pentateuch is not an infringement of the law of Moses, such a reply is tantamount to

* *Ibid*, p. 31.

† P. 131.

an admission of the whole question. I admit that the perfect law of Moses is contained in the Pentateuch, but not that the terms 'Pentateuch' and 'law of Moses' are convertible terms. The law of Moses was given 1500 years before Christ, but the Pentateuch was compiled probably not more than 400 or 500 years before Christ.

'The passages where more modern names of places occur in the Pentateuch are these:—

'Gen. xxiii., v. 2. And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.....

'It appears from these passages that the city of Hebron, which is called Mamre, formerly bore the name of Kirjath-arba, *i.e.*, the city of Arba. A question therefore arises, as to the time when the name Kirjath-arba was exchanged for that of Hebron. We in vain search the Pentateuch for an answer to this question, but in the book of Joshua the difficulty is entirely cleared up.

'Joshua xiv., v. 6—15. Caleb, the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, said unto him [Joshua] ".....give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be, the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said." And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh, Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel. And the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba; which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war.

'If the name of Hebron was not given to the city formerly called Kirjath-arba, until after it was taken from the Anakims by Caleb the son of Jephunneh, it follows that the Pentateuch, in which the name "Hebron" occurs several times, could not have been written until after the time when that town was taken by Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

'Numbers xiii., v. 23. And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates and of the figs. The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence.

‘Bishop Patrick’s note on this verse is highly sensible and becoming:—

“*The place was called the brook Eshcol.*] That is, when the Israelites got possession of the land, they called this brook, or valley, “Eschol,” in memory of this bunch of grapes, for so Eshcol signifies.”

‘*But the book which relates that the place was called Eshcol, cannot have been written until the act of naming had taken place.*

‘Gen. xxxv., v. 19. And Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.

‘This form of speech implies that the place once called Ephrath was better known in the time of the writer by the name of Bethlehem. This is natural and consistent if we consider it as coming from a later writer, but it is difficult to conceive Moses writing in such a manner. Neither he, nor the people for whom he wrote, had ever been in the promised land, and could not have understood such a description.

‘The names again occur in the 48th chapter of Genesis v. 7.

‘“And as for me,”—Jacob is speaking—“when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: And I buried her there in the way of Ephrath;”’ the same is Bethlehem.

‘The concluding words, *the same is Bethlehem*, if not meant to explain the obsolete name, Ephrath, by one that was more intelligible, can have no meaning at all. It will be observed that many of these second names given to places in Palestine are compounds of the word “Beth.” They were mostly given to these places after the Israelites expelled the original inhabitants and took possession of the country for themselves.

‘Numbers xiv., v. 44. But they presumed to go up unto the hill-top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them even unto Hormah.

‘Numbers, xxi., v. 1—3. And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies, then he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners. And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities: and the Lord hearkened to the voice

of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites, and they utterly destroyed them and their cities, and he called the name of the place Hormah.

‘“This” (says Dr. Shuckford, as quoted in the Family Bible), “was effected in the days of Joshua, Jos. xii., v. 14, or a little after his death. Judges i., v. 17.”’

‘Yet Dr. Shuckford did not perceive that the relation of an event which happened in the days of Joshua could not be made by the pen of Moses. The second of the passages above quoted, namely, the first three verses of Numbers xxi., describes the fulfilment of Israel’s vow, not in a mere word or short sentence, such as others which the commentators explain by saying that they are interpolations. The present text is too full for us to suppose so; it is evidently an integral portion of the main narrative, and cannot be separated from it. The whole of this part of the history, therefore, is liable to the same observation which has been so often made, that it was written by some one who lived long after the time of Moses.

‘Numbers xxxii., v. 34—42. And the children of Gad built Dibon and Ataroth, and Aroer, and Atroth, Shophan and Jaazer, and Jogbehah, and Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran, fenced cities, and folds for sheep.

‘And the children of Reuben built Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Kirjathaim, and Nebo, and Baal-meon, (their names being changed), and Shibmah, and gave other names unto the cities which they builded.

‘And the children of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead, and took it, and dispossessed the Amorite which was in it. And Moses gave Gilead unto Machir the son of Manasseh; and he dwelt therein.

‘And Jair the son of Manasseh went and took the small towns thereof, and called them Havoth-Jair.

‘And Nobah went and took Kenath, and the villages thereof, and called it Nobah, after his own name.

‘The foundation of all these towns, with the other events there related, could not be effected in the two years which passed between the first invasion of Bashan by those tribes, and the death of Moses. The account of these things, therefore, must be considered as proceeding not from him, but some later writer, who describes not only the settling of those tribes which had obtained their allotments beyond Jordan, in the life-time of Moses, but also the erection of towns and cities, which occupied them many years.

‘Many expressions used in the Pentateuch indicate a more advanced state of knowledge than was likely to exist among the Jews when they were just escaped from Egyptian bondage. The writer introduces these expressions apparently for the purpose of leading his readers to comprehend his meaning by alluding to something well known among them.

‘This peculiarity is observable: 1. In the account of the four rivers which watered the garden of Eden.

‘The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold: and the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium and the onyx-stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. Gen. ii., v. 11—14.

‘The first three of these rivers were little known to the Israelites, even in the most civilised periods of their commonwealth; they therefore required to be more fully described; but of the well known Euphrates no description was necessary. Yet in the time of Moses it may be doubted whether the Israelites were not in too ignorant and degraded a state, owing to their severe slavery in Egypt, to render the above distinction at all applicable.

‘2. In the description of the ark resting on Mount Ararat.

‘And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventh day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

‘Now the mountains of Ararat are situated a long way to the north-east of the Holy Land, and the Israelites, having never crossed the Jordan, but dwelling in the Arabian wilderness during all the life of Moses, would not be likely to know even where Mount Ararat was to be found. But in later times, when the Jews were in correspondence with foreign nations, such a description would be intelligible and appropriate.

‘3. The case is somewhat the same with Damascus mentioned in Gen. xiv., v. 15.

‘And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

‘Hobah and Damascus were equally unknown to the Israelites when they first came out of Egypt; the situation of Hobah could not, therefore, be more clearly explained by reference to that of Damascus. The whole of Palestine lay between the Israelites and Syria, of which Damascus was the capital.

'4. A similar allusion, less applicable in the time of Moses than in an after-age, is found in Genesis ix., v. 18.

'And the sons of Noah that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth; and Ham is the father of Canaan.

'But the Israelites knew nothing of the Canaanites until after the death of Moses, when they were conducted by Joshua over the Jordan, and came in contact with the Canaanites, Hivites, and other nations, who at that time occupied the land of promise. If, however, we suppose the Pentateuch to have been written in a later age, when the Canaanites were too well known to the Israelites by repeated wars, the allusion to them acquires a propriety which hardly belongs to it at a time when these people were comparatively unknown.'*

We could enumerate more anachronisms of the same character from the learned Gesenius and others, but they would become tedious to the popular reader.

The following, however, are so palpable and conclusive no perversion or equivocation can explain them away. In Deuteronomy, c. 34., v. 5, we read—'So Moses, the servant of the Lord *died* there in the land of Moab,' etc. This account of Moses' death is found in a book which he himself wrote! So gross an anachronism even the defenders of the genuineness of Scripture are obliged to allow. To screen themselves from derision, some even attempt to ridicule the sceptic for supposing that any one could believe Moses wrote *that* passage! The Rev. J. G. Rogers, in his own elegant phrase, exclaims, 'Christians are certainly not such a set of idiots as to imagine that a man wrote the account of his own death.' † Until this anachronism was detected and exposed, Christians *did* believe that every line in the Pentateuch was written by Moses; and down to this hour the last chapter of Deuteronomy is printed and published not as an 'appendix' to the Pentateuch, but 'part and parcel' of it! If, as the Rev. T. Carpenter complacently avers, ‡ this chapter 'is properly an appendix to Deuteronomy,' *why is it not published as such?* In no other book would a similar absurdity be connived at.

'The history of Moses, as written by himself, EVIDENTLY terminates with the 33rd chapter,' continues Mr. Carpenter. Why then was not a circumstance so VERY 'evident' made patent in the arrangement of the books? Why not have issued it as a

* 'Hebrew Records', pp. 130—144. † 'Evidences,' p. 73.

‡ 'Is the Bible a Genuine Record?' p. 13.

sequel to Deuteronomy, or, as some suggest, an introduction to Joshua? Why have left these things unexplained *till the sceptic detected the anachronism*? Why not *now* publish it as an 'appendix,' or, incorporate it with Joshua? The reason is 'evident.' *It would excite the suspicion of the people, and lead to more provoking exposures!* Once open the door to such innovations, and the secrets of the temple of priestcraft will become known to the mass. Then will fall the whole structure!

The Rev. J. D. Massingham very coolly assumes that 'The account of Moses' death was *doubtless* added by Joshua!' * A very summary inference indeed! A much more learned writer has shown its impossibility.

'The chapter before us is admitted by all not to have been written by Moses. Why then was it ever attached to the book of Moses without some strong mark to denote that it was only an appendix? It cannot be allowed that Joshua, Samuel, or Ezra could connive at such a deception. There is internal evidence that neither Joshua nor Samuel made this addition to the Pentateuch; for the word *Nabi*, rendered in English, prophet, indicates an age later than that of Samuel. We learn from the first book of Samuel, c. ix., v. 9, which was written after Samuel's death, that he who is now called a prophet, was beforetime called a seer.

'If, therefore, the xxxivth chapter of Deuteronomy had been written before or in the time of Samuel, Moses would have been designated a seer [in Hebrew *Roech*], and not *Nabi*, a prophet. This exculpates both Joshua and Samuel from having added to the book of Moses without mark of such addition. There are also other indications in the same chapter that Joshua could not have written it, for he would hardly have written of himself that Joshua the son of Nun was "full of the spirit of wisdom;" neither would he have said "there arose not a prophet *since* in Israel like unto Moses," for there was no other prophet to whom Moses could be compared except Joshua himself. The word *since* implies that many years had passed since the death of Moses, and that many prophets had arisen, none of whom could be placed in comparison with him who led them out of Egypt. Moreover, the words "no man knoweth of his sepulchre," *i.e.* the sepulchre of Moses, "unto this day," are another proof that the chapter was not added by Joshua, for they imply that a considerable space of time had elapsed, during which the sepulchre of

* Two Lectures, p. 26.

Moses remained unknown. As Joshua died only 25 years after Moses, these words coming from his mouth would lose half their force, and would probably also convey an untruth, for we cannot believe that the great Hebrew legislator was buried clandestinely, or that Joshua, the next in command, and almost his equal, could be ignorant where his body was laid.*

Disregarding the quibbles of many of his contemporaries, Dean Prideaux broadly admits these anachronisms. He pronounces them to be 'interpolations.' Even Bishop Watson, *when convenient*, assumes the same thing. But, singularly enough, these interpolations, we are told, do not destroy the genuineness of the Pentateuch!! Considerations which would unquestionably invalidate the genuineness of any historical book, are ignored when found in a *divine* record! Is LESS proof necessary to establish the claims of an 'inspired' work than a common history? Is not this inverting all sound criticism? Ought not these proofs to be *greater*—immeasurably? There is not a literary man in the world who would not challenge the genuineness of any other book containing such flagrant anachronisms. How inconsistent does prejudice render mankind! Bishop Watson placidly rules that 'a small addition to a book does not destroy the genuineness or authenticity of the whole book.† But these anachronisms are not 'additions.' These verses do not stand in the book as an 'addition' to it, *but as making a part of the whole*. They are interwoven with the context. *If these are 'additions,'* why not other passages? and thus its genuineness is destroyed. Inconsistent is it to assume they are 'interpolations' for the sole purpose of making Moses the author of the rest!!

May we inquire upon what authority it is asserted these are only interpolations? Finding they are so numerous,—that they are founded on the same evidence,—that they appear *as parts of a whole*,—that they refer to events so long posterior to Moses,—that the Pentateuch itself was not named till long after him, is it not more congruous, and rational, to infer that the book itself was the production of a later age? The favourite argument in sustaining the authority of the Bible is, that it is an 'uncorrupted' record, and yet learned divines who are appointed to the duty of expounding it, vindicate its claims by admitting it is *corrupted!*

Having established these anachronisms, we advance to other

* 'Hebrew Records,' pp. 126—128.

† 'Apology for the Bible,' p. 23.

considerations. We might demonstrate the Pentateuch spurious by Mr. Jones' first rule — *contradictions*, but, as the 'Consistency of the Bible' will form a separate chapter, we reserve our comments.

We hold the *STYLE* of the Pentateuch is at least *presumptive* evidence that Moses is not the author, especially when taken in connection with the preceding observations. The writer speaks in the *THIRD* person. 'Moses said unto the Lord,' 'The Lord said unto Moses,' etc. Unless, therefore, we have *undoubted* and *conclusive* proof that Moses *is* the author—if the least suspicion exists, this circumstance confirms it. We are fully aware that some writers have adopted this style, and therefore it is asked why not Moses? But this is only begging the question. He *might*, but *did* he? It behoves the theologian in so grave a dispute to *prove* and not presume. It is not enough to refer to Cæsar and Thucydides. There is no comparison between Moses and those distinguished personages. The former is represented as an *inspired* penman—a special agent of heaven: Cæsar and Thucydides were ordinary historians, narrating common occurrences. While such a style, therefore, might be consistent with their position, it is irreconcilable with the pretensions of Moses. Moreover, we have not argued that the proof of writing in the third person would *alone* settle the controversy. Our objections to the genuineness of the Pentateuch are based on accumulative and constructive evidence, and must be taken together to be fairly answered. Nevertheless, we unhesitatingly affirm, had such anachronisms been detected in the History by Thucydides, or Commentaries by Cæsar, they would peremptorily have been discarded as their genuine productions. 'Why then (to quote the Rev. Mr. Carpenter) 'should we not treat the Bible as we treat another Book?' To render their apologies somewhat more probable, our clerical opponents have introduced the topic of *authenticity*. They ask, Does the 'infidel' infer the Pentateuch is not *TRUE*? What we infer in our argument on genuineness is, *that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses*. We shall not allow our antagonists to evade *this* conclusion, by obtruding others not immediately before us. Particular statements in a book *may* be authentic, that is, true, and yet not genuine—that is, not written by the *supposed* author. But this authenticity must be *proved* by independent testimony. Notwithstanding, as a *general* rule, it is allowed where the genuineness of a book is invalidated, its authenticity may be challenged. Why must we not apply this rule to the Bible if we are to treat it 'as we treat another book?'

The Rev. Mr. Massingham also interrogates—‘ Besides, is the authenticity of any other book questioned because the writer speaks in the third person?’* Yes, where other evidence, internal and external, *confirm the suspicion* which always attends the anonymous. Under such circumstances *any* record would be questioned, *except* the Scriptures. We are to ‘ treat the Bible as we treat another book,’ if an incident appears *favourable* to its claims; when *inimical*, to follow the rule, only manifests ‘ self-sufficiency and pride!’

The parallel between Moses and Thucydides is, however, by no means ‘ complete.’ It is well observed by a competent judge,†

‘ If we read in a book the account of certain transactions in which a particular man is concerned, and his name always occurs in the third person, it is a natural inference that this man did not write the book in which he is so described. This general principle is, no doubt, to be taken with some limitation; for it is well known that some persons have, from modesty or some other motive, introduced their own names in the third person into their narrative of events, in which they have acted a prominent part. Thus Thucydides, the celebrated historian of the Peloponnesian war, prefaces his work with these words:—

“ Thucydides, of Athens, wrote the war between the Peloponnesians and Athenians, how they fought one against the other.”

‘ This mode of introducing his work, however, does not prevent the author from speaking *elsewhere* in the *first* person, as for instance, in chapter forty-eight of the second book of his history, where he describes the plague at Athens:—

“ I will relate its nature, together with such details as may best enable a man hereafter, if it should come again, to recognise it and to be prepared against it; for I both had the complaint myself, and saw others who had it also.”

‘ It is clear, from this passage, that Thucydides was the author of the book which bears his name; and the mode of speaking in the third person, with which the history commenced, is compensated by other direct expressions, and does not detract from his claims to be regarded as the author of the book. Indeed, the former sentence may be considered as equivalent to a modern title page, “ The History of the Peloponnesian War,” etc., by Thucydides.

‘ It is also observable that writers, speaking of themselves in the third person, use a sort of reserve in all such self-descrip-

* ‘ Two Lectures,’ p. 26.

† ‘ Hebrew Records,’ p. 321.

tions. The admirable historian just mentioned alludes to himself in two or three passages only of his immortal work, and with the utmost modesty and taste, though he held an important command as admiral in the war which he describes, and received the *honour* of *ostracism* from his democratic countrymen. But when we recur to the Hebrew Pentateuch, these two indications of authorship altogether fail us. Moses is invariably described in the third person, and, as three-fourths of the book concern him most intimately, it is impossible to conceive that the book could have been written by him.'

Are the allusions to Moses made with 'modesty and taste?' Could *Moses* have written the following?—'Now the man Moses was very *meeek*, above all the men that were on the face of the earth!'^{*} What a token of meekness to declare no other person on earth was as meek as himself!—'Moreover, the man Moses was *very great* in the land of Egypt,'[†] &c. Similar passages could be cited,[‡] yet the Rev. Mr. Massingham applauds the *humility* of Moses! 'I need only say that it was the testimony of God to Moses, not the testimony of Moses to himself; he wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. His pride, therefore, could not conceal faults, nor his modesty keep back excellencies!'[§] We confess our inability to confute such recondite distinctions! This is an example of Mr. Massingham's attempt to weigh 'infidel objections' in 'the balances of *reason* and fair *argument*!'

The book of Deuteronomy presents the style of a neutral pen in a marked degree. The writer opens the subject with an introductory discourse, and then introduces Moses as in the act of speaking; and when he has made Moses finish his harangue, he resumes his own part, and speaks till he brings Moses forward again, and at last closes the scene with an account of the death and burial of Moses. This interchange of speakers occurs no less than four times in this book; from verse 1 of chap. i. to the end of verse 5, it is the writer who speaks; he then introduces Moses as in the act of delivering his oration, and this continues to the end of verse 40, of chap. iv. Here the writer drops Moses, and speaks historically of what was done in consequence of what Moses, when living, is supposed to have said, and which the writer has dramatically rehearsed. This style continues to the end of chap. xxxiii., when the writer,

* Numbers xii., v. 3.

† Deut. xxxiii., v. 1-6.

‡ Exodus xi., v. 3.

§ Two Lectures, p. 25.

having now finished the rehearsal on the part of Moses, comes forward and speaks through the whole of the last chapter. He begins by telling the reader that Moses went up to the top of Pisgah, &c., and *died* in the land of Moab, and that the Lord buried him in a valley, *and that no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day*—that is, *unto the time at which the writer lived who wrote the book of Deuteronomy.*

So far as style can indicate, it is obvious Moses is not the author of this book. Had the writings of Cæsar, Thucydides, or Xenophon displayed such indisputable marks of a posterior origin, with what emphasis would the taunt of ‘ignorance’ have been applied to all who had maintained their genuineness? How blind does orthodoxy render its votaries to their own *dicta* when applied against themselves! Not one of the Apocryphal books of the Old or New Testament, which are *unhesitatingly* rejected by Christians themselves, exhibit such anachronisms.

If the style of Deuteronomy denotes a more modern origin, so does Genesis. This Professor Cooper, in his crushing reply to Professor Silliman, has unanswerably shown. So has Eichorn and other learned critics. They explain that the book of Genesis in particular, contains passages so hostile to the doctrines and views of Moses, that he could not have written it as we now have it.

The peculiar and characteristic doctrines of Moses, as delivered to the children of Israel, were, we are told—

1st. *The unity or oneness* of the Lord God of Israel. Deut. vi., v. 4, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.’ Mark xii., v. 29, ‘And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.’ Deut. xxxii., v. 39, ‘I, even I, am he; and there is no God with me.’

Could Moses dictate a narration implying, from beginning to end, a plurality of Gods?

There are three words throughout the Pentateuch generally used and translated God, *Elohim*; *Jehovah*; and *Adonai*; the word *Elohim* is in the plural, and the true rendering of it is, the Gods: probably as we may reasonably collect from Gen. c. vi., v. 2, inferior gods. Throughout the first chapter of Genesis, for instance, if you read ‘the gods,’ in lieu of *God*, you will use the true instead of the false translation. That *Elohim* is in the plural, and that it is joined with plural adjectives, verbs, and pronouns, the commentator, Dr. Adam Clarke, after Parkhurst Lex. has collected abundant instances in the note to Genesis i., v. 1. He considers this plural name of the Almighty,

as full proof of a trinity in unity. Moreover, El, Elohim, are Chaldee expressions—El, God; Elohim, Gods, as Adonai is a Phœnician word (Adonis); and Jehovah (hevo or yevo, the better pronunciation, Euseb, præb, Evang. lib. x. Diod. Sic. lib. 2 Macrob, Sat. lib. 1) was common to the Phœnicians and Egyptians. (Park. 6th ed., p. 21.)

The account of the creation in the book of Genesis, is a double narration. This, Eichorn has distinctly made out.* In the one account, complete in itself, the word *Jehovah* (God) is employed throughout: in the other account the word *Elohim*, the gods, is employed throughout, as it is through the whole of the first chapter of Genesis. 'In the beginning, the gods created the heavens and the earth: the gods said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness, &c.

It might be shown from other dogmas and mysteries taught in Genesis—the creation and fall, &c.—that that book is of *Chaldean* origin, and therefore later than Moses; but as this would open a question too large to be discussed here, we shall reserve our remarks till an early opportunity. It may be stated that the Talmud expressly declares that the Jews borrowed the names of the angels, and even their months from the Babylonians. We are apprehensive they have 'borrowed' other ideas which they have not acknowledged. Of this we are certain. Genesis is not named *before* the Babylonish captivity, which is incredible, had that book been familiar to the Israelitish priests.

This introduces an argument which is one of the most important connected with our present inquiry. From Joshua to the *second* book of Kings (which was confessedly written *after* the captivity), there is no allusion to any writings answering to the Pentateuch, and even the name of Moses rarely occurs.

In reply, we have been referred, with an air of affected surprise at our 'ignorance,' to passages in one or two books, containing words like the following:—'The Law,' 'The Law of the Lord,' 'The *book* of the Law,' &c. Now, what do those expressions mean? Do they imply the *Pentateuch*?—the five long books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy? To *assume* this identity is to beg the whole question. Will our clergy *demonstrate* the identity? Here rests the foundation of the discussion.

We are gratified in having an opportunity of citing, in support of an averment which has exposed us to no inconsiderable

* Pritchard's Anal. of Egyptian Myth. ed., of 1819, p. 128.

amount of polite vituperation, the authority of a writer who has undoubtedly devoted profound attention to the subject, though on some points we may not entirely agree with him.* He shows that in support of the claims of Moses, certain passages are quoted from the book of Joshua, which continues the Jewish history after the death of Moses, and it is thought that these passages allude to the Pentateuch, such as we now have it, proving thereby that this book was then in existence. Thus in Joshua, c. i., v. 7, 8, we read, 'THIS BOOK OF THE LAW shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein,' &c. In another passage of the same book, chap. viii., v. 34, we are told that Joshua, the successor of Moses, read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law: there was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel. From which passage, according to Bishop Tomline, 'it is evident, that the book of the law, or *Pentateuch*, existed in the time of Joshua, the successor of Moses.'† *But this inference is certainly more than is warranted by the premises.*

In the mean time, however, we may admit the statement in Joshua that in his time there was a certain 'book' called the book of the law; but from this point the continuity of the witnesses is entirely broken, for we in vain search the books of Judges,‡ Ruth, and the two books of Samuel for a continuation of the testimony—not the most remote trace is to be found of the book of the law or its author.

If it be conceded that these four last-mentioned books were written about the time of David's death, which happened in the year B.C. 1015—for this is the point at which the history contained in them terminates—and if it appears that these books, the only surviving records of those five hundred years, make no mention either of the book of the law, or of Moses its author, it necessarily results that the chain of testimony is interrupted

* 'Hebrew Records,' &c., pp. 79-91.

† Elements of Christian Theology, vol. i., p. 35.

‡ We read in Judges i., v. 20, 'And they gave Hebron unto Caleb as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.' But this language is too vague to fix the identity of the book of the law with our Pentateuch: it does not necessarily imply that Moses wrote any book at all.

—fatally and hopelessly interrupted—and that we cannot, on the strength of it, prove the Pentateuch to be the book of the law, written by Moses.

But the whole drift and force of our argument will be made more clear by adducing whatever testimony can be found in the remaining Hebrew writers.

As the Second Book of Samuel could not have been written before the reign of David, because it records the events of his old age, and some of the Psalms were written by David; the author of these Psalms, namely David himself, must be a little earlier in point of time than the author of the Second Book of Samuel; but neither does David, in the Psalms, nor his son Solomon, in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, *make the most remote allusion to the book of the law*, so that they furnish no link by which we may re-unite the broken chain of universal consent. It is true that David, in the Psalms, mentions Moses. The following are all the passages in which his name occurs:—Psalms lxxvii., v. 20; xcix., v. 6; cv., v. 26; cvi., v. 16; cvi., v. 23; cvi., v. 32. The facts alluded to in these verses, certainly are found in our Pentateuch; but many books exist, containing histories of the same facts, *without ever having been thought to be the same books*.

The author of the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, who is generally considered to be king Solomon, *makes no mention either of the book of the law or Moses its author*. This observation brings us down to the year 1055, when Solomon began to reign over Israel; but with the exception of the poetical books, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, generally ascribed to Solomon and his father David, we have no written records of any kind for nearly 300 years until the time of Jonah, who is supposed to be the earliest of the prophets. But the book of Jonah makes no mention of either Moses or the law, and none of the other prophets have the most remote allusion to the subject, except Jeremiah and Malachi, in whose books of prophecies we find the following passages:—‘The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and say thou unto them, Thus sayeth the Lord God of Israel; Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt.’ Jeremiah xi., v. 1-4.—‘Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be

toward this people.' Jeremiah xv., v. 1.—'Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.' Malachi iv., v. 4. These words, however, give us no assistance in identifying the writings of Moses with the Pentateuch which we now have: and no other testimony can be found until we come to about the 37th year of Jehoiachin king of Judah, *i.e.* about the year 562 before Christ. As this is the last year mentioned in the books of Kings, it is clear that the writer of them could not have lived* before that time. Concurrent with the two books of Kings are those of Chronicles, which are admitted to have been written by Ezra after the Jewish captivity, *i.e.* about 500 years before Christ. But between the time of Joshua, whose testimony to the existence of a 'book' of the law has been admitted, *on the supposition that he wrote the book which passes by his name*, and the year 562 before Christ when the author of the books of Kings lived, is an interval of nearly 900 years, and it will be borne in mind, as far as we have yet proceeded, no mention has been made by any intermediate writer of the book of the law, much less has any expression been discovered, by which it can be shown that the book of the law, which they had then, and the Pentateuch which we have now, *are one and the same book*.

There are, however, some remarkable passages in the books of Chronicles and of Kings which have not been noticed, because they are of a very different character from the foregoing, for they seem to prove that the book of the law was nothing more or less than *the two tables of stone* which God delivered to Moses on the Mount. The first passage is as follows:—'And

* I am justified in saying that the books of Kings were written after the Babylonish captivity by the admission of all the commentators. Take for instance the following passage from Bishop Tomline's 'Elements.' Theol. vol. i., p. 25:—'It seems probable, therefore, that the books of Kings and Chronicles do not contain a complete compilation of the entire works of each contemporary prophet, but are rather an abridgment of their several labours, and of other authentic public writings, *digested by Ezra after the captivity*, with an intention to display the sacred history under one point of view, and hence it is that they contain some expressions, which evidently result from contemporary description, and others which as clearly argue them to have been composed long after the occurrences which they relate.

all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. And they brought up the ark of the Lord, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, even those did the priests and the Levites bring up. And king Solomon and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude. And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above. And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy place before the oracle, and they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day. *There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone*, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.' 1 Kings, viii., v. 3-9. These words form part of the narrative concerning the building of the temple and the arrangement of the sacred utensils and other furniture with which it was stored. Among the things Solomon then placed in it, was the ark of the covenant, which had formerly been kept in the tabernacle, before the temple was built. It was in the side of this very ark of the covenant that Moses commanded the book of the law to be placed, as appears by Deuteronomy, xxxi., v. 26; and yet, when Solomon caused the ark of the covenant to be removed into the temple, it is expressly stated in the passage which has been just quoted that there was then '*nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone*, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.' How then is this discrepancy to be explained? If Moses put both the two tables of stone and the book of the law into the ark, and only the former were still there in the time of Solomon, it is manifest that the book of the law must have been removed in the interval; probably, it may be said, by the Philistines when they carried away the ark among the spoils of the defeated Israelites. If this be so, when was the book of the law restored? If it was never restored, how did the Israelites obtain the copy which we shall presently notice as having been carried round Judah by the order of king Jehoshaphat, and afterwards discovered in the temple in the reign of king Josiah? It may also be

asked, why the Philistines did not extract the two tables of stone also? for these were still safe in the time of Solomon. To these perplexing questions a simple answer may be given, which will solve the whole difficulty. The two tables of stone were the book of the law given by Moses, and besides them was no other.

We will proceed to show that the writer of the books of Kings makes no mention of the book of the law, which will enable us to identify it with the existing Pentateuch, but rather that his words exclude the possibility of such a book having then existed.

It has been observed that there are certain passages connected with the notice of the book of the law which bear upon our present argument. The first has been produced; the second is as follows—Solomon is still supposed to be speaking:—‘And the Lord hath performed his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built an house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the Lord, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.’ 1 Kings viii., v. 20-21. This is a most important passage: in every respect it corroborates the explanation which has been given of the former passage. In the one, we read that the two tables of stone alone were in the ark; in the other, it is said that the covenant of the Lord was therein. The two tables of stone were therefore the same thing as the covenant; the ark is from them called the ark of the covenant; it is also called the ark of the testimony. The book of the law also is called the book of the testimony; and the whole matter is plain and intelligible. The Lord gave two tables, containing a summary of his commandments, to be the basis of the Jewish constitution and the foundation of all their morals and government. As a fitting receptacle for these heir-looms of the nation, an *arca*, ark, coffer, or chest, was constructed, and this chest was called the ark of the covenant, because it contained the two tables aforesaid, and nothing besides them. If the Pentateuch had been in existence, it would have made the two tables of stone no longer necessary—they would have been a cumbersome and useless load.

If, however, it should be argued that Solomon *may* have placed the book of the law in the temple, distinct from the ark of the covenant, I would ask, Where is the notice of this fact?

It is impossible to prove a negative in any other way than by showing that there is no proof of such a thing having taken place. But if Solomon placed the book of the law in the temple, so valuable a treasure might surely have been worth mentioning among the lamps, tongs, and other furniture, which were then placed there. In the seventh chapter of the first book of Kings, and the 51st verse, we read:—‘So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the Lord. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord.’

But the book of the law, it seems, was not placed there; at least, there is no record of its having been so placed. It is more reasonable to conclude that it was not in existence than that, being in existence, this ‘divine’ record was less esteemed than the silver and gold, and the lamps and the tongs with which the perishable fabric of the temple was embellished.

About seventy years after the death of Solomon, Jehoshaphat was reigning over the kingdom of Judah. The emissaries of the king, it is here stated, *had the book of the law*. Was there then only one copy of this book, and that the original which had been given by the hand of Moses? It would appear from this verse (which, however, has no corresponding notice in the books of Kings), that there was no other copy of the book of the law, or the teachers who went through the country would not have been under the necessity of carrying it with them. Here, too, if we suppose, as has been before repeatedly observed, that the book of the law was nothing more than the two tables of stone, all difficulties vanish; and the history is reduced to harmony with our antecedent notions respecting those primitive times when writing consisted rather in monuments and inscriptions upon stone than in the more refined usage of books and alphabets.

The above argument irrefragably substantiates what we have long maintained in defiance of the contumely of the clergy—that the Bible itself fails to prove the existence of such a book as the Pentateuch till subsequent to the Babylonish captivity, *nearly one thousand years after Moses!*

It is sometimes affirmed that we find it recorded *in the Pentateuch* itself that Moses was the writer. Dr. Archibald Alexander remarks:—‘The five books of Moses were, when finished,

* ‘The Canon of the Old and New Testament Scriptures,’ p. 15.

carefully deposited by the side of the ark of the covenant,' Deut. xxxi., v. 24-26. This is the old assumption that the 'book of the law' means the five books of Moses. We say again, *prove* it. The author of the 'Records' very prudently surmises that 'it is more probable an inscription much shorter than the Pentateuch is to be understood by these words.* We should presume *much* shorter!

Our divines reason thus. It is asked, who wrote the Pentateuch? Moses. Who says he wrote it? Why, Moses wrote the book of the law. The Pentateuch says he did. Thus they deduce the author of the Pentateuch from the book of the law, and the author of the book of the law from the Pentateuch! How convenient! They forget to show, firstly, that the 'book of the law,' here mentioned, *is* the Pentateuch; and, secondly that *therefore* Moses must have written it. *The genuineness and authenticity of the Pentateuch itself must be first established before it is quoted as proof of its own claims.*

We beg our opponents to prove that Moses could have written *any* elaborate history. Upon what material were they written? Is there any testimony that Moses wrote upon anything but stone or plaster? And could he, or any one else, have written five long books upon *that* material? What a *portable* library they would make!

The Rev. T. Carpenter discerns 'no absurdity in supposing that his history was originally written upon tables of stone or plaster,† as Mr. Layard has deciphered, on the rocks of Sinai, the Assyrian and Ninevite monuments, and on slabs and cylinders many lengthy inscriptions.' Has the lucky Mr. Layard found any voluminous histories on stone like our Pentateuch? How unfortunate he did not discover the genuine 'book,' written 'with the fingers of Moses,' or one of the last 'editions' of the same! The allusion to the Arundelian marbles, or the pillars preserved in Crete, affords no conclusive parallel to our elaborate five books. Authorship must have been no easy task in those days!

There is no evidence the *papyrus* was in use for writing purposes till about the age of Herodotus. If there be, let it be adduced. Mr. Carpenter refers to a papyrus manuscript in the Vatican library at Rome, on which has been discovered a date answering to the year 640 B.C. Supposing the date to be clearly made out—which is conceding much—it only *confirms*

* P. 31.

† p. 120.

the above view. Besides there is a *little* difference between 640 B.C., and 1440 B.C., the time of Moses. Did *he* use the papyrus? *Where is the proof?* The Rev. J. A. Savage* *thinks* Moses might have used it. We have nothing to do with Mr. Savage's surmises. We want his *proofs*. To say we cannot show that Moses did *not* use this material, only displays Mr. Savage's logical fairness and consistency. We cannot prove a negative. All that we can do is, to establish that the 'proofs' on the affirmative side are not valid. Let these be advanced, and we will try.

The reference to the term 'book' in Deuteronomy, allowing it to refer to the five books, is not admissible *until it is demonstrated that that book was really written by Moses or in the age of Moses*. It is taking for granted the very point disputed. Is not this term 'book' an indication that the writer who used it lived when 'books' were in common use, and thus conforms himself to the language and ideas of his own age, rather than the days of Moses? That such anachronisms *do* pervade the Old Testament we have made manifest. Calling them by the more convenient appellation of 'interpolations,' does not make them less unfavourable to the *genuineness* of Scripture.

Who, then, *did* write the Pentateuch? ask our opponents. This is a query *they* must answer. Denying that Moses was the author, only entails upon ourselves the duty of showing that the evidence upon which such presumption is founded is fallacious. We respectfully submit that this *has* been accomplished. Here *our* work, therefore, upon this subject, legitimately ends. Those critics who have proved that the several reputed authors of the letters of Junius could not have written them, are not bound to show who *did* write those brilliant compositions.

Nevertheless several learned men have advanced reasons in support of the opinion that Ezra is the real author of the Pentateuch. The length of this chapter will not admit of our submitting their views. One citation from the late Dr. Cooper, of the United States, must suffice. He held—

1st. 'That Moses wrote no long composition—none that would occupy more than a part of a day to read. This agrees with the law of Mount Horeb.

2nd. 'That what he did write, were thin slabs of stone, traced in plaister while it was soft. This is certain, for he would naturally make use of the same methods himself that he publicly

* 'The Rise,' etc., p. 95.

recommended to the people: he would naturally prefer that mode of writing which he chose to recommend to others as the most convenient, especially when he directed the national records to be so kept. Deut. xxvii., v. 1-4.

3rd. 'That we have no accounts of any "books" of Moses, from the time of their supposed original composition till the time of Jehoshaphat and of the priest Hilkiyah, who said that he had found the "book of the law." Solomon and the Levites, under his direction, after due search, could find nothing of the kind. They did not exist in Solomon's time. What this book of the law comprised, what Hilkiyah found, or what he composed, whether it was in any respect the same as the ordinances in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, in whole or in part, or how much it comprised of the modern Pentateuch, if any, how much of it was traditional reduced to writing, no one can tell, and no trace of it remains. It is quite certain that it could not have contained the book of Genesis, for that constitutes no part of the "book of the law."

4th. 'A few years after Hilkiyah had produced this, his edition of the law of Moses, Jerusalem was sacked, burnt, and utterly destroyed and subverted. The Jews who were not slaughtered were carried into captivity, where they had no means or opportunity of becoming acquainted with the law, or of observing it. Nothing can be more likely than the assertion of Esdras (2 Esd. xiv., v. 19), that during the pillage and destruction of the city of Jerusalem, or during this captivity, the book of the law, whatever it might have been, *was burnt*, and no copy of it remained. Nor can anything be more probable in itself, than that after the captivity, and on their return to Jerusalem, their leader, Esdras (Ezra), should dictate, as well as he could, the history of the world from the beginning, as well as the history and law of the Jewish nation, and the claims and privileges of the Jewish priesthood to which he belonged. In so doing, the traditions and the learning of the Babylonians would greatly assist him, especially as he must have been born and educated in Chaldea, for a leader of seventy or eighty years of age would be too old for such an undertaking. Hence the similarity of the Jewish with the Babylonish accounts of the cosmogony and the Deluge of Xisuthrus; both of them distinctly traceable to India.

'Except this book so dictated by Esdras, as is said, we know of no other that relates to the question: he therefore was the probable author of the Pentateuch, so far as history can throw any light on this investigation. I say the probable author,

because there is nothing like certainty attached to any part of the historical testimony relating to the books called the Pentateuch. *All that is certain about them is, that those who believe the Bible, must believe that these books, when ascribed to Moses as the author, are forgeries.* The anachronisms cannot be gotten over.....The following considerations induce me upon the whole to consider Esdras as the author or compiler of the Pentateuch.

‘*Because*, there is neither positive, nor anything like probable evidence that any book of the law existed when he undertook to compose from recollection. That all the Jewish records and documents should have been burnt at the destruction and burning of Jerusalem by the soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar, is so very probable in itself, that it may be regarded as true, in the absence of all evidence to the contrary. It is exactly a parallel case to the burning of Rome by the Gauls, and the conclusions thence deduced by M. de Beaufort and Niebuhr.

‘*Because*, as Esdras suggested, the Pentateuch begins with a history of the world from the beginning—manifestly Chaldean.

‘*Because*, the book of the law composed or compiled by Ezra, or Esdras, took him seven days to read to the people, which agrees with the size of the present Pentateuch.

‘*Because*, the *double account of the Creation* in our common Bibles, so clearly pointed out by Eichorn and others, is manifestly a Chaldee tradition tacked to a Jewish tradition, without any connection with it, and easily separable. It is Chaldee, from speaking of God in the plural, Elohim, gods—Chaldee, because it agrees with the Phœnician and Chaldee writers, as cited by Josephus, Alexander, Polyhistor, and Eusebius from Berosus, &c.—Chaldee, because Ezra or Esdras, who was educated and probably born in Babylon during the seventy years’ captivity, would derive all his knowledge from the Chaldee writers of repute of his day—Chaldee, because it is manifestly distinct from and constitutes no part of the Jewish history or traditions, if any such existed: Moses would never have used the plural, Elohim, the gods—Chaldee, also, because the Jews during their captivity, those who attended to literature at all, would be conversant in the Chaldee literature; and the Chaldee traditional cosmogony would be fashionable in the time of Esdras.....

‘It is asserted, that Ezra compiled or composed the Scriptures from pre-existing fragments, or dispersed copies, collected for the purpose. I deny this, and demand the proof.

‘It is said, all these additions and interpolations were inserted by Ezra. I deny this, and demand the proof.

‘It is said, these anachronisms are parenthetical insertions necessary for explanation, correction, and illustration. I can see no such necessity: I deny that there is any such in the passages alluded to. Show it.

‘It is said, that the canonical Ezra was divinely inspired. I deny this, and demand the proof. If the effect of his inspiration was to cast an air of forgery over the whole of his work, as the case is, he was inspired to very little purpose. But he does not pretend to be inspired.

‘He was assisted, it is said, by the Sanhedrim of seventy of his day: were all these inspired also?

‘Were Simon Justus and his Sanhedrim of 120 inspired also? For it seems they added, altered, interpolated, connected, parenthesised, illustrated, and corrected, as well as Ezra.

‘How comes it these interpolators have so intermingled their own works with the originals, that there are no means of distinguishing which is which? How are we to know the interpolation from the original? Admit them all to be inspired, still the difficulties as to the authorship of Moses remain in full force.

‘What authority can a book claim, the work of so many authors, compilers, explainers, interpolators, when the text and the comment are undistinguishably blended?

‘Is it thus that inspiration works? Are doubt, confusion, uncertainty, and obscurity the results of it? If it were the work of some uninspired man, it would really be, as it really appears to be, a careless, inaccurate, unsatisfactory, and very bungling compilation.’*

The remaining books of the Old Testament need only be noticed briefly.

Joshua. The objections to the genuineness of ‘the Books of Moses,’ will apply, in a great degree, to Joshua. It is written in the same neutral style. It is the historian and not Joshua who writes. The same anachronisms pervade it. The *death and burial of Joshua is recorded.* We read also that ‘The Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem *unto this day.*’† Israelites did not dwell in Jerusalem *until after the time of David.* Jerusalem did not fall into the hands of the

* ‘On the Connection between Geology and the Pentateuch,’ in a letter to Professor Silliman, from Thomas Cooper, M.D. Boston, America, pp. 51-2, 25-6.

† Chap. xxiv., v. 29-30; c. xv., v. 63; 2 Saml., c. v., v. 2.

Jews until subdued by him. This passage, therefore, could not have been written until *subsequent to the reign of David*, that is, 370 years after the death of Joshua. When we take into account the expression 'unto this day,' the book could not have been composed until long after David's time, as those words imply a considerable interval between the period of writing, and the event referred to. Almost the whole of chapter xvii. contains facts of this nature.

In the preceding chapter, v. 10., there is a passage of the same kind, 'And they (the Ephraimites) drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer, but the Canaanites dwelt among the Ephraimites *unto this day*, and some under tribute!' This requires no comment. Let any one ask himself when this came to pass, and they will at once discover the credit due to books containing such palpable discrepancies.

Judges must take the fate of Joshua, being, in all probability, from the identity of the style, and other circumstances, the work of the same pen. In the 1st chapter, v. 8, there is a similar reference to Jerusalem as in Joshua, 'Now the children of Judah, had fought against Jerusalem, and *taken it.*' This clearly evinces the book could not be written until after the era of David.

We pass to Samuel, not deeming the story of *Ruth* noteworthy. The books of Samuel are evidently not written by him. There is an elaborate account of *his death and funeral!* This event transpired, according to the Bible chronology, in the year 1069 B.C; yet the history of the very book in which his death is recorded, is brought down to the year 1056—the death of *Saul*, which occurred four years *after* that of Samuel. The 2nd Book begins with the reign of David, who succeeded Saul, and continues the history until David's decrepitude, which did not occur until forty-three years later than the decease of Samuel.

Instead of the preceding book having been written by different authors 1400 to 1000 years before Christ, they bear all the marks of being the production of a common historian, at a more recent period. Joshua is, on the face of it, a continuation of Deuteronomy, Judges, of Joshua, and so on. In this opinion we are not alone. It is frankly confessed. 'As no evidence remains to prove that the separate divisions, entitled Genesis, Joshua, Judges, &c., are any more than consecutive parts of the same work, we are justified in viewing them in this light, until good grounds shall be adduced for disconnecting them.

If it be necessary to say more on this subject an illustration may be drawn from the case of Herodotus, who wrote an history of the wars between the Greeks and Persians, in nine books. But these *books* bear each the name of one of the nine muses, Clio, Melpomene, &c., and no one has ever disputed the unity of these books, the identity of their author, or the continuity of their subject.*

The rest of the historical books, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, it is allowed by Jews and Christians are comparatively modern—that is, were written *after* the Babylonish captivity—the age during which it is likely *all* were produced. The genuineness, however, of even Nehemiah may be challenged. In c. xii., v. 22, Darius, the Persian king is named, who did not live till 100 years after Nehemiah was in his grave!

What are denominated the *poetic* books, Job, Proverbs, Psalms, &c., we are not under the necessity of discussing here.

Job is evidently not a Jewish composition; it has no affinity with any other book in the Bible. This was the opinion of some of the most learned Jews. Eben Ezra and Spinoza declared there is no evidence to prove it is a Jewish book: that the *genius* of the composition, and the drama of the piece are *not Hebrew*.

Proverbs, ascribed to *Solomon*, are nothing but a collection of sayings, and Solomon's name added to give them authority. This opinion is confirmed by the 1st verse of the 25th chapter, which asserts that, 'these are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out.' Now, Hezekiah did not live until 250 years *after* Solomon!

Psalms, in point of order, should have been noticed after *Job*. The mass of Bible readers ascribe them to David. Hence, the general title in the Prayer Books, 'The Psalms of David.' Did David write the 137th Psalm, referring to an event which did not happen until 400 years after he was defunct? I mean the Babylonish captivity—'By the rivers of *Babylon* we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows, in the midst thereof, for there *they who carried us away* CAPTIVE, required of us a song, saying, Sing us of the songs of Zion.' The more learned admit that David composed only about a third of the Psalms—a very *safe* qualification!

The prophetic compositions we shall examine in our chapter on Prophecy.

* 'Hebrew Records,' p. 32.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THIS subject has been in some degree anticipated, and necessarily so, in a preceding chapter,* which the reader may consult before entering upon the following inquiry.

The New Testament comprises twenty-seven books. It is popularly believed these books were written by eight persons, all of whom were contemporary with the events they relate.

1. Matthew, the supposed author of the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

2. Mark, the alleged writer of the Gospel according to St. Mark.

3. Luke, the Gospel according to St. Luke, and the Acts of the Apostles.

4. John, the Gospel according to St. John, the Epistles of St. John, and the Revelation.

5. St. Paul, the fourteen epistles which pass under his name.

6. St. Peter, the two Epistles that bear his name.

7. St. James; the General Epistle of St. James.

8. St. Jude, the General Epistle of St. Jude.

Undoubtedly the *Gospels* are the most important division of the Christian Scriptures. Should we, therefore, succeed in establishing that fair grounds of doubt exist of their reputed origin, we seriously compromise their divine pretensions.

Upon our task then let us enter.

We have already demonstrated, in the chapter to which we have above referred, that their early history is *fatally* obscure;† for it must not be forgotten that we are not discuss-

* "The Christian Scriptures Historically Considered," chap. iii.

† Since writing the earlier portion of this volume, we have read a recently published work, entitled "The Doctrine of Inspiration," by the Rev. John Macnaught, M.A., Oxon, incumbent of St. Chrysostom's Church, Everton, Liverpool. On page 87 there is this broad admission:—"But, moreover, if from what Christians have thought about the canon as bearing upon inspiration, we turn to the history of the canon itself, *we shall*

ing the claims of ordinary memoirs. We are canvassing records professing to narrate the mission of the "Son of God"—records, a belief in which is pronounced essential to the everlasting welfare of the human race. Can it be possible that the origin of histories of such stupendous significance are uncertain and unknown? Does not this fact indisputably show they are merely human like other histories, and like them subject to obscurity and vicissitude?

We can trace these Gospels to the second century, *but no further*. The Rev. Mr. Macnaught admits — "When the four Gospels were written, or where they first received a degree of general reverence that was conceded to no other biographies of Jesus, *we cannot exactly say*; but there is much ground for believing *that this did not take place in THE FIRST century of our era.*"*

The chain of evidence thus fails the Christian at the *very period when all depends upon its strength*.

It is needless to pretend, by quoting Barnabas and others who flourished prior to the second century, to trace the Gospels we now have down to the very contemporaries of the Apostles, and boast of "one unbroken link," inasmuch as it has yet to be established that even the writings of these early fathers are genuine,† and, presuming this was satisfactorily accomplished, it has yet to be proved that the passages found in Barnabas and his contemporaries were really taken from our *present* Gospels, and not repeated from oral tradition.‡ Mr. Macnaught candidly acknowledges the force of these difficulties. We therefore reiterate, the "link" where it ought to have been the strongest has broken, and all attempts to unite it have signally failed.

We will consider the New Testament books *seriatim*.

1. *Matthew*.—Where is the evidence that this apostle wrote a gospel? No known copy ever was seen by a witness to the fact. The original of Matthew is *supposed* to have been written in Hebrew. But our present Gospel, bearing that title, is written

find such gloomy obscurities covering this whole subject, that we shall be compelled—however unwillingly—to own their inspirational infallibility must rest on some better support than the canonicity of Scripture, or it will not be maintained at all." More anon of this extraordinary book, which has already alarmed the clergy of Liverpool.

* *Ibid*, p. 90.

† Vide chapter iii. page 37.

‡ P 46.

in Greek. To assume that one is a literal translation of the other is to beg the point to be proved.

The following reasons may be assigned against this presumption. 1. Because there is not the slightest evidence on record of its being a translation. 2. Because it is unreasonable to believe that an *authentic* work, written by *divine* inspiration, would be utterly superseded by an unauthenticated translation. 3. Because there is nothing in the Gospel of St. Matthew, as regards its style of construction, that would lead to the inference of its being a mere translation. WHO translated Matthew into Greek? Nobody knows! Mr. Mackay unhesitatingly avers that "we have no means of tracing the connexion between these Hebrew memorials of the 'Logia' and our Greek canonical Matthew."*

It would have been more probable, had Matthew written a Gospel at all, that he would have written neither in Hebrew nor Greek, but in the *Syriac* tongue. The Jews at the age of Christ spoke that language and not Hebrew.† Now no such an original ever existed, as far as is known. We have a *Syriac version*; but why have we such a version? Why was it necessary? Why was not the *original* in that language? If Matthew wrote in Hebrew the common Jews could not have understood him. Hebrew ceased to be spoken after the captivity. Josephus wrote in *Syriac* to the *Jews*.

* II. *Mark*.—This Gospel was confessedly written in Greek; so were Luke and John. It has never been assumed they had a Hebrew origin. How is this? The Apostles were "unlettered, ignorant men." Where did they learn Greek? Why should these *strict* Jews (for they reprov'd Paul because he was not so) write to their own countrymen in a language which they did not use themselves, and which their countrymen did not comprehend?

Who, then, really wrote the gospel of Mark? Mark himself does not claim it: the other Evangelists do not ascribe it to him. When was it written? Where? To whom? No one can tell!

Even conceding that Mark may have written in Greek; the gospel of Mark now in circulation appears to be a different work to that which was first ascribed to him. Our present gospel is a regular history like the other three, while the one mentioned by Papias, who, according to Paley, was the *first* to mention that Mark wrote a gospel, were mere desultory memo-

* "Rise and Progress of Christianity," p. 7.

† Vide Mark vii. 34. Acts ix. 40, &c.

randas, taken down from time to time as Peter incidentally delivered them.*

III. *Luke*.—This Gospel is evidently composed after the Paulinist doctrines had given the dominant tone to Christian literature, and, therefore, long *subsequent* to the time of Luke. In positive terms it announces that Judaism ended where Christianity began, and transfers the prediction given in Matthew as to the permanence of the *law* to the "words" of Christ. It proclaimed the Pauline doctrine of faith and grace, and suppressed all those passages in which Matthew is said to have restricted the privileges of Christianity to Jews.

Mr. Mackay observes, "But the present Gospel is not the original Luke. The Pauline Gospel has passed through the hands of a *compiler* whose object, clearly distinguishable from the original, is to qualify party asperities, to restore the balance of impartiality by Judaical concessions, and thereby *adapt* the narrative to catholic wants."† Whether our present Gospel be the original or a compilation, we deny that we have succinct evidence that *Luke* wrote *any* Gospel. None of the apostolic fathers mention the fact. The first time Luke is named was by Irenæus, 150 years after Christ.

IV. *John*.—Undeniably is this gospel still more recent. It is written in a tongue foreign to the Jews of Palestine, and when greater marvels were needed to excite attention. The stories recorded are so extravagant, they are palpably not the testimony of an *eye-witness*, but of a later writer anxious to astound the credulous. None of the other three mention the most extraordinary tales of John. In plan as well as purport it is widely different to the rest. Had this Gospel been extant so early as John, it would have been impossible for the apostolic fathers to have avoided naming it.‡ They, above all others, ought to have *distinctly* named the Four Gospels, if then in existence. *None of them do so.*§

Could admissions be more corroborative of our doubts than the subjoined passage from the controversy between two *Christian* disputants—Augustine and Faustus, about the year 400? We need not add a word. "The books called the

* Chap. iii., p. 43.

† "Rise and Progress of Christianity," p. 100-101.

‡ The *apostolic* fathers are those who are considered to have *personally* known the Apostles.

§ Vide chap. iii. 37.

Evangelists have been composed *long after* the times of the Apostles by some obscure men, who, fearing that the world would not give credit to their relation of matters, of which they could not be informed, have published them *under the name of the Apostles*; and which are so full of discordant relations that there is neither *agreement* nor *connexion* between them." "It is thus that your predecessors have inserted in the Scriptures of our Lord many things, which, though they carry his *name*, agree not with his *doctrine*. This is not surprising, *since that we have often proved* these things have not been written by himself, *nor by his Apostles*, but that, for the greatest part, they are founded upon *tales*, upon *vague reports*, and put *together* by I know not what, half Jews, with but little agreement between them, and which they have, nevertheless, *published under the name of the Apostles of our Lord.*"*

5. *The Acts of the Apostles*.—Though anonymous, this book is ascribed to St. Luke from the inscription to Theophilus being the same as the Gospel of St. Luke; but this inference rests on the assumption that Luke *did* write the Gospel bearing his name. Neither the Corinthians nor the Marcionists admitted the Acts. Chrysostom, in a homily which he made on this work, declares that in his time (about the year 400) few knew anything either of the author or the book. †

6. *The Epistles of Paul*.—Popular though these productions are amongst modern divines, one of the earliest Christian sects—the Ebionists—*never accepted them*. The Ebionists regarded Paul as an impostor. They reported that he was originally a Pagan; that he came to Jerusalem, where he lived some time, and being disposed to marry the daughter of the high priest, he caused himself to be circumcised. Not being able to obtain her, however, he quarrelled with the Jews, and wrote against circumcision and all the legal ordinances. ‡ The genuineness of Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews has been challenged by the *literati* of Germany. Luther even suspected that it was written by Apollos and not Paul. § The two epistles to Timothy and the epistle to Titus were rejected by Marcion. The epistle to Philemon is confessedly problematical. Dr. Paley—ever prompt with an assumption in the absence of all evidence—avoids the

* Boulanger's Life of Paul, chap. ii. French Edition.

† Ibid, chap. ii.

‡ Ibid, chap. ii.

§ "Phases of Faith," p. 140.

difficulty in his usual mode by a probability. This epistle "*probably* escaped notice on account of its brevity."* If the "Evidences of Christianity" are to be considered established by the ready use of such phrases as "I believe," "very likely," "probable," "not improbable," "most remarkable," &c., no one has been so successful as this plausible divine. Demonstration is easy in the hands of such a logician.

The Archdeacon indulges in unmeasured exultation because the genuineness of Paul's Epistles are proved with little difficulty. And how will the reader suppose the proof is so easy? Because *some* of them are quoted by the apostolic fathers! The "proof" is "most remarkable" when a doubtful case is confirmed by doubtful evidence! The genuineness of the apostolic fathers is not yet established, nor is it "probable" they will, as the writings ascribed to these men are gradually abandoned, one by one, by Christians themselves. †

The favourite argument of Paley in support of the genuineness of Paul's Epistles depends upon the *ipse dixit* of Eusebius. "It is sufficient for us to find that the thirteen epistles of St. Paul are placed by him in the first-class (that is, "scriptures universally acknowledged") without any hesitation or doubt." ‡ Is it "sufficient" to settle a disputed question to cite the declaration of one who used falsehood as a "medicine" for "the benefit" of those who required it? "Probably" this was one of the cases which "required" the "medicine!"

That the early Christians *did* employ Paul's name to impose upon the people is patent from the acknowledged forgeries of "the Epistle of Paul to Seneca," "the Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans," a third "Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians," § "The Acts of Paul," "The Preaching of Paul and Peter," "The Revelation of Paul," &c. || If early Christians forged Paul's name to them, why not to others?

To determine the genuineness of those Epistles of Paul which remain in our New Testament canon, on the testimony of the very men who justified open frauds, and deemed it "an act of virtue to deceive and lie when, by that means, they could promote the interests of the Church," is not only illogical but disreputable.

* "Horæ Paulinæ," conclusion, sect. 1.

† See chap. iii. p. 37 of this work.

‡ "Horæ Paulinæ," conclusion, sec. 3. § Ibid, con. sec. 5.

|| See chap. iii. p. 51 of the present work.

6. On the Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude we need not expatiate. Five out of the seven—the Epistle of James, the Epistle of Jude, the second Epistle of Peter, and the second and third Epistles of John—Christian historians have themselves disputed.*

The veracious Eusebius, alluding to the Second Epistle of Peter, observes that though it was “gainsaid” it was still “read of amongst the rest of the Scriptures, because it seemed PROFITABLE.”† A very legitimate reason doubtless with the clergy of all ages? Is it not “probable” the genuineness of other books of the New Testament were accepted for reasons equally disinterested? This passage forcibly illustrates the orthodox rule that any writings which were “profitable” were pronounced “divinely inspired,” and permitted to circulate as the “Word of God.” What confidence can any honest man place in such a policy?

7. *The Revelation of St. John the Divine.*—The last book in the Bible is notoriously a “doubtful” composition. The “ancients” rejected it as spurious.‡ The learned Christian Professor Du Pin, in his elaborate history of the canon,§ informs us that St. Deneys of Alexandria observes, that divers before him had rejected and refuted the Apocalypse (Revelation), as a book full of fictions and falsehoods, but that divers others approved of it; as for himself he dared not reject it, that he believed it had a mysterious sense, but that he was persuaded *it was not wrote by St. John*, as he endeavours to prove by several reasons. St. Jerome says, in his 129th epistle, that in his time most of the churches in Greece did not receive this book, *no more than the Latins did the Epistle to the Hebrews*. It was rejected by Caius, who described it to Corinthus.

Not individual priests merely, but whole *councils* rejected it. It is not in the catalogue of the council of *Laodicea*, nor in that of St. Cyril. It was not finally placed amongst the canonical books till the *fourth* Council of Toledo, held in 633.|| How coolly our Christian historians narrate these facts. Do they not perceive the absurdity and inconsistency of calling upon the sceptic to believe those books genuine and divine, which Christians themselves impugned for the first 600 years?

* Mackay's "Rise and Progress of Christianity," p. 6.

† Euseb. Ec. Hist. ii. book 3, chaps. iii. xxi. xxii.

‡ Cave's Lives of the Apostles, Sec. 10, p. 73.

§ Vol. ii. chap. i. sect 9. || Du Pin, vol. ii. chap. i. sect. 9.

One of the early Christian bishops, Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, affirmed that many declared the title was a forgery. Even Eusebius, who was ready to assert anything to sustain the church, says :—"Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria [who lived in the third century] writeth thus of the Revelation of St. John. *Divers of our predecessors have wholly refused and rejected this book, and by discussing the several chapters thereof have found it obscure and void of reasons, AND THE TITLE FORGED.* They said it was not John's, nay, it was no revelation which was so covered with so gross a veil of ignorance, *and that there was none either of the apostles, or of the saints, or of them which belonged to the Church, the author of this book, but Cerinthus, the author of the Cerinthian heresy, intituling this as a figment under the name of John, for further credit and authority.*"*

This same bishop makes a remark which corroborates the propriety of the opinion we entertain that the Scriptures were not written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, &c, but at a *later date*, and their names affixed to give them weight and authority. He proceeds to say, "I suppose there were many of the same name with the apostle John, *who for the love they bare him, and for that they had him in admiration, and imitated his steps, would be loved alike of the Lord, and therefore usurped his name, even as Paul and Peter are often repeated of the faithful writers.*"†

It is not the "ancients" merely who challenged the genuineness of the Book of Revelation. Modern critics of great learning and ability follow their example. "His (John's) reputed authorship of the Apocalypse ill accords with his having written a book so utterly dissimilar in spirit, so alien in its tone from that doctrine of a material millennium of which, according to the Ephesian presbyters, the Apostle John was the great propounder.‡ These difficulties, the absence of unequivocal citation by the fathers or apologists earlier than Irenæus, and several geographical and historical incongruities, especially the variance from the practice of the Eastern Church as to keeping the Jewish passover, which John is said to have sanctioned, have induced a conviction that the book comes to us, not from the Apostles, *but a much later writer.*§ Luther, the pillar of Protestantism, vehemently repudiated the Apocalypse. The distinguished Pro-

* Eusebius Ecl. Hist., book 7, chap. xxiv.

† Ibid.

‡ Irenæ. Hær. Stieren's Ed. i. 809.

§ "Rise and Progress of Christianity," R. W. Mackay, M.A., p. 7.

fessor Michaelis mentions that Luther not only declared its spuriousness in the preface of his Bible, but solemnly charged his successors *not to print his translation* of the Apocalypse *without annexing this avowal* — a charge which they DISOBEYED.* The “interests of the Church” demanded that the deception should be kept up, and therefore *the fraud was continued*.†

Having reviewed the several books which comprise the New Testament, we proceed to notice the positions assumed by Paley, Lardner, Alexander, Norton, and others, in defence of the genuineness of those writings.

1. “The early adversaries of Christianity admitted the genuineness of these writings.”‡

Were this true, it by no means affects *our* objections. We depend on evidence that has come to light since their time.

But where is this admission of the early adversaries of Christianity? Celsus, the only one whose evidence would be of any importance, as having lived at an age at all approaching the Apostolic, does not mention any of the four Evangelists by name. He merely refers to certain writings *said* to be by the “disciples” of Christ. He does not state which disciple. Why should Dr. Paley *assume* he meant Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? As usual, the doctor endeavours to escape by *a petitio principii*. Were there no other gospels said to have been written by “apostles and companions of Christ.§ We condemn the absurdity of endeavouring to sustain Christianity by the concessions of its early antagonists, *since those admissions are not what those antagonists themselves put forth*. We have only what their *opponents* say they admitted. The writings of Celsus, as well as Porphyry, were destroyed by public edict.||

We only know what Celsus conceded through the Christian father Origen, his implacable enemy—a man who “was not incapable of asserting in argument *what he believed not*.”¶ To judge of Celsus or Porphyry by the statements of their enemies, and *such* enemies, is manifestly unjust.

* “Phases of Faith,” p. 139.

† For further particulars of the admissions of modern Christians on the subject of the New Testament records, see chap. iii. p. 57, of this work.

‡ Paley’s “Evidences,” chap. ix. section 9.

§ Vide chap. iii. pp. 50, 51, 44, 49. || Chap. vi. p. 95.

¶ See chap. iv. p. 63, and chap. vi. p. 93.

2. "Our present canon of Scripture was determined from the time of the Apostles.* Before the end of the second century they were in *general use*,"† and "appealed to by different sects."‡ So well known were they, and so widely spread, that upwards of 60,000 copies were extant at that time."§

We should be led to suppose from these several assertions that everything connected with the history of these so-called inspired writings was clear and undoubted, and as well known and acknowledged as the genuineness of Hume's History of England, or Gibbon's History of Rome in our day! Such is the impression modern divines labour to convey. Those, however, who have attentively read the former portion of this work will not be deluded.

The assumption that the canon was determined *from the time of the Apostles* is contrary to every fact on the subject. The canon was of extremely slow development.

The learned and able author of the "Rise and Progress of Christianity" confirms this view beyond the possibility of refutation, observing, emphatically that no trace of such a thing is to be found until late in the *second* century. Circumstances then arose which made it clearly needful to have a written standard to appeal to. In the earliest Christian age the only record was *tradition*; and the Gnostics had learned from their own practical experience|| of the facility of imposture, how to put a right estimate on the pretended apostolical authority of the writings which orthodoxy began to quote against them.¶ The *oral* long continued to be esteemed above the scriptural, and Papias, the oldest of Patristic authorities, values the "living voice" far more than the dead letter.** The scantily-written memorials of his day were hesitatingly used, and strictly confined to persons of approved discretion.†† Hints are thrown out that Mark's gospel was originally a *surreptitious* publication of the discourses of Peter,‡‡ whose avowed prejudices against writing

* Dr. Archibald Alexander's "The Canon," &c., p. 274.

† Dr. W. L. Alexander's "Christ and Christianity," p. 73.

‡ Paley's "Evidences," chap. ix. sec 7.

§ Norton's "Genuineness of the Gospels," vol. i. p. 31.

|| Epiphani. Hær., xxvi. 18.

¶ Irenæus. Hær. iii. 2, 1.

** Euseb. Hist. Eccl. iii. 39, p. 382 Hein.

†† Clem. Hom., Ep. Pet. 1.

‡‡ Comp. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. vi. 14, with Dem. Esau. iii. 5.

give way* only when, after his death, the concession becomes inevitable. The early Christian apologists argue almost exclusively from the *Old Testament*; and Justin, when referring to the "apostolic memorials," usually considers it proper to fortify their authority by Old Testament citation. The Epistle of Barnabas recognises no inspired *written* standard of Christianity; its author, like St. Paul, claims an immediate transfusion from the divine fountain of the Spirit, asserting the same privilege for every true Christian. Athenagoras and Melito, who strenuously uphold the inspiration of the Old Testament, *know nothing of the New*; and the uncertain condition of the contemporary Christian literature is illustrated in a rescript of Serapion to a Cilician congregation, in which the Bishop, on mature deliberation, withdraws the assent he had before given to the use of the "Gospel of Peter." The first symptoms of attributing to certain writings of imputed Apostolic origin the inspired character already allowed to the Old Testament are found *towards the end of the second century* in the second Petrine Epistle,† and in Theophilus and Irenæus; yet Irenæus considers the conversation and propagation of the faith to be secure independently of any written documents. *Eusebius* is the first who appears to have seriously addressed himself to the construction of a canon; but his opinions are given so hesitatingly, and the usage to which he appeals is so fortuitous and fluctuating, that his attempt rather proves the rule of faith to have been still *unformed*, and that there existed no means *except the fantasy of the churches* for forming it. His vague notices respecting the "many," or the "few," or the "majority," who approved of this book, or were unfavourable to that, and, in many instances, the inconsistency of his statements with what is known from other sources, *leave us to infer that the present canon is no result of critical research*, but a deposit of *capricious* usage, and that the "standard" was formed, as in other instances of a "standard literature" by *mere arbitrary preference* or acquiescence. But we obviously desert the path of impartial inquiry when, accepting as final the decisions of the second or third century, we confound the orthodoxy of so late an age with the opinions of Primitive Christianity, and resolve that no books, except such as were considered unexceptionable *then*, can possess historical value *now*. *We have no right to single out the most meritorious pro-*

* 2 Peter i. 15.

† 2 Peter iii. 16.

ductions of the age—FOUR, FOR EXAMPLE, *out of many hundreds* of Gospels; and while paying *unlimited* reverence to these as the soul-inspired repositories of Christian verity to *anathematise the rest as heretical!**

In a subsequent portion of his masterly production,† Mr. Mackay again refers to the canon in these decided terms:—

“The construction of a New Testament canon was the fruit of the controversies which showed the *want* of it: an independent literature accompanying the consciousness of an independent religion, which became more determinate and precise in proportion to the necessity of defining its limits against aggression. But heretics appealed not without effect‡ to scriptures of *their own*, or to readings which they asserted to be *more ancient and genuine!* and their opponents, finding literary controversy unsafe ground, fell back to the old source of tradition, declaring with Tertullian, ‘*Ergo non ad scripturas provocandum est.*’§ In short, it was necessary to test Scripture by means of doctrine *before doctrine could be established by the evidence of Scripture.* The argument was a begging of the question.”

The doctrine that our New Testament writings, or, at least, the gospels, were in “general use” before the *end* of the *second* century, is surely no conclusive indication they were really from the pen of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But were they at this period so general and popular? Was the canon so indisputably accepted? We rely upon a writer no less competent to judge than Dr. Alexander:—In order to maintain order and uniformity, in the early sense in which, in an actual establishment, it seemed possible to secure their objects, it became more and more obvious that the church must have a definite standard of doctrine to appeal to. All parties had long been accustomed to refer to Scripture; *but they were not agreed as to what was scripture*, or how it was to be interpreted. Each accused the other of subornation and forgery; each found in the contemporary pseudonymous literature evidence suited to its purposes; and Tertullian exhibits in his own person the loose way in which argument was conducted, quoting for “Scripture” at one time the very book which at another he scornfully rejects as apocryphal. It was impossible to make any conclusive appeal to canonical

* “Rise and Progress of Christianity,” p. 12—14. † P. 149.

‡ Tertull. de Præser., chap. xv. § Ibid, chap. xiv. and xix.

scripture when the canon had no existence. The floating literature of the day had no authentic stamp. Books were scarce, and few were able to read them. Those used in some communities were thought *inadmissible by others*; and there was always a large intermediate class of "Antilegomena," or disputed works. Eusebius tells us that the Apostles expressed themselves in vulgar language, and knew little of the arts of composition: that even the ablest of them, St. Paul, wrote only a few short epistles; and he might have added that for a long time even these shared the unpopularity of their author, and were seldom noticed except to be contradicted. A divine revelation could not be secured to later generations unless it were written; but the first disciples, who expected an immediate end of the world, *had no motive, even if they had the ability, to undertake a seemingly useless task*. It would have appeared absurd to confine within written paragraphs the free overflowings of the spirit; and those who came immediately after them, Papias, Polycarp, and Hegesippus, found it less profitable to consult books than to make personal inquiries of those who had associated with the disciples and professed to recollect their statements. Writing was only resorted to as a *subsidiary expedient* when the "living voice" was absent or extinguished, and since Christianity seemed only a new phase of Judaism, the Old Testament sufficed for almost every purpose of reference; Justin even declaring the gospel to be only a restoration of the law, and its true teachers to be prophets.* And, again, His (Christ's) immediate followers *preached, but did not write*, the literary efforts ascribed to them, having little or no claim to be considered genuine.

Lest the testimony of Mr. Mackay may not be sufficiently orthodox for some readers, we quote from a Church of England incumbent now officiating in Liverpool:— "That Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, wrote the compositions attributed to them we believe, merely because those compositions bear their names, *which is but little proof when it is remembered that early in the history of the Church it was held to be no fault, but an allowable, if not a praiseworthy pious fraud, to pass off any writings that could be useful as coming from the hand of an Apostle, or some companion of the Apostles*. Who the three first Evangelists were we have only the *vaguest tradition* to inform us. Why books which were read in

* "Rise and Progress of Christianity," p. 148—p. 6.

the Christian congregation and highly esteemed, like the first epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, and the other writings of the Apostolic Fathers, should have been utterly excluded from the canon, *it is not easy to explain*, especially when it is remembered that down to the days of Eusebius (A.D. 320), and, indeed, *much later*, the gravest doubts were entertained as to the canonicity of the Epistles to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James, the Second Epistle of Peter, the Second and Third Epistles of John, the Epistle of Jude, and the Revelation of John. So much, and far more, of confusion and uncertainty hangs over the history of the New Testament canon no less than the Old. We have not attempted an examination of the subject of the canon of Scripture, for that is not our present theme; but we have probably seen enough to show us how much difficulty and obscurity environ this very important subject; and we have perhaps seen enough to show us that the broad distinction between canonical and uncanonical writings *is one set up by the dogmatic definitions of man*, rather than by the actual differences which sever the two classes of composition. At all events, we have taken a sufficient glimpse of the history of the canon to convince us that the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible must be proved by some other evidence, or it will never rest securely on the canonicity of Scripture.*

Mr. Norton labours to represent that the Gospels were almost as numerous at this period as in our times—a position unsupported by facts or common sense. That every fifty at this primitive period could have had a copy of the Gospels is utterly preposterous; probably not one out of five hundred could read or write. There were no “Lancasterian” schools in those days, nor could they purchase a New Testament for ninepence! Every copy would be in manuscript—an insuperable difficulty with the popular reader even in this “enlightened” age. The books of the New Testament, indeed, in the early ages, were in the exclusive possession of the priests. Dr. Dodwell held the opinion that they lay “concealed in the coffers of particular churches”—an opinion “not improbable.” A much more learned writer than Mr. Norton confirms this view, “The Christian doctors *never brought their sacred books before the common people*, although people in general have been wont to think otherwise. *During the first ages they were in the hands of the clergy alone.*”†

At the end of the *second century*, and for 1,200 years after

* “Doctrine of Inspiration,” p. 91.

† Semler’s Dissertation, Tertullian, Section 10, Note 57.

wards, the art of printing was unknown. Books could be multiplied only by the tedious, laborious, and costly process of taking copies in handwriting. A written copy of the Christian Scriptures would have cost as much as 600 printed ones at the present day. Such writings, therefore, *if current*, must have been extremely rare, and in the hands of very few persons.

3. "It is an act of injustice for any person to assert that a *Council* determined the question, which were spurious and which were genuine—it merely gave *publicity* to the fact. *If* the canon *had* been determined by a council, we might be told that these books derive their authority *from* the decree of such council."*

To this objection we need only observe that, if the council did not determine the question, for what purpose was it called? The council was convened for the avowed object that the *then* considered genuine books *should* "derive their authority from the decrees of such council." The absurdity of the idea that they merely met to give *publicity* to them is transparent from the author's own showing. He informs us that the "Church at large" *had long known them*. If so, why meet merely to say they were known, and not to stamp them with authority? It was a prudent policy on the part of the author of "British Infidelity" to assure his readers that he was a very humble critic.

The "Working Man" concludes his chapter on the history of the New Testament by struggling to show that "the prisoner at the bar" (the New Testament) has not had a fair trial, as these Christian witnesses (meaning Barnabas, Hermas, Justin Martyr, and others) who were called were not allowed to speak, "either for or against the early claims of the

* "Lectures to the Working Classes on British Infidelity," *by One of Themselves*, p. 155. We may remark that this writer, who boasts of being a "Working Man," and adduces the fact as an evidence of his sincerity, has neither the spirit nor the candour of his "order" to put his real name to his book. One who is ready to defend the genuineness of the Scriptures ought at least to have put the genuineness of his *own* writings beyond dispute. We must also add that, on the publication of his first "Letter," we forwarded a copy of the first part of this work to his publishers, drawing his attention to the circumstance that many of his objections were therein anticipated. Our courtesy was not acknowledged.

prisoner." This is grossly untrue. They were heard.* It was shown that even the genuineness of *their* writings was by no means above suspicion. If genuine, however, these "witnesses" do not even name the "prisoner" to whose identity they are subpoenaed to depose! The mere coincidence of some passages in Barnabas and other apostolic Fathers being *similar* to some in our Gospels, we have repeatedly pointed out, is no proof that these passages were copied from our Gospels. As the "Working Man" seems to entertain a true clerical antipathy to everything adduced by an "Infidel," we will trouble him with the following passage from an evangelical divine, confirming the view we have so often enforced: "If we look to the case of the New Testament, we find that the apostolic Fathers, generally quote sayings of Jesus as such, without professing to extract them from any of our canonical writings. This they do just in the same way as Paul quotes the sayings of our Lord, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Indeed it is evident that, in the first Christian century, what Luke says in his preface was strictly true, that "Many had taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which were most surely believed among the Christians;" and there is every appearance which can make it probable that *from these numerous and uncanonical Gospels* the very earliest extant Christian writers make their quotations at least as readily and frequently as *from any of our canonical New Testament books.*"†

4. "The difficulty of palming such extraordinary forgeries upon the world, renders it absurd to doubt their genuineness. Certain it is that unless the case before us form an exception, the thing never has been done. Many literary forgeries have been uttered, some for amusement, some with a desire to deceive; but *invariably* the deception has been detected by some departure, more or less, from what consistency required."‡

And have not these forgeries been detected "by a departure, more or less, from what consistency required?" Consistency required that if these books were really written by men inspired by an All-wise and All-powerful Being, they should carry conviction *at once to every one*. Where was the "difficulty" of practising the forgery in that not very advanced epoch, especially by those who esteemed it "a *virtue* to deceive,"§ and who "com-

* Vide chap. iii, † "Doctrine of Inspiration," p. 90.

‡ Dr. W. L. Alexander's "Christ and Christianity," p. 11.

§ Chapter iv. p. 57.

mitted to the fire every work that appeared against them?" * From the complaisancy of Dr. Alexander we should apprehend those writings were never doubted. We should presume, too, it was as easy to detect fraud *then* as *now*. Notwithstanding, however, the many facilities for checking fraud, at the present moment imposture *is* successful. As many at this day believe in the "Book of Mormon" as accepted the "the Book of Revelation" in the same length of time. Dr. Alexander cannot be so ill-informed as to the state of literature among the ancient Fathers to attach that weight to this argument he would wish the popular reader to believe. Fully as well versed as himself in the history of the Christian Church is Mr. Mackay, who confesses, "The Fathers had few resources for sifting literary evidence; they used the only evidences of *authenticity* they had, but *such as it would be ridiculous now to rely on*. Their criterion was, in fact, no more than a general instinctive feeling of what was right and true; they gave out as authentic those writings *which they or the Church wished to be so*; and it might be shown in each case that the method of selection was entirely arbitrary, measuring the canonical authority *according to the doctrine, not the doctrine by the canonical authority*. Tertullian, in his treatise on Prayer, assumes the Scriptural dignity of the book called the "Shepherd," which Irenæus also places on the same footing; yet, in another place where the text is against him, *he treats the same work as "impure, apocryphal, and scouted by all the Churches;"* and yet, simultaneously with this unqualified reprobation, *seemingly* implying the severe watchful guardianship of an orthodox literature, the book in question was *respectfully* appealed to by Clement of Alexandria, as it was also by Origen and Athanasius. Many books, *which were perfectly orthodox when composed*, fell into disrepute, while others which were unacknowledged on their first appearance, *were unexpectedly promoted in their place*. This *capricious* formation of the canon is curiously illustrated in the opposite fortunes of the second epistle of Peter and the Apocalypse. The latter, the best authenticated of all the New Testament books, lost in Church estimation in proportion to the estrangement of orthodoxy from its doctrines, which were those adhered to by the Millenarians and Montanists. The second epistle of Peter fared differently. Unknown during the first two centuries, it is mentioned for the first time as of dubious authority by Origen.

* Chapter vi. p. 95.

Eusebius describe it as uncanonical, but as having been very generally received on account of its practical usefulness. Its claims *grow with time* until the Council of Laodicea quietly places the *once repudiated composition* by the side of the Petrine epistle; *the scepticism of Jerome is hushed*, and the classification, avowedly based on *expediency*, is ratified by general assent.*

5. "The early Christians were every way qualified to arrive at a sound judgment on such a point (genuineness). Taken as a class, the Christians of the second century were by much the more intelligent and virtuous portion of the community. Their writers were men of higher *intellectual vigour*, and much *clearer discernment* than the contemporary authors who were heathens; for among the latter we shall seek in vain for any whose pretensions in these respects will bear to be put for a moment in competition with those of Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian."†

Should recklessness of assertion be indicative of strong argument, Dr. W. Lindsay Alexander is invincible. The facts we have just introduced with reference to the "capricious formation" of the canon are a sufficient reply to those statements. Nevertheless, we have other evidence that these Fathers were immoderately credulous and indiscriminating, and therefore *not* qualified "to arrive at a sound judgment."

First, of Irenæus. Can it be possible that Dr. W. L. Alexander does not know the real character of Irenæus? Such indiscriminate praise evinces weakness or disingenuousness. What will the reader conjecture to be the facts from which Irenæus deduces our four Gospels? They are quite *geographical*, or rather *meteorological*! He concludes there are four Gospels, because there are *four winds*!‡ Very "discriminating," undoubtedly! He assigns other reasons no less ridiculous. Can such windy logicians be "qualified" to "arrive at a sound judgment?"

It is only fair to other divines that it should be known all have not the same "sound" standard of qualification as the author of "Christ and Christianity."

Mr. Macnaught refers § with much refined contempt to "such fantastic reasons as are given by one of the Fathers, Irenæus,

* "Rise and Progress," &c., p. 10.

† "Christ and Christianity," p. 19.

‡ "Rise and Progress of Christianity," p. 10.

§ "The Doctrine of Inspiration," p. 91.

who tells us there were four Gospels because there are four quarters in Heaven whence the winds come, and because in Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. i. 4—10) the 'living creatures' had four 'likenesses of their faces,'—viz., a man supposed to represent Matthew, a lion representing John, an ox symbolical of Luke, and an eagle typifying Mark.—Irenæus Adv. Hæres, iii.—xi." A far less able, but much more confident incumbent of the Established Church, Mr. Massingham, who attempted to refute a former edition of this work, is indignant at our ridiculing this credulous Christian Father. "Irenæus speaks of *admitted* truths. He took it for granted that as it was universally acknowledged that there were four quarters of the globe (Europe, Asia, Africa, and *America*), and four winds (north, south, east, and west), so there were four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)." Mr. Massingham adds, "What is there here to be ridiculed as nonsense?" Nothing!

Of *Tertullian* we cannot speak more favourably. We will not insist Dr. Alexander did not know that Tertullian, while vouching for the authenticity of John's gospel, recounts with like seriousness the impassibility of John's body in a vessel of flaming oil!* Can they who display such gross credulity be capable of a "sound" judgement on any subject? The learned Semler writes thus of these two Fathers, "Irenæus and Tertullian, *fanatical* and Judaizing writers, and undeserving of any praise," &c.† Yet these two men were the *first* to name *our four Gospels*, and "were *every* way qualified to arrive at a sound judgement on such a point!"

6. "Apocryphal writings existed in the first century is a fact which, so far from embarrassing the evidence for the authenticity of the New Testament, and the truth of the gospel history, very naturally confirms it. Had it not been notorious that the Apostles *did* write Gospels and Epistles, it is not likely that so many would have attempted to pass off spurious Gospels, &c., in their names."

Quite as logical would it be to conclude that, had it not been that there *had* been witches, it is not likely so many would have attempted to pass off as such! The question is, was there at any time a real witch? Were *any* books written by *inspired* men, and especially, were the four canonical Gospels now current really written by the four so-

* "Rise and Progress of Christianity," p. 10.

† "Observations," &c., p. 30.

called inspired men—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? *That* is the point in dispute. Clearly it is no proof that our present canonical writings are really genuine because there were many which were not. Is it not rather *prima facie* evidence that, if so many fictitious writings could be passed off as genuine, that these were fictitious too, seeing it was deemed, by the priesthood of that period, “a virtue to deceive and lie, when, by that means, they could promote the interest of the Church.”* Twenty blacks do not make one white. Constructive evidence is at all times equivocal and inconclusive. Might it not be retorted with equal speciousness that, “had it not been notorious” that the names of so-called inspired men were merely used to give weight to certain writings with the vulgar, that such pretensions would not have been attempted in connexion with our present Scriptures? *Direct and reliable testimony* of the genuineness of our present books must be presented, or the case of orthodoxy is “not proven.” That such evidence is wanting we have already abundantly exemplified.

7. “It is upon this basis of general acceptance that the claims of all ancient books to be received as genuine rest.† Why not believe the genuineness of the Gospels or the Pentateuch, as readily as Cæsar’s Commentaries, the Annals of Tacitus, or the Orations of Cicero, as they are proved by the same medium?”‡

Though trite and popular, this parallel is grossly sophistical. In the first place, the Gospels are ascribed to men who are said to have been specially instructed by God himself: Cæsar’s Commentaries pretend to no such distinction. It is, therefore, imperatively necessary to advance evidence to sustain the former of a more exclusive and satisfactory nature. What might be permitted to establish the one, could not be allowed to support the other. When it is maintained the rejection of one work involves my *eternal* happiness, and the other is of no moment, either now or hereafter, can it be fairly maintained the analogy is legitimate? Have we not a right to expect in one case more certain testimony? Nay, can we not demand that that evidence should be above *all* dispute? Though we are told the Bible, and the Bible only, is of divine origin, it is persisted that we have no right to expect any other kind or degree of proof than a common book. Now, if we are not to have more than ordinary

* See chap. iv., “Christian Fathers.”

† “Christ and Christianity,” p. 14.

‡ Paley’s “Horæ Paulinæ.”

evidence, why assume the Bible to be more than an ordinary record? To affirm we must test a *divine* production as a human one, is a contradiction, and virtually conceding the question to the Freethinker; for if we are to judge of it as a human work we have a right to assume it *is* human, or why test it as such?

It is alleged, however, that "betwixt the Bible and other ancient histories there are points of resemblance and points of *difference*." Granted. And it is exactly because there *are* points of difference we call for different evidence. Is it not extraordinary first to persist that we must estimate the history of the Bible as we would any other book, and then rejoin that the Bible is *different* to any other book? Again, we are informed, "If we regard it (the Bible) as the history of the past events of certain people and nations, it stands upon the same basis, as to its truthfulness, with other histories!" This we dispute. The Bible is mainly a history of *miraculous* events, and it is *because* of its miraculous character that we are asked to accept it as divine. Other histories record mere ordinary incidents; or when they indulge in the marvellous, we reject the latter and accept only the reasonable and probable. *We are not permitted this privilege with the Bible*, and, therefore, the "book" is *not* the same. An intelligent Christian perusing any other history, and finding it abounds in prodigies and extravagances, lays it aside as unreliable. The Freethinker merely does the same with the Biblical histories; yet the former is applauded for his judgment and good sense, whilst the other is denounced for his "audacity" and "ignorance!!"

Independently, however, of considerations so conveniently forgotten by our critics, it is not true the genuineness of the Gospels are as clearly attested as Cæsar's Commentaries. The Commentaries were *named* and quoted from the first as Cæsar's, but the Gospels were not named and quoted *as the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*, till a century had transpired.

Viewed, too, in connexion with the Pentateuch, this popular illustration is signally infelicitous. While the works of Herodotus, Thucydides, Plutarch, and other early historians are quoted by *name* by other authors, either contemporary with, or sufficiently near to, their own times to satisfy the demands of historic credibility, the *five books* of Moses are not cited by name by any historian till after the Babylonish captivity—an interval of nearly a thousand years! Nevertheless, says orthodoxy, the genuineness of the Gospels and the Pentateuch are as fully proved as any profane history!

8. "If the Gospels were not written by those whose name they bear, who *did* write them?"

This query has been suggested in language which reflects credit on the pulpit. "I ask, then, by whom was this book originally written? Christian testimony answers, by the men whose name it bears. No such thing *shouts* infidelity, it was not written till a number of years after the date it bears, and by very different men from those commonly reputed its authors. But, then, who were these men, and when was the Bible written? Does infidelity say?"*

By such coarse and shallow bluster, the clerical declaimer seeks to evade the proof. It is not the duty of "infidelity" to assume the affirmative in this discussion. † Having shown that the reputed authors could not have written these books, we are not bound to show who did. The critic who proved that Burke could not have penned the Letters of Junius is not obliged to "say" who was the author. Let us apply this reasoning to another case: A. B. is the reputed author of a certain crime; on examination, however, it is found that the evidence to convict him of the act is unsatisfactory and inconclusive, and the individual is acquitted. "But," *shouts* the bench, "who *did* commit the deed? If you are not, you must show who was the author." Would not the whole world laugh at the *learned* judge? Professor Newman has admirably remarked, ‡ "I found that I had been cajoled by the primitive assumptions which, though not clearly *stated*, are unceremoniously *used*. Dean Graves, for instance, always takes for granted that, *until* the contrary shall be demonstrated, it is to be firmly believed that the Pentateuch is from the pen of Moses. He proceeds to set aside one by one, as not demonstrative, the indications that it is of later origin; and when other means fail, he says that the particular verses remarked on were added by a later hand! I considered that if we were debating the antiquity of an Irish book, that in one page of it were found an allusion to the Parliamentary union with England, we should at once regard the whole book, *until the contrary should be proved*, as the work of this century; and not endure the reasoner, who in order to uphold a theory that it is five centuries old, pronounced that sentence evidently to be from a later hand. Yet in this

* "Is the Bible a Genuine Record?" Rev. T. Carpenter, Durham, p. 6.

† Chap. vii. p. 123.

‡ "Phases of Faith," p. 137.

arbitrary way Dean Graves and all his coadjutors set aside one by one the texts which point at the date of the Pentateuch. I was possessed with indignation. Oh, sham science! Oh, false-minded theology!"

CHAPTER IX.

MIRACLES.

1. Religion, and especially Christianity, if founded upon truth, would not rely on marvels and prodigies. Discarding all adventitious aid, it would depend on its intrinsic veracity alone. So based, miracles could not render it better or worse. If true in itself they could not make it more so; if false, they cannot make it true. Whence, therefore, the value of such evidence? Is it not purely *useless*?

2. On the other hand, were miracles *necessary* to prove the truth of Christianity 1800 years ago, they are so *now*. If Jews and Gentiles at *that* period could not believe except by the actual exhibition of "divine wonders," why should the "infidels" and "pagans" of this day believe without the same ocular demonstrations? Proof ought to be equal to all when like credence is demanded from all. But this proof is not presented. With us it is second hand. We only assent because somebody else did. Such testimony, therefore, particularly in so vital a responsibility as our *eternal* welfare, is *unsatisfactory*.

Miracles, it would seem, were invented for no other purpose than to supply the want of rational argument. Can TRUTH require the marvellous to ensure its supremacy? Fraud and falsehood alone need such helps. Precisely in proportion as a book departs from consistency and the established laws of Nature so ought it to be suspected. Is it not a strange anomaly that theologians should deem that the most certain criterion of authenticity which is dependent upon the most *uncertain* evidence? Is it not inverting the legitimate criteria?

3. A miracle is a contradiction in terms. The laws of Nature are declared to be "the eternal and *immutable* decrees of God," and yet a miracle must imply a *violation* of these laws! We consider a thing is miraculous *because* it is contrary to Nature.

How, then, could a miracle have been performed in *any age* unless God is *not* "immutable." Would an *unchanging* power have changed himself or his system?

Some divines, to escape from this paradox, affirm that a miracle is only a "suspension" of the laws of the universe. Dr Wardlaw thus defines a miracle: "Works involving a temporary *suspension* of the known laws of Nature, or a *deviation* from the established construction and fixed order of the universe."* Now this by no means explains the paradox. Could a being *infinitely* wise have made laws which he found it necessary subsequently to supersede. Deity surely would not "suspend" his own machine except to make it work *better*. And if it did operate more efficiently in consequence of such "suspension" at any time *subsequent* to its creation, Omnipotence could not have been *all-wise at the creation*. We are still in a quandary.

Other critics try to solve the dilemma in this mode.—They maintain that a miracle is not contrary to nature, "inasmuch as nature has been so ordered by divine wisdom as to admit *higher and creative* agencies into her spheres, and it is perfectly NATURAL that such powers when once admitted should produce effects beyond the scope of ordinary causes."† This is affirming that a miracle is no longer miraculous! If it be *natural*, how can it be supernatural? If a mere process of nature—a kind of higher "development," why esteem it above nature? The sceptic can no longer be asked to endorse the divine origin of Christianity on account of its "*miraculous*" character. Neander in his anxiety to uphold the marvellous explodes the possibility of such phenomena. To remove the contradiction he introduces another.

4. Not only is the evidence of miracles inutile, unsatisfactory, and inconsistent, but *suicidal*.

To establish a system of religion by evidence drawn from miracles, is to build it *upon the ruins* of the consistent harmony of the divine attributes. *It annihilates his perfection*. Either the Deity did things *at the first* as they *ought* to be done, or he did not. If he did them as they *ought* to be, there could be *no need of alteration*, and, consequently, *there could have been no such a thing as a miracle*; but if he did *not*, then he must have been either *imperfect* or have acted *inconsistently* with good principle; in either of which case his character, *as God*, would be

* Vide Wardlaw on Miracles, p. 24.

† Neander's Life of Christ, p. 138.

compromised. It is manifest, that a *wonderworking* God, who violates his own laws, and acts in opposition to the principles which *he himself* has established, is no God at all, but a puerile, creature, possessing all the vacillation of fallible humanity. It has been well said, to suppose that God can alter the settled laws of nature which he himself had formed is to suppose his will and wisdom *mutable*, and that they are not the *best* laws of the most perfect being : for if *he* is the author of them, they must be as immutable *as he is*, so that he *cannot* alter them to make them better, and *will not* alter them to make them worse. Neither can be agreeable to his attributes.

5. Miracles *prove too much*; for if Christianity be true because of its miracles, so are Hindooism and Popery.

A French missionary* who lived among the Hindoos for many years, and had every opportunity of becoming acquainted with their opinions, habits, and superstitions, remarks, "Miracles of the Christian religion, however extraordinary they must appear to a common understanding, are by no means so to the Hindoos. *Upon them they have no effect.* The exploits of *Joshua* and his army, and the prodigies they effected by the interpositions of God, in the conquest of the land of Canaan, seem to them *unworthy of notice*, when compared with the achievements of their own *Kama*, and of the miracles which attended his progress when he subjected Ceylon to his yoke. The mighty strength of *Sampson* dwindles into nothing when opposed to the overwhelming energy of *Bali*, of *Ravana*, and the giants. The resurrection of *Lazarus* itself is, in their eyes, an *ordinary* event, of which they see *frequent* examples in the *Vishnu* ceremonies of *Pahvahdam*. I particularise these examples because they have been *actually opposed to me more than once* by Brahmins in my disputations with them on religion." It is evident our divine miracle-dealers must "hide their diminished heads," and never more attempt to christianise *that* portion of the globe until they can manufacture a superior stock of "divine wonders."

Mahomedan marvels are still more astounding. Not to mention the miracle of Mahomet receiving the Koran, chapter by chapter, direct from heaven, or the nocturnal visits of the Angel Gabriel, Mussulmen deliberately believe the story that he went through numerous heavens in one night.

The Christian may reply that this marvellous night journey is utterly preposterous. So it may be to *his* mind. So are

* Abbé Dubois.

Christian prodigies to mine. The authenticity of both rests upon precisely the same evidence—*human testimony*. What is the declaration of Moses, or of Paul, that a spirit appeared miraculously unto them, more than the testimony of Mahomet? If the people at the time believed the former, so did Mahomet's followers believe him. Multitudes of Jews and Christians still credit their miracles. So do millions of Mahomedans. What is the "dream" of the Arabian Prophet more than that of Joseph, except that the one is puerile, and the other puerile and *immoral*. The effect of the Prophet's miracles was at least to convince the Arabians that he was a divine person. Was the result of Christ's anything more?

Dr. Campbell, in his reply to Hume—a work to which we shall subsequently allude—affirms that the miracles of Mahomet "could be no evidence of his mission, because no person was witness to them."* Was any one "witness" to the miraculous conception? Did any one *see* the angel visit Mary? Did any one *see* Christ rise from the tomb? Did any one "witness" the Spirit visit Paul?

Catholic miracles are incomparably better "attested" than any Bible prodigy.

During the Italian war, in 1797, the French were supposed to have *entered* Italy to overthrow *Papal* Christianity, when numerous *pictures* of the Virgin Mary *opened and shut their eyes* in different parts of that country, during an interval of *six or seven months*. This was confirmed "by at least 60,000 persons, who voluntarily deposed that they *repeatedly* beheld the prodigy *with their own eyes!*" The editor of the "Official Memoirs," declares that these miracles have more "*moral* certainty in their favour than any 'fact' whatever in the annals of the world." No less than 60,000 people actually saw *paintings* of the Virgin Mary—pieces of mere *inanimate* matter—oil, paint, and canvass—open and shut their "eyes" *continually* during the *space of six or seven months!!*

Protestants have the good sense to repudiate these incredibilities. But why not exercise the same rationality in reference to the Apostolic prodigies, which are no better attested and equally extravagant? The same argument by which the Protestant clergy expose the Popish, apply with equal force to the Primitive Church. The Catholics do not omit to remind them of this.

* Dissertation on Miracles, Section 2nd.

In the account given of the Abbé Paris, by Dr. Douglas,* we are informed that having acquired a vast reputation for sanctity amongst the Jansenists, he died on the 1st of May, 1727, and was buried in the church of St. Medrad, at Paris. An opinion of the efficacy of worshipping there soon gained ground, and by degrees it was rumoured about that the sick had by their prayers at the tomb been restored to health, and cures of an astonishing nature were declared to have been effected. Many of those "miracles" were attested by numerous witnesses in the ecclesiastical courts of Paris. Persons of credit and substance gave their oath in their favour. This was in a learned age, and in one of the most advanced cities of the world! Where could be found such reputable testimony in corroboration of any Bible prodigy? Yet who believes it? Dr. Campbell† and Dr. Paley‡ try with great zeal to show these Parisian miracles were delusions and impostures. We know they were, *But are they not attested?* Nevertheless, our divines very properly insist these people deluded themselves or deluded others. May we not say the same of biblical marvels? If such credulity and fraud could exist in the *eighteenth* century, could it not prevail in the *first*? Surprising is it such shrewd disputants did not perceive that their objections to the miraculous cures of the Jansenists militated against the "miraculous" cures in the New Testament. Paley observes,§ "The patients who frequented the tomb were so affected by their devotion, their expectation, the place, the solemnity, and, above all, by the sympathy of the surrounding multitude, that many of them were thrown into violent convulsions, which convulsions, in several instances, produced a removal of disorders depending upon obstruction." Why may not this have been the case with the like "miracles" of the evangelical records?

The remarkable career of John Wesley affords singular instances of mental hallucination. In his life, by Southey,|| it is mentioned that Wesley "visited a believer at night, who was not expected to live till the morning; the man was speechless and senseless, and his pulse gone. 'A few of us,' says Wesley, 'immediately joined in prayers. *I relate the naked fact*: before we had done, his senses and his speech returned. Now, he who will account for this by natural means, has my free leave; but

* "Criterion of Miracles," p. 423.

† Dissertation, Section 5. ‡ Evidences, Propsit. 2nd, C. 2.

§ Ibid. || Vol. ii. p. 25.

I choose to say *this is the power of God.*" A circumstantial narrative, published, according to Wesley, at the time of the event, of the miraculous cure of leprosy, is given in the "Armenian Magazine" for the year 1782.* This case is accompanied with certificates, dated within a month of the time, from a physician, apothecaries, and other witnesses. Wesley declares† that these persons could not be deceived themselves, nor "deceive others." But will the Churchman or Presbyterian accept their depositions? They will rather conclude they were purely natural, consequent upon the influence of excitement on the nervous system. This is the view of the orthodox churchman, Southey. Why, then, may I not conclude that analagous cures mentioned in the life of Christ resulted from like causes?

In the same journal‡ we are presented with an account of an extraordinary cure, wrought *instantly* upon Mrs. Elizabeth Savage. She was twenty-eight years of age, and had been afflicted from her birth, or nearly that period, with *palsy* on her right side, and with distortion of her thumb and fingers. We are assured that her infirmity suddenly left her whilst her husband was reading, in full faith, the account of the cure of a leper in St. Matthew (c. viii.). The particulars were inquired into by eminent doctors and many persons of quality, who were satisfied "that this cure was wrought by the immediate hand of God."

Had this woman lived in the time of Jesus, she would have gone to him "full of faith," and the consummation would have been recorded, "Daughter, be good of cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole!"

Space will only admit of one more illustration. It occurred in New England, America. The gentleman who records it as an unquestionable instance of superhuman agency was the learned Dr. Cotton Mather, a doctor of divinity and of such reputation even in Old England, he was elected a member of the Royal Society of London. He relates that the inhabitants were afflicted with demons and spectres to such a degree as to pine, languish, and die. The demons attacked first one house and then another, and at last a spectre ship entered the port of Salem, steering with her yards squared and her sails full. A supernatural light shone upon her, and her alone. The Rev. Mr. Stebbin called upon the assembled multitude to sing the 46th Psalm. The ship

* Vol. v pp. 312—18. † Letter to the Bishop of Gloucester.
‡ "Armenian Magazine," vol. v. pp. 251—7.

then sailed on, though no noise or voice was heard, until the masts and rigging suddenly fell into the sea, and the mighty spectre vanished. Dr. Mather solemnly writes,* "Flashy people may burlesque these things, but when hundreds of the most *sober people*, in a country where they have as much mother wit, certainly, as the rest of mankind, *know them to be true*, nothing but the absurd and froward spirit of Sadduceeism can question them. *I have not mentioned so much as one thing that will not be justified, if it be required, by the OATHS of more consistent persons that can be found to ridicule these odd phenomena.*" In his book the doctor gives accounts of trials, conducted with all legal ceremony, in which many persons deposed to the "fact."

Here are the records and archives of legal courts verifying the truth of a miraculous visitation! Can testimony be more "conclusive?" There is *better* evidence in favour of this Salem wonder than any apostolic marvel, and yet our Church rejects the one with contempt, and endorses the other with solemnity and pomp! The former happened, too, not two thousand, nor even two hundred years ago, and in a leading city of one of the most civilised nations.

If evidence "clear," "distinct," "official," can prove a miracle, is it not here? Nevertheless who accredits it? This curious case has been thus recapitulated:—

The Bible miracles

Are said to have happened from eighteen hundred to *six* thousand years ago.

In distant countries.

Before the invention of printing.

Were recorded in the Old and New Testaments, regarding which it is disputed *who* wrote the *various* books; *when*, *where*, and in *what* language they *were written*; where, how, and by whom the original manuscripts were preserved—whether correctly or incorrectly transcribed or translated.

Cotton Mather's miracles

Are said to have happened about one hundred and forty years ago.

In our own country.†

After the invention of printing.

Were recorded in his "Wonders of the Invisible World," regarding which there has been, there can be, no dispute. It was written in English by Cotton Mather, printed at Boston, and has descended to our time. The original edition is still preserved in our libraries.

* "Magnalia Christi Americana."

† America.

Were recorded by men for whose veracity we have no vouchers but their own words, with whose characters we are unacquainted, who are quoted by no contemporary historians whose works have descended to us.

Were preserved through long centuries of darkness in manuscript, chiefly in cloisters, or monkish libraries, under the custody of men who avowed their willingness to deceive whenever deceit was necessary to effect their ends, and who allowed the people no access to these holy legends.

Were first collected together (those of the New Testament) more than three hundred years after they were written, and their infallibility determined by an ecclesiastical council.

We ask, then, if the Christian discredits well attested marvels said to have been performed less than two hundred years ago, has not the freethinker a claim to disbelieve those declared to have occurred nearly two thousand years since?

In reply it is urged that we have better evidence for Scriptural miracles than any other. This introduces the more immediate argument of the present work—Bible Evidences.

We ask, where is this evidence? Do we find it in the *Old Testament*? The only testimony in favour of these miracles is, that they are recorded in a book composed by the priests of the most bigoted and credulous people of their age. Is this satisfactory? Are we to believe that the evidence in support of the wonderful repast of the angels with Abraham, the marvellous tale of Jonah's three days' residence in the whale's belly, the sudden conversion of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, the raining of fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, the passing of the Israelites through the Red Sea, the Herculean achievements of Sampson, the stopping of the sun by Joshua, and a multitude of other monstrous fables, is better attested than the

Were recorded *by* a New England Doctor of Divinity, who obtained a diploma from the University at Glasgow, was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of London, and was universally esteemed a man of probity and learning.

Were open to all the world and read by thousands at the time.

Were commented upon and adverted to by contemporary historians.

Were printed and published by the author.

numerous Popish miracles, when many of the latter are confirmed by the solemn attestation of magistrates, divines, physicians, and other respectable persons? I defy both Jews and Christians to cite *equal* testimony.

Not a particle of independent contemporary testimony is on record of miracles so stupendous, that had they really happened could not have escaped the notice of mankind. These stories are only mentioned in a book which was not named until more than a thousand years after the event. Wonders recorded only yesterday, confirmed by the emphatic oaths of reputable people, we must discard with contempt; but those supposed to have been current in the infancy of the world, in the epoch of primeval ignorance, at a period when everything new was pronounced supernatural, when the people lay at the feet of priestcraft, when reason was undeveloped, and intellect prostrate, we must receive without the shadow of reservation on the pain of unremitting damnation!!”

The miraculous pretensions of Moses are eminently untrustworthy. What confidence can be placed in a man assuming “divine” inspiration, who, after professing to have wrought so many miracles, could not convert his own people from idolatry? and who, after causing thousands to perish by the sword has the effrontery to claim the title of the meekest man on earth! Is the testimony of a leader of this character more to be regarded than Mahomet? We accept the testimony of *no* man in reference to miraculous interpositions, holding it to be more probable that he was deluded, or sought to delude others, than that the laws of nature were violated or “suspended.”

The principal arguments in vindication of the Jewish miracles are these: “Amongst the Jews a state of things exists, which naturally would exist if these miracles had been wrought: they have peculiar religious rites, such as the Passover, which could not have existed if their miracles had not really taken place. The Jews have observed these ceremonies from the time of their departure out of Egypt till their dispersion at the taking of Jerusalem.” “Things of *private* concern may easily be counterfeited; but the laws and constitution of a whole nation cannot be forged.” “Was there ever a book of sham laws?” “It is incredible that the Jews would have received in a later age a set of writings as the work of Moses, if no history and no tradition had preserved the remembrance of his having been the author, and especially as some of the laws were very burden-

some." "Why then should we hesitate to receive the numerous testimony of the Jews, who, if any imposture was practised upon them, were the most likely to detect it?" *

These arguments are immensely popular. — We will dissect the sophisms.

To what does it all amount? The description of the manners and laws of the Jews, as contained in the Pentateuch, corresponds with the actual laws and institutions of the Jews *now*; therefore, all the *miracles* mixed up with them must be true!! Is it possible such flimsy reasoning can be deemed invulnerable?

How can the existence of certain ceremonies *now* attest the authenticity of certain monstrosities two or three thousand years ago? Conceding it to be true, that the Jews did depart out of Egypt, does it *therefore* follow we must allow the truth of all the *miraculous* incidents? Will the theologian be faithful to his own argument? Take a Pagan historian. Livy informs us, that an *ox* spoke while leading it to the sacrifice, and that a *crow* foretold the misfortunes which attended the Roman Emperor Domitian. The same historian gravely records, that the marble statues of the gods, which had been set up in the temples, at one time sweated great drops of blood! Now, though Livy is esteemed one of the most eminent historians of ancient times, and Christians do not hesitate to quote him, do they believe **THESE** stories? Would they not smile were we to retort in the language of their own professors: "You *ought* to believe them if you accept **ANY** of his statements." What is there more incredible in Livy than the Old Testament? Do we not there read that a *serpent* and an *ass* spoke; that the water of Egypt was turned into blood, and that the Lord rained bread from heaven, &c. The latter would be a very useful miracle in **THESE** times!

But we reject the wonders of Livy *because* they are miraculous. Why not the other? Who were the Jews more than the Romans? When the Christian reader meets with an historian, he does not doubt him so far as he relates events within the bounds of probability; but the moment he mentions occurrences which are known to be contrary to the laws of nature, he *suspects* him. Why not exercise the same discretion in

* Leslie's "Short and Easy Method with the Deists;" "Horne's Introduction;" Rev. T. Carpenter's "A Genuine Record," &c.

studying a *Jewish* historian? Why blame the unbeliever for applying *his own rule to his own book*?

Leslie professes to lay down *criteria* which incontestably establish the Old and New Testament miracles—"There are four marks no *pretended* fact could have, but which apply to the Bible prodigies, *and these alone*. Nothing can be false which has them all."* The rules are these:—"1st. That the matter of fact be such as that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears, may be judges of it. 2nd. That it be done publicly in the face of the world. 3rd. That not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions to be performed. 4th. That such monuments, and such actions, or observances, be instituted and do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done." †

Allowing, in the first place, that these *criteria* are an unfailing test of the truth of a miracle, we deny that they are *solely* applicable to the miraculous events of the Old and New Testament. And here lies the whole assumption of Leslie.

The Catholics might and do advance the same pretensions. We are informed by a British traveller ‡—a gentleman of taste and ability—that in Florence an event occurred no less marvellous than the story of the fig tree, and to which these *criteria* are applicable, notwithstanding the boast of Mr. Leslie that "you may challenge all the Deists in the world to show any action which is fabulous which has all the four rules or marks before mentioned."§ *A withered elm tree*, in the Piazza del Duomo, at Florence, was suddenly restored to vegetation by the body of St. Zenobia resting against its trunk. Mr. Forsyth observes, "This event happened when Florence was more populous than now, and *one of the most enlightened cities of Europe*; it happened in the most public place of the whole town, *in the presence of many thousands* then attending the solemn removal of the saint from San Lorenzo to the cathedral. The event *is recorded by contemporary historians, and is inscribed upon a marble column, now standing where the tree stood; a column erected in the face of those who saw the miracle performed, and who certainly, if the tale were false, would not allow so impudent a story to insult them.*"

Here we have, 1st, a "sensible" fact, one of which "we

* "Easy Method with the Deists," sec. 4. † Ibid.

‡ Forsyth's "Italy," p. 344 (American edition).

§ "Easy Method with the Deists,"

could judge by our senses." The people could both *see* and *feel* the withered tree. 2nd. It was "notorious," and performed "in the presence of witnesses"—many thousands. 3rd. A "memorial" was erected in "memory" of it. 4th. The memorial "commenced with the fact." Must we, therefore, infer such a memorial "could not have existed if the miracle did not take place?" No, exclaims the Protestant, it was only a "pretended" fact. Consistent logicians! Either this Catholic prodigy is true, or the "*criteria*" are false. Which will the Protestant allow?

That "pretended" facts can be cited to which the rules of Leslie palpably apply is evinced in another remarkable story exposed by Thomas Carlyle.* During the naval engagement in 1794 between England and France it was reported that a French ship, "Vengeur," having fought till her masts were destroyed and her hull completely riddled with shot, was observed to sink. While in the act of going down, her crew still kept the republican standard flying, and discharged a broadside when the guns of the upper-deck were level with the water, the patriotic fellows shouting, "Vive la Republique!" This glorious deed was mentioned in the despatches at the time, and created such a profound sensation in Paris that the Convention actually ordered a naval statue or model of the sunken vessel to be placed in the Pantheon. The story was repeated by the English press. Thomas Carlyle himself inserted it in the first edition of his "History of the French Revolution." Was not this a "sensible" fact. Did not the French "see" the noble vessel go down? Did they not "hear" the courageous cries of the crew? Was it not "notorious?" Was not a "monument" prepared to commemorate it, and was not this done "at the time?" And was it not—*untrue*? In the days of Moses and Aaron, and even in the age of Christ and John, such a "fact" might have acquired popular currency undetected. Did it not do so in *our* time, for a considerable period? and is it not still accredited in France? Unfortunately the French have it not in their power, like the Christian fathers of old, to *burn* the writings of those who have exposed the fraud.

Mr. Leslie, however, when he applies these *criteria* to the Scripture miracles, begs the whole question. He takes for granted that the passing of the Israelites through the Red Sea and the waters of Jordan, &c., were "sensible" facts, obvious "to the eyes and ears of the people at the time," before it is demon-

* See his miscellaneous works.

strated that they *were* presented to the "eyes and ears" of any body! *If* such an event ever transpired *as there narrated*, it must have been obvious to the "eyes," indeed! But *did* it occur in such a mode? This Mr. Leslie should have proved. Instead, therefore, of refuting the Deists by a "method" "so short and easy" he evades the difficulty, and leaves the "doubt" unremoved.

His third and fourth rules are no less assumptive. How does Mr. Leslie know that certain "memorials" have existed, and certain ceremonies been observed by the Jews *since that time*? From the records of the Jews it is rejoined. But the genuineness and authenticity of these records are challenged by the "Deists." Thus, to refute the "Deists," Mr. Leslie *assumes* the precise question disputed by them. Such a "method" *is* "short and easy."

Why should it be "impossible" for there to be a book of "sham laws?" *Why* should not a constitution be drawn out, pretending to be the work of a certain person, and yet not his. At such an early age, and amongst people so inveterately superstitious, where was the difficulty?" It is of no avail to ask could such a thing be done *now*. This is not the age of Moses. What might be possible *then* may be impossible now. Leslie, who urges this point so pertinaciously,* reasons as if Moses had had a printing press at his command, and, like our *Houses of Parliament*, employed it to print his laws and regulations, placing his code when published in the hands of all, so that if untrue it might be contradicted by a counter publication? We have shown, there is no proof of the existence of the Pentateuch till after the Babylonish captivity—1,000 years after Moses.† Where then is the "impossibility" of a forgery? seeing that the genuine record cannot be shown to have existed *at the time* of the Jewish lawgiver. Besides, because Moses may have written a few laws upon stone (which is *not* impossible), are we bound to believe that he composed the five long books popularly ascribed to him, despite of the evidence we have before adduced, still less are we constrained to admit that he performed the *miracles* therein narrated? Would there be anything extraordinary, much less "impossible" in a writer, during that age of darkness and credulity, with no printing-press, no literature, no educational institutions, a population of mere slaves and dupes, compiling the superstitious legends of his nation, embodying

* "Easy Method," sec. 1. † See chap. vii.

them in narrative, and declaring it authentic history, having previously taken care that his history should generally correspond with the laws and habits as he found them in his time? What more easy, indeed, *at such a period, and under such circumstances*, to pretend that the said narrative was originally written by the greatest name in their tradition? How would the people of such an age have detected the "sham?" Were not similar frauds invented at a much LATER age? What were the false "Gospels" and "Constitutions" amongst the early Christians? Looking at the character and condition of the ancient Jews, is it absurd to suppose that, as they grew into a nation, they gradually adopted certain civil and religious laws; and that, subsequently, these laws should be collected together, and declared to be given by God himself through the hands of their favourite leader, embellishing the story with certain marvels, calculated to attract and astound the illiterate mass? Not only is this *not* unreasonable, but is it not the truth? Thus, instead of their miracles giving birth to their religious rites, these rites gave birth to their miracles.

It is further declared, that many of these laws and customs were "burdensome," and would have been rejected, "had they not been really from God."

We ask, because the Jews submitted to these disagreeable laws and customs, are they *therefore* divine? Do not the Chinese submit to "burdensome" laws and customs? Because *they* submit to cramp their feet, is the custom from heaven? The Africans flatten the skull and break the nose. Are we to conclude from their willingness to submit to such cruelties that these customs were ordained by inspiration? The Hindoo women burned themselves to death on the decease of their husbands. Was this a proof that the frightful custom was "holy?" *We*, in this "enlightened" age, submit to many "burdensome" laws and customs, though we know they are *not* from God, but opulent marauders and court parasites—men who have no other title to their broad domains than the sword or the caprice of a crown, the latter itself often being only a usurpation and a fraud.

The civil and religious polity of the Jews are so blended and interwoven, it is next argued, "they must have been established at the same time, and derived from the same original."

Why so? Are not *our* ecclesiastical and civil code so blended that Christianity is now declared to be part and parcel of the

* See chap. iv.

law of the land;" and yet were *they* derived from the same original?

"The Athenians believed that their laws were composed by Solon, and the Spartans that theirs were written by Lycurgus, without ever being suspected of a mistake in their belief. Why, then, should it be doubted that the constitution developed in the 'Pentateuch' was given by Moses."

Exactly because the conditions are *not* analogous. Contemporary testimony, or very near it, can be given in the former instances, *but none in the latter*; the one flourished nearly one thousand years before the other, and antecedent to any literature, or even before the means of writing were abundant. Are these facts nothing in the estimate of probabilities? Do they not destroy all similitude between the Jewish and Grecian constitutions? Moreover, supposing the parallel just, does it follow because the Spartans and Athenians were not mistaken, the Jews were not, remembering the gross anachronisms which abound in the writings of the latter? *

It is finally asserted that "the Jews, whose evidence alone can decide in the present instance, have *always* believed these miracles, and that Moses recorded them; and for *us* not to believe them is to offer them a national insult."† They believe them as we do "our Hume's account of what took place in the time of the Commonwealth, hundreds of years ago, or that our Magna Charta and Habeas Corpus Act were actually passed by the British Parliament."‡

Will our enthusiastic curate point out what similitude exists between such probable occurrences as the passing of an act of Parliament, or the wars of the Commonwealth, and the marvellous fables of the Pentateuch, and other Jewish writings? Had the English historian narrated that Cromwell's horse or ass had spoken to him while on its back, and that subsequently he slew thousands with its jaw-bone, or that when he entered to dissolve the Long Parliament, he laid hold of the pillars and pulled down the whole house on their heads, and finally ascended to heaven in a whirlwind of fire, should we *then* have believed Hume and Smollett?

But the Israelites "*always* believed these records." They believe them as we believe "our Hume's account of what took place in the time of the Commonwealth, hundreds of years ago," or

* Vide chap. vii.

† Rev. T. Carpenter's "Genuine Records," p. 21. ‡ Ibid.

“our Magna Charta and Habeas Corpus Act were actually that passed by the British Parliament.”

Can it be possible any intelligent clergyman has the “face” to present such shallow sophistry as legitimate reasoning? Because the *Jews* believe them, *we* must!!! The *Jews* believe that Jesus Christ was an impostor; must we believe *that*? Not to do so “is to offer them a national insult!!” For what is that society instituted, called the “Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the *Jews*?”

Is that an insult? How consistent! The “infidel” is called upon to believe the Jew, but the Christian not only will not believe him, but actually institutes a society to prove nobody else should!

Why send our missionaries, too, amongst the Hindoos to convert them from their “sacred writings?” They have *always* believed them, and for *us* not to believe is to offer them a national insult! Would that our clergy would cease offering such “insults,” and stay at home to instruct their own countrymen in that sound practical knowledge which will enable them to solve, clearly and irrevocably, those educational and social problems which really involve the liberty and progress of nations.

8. And is the evidence of the *New Testament* miracles more satisfactory?

Is it not entirely *ex parte*? Notwithstanding the exultation of our divines, we challenge them to cite any *independent contemporary* authority. Not one of the historians of those times can be quoted to sustain their tales of wonder. Seneca and the elder Pliny, the national philosophers of that age, and both of whom wrote largely on extraordinary phenomena, do not refer, in the most remote degree, to the preternatural darkness prevailing at the Crucifixion,—the rising of the Saints from their graves, and their walking through the streets of Jerusalem,—the slaughtering of the children of Herod,—the opening of the heavens at the baptism of Jesus,—the beheading of John the Baptist after he had baptised all Judea,—the purchase at the field of blood, which is said to have been known to all the people of Jerusalem,—the wonderful pool of Bethesda, wherein an angel came to heal the sick;—nor any of the marvels affirmed to have been performed before thousands of spectators! Those distinguished

writers, who were the most likely to have noticed these astounding occurrences, are utterly silent. Could this have been possible, had they really transpired?*

Gibbon has admirably criticised this most important circumstance. "Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth, or, at least, a celebrated province of the Roman empire, was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, or the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history. It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laboured work, has recorded all the great phenomena of nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. Both one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the moral eye has been witness since the creation of the globe."

Josephus, Pontius Pilate, and Publius Lentulus are the only contemporary writers whom divines themselves have ventured to cite—authorities whom we have shown to be forgeries from the admission of most distinguished ecclesiastical historians.†

9. IT IS TO THE CHRISTIAN CONVERTS ALONE we are indebted for the only accounts we have of such amazing prodigies, *and their isolated and unsupported testimony cannot be admitted as sufficient to establish THEIR OWN VERACITY.* Were this to be allowed, then, on the same ground, must we admit the miracles of the heathen lawgivers and founders of sects, as they were credited by millions of followers, and are so to this day. We require more conclusive reasoning that the miracles of the New Testament are true because recorded in the New Testament. The same logic might be employed by the Hindoo or Popish priests. The testimony must be *outside* the Bible. And where is it? The only reply vouchsafed is, that direct testimony to the miracles of the New Testament from the mouth of the heathen is not to be expected. Why not? If these miracles were really wrought by divine interposition, and produced such an extraordinary sensation as implied in the Scriptures, why are they

* See Lectures on the "Immortality of the Soul"—Article, Resurrection. By Robert Cooper.

† Vide chap. vi., 78, 91.

not noticed by contemporary and disinterested historians? Had they not themselves believed in them, they would, at least, have noticed them in detail as curious instances of popular credulity. But no reference is made in any way. This fatal silence can only be accounted for either on the ground that such marvels were never attempted, or deemed too contemptible and unfounded to demand serious notice. In either case, the Gospel history is invalidated.

It has been sometimes urged, that "it is the very fact of their being Christians in which the strength of the argument lies." Will the Protestant admit this reasoning? Might not the Catholics retort, when the Protestant reminds him that the miracles of the "Church" are only recorded by *Catholic* writers, "It is the very fact of their being *Catholics* in which the strength of the argument lies." There is not a Churchman or Dissenter in Christendom who would not hold that in that fact lay its *weakness*. Why, therefore, can he reasonably expect the unbeliever to be content with fallacies he himself indignantly rejects.

Utterly failing to substantiate the claims of Christianity by disinterested testimony, most laborious special pleadings have been advanced to confound the popular inquirer. We shall now analyse them.

10. Leslie confidently premises that it was impossible the Apostles could have been deceived with respect to the miracles—"They relate of their actual experience. They speak of those things which they had both seen and heard. How could they be deceived in the evidence of their own senses."*

How are we to know it *was* "the evidence of their own senses?" Upon what authority is it stated, "they relate their actual experience?" This is committing the old assumption—resting the authority of the Gospels upon their genuineness, when the latter has not been established. Leslie thinks it is only necessary to refer to the Gospels, and deems the matter settled. *But who wrote the Gospels? again arises.* So far from being the work of contemporary apostles who had "seen and heard" for themselves, there is no conclusive proof they were known *till a century afterwards*, when it had become a "maxim" with the Church to *impose upon the people*.†

If genuine, however, *two* of the four Evangelists were not "eye-witnesses," and consequently could not "have seen for them-

* Leslie's "Method," p. 10.

† See chaps. iv. and viii.

selves." Mark and Luke were confessedly not disciples at the time, nor is it certain who they were.

But why should it be impossible for them to be deceived? Have we not already adduced instances of multitudes of persons who had "seen" miraculous visitations, and declared such on *oath*. If people could be "deceived" in modern times, why not in the apostolic?

The preternatural darkness said to have followed Cæsar's death is as well attested as the same phenomenon which, it is believed, attended the death of Christ. Is not the word of Mark Anthony* as reliable as any of the twelve? Are not Plutarch† or Apian‡ as respectable as Matthew? The Pagan "miracle" is noticed by the most eminent historians of the time, and celebrated by the most distinguished poets § Yet what sensible person in this day believes the Pagan prodigies, notwithstanding that so many thousands are reported to have "seen" them. Never was a greater corruption, more *fraud* in point of miracles, and a *more general propensity to tamper with or believe anything of the kind than in the period which elapsed from the death of Christ to the destruction of Jerusalem.* ||

The learned and considerate Hennell, in mild but earnest terms, observes, ¶ "The lower class in every age and country, owing to their less acquaintance with physical science, are disposed to see special interventions in ordinary events, and receive readily miraculous tales when brought to them; but about the *time of Christ*, even grave historians, both Greek and Roman, admitted such tales into their most finished compositions. Amongst the Jews, especially, the national temper, creed, and low degree of scientific attainments, promoted the lust for the miraculous; consequently, their accomplished historian, Josephus, although obviously checked by his fear of Greek and Roman criticism, and without any other apparent motive than a pure love of the marvellous, could not resist the temptation of introducing abundance of miraculous stories. The historians of the early reformed Jewish or Christian churches were inferior to Josephus in education and literary attainments, wrote under stronger excitement, had in view the interest and honour of their

* See a public epistle of M. Anthony in Joseph. Antiq. xiv. 12.

† Plutarch in Cæsar, p. 471. ‡ Appian, Bell. Civil, lib. iv.

§ Virgil Georgic i. 466; Ovid Met. xv. 782; Lucan's Phar. i. 540.

|| Essay on Miracles, p. 486.

¶ "An Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity," p. 212.

own newly-risen sect, and apparently intended their works for the use of their brethren, who were influenced by the same feelings and opinions as themselves."

*Upon the veracity of such a class are we called upon to rely for the credibility of the New Testament miracles? Is it impossible for such people to have been deceived, and for the deception to be kept up, when their successors taught the doctrine that it was "pardonable in an advocate of religion to avail himself of fraud and deception if it were likely they might conduce towards the attainment of any considerable good."**

11. From the confidence with which Leslie, Paley, Chalmers, and others write on this subject, we should presume the Christian miracles were carefully inquired into at the time by *disinterested* and *competent* parties, precluding all chance of collusion or mistake. Was such the fact? On the contrary, miraculous cures were considered to be within the scope of human art. With such singular skill, indeed, were they performed by the heathens, that the Christians could neither deny nor detect them. They ascribed them to demoniacal influence. In like manner the heathens contented themselves by speaking in the same terms of the Christian wonders. *No investigation was instituted.* Hence some writers have maintained that it is owing to the total *disregard* of these miracles that the Jews and heathens were not converted by them, but by other causes, independently of them. Bishop Ebrington acknowledges that "the Roman philosophers, far from investigating the evidences of Christianity, seem not to have known of its existence."† The argument of Dr. Douglas, by which he sought to undermine the credibility of the Catholic miracles, applies with equal cogency to the Apostolic:—"When the truth of a common matter of fact is admitted blindly, without any previous examination into the testimony supporting it, a door is open to endless impositions; much more is such a previous examination necessary before we can be warranted to admit the truth of miraculous facts. A miracle, the evidence of which *was* not inquired into by those to whom it was first proposed, ought to be rejected equally with a miracle the evidence of which *could* not be inquired into."‡

Another question may be fairly raised—Supposing they *did* investigate these miracles, were the examiners infallible? Could they not be mistaken? It has happened that the most rigid ex-

* Mosheim.—See chap. iv. 61, of the present work.

† "Sermons," 1795. ‡ "Criterion of Miracles," pp. 87—88.

amination has failed to convince men of education and respectability of the falsity of many pretended miracles. They could not detect the fraud, though it *was* a fraud. The case of Abbé Paris affords many striking instances. Even the illustrious Pascal was deluded into the notion of miraculous agency. His own niece was cured of a *fistula lachrymatis*. It was "*instantly* healed when a thorn from the holy crown was kissed by the patient in full faith."* Pascal, the *enlightened* Pascal, boasted of this in triumph! If parties so accomplished could be deceived in an era of learning and science, why not a crowd of "illiterate fishermen" in the dark ages of the world? Fishermen are *still* the most superstitious class in the community.

The wonders performed at the tomb of the Abbé Paris present the most remarkable phenomena in the history of human credulity. To quote the reviewer— "They show that when the imagination of the multitude is inflamed *their general testimony is entitled to no credit*; and that, in such circumstances, the testimony of *even respectable individuals* should be received *with distrust*."†

12. Modern divines, like Dr. Chalmers and Dr. W. L. Alexander,‡ following the example of Leslie and Paley, urge the *sincerity* of the Apostles as a proof of their veracity, affirming that it only remains to be proved that, if they believed it to be true, it must be true indeed. Such is the reasoning by which able clergymen expect to substantiate Christianity, and convert the intelligent Freethinker from "the error of his ways!" Were not Pascal and his niece "sincere?" Were not John Wesley and his followers "sincere?" Were not Prince Hohenlohe and his patients "sincere?" Were not the crowd of "respectable witnesses," in the cases previously alluded to, who gave their testimony on *oath*, "sincere?" Then their statement must be true indeed! Sincerity is no test of infallibility. An individual indeed may be very sincere, and still highly credulous.

13. The *martyrdom* of the apostles, it is insisted, establishes their claims to credibility. "Would any one have sacrificed their lives for a delusion?"

We reply, the Hindoo widows sacrificed their lives for a delusion. Did not Joseph Smith and his followers lose their lives

* "Quarterly Review," vol. xxviii. pp. 30—31, art. Gregoire's "History of Religious Sects."

† Ibid.

‡ "Evidences," c. iv. p. 101. † "Christ," &c. p. 161.

for a "delusion." Was not Courtenay a "martyr?" and did not twelve of his "faithful disciples" seal their faith in him "with their blood"?* To read "Christian Evidences," one would presume that *all* the Apostles, and vast numbers of their adherents died in the midst of torture and sufferings while in the act of giving formal testimony to the miracles of Christ. That such an impression is unfounded may be seen in the New Testament itself.† Mosheim acknowledges, unhesitatingly, that "The early martyrologies are entitled to no sort of credit whatever."‡ James, Peter, and Paul he considers the only exceptions, and the two latter are highly improbable, resting only, as Semler has shown, on "doubtful tradition." Upon this subject, as upon others, the Christian Fathers invented "pious frauds" for the "benefit of the Church." Tertullian informs us that John was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, and came out unhurt! *If* Shadrach and his companions *did* come out of the furnace "unhurt," why not John *out* of the boiling oil? So reasons orthodoxy!

"The first Christians either delivered a sincere testimony," says Dr. Chalmers, "or they imposed a story upon the world which they knew to be a fabrication."§

Why so? Why should the Doctor have distorted the argument by assuming we had no other alternative? Have we not a third—that *they might be sincere, and yet mistaken?* And is not this the more reasonable view?

We are assured, however, that it is not "to mere *opinions* they attested, but *facts*"—an assurance which assumes the whole question. It has yet to be shown they are facts. With equal plausibility might it be assumed that the good people of Salem attested to *facts* and not *opinions* when they swore upon their oaths that they "saw" demons attack first one house and then another, and "witnessed," with "their own eyes," a spectre-ship sail upon the water before them, and suddenly sink into the sea. Or that the 60,000 people of Italy who *saw* the pictures of the Virgin Mary open and close their eyes, attested to "facts" and not opinions! Had they not "the best means of knowing, by their eyes and ears, whether what they heard was true or not?"

* See the public press for June, 1838.

† Acts, xxviii. 31; xvii. 9; 1 Pet. iii. 13.

‡ "Commentary," i. 179.

§ "Evidences," p. 108.

Are we not bound to believe "in the testimony of men who relied on their senses !"

Dr. Chalmers does not argue very profoundly when he infers that sincerity of belief, as evinced by sufferings and martyrdom, does of itself prove the character to be *wholly* free from deceit. A man may consent to suffer martyrdom rather than deny certain articles of faith ; but it does not follow the same individual will not attempt imposture for the sake of communicating to others a faith in those doctrines which he himself believes.

Southey thus describes the conduct and character of the first missionaries who preached Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons.* "*They were little scrupulous concerning the measures which they employed, because they were persuaded, that any measures were justifiable, if they conduced to bring about the good end which was their aim. This principle led to abominable conduct among their successors ; but they themselves had no sinister views ; they were men of the loftiest minds, and enobled by the highest and holiest motives. Their sole object in life was to increase the number of the blessed, and to extend the kingdom of their Saviour, by communicating to their fellow-creatures the appointed means of salvation ; and, elevated as they were above all worldly hopes and fears, they were ready to lay down their lives in the performace of this duty, sure by that sacrifice of obtaining crowns in heaven and altars of earth as their reward.*"

The "Quarterly Review," speaking of the pious fabrication of miracles by the old missionary Fathers, observes :— "They thought that, for bringing about an object of pure benevolence and paramount importance, *whatever was expedient was allowable.* No principle can be more plausible, and none can be more delusive or more dangerous, but, *beyond all doubt,* it has been acted upon *unhesitatingly* by persons, who, *in other respects,* were *eminently virtuous and devout men,* and who risked their lives, and sacrificed them heroically as martyrs for the faith which they were endeavouring to extend by such means."†

Dr. Chalmers is, therefore, in error in supposing that sincerity and fraud could not exist in the same person.

The objection of Paley, that it is absurd to suppose the early followers of Christ would "go about lying to teach virtue,"‡ has little weight, unless he can explain away the notorious "fact" that such *was* the "maxim" of the Primitive Church.

* "Book of the Church," vol. i. 53-4. † No. lxiii., p. 10.

‡ "Evidences," chap. x. "Recapitulation."

Werenot the Christian Fathers the sole exponents and depositaries for ages of the Christian Scriptures? Did not they teach virtue from them, and yet taught that "a falsehood was a good thing when it aided the speaker and did no injury to the hearers?"* Paley puts the case in the most offensive terms to excite indignation against the Freethinker, notwithstanding the disgraceful anomalies which must have been familiar to him—that the very volume which he assumes contains more against lying than any book in the world, was *first mentioned, first introduced, and first established by priests, with whom lying was a maxim!*

The argument of this popular divine has been put in another shape, still more fallacious. "*Bad men would not have written good things to condemn themselves, and good men could not have written lies.*" Precisely the same quibble might be used by the Mahomedan, or the Hindoo, in defence of their miracles. The Mussulman might refer you to his Koran. He could point to the moral precepts it contains at the time he urges upon you the miraculous deeds which his followers subsequently ascribed to him, and exclaim, "*Bad men would not have written these good things to condemn themselves, and good men could not have written lies!*" Will the Christian admit the force of his own reasoning? Does he not turn from it with contempt? This sophism rests upon the assumption that all men must necessarily be *absolutely* good or *absolutely* bad,—that there is no medium between the two. Now, is not the very *opposite* the truth? Are not most men partly good and partly bad—partly right and partly wrong? In our time bad men *have* advocated good doctrines, and good men *have* been mistaken. Why not 1,800 or 3,000 years ago? Let us not be misunderstood. We do not aver that "bad men," in the unqualified sense implied in this quibble, wrote the Bible, but that, if true, they could not have been *wholly* good. Moses was not wholly good, nor Joshua, nor Samuel, nor David, nor Solomon, nor Paul, nor Peter.

The past and present condition of nations does not warrant the assumption that, where the Bible prevailed, the inhabitants were pre eminent for their veracity. When the Christian himself wishes to describe the impersonation of a cheat does he not name the Jew? When the "barbarian" speaks of a deceiver does he not point to the Christian? When we boast of *christianising* nations, does it not practically mean that we

* See chap. iv. 66.

have defrauded the aborigines of their lands, their country, their homes? Who are the most honest?—the original Red Indian of America, or the modern Yankee, with his bible and his church? Who the most just—the white slave-owner or the black slave? Who the most treacherous, the most remorseless “liars”—the Christian Greek and Russian, or the Mahomedan Turk? Who, in short, inculcated that lying, in support of religion, was a *virtue*, and not a vice? The very Christian Fathers in whose hands the book which is said to denounce all lying first reposed, and upon whose “veracity” we have entirely to rely for its genuineness and authenticity!

16. Another prominent position of our divines is founded upon the presumed *disinterestedness* of the first believers. “There were no mercenary inducements to embrace Christianity. There was everything to lose, and nothing to gain. Christ was a poor peasant, and his apostles obscure fishermen. How, then, could Christianity have been established if its miracles were not real?”

This statement is by no means correct. Consistently with the usual disingenuousness of Christian evidence exponents, it does not contain the *whole* truth. What was the state of the Jews at the appearance of Christ? Was there not a general wish and expectation among the more ignorant that a deliverer or king would arise to emancipate them from the yoke of the Romans? The excitement on this subject made persons ready to follow any person who chose to assume the title of prophet and king, and could show them “signs and wonders.”* In our own time, when a people are oppressed beyond endurance, are not the mass ready to follow any one who declares he will lead them out of their captivity? And did not Christ, “the poor peasant,” advance those pretensions? Did he not profess to be of royal blood, the *Son of David*—the expected prophet? Did he not promise the poor fishermen “twelve *thrones*?”† and that any one who had forsaken houses or brethren or sisters, “for my name’s sake” shall receive “*an hundred-fold*,” and shall inherit “everlasting life?” Did he not say, that many that are *last* shall be *first*, &c., and that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a *rich* man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Was not this holding out “mercenary inducements” to “*poor*”

* Vide Josephus, book ii. chap. 13; and Lardner, “Credibility,” &c., vol. i. chap. 5. † Matt. xix. 28, 29, 30.

fishermen? Could they be very "disinterested" when tempted by such large promises? Was it not that they thought they had everything to gain, and nothing to lose, rather than they had everything to lose, and nothing to gain? When it is affirmed that the followers of Jesus were of the "poor," "neglected," "despised," "unlettered" classes, do not our clergy perceive that they were the very people, *especially in that age*, who would be the first to give blind and ready credence to an individual who promised better things? What more natural than that they should follow him gladly, and *believe him willingly*; and as prodigies were commonly accredited in those times, is it not MORE likely they would believe the miracles of such a personage, though they were NOT "real?"

Much has been said of the *public* character of Christ's miracles. Dr. W. L. Alexander declares they "took place, for the most part, in the most public places in Jerusalem."* Is this true? Were they not, "for the most part," done in comparative secrecy? When Christ was "transfigured," he takes with him only his three *favourite* disciples. When he turns water into wine, it is at a *private* party. When he raised the daughter of Jairus, he dismisses all *her* friends while he performs the resuscitating process. When he cures the blind man, he takes him *aside*. When he cleansed the leper, he "straightly charged him" to say "nothing to any man, but go thy way and shew thyself to the priest." The raising of Lazarus was only in the presence of Mary and Martha, his sister, the favourite female disciples of Christ, and those of their friends who called at their house to condole with them on the death of their brother. When he himself rises from the dead, he does so *unobserved*, and appears only to the "elect" of his own sect. When he "ascends to heaven," it is in the presence of the same favourites. His miraculous conception, too, is verified only by a "dream."

Those miracles which *ought* to have been "public"—his resurrection and ascension—were not so. Why did he not exhibit himself "in the public places of Jerusalem," in the presence of thousands, and not in an obscure district, to a select party of his own immediate followers, who were prepared to believe anything tending to enhance the credit of their sect? The best evidence would have been his *public* appearance in Jerusalem, before the face of his *enemies*. *Why did not this take place?* Why present himself to the few who believed, and not the

* "Christ and Christianity," p. 169.

many who disbelieved? Is it to such obscure exploits, such "hole and corner" demonstrations, that the intelligent and independent inquirer is to give his unhesitating assent? and that only on the authority of a suspicious, isolated, inconsistent, unconfirmed, unauthenticated record, written in the dark ages of the world?

Even the few persons to whom Jesus did show himself are not satisfactorily made out. Professor Newman pertinently asks, "Where are *the twelve men* of whom Paley talks as testifying to the resurrection of Christ? Paul cannot be quoted as a witness, but only as a believer. Of the twelve we do not *even know the names*, much less have their *testimony*. Of James and Jude there are two epistles, but it is doubtful whether these are two of the twelve Apostles, and neither of them declare themselves eye-witnesses to Christ's resurrection. In short, Peter and John are the only two. Of these, however, Peter does not attest the bodily, but only the *spiritual* resurrection of Jesus; for he says that Christ was 'put to death in *flesh*, but made alive in SPIRIT. (1 Peter iii. 18.) Yet if this verse had been lost, his opening address (i. 3) would have seduced me into the belief that Peter taught the bodily resurrection of Jesus: so dangerous is it to believe miracles on the authority of words quoted from a man whom we cannot *cross-examine*. Thus, once more, John is left alone in his testimony; and how insufficient that is it has been said."*

With respect to the *ascension*, it appears that Mark and Luke, *who were not disciples at the time*, and, consequently, *not present*, are the *only writers* who pretend to give an account of the circumstance, and this, too, in a very contradictory manner; *while Matthew and John, who are said to have been present, do not make the slightest allusion to it, nor inform us that it ever occurred*. The account they do give shows it to have been a "private" miracle, performed in an out-of-the-way locality, and witnessed only by a *chosen circle*.

The only remaining miracle of moment, the resurrection of Lazarus, is not even mentioned in the gospel history itself, except by John, the *least* reliable of the four—a man so credulous, so full of extravagance and hyperbole, that he deliberately avows had he written all that Christ did, the world itself would not contain the books !!!† Matthew, Mark, Luke, all are silent, though they are said to have written *nearer* to the

* Phases of Faith, p. 184.

† Chap. xxi. 25.

time than John. Why is this, except that they never heard of such a "decisive" test of miraculous power, or did not themselves believe it?

These considerations support the view, that while such a person as Jesus Christ *may* have existed, and wrought certain "cures," like John Wesley, upon his followers, *naturally* resulting from the violent excitement at the time, the more exaggerated stories—the resurrection of Lazarus and Christ—were frauds of subsequent Christian sects.

The ingenious author of an exceedingly interesting work* enters largely into the discussion of this curious subject, and concludes by classifying the miracles thus:—

Real Delusion and Exaggeration.

Cure of whole multitudes	...	...	...	...	Matt. iv. 1—25
Cure of a leper	...	...	...	...	Matt. viii. 1—4
Sick of the palsy	...	...	...	...	Matt. ix. 1—8
Fever ..	...	...	...	...	Matt. viii. 14—15
Dropsical man	...	...	...	...	Luke xiv. 2—4
Gadarene devils	...	...	...	...	Mark v. 1—20
Unclean devils	...	...	...	...	Luke iv. 33—4
Daughter of Canaanitish woman	...	...	...	...	Matt. xv. 21—28
Infirm woman	...	...	...	...	Luke xiii. 10—17
Withered hand	...	...	...	...	Mark iii. 1—12
Centurion's servant	...	...	...	...	Luke vii. 1—10
Nobleman's son	...	...	...	...	John iv. 43—54
Infirm man, at the pool of Bethesda	...	...	...	...	John iv. 1—16
Issue of blood	...	...	...	...	Matt. ix. 20—22
Widow's son	...	...	...	...	Luke vii. 11—18

Imposture of Patient.

The blind see	...	...	...	...	Matt. xx. 29—34
The deaf hear	...	...	...	...	Matt. vii. 31—37
The dumb speak	...	...	...	...	Matt. xii. 22—37
Lazarus	...	...	...	...	John xi. 1—46
Jairus's daughter	...	...	...	...	Matt. ix. 18—26

Popular or Apostolical Invention.

Converts water into wine	...	...	...	...	John ii. 1—11
Cures ten lepers	...	...	...	...	Luke xvii. 11—19
Miraculous draught of fishes	...	...	...	...	Luke v. 1—11

* The Human Origin of Christianity. London: Brooks, 1831.

Calms a tempest	...	...	...	...	Matt. viii. 24—27
Walking on the sea	...	...	...	...	Matt. xiv. 22—33
Feeds five thousand	...	..	...	...	John vi. 1—14
Feeds four thousand	...	..	...	...	Matt. xv. 32—39
Causes a barren fig-tree to wither	...	...	...	...	Matt. xxii 17—22
Resurrection and ascension	...	...	...	...	Mark and Luke

The opinion that the resurrection is only a post-apostolic marvel, introduced to awe the credulous, is confirmed by the singular contrariety of opinion existing among the early Christians. The followers of *Basilides* affirmed that Jesus, at the time of his passion, assumed the appearance of Simon the Cyrenean and transformed to him his own, under which the *said Simon was crucified in his stead*.* In the gospel ascribed to Barnabas we read that Judas, and not Christ, was crucified.† The disciples of Corinthus maintained that Christ could not have been *actually* crucified. These sects deemed it an incongruity to suppose that the Son of God could *die*.‡

The most prevalent opinion was that of the Gnostics, who believed that he existed in *appearance* only, and not in reality.§ Dr. Priestley says that this opinion obtained till Popery was established, and was received by those persons who pretended to philosophy, or more knowledge than the vulgar.|| The Ebionites denied the miraculous conception, and, with the Nazarenes, looked upon Christ as an ordinary man.

If *Christians* not only doubted but *denied* these things *then*, may not *sceptics* question *now*?

We are reminded, however, that one "infidel" at least admitted the *fact* of the miracles, but ascribed them to magic (Celsus).¶ This raises the question we have previously discussed.** We have shown it is *not* the evidence of Celsus, but *Origen*, his bitter enemy, a man who had no regard for truth in controversy, and would not, therefore, hesitate to ascribe to his opponent what he did *not* admit. Christians *burnt* what Celsus *did* say, and then call upon us to believe *their own account* of his "admissions!" Very convenient and very fair! They destroyed his works because his admissions were so *favour*

* St. Ireneus, lib. i. c. 23.

† Vide Gospel of Barnabas, quoted by Dr. Giles in his "Un-canonical Gospels," part ii., p. 658.

‡ "Tillemont," tome ii. 221.

§ "Mosheim," i. 136. || "Church History," i. 97.

¶ Horne's "Introduction," p. 84 ** See chap. vi.

able to their divine scheme! Very much like the truth!! Reading the account which Origen himself gives of Celsus, we find it is not correct that he admitted all these wonders as *bonâ fide*. He does not acknowledge that they *were* wrought, but allows the Christian to make his own statement, and then mentions similar impostures worked by magic amongst the Egyptians. Is this *admitting* the miracles of Christianity *as such*? For the same reason might it be reported that I have confessed the "fact" of the marvellous stories of the Bible, because I have shown similar or more extraordinary occurrences are said to have happened in other times than the Apostolic. But supposing these admissions were really made by Celsus, and that they *do* establish the miracles of Christianity, do not similar admissions on the part of Christians prove *Pagan* miracles. *Did not the early Christians ascribe the miracles of Paganism to magic?** Is Paganism, therefore, true? If the admission is "conclusive" on one side, it is on both.

We have thus reviewed, *in EXTENSO*, those positions, directly involving the authenticity of the Old and New Testament miracles, which the most popular divines themselves pronounce incontestible.

There are, however, several arguments arising out of this controversy to which importance is attached. We, therefore proceed to their discussion, not wishing to shirk any difficulty which the theologian apprehends he has placed in the way of the free inquirer.

Decidedly the ablest writers in defence of miracles are Leslie, Paley, Campbell, and Whately. To the favourite arguments of the two former we have already replied. Those of Dr. Campbell, and his imitators, we shall now examine as put forth in his celebrated answer to David Hume.

20. His first query, strictly considered, has reference more to the *existence* of Deity, a topic not now under discussion. The Doctor asks, "Whether the world had an origin or not?" Upon this interrogatory he starts the argument, though evidently with some impression of its inconsequence, that it must have had a beginning, which beginning was *miraculous*; that is, "not conformable to that course of nature with which we are acquainted by experience;" and, therefore, "we have irrefragable evidence that there have been, that there must have been, miracles in

* Vide Justin Martyr's "Apology;" Lactantius's *Insit. Divin.* &c.; also Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," chap. xv.

former times." * How far-fetched and paradoxical ! Presuming we concede the world had a beginning in the *theological* sense, does it follow, as a necessary sequence, that because the universe was "made" by an "all-wise" and "all-powerful" Being, that *after* it was made the same Power should be repeatedly "violating" or "suspending" the very laws he then established ? The assumption of Dr. Campbell explodes his own argument. Being omniscient, the Deity must have designed all things *at the first* as perfectly as they could be, and, therefore, no subsequent alteration or suspension could be needed. How then could there have been a miracle at any time ?

Is it not a solecism to designate the creation itself a miracle ? How could that be called a "suspension" of the laws of nature—the modern definition of a miracle—before there were any laws of nature to suspend ? The Doctor, instead of answering Hume, refutes himself.

21. Our learned divine proceeds from the general to the particular, narrowing the argument to the progress of *man*. "Admitting that the world had not a beginning," says the Doctor, "thus much must be admitted also, that not barely for a long continued, but for an *eternal* succession of generations, mankind were in a state little superior to the beasts ; that of a *sudden* there came a most astonishing change upon the species, that they exerted talents and capacities of which there appeared not the smallest vestige during the eternity preceding." † He then contrasts man's primitive condition with the present, and concludes, "If such a revolution in nature, such a thorough general and sudden change as this, would not be denominated miraculous, it is not in my power to conceive what would." Upon what ground does the Doctor assert the change was "sudden ?" That supposition is "contrary to experience." The progress of man indeed, has been *slow* and *gradual*. The Doctor's presumption is the reverse of the fact, and therefore the argument is clearly untenable.

22. Pertaining to this subject it has been dogmatically insisted by one who has evidently read Dr. Campbell :—"It is too late in the day for any man who has the slightest pretensions to knowledge to deny the possibility of miracles. The science of geology has established beyond the reach of reasonable controversy the fact that there was a time when man did not exist upon the earth, and, therefore, a time when a new creative energy

* Dissertation on Miracles, sec. 6.

† Ibid.

was put forth. This could have been nothing less than a miracle."*

Might we not rejoin, "it is too late in the day for any man who has the slightest pretensions to knowledge," to assert the possibility of miracles? This is incontestible, that *precisely* as mankind have advanced in knowledge so has the belief in miraculous interpositions diminished. Many phenomena that were at one period deemed supernatural are now accounted for upon purely natural principles.

We challenge the inference, that because "there was a time when man did not exist upon the earth" he must have been formed by a *miracle*. This is the old exploded notion, that that which we cannot amply elucidate, or for which we cannot account, must necessarily be miraculous. The Grecians, before the time of Anaxagoras, esteemed the rainbow a miraculous interposition of the gods. Was it so? We might amplify such instances, but as they must be familiar to "any man who has the slightest pretensions to knowledge," we will save our ink.

Does our reverend disputant know *all* that nature can do? Is he initiated into *all* her secrets? If he be, he is himself the greatest "miracle" that could have been cited?

Theologians always endeavour to account for human origin upon the orthodox theory of *a miracle*. Because they cannot explain the phenomenon upon natural principles, we are instantly assured "miraculous interposition" alone can solve the enigma. It never occurs to such philosophers that it is not nature which is incapable of such development, but man who is incompetent of fully elucidating the *rationale* of nature. Will our divines, in the plenitude of their arrogance, presume to affirm they know *all* that nature can do, and *how* she does it? What right, therefore, have they to dogmatise, fix limits to the powers of the material world, and ascribe what are, *as yet*, secrets *in* nature, to something *out* of nature? Not only is such a course paradoxical and presumptuous, but it is fatal to all legitimate demonstration. Reason must be abandoned, facts ignored, and inquiry itself become an incongruity. *Here, indeed, lies the grand fallacy of all religions—the ground-work of all superstition.* Unable to explain phenomena to his own satisfaction, man has imagined it is owing to some "miracle," while the truth is, *the difficulty arises from his own ignorance.*

* Modern Christianity and Secularism, by the Rev. E. Mellor, Halifax.

When people are modest enough to confess the truth, and honest enough to avow it, priestcraft will be deprived of its power. "You do not mean to assert, however," it may be alleged, "that man, whose economy is so wonderfully complex, composed of such a multiplicity of organs—most of which are so small, so delicate, so nice in their construction, as to be unobserved by all but the practical anatomist—sprung up all at once like a cabbage?" No; we suppose no such absurdity. In proposing such a question, the orthodox perpetrate a sarcasm against themselves. According to their theory, man *did* "spring up all at once like a cabbage," being made in one short day out of "the dust of the ground," perfect and mature! Science teaches that nature performs no delicate operation *suddenly*—that all changes are *gradual*, from the upheaving of mountains and the deposition of strata, to the formation of the foetus and the decomposition of organisations. The rise and decay of all forms are by slow and almost imperceptible degrees. *Comparative anatomy* enforces the opinion that, instead of our organism emerging into existence impromptu, separate, and distinct from the rest of the animal world, that *it*, complex and delicate though it be, is only a link in the chain of animal forms. More refined organisations have gradually and imperceptibly grown out of more simple ones; and thus as the earth, in its various changes, developed different modifications of animal life, advancing from the simplest to the most complicated, the way was insensibly prepared for the development of such a superior nature as our own. Man is, therefore, inseparably connected by a long chain of animal forms, with the lowest of animated creatures. Dr. King says, "There is, I repeat, no *absolute* line of demarcation between one organisation and another; they seem *all* to be formed upon the *same general principles*, and almost throughout of the same identical materials."* It may be asked, however, "How could the *first* animal forms have appeared upon our globe except by divine agency?" One question can be legitimately answered by another. How could the first *material* forms have appeared on our globe except by *material* influences? Do we know *all* that matter can do? Are we, indeed, further than the threshold of the temple of physical science? Until the theologian, therefore, *knows* that matter *cannot* develop *every* material phenomenon, organic and inorganic, why should he assume that matter is incompetent to realise its own forms?

* Lectures on the Study of Anatomy.

Why invent the *super-natural* till you *know* the natural? Why demand from me a belief in the spiritual till you can prove you have mastered the material? Is it logical, is it natural, is it consistent to ascribe *material* effects to *immaterial* causes? It is an absurdity known only in theology. Science ignores it, reason shuns it, common sense despises it. The priest, and not the philosopher, suggested the delusion; and, as the light of secular knowledge dawns upon the world, it will pass away as a fiction of man's mental babyhood. Is it more irrational to suppose that the matter of which this planet is composed, in the course of its various changes insensibly assumed a condition capable of generating material life, than that life should be first introduced into our orb by a power with which matter could have no contact, no identity, no assimilation—in a word, a *negation*. We leave the question with those who *dare* to think. The taunt, "Nobody ever saw a man formed," is suicidal; for if the advocate of this theory never *saw* a man formed by matter, neither has the supporter of the "divine" creation seen them formed by a *spirit*. If we are to infer nature did not occasion these phenomena because we do not *see* such developments *now*, within a mere historic period, we have a right to conclude, by the same reasoning, Omnipotence did not create them, because we do not see *such* formations in our days. *

23. Before proceeding further with Dr. Campbell's answer to Hume, we must permit the illustrious Freethinker to state his own case. "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more than probable that all men must die; that lead cannot of itself remain suspended in the air; that fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by water; unless it be that these events are found agreeable to the laws of nature, and there is required a violation of these laws, or in other words, a miracle to prevent them? Nothing is esteemed a miracle if it ever happen in the common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man seemingly in good health should die on a sudden; because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any

*For a more detailed discussion of this interesting topic we must refer the reader to the vol. i. of "The London Investigator." Edited by the writer.

other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must, therefore, be an uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as an uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full *proof* from the nature of the fact against the existence of any miracle; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof, which is superior. The plain consequence is (and it is a general maxim worthy of our attention) 'that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish: and even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force which remains after deducting the inferior.' When any one tells me that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself whether it be more probable that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact which he relates should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous than the event which he relates, then, and not till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion." *

How does Dr. Campbell rebut this reasoning? By a quibble. He endeavours to show it is by human testimony or experience that we know what are the laws of nature, and thus Mr. Hume himself has to rely upon what he ignores. "But how are the laws of nature known to us? By experience. What is the criterion whereby we must judge whether the laws of nature are transgressed? Solely the conformity or disconformity of events to our experience." * * * "Now, what has been observed, and what has not been observed, in all ages and countries, pray how can you, sir, or I, or any man, come to the knowledge of? Only, I suppose by testimony, oral or written. The personal experience of every individual is limited to but a part of one age, and commonly to a narrow spot of one country. If there be any other way of being made acquainted with facts, it is to me, I own, an impenetrable secret,

* "Essays on Miracles," part 1.

I have no apprehension of it. If there be not any, what shall we make of that cardinal point on which your argument turns?"* Now, Mr. Hume does *not* ignore human testimony, but only "that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle *unless* the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish." Instead of trifling with the word "experience," and trying to fasten upon Hume a logical inaccuracy, it would have been more creditable to so respectable a controversialist to have shown at once that the testimony in question was of the kind referred to. Is the falsehood of the testimony that a dead man should come to life more improbable than the fact itself, when the *uniform* experience of the world, both *before* and *since*, is against the truth of that testimony, AND *when the testimony, too, rests only on the authority of writings the genuineness of which cannot be clearly substantiated?* Not only is the *truth* of the testimony doubted, but the *fact* that such testimony ever was given.

Dr. W. L. Alexander re-states Dr. Campbell's perversion of Hume's argument thus. "But, secondly, this argument against the credibility of miracles is suicidal. It is an appeal to testimony for the purpose of proving that testimony is not to be trusted."† We beg to correct Dr. Alexander. It is an appeal to testimony, for the purpose of proving that *some* testimony is not to be trusted.

The same learned disputant rejoins—"We may reasonably accept testimony to prove that the laws of nature were the same in Judea eighteen hundred years ago as they are in this country at the present day; but we must not accept testimony, even of the most cogent kind, to prove that cases did occur, in which, for great and necessary purposes, certain of these laws were temporarily suspended by the power of God. Can anything be more capricious than this? Why should we believe the one thing on testimony, and not the other?"

Because the falsehood of the former testimony would *not* be more miraculous than the event related. That the laws of nature are the same now as eighteen hundred years ago is not improbable, but that they were "temporarily suspended" at *any* time is contrary to *all* probability. The assertion that the testimony for this suspension is of "the most cogent kind" is perfectly gratuitous, since the writings recording such extraordinary events are un-

* "Dissertation on Miracles," sec. 2.

† "Christ and Christianity," p. 194.

authenticated, and only quoted by name upwards of a century afterwards! Dr. Alexander continues — “Is it because the former accords with our experience, whilst the latter does not?” No, not because it accords with *our own* experience merely, but that of *all* mankind, *before and since*. Had the human race, in every country and every age, *seen* dead men “rise again,” the reader might *then* ask, “Why shall we believe the one thing on testimony, and not the other?” Is testimony to be believed indiscriminately? Is no qualification to be allowed, no criterion established? And what *better* criterion than that of Hume’s, “that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle *unless* the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish?” Does either Dr. Campbell or Dr. Alexander lay down a better?

24. The illustration of Dr. Campbell,* that the freezing of water might be called a miracle by the King of Siam, because it was “contrary to his experience,” is most unfortunate. We can take the King of Siam *now* to where he will see frozen water. Can any divine take me to where I shall see dead men rise before my own eyes? If the clergy will give the *same* proof in favour of their favourite miracle which can be presented to the King of Siam, there would be an end to the discussion. Unfortunately special pleading, however ingenious, cannot make a fiction a fact. The freezing of water, so far from being a “violation,” or a “suspension” of the laws of nature, is a law of nature. It happens *invariably* that water congeals at a certain temperature. Does it happen *invariably* that dead men come to life?

25. Another argument, considered very satisfactory, is thus put: “Granting that a miracle contradicts all our experience, it is equally true that the falsehood of such testimony as that advanced in favour of the Scripture miracles contradicts all our experience.”

We demur to this assertion. We have already shown that “good” men have been mistaken, and, therefore, it is not contrary to known experience to premise they may have been mistaken in the apostolic era. Dr. Chalmers, who uses this argument, must *first* establish the *infallibility* of these witnesses. Nay, he has yet to prove that such persons *said* they witnessed them. Where is the story found?—In the Gospels. And who wrote the Gospels?—The Evangelists. And who, say the Evangelists,

* “Dissertation,” sect. 2.

wrote them?—The Christian Fathers. And who were the Christian Fathers?—Men who considered it an act of virtue to deceive and lie. So that the real “witnesses” were the *Fathers*, and it is *not* “contrary to experience,” that men who deceived in one instance should deceive in more. If the Fathers forged such writings as those enumerated in a previous chapter, *why not these?*

26. Not the least popular fallacy at this moment is the following:—“There could not have been any sham miracles unless there had been *some* real ones. There could not have been any bad guineas unless there had been good ones.” This reasoning is too shallow to merit much serious refutation. It may be answered in the same manner we disposed of a former objection. “There could not have been sham witches unless there had been *some* real ones!” Query. Were they not all “shams?” Is not this a “sham” argument? What fair comparison exists between “guineas” and “miracles?” The former is consonant with, while the latter is opposed to, our experience. When those who adduce this argument can exhibit a “real” miracle as we can a real guinea, we may have something more to allege—not till then.

27. We hasten to investigate the famous position of Archbishop Whately. This undoubtedly clever prelate has laboured with singular skill to illustrate the extreme difficulty of proving the exact truth of any event, even the most memorable, confirming his view by a triumphant reference to the remarkable career of Napoleon. Now, did not this acute logician perceive that he was thus committing suicide? For if it be extremely difficult to prove *any* event—if even the most popular may have some degree of doubt or fiction connected with it, are there not grounds of doubt in reference to events said to have happened 1,800 year ago, unconfirmed, too, as such events were by independent testimony? Is not the bishop by such ratiocination showing that the sceptic is not so “unreasonable” “audacious,” or “ignorant” after all? The impossibility, indeed, of establishing historical data, separating the mythological from the real, the true from the false, is a fatal argument against the pretensions of any history—Jewish, Christian, Mahomedan, or Hindoo—to infallibility.

But let the liberal archbishop state his case in his own way. Referring to the fact of the unbeliever discrediting the facts of Scripture, and yet accepting as true the records of Napoleon’s wonderful movements, he observes:—“If they (the sceptics) have already rejected some histories, on the ground of their

being strange and marvellous—of their relating facts unprecedented, and at variance with the established course of nature, let them not give credit to another history which lies open to the very same objections—the extraordinary and romantic tale we have just been considering.”* The bishop must excuse us if we decline to allow that the career of Napoleon “is open to the very same objections” as the History of Jesus Christ. 1. The history of the former does not pretend to *Divine* inspiration. 2. It does not profess to record events, extraordinary as some may be, that were produced by *super-human* interposition. 3. Nor does it declare that “eternal damnation” will be the penalty of non-acceptance of the stories there recorded. The evidence, therefore, that might be accredited relative to the career of a mere warrior, ought *not* to be satisfactory in reference to the *miraculous* mission of a *divine* personage. For every fact in connexion with the latter we demand proof beyond *all* dispute. The learned prelate is, therefore, not justified in saying, “Let them (the sceptics) be consistent enough to admit the same evidence in *other* cases which they yield to in *this*.”†

The theologian has no right to expect that the “same evidence” should satisfy us in both cases, *unless he will make the cases analagous*; and, by doing so, *he grants all for which we contend*. Will the Christian admit Christ was a mere man, like Napoleon? Will he admit that the events of Christ's life were *not* miraculous, like Napoleon's? And will he admit that I may reject *any* passage in the history of Christ, as I am at liberty to do in the history of Napoleon? *We* will admit the same evidence as conclusive if *he* will admit the cases are identical.

But we do not believe, nor does the Christian, *all* that we read of Napoleon, even in the most “authentic” histories.

Could we not, therefore, retort upon the accomplished divine and his brother Christians, “Let them be consistent enough to *doubt* the same evidence in *other* cases which they *doubt* in *this*?” Had it been recorded in the history of Napoleon that he was born of a virgin, that he had raised his friend Dessaix from the dead, that some of his favourite guard, slain at Austerlitz, had afterwards been seen walking the streets of Vienna, that he was in the habit of proceeding through his ranks, healing the sick and wounded by a touch or a nod, that he fed a whole army upon a few loaves and fishes, that he converted the snows of

* “Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Buonaparte,” p. 52.

† *Ibid.* p. 53.

Moscow into wine for the dying, that he walked on the waters of the Danube to the opposite banks, that, on his death (indeed we may say literally *his* "crucifixion") at St. Helena, the whole island was instantly enveloped in darkness, and that three days after his interment he "rose again," and shook hands with Bertrand, Monthollon, and *his* "disciples," and finally ascended from the dreary rock into the clouds, gradually vanishing from the sight of his admirers—had any history of Napoleon contained *such* marvels, would Dr. Whately or the Christian public have believed those histories as readily as they do now? Would they have not insisted these statements are so astounding, so incredible, so contrary to all human experience, we must have much more positive and distinct evidence than for ordinary events, or we *cannot* accept them. Precisely is this the position of the sceptic in relation to Christian prodigies. And yet the unbeliever is denounced as "perverse," "stiff-necked," and "blind to the truth!"

The evidence, however, in favour of the leading incidents of the career of Christ and Napoleon is not "the same." *Contemporaries*, who were his implacable *enemies*, notice the most prominent achievements of Napoleon's career, but *no* adverse historian of *the time of Christ* mentions his more remarkable miracles. Had contemporary history been silent on the progress of the French warrior, our posterity of 1915 would have just grounds to question his magnificent victories. *Particularly would this be just had he performed such miracles as those ascribed to Christ.*

We hold that this popular essay of Dr. Whately's tells *against* all historical evidence, *Christian included*. Mark the following:— "But, not to multiply instances, the battle of Borodino, which is represented as one of the greatest ever fought, is unequivocally claimed as a victory by both parties: nor is the question decided to this day. We have official accounts on both sides, circumstantially detailed, in the names of supposed respectable persons, professing to have been present on the spot, yet totally irreconcilable. *Both* of these accounts may be false, but since *one* of them must be false, that one (it is no matter which we suppose) proves incontrovertibly this important maxim, *that it is possible for a narrative, however circumstantial, however steadily maintained, however public, and however important the events it relates, however grave the authority on which it is published, to be nevertheless an entire fabrication.**

* "External Evidence," p. 21.

* * * What, then, are we to believe? If we are disposed to credit all that is told us we must believe in the existence not only of one, but of two or three Buonapartes: if we admit nothing but what is well authenticated we shall be compelled to doubt of the existence of any." * * * *That even in this enlightened age, as it is called, a whole nation may be egregiously imposed upon, even in matters which intimately concern them, may be proved (if it has not already been proved) by the following instance. It was stated in the newspapers that, a month after the battle of Trafalgar, an English officer, who had been a prisoner of war, and was exchanged, returned to this country from France, and beginning to condole with his countrymen on the terrible defeat they had sustained, was infinitely astonished to learn that the battle of Trafalgar was a splendid victory. He had been assured, he said, that in that battle the English had been totally defeated, and the French were fully and universally persuaded that such was the fact. Now, if this report of the belief of the French nation was not true, the British public were completely imposed upon; if it were true, then both nations were, at the same time, rejoicing in the event of the same battle as a signal victory to themselves; and, consequently, one or other, at least, of these nations must have been the dupes of their government: for if the battle was never fought at all, or was not decisive on either side, in that case both of the parties were deceived."*

We again venture to interrogate—Does not Dr. Whately perceive the dilemma in which he places the Christian divine by these illustrations? If such little reliance can be placed on modern history — if *frauds, misrepresentation, and falsehood* can be so readily practised *now*, how much more easily *in the dark ages of the world*, with no printing-press or popular literature as a check, and when mankind were more notoriously prone to credulity and superstition? If modern literature is not to be depended on, it is an *additional* reason for doubting *ancient records*.

We close this chapter with a passage from his own essay, which we trust the *Christian* reader will appreciate. (P. 24.)

"After all, it may be expected that many who perceive the force of these objections, will yet be loath to think it possible that they and the public at large can have been so long imposed upon. And thus it is that *the magnitude and boldness of a fraud become its best support*; the millions who for so many ages have believed in Mahomet or Brahma (or Christ) lean, as it were, on

each other for support; and, not having *vigour of mind enough boldly to throw off vulgar prejudices, and dare be wiser than the multitude, persuade themselves that what so many have acknowledged must be true.*"

CHAPTER X.

PROPHECY.

IN the estimation of many Christians this is indubitably the most important, interesting, and triumphant evidence of the divinity of the Bible. Others, however, and they include some of the most learned, think that considerable doubt and difficulty surround the question.

Bishop Watson admits, that "no subject requires greater intellectual energy than the elucidation of prophecy. *It is a boisterous sea of controversy.*" *

Mr. Belsham† observes, "I find it *difficult* to satisfy myself, that I fully comprehend the true meaning and extent of the prophetic language. To understand it satisfactorily, it must be proved—First, That the Jews *were* favoured with a revelation from God; Secondly, That their sacred books contain a series of prophecies which received their *proper* accomplishment in the person and character of Jesus of Nazareth; and to the validity of this argument there must be—First, Sufficient evidence that the prophecy was delivered *prior* to the event. Secondly, That the event was beyond the reach of *human* sagacity to foresee or calculate; and, Thirdly, The clear and palpable fulfilment of the prophecy *in* the event."

In subsequent observations I shall show that the Scripture prophecies *do not* conform to the rules of the learned gentleman, and, therefore, according to his argument, cannot be received.

Even Bishop Sherlock declares‡ that, "many of the latter prophecies are still *dark and obscure*, and so far from evidently be-

* "Life of Watson," vol. iii. 385.

† "Evidences," p. 72, 112. ‡ "Discourses," p. 31.

longing to *Christ, and Christ only*, that it requires much learning and sagacity to show, *even now*, the connexion between some prophecies and the events."

These few extracts, from Christians of no mean celebrity, evince the great difficulty to establish the divinity of the Scriptures by prophecy.

Hence the most laborious and voluminous writings ever published, have been upon this vague and speculative topic. Dr. Keith has exhibited an immense mass of useless learning and idle display, and Bishop Newton has presented the world with a production of 1,200 pages on the same question, and yet informs his readers he has studied *brevity!*

We would submit that if the prophets of the Hebrews had been able to foretell future events by virtue of *divine* inspiration, and wished to be understood, why not have expressed themselves in intelligible language? Why all this ambiguity, allegory, and perversion? Why should the most "important" evidence be the most difficult to comprehend? The old policy of deluding the people in order to instruct or persuade them, cannot be accepted.

Our objections to the Prophecies may be thus stated:—

1. The evidence is necessarily inconclusive and unsatisfactory.
2. The Jews themselves deny that any of them apply, or were intended to apply, to Christ or Christianity.
3. The vague and indefinite character of these predictions generally.
4. That many of them were written *after* the events predicted.
5. That those which are clear and distinct have not been fulfilled.

1. That the evidence of Prophecy is necessarily inconclusive, is apparent from the fact that the genuineness of the writings which contain them has not been established. We do not positively know either when, where, or by whom they were written. Until this is settled, beyond all controversy, the mere coincidences between certain passages and certain events prove nothing. It may be a fraud, or it may be an accident.

Of the prophets of the Old Testament, what do we know earlier than the time of Ptolemy? What contemporary independent writer refers to these predictions? The originals, both of the Old and New Testament are utterly lost. We have only those copies of copies which the priesthood have handed

down to us, and that *they* cannot be relied on we have amply exemplified in preceding chapters.

In the earlier ages unlimited confidence was placed in those who pretended to supernatural agency. The Greeks and Romans trusted to their oracles and soothsayers, the Babylonians to their astrologers, the Egyptians and Persians to their magicians, and the Jews to their seers or prophets. These men were a race of mere mercenaries, who were dependent for their subsistence upon the credulity of the people. They were continually squabbling among themselves, crying out, like our modern quacks, "take *my* pills, and beware of counterfeits!" They applied to each other the most disparaging epithets. The terms "fool," "snare," "vain and foolish," "divining for money," "lies," "drunken," &c., were in common use amongst them.* Are such persons to be elevated to the rank of *inspired* agents of Omniscience? Are we to believe that their prognostications affected the destiny of empires?

2. Prophecies, as in the case of miracles, prove too much. Mahomedanism might claim divine origin on the same ground. Mahomedans refer to certain passages of the Scriptures with unfeigned triumph, and apply them to the mission of their prophet. Is the religion of Mahomet *therefore* divine? Mr. Evans Bell, in a series of exceedingly able and ingenious papers, develops this argument very fully.

He remarks,† that "The Mussulman doctors say that the narrative of the incidents of Ishmael's life in the book of Genesis is characterised by a solemnity and a minuteness of relation, which would be quite superfluous and quite inexplicable, unless the Arab patriarch had a real substantial part and share in the covenant promised to the seed of Abraham. By many significant circumstances and prophetic intimations the independent importance of the destinies of Ishmael's race is typically yet clearly foreshadowed. * * The Mahomedans have always accused the Jews of substituting the name of Isaac for that of Ishmael as that of the son whom Abraham was directed to sacrifice, and of misplacing the incident in the book of Genesis, so as to bring it in after the birth of Isaac. This at least is certain that the Arabs have from time immemorial celebrated an annual festival, called by the Arabs

* Hosea, ix. 7, 8; Micah, iii. 5—11; Lamentations, ii. 14; Isa. ix. 15, and xxviii. 7; 2 Chron. xviii.

† Vide "The Reasoner," vol. xix.

and Turks 'Eed-i-Koorban,' by the Indian Moslems 'Bukreed,' and sacrificed a ram, representing the victim provided by God in lieu of their great ancestor—a strong proof, according to Leslie's 'Short and Easy Method'—whereas there never has been any such annual commemoration among the Jews. The Hebrew interpolators, however, bungling their work as deceivers always do, have left evident signs in the passage, even as it now stands, of the change of position, and of the alteration of names. Isaac *never* was Abraham's 'only son:' Ishmael *was* his only son for thirteen years. This expression, 'thy only son,' three times repeated in the twenty-second chapter, is enough to prove that the temptation must have taken place before the birth of Isaac, and that Ishmael must have been the appointed victim. * * Undoubtedly the clearest and most satisfactory prophecy of the mission of the prophet Mahomed is that which commences at the 15th verse of Deuteronomy 18th, "I will raise them up a prophet from among *their brethren*, like unto thee?" On the very threshold of the inquiry, in the first link of the chain of predictions, in this simple and apparently immaterial sentence, the unprejudiced and impartial reader will find the key to the prophecy—for here we meet with that peculiar formula, "among thy brethren," which, twice conspicuously used with reference to Ishmael, is now emphatically applied to the promised teacher and leader of mankind, and points him out as a descendant of the Arab patriarch. The prophet was not to arise from among the Jews, but from among 'their brethren.' In the preceding chapter (v. 15) permission* is given to the Israelites to appoint one "from among their brethren" to be their king at a future period; but they are on no account to set up a stranger or Gentile.

But we are furnished with another definite test; he is to be "like unto" Moses; and this is to be twice repeated. A brief comparison will show whether the person, life, and actions of Jesus to Mahomed coincide best with this second criterion. The career of Moses, like that of Mahomed, commenced with a flight to Hegira. Mahomed went to Medina, Moses to Midian. We know that Midian was a district of Arabia, which is striking enough in itself; but does not the resemblance of the names leave us to believe that the same illustrious city, Medina, was

* "One from among thy brethren thou mayest set king over thee," is the correct translation, and not "shalt," as in common version.

the place of refuge for both prophets? We cannot be certain that the locality of the two Hegiras was identical; but the primary point of similarity in their missions is manifest. On the other hand, the reported flight of the parents of Jesus into Egypt in his infancy cannot be regarded as a parallel case. Moses was their leader in a war of conquest and conversion; so was Mahomed. Jesus, on the contrary, throughout his ministry forbade violence, and at a time when, humanly speaking, a defensive struggle might have proved successful, said, "Put up thy sword in the sheath." Moses was a destroyer of idols and idolators; so was Mahomed. Jesus, on the contrary, never came into any sort of collision with the Pagans of his time; and although living in the midst of them, never even addressed himself to them: "for I am not sent," said he, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And he gave strict orders to the disciples whom he sent forth to preach not to go into the towns of the Samaritans or Gentiles; but rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Matt. x. 5.

Moses was a lawgiver, and promulgated a new code; so did Mahomed. Jesus, on the contrary, declared that he was not come to abrogate but to "fulfil the law;" and declared that "not a jot or tittle of the law should pass away until all these things were fulfilled." The Christian heresies have, by their laxity and corruption, subverted the decent observances of the law, and introduced a heathen license; but Islam confirms and fulfils this prophecy and ordinance completely. . . . But the still greater light to be brought by Mahomed is now to be foretold. At Isi. c. 21, v. 13—15 the Hegira is predicted. "In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, ye travelling companies of Dedanim" *The whole of the tribe of Dedan*, to which Obeidollah and many other distinguished Mussulman fathers belonged, emigrated to Medina, leaving their houses in Mecca locked up. "The inhabitants of the land of Tema (the name of a son of Ishmael, and the name of the tribe to which the Prophet's father-in-law Abueka belonged) brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread *him that fled.*" The part of the Hejaz in which Medina is situated is called Tema to-day, doubtless from the tribe of Tema. The whole of the twenty-eighth of Isaiah is a prophecy of the mission of Mahomed and of Islam as the 'mighty and strong one,' and 'the overflowing scourge.' * * * And here also the peculiar mode in which the Koran was revealed, and the personal characteristics of the Prophet, are quite literally depicted. * * *

'Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little; with stammering lips and another tongue'—not the tongue in which the prophet is writing, but another tongue, Arabic—'will he speak to this people' (Is. c. 28, v. 10, 11). 'With stammering lips'—Mahomed frequently alluded to his own illiterateness and want of eloquence as a proof that he was incapable of forging the Koran. 'Precept upon precept, line upon line'—as the exigencies of the time required—thus was the Koran revealed, recited, and re-corded. Was the Old Testament revealed in this way? No. * * * It goes on in a fine strain of denunciation to predict the advent of a warlike redeemer, and promises that when 'the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him' (Isa. lix. v. 19). And this was exactly fulfilled in Mahomed, the commencement of whose success dated from his flight from Mecca. After his arrival in Medina his disciples increased rapidly in number, and it was then revealed to him that whereas former prophets who worked by persuasion and miracles had been rejected, he was to propagate the faith by the sword."

Now, it might fairly be argued, if Christianity is of divine origin because the career of its founder is predicted, why not Mahomedanism? Or, if Christians dispute that such passages refer to Mahomed, why not Freethinkers deny that passages far less explicit apply to Christ? In every point of view the argument is suicidal, and therefore unsatisfactory and inconclusive.

3. The circumstance that the Jews themselves, whose ancestors wrote and circulated these prophecies, have *always* indignantly asserted that they have no reference at all to Christ and his followers, ought, according to the *ipse dixit* of Leslie and his clerical successors, to be undoubted evidence that the Jews are right. Leslie insists upon the authenticity of the Old Testament miracles because the Jews have always believed them. Why not, therefore, insist upon the non-applicability of the Old Testament prophecies to Christianity because the Jews have "always" entertained that view? At least, if the argument is valid in one instance, it is in both.

The Jewish Rabbis accuse the Christians with having changed in the original, nouns, verbs, tenses, and meanings. "These prophecies have repeatedly been shown, by our Rabbis, to have a different meaning from that given them by the Christians, which it is impossible for any one to mistake, *whose mind is not*

predisposed to shut out the light of truth."* The learned author of another Jewish work,† in reply to his Christian opponent, observes, "In your eagerness to convert the Jews to your way of thinking, you make no scruple of converting and *perverting* the prophets, *by turning their words to a meaning, which you conceive to be best adapted to your purpose*; and, in doing this, you make them not only *flatly contradict each other, but themselves also.*" Solomon Bennett, in his celebrated reply to Lord Crawford,‡ remarks, "Most of the prophecies were merely *temporal*; their visions with regard to the restoration, most of them, have not exceeded the time of the restoration of the second temple, except Daniel, Zechariah, and Ezekiel, who received visions during the captivity; which visions related to events from the time of that captivity, *until the destruction of the kingdom of Israel by the Romans.*"

The Jews contend that the prophecies of Daniel imply, that in the days of the Messiah there should be only *one* kingdom, and *one* king upon earth, and that Isaiah predicts there shall be *one* religion and *one* law only throughout the world at the time of the Messiah. Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, they contend that there shall be no sins or crimes upon earth at that period, and that Isaiah even anticipates that at the appearance of the *true* Messiah there shall be universal peace not only amongst men but beasts. Now was this the case at the time of Christ? Is it so now? How, then, they conclude, can it be pretended the Messiah is yet come?

We will leave Jews and Christians to reconcile these disputed pretensions, and proceed to the examination of the prophecies as interpreted by Christians themselves.

Following their own order, we begin with those which are said to foretell the *coming of Christ*. From our remarks will be seen the fairness of the objections previously enumerated.

4. *That a Messiah would come.* As prophetic of this event we are first referred to Gen. iii. 15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This remarkably intelligible passage our divines affirm predicts the Messiah! What an admirable sample of a prophecy! How conveniently obscure! I am utterly at a loss to conceive by

* "Israel Vindicated," 1826.

† "Koral Jacob in Defence of the Jewish Religion."

‡ "The Constancy of Israel." 1812. Preface.

what perversion of language these empty words can be made to have a special reference to any particular person, much less to Jesus Christ. As to the expression "seed of the woman," are not all mankind the seed of woman? The Mahomedans, or the followers of any religious pretender, may, with equal distinctness, apply the passage to their founder.

Biblical interpreters profess to find the prediction verified in Gal. iv. 4. "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law." This was 2,000 years after the prophecy, which, say the clergy, was truly wonderful. Surpassingly wonderful, indeed, that a man should be born of a woman at any time! I apprehend it would have been a much greater marvel if he had been born of anything else!

We are referred also to Rom. xvi. 20, where the word *bruise* happens to occur. "And the God of peace shall *bruise* Satan under your feet shortly." What a strange coincidence between these two passages exclaims the Christian! Perhaps quite as much as that detected by the sagacity of the Irishman who insisted that Armageddon meant Armagh, because in the Apocalypse something is said of fine linen! If any identity really does exist, what more easy for the writer of this epistle to adapt his language to the words found in the Jewish Scriptures.

But the passage in Genesis is no prophecy at all. It is a declaration of what might naturally happen. Did it require divine inspiration to foresee that serpents would be apt to bite men by the heels, and that men would be apt to defend themselves by striking them on the head, especially in eastern countries, where serpents are abundant and men generally walk with their naked feet?

In Genesis xxii. 18, there is another passage quoted as a prophecy of the coming of Christ. "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." How can this sentence be construed to mean one particular individual, when from the context, as well as the passage itself, it is evidently used in a plural sense. The word *seed* imports the whole descendants of Abraham. In the preceding verse, the angel of the Lord said unto Abraham, "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the *stars* of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore, and thy seed shall possess the gates of his enemies." Then follow the words, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Now, to suppose this applicable to Christ, or any single person,



it would be necessary to admit that that individual would be multiplied as the sand upon the shore, or cut up into stars to "enlighten the heathens"—a rather prolific personage it must be confessed!

5. *When the Messiah would come.* "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."—Gen. xlix. 10. How is it possible for these words to refer to the Christian Messiah, who did not appear till long after the sceptre *had* departed. The Jews were under the sway of the Romans at the advent of Christ, as they had been under the Babylonians centuries before. The sceptre had departed at least *twice* before "Shiloh" came, allowing "Shiloh" to mean Christ, which has yet to be proved. That term is so vague it has been very differently rendered. Why not have placed such a pregnant word beyond all mal-interpretation. Inspired by *infinite* knowledge, what more easy? Be it as it may, the prophecy, if intended to refer to Jesus Christ, *is an utter failure*, the sceptre having departed before the time predicted.

In this instance, as many others, an attempt has been made to save the prophetic reputation of Scripture by a quibble. Some critics allege that a *tribunal* sceptre only is meant. Why then did not the prophet say what he meant. How is it that modern writers, who so humbly acknowledge their *fallibility*, can put the case so much better than those *inspired* men who are pronounced *infallible*? Can the fallible correct the infallible? Is the finite better informed than the infinite? But even in a "tribunal" sense the sceptre departed before Shiloh came, as the Babylonians had held the Jews in *bondage*. There was no sceptre of any kind *then*. Whether, however, a *regal* or a *tribunal* sceptre is to be understood, the prophecy is untenable. This quibble will not relieve the Church, for the latter part of the prophecy intimates that "unto him (Shiloh) *shall the gathering of the people be.*" Now, were the Jews gathered unto Christ spiritually or temporally? Did they not on the contrary crucify him? Do they not still ignore his Messiahship! Nay, more, if Jesus be the Messiah here mentioned, he was to *remain* the leader or ruler of the tribe of Judah. The expression "unto him shall the gathering of the people be" conveys that idea, or why gather them unto himself? Now Christ failed at any time to gather the Jews unto him as a Messiah or a ruler, much less did he remain so. Hence the prophecy in *any* sense is a failure.

The prediction said to foretell the *precise* period of Christ's

appearance, and deemed by many the most important in the Old Testament, is given in Daniel ix. 24, 27. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy."—"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times."—"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."—"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate."

In order to make this prophecy apply to Christ our divines begin by assuming that the "seventy weeks" imply weeks of *years*, and not weeks of days. One week meant seven years and not seven days, and, therefore, seventy weeks included seventy times seven years, or 490. Now, though the Church may deem this a fortunate interpretation, we will test the prophecy, in the first instance, by their own standard of time. Does it apply to Christ even by this reading? Let us see.

In verse 25 it states that the "Messiah the Prince" will appear at the end of the *seventh* week, BEFORE the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Now this cannot be Jesus, as he was not born till 350 years *after* the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and only 70 before it was again destroyed!

Besides, in the next verse, it is said, that "*after* threescore and two weeks, Messiah shall be cut off." Calling the week seven years in this case, as in the other, the true Messiah ought to have lived 434 years! Did Christ live so long? He died, it is supposed, when only thirty-two or thirty-three years old, thus leaving a *slight* deficiency in the prophecy of upwards of 400 years!!

Again. From the context it appears that the Messiah was to be a *temporal* prince. David calls him, "Messiah, the *Prince*," and talks of "*troublesome* times," and of building "streets" and "walls." Was Christ such a Messiah?

We are told, too, in v. 27, that "he shall confirm the covenant with many for one *week*." Did Christ confirm a covenant with any one for one week—*i.e.*, *seven years*? His ministry lasted little more than *three*. In the "*midst of the week*," we also read, "he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease." Did Christ do this in his time? This Messiah was to be "cut off" after "three-score and two weeks," *at the same time* as the city and sanctuary were destroyed. Now, Jesus was put to death thirty-seven years *before* the destruction of the city, and not at the same time.

It is further announced that these "seventy weeks" were "*to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins*." Was this happy result attained, either *during* the seventy weeks, or *after* their expiration? Are the Jews even *yet* without sins?

So far from these seventy weeks, or 490 years, agreeing so precisely with the advent of Christ, there was a difference of at least *half-a-century*—not *very* precise for an *infallible* writer.

In every particular, therefore, is this boasted prediction falsified.

Some of the objections we have raised have been met by Christian writers in a manner not very creditable. It has been attempted, for example, to alter the date of the prophecy by calculating the "seventy weeks" from the time of Ezra's return, in the *seventh* year of Artaxerxes. Others date from the period Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, in the *twentieth* year of the same reign. This would bring the seventy weeks to about the epoch of Christ's death. But these estimates are purely arbitrary, as the book of Daniel itself expressly records in the same chapter that the commandment or prophecy came to Daniel *while he was praying during the first year of the reign of Darius*, about 540 years before Christ. Verse 23 distinctly states, "At the *commencement of thy supplications* the commandment came forth." How, then, can the commandment be dated from the time of Ezra or Nehemiah?

Another endeavour to overcome the difficulties we have here pointed out has been made by altering the punctuation of the passages. In our present editions of the Bible, it reads, "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, to Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and three-score and two weeks:" The Jewish critics, however (see "Defence of the Jewish Religion," before quoted), interpret the words thus:—"From the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem shall be seven weeks: and three

score and two weeks the street shall be built again," &c. Though the former reading may diminish the absurdity of the Messiah living for some hundreds of years, it not only does not obviate other objections, but creates more no less embarrassing. If the first "seven weeks" are to be united with the "three-score and two," how will these critics reconcile it with the 26th verse, which mentions that "after three-score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off." Was he cut off "seven weeks" before he came? This is a more preposterous supposition than that the Messiah lived nearly four centuries and a half after he came! Into what perplexities are the apologists of exploded theology inevitably drawn!

But this is not all. According to this reading, the rebuilding of the city, and the coming of the Messiah, were to be *at the same time*. The fact that it was not so invalidates the prediction.

Neither readings, therefore, save the reputation of the prophet.

It may be questioned, however, whether "weeks" always meant weeks of *years*, for the same prophet, in the following chapter, declares that during "three full weeks" neither "came flesh nor wine into my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all." Now, if three weeks imply *twenty-one years*, Daniel must have been singularly *clean* and abstemious!

Understanding this popular prophecy to involve ordinary weeks, or a series of years, it cannot apply to the coming of Jesus Christ.

6. *Of whom the Messiah was to be born.*—The following verse is ascribed to Isaiah, and said to be a signal prediction of the birth of Christ:—"Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a *virgin* shall conceive, and bare a son, and shall call his name *Immanuel*." Chap. vii. 14.

If this has any reference to the appearance of Christ, it is exceedingly strange it should be so indefinite in the details. It is utterly destitute of all the properties of perspicuous prediction—a fact which proves it could have no relation to such an important event as the birth of the "Son of God." The only thing definite in this memorable prophecy is the *name* of the child to be born, which is *not Christ*. The name of the mother is not stated, nor any of the circumstances said to be connected with the birth of Jesus.

The Jews themselves, who ought to understand the meaning of their own book, most solemnly deny that this prophecy refers to Jesus Christ. "These prophecies have repeatedly been shown

by our Rabbis to have a *different* meaning from that given them by the Christians, which it is impossible for any one to mistake whose mind is not *predisposed to shut out the light of truth.*"*

Solomon Bennett, a learned Jew, who ought to comprehend his own language at least as well as a Christian, states that *virgin* and *young woman* are sometimes used synonymously. †

The real nature of this celebrated passage will be seen on reading the context. It will be perceived that it has not the slightest reference to a Messiah some 700 years subsequent to the time of Isaiah, but only to mere *local* and *immediate* events. The plain purport is simply this:—The King of Syria and the King of Israel made war against Ahaz, King of Judah, and marched their armies towards Jerusalem, the capital of Ahaz. The latter, with his people, were alarmed; and, according to verse 2, "their hearts were moved, as trees of wood are moved with the wind." At this moment the prophet Isaiah addressed himself to Ahaz, in the usual parlance, "the name of the Lord," assuring him that these two kings should not succeed against him. To convince Ahaz that this should be the case, Isaiah requested him, as was the practise of the prophets of that period, to ask a sign. He declined, however, stating, as a reason, that he would not "tempt the Lord." Isaiah then said, as given in verse 14, "Therefore, the Lord *himself* shall give you a sign: *behold a virgin shall conceive and bare a son,*" and verse 16 states, "*And before this child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land which thou abhorrest (meaning Syria and the kingdom of Israel) shall be forsaken of both her kings; and it shall come to pass, that the Lord shall hiss for the flies that are in the brooks of Egypt, and for the bees that are in the land of Syria.*" * * * * "In the same day shall the Lord *shave with a razor* that is *hired*, viz., by them beyond the river, by the King of Assyria, the head and the hair of the feet, and it shall also consume the beard." Verse 20.

Here, then, was the sign, and the *time* limited for the performance of the prophecy; viz., *before the child could distinguish the good from the evil.* It was necessary for the prophet to see to the fulfilment of his prediction; and, accordingly, we are told, in the next chapter, verses 2, 3, that *Isaiah*, in the presence of witnesses, "went unto the prophetess, and she conceived and bare a son," which was to be called by the strange name of *Mahershalal-hash-baz.* Thus was this absurd and obscene predic-

* "Israel Vindicated," 1826. † "Constancy of Israel," p. 26.

tion verified. The prophet himself puts it past all dispute by express words, as well as by his whole narration. In chap. viii. 18, he remarks, "Behold I and the children, whom the Lord hath given me, *are for signs and for wonders in Israel.*" Hence, instead of this prediction referring to Christ, it meant only the prophet's own son, and the "virgin" his own wife.

It is only necessary to read 2nd Chron. xxviii. 5, where the rest of this story is given, to find the fraud which Isaiah practised upon poor Ahaz. Instead of these two kings falling, as he "predicted," *Ahaz himself* was beaten.

To affirm that this prophecy refers to Christ, is as much as to assert that Isaiah would tell Ahaz that these two kings should not prevail against him until a child was born 700 years after he was dead!

An attempt to uphold this prophecy has been offered in these terms: "It is true that the words, 'A virgin shall conceive and bear a son,' relate to events which occurred in the prophet's time, but that they also relate to some one greater than the prophet's son is proved from Isaiah viii. 8., and *especially* chap. ix. 1—7. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this." Suppose we allow that "some one greater than the prophet's son" is meant in *this* verse, it does not affect the story of the *preceding* chapter about the child born of a *virgin* being the prophet's son, and not Christ; and this is the main feature of this so-called prophecy. The attempt to mix up the two subjects is simply disingenuous, and a mere endeavour to confuse the ordinary reader. The above verses seem to be part of a description of the times of Josiah. Compare the 19th verse of chap. viii. to the 7th verse of chap. ix., with 2 Kings, xxiii. 23—25. We there read that Josiah extirpated the familiar spirits, wizards, and idols; "*and like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.*" The passage in Isaiah urges the people to leave the wizards and familiar spirits, and to seek the law and testimonies. It tells them

that a great light hath shined upon them, as they walk in darkness; that unto them a child is born, and the government shall be upon his shoulder (Josiah was only eight years old when he began to reign); that "his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God," &c.; and that "of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end on the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice." The excess of panegyric affords ground for conjecturing that the passage was not written earlier than the time of Josiah. The book of Isaiah contains probably fragments written at different times. At least we shall show, when commenting upon the fall of Babylon, that some portions, at any rate, were written long after the time of Isaiah. It has been also urged that "Immanuel" means "God with us," and to whom can that term apply so well as to Christ? This is begging the question. The point to be settled is—Can the child born of a *virgin*, and named "Immanuel," in the 7th chap of Isaiah be Christ? We deny it, and defy the clergy to establish the identity. Grotius conjectures, as regards the words "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God," that instead of "Counsellor, the mighty God" we should read a "consulter of the mighty God." This would agree with either Hezekiah or Josiah, who both "turned to the Lord with all their hearts."*

7. *In what place the Messiah was to be born.* This circumstance was, it is said, predicted by Micah, c. 5 v. 2. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be *ruler in Israel*; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." It is easy to be seen that this passage can have no reference to such a person as Jesus Christ; for it is stated in verse 5 of the same chapter, "And this man (meaning he who was to be ruler in Israel) shall be at peace when the *Assyrian* shall come into our land; and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise up against him seven shepherds and eight principal men." And in verse 6 it states, "And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod, in the entrance thereof; thus shall he (the person spoken of) deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders." These passages evidently refer to a *military* chief, and cannot mean Christ. The circumstances of the times spoken of, and those in which Christ

* "Hennell's Origin of Christianity," p. 220.

lived, are in *contradiction* to each other. Strange to say, it was the *Romans*, and not the Assyrians, who were in the land of Judea, and "trod in their palaces," at the period Christ is said to have been born and died; and, so far from driving *them* out, it was under them he suffered *death*. These facts absolutely falsify the prophecy as applied to Christ.

8. *That the Messiah should be a prophet.* Deut. xviii. 15—19. "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, *like unto me*; unto him ye shall hearken." "According to all thou desirest of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the assembly, saying, let me not hear the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not." "And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, *and will put my words in his mouth*; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." "And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name I will require it of him."

It has been before explained that the Mahomedan doctors maintain that this prophecy relates to their founder rather than Christ. No doubt they are so far correct, but we hold it cannot be fairly applied to either. The prophet meant was an *immediate* successor to Moses. Joshua, who resembled him in every remarkable particular, is more likely the prophet alluded to. Moses himself afterwards appointed him his successor.* This view of the case is the one entertained by the Jews themselves. From the context it is apparent Moses was giving the Jews directions of *immediate* use; and, therefore, in promising a prophet to whom they should hearken, must intend an immediate prophet, who might be of use to the Jews, and answer their common exigencies, and not a prophet two thousand years to come. This prophecy, too, cannot relate to Jesus, inasmuch as the *prophet* here spoken of might be tried and condemned as really a *false prophet*; and that those who did not hearken to him, if a true prophet, should be *cut off*, and God would require it of them; which was also so far from being true in respect to Jesus, that *he* was cut off, and not his opposers and enemies.

9. *Where the Messiah should preach.* "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison he departed into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which

* Deut. xxxi.23

is upon the sea-coast, on the borders of Zebulon and Nephthalim. *That it might be fulfilled*; which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentile; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." Matt., c. 4, v. 12—17. Now, turning to Is'iaiah, ix. 1, 2, the words are these: "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulon, and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations." "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Comparing Isaiiah with Matthew, it appears that this is no prophecy at all, but relates to two circumstances that had already happened at the time these words in Isaiiah were written. Matthew falsified the text. He begins his quotation at a part of the verse where there is not so much as a comma, and thereby cuts off everything that relates to the first affliction. He then leaves out all that relates to the second affliction, and by this means leaves out everything that makes the verse intelligible, and reduces it to a senseless skeleton of names of towns.

The second verse, as given in Isaiiah, is historical, and not prophetic. "The people that walked in darkness *have* seen a great light, they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death upon them hath the light shined." The whole of this is in the preter tense; it speaks of things that *had been accomplished* at the time the words were written, and not of things to be accomplished afterwards. If we look into the preceding chapter, the eighth, we shall find the writer speaking, at the 19th verse, of *witches and wizards who peep about and mutter*, and of people who made application to them; and he preaches and exhorts them against this dark practice; it is of this people, and of this darksome practice, or *walking in darkness*, that he is speaking at the second verse in the ninth chapter; and with respect to *the light that had shined in upon them*, it refers entirely to *his own* ministry and to the boldness of it, which opposed itself to that of the witches and wizards who peeped about and muttered.

10. *That the Messiah would work miracles.* "When the even was come they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils, and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all

that were sick. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." Matt. viii. 16, 17. Here again we will turn to the words as in Isaiah. "Surely he (the person of whom Isaiah is speaking) hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." Chap. liii. 4. Here is nothing about casting out devils nor curing of sicknesses. The passage, therefore, so far from being a prophecy of Christ, is not even applicable as a circumstance. Besides it is evidently of the preter tense. Whoever be the personage intended, it is plain that Matthew has not only quoted incorrectly, but has given quite a different sense to that of the writer of Isaiah; for the latter speaks of the sorrows undergone by the person himself: Matthew, of the infirmities and sicknesses which Jesus removed from others.

11. *The manner in which the Messiah would enter Jerusalem.* "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation, and lowly, AND RIDING UPON AN ASS, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." Zech. ix. 9. The reader need only compare this with the context of the same chapter, and with c. iii. v. 8—9, and c. vi. 11—13, and it will be seen Zerubbabel is the person intended, and not Christ. "Hear now, O Joshua, the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men wondered at; for, behold, I will bring forth thy servant, the *branch*." Now, Zerubbabel was a "branch" of the house of David,* and might very naturally be considered by the returned Jews as their lawful king. One object of the book of Zechariah seems to be to advance his pretensions. But he could not assume the regal state, under the Persian rule, and was obliged to limit himself in public to an humble and pacific demeanour; therefore, his friend and poet, Zechariah, asserts his claim to the homage of his countrymen, notwithstanding his apparently low estate. According to Grotius, instead of "thy king cometh," the Hebrew might very well be read, "thy king hath come;" and he is described as riding upon an ass, instead of a horse, not only from modesty, but also for the sake of showing a pacific intention, the ass being an animal of peace, and the horse of war.†

The writer's mind was taken up with the entry of the Jews into Jerusalem after their captivity, and not with the entry of Christ 700 years afterwards. Besides, there is good ground

* 1 Chron. iii. 19.

† Annotations on Zechariah.

for rejecting as untrue the story of Christ riding into Jerusalem with a great multitude *shouting and rejoicing*, and spreading their garments by the way; for, previous to this, Jesus is represented *running away*, or withdrawing himself from Jerusalem, for fear of being apprehended; but here, though no new circumstance had risen in the interim to change his condition for the better, he makes a public entry into that city he had fled from for safety. These two circumstances are beyond the bounds of probability, and if both are not false, one of them at least can scarcely be true.

12. *That the Messiah should be betrayed.* "And I will feed thy flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me *two staves*; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. *Three shepherds also I cut off in one month*; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me. Then said I, I will not feed you; that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant, which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day; and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord. And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price *thirty pieces of silver*. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, a goodly price that I was prized at of them; and I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter, in the house of the LORD. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel." Zech. xi. 7—14. No part of this incoherent story has any relation to what is stated in Matthew,* *but quite the reverse*. In Zechariah,

* Matthew, indeed, says this prophecy was given by "Jeremy," while it was Zechariah, and not Jeremiah who gave it—a slight mistake for an *infallible* writer. An apologist, more unprincipled than able, says, "In Greek, Jeremiah would be written Iriou, Zechariah Zriou; so that by the mere mistake of the letter Z instead of I, a single letter, the error might arise." This does not explain away the fact, that there is an "error" in an inspired book. Moreover, if such stupid blunders can be so *readily* made, what positive assurance have we there are not more "errors," and thus the *infallibility* of the Bible is at once invalidated.

the thirty pieces of silver, whatever it was for, is called a goodly price, and was approved of by the Lord, and the money given to the potter in the house of the Lord: but in the case of Judas, as stated in Matthew, the thirty pieces of silver were the price of blood; the transaction was condemned by the Lord, and the money when refunded was refused admittance into the treasury, c. xxvii. v. 3—8. Everything in the two cases is the reverse of each other. Besides, in the Acts of the Apostles, c. i. v. 18, it is stated that so far from repenting and returning the money, or the high-priest buying a field with it to bury strangers in, Judas kept the money, and bought a field with it himself, and afterwards fell headlong and burst himself. Moreover, why does not a prophecy said to be so circumstantial mention Judas by name, if intended to refer to him? Solomon Bennett, the Jew, shrewdly observes,* “One error produced another: the misunderstanding of the above chapter in Amos gave an opportunity of perverting also the eleventh chapter of Zechariah,” on which account St. Matthew superficially thought, in his testimony, to fix the price of the bargain at thirty pieces of silver (Matt. xxvi. 14, 15), that it might agree with the terms mentioned in Zechariah; though Amos speaks of no sum at all. It will be obvious to the reader that the Nazarene commentators *have changed in the original, nouns, verbs, tenses, and meanings, as I will show in the course of the explanation.* It is obvious that the speeches of Zechariah are mostly spoken in a figurative and emblematical manner, which allude to the time and circumstances he was in (see foregoing chapters of Zechariah). Zechariah was one of those who had seen the temple and Jerusalem in their first existence, their destruction, and the restoration. I ask the author of the letter, and the Nazarene commentators, who adhere to the testimony given by St. Matthew, how they cleave together that context in Zechariah; and what is their explanation (when related to Christ) of the *two staves*, and the *three shepherds*, mentioned in the chapter. Who were they? and what correspondence have they with the selling of Christ, agreeable to St. Matthew?”

13. *The circumstance and manner of the Messiah's death.* Several doubtful and general expressions have been cited as prophetic of this subject:

“For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me! *they pierced my hands and my feet.*” Psalm xxii. 16.* * * “They part my *garments* among them, and cast lots

* “Constancy of Israel,” p. 19, 20.

for my vesture," verse 18. "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," lxix. 21. On a careful perusal of the whole two Psalms, it does not appear that the resemblances in question can be considered as more than mere coincidences. The two Psalms contain the complaints of a man under persecution, but who? Some parts apply very well to Jeremiah. Compare Psalm xxii. 6, 7, with Jeremiah xx. 7; Psalm lxix. 8, with Jer. xii. 6; and *ibid.* 14 with *ibid.* xxxviii. 6—9.

The whole of the 69th Psalm is so much in the style of Jeremiah, and so applicable to his long imprisonment, (Jeremiah xxxvii. 16), that it seems not improbable that it was part of the writings of the same person.

Hennell considers that there are various readings of the text, 'they pierced my hands and my feet.' Rosenmuller gives a minute account of them, and concludes that the genuine reading was probably 'they *bound* my hands and my feet;' the Hebrew verb being one which might easily have been corrupted into the other readings. Grotius admits this reading to be a probable one. The Septuagint has "they pierced;" but there were copies in Aquila's time which had a different word. Since none of the EVANGELISTS have made use of this text as a prophecy, whilst, as it stands at present, the coincidence is more striking than in many others which they have cited, it seems likely that, in their time, the copies generally known to the Jews, whether of the Septuagint or of the Hebrew, had not the present reading "they pierced."* That a man's enemies should plunder him, even of his clothes, and cast lots for them was not an unlikely thought to occur to a writer endeavouring to paint a scene of great distress, and the thing itself was very likely to be done by the executioners of public criminals. Such a coincidence, therefore, by no means requires a supposition of a prophetic spirit in the author of the Psalm. Indeed, the writer of that Psalm is speaking of himself, and of his own case, and not that of another. The picture which the writer draws of his own situation in this Psalm is gloomy enough. He is not prophesying, but *complaining* of his own hard case. He represents himself surrounded by enemies, and beset by persecution of every kind; and by way of showing the inveteracy of his persecutors, he says, at the 18th verse, "*they parted my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture.*"

* Hennell. "Origin of Christianity," p. 230.

With respect to the offering of drink there is much dissimilarity between the case contemplated by the Psalmist and that of Jesus. The Psalmist's enemies offer him vinegar, or the juice of unripe grapes, and gall, both obviously in mockery, since the Psalmist complains of it. But the offering of Jesus, on the contrary, was meant as a relief. Pliny speaks of wines flavoured with myrrh as having been frequently used. The Jewish writers agree that their criminals were accustomed to receive wine mingled with frankincense, of which myrrh was an ingredient. And Mark says, that, immediately before the crucifixion, they offered to Jesus wine mingled with myrrh. If the vinegar offered afterwards were something different, it seems still to have been only what the Roman soldiers were accustomed to drink themselves. Matthew alone speaks of vinegar mingled with gall; but it has been seen that there is reason to suspect that he accommodated his description purposely to the Psalm.

Mark xv. 28, speaks of Christ being crucified between two thieves: that, says he, the *Scriptures might be fulfilled which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors*. The same thing might be said of the thieves. This expression is in Isaiah liii. 12. But the case has happened so often in the world where innocent men have been numbered with transgressors, and is still so continually happening, that it is an absurdity to call it a prophecy of any particular person. All those whom the Church call martyrs were numbered with transgressors. All the honest patriots who fell upon the scaffold in France, in the time of Robespierre, were numbered with transgressors. Such vague sentences, that can be made to apply to anybody, are indicative of no prophetic spirit in the strict application of the term.

14. *That Christ predicted his own death and resurrection*, Matt. xii. 40, says, "For as Jonas was three nights and three days in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three nights and three days in the heart of the earth."

One would suppose a prophecy so plain as this would have been literally correct; but Jesus was in the tomb only from Friday night to Sunday morning, or *one* day and two nights. Did Christ, however, really foretel such an incident? Other passages in the New Testament itself throw great doubt upon the subject, for the apostles themselves treated his admonitions upon the subject of his death with great carelessness or great incredulity. Luke says, chapter ix., 45, "They understood not this saying, and it was hid from them." Immediately after the supposed confidential prediction of his sufferings to the twelve,

(Matt. xx. 20), two of these very twelve came to ask for seats on the right and left of his throne. They all frequently dispute who shall be the greatest. They seem full of hope and expectation until they reach Jerusalem. They think more of their twelve thrones over the twelve tribes of Israel than of death and suffering. When nigh to Jerusalem they expect the kingdom of God to appear immediately; and when, at last, Jesus is taken and put to death, exactly according to the supposed predictions, they all seem taken by surprise and forsake him! Cleophas is represented as saying, Luke xxiv. v. 20 21, "And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. *But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel;*" showing clearly surprise and disappointment at his death, which seemed to have ended the matter. They were so far from expecting him to rise again, that most of them were with difficulty induced to believe in it, even when they were told that he was risen. And John himself unconsciously gives a final contradiction to these stories of predictions, by saying of the disciples who came to the sepulchre, c. xx., v. 9. "*For as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that he must rise again from the dead.*" Can it be believed that any of the disciples, much less the whole body of them, would have quite forgotten such a thing, if it had really been foretold to them so clearly and so often?

15. *The appearance of John the Baptist.* "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, *even the messenger of the covenant* whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope," Mal. iii. v. 1 to 2. This description cannot refer to the birth of Christ, and the coming of John the Baptist, for it is a scene of horror and fear that is here described, and the birth of Christ is always spoken of as a time of gladness and rejoicing. Malachi, in continuation of the same subject, explains in the next chapter the nature of the next scene, and whom the person is he calls messenger, of whom he has been speaking. He says, chap. iv., v. 1. "For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." "Behold, I will send you *Elijah* the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord,"

v. 5. By what latitude of interpretation can Elijah be made into John the Baptist, and Malachi's dreadful day that is to "burn like an oven," and destroy the wicked "like stubble," leaving them "neither root nor branch," be transformed into the birthday of Christ! It is only by the most unwarrantable distortion that such prophecies as these can be applied to such events.

We have now noticed those passages which Christian divines themselves insist foretel the birth, career, and death of Christ. We have seen how the apostles selected sentences from all parts of the Old Testament, tearing them from the context and applying them, without regard to their original meaning, to the history of Jesus. If the words bore a resemblance in sound only, they were pressed into the service and sometimes altered, so as to adapt them to their new application. By this method, a large collection of writings, like the Old Testament, might afford a tolerable description of any person whatever.

The hypothesis of a secondary or mystical sense in the writings of the Old Testament is totally unsupported. The writers themselves do not pretend to have more than one meaning, which in most cases is a very intelligible one, relating to events *near their own times*.

16. To show still more decidedly how recklessly and flagrantly the New Testament writers dealt with the supposed Jewish prophecies, we will furnish the reader with a few more striking examples. We will quote from a *Christian* writer—a clergyman officiating in the Established Church—who candidly admits their falsity. This is a sufficient reply that no one but an "infidel" would suppose that the Evangelists do refer to them as prophecies. "But now let us consider for a moment the settlement at Nazareth, which both the evangelists represent the holy family as having ultimately made. Matthew says, this abode at Nazareth was effected under divine guidance, *'that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene.'* This is a remarkable passage, *for none of the prophets do foretel that the Messiah shall be called a Nazarene*, so that on this point Matthew on one side, and all our Old Testament writers on the other are at issue, and this has been so thoroughly felt by the commentators, that they acknowledge the absence of any such precise prediction as that quoted by the evangelist; but they urge that Matthew's meaning was, that the general tone of Messianic prophecy was in accordance with Jesus being called a Nazarene, or dweller at Nazareth. Having gone as far as this,

it is no uncommon thing to find commentators of repute arguing that Samson, and Elijah, and others had been Nazarites, or men with an obligation of abstemiousness upon them, and that, as such, they were typical of Christ who dwelt at Nazareth that he might be called a *Nazarene*, and so fulfil the type of their *Nazariteship*. Surely this mode of "explaining away" the difficulty *is too absurd to need more than a statement, in order that it may refute itself by its own folly*. Our blessed Lord so entirely disowned all Nazariteship, that he contrasted himself with the Nazarite Baptist in the words, 'John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say behold a man gluttonous and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.' Other interpreters say, that 'Nazarene' was a despicable name in our Saviour's time, and that by bearing this title Jesus fulfilled the predictions of that scorn which was to be one of the characteristics of Messiah. This interpretation is very ingenious and well worthy of consideration; but when it has been examined, the reader will find that it explains a *different* prophecy from that which Matthew quotes. This explanation is, to the effect, Jesus was called habitually 'a Nazarene'—a name of ignominy! And so he fulfilled the prediction, 'He is despised and rejected of men; He was despised and we esteemed him not.' But so did he not fulfil the prophecy, 'He shall be called a Nazarene,' *for there is no such prediction in the whole volume of the Prophets*. What then? Is it conceivable that Matthew made a mistake in quoting the Old Testament? We answer that it is quite obvious that whoever wrote our present Greek 'Gospel according to Matthew,' *made a mistake here*; just as he manifests either want of care or want of knowledge, when in a subsequent part of his narrative * he writes, 'Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, and they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.' Now, in the book of Zechariah † you may find words somewhat like these which Matthew quotes; but in all the writing of Jeremiah from whom the evangelist declares them to be a quotation, the reader will find no such passage. In these verses, then, we see *two plain errors in Matthew's gospel*, and if there were no other mistake in all the Bible, *this ought to pre-*

* Matthew xxvii. 9.

† Zech. xi. 12, 13.

vent our calling the Scripture infallible, that is, wholly free from all errors." The same reverend gentleman refers to another blunder no less egregious. "In his second chapter, Matthew says, that Jesus lived in Egypt for a time, that (*hina*, in the Greek, which signifies in order that) it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt have I called my Son.' Now, if the reader will refer to the prophet Hosea,* he will find that it is of Israel, and not of Jesus, that this prophecy was written; so that here again, if the grammatical meaning of words is to be of any force in their interpretations, there is a *hopeless* discrepancy between Hosea's real utterance, and that which Matthew represents him as having uttered. Indeed, it is well known to every scholar, and it can hardly be denied by any man whose prejudices have not blinded his perceptions, or *robbed him of his honesty*, that a *large* portion of the quotations made in the New Testament from the Jewish Scriptures are quoted in a wholly different signification from that in which they were originally written. In each of these misquotations there is, at least, a grammatical error, such as is quite irreconcilable with the idea of inspirational infallibility." †

An attempt has been made to excuse the conduct of the gospel writers by supposing that the words, "called my son out of Egypt," had "passed into a proverb, and they were regarded as *again* literally fulfilled in Christ, as Matthew relates." This evasion is worthy of the party who makes it. The evangelist himself does not take it in this sense. He applies it *directly* to Christ, *as in all the other instances* where the expression occurs, "that it might be fulfilled." If the evangelist is not to be supposed as applying this passage to Christ, *and Christ only*, then we may suppose the same thing of all the other predictions referred to in the same terms; and thus the force of the evidence of prophecy, in reference to Jesus, is destroyed. If the prophecies may apply to anybody else *besides* Christ, they cease to be prophecies of Christianity in particular.

An apology equally contemptible has been started by the same *learned* critic with reference to Christ being called a Nazarene. He gravely reminds us that the words are, "which was *spoken*," not "which was *written*," as if that would exonerate the writer of Matthew from misquoting the words of the prophet!

* Hosea xi. 1.

† The Doctrine of Inspiration, p. 26, 28; by the Rev. John Macnaught, M. A., Oxon.

Another gross blunder is committed by Jude (v. 14), in referring to the book of Enoch, as if it were an inspired prophecy; and yet, since Archbishop Lawrence has translated it from the Ethiopian, we know that book to be a fable, undeserving of regard, and undoubtedly not written by "Enoch, the seventh from Adam."* The same learned author, alluding to the quotations from the Old Testament by the New Testament writers, observes, "If we take free leave to canvass them, it may appear that not one quotation in ten is sensible and appropriate; and shall we then accept the decision of the New Testament writers as final concerning the value and credibility of the Old Testament, when it is so manifest that they most imperfectly understood the book?"†

Having now considered those predictions said to apply to Christ, as the Messiah, we shall hasten to the discussion of others to which importance is attached.

17. *The Dispersion of the Jews.* Of the predictions in the Old Testament which are regarded by the Christian with so much admiration, few are more popular than those contained in the revolting chapters, Deut. xxviii. and Levit. xxvi. Let the reader consult them.

At the outset we would observe that, until it is demonstrated that the *Pentateuch* was in existence prior to the Babylonian captivity, we have a right to assume this prediction, if it be one, was given *after* the Jews were dispersed. And this has not been demonstrated.

But is it a prediction? Is it anything more than a summary of certain blessings and penalties consequent upon the obedience or non-obedience of the Jews to what are *said* to have been Moses's commands. These favours and curses are so numerous and varied that if the Jews existed at all, they must be experiencing some one or other of them. A very *safe* way of manufacturing a prophecy! A prognostication that leaves no alternative is no prediction at all. It is like foretelling that a person will either be well or ill, awake or asleep, at some time or other, or that he will live or die by obeying or disobeying certain laws. We know he will; but to render it a prediction in the true sense of the term, we must know precisely *when* or *how long*, he will be one or the other. This must be distinctly fixed *before-hand*. It does not show prophetic power to say the Jews have suffered or are now suffering in a given manner. The question is, were they to experience these things exactly in this *mode*

* "Phases of Faith," p. 126.

† Ibid p. 126.

and DEGREE, at this PARTICULAR period? Nothing is advanced of this definite character. Hence it is no prophecy.

The writer of Deuteronomy might very safely announce the ultimate dispersion of the Jews even had that book been really written at so early a date. The marvel would have been had they not been scattered. From time immemorial they had been intolerably rebellious, cruel, insolent, and pragmatical. What more probable, therefore, that the first great nation would attempt their subjection, in which they would be sure to succeed, for cowardice is generally allied with cruelty. It required no divine inspiration to foresee such an issue.

Deuteronomy, verse 15, represents that these calamities were to befall the Jews *in consequence of their disobedience to Moses's ritual*. Is such the real reason of their present dispersion? Is it not rather owing to the natural growth of stronger nations. Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome, combined with their natural tendency to rove,—peculiarities that existed *before* the "prophecy" was promulgated. This fact alone falsifies the prediction. It is the only positive condition named, and it has not been confirmed.

Considered as a legitimate prophecy it has not been fulfilled in many most essential particulars. If deficient in *any* it cannot be of *divine* origin.

Verse 49 declares, "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee *from far*, from the *end of the earth* as swift as the eagle flieth, a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand." Did the Egyptians, or even the Romans come from "the *end of the earth*?" Were not *all* their enemies comparatively near?

Verse 64 states that "The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even to the other, *and there thou shalt serve other gods* which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even *wood and stone*." Is such the case? Do Jews, now they are "scattered" worship "wood and stone?" On the contrary, are they not more tenacious of the religion of their forefathers than any people known?

Verse 44 states that "He (the Stranger) shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him. Is not the reverse the truth? Are not the Jews the greatest "lenders" in the world. With them it has become an "art," and a lucrative one.

Verses 60, 61, "Moreover, he will bring upon thee **ALL** the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of: and they shall **CLEAVE** unto thee." "Also every sickness, and every plague which is not written in the book of this law, **them** will the Lord bring upon thee until thou be destroyed."

Now, have *all* the diseases of Egypt, and *every* sickness not mentioned, &c., fallen upon the Jews, and do they *still* "cleave" unto them. Are not the Jews as free from disease and plague as other people? Indeed, during the cholera it is notorious the Jews were less afflicted than any other class.

Verse 23, chap. xxix., "And that the *whole* land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath."

Has this proved true? Has the "whole land," that is, all Judea, been covered with "brimstone and salt?"

We might continue quoting portions of this so-called "prediction" which not only show it has not been fulfilled, but completely falsified. It is quite as fair to do this as for the Christian to cite isolated passages and ask, has not this or that been fulfilled? and leave out of view those portions which are notorious failures. We hold that the prophecy, if really written by an *inspired* writer, must be fulfilled in its *entirety*, or it cannot be regarded as divine. That it has not been so fulfilled the verses we have criticised unanswerably evince, and, therefore, were all the rest literally confirmed by history, *these* demonstrate the writer was not infallible, and consequently not *divinely* instructed.

To tell me "it is absurd to suppose that the Jews were to experience these manifold sufferings *all at once*" is no answer. We do not make such an affirmation. What we maintain is, that if these chapters in Deuteronomy and Leviticus are to be esteemed as *genuine* prophecies, and really emanating from Omniscience, they ought to have stated *when, where, and how* these respective calamities would overtake the Jews. The utter want of precision and directness destroys their value as prophetic compositions.

To urge, too, that some sections of the prediction, not yet verified, *may* in the *future* become so, is only to admit that, *as a prophecy*, it is not fully corroborated, and therefore ought not to be advanced as *proof* of the Divine origin of the Scripture; or, if it be, the sceptic may claim the non-fulfilment of many parts as *proof* of the opposite. Besides, it could be insisted that it *may* be the "future" will not substantiate them, especially as the probabilities are in consonance with the latter contingency. Is it at all likely Judea will be at any time entirely covered with "brimstone and salt." *When* that occurs there will be more pilgrims to the Holy Land than were ever known! Or is it

within the range of possibility that the enemies of the Jews, which *were* to scatter them will "come from the *end* of the earth," seeing that they *are* scattered. The "future" cannot effect this verse, and its absolute falsity compromises the whole prophecy.

Apart from these considerations—allowing, indeed, that *every* misfortune predicted had already fallen upon this "chosen" people, the prophecy can have no conclusive cogency till the Jews are RESTORED. Chap. xxx., verses 1—5, solemnly proclaims, "And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee and thou shalt call *them* to mind among all the nations whither the LORD thy God have driven thee." "And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice, according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart and with all thy soul." "That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee." "If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee." "And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and He will do thee good and multiply thee above thy fathers."

Even supposing, therefore, that the "future" does bring the remaining "curses" on the Jewish tribe, they must be restored to the land of their fathers, even those who may have been "driven out unto the outmost parts of *heaven*," before the popular prediction can be adduced in evidence of *divine* inspiration. So long as the Church demands that the people accept this volume as an emanation from Omniscience, and an *infallible* authority, so long ought we to exact the most absolute fulfilment of each prophecy in all *minutiæ*.

18. *The Destruction of Nineveh*.—At the present moment this prophecy is the subject of much congratulation among Christians. Recent discoveries by Layard, and others, it is asserted, place the question beyond all incertitude, and emphatically confirm the following predictions:

We will allow an acknowledged reverend lecturer on Nineveh to state the case.*

* "Syllabus of Lectures," by the Rev. J. Guttridge, Todmorden.

1. That it should be destroyed—Nahum iii. 5, iii. 18, iii. 3.—Zeph. ii. 13.
2. That the two principal agents employed in its destruction should be *water and fire*. Water—Nahum i. 8, ii. 6, ii. 8. Fire—Nahum ii. 13, iii. 15.
3. That the spoil should be divided. Nahum ii. 9.
4. That they should be overtaken with destruction suddenly, and that they should be inebriated when so overtaken. Nahum i. 10.
5. That the renown of Nineveh should wane—that the seeds of Assyrian celebrity should cease to be scattered—“no more of its name sown.” Nahum i. 14.
6. That its very *site* should be unknown. Nahum iii. 17.
7. That it should be *buried*—“I will make thy grave for thou art vile.” Nahum i. 14.
8. That it should have none to bemoan it. Nahum iii. 17.
9. That its destruction should be irretrievable—no rebuilding of the city—“no healing of its bruise.” Nahum iii. 19.
10. That their choice edifices should be exposed—their cedar work uncovered. Zeph. ii. 14.
11. That illustrations of their character and conduct should be gathered from the stones and timber of the palaces of which they were so proud. Hab. ii. 11.

Before discussing this prophecy it is indispensable that we should first know *when* it was given. Is this made out? Do we positively know *at what time*, or *by whom* it was given? Who were Nahum and Zephaniah? Who heard of them or their writings *before* the events predicted. These queries must be *satisfactorily* answered, or the prophecy is unworthy of attention. It is not very difficult to make a prediction “wonderful” *after* the event occurred. And what evidence have we this was not a case of that kind? We know it is *supposed* Nahum and Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Hezekiah, “a few years previous to the Babylonish captivity.”* But conjecture is not proof, and if so much importance is to be attached to the words of these men we demand *unanswerable* testimony of the genuineness of these books. Can the clergy supply such testimony? We defy them. They cannot name a single independent author who mentions them till long subsequent to the fall of Nineveh. How, then, can we be assured against interpolation?

* “Colman’s Atlas of Biblical Geography,” p. 154.

Supposing those books were written about this time—but which I do not believe, nor can our divines establish—what more easy for some subsequent writer to have foisted into the text passages to make it conform exactly with the events as they really happened? Who could have detected the fraud but the priests, *who were interested in giving weight to those writings*, which were the foundation of their power.

It surely did not require *divine* inspiration to foresee the downfall of a great city which had risen to eminence by conquest, and raised enemies around her, who were silently preparing for triumphant revenge, while she was wasting her strength in dissipation and excess? Any far-seeing mind might readily have declared the ultimate downfall of such a city, especially in that age, and under such flagrant circumstances. Some sagacious priest may possibly, therefore, have announced that such a catastrophe would, sooner or later, happen. This might subsequently grow into a conviction of the whole people, and after the event had occurred some scribe may have written in an assumed spirit of prophecy the details of its fall.

Or, it may be, the real author of the prediction was contemporary with the events, and though he had often affirmed the destruction of Nineveh, had not put down in writing his prognostication till after the crisis, and thus might easily have suited his words to the facts. Professor Newman has well said : *

“This may lead on to a simple remark of perhaps no little importance. We are apt most unduly to assume that *a prophet wrote his speech the same day that he delivered it*. That may sometimes have happened, but it often was otherwise. We know by Jeremiah’s own statement (xxxvi. 1, 2), that he did not commit his prophecies to writing, till *twenty-two years after he began to deliver them*. It is equally possible, and indeed probable, that Isaiah did not write down his utterings against Sennacherib during the turmoil of the war, and if they received the final shape from his pen after the event, he would almost inevitably (without consciousness of it) give point to all the predictions.”

Any, or all of these conjectures are much more reasonable than the assumption that such a prophecy was given upwards of a century before the event, seeing that neither the prophet nor his book were known to the world till some hundreds of years after the dissolution of the Assyrian empire.

* “Hebrew Monarchy,” p. 300.

Notwithstanding the popularity of Mr. Layard's discoveries in the East, are we *certain* they are the remains of Nineveh? Mr. Layard himself does not seem so positively assured of the fact as he ought to be before such important inferences are drawn from them. He says, "Although the names of Nineveh and Assyria have been familiar to us from childhood, and are connected with the earliest impressions we derive from the Inspired Writings, it is only when we ask ourselves what we know concerning them that we discover our ignorance of all that relates to their history, *and even to their geographical position*. "It is indeed one of the most remarkable facts in history, that the records of an empire so renowned for its power and civilisation, should have been entirely lost; and that the site of a city, as eminent for its extent as its splendour, *should for ages have been a matter of doubt*. It is not perhaps less curious that an accidental discovery should lead us to *hope* that these records may be recovered, and this site satisfactorily identified."*

That the ruins excavated by Mr. Layard are the remains of some city is not disputed, but is it not more probable they belonged to ancient Larissa and Mespila, two cities inhabited by the Medes after they had destroyed Nineveh, B. C. 606, and suffered to fall to ruin by the Persians when they expelled the Medes about B. C. 540. Xenophon, who travelled over this district, about B. C. 400, names these ruins, *but not Nineveh*. His description of the locality and the ruins, renders it quite as likely they are the remains of these cities as Nineveh. The two great mounds examined by Mr. Layard lie on the route of Xenophon and the intervening distance would form one day's march for the Grecian army. Indeed, Mr. Layard, while claiming them for Nineveh, though eighteen miles apart, seems to admit they are the cities mentioned by Xenophon. Mr. Layard remarks, "From the summit of an artificial eminence we looked down upon a broad plain separated from us by the river. A line of lofty mounds, bounded it to the east, and one of a pyramidal form rose high above the rest. Beyond it could be faintly traced the waters of the Zab. Its position rendered its identification easy. This was the pyramid which Xenophon had described, and near which the ten thousand had encamped; the ruins around it were those which the Greek general saw twenty-two centuries before, and which were even then the remains of

* "A Popular Account of Discoveries at Nineveh." Introduction, p 7.

an *ancient* city. Although Xenophon had confounded a name, spoken by a strange race, with one familiar to a Greek ear, and had called the place Larissa, tradition still points to the origin of the city, and by attributing its foundation to *Nimrod*, whose name the ruins now bear, connects it with one of the first settlements of the human race.*

The words of Xenophon, when narrating the progress of the Grecian army, after the death of Cyrus the younger, are these : "That day the army staid in the same place, and the next they began their march, earlier than usual, for they had a valley formed by a torrent to pass, and were afraid the enemy should attack them in their passage.

"* * * When the Greeks were advanced about eight stadia beyond the valley, Mithridates also passed it with the force under his command. * * * After this defeat the Persians retired, and the Greeks, marching the rest of the day without disturbance, *came to the river Tigris, where stood a large uninhabited city, called Larissa, anciently inhabited by the Medes, the walls of which were twenty-five feet in breadth, one hundred in height, and two parasangas in circuit ; all built with bricks, except the plinth, which was of stone, and twenty feet high. This city, when besieged by the king of Persia, at the time the Persians were wresting the empire from the Medes, he could not make himself master of it by any means ; when it happened that the sun, obscured by a cloud, disappeared, and the darkness continued till the inhabitants, being seized with consternation, the town was taken. Close to the city stood a PYRAMID of stone, one hundred feet square, and two hundred high, in which a great number of barbarians, who fled from the neighbouring villages, had conveyed themselves. Thence they made in one day's march six parasangas, to a large uninhabited castle, standing near a town called Mespila, formerly inhabited also by the Medes. The plinth of the wall was built with polished stone, full of shells, being fifty feet in breadth, and as many in height. Upon this stood a brick wall, fifty feet also in breadth, and one hundred in height, and six parasangas in circuit. Here Media, the king's consort, is said to have taken refuge when the Medes were deprived of the empire by the Persians. When the Persian King beseiged this city he could not make himself master of it either by length of time or force ; but Jupiter having struck the inhabitants with a panic fear, it was taken.†*

* "Nineveh and its Remains," chap. i. 3.

† "Expedition of Cyrus," Book iii.

Considering the uncertainty which Mr. Layard himself admits exists on the subject, and the acknowledged identity of Xenophon's "Larissa," with his own Nimroud, how can he, or any one else, positively aver they are the remains of Nineveh *as well as* Larissa. If they were, would not Xenophon have said so too, the more particularly, as he must have seen, and no doubt read, the specific work which Herodotus said he would write, and no doubt did actually write, on the great city, Nineveh.

But a more important fact stares us in the face, that Xenophon says that Larissa was *inhabited*, not *built*, by the Medes. Now, as the Medes only occupied the country from B. C. 606, the date of Nineveh's fall, to about B. C. 540, when, as Xenophon tells us, they were expelled by the Persians, it is possible that Larissa may have been an ancient Assyrian city occupied by the Medes, on their conquering the ancient Assyrian empire. This is, in fact, the more probable view of the case, from the great solidity and apparent antiquity of the walls, as described by Xenophon. It is confirmed, too, by the Biblical critics themselves, who all fall in with the conjecture that Larissa is merely the Greek form of La Resen, or Al-Resen, named in Genesis, x. 11, 12. But as Resen, as said in the Bible, was built at the same time as Nineveh, by Nimrod, but *distinct from it*, it is apparent, if these data are certain, as certain is the conclusion that Resen, that is, Larissa, that is, *Nimroud*, cannot be the *present representative* of Nineveh.

The inscriptions found on some of these remains cannot conclusively determine the question, inasmuch as their interpretation, to a considerable extent, is still conjectural. Mr. Layard admits "the results of the attempts to decypher the inscriptions are still too uncertain to authorise the use of any actual names for the earlier kings mentioned in them.* * * * "Owing, however, to the very large number of distinct characters in the Assyrian inscriptions, there being nearly 400 different signs, whilst in the Persian there are but thirty-nine or forty, *and the great apparent laxity in the use of letters, and the grammar*, the process of decyphering is one of considerable difficulty, notwithstanding the aid which a version of the same inscription in a known tongue naturally supplies."† Col. Rawlinson and Dr. Hinde profess to have decyphered several words and sentences, but we must be pardoned receiving their interpretations with reservation, since they begin their work with a prejudice in favour of

* Ibid, preface, p. 4.

† Ibid, introduction, p. 13.

certain readings, and the consummate difficulty of detecting whether they are right or wrong. Without a grammar of the ancient Assyrian language, without even a knowledge of the letters or signs used by that people, these gentlemen presume to dogmatise, and insist that certain hieroglyphic characters convey particular meanings, and those only, and these meanings are exactly such as to confirm Bible history! Could anything be more unsatisfactory and gratuitous? Is our faith in the *divine* origin of records to depend upon such guess-work? If the chances of a future life are as problematical as the chances that these *savans* are right, then, indeed, is salvation a lottery!

And what, after all, do they confirm? Granted, that they prove such a city as Nineveh existed—granted that they contain a record of the proceedings of some Assyrian monarch—granted, even, that they mention some of the kings of Israel, and their movements*—do they establish the truth of those *miraculous* facts upon which alone rest the divine pretensions of the Bible? That a great city may have existed and been destroyed 2,500 years ago is possible; that the king of that city may have carried on successful wars, and yet finally have been himself defeated, is possible; that other kings may at one time have sent “offerings” to him is possible; but does it, therefore, follow the *prophetic* and *miraculous* passages of Scripture are true? It is *these* we dispute. It is one thing to prove Nineveh existed, and it is another that its destruction was predicted in such detail upwards of a hundred years before it happened. It is one thing to show that Moses and the Israelites existed, and were in bondage, and it is another to demonstrate that the former worked miracles, enabling the latter to walk across the sea on dry land, with its billows suddenly standing up on each side like a wall.

But if our divines will quote Scripture to substantiate its prophetic character, why not quote all? They refer us to Nahum and Zephaniah: why not to Jonah? In chap. iii. 4, Jonah predicts that Nineveh shall be destroyed in *forty days*: “yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” Was it overthrown in forty days, or even forty years? With what self-satisfaction the clergy remind us of all apparently successful predictions, and yet how studiously they conceal those which are signal failures.

Look at the manner in which they labour to strain and distort words to fit them to subsequent facts. In the prophecy now

* “Two Orations,” &c.: by H. J. Spry, Devonport.

under discussion, for example, the 14th verse says, "I will make thy grave, for thou art vile."* We are told the word grave means, that Nineveh should be *buried for thousands of years* under heaps of rubbish! Of course the prophet does not say it would be so interred—that would have been too explicit—but our divines console us with the assurance that it *meant* that! In chap. iii. 19, we read, "There is no healing of thy bruise." This implies, we are informed, that the city should not be rebuilt! No doubt it does! Again, Zephaniah states, "And flocks shall lie down in the midst of thee," &c., "*for he shall uncover the cedar work.*"† Uncovering the cedar work, it is said, implies that "their choicest edifices should be exposed" 2,500 years afterwards by some traveller! Precisely so! Why not have rendered the prophecy "complete" by naming the traveller—Austen Henry Layard!! Habakkuk, too, is represented to have observed, "Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and has sinned *against* thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it," chap. ii. 10. We are actually to believe this means, "That the *illustrations of their character and conduct* should be gathered from the stones and timber of the palaces of which they were so proud," by the guessing process of Messrs. Rawlinson and Hinde! How *literally* true!

Probably the most amusing prediction of all is, that "its very *site* should be unknown." Nahum says, "Thy crowned are as thy locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, *and their place is not known where they are.*"‡

This singularly lucid passage is said to indicate that the *site* of Nineveh should be unknown! Could anything be more obscure or far-fetched? Could a fairer specimen of the ambiguity and over-straining of prophetic language be presented? Only suggest a prophecy, however foolish, and the clergy are sure to find a verse, or part of one, to sustain it.

But if it was prophesied the site of Nineveh should remain unknown, the discoveries of Mr. Layard and others render the prophecy a failure, for they assert it *is* known, and our churches have rung with joy at the announcement! How short-sighted and contradictory are the ways of priestcraft!

19. *The Destruction of Babylon.*—This appears to have been a favourite theme with the Jewish prophets, and our modern

* Nahum, i.

† Ibid. ii. 14.

‡ Chap. iii. 17.

writers on prophetic inspiration have indulged in no little exultation. Now, whether we admit or deny the genuineness of Isaiah and Jeremiah, we assert their predictions are not verified.

Of Isaiah, there is internal evidence it could not have been written until during the captivity, if not after that event. At least, Isaiah could not have written the following: "Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, *Jerusalem a desolation.*" "Our holy and beautiful house where OUR FATHERS praised thee, is burnt up with fire; and all our pleasant things are laid waste."* These passages must undoubtedly have been written *while the Jews were in captivity, or subsequently.* Jerusalem was not a "desolation" till upwards of 150 years after the time of Isaiah.

This confirms the opinion that when, in a previous portion of Isaiah,† Cyrus is mentioned, it is in the sense that Cyrus is *then* in being, that is, at the time when the writer of Isaiah lived. Now Cyrus did not reign till generations after Isaiah. Bishop Watson contends ‡ that Cyrus is only referred to *prophetically!* Be this as it may, the prophecy must have been given later than Isaiah, for in another chapter § it says, "her (Babylon's) time is near to come." It could not have been *very* near, if *Isaiah* wrote it. Babylon was not destroyed till 150 years after the prophet was in his grave!

Whoever might have written this book, was the prediction of the downfall of Babylon fulfilled? We hold the negative. We have much pleasure in quoting from a coadjutor whose absence from England is much to be regretted.||

"In the first place, it must be remarked that the judgments denounced were not confined to the destruction and desolation of the city alone. "The word that the Lord spoke against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet. It shall no more be inhabited for *ever*, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation" (Jer. 50, v. 39, 40). These predictions are positively contradicted by both the past and present condition of the rich province known as Irak Arabia (the ancient Chaldea), forming a most valuable part of the Pashalic of Bagdad, containing the important cities of Bagdad and Bussora, the seat of an extensive commerce by land and sea; and, although not cultivated nearly to the extent of which it is capable, producing, according to the calculations of Sir Harford Brydges, a

* Isaiah lxiv. 10, 11.

† Chaps. 44 and 45.

‡ "Apology" p 47.

§ Chap. xiii. v. 22.

|| Evans Bell.—"Reasoner," vol. 17, No. 441.

revenue of upwards of a million sterling.* Is this "a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither does any son of man pass thereby?" (Jer. 51, v. 43.)

But we will even consent to restrict our inquiries to the undoubted destruction of the ancient city. And first as to the time. Jeremiah indicates the termination of the seventy years' captivity as the epoch for the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar and his people, and for the fall of Babylon. "And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the King of Babylon and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it *perpetual desolations*. And I will bring upon that land *all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book*" (Jer. xxv. 12, 13). Now the end of the captivity, and the conquest of Chaldea by the Persians, did not mark even the *commencement* of that series of circumstances which led to the decline and desolation of Babylon. "Cyrus was not its destroyer," says Dr. Keith, "but he sought by wise institutions to perpetuate its pre-eminence among the nations. He left it to his successors in all its strength and magnificence."

It is also distinctly predicted both by Jeremiah and Isaiah that the ruin of Babylon was to be sudden and final. "But these two things shall come to thee *in a moment, in one day*, the loss of children and widowhood. And desolation shall come upon thee suddenly" (Isaiah xlvii., 9—11). "Babylon is *suddenly* fallen and destroyed." "O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, *thine end* is come, and the measure of thy covetousness" (Jer. li. 8—13). And Jeremiah, after desiring Seraiah to rehearse the prophecy in the city of Babylon, directs him to signify her approaching fate by an emphatic and expressive ceremony. "When thou hast made an end of reading the book, thou shalt bind a stone to it and cast it in the midst of Euphrates, and thou shalt say, *Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise* from the evil that I will bring upon her" (Jer. li. 63, 64). She was clearly to sink under judgment suddenly, as a stone thrown into deep water, and, like the stone, she was never again to rise from the abyss. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah declare that her condition shall be like Sodom and Gomorrah, which, according to the Jewish traditions, were burnt by fire from heaven, and lie buried beneath the Dead

* "An Account of the Mission to the Court of Persia," by Sir Harford Jones Brydges, Bart. Vol. ii. p. 18. London: 1834.

Sea. Jeremiah, indeed, distinctly says, "The sea is come upon Babylon, she is covered with the multitude of waves thereof" (c. li. 42). This is incapable of even a specious interpretation. Dr. Keith, indeed, in his "Evidences of Prophecy," with profound ignorance of oriental agriculture, considers this curse to be fulfilled by the periodical overflowing of the Euphrates, which has ever been, and is now, about as great a *curse* to Chaldea as the annual overflowing of the Nile is to Egypt! Dr. Nelson, an American writer, in his "Cause and Cure of Infidelity," coolly asserts that the predicted "pools of water" appeared in Babylon "in comparatively modern times, in consequence of some singularly spontaneous obstruction of the Euphrates, which caused its overflowing"* Very singular, certainly, an overflowing which happens every year, and the cessation of which for one year would most assuredly cause a famine. Jeremiah neutralises and contradicts this passage with two others. "I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry" (c. li. 36). "A drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up" (Jer. c. l. 38). The predicted drought has proved as false as the predicted deluge.

And so far from sinking at once and for ever like a stone thrown into water, Babylon was the subject of seven successive sieges and conquests, by Cyrus, Darius, Alexander the Great, Antigonus, Demetrius, Poliorcetes, Antiochus, and the Parthians, and survived them all. Her impoverishment was effected, not by any sudden catastrophe, but by the gradual secession of her inhabitants to the neighbouring new cities of Seleucia and Ctesiphon. In the third century of the Christian era, seven centuries after her first capture by Cyrus, the walls remained in existence. Does this accord with Isaiah? "Her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged" (c. xiii. 22).

Even now, interspersed among the remains of the ancient city, are found many detached dwellings, date gardens, cultivated lands, five villages, and a large commercial town, named Hillah, the population of which is variously stated at from 10,000 to 25,000.† Does this agree with the prophecy? "It

* "Cause and Cure of Infidelity," by the Rev. David Nelson, M.D. Routledge and Co. London: 1853.

† This town is thus described in Malte Brun and Balbi's "Geography" (Longman and Co., 1844), p. 655:—"Hillah, a large, well-built town of 10,000 inhabitants. About two-thirds of the town are on the right bank, the rest on the left of the

shall no more be inhabited for ever, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation" (Jer. l. 39). "It shall be a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither does any son of man pass thereby" (Jer. li. 43). "None shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but it shall be desolate for ever" (Jer. li. 62). The prophets seem to be quite reckless of contradicting themselves, for although Jeremiah here says that "no beast shall remain in it," in other passages he describes it as a dwelling-place for "the wild beasts of the desert and of the islands," for owls and dragons, satyrs and lions.

Mr. Rich, formerly British Resident at Bagdad, in his "Memoir on Babylon," thus describe Hillah :—"The gardens on both sides of the river are very extensive, so that the town itself from a little distance appears embosomed in a wood of date trees. The air is salubrious, and the soil extremely fertile, producing great quantities of rice, dates, and grain of different kinds, though not cultivated to above half the degree of which it is susceptible. The grand cause of this fertility is the Euphrates. When at its height it overflows the surrounding country, fills the canals dug for its reception, and facilitates agriculture to a surprising degree. Many of these irrigation canals pass among and between the masses of ruins, as also do several beaten tracts, and the high road from Hillah to Bagdad, and many 'sons of men pass thereby' continually.

Wellstead, in narrating Ormsby's travels, writes :—"Hillah,

Euphrates, with a bridge of boats between them, 450 feet long, the depth of water being eighteen feet at the lowest season. Hillah is situate within the precincts of Babylon, and built with bricks dug from its ruins." The following facts I have gathered from other sources. Three of the largest ruins, named Mujelibé, Al Kasr, and Amran, lie in almost straight line from north to south on the east side of the river, and to the north of Hillah. A village is situated between Mujelibé and Al Kasr, and two more villages, one on the right and one on the left bank, at a bend of the river between Amran and Hillah. The most extensive and celebrated mass, the Birs Nimrod, lies to the south-west, at a distance of about five miles from Hillah and about eight from Amran, the nearest of the northern ruins, and, of course, on the opposite side of the Euphrates. Thus it will be seen that Hillah lies undoubtedly within the walls of the ancient city, which embraced a circuit variously stated by historians at from 48 to 60 miles.

next to Bagdad and Bussora, is the largest town in the Pashalic; well-built mosques and extensive bazaars bespeak its opulence. The number of its inhabitants is estimated at 25,000. Fruit, grain, and other provisions are cheap and plentiful at Hillah, and boats are constantly arriving from various parts."

It is further predicted of the site of Babylon :—" Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there" (Isaiah, c. xiii. 20). Mr. Thomas Lumisden Strange, of the Madras Civil Service, mentions, in a lately published work, entitled "*The Light of Prophecy*,"* that he visited Babylon in 1835, and saw indubitable signs of a recent Arab encampment near one of the most extensive ruins, Al Kasr. Sir Robert Ker Porter, as quoted by Mr. Strange ("*Light of Prophecy*," p. 10), states that he paid a visit within the limits of the ancient city to the encampment of a chieftain named Kiahya Beg, "made up of bodies of men collected from distinct tribes." He goes on to say, "we then bent our steps to the lines of an old Arab sheikh, named Mahomed Bassani, who, with his tribe, had adhered invariably through all changes to the Pashalic of Bagdad. As soon as we arrived within sight of his camp, we were met by crowds of its inhabitants."

It is also prophesied, "they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations" (Jer. li. 26). The following extracts will prove that the very reverse of this has been the case with respect to the ruins of Babylon. "Lying on a spot of the vast site of Babylon, nothing was more likely than that it (Hillah) should be built out of the fragments of that great city. The town is defended by a number of brick-built towers, all the spoil of Babylon. From her fallen towers have arisen not only all the present cities in her vicinity, but others which, like herself, are long ago gone down into the dust. Since the days of Alexander, we find four capitals at least built out of her remains—Seleucia by the Greeks, Ctesiphon by the Parthians, Al Maidan by the Persians, and Kufa by the Caliphs, with towns, villages, and caravanserais without number. Scarce a day passed without my seeing people digging the mounds of Babylon for bricks, which they carried to the verge of the Euphrates, and thence conveyed in boats to wherever they might be wanted" (Sir Robert Ker Porter.) "The bricks of Al Kasr are of the finest description; and notwithstanding this is the great store-house of them, and that the greatest supplies have been, and are now, con-

* Printed and published at Bangalore at the Wesleyan Mission Press. 1853.

stantly drawn from it, they appear to be abundant" (Rich's "Memoir," p. 22). What a commentary on the prophetic text, "they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations!" Babylon, indeed, has become desolate, but not at the time, not from the causes, not to the extent, and without the peculiar signs, which alone could verify the circumstantial denunciations of the Jewish prophets.

To this admirable statement we may add that the most signal failure of the whole prophecy is that portion which declares that the *Jews* would ultimately conquer the Babylonians and lead *them* captive: "And they take them captive whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors."* This never happened. Babylon never was subdued by the Jews, much less kept in captivity by them. In every point, therefore, is manifested falsification and failure.

20. *The Captivity of the Jews in Babylon.*—While on the subject of Babylon, we will notice, particularly as a scurrilous disputant has boasted no reply has ever been given, a so-called prediction Isaiah is said to have made to Hezekiah, in c. xxxix. v. 6, 7:—"Behold the days come that all that *is* in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store, until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord, and of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." Now, having already shown that the book of Isaiah contains passages which could not have been written till either during this very captivity, or subsequent to it, why not this also? The genuineness of Isaiah cannot be insisted on in the face of these passages; and, therefore, *any* prediction found therein cannot be sustained. Before advancing a word in reply to such a flippant challenge, therefore, we demand the proof that these verses were written *before* the captivity. But waiving this claim, let us look to the circumstances under which the prophet announced the prediction. We quote this disputant's own words:—"It was in the reign of Hezekiah that Jerusalem was saved from the Assyrians. Hezekiah having been sick, the king of Babylon sent messengers to congratulate him by letters and a present on his recovery from sickness. In such a season, and in a *spirit of pride*, he made a display to them of *his palace, his arms, and the treasures of wealth* and decoration, which he and his fathers had gathered

* Isaiah xiv. 2.

for the splendour of his kingdom. This season was selected as the time for revealing to this king the future captivity, and degradation of his children, and the spoilation of his house.* Now was there anything very remarkable in Isaiah selecting such a time for such an announcement, supposing he did so? Could not any one of ordinary sagacity have perceived the imprudence of Hezekiah making such a display of his wealth to a rival power? That Babylon was friendly just at that moment does not diminish the folly. The far-seeing priest could at once have observed it would excite the envy of the Babylonian king—a power much stronger than Judah, as events soon proved. The result, therefore, might readily have been foretold.

“Still further,” continues our virulent antagonist, “it is foretold by one prophet, Jeremiah xxxiv. 2, 3, that Zedekiah, the King of Judah, should be delivered into the hand of the King of Babylon, and “behold *his eyes*,” and speak with him mouth to mouth, and “*go to Babylon*.” It is foretold by another prophet, Ezekiel xii. 13, that Zedekiah should “not see Babylon,” “though he should die there.” Now look at these two prophecies. Jeremiah says that Zedekiah was to be taken to Babylon and see her king; and Ezekiel says that he was to die in Babylon, and never to see it. It is a wonder that Mr. Barker, who has made a hundred contradictions where they never existed, has not made one here. But what are the facts of the case as found in the history of the Kings of Judah? Zedekiah was delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon, and beheld his eyes, and spake with him mouth to mouth, *not, however, at Babylon*, but at Riblah. There his eyes were put out by command of the king of Babylon. In this state he went to Babylon, and died there, having never seen the city of his captivity. Thus the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel were both fulfilled to the letter.”†

Now we deny they were fulfilled “to the letter.” We need not remark upon the absurdity of taking a portion of one prophecy, and a section of another, and calling the two detached sentences a prophecy “fulfilled to the letter.” We will simply give the preceding verse in Ezekiel, and the notorious unfairness of this gentleman will be patent to the reader. “And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder, in the twilight, and shall go forth; they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby, *he shall cover his face that he see not the*

* Discussion between Barker and Grant, p. 415.

† Ibid, p. 416.

ground with his eyes." Ezek. xii. 12. The same is said in verse 6. Here the reason for his not seeing Babylon is explained. It is not because Zedekiah's eyes were to be out that he would not see it, but because he would have them covered. The passage implies that he would *have* his eyes; but would cover them to prevent his seeing. Thus the prophet was mistaken. In order to have been fulfilled "to the letter," it ought to have been distinctly prophesied that Zedekiah's eyes would be taken out, and that he would see the king of Babylon at "*Riblah*, and not Babylon." Neither of these events was mentioned, and yet it is said both prophecies "were fulfilled *to the letter!*" The very incidents which would have imparted force to the prediction are omitted both by Jeremiah and Ezekiel—a conclusive indication that if they were prophets at all, they were not inspired by a being who knew all things, or why not have named everything, and thus precluded mistake. But, in what a pitiable position is that controversialist placed who tries to shelter himself behind such trifles, and escape the discussion of those prophecies, which, in the esteem of the more respectable clergy, decide the question between Christianity and its adversaries.

Were the words of Jeremiah and Ezekiel upon this petty incident literally fulfilled "to the letter," they are of no importance until it can be shown that their predictions on those great events, the Fall of Babylon and Egypt, have been confirmed. If a prophet is in error on any one point, it shows he is *fallible*, and therefore not inspired by omniscience. Jeremiah says, Babylon and the LAND of the Chaldeans shall be a *perpetual* desolation.* We have shown that this really important prediction is utterly untrue. This fact alone demonstrates that Jeremiah can blunder like other people, and therefore has no more pretensions than other people to divine inspiration. Ezekiel's failure relative to Egypt we now proceed to explain.

21. *Desolation of Egypt.*—Nelson, in his "Cause and Cure of Infidelity," boasts loudly of this prophecy. Why he should do so we cannot conjecture, except that he is in the habit of taking romance for fact, and assertion for argument. By a careful perusal of the words of Ezekiel it will be found there has been no real fulfilment of this prediction. Ezekiel, for example, is said to have predicted,† "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; behold I will give *the land of Egypt* unto Nebuchadnezzar king

* Chap. xxv. 12.

† Chap. xxix. 19.

of Babylon; and *he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army.*"

Now Egypt was not enslaved by Nebuchadnezzar, nor were her inhabitants taken away captive. There is no satisfactory evidence that the Egyptians ever acknowledged his sovereignty over them. Josephus asserts in his *Antiquities*,* that Nebuchadnezzar, in the twenty-third year of his reign, "fell upon Egypt in order to overthrow it, and slew the king that then reigned, and set up another, and he took those JEWS who were captives and led them away to Babylon." Josephus says nothing here about any of the *native Egyptians* being carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. Josephus, too, quotes † Berosus, a Chaldean historian, who related that a governor whom Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, had set over Egypt and certain other countries, revolted against the said Babylonian king, and that he sent his son Nebuchadnezzar, who was then a youth, with an army, who put down the rebellion, and carried away some Egyptian captives; but this, if true, happened many years before Ezekiel wrote his prophecy against Egypt.

The conquest of the whole of Egypt was not effected till the days of Cyrus, being after Nebuchadnezzar. Several revolts, indeed, took place even after this conquest, *and eight or nine native princes reigned over Egypt between the time of Cambyses (son of Cyrus) and the conquest of the country by Alexander the Great*; and therefore the prediction of Ezekiel, that "there should no more be a prince (or king) in the land of Egypt," ‡ has proved false.

Nelson wholly omits that portion of it which speaks of carrying ALL the inhabitants into captivity, and forty years' total desolation. Verse 11., chap. xxix., expressly declares "No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, *neither shall it be inhabited forty years.*" He begins with the 14th verse, chap. xxix., which reads thus: "And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return into the land of Pathros," &c. What captivity? *Why the captivity mentioned in the verses immediately preceding the 14th*, which affirm, that all the people who were not slain by the sword, should be dispersed into other countries, and Egypt should be without inhabitants *forty years*. This portion of the prophecy has not been fulfilled; Egypt has been a populous country in every age since the prophecy was written, and therefore the portion which Nelson quotes relative to events which

* Book x. chap. xi. † Ibid, chap. xi. ‡ Chap. xxx. 13.

were to happen *after* the forty years' desolation, cannot be applied until the forty years' desolation shall take place, *which should have commenced during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar*. It is not expressly stated in chap. xxix. that Nebuchadnezzar should cause the forty years' desolation; but in chap. xxx., where the substance of the prophecy is repeated, the predicted destruction and *total desolation* of Egypt are ascribed to this *Babylonian king*. It is evident that Nelson did not quote this part of the prophecy, because he well knew it would spoil all his arguments, and convince every reader of his book, who has any knowledge of ancient history, that the whole prophecy is false and entirely worthless.

22. *The Fall of Tyre*.—Ezekiel is equally unsuccessful in this prediction (chap. xxvi. 7, 12, 13, 14). He declares that Nebuchadnezzar shall take and utterly destroy this distinguished city, that "it should be built no more," but should "be like the top of a rock, and be a place to spread nets upon," &c.* It appears, however, that the army of Nebuchadnezzar, according to Josephus, besieged Tyre thirteen years, but finally this king was obliged to raise the siege and go and fight the Egyptians. It is clear, from a subsequent prophecy of Ezekiel himself, that Nebuchadnezzar did not conquer the Tyrians, nor even compel them to pay him anything to induce him to withdraw his army.† It is true that this famous city has, in modern times, dwindled into a miserable village; but this has happened to many other celebrated cities. The ruin of Tyre is also predicted in Isaiah;‡ but this prophet affirmed that the desolation of Tyre should continue only seventy years, which is inconsistent with the prophecy of Ezekiel. Ezekiel, also, as we have shown, is inconsistent with himself by fortelling that Nebuchadnezzar should make a spoil of Tyrus (chap. xxvi.), and yet confesses (chap. xxix. 18.) that he got no spoil!

23. *The Destruction of Damascus*.—We scarcely need remind the intelligent reader that this prophecy is a ridiculous failure. In Isaiah § we read, "Behold Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap." Damascus is still, and has remained, since the days of the prophet, a large and populous city! At this moment it is the most flourishing and handsome town in Syria.

* Ezek. xxvi. 14.

† Ezekiel xxix., 17 to the end.

‡ Chap. xxiii., 17.

§ Chap. xvii. 1.

24. *Destruction of Jerusalem.*—Notwithstanding the popularity of this prophecy, there is nothing, we conceive, remarkable in it. Any man of ordinary foresight might have anticipated such an event, taking into consideration the character of the Jews, and the position of surrounding nations. Rome was then the mistress of the world. She had deluged Europe with blood—darkened it with desolation—and was still disposed to crush every empire that might deny her supremacy. Knowing this, and being aware of the insolent and rebellious character of the Jews, it was quite natural that any person might have anticipated the demolition of Jerusalem. It would have been a miracle had *it not* been destroyed. What was the fact? The Jews rebelled against the Roman authority, and their city being consequently destroyed, they were scattered. Is there anything extraordinary in this? Is there anything requiring *divine* inspiration to foresee?

But what assurance have we this prophecy was given before the event? If it has been so “literally” fulfilled, we ought to inquire when it was written. Can this be shown? The books which record it—the Gospels—we have proved were not named till upwards of one hundred years after then. How easy to make a capital prediction under such circumstances. Supposing indeed, we agree with Lardner and Paley, that Matthew—the earliest Gospel—was written A.D. 64, that was only *six years* before the destruction of Jerusalem. What profound sagacity to foresee an event of this character at such an *immense* distance of time!

Whether this prophecy, however, was given before or after the event, it was not fulfilled; and, therefore, can be no evidence in favour of the divinity of the Bible. We must take into account the *whole* of the prediction. “Immediately after the tribulation of those days (that is, the destruction of Jerusalem), shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together his *elect* from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other.” “*Verily, I say unto you, THIS generation shall not pass till ALL these THINGS are fulfilled.*”* Here

* Matt. xxiv., 29—34.

is a prophecy so clear and distinct there is no mistaking its purport. *But is it fulfilled?* Is the world destroyed? Not only has THAT generation "passed away," but many, and still the world is not at an end. The sun has not been darkened, nor has the moon ceased to give her light; and the stars still shine in brilliant splendour, as if in mockery of such a monstrous blunder. They still ride in triumph through the fields of space, spreading light and warmth to an admiring world.

And what of the second advent? Did Christ appear again, immediately after the siege of Jerusalem, as predicted? Was he seen "coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory?" gathering together "the elect" from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other? And yet "all these things" were to happen before *that* generation passed away.

Many and ingenious have been the attempts to explain away anomalies so palpable and hyperbolic.

One reverend disputant * declares that "it is no purpose" to remind him that these extraordinary calamities were to occur during *that* generation. "History does not tell us of the literal fulfilment of these words, and I know no Christian commentator who would assert that the prophecy has been fully met by any events that have occurred. But will not *future* history tell us something of its fulfilment?" Other apologists avow that the word "generation" means "*nation*," and it should read, "this nation or people shall not pass away till all these things shall pass away."

As usual, when once in a difficulty, fallible commentators assume that they know much better what Christ intended than the *infallible* penmen who were *divinely* and specially instructed to record his words! Let them not talk of the audacity of the "infidel," for no one is so ready to pervert the text as the Christian himself when he finds its popular interpretation no longer tenable. But contradiction only enhances contradiction. If Christ meant a *distant* period, and not that generation, how can this chapter be considered a prophecy of the *destruction of Jerusalem*, which happened only a few years afterwards.† Viewed as referring to an immediate or remote epoch, the prophecy is equally falsified. If remote, it is a failure, because the destruction took place almost at once: if immediate, because the astounding convulsions that were then to befall the world at *the same time*, did not take place.

* "Two Lectures," by the Rev. J. F. Serjeant. Sheffield. p. 27.

† A. D. 70.

To substitute the word "nation" or "people" for generation is to ignore the force of the whole chapter. Christ wished to intimidate his audience. He, therefore, gave them to understand the end of the world was *near*, which ought to make them tremble. To say, indeed, the "tribulation" referred to is *yet* to come is to deny the truth of verses 20 and 21, which represent that the people whom Christ was *then* addressing were to share the tribulation. "But pray ye that *your* flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day:" "For *then* shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to *this* time, no, nor ever shall be."

Why speak thus if he did not mean *that* generation?

The second coming of Christ, *which was to be contemporary with these remarkable signs and demonstrations*, we are distinctly told in another chapter,* was to take place during the *lifetime* of the Apostles, and before they had finished their preaching: "For verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel *till the Son of Man be come.*" Again, in another place we read, "Verily, I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."† It is evident, therefore, the time alluded to was *immediate*. This opinion is further confirmed by the fact that the leading Apostles themselves so understood it. Surely no modern Christian will deny that what *they* believed to be the true sense was really so. Peter, when referring to this great prediction, says, "But the end of all things *is at hand.*"‡ Paul and John say the same § It is, therefore, no less discreditable than absurd to attempt to substitute "nation" or "people" for generation, with the object of conveying the impression that some remote period not yet come was understood.

There is one more circumstance worthy of note. Though Christ announces emphatically that all these things were to happen during that generation, he confesses he could not fix the day nor the hour. || Why not? If he had the power of foreseeing future events—if he was *divinely* inspired, why could he not have known the time of the occurrence as well as the occurrence itself? This is a damaging admission, and vitiates

* Matt. x. v. 23.

† Matt. xvi. v. 28.

‡ 1 Peter iv. 1, 7.

§ 1 Thes. iv. 15 to 17, Rev. i. 7.

|| Mark xiii., 32.

the claim of the whole of Christ's prognostications to be regarded as an emanation from divinity.

We scarcely need remind the reader that the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem comprised, in fact, four several predictions, viz., that the end of the world would come—that Christ himself would come, visibly, in the clouds of heaven—that his angels should gather his elect from the four winds—and that his Gospel should be preached in all the nations of the earth in the course of the then present generation—all of which proved utterly false.

It may be worthy of remark here, that the prophecy of the end of the world being "near at hand," so earnestly put forth by Christ as well as the leading apostles,* completely falsifies the theory of Christianity; for if the world was to come to an end *during that generation*, how could Christ have been sent to save *posterity*, when he himself disbelieved in any future on earth beyond his own times? The popular argument, that there was a *necessity* for a revelation is utterly nugatory, if all the people on earth were to "pass away" before such revelation could reach them! What need, indeed, for the apostles of Christ to record his sayings, if he and they, and the world at large were "immediately" to "pass away?" In short, paradoxical as it may appear, Christianity affords the best refutation of itself. Either the Christian must admit that Christ never gave such a prediction, and thus the scriptures are falsified; or, having given it, he never intended us to have any scriptures, since, if his prediction proved true, they were entirely useless! Which dilemma will the churches accept? They cannot escape both.

25. One more prophecy, and we have done. In Mark,† Christ is represented as saying, "Go ye unto all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name they shall cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover."

Do such things attend those who believe in Christ? Can

* Matt. c. x. v. 23; c. xxiv. v. 1—42; Mark, c. xiii. v. 23—29; Luke, c. ix. v. 23—27; 1 Thessal. c. iv. v. 15—17; James, c. v. v. 7, 8; 2 Peter, c. iii. v. 20, 31.

† Chap. xvi. 15, 18.

Christians cast out devils? If they could, there is ample employment amongst their own sect—not to mention the Sepoys! Can they take poison with impunity? How convenient they would be in an age when the staff, the pistol, and the dagger are superseded by strychnia and prussic acid, as a means of human destruction! Can they play with serpents? Can they lay their hands on the sick and they will recover? Were Christians to exercise such a power they would make more converts in one week than during a century by the aid of sermons and missionaries! Christianity would, indeed, become an universal blessing, spreading joy and hope in every home! But can they do any of these things? It is a mockery to ask the question. Here is the plainest prophecy in the Bible, and given by Christ himself, proved to be an absolute, unqualified failure!

Yet will it be believed that language so plain as this is susceptible of a quibble? Even so. The clergy now reply, "It is not said *how long* these signs were to follow them. It applies only to the *first* disciples." Who says so? Do the gospels thus restrict the meaning? If, however, restriction be allowed in this verse, why not in the preceding one, which says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned."* Are we to say this applies only to the "*first*" believers, and not all believers? Are we to suppose that those who believe *now* will not be saved? Or, that those who *now* disbelieve will not be damned? Though this may be consoling to the infidel, it cannot be very satisfactory to the Christian. Restriction must be observed in both verses, or in neither. To consider the one as universal and the other as limited, is so eminently inconsistent, we will not detain the reader with further criticism. We repeat, therefore, that inasmuch as these marvellous signs have not followed those who believe, the prediction is signally falsified.

From the foregoing inquiry, it is established that many of the Scripture prophecies are so obscure and indefinite they prove nothing in regard to the *divine* origin of the Bible, and others, the most explicit, have never been fulfilled. To affirm, therefore, that evidence drawn from prophecy substantiates the divinity of the Christian religion is to substitute conjecture for truth, and surrender the reason of man to the capricious fancies of superstition and sectarianism.

* v. 16.

CHAPTER XI.

SCRIPTURAL DISCREPANCIES.

THAT any work inspired by Omniscience would of necessity be perfectly consistent in *every* particular, is an indisputable proposition. To imagine that such a volume could be self-contradictory, is itself a contradiction. It is one of the *criteria* of the Rev. Jeremiah Jones, a distinguished writer on the canon,* that a book is apochryphal which contains contradictions. If, therefore, discrepancies can be shown to exist in the Scriptures, it is conclusive evidence of their non-divinity, and further confirms the views we have so earnestly enforced in previous chapters.

While disclaiming all desire to distort a single sentence, either in the Old or New Testament, we must be permitted to protest against the reckless perversions of Biblical apologists. Of late the practice has become so common, that "marginal notes" are gradually superseding the Bible. The Will of Heaven is now found in the commentary rather than the text. In other terms, the words of *God* are silently displaced by the words of *men*, and this, too, by the very individuals who profess to indorse their authenticity! Can anything be more paradoxical or suicidal? Instantly any discordance is pointed out, these apologists abandon the meaning hitherto accepted, and insist that it is erroneously translated, or will bear a different interpretation to the one generally received. A sentence in Scripture is now treated like a clause in law. All sorts of quibbles, perversions, and evasions are resorted to to put a different signification to words than the one they obviously convey. Now, we claim to take the Bible as we find it, or not at all; for if the language be so loose and ambiguous as to allow of mere arbitrary solution, it ceases to be a safe, much less infallible guide.

We will first analyse the Four Gospels—confessedly the most important section of the Scriptures.

Even the most eminent Christian writers are compelled to acknowledge there *are* discrepancies in these writings; and the manner in which they endeavour to account for them is no less disingenuous than inconsistent.

Some maintain that these very discrepancies are the best evidence there was no conspiracy or collusion in their production. But is it "the best evidence" they were *infallible*?—and *that* is the point at issue in this chapter. Granting that the

* Vide p. 99 of this work.

four Gospels may have been written by four different persons, who never saw the writings of each other, they may still be the composition of ordinary and not inspired men. This is our argument at the present moment.

Triumphantly, however, has it been asked, "Who ever thought of discrediting Livy or Polybius because of the discrepancies which occur between *them*?" We may rejoin—"Who ever thought of affirming, in the face of these discrepancies, that Livy or Polybius were *infallible*?" And yet this is said of the Old and New Testament.

"These discrepancies can be easily accounted for," it is argued, "when we consider the liability of translators to make mistakes. This does not show that these mistakes were in the original copy." Now, that many of the incongruities we shall presently notice were not mere errors of translation will be made apparent. But supposing we accept this explanation—how then? Where are the originals? Confessedly lost. We are thus placed in this dilemma—that there *are* errors in our present copies, and we cannot now identify them! This is simply admitting that the Bible, as we now have it, is fallible, and must remain so!

Dr. Paley observes, "A great deal of the discrepancy observable in the Gospels arises from *omission*; from a fact or a passage of Christ's life being noticed by one writer, which is unnoticed by another."* We reply, *why* this omission in *any* of the Gospels, if *all* are the emanation of the *same* Omniscient mind? Can a being that knows *all* things forget *any* thing? The evidence of forgetfulness is proof of finite knowledge. The apology of the doctor is therefore inadmissible. It disproves the very position he is solicitous to sustain.

Our objections, however, to these discrepancies do not rest on cases of omission merely, but *contradiction*. When two or more evangelists notice the *same* event, they frequently contradict each other. Such discrepancies are those of *commission*, not "omission." If *all* were "divinely" inspired, this disparity would be impossible, or infallibility would cease to be an attribute of Omniscience.

That we do not find that concordance in the Gospels necessary to establish their *divine* origin, we now proceed to show.

1. *The Genealogy*. Luke says (v. 23) that Joseph was the son of Heli, while Matthew affirms he was the son of *Jacob*. Here both refer to the same subject, and yet flatly contradict each

* Evidences, Part III. chap. i.

other. Some modern commentators have suggested that Heli was the father of *Mary*, and *father-in-law* of Joseph :* if so, how came Luke to make such a gross mistake? How could he say Joseph "was the son of Heli," (c. iii. v. 23) when he meant *Mary* was the *daughter* of Heli? Could writers who make such palpable blunders be *infallible*? We deny there is any indication that *Mary* was the daughter of Heli. With respect to the argument that the Jews "omitted women in their genealogies," the utmost that can be said on this point is, that the Jews, like the English, traced their descent, if possible, through the male line; and in the case cited from Gen. xxxvi. 2, where is the evidence that *Anah* was not a female as well as a male appellation among the Jews? The passage cited is in itself a proof of this fact. The words *Aholibamah* . . . the daughter of Zibeon, occurring in serious prose—not poetry—indicates that females were named occasionally in Jewish genealogies, and also that *Anah*, at least in this instance, was the name of a woman.† The genealogies of Matthew and Luke are so different, that it is impossible both can be true; and it is not a sufficient reply to this objection to state that the writers wrote one thing and meant another; there is no evidence that Jewish writers ever called a man *the son of his wife's father*, absolutely, and without some indication of their doing so.

Again, Matthew estimates the total number of generations from Abraham to Christ at 42, while his own list gives only 41, even if we include Abraham and Christ, thus contradicting himself.

1 Abram	1 Solomon		1 Salathiel
2 Isaac	2 Roboam		2 Zorobabel
3 Jacob	3 Abia		3 Abiud
4 Judas	4 Asa		4 Eliakim
5 Phares	5 Josaphat	} 1 Ahaziah	5 Azor
6 Esrom	6 Joram		2 Joash
7 Aram	7 Ozias		3 Amaziah
8 Aminadab	8 Joatham		7 Achim
9 Naasson	9 Achaz		8 Eliud
10 Salmon	10 Ezekias		9 Eleazar
11 Boaz	11 Manasses		10 Matthan
12 Obed	12 Amon		11 Jacob
13 Jesse	13 Josias		12 Joseph
14 David	14 Jechonias		13 Jesus

* See Family Bible, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

† Christian Records, p. 102.

Let the reader compare these pages with his Bible. If we alter our modes of counting and place Jechonias at the head of the third column, as well as at the bottom of the second, then we must similarly place David at the head of the second column as well as at the bottom of the first; and thus we shall vary the incorrectness by producing fourteen generations in the third column, and fifteen instead of fourteen, as Matthew says, in the second.

Besides, instead of there being only, as stated by Matthew, 14 generations from David to Jechonia the Old Testament says there were 18.

Professor Newman conclusively remarks on this point—"On reading it afresh, after long intermission, and comparing it for myself with the Old Testament, I was struck with observing that the corruption of the two names Ahaziah and Uzziah into the same sound (Oziah) has been the cause of merging *four* generations into one; as the similarity of Jehoiakim to Jehoiachin also led to blending them both in the name Jeconiah. In consequence, there ought to be eighteen generations where Matthew has given us only fourteen! *Yet we cannot call this an error of a transcriber*; for it is distinctly marked that the genealogy consists of fourteen, *three times repeated*. Thus there were but fourteen names inserted in Matthew: yet it ought to have been eighteen: *and he was under manifest mistake*. This surely belongs to a class of knowledge of which man has cognisance; it would not be piety, but grovelling superstition, to avow before God that I distrust my powers of counting, and in obedience to the written word, I believe that eighteen is fourteen and fourteen is eighteen. Thus it is impossible to deny that there is cognisable error in the first chapter of Matthew. Consequently, that gospel is not all by the Spirit of God, and (unless we can get rid of the first chapter as no part of the Bible) the doctrine of the verbal infallibility of the whole Bible, or indeed of the New Testament, is demonstrably false." *

A careful examination of these genealogies shows that they differ almost as much from that which is found in the Old Testament, as they do from one another. That of Luke does not so easily admit of being tested by this comparison; for Luke traces the lineage of Christ through David's son Nathan, whose family and descent do not occur at all in the Old Testament. Yet even here, the only point where it is possible to compare the

* Phases of Faith, p. 107.

wo, *they are found to differ* : for Salathiel and Zorobabel, the only intermediate links which occur both in the Old Testament and Luke, are placed in the former as *grandfather* and *grandson*, whilst in Luke they stand in relation of *father* and *son* : besides which Salathiel appears in Luke as the son of *Neri*, whilst in the Old Testament his father's name is *Jechonias*. Luke also mentions Resa as the son of Zorobabel, but no such name occurs in the Old Testament of any such person. Joram begat Ozias, whereas the books of Chronicles and Kings tell us that Ozias was the *great, great grandson* of Joram, and that between these two kings there intervened three additional links in the chain of Christ's ancestry. Again, according to the book of Chronicles (2 Chron. xxi. 20; xxii. 12), Ahaziah the *youngest* son of king Jehoram was two years *older* than his father, for Jehoram died aged *forty* years, and upon his decease Ahaziah aged *forty-two* years began to reign !

It is not a little gratifying that since we first published our views on this subject—nearly twenty years ago—and for which we have been denounced as audacious and dishonest, that, besides the learned authors just quoted, another able writer, a clergyman of the established church, has confirmed them. “Now, let us not be told, by those who wish to uphold the doctrine of the Bible's freedom from all error, that a Scripture genealogy is but a small and insignificant matter with which to occupy the reader's time and attention ; for thus to speak of a genealogy would surely be not only to abandon the infallibility, but even to question the wisdom of those sacred penmen who often fill up whole pages of their compositions with Hebrew pedigrees ; and who, in some instances, have repeated more than once pedigrees which, as they profess to be of one and the same person, and traced through the same line, should be, what indeed they sometimes are not, identical.” “We know that there are modes of *explaining* away these and all other discrepancies : but we feel that they are so *thoroughly unsatisfactory*—not to use a *stronger* word—that, though they may serve as a hiding-place for the doubts of those whose conclusions as to Biblical infallibility are foregone, yet they are a terrible stumbling block to those who bring earnest, unprejudiced minds to the examination of Scripture.” Again, referring especially to the pedigree of Joseph, he says : “On the first glance, these genealogies, as given by Matthew and Luke, are so *evidently* different, that it has been the ordinary, if not the invariable practice of Christian harmonists and commentators to represent the former evangelist

as recording the descent of Joseph, whom the Jews would recognise as the father of Jesus; while the latter evangelist is said to have given the pedigree of Mary, whom alone the Gentiles would acknowledge as being the only earthly parent of our Saviour. We will say nothing of the plausibility of this explanation, which acknowledges the genealogies to be wholly different, and *supposes* they belong to two persons. Our question must rather effect the truthfulness of this mode of explaining away the difficulty. Let the reader bear in mind how Matthew states that "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary;" and how Luke's words are, "Joseph which was the *son* of Heli;" and then let any reader say whether it is truthful to allege that these different genealogies belong to different individuals. Is it not plain that each of them professes to trace the lineal descent of one and the same man, Joseph? If we are still to be told that, when Matthew professes to give the descent of *Joseph*, he is to be understood as giving the descent of *Mary*, then we simply rejoin, that such an explanation is nothing more or less than an abandonment of the idea of inspirational infallibility; *for it represents the Bible as saying one thing and meaning another.*"†

2. *The Conception.* Two only of the four evangelists mention this extraordinary fact, and they do not concur. Matthew says, c. i. 20, the angel appeared to *Joseph*; while Luke c. i. 30, states, the angel presented itself to *Mary*. If it be alleged that *both* may be right, inasmuch as the angel may have visited both, how is it *neither* of the two record the fact of the double visit? How is it possible both could make so grave an "omission," if both were inspired by the same infinite intelligence?

3. *The Birth.* Neither Mark nor John mentions the place of Christ's nativity. Matthew and Luke, who do, differ in most important particulars. Matthew tells us, c. ii. 1, that on the nativity in Bethlehem, there came *wise men of the east* to worship him; while Luke mentions, c. ii. 8, only a number of *ignorant shepherds*, who, instead of coming from the *east*, were in the *immediate neighbourhood*. Matthew observes, c. ii. 2, that the strangers were directed to Bethlehem by a *star*; Luke, however, c. ii. 9, names only an angel. On reading Matthew, you would suppose he thought Christ's parents always lived at Bethlehem, before the flight into Egypt; while Luke intimates that they lived at Nazareth, and only went to Bethlehem for a short time, during which Mary gave birth to Jesus.

† Rev. J. Macnaught's "Doctrine of Inspiration," pp. 19, 22, 23.

The *time* of the birth, as stated by Luke, is decidedly erroneous—indisputably demonstrating that the Gospel writers were liable to err, like other men. According to Luke, c. ii. 1, the *census* decreed by Cæsar Augustus was the cause of Mary's visit to Bethlehem, where her son Jesus was born soon after her arrival. In a subsequent chapter, however (c. iii. 1—3), we read that in the *fifteenth* year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar the word of God came unto John the Baptist in the wilderness. Luke then proceeds to narrate the extraordinary teachings of John, and mentions that Jesus himself (v. 21, 22) was baptised by him, when the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove, upon him. In the next verse (23) we are informed, "And Jesus himself began to be about *thirty* years of age." Now, from these data we should infer that Christ was born fifteen years *before* the Emperor Tiberius came to the throne; or how could he then have been *thirty*?—and that the census, alluded to by Luke, also took place fifteen years before that time. The truth is, however, Luke's gospel is not correct in stating that a census or taxation decreed by Cæsar Augustus, and executed by Cyrenius, furnished occasion for Mary's visiting Bethlehem, where her son Jesus was born, fifteen years before the death of the Emperor Augustus. There is no mention in history of any census or assessment of the whole Roman empire, for the purpose of taxation—or, indeed, for any other purpose—as having been made at that time; and even if such a taxation had been made, it would not have extended to Judea, which was still an independent country, under its king, Herod the Great, and was not reduced to the form of a Roman province until ten years afterwards. It is related, however, by Josephus, that Cyrenius did actually go into Judea, on a mission of the kind referred to by the evangelist, about the year A.D. 10, and consequently *ten years* later than the birth of Christ. If this is the mission of Cyrenius which the evangelist supposed to be the occasion of the visit of Christ's parents to Bethlehem, such an error betrays, on the part of the writer, a great ignorance of the Jewish history and of Jewish politics; for, if Christ was born in the reign of Herod the Great, no Roman census or enrolment could have taken place in the dominions of an independent king. If, however, Christ was born in the year of the census, not only Herod the Great, but his son Archelaus, also, were dead. Nay, by no possibility can the two events be brought together; for even after the death of Archelaus, Judea alone became a Roman province; Galilee was still governed by Herod Antipas, as an independent

prince ; and Christ's parents could not have been required to go out of their own country to Jerusalem for the purpose of a census which did not comprise their own country, Galilee.

4. *The Ministry.* The gospel of John, and the other three, differ so widely on this subject, it is impossible for all to be true. According to Matthew, Christ, after his baptism, and temptation in the wilderness, for which he had gone expressly out of Galilee into Judea, immediately returns to Galilee, and performs a series of cures, miracles, and other actions, which occupy the whole of the evangelist's narrative as far as the end of the 18th chapter. In c. xix., 1, he is related to have gone into Judea, beyond Jordan ; and in the first part of c. xxi. is related the visit to Jerusalem, which led to his crucifixion. He there spends the day generally in the temple, and retires to pass the night at Bethany. John, however, after giving us, in c. ii., an account of Christ's miracle at the marriage feast, in Cana of Galilee, says that Jesus went up to Jerusalem ; and in c. iii., 22, we read, "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and there he tarried with them, and baptised." But in the interval, between these two texts, it is not said that Jesus had left Judea ; so that it appears superfluous information to tell us that he again came into it. At c. iv., 1—3, we are told that he left it. He does not, however, remain long in Galilee ; for at c. v., 1, it is said that he again goes up to a feast. We next find him again, c. vi. 1, in Galilee, without being told how he had found his way thither. In the next verse (4) we are told that "the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh." It is not, however, said that Jesus went up to this passover, though shortly after he again goes up to Jerusalem, unknown to his disciples, *whom he had led to suppose that he did not intend to attend the feast.* At c. x., 22, we read, "And it was at Jerusalem, at the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch." From which it would seem that Jesus passed the whole interval between the two feasts at Jerusalem ; at least, there is no notice of his having left it between the feast of tabernacles and the feast of dedication. In short, the first three Gospels evidently lay the scene of Christ's teaching in *Galilee*, whilst the gospel of St. John places it principally in *Judea and in Jerusalem.* According to the first three Gospels Christ's public life lasted only *one* year, at the end of which he went up to Jerusalem, and was crucified. But according to John's gospel his ministry would appear to have lasted as many year as there occur passovers.

5. *The Flight into Egypt.* Here we find Matthew and Luke again at issue. The latter says (c. ii.) that when Mary had made the usual offering for her purification, in the temple, forty days after the birth of Jesus, she immediately returned with the infant to Nazareth, their usual place of residence. Matthew, on the other hand (c. ii.), represents their flying into Egypt at once, to escape from Herod the king! Now, there is no time for this to have taken place; for if the flight into Egypt, and the tarrying there until the death of Herod, are to be understood as following immediately after the birth, in that case Mary did not go to Jerusalem to present Christ in the temple. If, on the other hand, the offering in the temple is the first event after the birth, and the flight into Egypt followed, it is equally certain that Luke was wrong in saying that, "When they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth."

6. *The Baptism.* Matthew, c. iii. 14, 17, says: John the Baptist *knew* Jesus when he *went* to be baptised, and therefore refused *at first* to baptise him. That, *after* his baptism, Jesus having gone out of the water, the Spirit of God descended on him like a dove, and that a voice from *heaven* exclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." John, c. i. 31, 34, says, John the Baptist would *not* have known Jesus had it not been from the sign from heaven of the Spirit descending like a dove, &c., which is stated by Matthew, to have occurred *after* the baptism. He, therefore, could not have refused to baptise Jesus, *knowing who he was*. See also Mark, c. i. 10, 11, and Luke, c. iii. 22. Now, Matthew, c. vi. 2, 5, and Luke, c. vii. 19, 22, says, John the Baptist, while in prison *some time after Christ's baptism*, sent to *ask* Jesus if he was *really* Christ, or if *he* (John) was to look for another Saviour, and that Jesus offered proof to convince John's messenger that *he* really *was* Christ. It is therefore evident that the voice from heaven, which had previously declared before John, "Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," and the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, had no effect whatever on John's credulity and faith. How then can it be expected that we now should believe, when *bare assertion* is all we have to rely upon?

7. *The Temptation.* The first three Gospels place the temptation in the wilderness *immediately* after the baptism of Jesus, but John places the marriage at Cana of Galilee on the *third* day after the baptism, c. i. 35, 43. The second chapter opens with

the account of the marriage. By this order of events, the scene of the *forty* days in the wilderness is altogether excluded, for the very days between the baptism in Jordan and the marriage, are numbered. Either, then, John's Gospel must be wrong, or the other three.

8. *Calling of the Apostles.* The gospel writers do not agree in the time or place of calling the twelve, nor even in their *names*. Mark calls Thaddæus one of the twelve, but Luke excludes him, and introduces *Judas* the brother of James in his place. Matthew also speaks of Thaddæus, as "*Lebbæus*, whose *surname* was Thaddæus." An attempt has been made to explain away this direct contradiction, by *supposing* Thaddæus or Theudas and Judas to be the same, but this would prove too much. *Judas* Iscariot might claim the name of Thaddæus too, and thus render the whole subject of the name more doubtful than before. Again, the apostle Matthew, is elsewhere called *Levi* by Luke, c. v. 27, 29, and Levi the son of Alphæus by Mark, c. ii. 13, 17. Could such gross blunders be perpetrated by *infallible* writers?

Matthew, Mark, and Luke state that the call of the two pairs of brothers, Peter and Andrew, and James and John, took place in Galilee, near the lake of Gennesareth; but John (c. i. 35, 51) represents that Judea, near the Jordan, where John was baptising, not Galilee, is the place where Jesus first meets with Peter, Andrew, and a third, who is supposed to be John. A strange name, Nathaniel, next occurs in conjunction with Philip, though it is not found in either of the first three Gospels, and only in one other passage of St. John's Gospel, where, however, he is mentioned as if he was one of the twelve apostles, or disciples. All this is wholly irreconcilable with the narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who know nothing of Nathaniel, and who place the call of Simon, Andrew, James, and John, in Galilee, where they usually lived, and plied their trade of fishermen, not in *Judea*, where John the Baptist was baptising.

9. *The Sermon on the Mount.* Matthew and Luke contradict each other as to the locality. The former, c. v. 1, states that he delivered it while he *sat* on the *mountain*, his disciples coming *up* to him to listen; but Luke, c. vi. 17, represents him as going *down* to them, and *standing* in the *plain* below while he delivered it. How can such discrepancies be accounted for, except by admitting that these writers were liable to make mistakes like other historians?

10. *The Lord's Prayer.* The evangelists cannot even agree in

reporting this popular invocation—a document deemed so vitally important by all Christians. Matthew, c. vi. 9, 13, adds a whole sentence which is omitted by Luke: “For thine is the kingdom,” &c. If *both* were directly inspired, how did this difference arise? Besides, they differ also as to the *occasion* of its delivery. Matthew introduces it into the sermon on the mount, and, therefore, refers it to the very *beginning* of Christ’s ministry; but Luke, c. xi. 1, ascribes its first introduction to a much *later* occasion, in reply to an invitation from one of his disciples, to teach them to pray, as John the Baptist had taught his disciples. How can these differences be accounted for if we must not presume these biographers were liable to be misinformed like ourselves?

11. *Healing the Centurion’s Servant.* In Matt. c. viii. 5, we are instructed that the Centurion appears *himself* to Christ, and beseeches him to cure his servant; but Luke says he did not go, but sent a message only, by the *elders of the Jews*. Which was the fact?

12. *Healing the two Blind Men.* 1. Matt. xx. 29, 34, and Mark x. 46, 52, lay the scene of this miracle at Christ’s *departure* out of Jericho; Luke places it at Christ’s *entry* into that city. 2. Matthew affirms there were *two* blind men healed; Mark and Luke confine the incident to *one*.

13. *The Anointment* affords another striking instance of the irreconcilable disagreement of the evangelic records. See Matt. xxvi. 1, 13; Mark xiv. 1, 9; Luke vii. 36, 50; John xii. 1, 9. The four differ as to the time when this took place. Luke relates it in the *early* part of Christ’s ministry; the other three place it within a few days of his crucifixion. Again, Matthew and Mark say that it was *two* days; John, *six* days before the feast of the passover. Matthew and Mark say it took place at the village of Bethany, at the house of Simon the leper; Luke calls him Simon a Pharisee, and lays the scene in a city, (v. 7, 37). But John gives us to understand that it was at the house of Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus; for he tells us “Martha served.” And he adds (v. 9), that a large number of persons had come together that they might see Lazarus; “whom he had raised from the dead.” Matthew and Mark affirm that the woman poured the ointment on his *head*, as he sat at meat; but Luke and John record that she anointed his *feet* with it; and Luke entering more into detail, adds that she stood *behind* Jesus, a position in harmony with the anointing of his head, but very unfavourable for pouring the ointment over his *feet*.

14. *Christ's last Journey to Jerusalem.* Matt. xix. 1 ; Mark x. 1 ; Luke ix. 51 ; John xi. 54. Matthew, Mark, and Luke represent Jesus as going up to Jerusalem from Galilee, passing through Jericho, and then riding on the ass from Bethphage and Bethany into Jerusalem, without stopping at Bethany. John, on the other hand, brings Jesus not from Galilee, but from the city of Ephraim ; and makes him partake of a supper, and pass the night at Bethany. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who agree in bringing Jesus out of Galilee, differ about the road which he took. The two former say that he crossed the Jordan, and passed along to the east of that river, again crossing it to the westward, near Jericho ; but Luke says as plainly, at xvii. 11, that he came by the straight road which led through Galilee and Samaria.

15. *The Barren Fig-tree.* Matt. xxi. 18—22 ; Mark xi. 12—24. Even this foolish incident is not recorded harmoniously. The former says, that the fig-tree withered in the sight of the disciples *immediately* after the words of Jesus ; Mark says, that the disciples did not observe the withering of the tree until the *following* morning. We will not waste time in expatiating upon the inconsistency and absurdity of cursing a *tree*, and that too for not bearing fruit, when the evangelist himself declares the time for its bearing fruit was not yet. The whole story is puerile.

16. *The Last Supper.* Matt. xxvi. 17—30 ; Mark xiv. 12—26 ; Luke xxii. 7—35 ; John xiii. 1—18. As to the place of the supper, it appears from the first three evangelists that it took place at *Jerusalem*, Jesus having sent some of his disciples that very morning from Bethany into the city to make preparations for the feast. But in the Gospel of St. John the supper appears to have been at *Bethany*, whither Christ returned every evening to take his meals after the occupation of the day at Jerusalem ; nothing is said of the sending the disciples into Jerusalem in the morning to make preparations for the feast, or of his going thither himself in the evening. Matthew and Mark relate Christ's detection of Judas' treachery as *preceding* the institution of the communion ; but Luke inverts this order, and places the communion *first* ; John, however, omits all notice of the communion, and, instead, represents Jesus as washing the feet of his disciples. Luke places the "strife among the disciples which should be greatest" as one of the incidents of the *Last Supper* ; but Mark says that it took place as they were *on their way to Capernaum*, some time before. According to Luke, Christ fore-

tells Peter's denial of him *whilst they are still sitting at meat*; but Matthew and Mark agree in placing it *after* their arrival at the Mount of Olives.

17. *The Superscription.* The inscription which it is said Pilate placed upon the Cross, is differently given by all the four:—

“This is Jesus the King of the Jews.” Matt. xxvii. 37.

“The King of the Jews.” Mark xv. 26.

“This is the King of the Jews.” Luke xxiii. 38.

“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” John xix. 19.

How is this? It is not enough to say the inscription was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. If the four were inspired by the *same* intelligence, why not the same reading in all? The virtue of any inscription depends upon its being *exactly* copied, and especially this one. If, therefore, these four historians were *infallible*, again we ask, why these discrepancies? The fact that they were unable to agree in recording so simple a sentence is an additional reason why we should distrust their accuracy on other points.

18. *The Denial.* Matt. xxvii.; Mark xiv.; Luke xxii.; John xviii. According to Matthew, Christ's words were—“Verily I say unto thee, that this night before the cock shall crow thou shalt deny me *thrice*.” Whilst, according to Mark, they were—“Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even this night, before the cock crow *twice*, thou shalt deny me *thrice*.” No two evangelists give the challenge, which is supposed to have elicited but one reply, in the same words. Matthew alone speaks of the *oath* used in this answer. Three of the evangelists put widely different answers into the mouth of Peter; and Luke, who represented the question on this occasion as having been put by a *man*, makes Peter employ the term “*Man*” with emphasis in his reply. Not only does Luke say that Peter's brief denial was addressed to one *particular* man, but Luke adds that “*immediately*” while Peter *yet* spoke, the cock crew; and the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. There was therefore no time for the cursing and swearing of which Matthew and Mark tell us. Matthew, Luke and John record the *first* crowing of the cock after the *third* denial. But Mark says this was the *second* time the cock had crowed. If Mark be right in this assertion, what becomes of the other evangelists' words—“The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me *thrice*?”

19. *The Crucifixion.* Matt. xxvii. 32—66; Mark xv. 21—47; Luke xxiii. 26—56; John xix. 16. In the first place, John says that

Jesus bore his own cross to the place of execution, called, in Hebrew, Golgotha; but Matthew, Mark, and Luke relate that the soldiers laid hold of one Simon, a Cyrenian, who was accidentally then passing by, and compelled *him* to carry the cross. St. John says (xix. 14), that it was "about the *sixth* hour," that is, twelve o'clock at noon, when Pilate, in the course of the trial, said—"Behold your king!" But St. Mark says (xv. 25) it was the *third* hour, that is nine o'clock in the morning, when they crucified him. Thus by blending of these two authorities we are led to the inference that he was crucified three hours *before* he was condemned! In Matthew it is "the *rest*" of the bystanders who say, in ridicule—"Let him alone; let us see whether Elias will come to save him;" but in Mark, it is the *man* himself who says it. Again, in Luke, we have nothing of the myrrh and gall mingled with the vinegar; the draught is offered once only, and then in *mockery*! whereas, in Matthew and Mark, neither of the two draughts seem to have been offered in a mocking spirit. In John, it is said that the vinegar was mingled neither with gall nor myrrh, but *hyssop*, and that it was offered at the request of Jesus himself, who exclaimed—"I thirst!" The words of Christ, as he was hanging on the cross, are variously reported by the four evangelists; and in particular his last exclamation, immediately before his death; with the exception that Matthew and Mark agree in making him speak twice only: first, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani;" and then his last cry, before he died. The other two evangelists differ from both of these, and, multiplying the number of Christ's speeches, differ wholly from one another. For instance, Luke has nothing of "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," but tells us of a dialogue between Christ and the thieves; after which he says that Jesus Christ cried with a loud voice, and having exclaimed, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit," gave up the ghost. St. John, however, knows nothing of all this, but in its place has a dialogue with Christ's mother, and with John: "Woman, behold thy son!" "Behold thy mother!" after which he exclaims, "I thirst!" and then, with the words "It is finished!" bows his head and gives up the ghost. Now, in these St. John and St. Luke positively contradict one another; the one says the *last* words were, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" the other "It is finished!" In the account of the two thieves, Matthew says, *they* "cast the same in his teeth;" in Mark *they* "revile him;" but in Luke it is *only one* of the malefactors that reviles Christ; the other *repents*, and, confessing his sins, is promised immediate happiness with Christ in Paradise.

20. *The Resurrection.* Matt. xxviii. 1—15; Mark xvi. 1—11; Luke xxiv 1—12; John xx. 1—18. According to St. Matthew, “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary” are the women who go to see the sepulchre. Mark has *three* names, “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome;” according to Luke (v. 10), it was “Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary *the mother of James, and other women*” that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles; lastly, St. John names Mary Magdalene *only* as coming to the sepulchre at that early hour. Matthew mentions only *one angel*, who came down from heaven, and rolling away the stone from the door of the sepulchre sat down upon it *outside* the tomb. Mark, however, relates that they found the stone rolled away, and, entering it, *saw a young man sitting on the right side* clothed in a long white garment. Lastly, St. John says, that Mary Magdalene had run off to call Peter, and having returned in his company, had remained behind when he left the tomb, and then on looking into the tomb saw *two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain*. In the first Gospel Jesus salutes them, and they at once know him. In St. John, Mary does *not* know him until he has emphatically called her by name. She even takes him for the gardener, and asks him if he knows where the body of Jesus has been carried. St. Matthew and St. Mark represent the angel as bidding Mary tell his disciples that they should see Christ again in *Galilee*; and yet the words are hardly out of the angel’s mouth, before Mary herself sees him there *upon the spot*, and all his disciples see him that same day in *Jerusalem*.

The mode in which some disputants have attempted to explain several of these discrepancies may be seen by quoting from one who designates everybody “ignorant” who presumes to take a different view of evidence to himself:—“Where is the contradiction? Suppose four persons, writing of this discussion, should say, ‘Barker and the other disputant were there;’ ‘Barker and Grant were there;’ ‘They were there;’ ‘Barker was there;’ where would be the contradiction?” . . . “If a man should say, ‘Lord Raglan was seen on the field at Inkermann,’ and another says he ‘saw General Canrobert there,’ will any one but Joseph Barker declare these two accounts ‘affirm,’ respectively, ‘that *only* Raglan was there,’ or ‘*only* Canrobert was there?’”* Now we scarcely need remind the reader that this is not a fair parallel, nor does it cor-

* Barker and Grant, p. 97, 98.

rectly state the point. We know, at a discussion or a battle, there *must*, from the necessity of the case, have been two or more persons present; but this need not be the fact at a *sepulchre*. The question, however, really is, not merely who were at the discussion or at the battle, but also who were the *first* to arrive there. If one writer said Mr Barker was the first, and another Mr. Grant, would they not contradict each other? The four evangelists are speaking of those who *first* go to the sepulchre early in the morning, and are the first to report the fact of Christ having risen, to the rest of the apostles. Matthew says—"Mary Magdalene and the other Mary" were the first; Mark that "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome" were the first; Luke, that "they" (the "women") were the first; and John, that "Mary Magdalene" was the first; and yet we are told this is not contradiction! To reply that we have no right to suppose that John meant that Mary Magdalene was *alone*, is absurd. Why not have mentioned others as being present at such an important moment, if they really were so? Could such a grave "omission" have been made by one who was *specially* inspired to write the history? Besides, John's account speaks distinctly in the singular number. "Then *she* runneth," &c. (v. 2.) Would John have written thus had not Mary "only" been there? To elucidate these discrepancies by assuming that the four evangelists refer to *different* visits, at *different* times, is simply begging the question disputed. If it be so, why is it not recorded so? A fair and impartial judge, in deciding a case, is led to his conclusions by the evidence brought before him, and not by evidence omitted. It is easy to *suppose* that this or that were *intended* to have been said. We have only to do with what *is* said. If it be true these evangelists do write of different visits, then we ask which alludes to the *first* visit. Who *first* saw that Christ had left the tomb?

One of my opponents observes:—"In reference to Luke, xxiv. 10, as 'other women' are mentioned, is it not possible—more than this, probabilities favour the supposition—that the party of Salome, after arriving first, and visiting the tomb first, as related by St. Matthew and St. Mark, had fallen in upon their return with the party of Joanna, and accompanied them to the sepulchre again. It will be seen, on referring to Mark xiv., that "Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Salome," set out in company for the sepulchre; and from John xx. 1—2, we learn that Mary Magdalene somewhat preceded the arrival of her companions at the sepulchre; seeing that the stone

was rolled away, she ran to tell Simon Peter, and on her return visited the sepulchre in company with the other women. I trust the above candid explanation will be sufficient to satisfy every candid reader that the objection of Mr. Cooper is groundless.* We much regret that one so anxious to appeal to every "candid reader," should not himself be candid. Where does John name *any* woman as going to the sepulchre besides Mary Magdalene? She "perceived" Peter and "the other disciple," whom we learn in v. 5, was a *man*, and not a woman. There is no account whatever of her "preceding" her *female* companions, or that, "on her return she visited the sepulchre in company with the other women." This is a pure invention, which, had it been made by a sceptical author, would have been derided as an invention of "ignorance" or "dishonesty." The story of John is in direct contradiction to the rest, and the rest do not agree among themselves.

The only rational way of accounting for the discrepancies is, that these writers were fallible, like all other historians; and, depending upon mere rumour, which always varies, had written according to the impression such traditions had produced upon their minds.

21. *The Ascension.* Matthew and John take no notice of this important particular. According to Mark, however (xvi. 19), the ascension took place from the room in which the eleven sat at meat in *Jerusalem*, on the evening of the resurrection; while we find in Luke's Gospel (xxiv. 50—51) it took place from *Bethany*, whither Jesus led them out immediately after his appearance to them on the *evening of the resurrection*. But we learn from the Acts (i. 3), that Christ "showed himself alive" after his passion, by many infallible proofs; being seen of them *forty days*, and speaking of the things pertaining of the kingdom of God. Again, in Acts (i. 4), Jesus tells his disciples that they should not depart from Jerusalem until they should "be endued with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 59); but in Matthew's Gospel they had *already* gone into Galilee, *immediately* after the resurrection; and, in John, appear to have resumed their old occupations, supposing they had for ever lost their master.

We have thus reviewed the leading incidents in Christ's career. The truth of the averment that many of these discrepancies are *bona fide* contradictions, not mere "omissions" or "diversities," we have amply proved, though we hold that even the omission

* British Infidelity, p. 198.

of some of the events by *any* of these writers, is itself an evidence either of their ignorance or inconsistency, or both. Why omit an event, even a mere incident of an event, if they are so *vitally* momentous? This apology detracts from the dignity and value of these writings, and vitiates rather than supports their claim to divine origin.

In conclusion, it has been affirmed that it is absurd to suppose these four Gospels ought to be exactly alike, or why have four. Exactly why *four*? Why not one *complete* history, to preclude cavil or misapprehension? The fact that there are four affords a strong presumption that *none* emanated from one Divine mind. Is it consistent that a Being of Infinite Wisdom would inspire four different men to write the life of the *same* person, instructing one man to omit this, and another to introduce that—one to make this assertion, and another to contradict it? Such apologies are utterly beneath serious refutation.

In our further analysis of the discrepancies of Scripture, we propose merely to name the subject, supplying the reader with chapter and verse, and leave him to judge for himself. We adopt this course to obviate the repeated excuse that we “pervert” scripture—tear passages from their context, and mislead the inquirer. Let the inquirer go to the context. We entreat him to do so. It will be the best answer to the lame and flip-pant explanations of those who have attempted to meet our objections, not by adhering to the text, but substituting one of their own. Commentators find it much easier to write a new Bible than defend the one we now have.

22. *Divine Attributes*.—Compare the following passages:—
1.—John iv. 24, and Exod. xxxiii. 22—23. 2.—Ephesians iv. 6, and Habak. iii. 3. 3.—Matt. xix. 26, and Gen. xxxii. 24—30.*
4.—Acts i. 24, and Gen. iii. 9—14. 5.—1 John iv. 8, and Deut. iv. 24; Exod. xv. 3, Nahum, i. 22, Hosea xiii. 7—8. 6.—Rom. ii. 11, and Deut. xxi. 17; 1 Sam. ii. 7. 7.—Malachi iii. 6, and Exod. xxxii. 14, Gen. vi. 6, Jer. xv. 6.† 8.—Colos. i. 15, and Exod.

* Some commentators say this story was only a “vision” or “figure,” and “wrestling” expressive of Jacob’s *fervent prayer*! Then what becomes of the *broken thigh*? Was *that* a “figure?” We never knew a theologian, when unable to explain a discrepancy, but he assured us it was “figurative.” Such explanations are no explanations. They are evasions.

† The *British Quarterly*, vol. xvi. p. 463, says, “When God is said to repent, to be angry, to rejoice, and such like, the

xxxiii. 11, Gen. xxxii. 30, Exod. xxxiii. 22—23.

23. *The Trinity*.—Compare 1 John c. 5, v. 7, and 1 Tim. ii. 5; Isaiah xlvi. 9, John x. 30, and xiv. 28.

24. *The Commandments*.*—1. Compare Exod. xx. 3, and 1 John c. 5, v. 7. 2.—Exod. xx. 5, and Ezek. xviii. 20. 3.—Exod. xx. 7, and Jer. xxxi. 34. 4.—Exod. xx. 8—11, and Matt. xii. 5. 5.—Exod. xx. 13, and Exod. xxxii. 27, 2 Kings x. 30, Judges iii. 15—21; iv. 21—24. 6.—Exod. xx. 14, and Isaiah xiii. 16. 7.—Exod. xx. 15, and Exod. iii. 22.

25. *Immortality*.—Compare John c. 5, v. 28; Acts i. 9, and Job vii. 9; Eccles. iii. 19—22, Ps. cxlvi. 4, Ps. vi. 5.

26. *Duration of the World*.—Compare Eccles. i. 4, and 2 Peter iii. 10; Matt. xiii. 49.

27. *Temptation*.—Compare James i. 13, and Gen. xxii. 1.†

28. *Faith and Works*.—Compare Rom. iii. 28, and James ii. 24; Ephes. ii. 8, and James c. 2, v. 20.

29. *The Sabbath*.—Exod. xx. 10, and John xx. 1.

30. *The Truth*—1 Tim. ii. 4, and 2 Thess. ii. 11; 1 Sam. xvi. 1—2; 2 Chron. xviii. 21.

proper corrective of any such mischief which such phraseology might produce, if taken literally, is supplied by those passages which declare him to be impossible of change." This simply means that if one passage says one thing, you must look for another that says the reverse! Is not this *admitting* our argument—that there *are* contradictions in Scripture?

* There is a discrepancy even in the commandments themselves. By comparing Exodus xx. 1—17, with Deut. c. 5, v. 7—21, it will be seen that the reason for observing the fourth commandment is very different in the latter, though both books are said to have been written by the same author! Exodus says the seventh day must be kept holy, because the Lord rested on that day, but Deut. says nothing about so important a reason, and merely reminds the Israelites that the Lord brought them out of the land of Egypt. It is impossible for the same pen to have written the two accounts.

† It is alleged, "when God is said to tempt Abraham, the expressions means nothing more than he *tried* him." (Davidson's *Sacred Hermeneutics*, p. 581.) Then when it is said "neither tempteth he any man," the expression means nothing more than "neither *trieth* he any man." Does this interpretation make the inconsistency any less? If such a reading is fair in one case, it is in both.

31. *Wisdom*.—Prov. iv. 7, and Eccles. i. 18.
32. *The Righteous*.—Rom. iii. 10, and James c. 5, v. 16.
33. *The Wicked*.—Ezek. xviii. 32, and Prov. xvi. 4. *
34. *Sincerity*.—Prov. xii. 17, and 2 Cor. xii. 16, 1 Cor. ix. 19—22.
35. *Revenge*.—Lev. xix. 18, and Num. xxxi. 2.
36. *Sobriety*.—Prov. xxxi. 4, and Jer. xxv. 27, Deut. xiv. 26.
37. *Temperance*.—Rom. xiv. 21, and 1 Tim. v. 23.
38. *Charity*. 1 Cor. xiii. 1—2, and 2 John i. 10; Gal. i. 9.†
39. *Divine Mercy*.—Micah vii. 18, and Deut. vii. 2—16.
40. *Divine Pity*.—James v. 11, and Hosea xiii. 16.
41. *Divine Justice*.—Malachi i. 1—2, and Ezek. xviii. 25.
42. *Divine Anger*.—Psalms xxx. 5, and Num. xxxii. 13.
43. *Divine Light*.—1 Kings viii. 12, and 1 Tim. vi. 16.
44. *All Scripture given by inspiration of God*.—Compare 2 Tim. iii. 16, and Psl. xxxviii. 5—11; Ezek. iv. 12; 2 Sam. xvi. 22; Gen. xxxviii. 9; 2 Kings xviii. 27; Isa. xxvi. 18; Judges iii. 21—22; Deut. xxiii. 1; Deut. xxiii. 13; Deut. xxv. 9; Deut. xxii. 15; Lev. xv. 16.
45. *Moral Life*.—Compare Exod. xx. and Gen. ix. 21—22; Gen. xxix. and xxx.; Exod. ii. 11—12; Num. xxxi. 17—18; 2 Kings ii. 23; 2 Sam. xi. 2—6; 1 Sam. xxi. 12—13; 2 Sam. xii. 29—31; 1 Kings ii. 8—9; 1 Kings xi. 3; Num. xxxi. 17; Judges xxi. 12.
46. *Good Faith*.—Num. xiv. 30, and Malachi iii. 6.
47. *Forgiveness*.—Luke vi. 36—37, and 2 Tim. iv. 14; Matt. xxiii. 15—33; Matt. x. 32—33; Mark xvi. 16; Mark iv. 12; Num. xxv. 16—17.
48. *Toleration*.—Matthew v. 44, and 2 John i. 10, Deut. xiii. 6—9; Joshua xxiv. 20; Deut. xvii. 2—5; 2 Chron. xxviii. 6; xv. 13; Luke xix. 27; Gal. i. 9; v. 12; 2 John i. 10; Mark xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 22; Acts xiii. 8—12; iii. 23; Matt. xii. 31; Luke xiv. 23; Matt. x. 14.

* We are told that “the idea that the wicked were created for the express purpose of being condemned, is inconsistent with numerous parts of scripture.” (*British Infidelity*, p. 174.) Exactly so. This is *our* argument. It is to these inconsistencies we object.

† “The correct meaning of accursed is—Let him be excommunicated or cut off from the congregation of the true worshippers.”—*British Infidelity*, p. 177. But even in this modified sense, is the one verse consistent with the spirit of *universal* charity enforced in the other?

49. *Ignorance*.—Isa. vi. 10; 1 Cor. xiv. 38; Mark iv. 11—12, and 1 Tim. ii. 4.
50. *Freedom*.—Rom. xiii. 1—3; Heb. xiii. 17; 1 Peter ii. 13—18.
51. *Slave Trade*.—Lev. xxv. 44—46; Joshua ix. 21; Joel iii. 8.
52. *Woman*.—1 Tim. ii. 11—12; 1 Cor. xiv. 34; Ephe. v. 22—23.
53. *Marriage*.—Deut. xxi. 10—14; Deut. xxiv. 1—2.
54. *Suicide*.—Prov. xxiii. 2; Exod. xx. 15.
55. *Judas's Death*.—Matt. xxvii. 3—10, and Acts i. 16—19.*
56. *The Oath*.—Matt. v. 34, and Gen. xxi. 31.
57. *Temples*.—Exod. xxv. 8, and Acts vii. 48.
59. *Jacob's Sons*.—Gen. xxxv. 26, and Gen. xlvi. 8—27.†
59. *Abram's Sepulchre*.—Acts vii. 16, and Gen. xlix. 30.‡
60. *Solomon's Officers*.—1 Kings ix. 23, and 2 Chron. viii. 10.
61. *Sojourn in Egypt*.—Exod. xii. 40—41, and Acts vii. 6.
62. *Heaven*.—John iii. 13, and 2 Kings ii. 11.
63. *Seeing God*.—John i. 18, and Exod. xxxiii. 11; xxiv. 9—11; Exod. xxxiii. 20, and Gen. xxxii. 30.
64. *Evil*.—Sam. i. 31, and Isaiah xlv. 7.
65. *Cain*.—Gen. iv. 13—17. §

* The two accounts differ, not only as to the mode of death, but the purchaser of the field.

† 1. His son Benjamin was not born in Padan Aram, but *after* Jacob had left there on the way to Ephrath (xxxv. 18). 2. The names, when added properly, are sixty-seven, and not “three score and six.”

‡ Here the sepulchre which *Jacob* bought of Hamor, father of Shecham, is confounded with that which Abraham bought of Ephron the Hittite.

§ We are told that when the Lord cursed Cain, and sent him as a vagabond through the earth, Cain said *that every one* who found him would *slay* him. Now, who could “every one” be, when, according to the Bible, *there were no one then in existence*, Abel being murdered, *but his own father and mother*. In v. 16 and 17, it says, Cain went to the land of Nod, and got a *wife*. Where did he get her? There was no female then in existence but Eve—his own mother. The same verse 17, says that Cain *built a city*. But who were to inhabit it? There were only himself and his wife, and his infant son Enoch living—a very *numerous* population to require a *city* for their home. But did Cain build the *city* himself? *That* he could not do. Where then did he find the

66. *Seed Time*.—Gen. viii. 22, and Gen. xlv. 6.
 67. *Pharoah*.—Exod. iv. 21, and Exod. viii. 15.
 68. *Israel Numbered*.—2 Sam. xxiv. 1, and 1 Chron. xxi. 1.*
 69. *Paul's Conversion*.—Acts ix. 7, and Acts xxii. 9.
 70. *Christ*.—1. Compare Matt. xxvi. 52, and Luke xxii. 36.
 2. Luke xii. 4, and John vii. 1; also x. 39. 3. Matt. v. 22, and
 Matt. xxiii. 17. 4. Matt. v. 43—44, and Matt. xxiii. 15—33.
 5. Luke vi. 35, and Mark xvi. 16; John xv. 6. 6. Matt. xxvi. 52,
 and Luke xxii. 36. 7. Matt. v. 39, and Matt. x. 14. 8. Matt.
 xv. 24.† 9. Matt. xvi. 27—28; Mark ix. 1; Luke ix. 27;
 John v. 25—29.‡ 10. Matt. xxiv. 29—51; Mark xiii. 14—18;
 Luke xxi. 32—33.§ 11. Mark ix. 38—40; Luke ix. 49, 50||.
 12. Matt. xxvi. 29. 13.¶ John xi. 51.**

workmen? Such are the discrepancies and contradictions which crowd the subject.

* The result of the numbering was (2 Sam. xxiv. 9) that, "There were in Israel 800,000 valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were 500,000 men." This seems a marvellous army, 1,300,000 soldiers for a territory less than 200 miles long by 100 miles broad. But the book of Chronicles (1 Chron. xxi. 5) gives the result of the *same* census as, besides the men of Levi and Benjamin, 1,100,000 soldiers in Israel, and 470,000 soldiers in Judah; *i.e.* 1,570,000 soldiers from Palestine alone!! Can such have been correct?

† How does this verse accord with the theory of *universal* redemption? Why sent to the Jews *exclusively*.

‡ Did Christ appear with his angels? Did the dead rise from their graves?

§ Were those things fulfilled in *those* days? See prophecy.

|| If common men by the roadside could cast out devils, where was the miracle in the case of Christ?

¶ Will he drink wine *there*?

** How then can the power of *prophecy* be considered peculiar to *divine* influence?

ERRATA.



- Page 19.—For “Moloch,” read “Molech.”
,, 55.—For “Christian writer,” read “critical writer.”
,, 59.—For “Chapter III.,” read “Chapter IV.”
,, 65.—For “very very little,” read “very little.”
,, 80.—For “Hebrew Testimonies,” read “Heathen Testimonies.”
,, 127.—For “preceding book,” read “preceding books.”
,, 166.—For “national philosophers,” read “natural philosophers.”
,, 245.—For “wo,” read “two.”
,, 251.—For “year,” read “years.”







