





“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

THE

SCEPTIC REFUTED,

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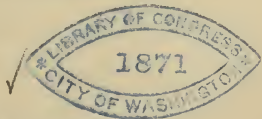
THE BIBLE VINDICATED.

BY

REV. J. B. WATERBURY, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "ADVICE TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN," "THE VOYAGE
OF LIFE," ETC.

17
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P R E F A C E.

IN this volume are contained the condensed arguments and illustrations, on the subjects treated, which the author, through many years of professional reading, has been treasuring up. They are put in this compact form for the benefit, principally, of the young.

At the present day, Infidelity is doing much to weaken confidence in the full inspiration of the Bible. By books and public lectures the young mind is continually assailed with a plausible scepticism; and the object of this small volume is to furnish an antidote to this insinuated poison, and to afford a sort of armory from which the young may draw forth weapons to meet the artful and incessant attacks of the enemies of divine truth. May God bless it to this end!

J. B. W.

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CHAPTER I.

SCEPTICISM IN RELATION TO THE BEING OF GOD.

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Do any deny the existence of God? Yes, my young reader, you will not have lived long before you will meet with this dark creed,—if creed it may be called,—either in books, or by an open and oral declaration.

An Atheist! can there be an Atheist? methinks I hear you say, as if such a moral monster existed only in the imagination.

I do not wonder that you are horrified at the idea; for a universe without God is but a gloomy prison, opening its doors at last to a still

gloomier destiny — annihilation. Yet there are some who profess this belief; and there are sentiments constantly put forth, in books and pamphlets, which, if believed and imbibed, inevitably lead to it.

Now-a-days, religion is assailed by its enemies *indirectly*. Doubts are suggested in regard to its fundamental principles; and scepticism does more, at the present time, to weaken our faith by its insinuations, than by its open declarations.

Be on your guard, then, when any novel sentiments are thrown out, which tend to impair your confidence in the great truths which lie at the foundation of morality, virtue and piety.

Remember that Infidelity and Atheism have a spontaneous growth in the wickedness of man. They come out of the *heart*. “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” Hence, though often met and refuted, they as often recur, and, varying the method of attack, they seek again and again to overthrow our faith.

Accordingly, it is necessary to array the arguments and to vary the arguments to suit the exigency of the times. The large and valuable treatises which have been written for this purpose have been generally above the

capacities of youth, or inaccessible to the mass of readers. It is proposed, therefore, in this little volume, to talk to you in a very plain and simple style; and to meet the cavils, and contradictions, and absurdities of Infidelity in a way that shall not only keep your own faith firm, but shall furnish you with good weapons to defend it against the attacks to which, at the present day, it is exposed.

Let us introduce the sceptic, and hear what he has to say. Don't be frightened at the apparition. It is only an imaginary sceptic. I wish we had no other kind to be afraid of. Alas! there are many living, breathing men, and I fear even some *women*, whose sentiments partake of the dark and dreadful features of Atheism.

Let us have the sceptic before us, then, and let us hear what he has to say,—not in dark corners, where nobody can see him; nor in whispers addressed to the ear and mind of youth who have not the means of refuting them; but let us call him,—as they say of the witness on the stand,—hear his statements, and then reply to them.

Supposing him before us, we will put the inquiry to him: “Sir, on what grounds do you deny that there is a God? But first, what led

you to embrace so dismal a theory? Let us have something of your history."

Sceptic. "I was educated, as other youth are, to believe in God and the Bible; and did so until I arrived at manhood. Then I read certain publications which injected doubts, and, pursuing my investigations, the more I read the more I doubted, until I was led to reject first the Bible, and finally to disbelieve the existence of God."

Querist. "May we inquire if, in the meantime, you read any books on the side of Christianity, or was all your reading of an infidel tendency?"

Sceptic. "The latter, entirely. I never read a full and complete treatise in favor of the Christian religion."

Querist. "Was this giving Christianity a fair chance,—was it pursuing a course that an honest seeker after truth would adopt? But another question. Did you *wish* to reach the conclusion that religion had no foundation? Did you hope to find the infidel side of the question true? For you know our wishes go to give apparent strength even to weak and inconclusive arguments. What was the state of your mind on this point?"

Sceptic. “I confess I rather inclined to hope that religion, as I had been taught it, was untrue, because it gave such dreadful prominence to future retribution. I did n’t like the idea of future punishment; it was a feature in the Christian religion that I could not agree to. At first, I tried to think it could not be proved from the Bible; but, finding I failed in this, I had no resort but to reject the Bible, and become a Deist. After trying Deism a while, I began to dislike any thought that implied the being of a God, and my mind took a course of reasoning which led to a final denial of that generally admitted opinion. I now call myself a universal sceptic.”

Querist. “Can you trace your opinions to any course of moral conduct — or rather I should say *immoral* conduct — which you were pursuing or wished to pursue? for sometimes this has an influence in shaping one’s religious opinions. Were you gradually falling into loose and immoral habits when your doubts and reasonings led you into infidelity?”

Sceptic. “Why, yes. I *was* inclined to indulge in some things which people generally think wrong, and which, according to Bible

morality, would be wrong, but which I now conceive to be not only natural, but harmless.”

Querist. “Do you not think that this disposition to indulgence in what the Scriptures forbid, and for which they threaten future punishment, had considerable effect in biasing your mind in favor of Infidelity, inasmuch as Infidelity offers no such impediments to vice?”

Sceptic. “Possibly it might have had some little influence; but, after all, the arguments on the side of Infidelity are to my mind sufficient, apart from all such influence, and I am ready to maintain them against all opposition.”

Well, having now got out of the sceptic some of his preliminary history,—which the reader will see to have had a natural bearing on his present state of mind, if it has not actually produced it,—we are prepared to attend, with some degree of candor, we hope, to what he may have to say in the way of statements and arguments which to him seem so strong in favor of Infidelity.

Querist. “Now, sir, what are the reasons which have blotted out of your soul a belief in the divine existence?”

Sceptic. “I cannot be expected to state the whole of them, but I will say that they are prin-

cipally as follows: First, the difficulty, nay, impossibility, as I think, of conceiving of such an idea as an eternal self-existent Creator; secondly, the all-sufficiency of nature to produce all the results which we see produced in the world; thirdly, the state of things which we see going on now is that which we have reason to think has gone on forever; and fourthly, the fact that man is but a higher grade of the brute animal, ending, like them, his whole existence at death. These are positions which I think no reasoning can overturn, and which satisfy my mind that the idea of God and responsibility are mere delusions, got up to subserve priestly authority, and to bring mankind under a system of spiritual slavery."

This is frank, and we will meet it in a spirit of candor, and give it all the weight it deserves; and if, after putting it into the balances of reason, and subjecting it to that highest style of moral verdict, human consciousness, it appears to be but a building based upon the sand, we hope that the sceptic will not any longer inhabit an edifice destined to crush him by its fall, when the floods come and the winds blow and beat upon it.

Let us take up these statements or arguments

one by one, and see what can be said upon each of them.

First, the difficulty of *conceiving* of such an idea as an eternal, self-existent Creator. This is urged against the fact of his existence.

But certainly it must occur to the least reflective mind that, if there be a God who has made us and all things, he would be too vast a being to be comprehended by his creatures. A God that we could comprehend would be no God. And hence the inquiry is put in the sublimest language: "Who, by searching, can find out God,—who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Are we to believe nothing that we cannot comprehend? Let us then deny our own existence, which is about as great a mystery as any one visible thing. Let us deny the existence of mind, and the law of gravitation, and a thousand other influences of nature too deep for our comprehension.

The great point is *not* whether we can *comprehend* the idea of an infinite creator, but whether there are proofs sufficient to establish beyond all question his existence. This is the great point, and the matter of comprehension is one which may afterwards be considered and decided.

The second argument or consideration stated is the all-sufficiency of *nature* to produce all the results which we see produced in the world.

Nature is here put in place of an intelligent mind and sovereign will. Nature is the Atheist's god. It is a brute, unconscious force, by which all things are said to be effected, and all uniform results brought about. But then this difficulty meets us: Here is something doing the very work which we ascribe to an intelligent, infinite mind, which is nothing but a brute force,—a greater absurdity, and a thing much more difficult to comprehend, than to attribute these stupendous results to a great and all-controlling mind. How are we relieved by saying that a human body is the work of nature; that all the curious machinery that enters into the frame-work of the body — as the eye, the ear, the lungs, the stomach, the nerves, the muscles, the limbs, and even the conscious soul itself — are all the work of nature? Can the inquisitive mind be satisfied with that?

We look for some adequate cause. To say that it is *nature*, is not satisfactory. Nature is a very vague term. It means nothing, it can do nothing. How absurd to say that nature framed a law by which the planets move; a law

adjusting the relations of one orb to another so nicely that an eclipse can be calculated beforehand even to a second of time ! It is very easy to get rid of the idea of God by referring this all to nature ; but is it reasonable,— is it satisfactory ?

The most common argument against the belief of the divine existence, and that which has had most weight with the Atheist, is the third consideration adduced, namely, “ that there is no proof that the world ever had a beginning ; and that the state of things which we see going on now is that which has been going on forever.”

This sounds plausible. But there are one or two points which need to be carefully looked at and considered. The sceptic says, we have no proof that the world ever had a beginning. What proof, we might ask, has *he* that it has always been as it is now, that it is eternal ? How does he know, whose life covers so small a space, that the world is eternal ? But we shall show some proofs that this gratuitous declaration has no foundations. There are arguments which satisfy the best minds that the world, with man who inhabits it, must have had a beginning,— that such a beginning could not have been chance-

work, and that hence it must have been produced by an intelligent and infinite mind.

ARGUMENT OF JOHN LOCKE.

The celebrated Locke uses the argument just alluded to to prove the being of a God. I dare say my young reader has heard of John Locke, one of the greatest mental philosophers the world has produced. He was a profound thinker, and his work on the human understanding is probably not excelled by any treatise on the same subject. When infidels speak derisively of religion, ask them if they ever heard of such a name as Locke. When they talk of religion as influencing only weak minds, — as in their ignorance they sometimes do, — inquire of them if they ever read Locke's argument for the being of a God.

In the estimation of the most candid and intelligent minds, his reasoning is conclusive and unanswerable. He begins by asserting that "every man knows with absolute certainty that he exists. He knows, also, that he did not *always* exist. It is clearly certain to him that his existence was *caused*, not *casual*; and that, if caused, the cause must have been adequate to

the production. An *adequate* cause is that which has sufficient efficacy to bring a certain effect to pass. In the present case, an adequate cause is one possessing and exerting all the understanding necessary to contrive, and the power necessary to create, such a being as the man in question. This cause is what we are accustomed to call *God*. The understanding necessary to contrive, and the power necessary to create, a being compounded of the human soul and body, can create and contrive anything. He who actually contrived and created man certainly contrived and created all things."

This argument, you perceive, goes on the supposition that wherever there is an effect, there also must be an antecedent cause adequate to produce it. This is a first principle in all reasoning. Without admitting the idea of cause and effect, we are brought to a dead stand in reasoning on both physical and moral subjects. Seeing this, and wishing to get rid of the idea of responsibility, David Hume, the celebrated historian and sceptic, actually denied the connection of cause and effect in relation to this subject.

Every reflecting mind must see that such a denial undermines the foundations of truth, and

leaves us without one principle that we can know to be true, or one fact for which we can give a rational explanation.

The very constitution of the human mind requires that we should believe in this connection. The child no sooner begins to compare ideas and to draw conclusions, than he is obliged to found his reasonings on the connection of cause and effect. What is more common than to hear an intelligent child inquiring for the cause of every effect which falls under his eye? "Who made me?" is one of his first inquiries. "Who made the sky, and the trees, and the rivers?" The little reasoner is searching for the cause of nature's exhibitions and changes.

Now, if to his inquiry who made him, and who made the world, you should answer, It wasn't made, it was always so, would he be satisfied? Suppose you should tell him that his father, or some other man, made it,—would that satisfy him? And why? The *cause*, even to his weak comprehension, would not be adequate to the effect. You must refer him to a cause sufficient, in his view, to produce so great effects. His father may be able to construct a watch or a wagon, but he cannot believe him to be adequate to the building of a world. There

is n't skill and power enough in men to do this, and yet everywhere he sees skill and power most wonderfully exhibited in all that meets his eye. Tell him that God, an infinite being, with wisdom infinite and power omnipotent, made man, and made the world, and you give him an adequate cause. His mind can rest upon this.

There is a necessity, as appears to me, of admitting the idea of cause and effect, arising from the very constitution of the human mind. Hume denied it only in THEORY. In his own practice he admitted it every day and every hour. No change in body or mind but is indicative of it. No revolution in the mental or moral world but is referred to it. Things do exist, and changes take place in them. Things that were not begin to exist. Therefore *all* things may have begun to exist. A thing cannot be the cause of its own existence. Something from without, and that existed before, must have produced it. Is that antecedent thing *matter*? Can mere lifeless matter out of nothing produce matter? But, more absurd still, can it produce *mind*? We know, and our own consciousness tells us, that nothing short of infinite intelligence and almighty power is ade-

quate to produce it, and hence there *must be a God*.

Is not this argument for the divine existence satisfactory, unanswerable? We do not pretend that it is what, mathematically speaking, would be called demonstration. But there may be truths built upon moral evidence which we can as little doubt as the clearest mathematical deductions. The being of a God is one of them; and the above mode of arriving at it must, to any mind but that of a blinded and confirmed sceptic, be perfectly satisfactory.

Atheists have endeavored to weaken this argument by asserting that there is in nature what they call "an eternal series," and that this production and reproduction has been going on forever. Of course this is but a gratuitous assertion, but a moment's reflection will convince any one of its fallacy.

In whatever period you take man, however far back in history,—even if it were a million of years,—you are still required to account for his peculiar organization, evincing as well at one period as at another the skill of an infinite contriver, that must have possessed unlimited wisdom and power.

Besides, is it not a little remarkable that no

traces of this infinite longevity of the world can anywhere be found? We cannot find, by records or by recovered monuments, that the world is older than the Bible makes it; that is, about six thousand years.

The evidence must be adduced of what nations existed a million years ago. Has any such evidence been produced, or can it be? If, then, the world began to exist at any given period of time, there must have been an adequate cause, a great first cause, to have produced it. That cause is *God*.

BISHOP BERKLEY'S ARGUMENT.

Bishop Berkley's argument for the divine existence is beautiful, ingenious and satisfactory.

"We acknowledge," says he, "the existence of each other to be unquestionable; and when called upon for the evidence on which this acknowledgment is founded, allege that of our senses; yet it can by no means be affirmed with truth that our senses discern *immediately* any man. We see, indeed, a form, and the motions and actions of that form, and we hear a voice communicating to us the thoughts, emotions and volitions, of an intelligent being; yet it is intui-

tively certain that neither the form, the motions, the actions, the voice, the thoughts, nor the volitions, *are* that intelligent being, or the living, acting, thinking thing, which we call *man*. On the contrary, they are merely effects, of which that living, acting thing, denoted by the word *man*, is the cause. The existence of the cause, or, in other language, of the man, we infer from the effects which he thus produces.

“In the same manner, and with like certainty, we discover the existence of *God*. In the universe without us, and in the little world *within* us, we perceive a great variety of effects, produced by some cause adequate to the production. Thus the motions of the heart, arteries, veins and other vessels; of the blood and other juices; of the tongue, the hands and other members; the perception of the senses and the action of the mind; the storm, the volcano, and the earthquake; the reviviscence and growth of the vegetable world; the diffusion of light and the motions of the planets, are all *effects*, and effects of a cause adequate to the production. This cause is *God*, or a living being possessed of intelligence and power sufficient to contrive and bring them to pass.

“He, with evidence from reason equally clear

with the testimony of the Scriptures, 'thundereth marvellously with his voice; holdeth the winds in his fist; sendeth forth his lightnings with rain; looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; toucheth the hills, and they smoke. The mountains melt like wax at his presence. He causeth the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice; and he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good.' Him also we are bound to praise, because 'we are fearfully and wonderfully made by him. Our substance was not hid from him when we were made in secret. His eyes saw our substance yet being imperfect; and in his book all our members were written, which in contrivance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them.' He also 'breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, and the inspiration of the Almighty hath given us understanding.'"

This beautiful argument for the existence of God is addressed to us in a manner that cannot be resisted. It calls us to view our Almighty Creator in every floating atom and quivering leaf, as well as in the restless ocean and the revolving planets. In this splendid panorama of nature we discern, behind the curtain, an intelligent cause and a skilful hand, to which

the existence of all is to be referred, and by which every change is directed and controlled. Even the rude intellect of the savage, who "sees God in clouds and hears him in the winds," submits to this reasoning, and acknowledges the force of this argument.

Within us, and everywhere *without* us, there are the unmistakable indications of the presence of an all-pervading and infinite Spirit. When we feel in our heated veins the rush and reflux of blood, we cannot but feel that the involuntary and regular march of the fluids is guided and controlled by this invisible and almighty Agent. When we behold the clouds rising and spreading their grateful shade over the withered and dusty vegetation; distilling in genial and refreshing showers, to cleanse and revive it; then passing deep into the soil to feed the springs and swell the rivers; and then exhaled by the sun to be again collected into beautiful clouds; and, after adorning the sky with golden vapors, returning to perform the same regular and benevolent task; we cannot but feel that there is, in this revolution of mercy, an invisible but efficient Being, whose hand originally produced and is now constantly employed in sustaining the process.

In short, we cannot, by day or by night, turn our eyes upon the great outlines of nature, or her minuter portions,—we cannot survey the vegetable, animal or mineral kingdoms,—without being impressed with the thought that all this beauty, grandeur and regularity, are the product of an infinite mind. His footsteps are seen in the whirlwind and in the storm. His voice is heard in the sky and in the ocean. His mercy smiles in the summer clouds. The whispers of his love come to us from the fragrant flowers, and from the gentle zephyrs. The dark mountain seems to be his throne, and the still, deep forest his sanctuary; and, when climbing the one, or wandering in the other, every light and careless emotion is gone, and we feel as if the presence of the presiding Deity were surrounding us. He must be blind who sees not God in his works. “The heavens declare his glory, and the earth is full of his praise.” All nature seems, by her silent eloquence, to proclaim his power. There are times when the impression of the divine existence comes upon us with a momentary but overwhelming force. It is an awful glimpse,—a gleam, as it were, of the eternal majesty, that appals and astonishes us. An instantaneous dread falls upon us. But, in a

moment, it is gone. We have just seen enough and felt enough to make us exclaim, "How great a Being is God!"

DR. PALEY'S ARGUMENT.

The argument for the divine existence oftenest adduced is that of Dr. Paley. It consists in the examination of facts gathered from the works of creation as they are presented to the view of man. Their evident design, and their wonderful adaptation to the sphere in which they are found, are presented in such strong lights as to force the conviction that a designing mind must have been at work to arrange them, and a power infinite to bring them into being.

He opens his argument by the following striking illustration: "In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there. I might answer, that, for anything *I* knew to the contrary, it had lain there forever; nor would it, perhaps, be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer. But, suppose I found a *watch* upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place. I should hardly think of the answer which I had

before given, that, for anything I knew, the watch might always have been there. Yet, why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone? Why is it not as admissible in the second case as in the first? For this reason, and for no other, namely, that when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive — what we could not discover in the stone — that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose. For example, they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion; and that motion is so regulated as to point out the hour of the day; and that, if the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are, or placed after any other manner or in any other order than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none that would have answered the use that is now served by it.

“To reckon up a few of the plainest of these parts and their office, all tending to one result: We see a cylindrical box, containing a coiled elastic spring, which, by its endeavor to relax itself, turns round the box. We next observe a flexible chain (artificially wrought, for the sake of flexure), communicating the action of the spring from the box to what is called the fusee.

We then find a series of wheels, the teeth of which catch in and apply to each other, conducting the motion from the fusee to the balance, and from the balance to the pointer; and, at the same time, by the size and shape of these wheels, so regulating that motion as to terminate in causing an index, by an equable and measured progression, to pass over a given space in a given time.

“ We take notice that the wheels are made of brass, in order to keep them from rust; the springs of steel,—no other metal being so elastic; that over the face of the watch there is placed a glass,—a material employed in no other part of the work, but, in the room of which if there had been any other than a transparent substance, the hour could not have been seen without opening the case.

“ This mechanism being observed, the inference, we think, is inevitable, *that the watch must have had a maker*; and that there must have existed at some time, and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its construction, and designed its use.

“ The application of this argument every one

will perceive. To speak in the comparison, the mechanism of nature is *infinitely* more varied, complex and beautiful, than the watch.

“To say, therefore, as some infidels have done, that the curious and regular organization of matter is of chance, would be more preposterous than to say that the watch was produced by chance.

“To assert that it came from a principle of order is nonsense, and does not relieve the mind. Who ever knew a watch made by a principle of order ?

“To declare it to be the result of the laws of metallic nature is no reply ; for a law always presupposes an agent ; it implies power, and is the order according to which that power acts.

“There is, then, but one conclusion : As the watch by its contrivance and design implies the necessity of a contriver and designer, so also the organization of matter — as, for example, the structure of the human body, *infinitely* more complicated than a watch — implies the necessary existence of a being adequate to such a production. *That Being is God.*

“The conduct of this argument opens an immense field of research and curious investigation. You may range through the animal, vegetable

and mineral kingdoms; and the closer your inspection, the greater will be your astonishment at the marks of design, and the minute and ingenious contrivances, visible in every object that shall come under your observation. The organ of vision you will find adapted to the light, the lungs to the air, the ear to the sound, and all the members of this curious frame-work to the external world in which it is to act.

“The field of investigation is so immense that we can only allude to it. But go search the book of nature,—that great primary oracle of God,—and every step of your progress will not only teach you that there is a God, but will unfold to you lessons of his wisdom, power and goodness. Every leaf and flower and dew-drop are the changeless testimonials of his skill. The *human body* — so ‘fearfully and wonderfully made’ — is the living, moving witness of his being and perfections. It was his hand that gave symmetry to its form, and flexibility to its muscles. It was his hand that opened channels for the blood, and gave it the law by which its circulation is regulated.

“But take a single organ,—the eye, for example,—and examine it. Placed amid surround-

ing and projecting bones, to guard so tender a member from the injury of casual blows; covered with a flexible coat, which, at the same time, moistens, cleanses and shields it, and this coat fringed with a brush to exclude the finer particles of floating dust; at night, when most exposed and requiring rest, this coat closes gently over it, till the hour for waking. A tube, like a little aqueduct, carries off through the nostril the superfluous humors. The pupil has the power of contracting and dilating to suit the near or distant object, and to accommodate the greater or lesser glare of light. These are a few of the prominent qualities or functions of this beautiful and expressive orb of vision, which holds us in communication with the beauties and glories of the external world; and in the whole range of nature nothing more strikingly evinces the being and perfections of an intelligent Creator. Hence, it has been affirmed that 'an accurate examination of the eye is a cure for Atheism.'"

The conclusion is thus forced upon us that there is a God, by whom all things were created, and by whom they are constantly sustained. This is a conclusion of immense importance. It is the basis of all religious and moral obligation. There is a God! The works of nature, no less

than the oracles of inspiration, proclaim it. Our consciences echo back the sentiment, there is a God. Where else could the idea have come from? Who invented it, and when? Why is it engraven so indelibly on human souls? Something within tells us it is true, and points to that day when it will be more fearfully brought home to our convictions. What a tremendous truth it is, that there exists within us, and above us, and around us, a Being who is infinite, and holy, and just, and good! He has numbered the hairs of our heads. He notices the slightest movements of our thoughts. He has marked the exact limit of our existence. Go where we may, we cannot escape from Him. Into his hands we must fall, and at his tribunal we must meet our destiny.

Look around, and see, in the exhibitions of nature, the evidences of his being and his power! See worlds on worlds moving in majestic order at his command! What is man? Yet has man a soul to know this great Being, and to glorify Him, if he would. But the proud worm, in some instances, denies his God; in others, he admits his existence, but denies his right to govern. In all, the insect man rebels against his Creator. Why does not the Almighty crush

him? Because He is God, and not man; because He is long-suffering, and willeth not the death of him who deserves to die.

But we did not intend to preach in this little volume,—only to reason; and, therefore, we will pause to inquire of our sceptical friend whether he thinks now there are not some pretty conclusive arguments for the being of God.

Sceptic. “Well, I admit that you have adduced some powerful arguments, and that there is much more to be said on your side of the question than I had supposed. But, after all, if there be a God, what interest can he take in us insignificant creatures? He has only created us, as he has the brutes, to live a while, and then to be no more. I cannot believe that there is a future state for man, or that the soul survives the body. My opinion is, that when we die that is the end of us. On this point my mind is made up; nor do I think any man can convince me to the contrary.”

Let us, then, examine this point, for it seems to me next in importance to the one which we have been considering; and, perhaps, it may be found that as much can be said to prove the immortality of the soul as to prove the being of God.

CHAPTER II.

SCEPTICISM IN REGARD TO THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

What is the soul?—Materialism—The doctrine of immortality possible and probable—General belief of it among all nations.—Plato's writings—Testimony of Socrates—Bishop Butler's remarks—How far reason proves immortality—Proof from analogy—Comparison of man and the brute animals—Argument from the soul's tendencies and capacities—The soul's capacity for improvement—Susceptibility to enjoyment and suffering proof of immortality.

WHAT is the soul? It is the part of our being which distinguishes us from mere animals—puts us immeasurably above the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. It is *that* in man which makes him a moral and accountable being. It is not only the *thinking* part, but the part that discerns right from wrong; the *moral* nature—that by which we can know God, and understand our duties and responsibilities. It is *spirit* in distinction from *body*; united to the

body, dwelling in it, influenced by it, mixed up as it were with it, and ceasing to exhibit its effects in this world when the vital cord is sundered. Hence, some have maintained that it is not immortal, but perishes at the dissolution of the body. In fact, some go so far as to say that it is only one of the effects of our bodily organization; and such are called *Materialists*.

But let us look into the matter, and see how much ground these materialists have to stand upon, and what reasons we have for believing in the immortality of the soul.

A first consideration is, that, if we have proved the being of God, we have rendered the doctrine of immortality possible, and even plausible. An infinite God can make the soul immortal, if he please so to do.

Another thought: The idea of immortality is neither new nor strange; for a general belief prevails, and always has prevailed, that man is destined to exist in a future state. This feeling is not peculiar to Christian countries. From the information which we possess of the feelings of pagans, there can be no doubt that solicitude about the future state is a general, if not universal, characteristic of man. The doctrine of transmigration, — that is, the passing of the soul

into other animals, to be punished or rewarded by dwelling in a noble or mean animal,—as held by the Hindoos, and broached at first by so renowned a heathen as Pythagoras; the fancied isle of rest and recreation upon which the imagination of the Indian fastens; with numerous other theories of heathenish belief, indicate a universal impression in favor of immortality.

The subject of the soul's immortality was agitated, and often discussed, by Socrates and his disciple Plato. Plato, in fact, has written a beautiful treatise to prove the immortality of the soul. His arguments are so strong, even without one ray of light from revelation, that any candid reader—making all due allowance for heathenish ideas which are mixed up with them—will see in them a force not easily resisted.

It is true that, depending only on the reasoning powers, these great philosophers could not perfectly satisfy their minds on this subject. They were disturbed by lingering doubts; but their habitual belief was in favor of immortality.

TESTIMONY OF SOCRATES.

The dying testimony of Socrates was to this effect: "I hope I am now going to good men;

though this I would not take upon me peremptorily to assert; but that I shall go to the gods, lords that are absolutely good,—this, if I can affirm anything of this kind, I would certainly affirm. And for this reason I do not take it ill that I am to die, as otherwise I should do; but I am in good hope that there is something remaining for those who are dead; and that *then* it will be much better for good than for *bad* men.”

The idea of immortality is not, then, new, nor is it peculiar to one age or to any particular sect. It is one of those instinctive ideas that spring up in the soul itself, of spontaneous growth, interwoven, it would seem, with the very texture of our nature. This fact, and its universality, go to show that it is not a baseless idea, but presumptively true. It is as true *morally* as hunger and thirst are *physically*.

BISHOP BUTLER'S REMARKS.

Bishop Butler says that “if our happiness or misery in the future life depended not on our conduct in this life, the doctrine of immortality would be only a subject for curiosity or speculation; but, if our present conduct is to give shape

to our future destiny, the subject assumes at once an importance and solemnity."

Yes, dear reader, it is no mere theory. It is a matter of great practical importance. It is a question in which you are deeply interested. Have you a soul destined to survive the body — to live and feel and act, to love and hate, to enjoy or suffer, after the body has been resolved into its original dust? A great question this! Around it clusters all that is really important in human existence. For, what is man but a superior kind of brute, if, at death, he ceases, like the brute, to exist? No wonder sensualists favor this doctrine. Their motto is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

But the doctrine of immortality dissipates at once these grovelling views. It invests human existence with dignity and responsibility. To say that three-score years and ten marks the limits of human existence, is surely to deprive man of all moral grandeur, and to rob him of all elevating motives.

HOW FAR REASON PROVES IMMORTALITY.

We do not undertake to say that reason can do more than confirm our instinctive notions of

immortality. Hence it is, that, whilst reason renders it probable, revelation makes it *certain*. "Life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel."

It may not be amiss, however, to show what proofs we have from reason of the immortality of the soul.

PROOF FROM ANALOGY.

It is not contended that such reasoning leads to anything more than a high degree of probability. The argument from analogy is perhaps more beautiful than convincing; yet to some minds it has adaptation, and with some considerable force.

The difference between a mind in maturity and at birth is so great, that, according to analogy, it would not be preposterous to suppose, at death, a change as great, or even greater, to take place, as to its capacities and enjoyments. The general law of analogy favors this idea. The change which insects undergo from the creeping to the flying state, the bursting of birds from the shell, which is their habitation for a time, may indicate a probability that the soul will exist with enlarged and appropriate facul-

ties in another state. May not the Creator have designed these changes which take place under our eye and observation as hints to man of his own immortality?

The changes which are produced at birth, and from infancy to maturity, are so remarkable as naturally to suggest an analogous change at death, unless there is ground to believe that the soul dies with the body. But there is no evidence whatsoever that death will have the effect to destroy the soul, or even interfere with its active powers. From the nature of the case, no such evidence can be produced. It is all mere supposition; whereas we have strong probable evidence to the contrary.

No man can know what death is until he experiences it. Therefore none can assuredly say what its effects will be on the thinking part — the soul. We stand on equal ground here. The sceptic knows nothing, and *we* know nothing. But the fact that, up to the moment of death, thousands and tens of thousands have retained all their powers of mind, raised and excited often to the highest point of activity and comprehension, is presumptive proof that the actual shock of death will not interrupt the soul's existence.

The effect of death is perceptible only on the body. We perceive the changes which pass upon the flesh, and the blood, and other parts of the animal structure, but the mind is meanwhile displaying all its wonted energy. What is this but the contrast of death and immortality?

The body is subject to many changes which do not affect the continuance of the mental powers. *Sleep is one.* The soul is then as active, even more so, than in our waking hours. *Syncope, or swooning, is another,* when the soul keeps its past, even though the capacities through which it acts are suspended; showing that the bodily functions may be interrupted whilst yet the soul remains unchanged.

Another important change which the body undergoes is *the imperceptible wasting and recruiting of the substance which composes it.* The whole animal frame is, by this process, changed every few years. It is said by physiologists that we retain not a particle of the matter which composed our bodies ten years ago. But are we conscious of any change in the essential properties of the soul? If, then, we may acquire the material of an entirely new body without an interruption of the soul's existence, is it not probable — more than probable — that

death will not interrupt it? If by a gradual process we can part with the matter which composed one body and receive another, and still retain our consciousness and personal identity, may we not give up the body by one stroke,—that of death,—and still retain them? Men have been so mutilated that one-third of their bodies has been removed, and yet no change has been perceptible on the soul. May we not infer from this that the latter can exist even when the whole of the body is decomposed?

But look at the soul in connection with the body! Does it seem to acknowledge in the latter anything more than a medium through which it acts. The eye is but as an optical instrument to convey the idea of external nature to the soul. The ear is a trumpet for the same purpose. The touch and the taste — in fact, all the physical attributes — have a telegraphic communication with the soul. But they are not the soul. They are auxiliaries and instruments which the soul makes use of to gain knowledge. Is it at all probable that, when these fail, the soul which employed them in the necessities of its present state will cease to exist?

COMPARISON OF MAN AND THE BRUTE ANIMALS.

Sceptic. “But how is this? Will not the same argument apply to brutes which you are now using to prove the immortality of the soul? Are brutes immortal?”

This is a reasonable inquiry, and well put; and we will endeavor to show that there is a distinction between men and the brute animals, strong enough, and wide enough, to render our argument conclusive in favor of the immortality of *man*.

As to brutes, Dr. Butler says we cannot affirm whether they are or are not immortal; that is, without the Scriptures, and merely by the light of reason, we cannot. But the presumption would be they are not immortal. And yet their bodies are strikingly like ours. They have life, too, and instinct,—almost reason, it would seem, sometimes. They sicken and die. Now, wherein is the difference between man and the brute,—so great a difference as to render the one merely mortal and the other immortal?

I cannot do better, on this point, than to refer you to what Dr. Paley says on the subject of *instinct*. “An instinct,” says Dr. P., “is a

propensity prior to experience, and independent of instruction.”

It is this which prompts the bird to construct her nest before depositing her eggs. It is this, also, that impels her, by incubation, to warm them into life, and which teaches her to nurse her young while unfledged with so assiduous and tender a regard. The force of instinct is shown in many other ways by the various species of animals.

While in this propensity we admire the wisdom and goodness of God, who has adapted the nature of his creatures to the sphere and circumstances in which they were destined to exist, we can see nothing in mere instinct that implies a knowledge of a provision for a *future* state.

The instinct, the desires, and the pleasures of brute animals, refer, beyond a reasonable doubt, to this world *only*; and this, we think, is presumptive evidence that *their* existence reaches no further. The Creator has given them such propensities and powers as adapt them to this life, and which render them not only susceptible of much present enjoyment, but capable, at the same time, of contributing to the gratification and necessities of man. In their brief existence, these ends are answered. They give no proof of

possessing *moral* powers, or of the existence of any ideas of a Creator. They cannot be impressed with a sense of obligation, or of a future state. The reasons are obvious. They were never intended by their Creator for any such state. Their very constitution renders them incapable of such ideas.

The capacity which some of these animals possess of receiving instruction amounts to little more than the intelligence necessary for their present safety and usefulness. We cannot well conceive how, under existing circumstances, the brute creation could be subservient to the wants of man without the life and sagacity which enter into their constitution. Whilst in such life and sagacity we are ready to admit a remote analogy to the human soul, yet, being destitute of *moral* powers, and incapable of moral cultivation, their intelligence is only such and so much as to qualify them for the present world.

Not so with *man*. There is no limit to the possible scope of *his* powers. Up to a given point,—and that a very low one,—you may teach a brute; but you soon find your limit; and, all that you can do, you cannot give the most sagacious of brutes any moral ideas or impressions. But man is not only capable of

endless improvement,—he is also susceptible of *moral* impressions, and acknowledges his obligations to a Supreme Creator. He cannot, if he would, keep his thoughts from piercing into eternity. They will overleap death and the grave. In despite of him, they will fasten upon a future state.

Now, does not all this imply between man and the brute creation a difference sufficient to make the one merely mortal and the other immortal?

The constitution of the brute is adapted to this life only, but that of man is compound; *his* is adapted both to this life and to that which is to come. “The economy (or arrangement) of the universe,” says Bishop Butler, “might require that there should be living creatures without rational or moral capacities; and all difficulties as to the manner how they are to be disposed of are so apparently and wholly founded on our ignorance, that it is wonderful they should be insisted upon by any but such as are weak enough to think they are acquainted with the whole system of things.”

The above remarks, we think, are a sufficient answer to the sceptic, who pretends to found an argument against the soul’s immortality on the instinct and sagacity of the brute animals, as

compared with the intellectual capacities and moral nature of man.

ARGUMENT FROM THE SOUL'S TENDENCIES
AND CAPACITIES.

The soul, we have said, is capable of *moral* impressions. By this I intend a belief in a supreme being, and a sense of accountability to him. If there were no hereafter, how could such impressions have found their way into the human soul?

Sceptic. "Designing priests invented these notions."

Ah! but how happens it that where no such influence ever has or ever could have been exerted such impressions are still found? They are of universal prevalence.

But let us admit the supposition that they were inculcated first by the ministers of religion, —how does that help the matter? How did these ministers of religion come by these ideas? And how is it that they have impressed the whole human race with them? If immortality, and the idea of a God and of accountability, are all visionary, how is it that the human race should have universally believed in them?

Suppose that every religious teacher should commence inculcating the opposite or atheistic notion, and by every possible means try to eradicate the idea of immortality,— would they be successful? Can anybody believe they would? Could you get mankind to abandon their instinctive idea of immortality, and to write over the graves of their departed relatives, “Death is an eternal sleep”? It is folly to refer a moral impression which is so deep and universal to any influence whatever save the power of God, and the oracular voice of our own innate consciousness.

There is a capacity in the soul for just such ideas; they are con-natural,—they have always prevailed, and always will. God has written them on the *inner* man, and Atheism is a shock to our moral nature.

On the existence of these ideas the whole frame-work of society is based. The obligations of man to man, and of man to his Maker, are the pledges of security to our persons, our property and our reputation. If these impressions were extinct, all confidence would be destroyed, and society would resolve itself into its original elements, each one walking after the counsel of his own wicked heart. This was the case in France

during the first revolution, when by Atheism men were converted into monsters. We are apt to judge of truth by its effects. Truth is supposed to elevate and purify, to make men better. Try Atheism by this rule,—try the denial of immortality by it. Look at France when the idea of immortality was scouted,—and look at England and America, where it is believed! Then draw your own inferences.

THE SOUL'S CAPACITY FOR IMPROVEMENT.

There is a point when the functions of the body are as perfect as in this life they can be. From that period they begin to decline. But not so with the soul. It is true that the waning powers of the body often, by sympathy and by an influence too deep for our inspection, seem to drag down the soul along with them. But there is no uniformity in this influence. Thousands of instances might be adduced, in which, amidst the greatest corporeal weakness, and even under the decrepitude of age, the mind has retained all its vigor and energy. Old men — like Franklin and Humboldt — of four-score years have shown as fresh and bright an intellect as at forty. They have gone on in their investigations, and

gathered new ideas, even up to the last limit of earthly existence. Does this look as if the soul was material, or that its existence was confined to so short a space as four-score years?

In those cases where the mind seems to fail through disease or decrepitude, we observe that the outlets or avenues through which the soul was wont to act are obstructed, as where the eye grows dim, the ear deaf, and the sensibilities are palsied. The prison-doors are thus shut, as it were, upon the soul; and it would be absurd to argue its extinction, when these avenues are closed up, and it has not its wonted opportunities for development.

Renew these organs,—clear away the film from the aged eye, open the ear, and send a fresh circulation through the veins,—and see how quick the imprisoned spirit would show itself!

The capacity of the soul for improvement is illimitable. None can deny this. There is no point to which the mind can arrive, when it can be said nothing more can be added to its stock of information. The wisest man that ever lived may be made wiser, and the most learned may be taught some additional lessons. The human race have been in existence about six thousand years, and yet every year and month, and almost

every day, new discoveries are being made, and new stores of information added to the general stock. In every science there has been a gradual improvement, and an approximation towards perfection. Each succeeding generation takes up subjects that were matter of investigation to former generations; and they, in turn, are obliged to resign them, still imperfectly understood, to the generations which follow.

These discoveries and inventions are not owing to a natural superiority of one generation over another, but occur, in most instances, simply because one has lived later on the earth than another, and so availed itself of the investigations of former times to push forward its inquiries. We stand, as it were, on the shoulders of our predecessors, and are therefore enabled to stretch our vision beyond them. Who can set limits to this progressive improvement? Where is the ultimate goal in this immortal race?

There seems to me in this illimitable capacity a strong indication of immortality. The brute animals come quickly to perfection. What they know they know by instinct, and beyond a given point it is vain to attempt their improvement. But when you undertake to instruct the human soul, you find an expansive power that unfolds

in proportion as you task it. Were our lives long enough, you might go on adding science to science, and no limit could be fixed to the soul's improvement. Is it probable, then, that a being capable of such enlargement is to find its only sphere of action within the brief period of three-score and ten?

SUSCEPTIBILITY TO ENJOYMENT AND SUFFERING
ANOTHER PROOF OF IMMORTALITY.

There is enjoyment and suffering peculiar to the soul, as distinct from the body. Discontent, envy, hatred, despondency, are feelings traceable to the soul itself. It will not be contended that these passions are dependent on the body, except so far as the senses are a means of communicating the knowledge of external things to the soul. Envy, for example, may come from seeing in the possession of another what we supposed should have been given to ourselves. In this case, however, the eye has nothing to do in exciting the passion, except as a mechanical means of knowledge. The same corroding passion may come merely by reflecting in secret upon the possibility that another may be more favored than ourselves. Thus it will be seen that much

of our wretchedness arises from the exercise of feelings which are independent of the body,— which may be said to inhere, as it were, in the soul itself. That they affect the body we do not deny. They paint themselves in every feature of the speaking countenance. But they come from no conformation of the *bodily* powers. How deeply man is capable of suffering through their indulgence, it would be impossible to say. The unrestrained exercise of one of them would render existence a curse. What, then, would be the effect of their combined influence? Would any *positive* ingredient be necessary to the bitterness of a sinner's cup? Given up to the unrestrained influence of these evil passions, what more fearful punishment could be conceived?

It is easy, also, to conceive of the illimitable capacity of the soul for *enjoyment*. Activity, if directed to the attainment of things lawful, renders the soul happy. But, besides this, the exercise of feelings contrary to those just described — such as contentment, benevolence and meekness — produces even in this life great enjoyment. There is no reason why the soul may not exercise these emotions apart from the body, as when connected with it; nor is there any rea-

soning that can prove they may not be exercised to an *indefinite* degree. We do, in fact, perceive, in the case of many, a gradual increase of such dispositions up to their dying day. In the truly good man they continue to strengthen. His soul is in progress towards a state of perfect felicity.

Where evil principles prevail, the capacity for misery, by their very exercise, continually enlarges, and the soul is increasingly wretched. Where the contrary principles prevail and are continually operative, the capacity for enjoyment increases, and the soul is proportionably peaceful and happy. It requires no stretch of the imagination to suppose that these beginnings of good and evil may be perpetuated. In the *good* man they are the earnest of an eternal blessedness; in the *wicked*, they are the fearful foreshadowings of his predicted doom.

Thus the capacity of the human soul to enjoy or to suffer, from the exercise of feelings which are independent of the body, plainly points out not only its immortality, but even the retributions which are to attend it. It is the dim foreshadowing of the awful or glorious future.

Such are some of the evidences for our immortality drawn from mere reason. We do not

present them as absolutely decisive, nor as actual demonstration ; but they are strong, and to my mind quite conclusive. Still must we depend on the light which the Scriptures have thrown upon the point,—a flood of light, as it were,—more than on mere reason. Reason renders immortality *probable*, revelation makes it *certain*. “He hath brought life and immortality to light through the *gospel*.”

Having thus considered the proofs for the divine existence and the soul’s immortality, we are prepared to consider the evidences that God has given us a true record to guide the soul in its way to that immortality.

CHAPTER III.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

Further conversation with the Sceptic — Probability of a divine revelation — Morality of the Greek and Roman sages — Heathen notions of the Deity — Is God merciful ? and how known ?

BEFORE we proceed further in our course of argument, we may as well inquire whether, in what has already been said in regard to the being of God and immortality, there does not seem to be, even to the sceptic, an amount of proof which he had not before thought of, — and whether the side which we take in this controversy is not capable of being sustained by moral evidence satisfactory to any candid mind.

Sceptic. “I am ready to admit that much more has been said in favor of the common belief than I supposed could be adduced. In fact, as I said before, I have never given a full and candid hearing to your side of the question

until now; and I am rather surprised,— I will not say convinced,— under the reasonings which you have put forth on these points. Still I am open to conviction; and if the Bible is true, I shall be as ready as anybody to acknowledge it, when the proof is fairly and convincingly stated.”

Ah! my friend, you have made a confession which betrays the weakness of your cause. Atheists and Deists generally look only on the side which they *wish* to be true. And yet how strange it is that any man could wish to blot out from human belief the idea of a God and immortality,— the only foundation of religion and virtue! How strange this is! Alas! it comes from that heart which loves sin, and desires to practise it without restraint. This is the secret cause of all the infidelity, under all its various forms, which has been maintained among men. The ideas of a holy God and of a future retribution are fearful ideas to a sin-loving heart. Hence arguments are sought to undermine these great truths, and if possible break their force over the conscience. No wonder, then, that you and others of the same way of thinking have never given a candid hearing to our side of the question. But, having had your ear thus far, I

may hope that you will give your attention for a season to what may be said in another branch of the general subject, growing out of what has already been established; I mean the proof for the inspiration of the Bible.

Sceptic. “ Well, let us hear what you have to say, though I think I can anticipate pretty much what will be forthcoming on that subject.”

I am well aware that many volumes of great weight and worth have been produced to prove the inspiration of the Bible; but, if I may judge from what has fallen from you, they have not been very closely studied by yourself; so that, if attentive, you may possibly gain some new light on this very important matter

PROBABILITY OF A DIVINE REVELATION.

If we admit the existence of God and the immortality of the soul,— which, after all that has been said, I think we must,— then there is at least a probability that our Creator would take some measures to communicate his will to his intelligent and accountable creatures. With all our moral impressions, and all our reasoning powers, how, without such a revelation, could we know when we performed our duty, or when we

neglected it? How could we know what actions were pleasing and what were displeasing in the sight of God? How could we ascertain what course of conduct he would approve towards our kindred, our neighbor, and mankind in general? In fine, how could we determine, in the various circumstances of life, the true distinction between virtue and vice?

It must be remembered that, since we have been created moral and accountable beings, we must be so treated by him who made us. There must be exercised over us a moral government. But how, without a revelation from heaven, could we understand the nature and learn the laws of that government? How could we ascertain whether we violated or obeyed the statutes of our Almighty Sovereign.

Besides, is not man a religious being? Has he not always had, and *will* he not always have, some object of adoration or worship? By the term "religious being" we do not mean that he has right views or right feelings; but still, such is his moral nature that he naturally and necessarily gropes after some being answering to the word *God*, and, if he cannot find the *true* God, he will, out of his own imagination, fabricate

some idol-god. The history of the race proves this.

France tried to blot out this sentiment of the soul, during what is called the reign of Atheism; but human nature revolted at the violence done to her moral powers, and called upon the government to reërect the broken-down altars, and give them back the worship of God.

There being in the soul this natural yearning after some object of religious worship, accompanied by a sense of obligation, and a desire to know what is right and what is wrong, how are these desires to be satisfied without a divine revelation? The world by their own wisdom cannot find out God, nor can they know what is right and pleasing to him in human conduct. This is evident from the history of ancient and modern heathen.

MORALITY OF THE GREEK AND ROMAN SAGES.

“From the ignorance and uncertainty which prevailed among some of the greatest teachers of antiquity concerning those fundamental truths which are the great barriers of virtue and religion, it is evident that the heathen had no perfect scheme of moral rules for piety and good

manners. Thus, with the exception of two or three philosophers, they never inculcated the duty of loving our enemies and of forgiving injuries, but, on the contrary, they accounted revenge to be not only lawful, but commendable. Pride and the love of popular applause were esteemed the best and most noble incentives to virtue. Suicide was regarded as the strongest mark of heroism. Theft, as is well known, was permitted in Egypt and encouraged in Sparta. The exposure of infants, and the putting to death of children who were weak and imperfect in body, was allowed at Sparta, by Lycurgus; and at Athens, the great seat and nursery of philosophers, it was enacted that infants which appeared to be maimed should either be killed or exposed; and that the Athenians might lawfully invade and enslave any people who, in their opinion, were fit to be made slaves. Among the Romans, masters had an absolute power over their slaves, whom they might scourge or put to death at pleasure. Customary swearing was commended, if not by the precepts yet by the example of the best moralists among the heathen philosophers,—particularly Socrates, Plato, Seneca, and the Emperor Julian, in whose works numerous oaths, by Jupiter, Hercules and

the sun and other deities, are very frequent. The gratification of the sensual appetites and the most unnatural lusts were openly taught and allowed. Many of their most celebrated philosophers and heroes not only pleaded for self-murder, but carried about with them the means of destruction, of which they made use, rather than fall into the hands of their adversaries, as was the case with Demosthenes, Cato, Brutus and Cassius. Seneca pleads for suicide in the following terms: 'If thy mind be melancholy and in misery, thou mayest put a period to this wretched condition. Wherever thou lookest, there is an end to it. See that precipice! There thou mayest have liberty. Seest thou that tree, that river, that well? Liberty is at the bottom of it. That little tree? Freedom hangs upon it. Thy own neck, thy own throat, may be a refuge to thee from such servitude; yea, every vein of thy body.' "

Truth was of small account among many even of the best heathens, for they taught that on many occasions a lie was to be preferred to the truth itself. Plato says: "He may lie who knows how to do it in a suitable time." So much for the ideas of the most renowned moral teachers of Greek and Roman fame!

HEATHEN NOTIONS OF THE DEITY.

Gods many and lords many had Greece and Rome. Many of these deities were actuated by the worst passions, and chargeable with the worst of crimes. The morality of a nation will correspond with the nature and supposed conduct of its gods. How, then, can we wonder that the worshippers of Venus should be dissolute, and of Mars should be cruel and bloody!

“In Tartary, the Philippine Islands, and among the savage nations of Africa, the objects of worship are the sun, moon and stars, the four elements, and serpents; in Guinea, birds, fishes, and even mountains; and almost everywhere, evil spirits. In Japan they hold that there are two sorts of gods, and that demons are to be venerated. In Hindostan the Polytheism is of the grossest kind, not fewer than three hundred and thirty millions of gods claiming the adoration of their worshippers. The Hindoo is taught that the image which he beholds is really God, and the heaviest judgments are denounced against him if he dare to suspect that it is nothing more than the elements of which it is composed. In the apprehensions of the people in general, the

idols are really deities; they occupy the place of God, and receive that homage, fear, service and honor, which the Almighty Creator so justly claims.”

The nature of the heathen deities is cruel and malignant. They are *feared*, not loved. Their very appearance is most hideous. They are propitiated, in many instances, only by the blood of their worshippers. Such are the appalling traits in the character of their religion who are left without the light of revelation. Such are the views of God which unevangelized nations entertain.

What a melancholy picture has the heathen world always presented on the subject of God and of religion! Who can say that, independent of revelation, man can attain to correct ideas on these all-important points?

IS GOD MERCIFUL, AND HOW KNOWN?

There is one other point, of great practical importance, upon which nature sheds not a particle of light.

Supposing that without a revelation we could arrive at some conceptions of the character of God, how much of that character could we know?

Could we know that he was *merciful*? Could we ascertain if, consistent with his principles of government, he could pardon sin? This was a stumbling-point in the mind of Socrates. Might we not say to that renowned philosopher, who was so much perplexed on this point, "Go to your oracles and call for an answer. You shall hear a response more ambiguous and uncertain than was ever yet uttered. Search through the whole system of nature; not an intimation will she give that shall serve as a clue to the solution of this important inquiry."

The doctrine of forgiveness, the mode in which it is to be sought, and the terms on which it is granted, can be learned only through a divine revelation.

This point, we have said, is one of great importance. There is something in man, wherever you find him, in Christian or in heathen lands, that tells him that he is a sinner. In some this impression is more vague, in others more distinct; but a sense of guilt attaches to the minds of all, and makes them more or less anxious about pardon. That is a miserable condition, indeed, where there is no certain guide on a subject so practical and so momentous.

"Man is not only a subject of the divine gov-

ernment, and therefore in the highest degree concerned to know the divine law, that he may obey it; but he is also a rebel subject, and therefore in the highest degree concerned to discover the means of restoration to the favor of God. Man has violated such precepts of the divine law as are discovered and acknowledged either by reason or revelation; such precepts, for instance, as require him to be thankful to his Maker, and sincere, just and kind, to his fellow-men. These are natural duties, prior to revelation; for philosophers who acknowledge God have generally agreed that these are plainly duties of man. But all men have violated the precepts which require these things. The first interest of all men is, therefore, to obtain a knowledge of the means, if there be any, of reconciliation to God, and reinstatement in the character and privileges of faithful subjects. To be thus reconciled and reinstated, men must be pardoned,—and pardon is an act of mere mercy. But of the mercy of God there are no proofs in his providence.

“The light of nature indeed showed their guilt to the most reflecting of the ancient philosophers, but it could not show them a remedy. From the consideration of the divine goodness,

as displayed in the works of creation, some of them indulged the hope that the Almighty might, in some way or other,—though to them inscrutable,—be reconciled; but in what manner revelation *only* could inform them. That God will receive returning sinners, and accept repentance instead of perfect obedience,—and that he will not require something further for the vindication of his justice, and of the honor and dignity of his laws and government, and for more effectually expressing his indignation against sin, before he will restore men to their forfeited privileges,—they could not be assured. For it cannot be positively proved, from any of the divine attributes, that God is absolutely obliged to pardon all creatures, all their sins, at all times, barely and immediately upon their repenting.

“There arises, therefore, from *nature*, no sufficient comfort to sinners; but, on the contrary, anxious and endless solicitude about the means of appeasing the Deity. Hence the various ways of sacrificing, and numberless superstitions, which overspread the heathen world, were so little satisfactory to the wiser part of mankind, even in those times of darkness, that the more reflecting philosophers could not forbear

frequently declaring that they thought those rites could avail little or nothing towards appeasing the wrath of a provoked God, but that something was *wanting*, though they knew not what."

It thus appears that neither the knowledge of God, nor a pure morality, nor the possibility of pardon, nor the way in which it could be obtained, could be known without a divine revelation.

Now, is it reasonable to suppose that a benevolent Creator, who had given us souls capable of knowing Him, and placed us under a moral government, would leave us to grope in the darkness of nature for light on these all-important subjects? Is it not, according to our reasoning, highly probable that, in some way, he would make his will and our duty and destiny known?

Thus are we led to look as naturally for the bread of life for the soul, conveyed to us by a revelation, as we are to expect food for the body, supplied to us from the sources of nature. He who takes care for the body — so soon to perish — will surely make provision for the soul, which is the undying part of our nature! Once admit the being of God, and man's

dependence and responsibility, and it seems to me to follow, as an almost certain consequence, that a divine communication will be made, in order to guide us in the way of duty and of blessedness.

CHAPTER IV.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCES.

What included in external evidences—Testimony of Philo and Josephus to the authenticity of the Old Testament—Authenticity of the New Testament—Ancient manuscripts—Testimony of the fathers—Irenæus, Origen, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage—Tertullian—Justin Martyr, Papias—Apostolic fathers—Clement, Hermas, Polycarp—Testimony from enemies—Cerinthus, Celsus, Porphyry, Emperor Julian—Collateral testimony—Tacitus—Coincidences of profane authors with the New Testament writers—Josephus' testimony as to our Lord—The acts of Pilate—The Latin historians—Pliny's testimony—His letter to Trajan—Trajan's reply—Overwhelming evidence for the authenticity of the New Testament.

THE necessity and probability of a divine revelation having been shown, we next approach the question, On what rests the claim of that book which we call the *Bible* to be such a revelation from God to man? The proofs generally adduced are of two kinds, *external* and *internal*. The *former* embraces the authenticity of the books, miracles, prophecy, the progress and

influence of the gospel; the *latter* comprises the nature and tendency of the doctrines of the Bible.

It must be evident that in a book of such dimensions, written at various periods, and embracing such a diversity of topics, there must be ground for many trifling objections, which a caviller might pick up, but which it would be as unreasonable to make a ground of serious allegation against the vast whole, as it would be to find fault with the sun because, though emitting such a flood of light, there has nevertheless been found, by the aid of the telescope, some spots or nebula floating on his surface.

We shall not ask your attention to the proofs for the authenticity of the *Old Testament*, for several reasons. First, because, if we make it clear that the books called the *New Testament* are authentic and inspired of God, the *Old Testament*, by a sort of necessary inference, must be allowed the same claim. Second, because the Jews, in all ages, as far back as history goes, have by common consent maintained the genuineness and authenticity of their Scriptures. Philo, an Egyptian Jew, who lived in the first century of the Christian era, ascribed canonical authority to those books, and to none other,

which are contained in the Hebrew Bible, and which alone are acknowledged by the Jews of Palestine. Josephus — who was cotemporary with the apostles, himself a Jewish high priest — says: “We have not thousands of books discordant and contrary to each other, but we have twenty-two, which comprehend the history of all former ages, and are justly regarded as divine. Five of them proceed from Moses. They include as well the laws as an account of the creation of man, extending to the time of his (Moses’) death. The prophets, who succeeded Moses, committed to writing in thirteen books what was done in *their* days. The remaining four books contain hymns to God (Psalms) and instructions of life for man.” Third, because all who know anything of history are acquainted with the fact that, two hundred and eighty years before the Christian era, the Greek version of the Old Testament, usually called “the Septuagint,” was executed at Alexandria,—the books of which are the same as in our Bibles. “Whence,” says an author, “it is evident that we still have those identical books which the most ancient Jews attested to be genuine,—a benefit this which has not happened to any ancient *profane* books whatsoever.”

For these reasons, we shall invite attention principally to the proofs and arguments for the authenticity and inspiration of the *New Testament*.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Here is a book — or rather a collection of books — in our possession, of a cast of character very peculiar, and which, by a glance, we discover claims to be a revelation from God, and just such a one as we need. It professes to have been written by men under a direct, divine impulse, and so far back as eighteen hundred years. A large portion of it is narrative, and is employed in describing the birth, life, doctrines, death and resurrection, of one named Jesus Christ; and maintains throughout the idea that he was the Messiah expected by the Jews, and that his death was an atoning sacrifice for our lost race, whereby the Almighty, upon our repentance and faith in Christ, can and does pardon our sins, and restore us to the divine favor.

This wonderful book lies before us, and the inquiries most natural in regard to it are these: Was this book written at the date which it professes to bear? Were the men who wrote it

truly inspired of God? And has there been no corruption in text as originally inscribed?

ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS.

It is interesting to know that several very old manuscripts have, by an overruling providence, been preserved and transmitted, of the New Testament; which go to prove that its date is authentic, and that it must have been written at or about the time in which it professes to have been written. One of the most important of these is the "Codex Alexandrinus," deposited in the British Museum. Its date, according to the profound investigations of a distinguished biblical critic, Dr. Waide, is fixed between the middle and end of the *fourth century*.

"This celebrated manuscript, which had been revered as a treasure by the Greek church for several ages, was presented to King Charles the First by Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, and was transmitted to England by Sir Thomas Roe, ambassador at the Ottoman Porte, in 1628. The writer of it is said to have been Thecla, an Egyptian lady, early in the fourth century. Her copy is complete as to its contents, though now bearing marks of accidents to which it has

been exposed. Its value is further enhanced by observing that whatever opinions in subsequent ages agitated the Christian world, they have had no influence on this copy. It neither omits nor inserts nor dismembers a word to accommodate a passage to such sentiments. It was not many removes distant from the originals, of which it is a faithful transcript. The language was still spoken; and, whatever ambiguities occurred, they were then easily explained, and properly understood by the copyist; so that one principal cause of literary and verbal errors did not exist." A full account of this interesting manuscript may be found in Calmet's Dictionary.

Several other ancient manuscripts are in existence, some of which are supposed to be older even than the Alexandrian. The total number is about five hundred.

But we are not left to depend on these ancient manuscripts alone for the authenticity of the books composing the New Testament; for, as several able writers have very justly remarked, "There is no ancient treatise concerning which the evidence for its genuineness is so various and accumulated as that in favor of the New Testament. There exists, happily, a regular chain of proof, that the New Testament, as we have it,

was written at the time it professes to have been.

TESTIMONY OF THE ANCIENT FATHERS.

Many of the writings of the early fathers — those who lived near the times of the apostles — have been transmitted to us. If in these we find quotations from all the canonical books of the New Testament, it is clear that these books are the genuine ones, and must date their origin anterior to these writers.

IRENÆUS.

Irenæus, who was Bishop of Lyons about the year 170, bears testimony to the genuineness and authority of the New Testament; and that testimony is the more important and valuable, because he was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John, and had also conversed with many others who had been instructed by the apostles and immediate disciples of Jesus Christ. Some of his works are lost, but his five books against heresies remain. In these there is ample testimony to the authenticity of the books of the New Testament; for he describes their

authors and the occasions on which they were written, and quotes from all except the Epistle to the Hebrews, to Philemon, Third Epistle of John, and the Epistle of Jude.

ORIGEN.

Origen flourished in the third century. He was born in Egypt, Anno Domini 183, and died in the year 253. This learned man wrote a three-fold exposition of all the books of scripture. In that portion of his works which has come down to us, he uniformly bears testimony to the authenticity of the New Testament as we now have it; and he is the first writer who has given us a perfect catalogue of those books which Christians have unanimously considered as the genuine and divinely-inspired writings of the apostles.

CYPRIAN, BISHOP OF CARTHAGE.

In the writings of Cyprian, who flourished a few years after Origen, and suffered martyrdom in the year 258, there are copious quotations from almost all the books of the New Testament. Dr. Lardner, a laborious scholar, and eminent

critic, at an immense expense of labor, has explored the original writings of these fathers, and given, in his celebrated work, such extracts as were necessary to corroborate his positions in favor of the authenticity and genuineness of the New Testament.

Dr. L. observes, "That the quotations from the small volume of the New Testament, by Tertullian, who was born in the year of our Lord 160, are both longer and more numerous than the quotations are from all the works of Cicero, in writers of all characters for several ages."

TERTULLIAN'S TESTIMONY.

"Tertullian has expressly affirmed that, when he wrote, the Christian Scriptures were open to the inspection of all the world, both Christians and heathens, without exception. And it appears, also, that in his time there was a Latin version of a part, if not the whole, of the New Testament; for he appeals from the language of such version to the authentic Greek." "Sci-amus plane non sic esse in Greco authentico."

JUSTIN MARTYR.

“This father sealed with his blood his confession of the truth of the Christian religion. He was one of the most learned fathers of the second century. He was born in Sichem, a city of Samaria, about the year 89. He was converted to Christianity in 133, and suffered martyrdom in 164. He wrote several pieces, of which only two,—his apologies for the Christians — one addressed to the Emperor Titus Antoninus Pius, and the other to Marcus Antoninus and the Senate and people of Rome — and his dialogue with Trypho the Jew,— have been preserved. From this dialogue, it appears that before his conversion Justin had studied carefully the Stoic, Pythagorean and Platonic systems of philosophy, and that he embraced Christianity at last, as the only safe and useful system. The sincerity, learning, and antiquity of Justin, constitute him a witness of the highest importance. He has numerous quotations from, as well as allusions to, all the four gospels, which he uniformly represents as containing the genuine and authentic accounts of Christ and of his doctrine. Further, he represents that the memoirs of the apostles were read and ex-

pounded in the Christian assemblies for public worship. Whence it is evident that the gospels were at that time well known in the world, and not designedly concealed from any one. He bears also the same testimony to most of the epistles.”

PAPIAS.

“Anterior to Justin was Papias, Bishop of Hieropolis, in Asia, in the year 110. He was acquainted with Polycarp, if not with the apostle John himself; and he too bears testimony to the gospels of Mathew and Mark, also the Epistles of Peter and John, and alludes to the Acts and Revelation.

“We are thus carried back to Barnabas, Clement, Hermas, Ignatius and Polycarp; who are styled the Apostolic Fathers.”

APOSTOLIC FATHERS.

“*Barnabas* was the fellow-laborer of Paul. (See Acts xiii., and 1 Cor. ix.) He is the author of an epistle, still extant, which is full of evidence to the existence and genuineness of the New Testament.”

“*Clement*, Bishop of Rome, and also fellow-

laborer of the apostle Paul (see Phil. 4: 3), wrote an epistle in the name of the church of Rome to the church in Corinth, which contains several passages as they are recorded in the gospels. He also cites most of the epistles. He was ordained Bishop of Rome in 91, and died in the third year of Trajan, Anno Domini 100."

"*Hermas* was also cotemporary with Paul, by whom he is mentioned in his epistle to the Romans (16: 14). He wrote a work entitled 'Pastor,' which was greatly esteemed by the fathers, and contains numerous allusions to the New Testament."

"Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was the disciple of St. John. He had conversed with many who had seen Jesus Christ; and he is supposed to be the angel of the church at Smyrna, to whom the epistle in the Revelation is addressed. He wrote much; but one epistle *only* has come down to us, in which there are nearly forty allusions to the different books of the New Testament. He suffered martyrdom in the year 166."

The fact that these fathers quote freely from all those books which we include in the sacred canon proves they were regarded as of divine authority in their time, and greatly strength-

ens our confidence, not only in the antiquity, but the authority, of these books. They speak of them by the terms "scriptures," "sacred scriptures," and the "oracles of the Lord." By these phrases they indicate their reverence for them as inspired documents. These men, too, lived at different places and in different periods. They were men of great learning and acuteness; and they all concur to prove that the books of the New Testament were equally well known in different and distant countries, and were received as authentic by men who had no intercourse with one another.

But, if the testimony of *friends* is objected to, let us look at what *enemies* and pretended friends say on this subject.

TESTIMONY FROM ENEMIES.

"*Cerinthus*, who was cotemporary with the apostle John, maintained the necessity of circumcision, and the observance of the Mosaic law; and because Paul delivered in his epistles a contrary doctrine, Cerinthus and his followers denied that he was an inspired apostle. Paul's epistles, therefore, were extant in the first century, and were acknowledged to be his by the Corinthians.

“Among the heretics who erased and altered passages of scripture, was *Marcion*, who flourished in the beginning of the second century. He was excommunicated by the orthodox Christians, which greatly incensed him; and if he could have proved the Scriptures a forgery, he would have done it; but all he affirmed was, that the gospel of Matthew, the epistle to the Hebrews, with those of Peter and James, as well as the Old Testament in general, were writings not for Christians, but for Jews.” “*His* attack upon the sacred canon,” says an author, “led the Christians to examine and settle it with the greater accuracy.”

These were *pretended* friends of the Scriptures. But we have the testimony of avowed and bitter enemies; and it has been remarked with equal force and justice, by Chrysostom, one of the fathers, “that *Celsus* and *Porphyry*, two enemies of the Christian religion, are powerful witnesses for the antiquity of the New Testament, since they could not have argued against the tenets of the gospel if it had not existed in that early period.”

“*Celsus* flourished towards the close of the second century. He not only mentions by name, but quotes passages from the books of the New

Testament; so that it is certain we have the identical books to which he referred. In no one instance did he question the gospels as books of history; on the contrary, he admitted most of the facts related in them; and this acute adversary professed to draw his arguments from the writings received by its professors as genuine."

"The testimony of Porphyry," says Michaelis, "is more important than that of Celsus. He is universally allowed to be the most sensible as well as severe adversary of the Christian religion that antiquity can produce. His acquaintance with the Christians was not confined to a single country, but he had conversed with them in Tyre, in Sicily, and in Rome. He possessed every advantage which natural abilities or political situation could afford, to discover whether the New Testament was a genuine work of the apostles and evangelists; but never does it appear to have occurred to Porphyry to suppose it spurious. What a triumph would it have given him in argument, if he could have shown that it was not authentic! What a mortal blow would it have enabled him to have struck at the religion which he aimed to destroy! But so far is this from being the case, that Porphyry not only did not deny the truth of the gospel history, but

actually considered the miracles of Christ as real facts.”

“ One hundred years after him, flourished the Emperor Julian (A. D. 331), surnamed the apostate. Though he resorted to the most artful political means of undermining Christianity, he was inferior, as a *writer*, to Porphyry. From various extracts of his works against Christians, it is evident he did not deny the truth of the gospel history, though he denied the deity of Christ, asserted in the evangelists. Referring to the differences between the genealogies of Matthew and Luke, he noticed them by name, and recited the sayings of Christ in the very words of the evangelists. He himself expressly states the early date of these records. He nowhere pretends to doubt it.”

The admissions of the Emperor Julian, though an avowed enemy, are all-important, as settling the fact that the books which we hold to be the Scriptures were so regarded in his day, and far beyond it.

Here we have *Celsus* in the second century, *Porphyry* in the third, and *Julian* in the fourth century, all virulent enemies, yet not one of them expressing even a suspicion against the authenticity of these books; never insinuating

that Christians were mistaken in the authors to whom they ascribe them; "and," says Dr. Paley, "when we consider how much it would have availed them to have cast a doubt upon this point, if they could, and how ready they showed themselves to take every advantage in their power, and that they were all men of learning and inquiry, their concession, or, rather, their suffrage on the subject, is extremely valuable."

To trace properly the stream of testimony in favor of the New Testament back to the very date of its origin, would be a vast work, so many are the materials for this purpose. But what has been given, though a mere sketch, is sufficient, I would hope, to confirm the Christian, if not to convince the sceptic.

COLLATERAL TESTIMONY.

But collateral testimony comes in, all along, to corroborate our position. The controversies of the church, which elicited the writings of Origen, of Cyprian, of Irenæus, of Polycarp, and a host of other subsequent defenders of the truth, were so many occasions made use of by Providence to preserve the chain of evidence to the authenticity of his holy Word.

TACITUS.

Little thought Tacitus, the Roman historian, that his classic pen, which indited so unworthy a paragraph against Christians and their heroic sufferings, was then polishing an arrow to be used in after ages by the defenders of that hated faith! But God can cause "the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He can restrain."

How can we sufficiently admire that overruling Providence, which, in every age, has not only preserved the Scriptures from destruction, but flanked them, as it were, by such a host of invincible testimony! If from the fifth century backwards no trace could have been found of the existence of the New Testament, no allusions to it in cotemporary authors, no attacks from enemies or defences from friends, how certainly should we have been obliged to surrender the ark of our hopes! But the further we travel back in our investigations, the more do the proofs thicken upon us, until we arrive at the consecrated age, and among the original witnesses and actors in the scenes! The whole land of Palestine is a silent but glorious witness for the authenticity of the Bible. The mouldering columns of the

Acropolis at Athens, the scattered fragments of that classic soil, speak not more strongly of the existence of her sculptors and architects, than does every mountain, river and ravine of Canaan, of the presence and pilgrimage of the Son of God!

Men have gone with the Bible in their hand, and it has proved as a guide-book in that far-famed region. As they have identified its localities, they have felt their imaginations glow and their hearts warm with the hallowed associations. Jerusalem is still there; shorn, indeed, of her former splendor, but telling, even in her diminished grandeur, the whole story of the gospel. There is the Mount of Olives, where Jesus wept and prayed, and Tabor, where he was transfigured, and Calvary, where he bowed his head in death.

Go, sceptic, to that scene of wonders, and learn to reverence at least the veracity which has been so faithful even in its allusions to that land!

Here is a book, whose very antiquity should awaken a deep interest. We do not pretend to have culled a hundredth part of the testimony to its age and authenticity; but, so far as I have gone in the investigation, I can say of my own convictions, that I just as much believe that this

book (the New Testament) was written when it professes to have been, and by its reputed authors, as I believe that Milton wrote the "Paradise Lost," and Baxter "The Saint's Everlasting Rest."

COINCIDENCES OF PROFANE AUTHORS WITH THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS.

Before proceeding with the proof that the authors of the New Testament were inspired of God, it may be well to give a few specimens of historical coincidences between the apostles and Jewish and profane authors. If the allusions of both are to the same personages and events, it will render it certain, even to sceptical minds, that the New Testament is an authentic book, at least.

The New Testament informs us that Jesus was born in Judea, in the days of Herod the king. Now, Josephus tells us that "a prince of that name reigned over all Judea for thirty-seven years, even to the reign of Augustus." Josephus describes him as a cruel tyrant, which answers to the description of him in the New Testament.

"Herod," says Josephus, "left three sons,

one of whom, Archelaus, he by his will appointed to reign over Judea. Another, Herod Antipas, was Tetrarch of Galilee; and Philip was Tetrarch of Trachonitis." This is Josephus' testimony. What says Luke? "*Now* in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Herod being Tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip being Tetrarch of the region of Trachonitis," &c.

Josephus affirms that Archelaus reigned as the successor of his father, which coincides with the account of Matthew.

St. Luke relates, in Acts 12: 3, that Herod the king, having killed James the brother of John with the sword, and, because he saw that it pleased the Jews, proceeded to take Peter also; and Josephus represents this Herod as manifesting great zeal for the Jews, which accounts for his persecutions of the disciples. "His death," says one, "is related by Luke and Josephus with so much harmony, that, if Josephus had been a Christian, one would certainly have thought that he intended to write a commentary on that narrative." (Acts 12: 20—23.) Josephus says "that he came into the theatre early in the morning, dressed in a robe made wholly of silver, of most wonderful workmanship; and that the reflection of the rays of the sun

from the silver gave him a majestic and awful appearance." "In a short time," says Josephus, "his flatterers exclaimed, one from one place, and one from another, though not for his good, that he was a god; and they entreated him to be propitious to them, saying, Hitherto we have revered thee as a man, but henceforth we acknowledge that thou art exalted above mortal nature." "Immediately after he was seized with pains in his bowels extremely violent, and, being carried to his palace, he died, worn out with these pains." These narratives are consistent, Luke relating the cause and Josephus the effect of his disorder.

Tacitus and Josephus mention Felix, who was Governor of Judea on the death of Herod; and, what is worthy of note, they refer to his having taken Drusilla, the daughter of Herod, she having abandoned her lawful husband,—Asizus, King of the Emessenes,—to live with him. (See Acts xxiv.)

Luke, in the Acts, mentions Galleo, Proconsul of Achaia, and speaks of him as a temperate and humane man. The same character is recorded of him by the celebrated philosopher Seneca, who was his brother.

When an uproar was made, and Paul was

brought before the civil tribunal, the Roman magistrate asked him, "Art thou not that Egyptian which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men who were murderers?"

Now, here is an historical fact of some importance. What says Josephus in relation to it? He has recorded at length this very incident; and there is a remarkable coincidence between his account and that of St. Luke; for he mentions not the name of this insurrectionist, but calls him the Egyptian, and says that "Felix marched into the wilderness against him, and that he escaped with but a small part of his army."

Paul represents the Athenians as very superstitious (see Acts xvii). All antiquity bears the same testimony. "They crowded into their capital all the divinities of the known world. So encumbered were their streets with them, that it was said that it was easier in Athens to find a god than a man."

The account which Luke gives of the Athenians is, that "they spent their time in nothing else but to tell and hear some new thing" (Acts 17: 21); and Demosthenes, their great orator, holds the following remarkable language:

While *we* —for the truth must not be concealed —are confined within our walls in perfect inactivity, delaying and voting, and *inquiring in the public places whether there is any new thing.*”

Paul quotes from the poet Epimenedes a line in which the Cretans are represented as proverbial liars (see Titus 1 : 10, 11). And history informs us “that from the time of Homer the island of Crete was regarded as the scene of fiction,—that the inhabitants were infamous for the violation of the truth; and, at length, their falsehood became so notorious, that to Cretize, or imitate the Cretans, was a proverbial expression among the ancients for *lying.*”

JOSEPHUS' TESTIMONY AS TO OUR LORD.

As the history of Josephus embraces the period within which our Lord is said to have lived and died, it is natural to expect in his writings some allusion to these events.

In the eighteenth book of his *Antiquities* there occurs the following remarkable passage. After relating a sedition of the Jews against Pontius Pilate, which the latter had quelled, he says, “Now, there was, about this time, Jesus, a wise

man, if it be lawful to call him a man — for he performed many wonderful works. He was a teacher of such men as would receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many of the Jews, and also many of the Gentiles. This was the Christ (or Christ was this one); and when Pilate, at the instigation of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him from the first did not cease to adhere to him; for he appeared to them alive again on the third day; the divine prophet having foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him, and the tribe or sect of Christians, so named from him, subsists to this time.”

This passage carries such irresistible force with it, that the only resort of the enemies of the Christian faith has been to pronounce it spurious. But look at the evidence of its genuineness.

First, It is found in all the copies of Josephus' works, whether printed or in manuscript; and also in a Hebrew translation preserved in the Vatican library.

Second, It is cited by Eusebius, Jerome, and others; all of whom had indisputably seen manuscripts of considerable antiquity.

Third, It is not probable that Josephus, who has discussed the events of those times, should have passed over one so important, whilst Tacitus and Suetonius, Roman historians, have distinctly taken notice of him.

THE ACTS OF PILATE.

The ancient Romans were very careful to preserve the memory of remarkable events, which were called "Acta Senatus," and were preserved at Rome. It seems, also, that the rulers of provinces did the same. Accordingly, Pilate kept memoirs of the Jewish affairs during his procuratorship, which were called "Acta Pilati."

Eusebius the historian says that "Pilate, in these acts, sent to the emperor an account of the miracles, death and resurrection, of Christ; and observed that he was already believed by many to be a god."

Now, long before Eusebius, the primitive Christians appealed, in their disputes, to these very acts of Pilate, as a most undoubted testimony.

Justin Martyr, in his first apology for Christians, presented to the emperor in the year 140,

having mentioned the crucifixion of Christ, and some of its attendant circumstances, adds, "And that these things were so done you may know from the 'acts' made in the time of Pontius Pilate."

The learned Tertullian, in his apology for Christianity (A. D. 200), makes the same appeal to the "acta Pilati;" and how would these writers have ventured to make these appeals, especially to the very persons in whose custody these records were, had they not been fully satisfied of their existence and contents?

THE LATIN HISTORIANS.

Suetonius, a Roman historian, who flourished in the reign of the Emperor Trajan, A. D. 116, refers to Christ, by saying that "Claudius Cæsar expelled the Jews from Rome, because they raised continual tumults at the instigation of Christ." (See Acts 18: 20, A. D. 52.)

Tacitus,—to whom some reference has already been made,—writing the history of Nero, and speaking of the Christians (A. D. 64), says, "The author of that sect was *Christus*, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was punished with

death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate.”

Now, Tacitus was cotemporary with the apostles, and bears this testimony to the first persecution of the Christians by Nero. He affirms, respecting the great fire at Rome, by which a vast portion of the city was destroyed, “That Nero charged the crime of setting it on fire to the Christians; and, in order to give a more plausible color to the calumny, he put great numbers of them to death, in the most cruel manner.” And he adds, “But this pestilent superstition, though checked for a while, broke out afresh, not only in *Judea*, where the evil first originated, but even in the city of Rome.”

Says a writer on the evidences of Christianity: “The above-cited testimony of Tacitus, corroborated as it is by contemporary writers, is a very important confirmation of evangelical history. In it the historian attests: *first*, that Jesus Christ was put to death as a malefactor, by Pontius Pilate, procurator under Tiberius; *second*, that from *Christ* the people called Christians derived their name and sentiments; *third*, that this religion had its rise in *Judea*, where it also spread, notwithstanding the ignominious death of its founder; *fourth*, that it

was propagated from Judea into other parts of the world as far as Rome ; and that the professors of this religion, in the reign of Nero, were reproached and hated, and underwent many and grievous sufferings.”

On this passage of Tacitus, Gibbon, though an enemy of Christianity, has the following remark : “The most sceptical criticism,” says he, “is obliged to respect the truth of this extraordinary fact, and the integrity of this celebrated passage of Tacitus. Its truth is confirmed by the diligent and accurate Suetonius ; its integrity may be proved by the consent of most ancient manuscripts ; by the inimitable character of Tacitus ; by his reputation, which guarded his text from the interpolations of pious fraud, and by the purport of his narration.”

Such is the observation of the learned historian, whose hatred of Christianity has led him so often to misrepresent the Christians.

PLINY'S TESTIMONY.

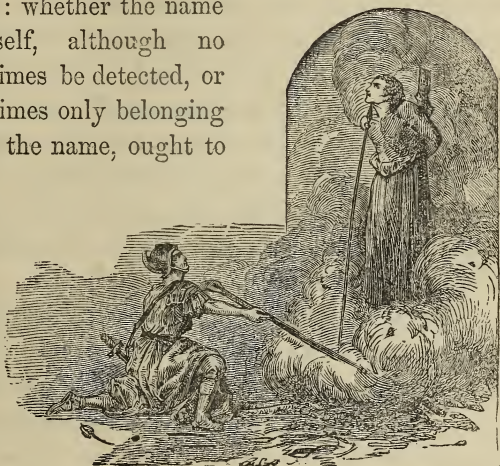
We come now to a very important witness, commonly known by the name of the younger Pliny. He was born A. D. 62, and was sent to the provinces of Pontus and Bithynia by the

Emperor Trajan, A. D. 106, with proconsular power. The persecutions of the Christians, under Trajan, had commenced A. D. 100, and in the country to which Pliny was sent there were prodigious numbers of Christians, against whom, by the emperor's edict, Pliny was obliged to use all manner of severity. Being, however, a person of good sense and moderation, he was not for proceeding to the extreme rigor of the law, until he had represented the case to Trajan, and received his commands concerning it. He therefore wrote him as follows, and received in the same year Trajan's answer :

The Letter of Pliny.

“Health and happiness to Trajan. It is my constant custom, sir, to refer myself to you in all matters concerning which I have any doubt. I have never been present at any trials of Christians, so that I know not well what is the subject-matter of punishment or of inquiry, or what strictness ought to be used in either. Nor have I been a little perplexed to determine whether any difference ought to be made upon account of age; or whether the young and tender and the full-grown and robust ought to

be treated all alike : whether repentance should entitle to pardon ; or whether all who have once been Christians ought to be punished, though they are no longer so : whether the name itself, although no crimes be detected, or crimes only belonging to the name, ought to



be punished. Concerning all these things I am in doubt." Pliny then goes on, in the letter, to state the course he had pursued, which was as lenient as might be expected from a heathen.

But he goes on to say : " In a short time, the crime spreading itself, — even whilst under persecution, — as is usual in such cases, divers sorts of people came in my way. An information was

presented to me, without mentioning the author, containing the names of many persons, who, upon examination, denied that they were Christians, or ever had been so; who repeated after me an invocation of the gods, and with wine and frankincense made supplication to your image,—which for that purpose I had caused to be brought and set before them, together with the statues of the deities. Moreover they reviled the name of Christ; none of which things, as is said, they who are really Christians can by any means be compelled to do. These, therefore, I thought proper to discharge.

“They (the informers) affirmed that the whole of their fault (that is, Christians’ fault) lay in this, that they were wont to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and sing among themselves, alternately, *a hymn to Christ as God*, and bind themselves by an oath not to commit any wickedness; not to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them when called upon to return it. When these things were performed, it was their custom to separate, and then to come together again to a meal, which they ate in common, without any disorder; but this they had forborne since the

publication of my edict, by which, according to your commands, I prohibited assemblies.

“After receiving this account, I judged it the more necessary to examine, and that by torture, two maid-servants, which were called ministers. But I have discovered nothing beside an evil and excessive superstition.

“Suspending, therefore, all judicial proceedings, I have recourse to your advice; for it has appeared unto me a matter highly deserving consideration, especially on account of the great numbers of persons who are in danger of suffering,—for many of all ages and every rank, of both sexes likewise, are accused, and will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country.”

Trajan's Reply.

“Trajan to Pliny wisheth health and happiness.

“You have taken the right method, my Pliny, in your proceedings with those who have been brought before you as Christians; for it is impossible to establish any one rule that shall hold universally. They are not to be sought for. If any are brought before you and are convicted,

they ought to be punished. However, he that denies his being a Christian, and makes it evident in fact,—that is, by supplicating to our gods,—though he be suspected to have been so formerly, let him be pardoned, upon repentance. But in no case of any crime whatever may a bill of information be received, without being signed by him who presents it; for that would be a dangerous precedent, and unworthy of my government.”

Here is a very valuable testimony from heathen princes and persecutors, which Providence has transmitted, and which shows, first, that in seventy or eighty years Christians had overspread a large part of the Roman empire; that among them were persons of all ages, rank and condition, and of both sexes, and that some of them were citizens of Rome.

Second, Pliny's letter is a noble testimony to the fortitude of the Christian martyrs; their contempt of life when their principles were in question; and it makes known some very important features of their belief and worship;—as, for instance, that they disowned the gods of the heathen, and could not be compelled to worship them; that they assembled together on a stated

day, which we know, from other sources, to be the Lord's day; that when they were assembled they worshipped Christ as God, and pledged themselves by an oath against all immorality.

This account of a heathen prince, written in the year 109, is highly to the credit of Christians, as well as corroborative of the whole New Testament history. Who can read it without being convinced that the thousands who, for Christ's sake, laid down their lives, were fully persuaded of the truth of the gospel history?

We have thus ascertained, from numerous witnesses, by direct and *indirect* testimony, the truth of the gospel narrative. These witnesses are of undoubted veracity, including princes and philosophers who lived and wrote previous to the fourth century, and some of whom lived at the very time of the apostles. Many of these witnesses wrote for the very purpose of overthrowing Christianity. They were its bitter and inveterate enemies, and their testimony is therefore above all suspicion.

And, now, what do they all unite in affirming? Why, from Tacitus and Josephus downwards, without a contradicting voice, that the Christian religion took its rise in Judea, in the reign of Tiberius; that Christ was its founder; that he

was a holy and wise person; that he was put to death by the Procurator Pontius Pilate; that, according to Josephus, he appeared alive on the third day; that Christians multiplied so rapidly that in Trajan's time (A. D. 109) they had overspread Asia Minor; that nothing could be alleged against them but their religion; and that they worshipped Christ as God and practised all the moral virtues,—that thousands of them laid down their lives, rather than abjure their religion.

What overwhelming evidence is here to the truth and genuineness of the New Testament! If Cæsar's commentaries were subjected to as severe a scrutiny from cotemporary authors and events, would they stand the test, as to all their facts and allusions, better than this book? How wonderful that so much collateral testimony should exist in favor of the Bible, that it is a veritable history, was written by its reputed authors, and at the date which it claims!

It challenges investigation as to its fidelity in all the facts — chronological, political and historical — to which it alludes; and hence many opponents, finding that, in these respects, there was no place to put their lever, nor any spot to aim their arrows at, have lifted their battering-

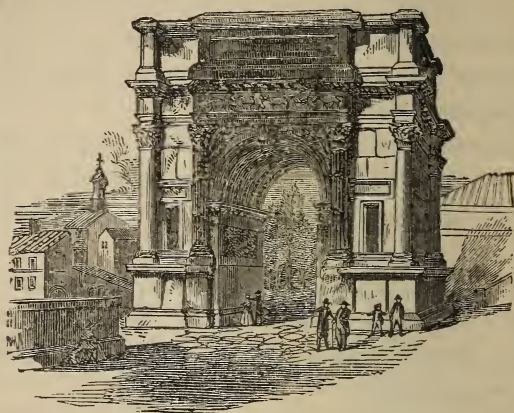
ram against the very citadel itself. But we shall by and by attempt to show how strong that citadel is; and that, having stood repeated shocks from the time of Celsus until now, it is likely to hold out until the final and universal triumphs of the Redeemer.

The enemies of Christianity have found, and are still finding, that the more they hunt for proofs *against* the Bible, the more do the proofs in its favor thicken upon them.

West, who wrote so ably on the resurrection, began his inquiries as an infidel, with a view of disproving it. He came out a strong believer in the resurrection.

The infidel thought he could disprove the Bible by geological facts; when lo! Baron Cuvier — the greatest naturalist, perhaps, in this century — comes out with a chain of geological facts corroborative of the Bible.

The historian Gibbon, in writing the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, thinks he can weaken the historical argument for Christianity; but Tacitus, whom he so much reverences, meets him with a clear statement of facts in proof of the existence and general features of Christianity in the time of Nero, and even asserts when and where and by whom this religion originated.



The antiquarian finds upon Roman coins a proof of the Christian religion; and the traveller sees it in the sculptured trophies in bas-relief upon the half-decayed triumphal arches of that empire. How overwhelming the evidence! Enough to scatter every doubt,—if, alas! the heart was not proof against conviction. If it did not *wish* to disbelieve, it *could* not.

CHAPTER V.

MIRACLES PROOF OF INSPIRATION.

Conversation with the Sceptic renewed — Miracles among the strongest proofs of inspiration — A miracle ; what is it ? — Moral character of the witnesses and workers of miracles — Human testimony ; how much force should it have ? — Hume's objections to miracles considered — Dr. Campbell's reply — Dr. Dwight on Hume's reasoning — Recapitulation — Were miracles asserted and believed to have been wrought ? — Quadratus vindicates the New Testament miracles — Admissions by the enemies of Christianity : Celsus, Porphyry, Heroles and Julian — Examples : the man born blind, and the cripple at the gate of the Temple — Proofs that the apostles were neither impostors nor imposed upon.

Sceptic. “WELL, now you are coming to the point. Even if I admit that the New Testament is an authentic book, am I bound to believe all that it contains? How can I believe in miracles? If I were sure that a miracle or miracles were wrought by Christ and his apostles, I would give up all my infidelity at once ;

for I hold that a miracle would indeed be proof not only of sincerity, but of divine inspiration.”

Well, let us candidly address ourselves to the investigation, and see how much proof there is that miracles were wrought. Perhaps, as you have been surprised to learn how much can be adduced as to the authenticity of the book, you may be equally surprised, and I hope convinced, when you see what can be presented on the subject of miracles. I thank you for your candor in admitting that, if a miracle or miracles can be proved, you will henceforth give up your scepticism, and embrace the truths of the Bible.

Several important points have been settled, which have a direct bearing on what is to follow; namely, that the books of the New Testament are the genuine production of the writers whose names they bear, and that they were written at the time and under the circumstances set forth therein. We have also seen, from cotemporary writers, both Jewish and pagan, an endorsement of the general facts of the gospel history.

Now, if the New Testament recorded nothing supernatural or mysterious, it would be considered a work authenticated by more abundant proof than any other ancient document in exist-

ence. If it was a matter of mere history, all, even infidels, would unite in appreciating it as above all price; nor would they entertain a doubt of its entire veracity.

Well, this is a great point attained; for we are thus prepared to examine whether, since all that relates to the chronology, geography and history, is so correct, the statements, also, which relate to the divine character and mission of Jesus, and to his death and resurrection, are not equally worthy of our confidence? Their strict veracity in all that relates to the times and characters of that day is presumptive proof that these writers spoke with equal truth in all else which they have affirmed.

If you were to take up a book of travels, and find that your author manifested a scrupulous regard to truth, even in the allusions which he made to unimportant circumstances, and if all that he said coincided with the observations of other good men who had at the same time traversed the same region, you would be very likely to credit him, even if he were to relate some things very extraordinary and wonderful.

On what grounds, we ask, are the writers of the New Testament to be discredited in their testimony to the miracles and wonders which

they record, whilst, in all that relates to the historical and political affairs of Judea and the neighboring countries, they are allowed to speak the entire truth? As it respects these miracles, the passage from Josephus confirms the account given by the evangelists. Celsus, the enemy of Christianity, also admitted the existence of these miracles. Other cotemporary writers, who lived not in Judea, could give their testimony, of course, only to the historical statements and allusions; and we may argue fairly, from the admitted veracity of the New Testament writers on all these points, that they must have spoken the truth in all respects.

The apostles assert that they spake by the inspiration of God. Now, they must give us the evidence of their being thus inspired. What would most effectually convince us? Nothing, I apprehend, short of a power or instrumentality to do what no *mere* man could do,—that is, work miracles. If, in the open day and in the sight of thousands, miracles are wrought, this fact, connected with uprightness of character and pure moral instruction, is all that could be desired to produce a conviction that God spake through them.

There is no way, as we conceive, in which

God could more impressively and satisfactorily sanction the divine commission of his servants, than by endowing them with the power to work miracles. This would produce the highest possible confidence. It would be far more satisfactory than if God were to speak in an audible voice, and say that such and such individuals were inspired to declare his will.

We affirm, then, that miracles are among the strongest possible proofs in favor of a divine commission.

A MIRACLE: WHAT IS IT ?

The following definition of a miracle is from a distinguished author, and is perhaps as clear as any which can be framed :

“ A miracle is an effect or event contrary to the established constitution or course of things ; or a sensible suspension or controlment of, or deviation from, the known laws of nature, wrought either by the immediate act, or by the assistance, or by the permission of God, and accompanied with a previous notice or declaration that it is performed according to the purpose and by the power of God, for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of

the authority or divine mission of some particular person.”

There are here two distinct points: first, a suspension or deviation from the known and established order of nature. For instance, the production of grain by vegetation is according to a law of nature. Were it to fall like rain from the clouds, *that* would be a miracle. Or, it is according to nature — so far as our observation has gone — that the dead return not to life. Were a dead person to become alive, that would be miraculous.

Second, it is essential to a miracle that it be accompanied with a previous declaration that it is performed according to the purpose and power of God, for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the authority or divine mission of some particular person.

This intimation, says an author, is necessary, that it may not seem to happen in the ordinary course of things; and it must be beyond the reach of human calculation and power, that it may neither appear to be the effect of foresight or science, as an eclipse, nor the contrivance of human ingenuity and expertness, as the feats of jugglers.

It has been truly remarked that there is no

force in the objection to miracles founded on their supposed incomprehensibleness; for, according to this rule, we should not credit any fact in nature. We put the seed into the ground, and it comes up a beautiful flower. But this exceeds our comprehension. This, being of common occurrence, has ceased to excite our wonder. It is, then, rather because a miracle is uncommon, than because it is incomprehensible, that the objection is advanced. Both the growth of the flower and the production of the miracle are to be referred to divine power, and both are equally incomprehensible. But the one is a common occurrence, according to a fixed constitution of nature; whilst the other is uncommon, and is wrought in contravention of this usual course of things.

It may be supposed, then, that a miracle will not be wrought on any trifling occasion, but only where the importance of the object would seem to call for and justify this deviation from the regular course of nature. Such an occasion, it must be admitted, is the all-important one of setting the seal of divine approbation to His revealed will.

MORAL CHARACTER OF THE WITNESSES AND
WORKERS OF MIRACLES.

When an individual or individuals come before the world with the claim of inspiration, we naturally expect that their characters will be upright, their doctrine worthy of God, and their divine commission attested by miracles. Under these circumstances, it will be impossible to deny their claim.

If a *bad* man were to profess to work a miracle, we should have a suspicion at once of some deception. If a man were to utter some absurd tenets unworthy of the Divine Being, and injurious in their moral tendency, this also would prejudice us against his testimony. We might be sure, in these cases, that the Almighty would not approve or sanction by miracle the testimony of either. God's testimony would be given only to good men, and in favor of doctrines worthy of Himself and beneficial to man.

Now, in the New Testament we have the two important qualifications, namely, *the integrity of the witnesses, and the purity of their doctrines and precepts.*

HUMAN TESTIMONY: HOW-MUCH FORCE SHOULD
IT HAVE ?

The ground on which we receive much of our knowledge, scientific and historical, is human testimony; and the certainty of this knowledge is affected solely by the character and number of the witnesses.

We believe, for instance, that there is such a city as Rome, and that it is of very great antiquity; that such men once lived as Alexander the Great and Julius Cæsar; that they were great generals, and achieved numerous victories. Not a doubt is entertained on these subjects; nor is any additional testimony needed to make these things more certain.

But, suppose we apply the same rule of belief to the facts recorded in the New Testament. In all that respects the historical allusions, and the character and customs of the people, the evangelists are received as true and faithful historians; but, when they record the existence of miracles, their testimony is by some set aside; and because miracles, as they affirm, being contrary to experience, no testimony is sufficient to prove their existence.

This ground was first taken by the infidel

Hume, and has been readily adopted by succeeding deists.

HUME'S OBJECTION TO MIRACLES CONSIDERED.

DR. CAMPBELL'S REPLY.

In reply to Hume's objection, I cannot do better than to give a quotation from the celebrated Dr. Campbell's dissertation on miracles.

“The evidence,” says Dr. C., “arising from human testimony, is not solely derived from experience; on the contrary, testimony has a natural influence on belief antecedent to experience. The early and unlimited assent given to testimony by children gradually contracts as they advance in life. It is therefore more consonant with truth to say that our *diffidence* in testimony is the result of our experience, than that our faith in it has this foundation. Besides, the uniformity of experience in favor of any fact is not proof against its being reversed in a particular instance. The evidence arising from the single testimony of a man of known veracity will go further to establish a belief of its being actually reversed. If *his* testimony be confirmed by a few others of the same character for integrity, we cannot withhold our assent to the truth of it.

“Now, though the operations of nature are governed by uniform laws, and though we have not the testimony of our senses in favor of any violation of them, still, if, in particular instances, we have the testimony of thousands of our fellow-creatures — and those, too, men of strict integrity, swayed by no motives of ambition or of interest, and governed by the principles of common sense — that they were actually witnesses of these miracles, the constitution of our nature obliges us to believe them.”

Dr. Dwight, also, has some striking remarks, tending to refute Mr. Hume's position. Mr. Hume asserts that the evidence that anything exists in any given case is exactly proportioned to the number of instances in which it is known to have happened before; and he hence infers that our experience has, in the number of instances, furnished such a vast preponderance of evidence against the existence of a miracle, that if we were even to witness it, we could not rationally believe it to have existed, until it had taken place as many times, and some more, than what he calls the contrary event.

“This reasoning,” says Dr. Dwight, “has a grave and specious appearance, but is plainly destitute of all solidity. Every man knows, by

his own experience, that the repetition of an event contributes nothing to the proof or certainty of its existence. The proof of any event lies wholly in the testimony of our senses. When the event is, as we customarily say, repeated,—that is, when another similar event takes place,—our senses in the same manner prove to us the existence of *this* event. But the evidence they give us of the *second* has no retrospective influence on the *first*, as the evidence given of the *first* has no influence on the *second*. In each instance, the evidence is complete, nor can it be affected by anything which may precede or succeed it. What is once seen and known is as perfectly seen and known as it can be, and in the only manner in which it can ever be seen and known.

“If we were to see a man raised from the grave, we should know that he was thus raised as perfectly as it could be known to us; nor would it make the least difference, in the evidence or certainty of this fact, whether thousands or none were raised afterwards.

“No tribunal of justice ever asked the question whether a crime had been twice committed, in order to determine with the more certainty and better evidence that it had been committed

once. No individual ever thought of recurring to the testimony of his senses on a former occasion to strengthen their evidence on a present occasion.

“The man born blind (to apply this scheme directly to miracles) could not possibly feel the necessity or advantage of inquiring whether he had been restored to sight before, in order to determine that he had received it from the hands of Christ, or of asking the question whether he saw at any time *before*, to prove that he saw *now*.

“What is true of this is equally true of all similar cases. Experience, therefore, *is* capable of completely proving the existence of a miracle.

“Should twelve men,” says this author, “known and proved to possess the uniform character of unimpeachable veracity, declare to one of us independently (no one of them being acquainted with the fact that any other had made the same declaration) that they had seen, in the midst of a public *assembly*, a leper cleansed, and the white, loathsome crust of the leprosy fall off, and the bloom and vigor of health return, at the command of a person publicly believed to have wrought hundreds of such miracles, and to

be distinguished from all men by unexampled wisdom and holiness, every one of us would believe the testimony to be true. *Especially* should we receive this testimony, if we saw these very men endued with new and wonderful wisdom and holiness, professedly derived from the same person, forsaking a religion for which they had felt a bigoted attachment, embracing and teaching a religion wholly new; and, in confirmation of this new religion, professedly taught by God himself, working many miracles, forsaking all earthly enjoyments, voluntarily undergoing all earthly distresses, and finally yielding their lives to a violent death. A miracle, therefore, can be proved by testimony."

These remarks impliedly meet and refute another objection of Mr. Hume, namely, "that there is a daily diminution of credibility in proportion to the distance from the date of the event;" that is, as time rolls on, the truth of these miracles will become less and less, until the foundation of Christianity, like that of a building, is weakened and wears out by age.

But it so happens, in this case, that the longer Christianity exists, the more proofs of its divinity are found; and, so far from being less credible,

every age augments its hold on the minds of men.

How weak must be a cause which is obliged to have recourse to such sophistry! As if a fact, once settled as true by the united testimony of credible witnesses, could cease to *be* a fact merely by the lapse of time!

Who complains of the decay of evidence in relation to the acts of Alexander, Hannibal, Pompey or Cæsar? An historical fact, once settled by authentic testimony, is never a subject of doubt afterwards. And if it appears that the witnesses of the New Testament facts were competent and honest men, we are bound to believe their testimony, even when they assert the existence of miracles.

RECAPITULATION.

It may now be proper to glance back and recall some of the points which have been established and elucidated; as, for instance, the necessity and probability of a divine revelation, on the ground that, if man has an accountable soul, it is not probable that a benevolent Creator would provide so generously for the *body*, and make no provision for the soul. *Next*, the authenticity

and credibility of the New Testament, authenticated, as to its date and its authors, by even its bitterest enemies, who concede all the principal facts; then the power of human testimony when given under such circumstances as those in which the apostles were placed, proving the existence of miracles.

Thus are we prepared to examine some of these miracles, and see by the circumstances what claim they have on our belief.

WERE MIRACLES ASSERTED AND BELIEVED TO
HAVE BEEN WROUGHT?

That miracles were extensively believed to have been wrought, cannot, by the most incredulous infidel who is acquainted with history, be denied; for thousands and hundreds of thousands gave their testimony, many of whom adhered to it amid the fires of martyrdom.

Quadratus, one of the most ancient writers after the days of the apostles, who wrote his apology for the persecuted Christians about A. D. 124, says, "That there were persons living even in his time, upon whom miracles had been wrought." "And it is by no means improbable," says a writer, "that some of those

who were cured of their infirmities by Jesus Christ were preserved by Providence to extreme old age, to be living witnesses of his power and goodness.”

But what is remarkable is the fact that those who wrote against Christianity at this early date did not think of denying preternatural works to have been wrought by the Saviour and his apostles; for, while the facts were too recent to be disputed, Celsus, Porphyry, Herocles, Julian, and other equally bitter adversaries, admitted their reality, but ascribed them to magic, and denied the divine commission of him who performed them. But this supposition (that is, referring them to the power of magic) was wholly gratuitous, since the writers alluded to could not possibly have had any proof that Jesus wrought miracles by the power of magic.

It only remains for us, then, to take up the testimony, and examine it, of those who believed the miracles, and see how much weight it ought to have upon our convictions.

When a civil tribunal is sifting evidence, in order to ascertain the truth or falsity of an alleged fact or series of facts, there are some considerations indispensable and always attended to.

If the alleged fact or facts were said to have occurred in a particular neighborhood and at some distant previous date, it would be of prime importance to inquire if such facts were believed at the time, and have been regularly transmitted as matter of history. This would be presumptive proof that, however strange or unaccountable the facts were, they really did take place.

Another point indispensable to be attended to is *the character of the witnesses*. This is always a point that must be settled, before it can be known what weight to attach to the testimony.

Now, the former point we have shown is clearly settled. We have the original account of the miracles, with all the minute statements as to time, place and circumstances. These accounts are admitted by those who wrote for and against Christianity; and at a period so early that, if they had been spurious, they must immediately have been detected.

Upon the testimony of their own senses, these witnesses — the apostles and first Christians — have actually declared the existence of miracles wrought eighteen hundred years ago, by the Saviour and his apostles, in the province of Ju-

dea, under the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, and in the reign of Claudius Cæsar.

If these witnesses told the truth, then the point is settled by this department of proof, namely, *miracles*, that Christianity is of divine origin.

There are but *three* suppositions, in regard to their testimony, which can be made; namely, either they were imposed on by false appearances, or they were wilful deceivers, or they were actual witnesses of these miracles.

Were they *imposed upon by false appearances*? This would be consistent with their integrity. But how could this be? The circumstances are *against* it. We should remember that the possibility of deception decreases with the number of witnesses. Now, if without concert or mutual understanding a great number of upright men testify to the same fact, there seems to be no possibility of imposition, even though the fact may be very unnatural or extraordinary. But the publicity of those miracles to which their testimony is borne is such as to preclude the possibility of deception.

When Mahomet wrought his *pretended* miracles, he shut himself up in a cave, and gave his followers only his own naked testimony, or that

of a few friends, who were in the secret; but did not select circumstances like those which called forth the miracles of Christ and his apostles. These were wrought in the open day, along the highways, and in view of thousands.

THE MAN BORN BLIND.

Take, for example, the man that was born blind,—a case that seems to have excited great interest in the Scribes and Pharisees. This man was well known, because, being a beggar, he had been for years seen at a particular and most public spot, presenting his sightless eyeballs in order to move the pity and call forth the charity of those who entered into the Temple.

Is not this a fit subject to test the power of miracles? The defect in him is natural; he has never seen. He is a beggar, always found in one place, well known at the most public thoroughfare in Jerusalem. Every one who passes sees his ghastly eyeballs, and his outstretched hand. His appearance makes an indelible impression. But, all at once, this man is seen with his sight restored,—or rather, as we should say in this case, *imparted*. So astonished are the people, that some said, “Is not

this he that sat and begged?" And others said, "He is *like* him; but *he* said, I *am* he."

All wish to know how and by whom his eyes



were opened. So he gives them the simple story, that a man named Jesus did so and so, and his eyes were opened.

The news flew over the city, and reached the ears of the rulers, who, finding what had been

done, and by whom, came together to ascertain how it was, and, if possible, to weaken the moral force on the public mind which it was calculated to produce.

They look at the restored beggar, and, sure enough, it is the very same who sat and begged at the Temple-gate. Everybody knows him, and the case is beyond all artifice and misconception. Still, in hope of finding something against the miracle, they commence catechizing the man. He tells them the same simple story, — that “he was blind, and that Jesus, by a touch, healed him.” They try the power of rebuke and intimidation, declaring that it cannot be so, — “that no man can do this thing;” “give God the praise,” say they. But the man is unmoved, and reasserts, with stronger emphasis, that he *was* born blind; that he never saw till now, and that Jesus opened his eyes.

One more effort to weaken the force of this miracle must be made, or all Jerusalem will go after Jesus. So they call the parents, and, putting on all the authority which those stern, vindictive Pharisees knew how to assume, commanded the parents to tell them if it be so as their son has asserted. But, though trembling under apprehensions of being cast out of the

synagogue, they are obliged to admit that this is their son, and that he was born blind; but how and by whom he now saw they could not tell,—or, perhaps, we might in their behalf say, they *dared* not tell.

Again they appeal to the son, and command him to abjure his benefactor — to deny the fact that his own joyous vision told him was true; but, even on pain of excommunication, he will not deny the miracle; and so they cast him out.

Saint John relates this miracle, and all the circumstances, in the ninth chapter of his gospel; and this very Saint John was the teacher and friend of Polycarp, who suffered martyrdom in the year 106; one of whose epistles has come down to us, in which there are forty allusions to the different books of the New Testament. Ignatius also, who suffered martyrdom in A. D. 116, has quoted from this very book, affirming the miracle in question.

We cite this, out of the many miracles, in order to show that there was no room for false impressions. For, suppose a man with sightless eyeballs — born blind — were to occupy, for a series of years, every day, the steps of some

public edifice, asking charity of all the passers-by; and, suppose that, all at once, he should be found entering that edifice, seeing as plainly as others saw, and declaring that a certain person had opened his eyes,—we could neither doubt the fact nor deny the miracle.

But, suppose, in addition to the man's testimony, a hundred men of integrity should come forward and say, "Yes, it is true, and we saw it done only by a touch,"—what room would there be left for doubt? Now, this was the case with the beggar in question, only that in *his* case, as all Jerusalem went periodically to the Temple, there were a thousand witnesses there where there could be one here.

A singular instance took place in the sudden cure of a confirmed cripple, who was laid at the gate of the temple called "Beautiful." This miracle was wrought by Peter and John, in the name and by the power of the Lord Jesus. So wonderful an event drew together a great multitude, all of whom knew the subject on whom the miracle had been wrought. He was the well-known mendicant whose pitiable condition had so often appealed to their sympathies. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

This event opened the eyes of thousands as to the truth of Christianity; and there was a great defection from the Jewish religion, multitudes joining themselves to the Christians. Alarmed at this, the rulers of the Jews cited the apostles to appear before them, and undergo an investigation as to this miracle. They went, and were careful to take the healed man along with them. When interrogated, Peter assures them that the man was healed by no power of his own (does this look like imposture?); but that he was healed by the power of God, through faith in a risen Saviour. "And, beholding the man that was healed *standing* with them, they could say nothing against it." This man they had seen a thousand times lying at the temple-gate — a poor, helpless cripple; now he is standing with the men who had, in Christ's name, healed him. What is the result of the investigation? "Commanding them to go aside from the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do unto these men? for that, indeed, a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell at Jerusalem, *and we cannot deny it*;" so all they did or *could* do, in the case, was to threaten the apostles, and command them not to speak any more in the name of Jesus.

“All Jerusalem,” by the confession of these rulers, knew of this miracle. Luke has stated this so near to the time of its occurrence, that, if no such cripple had been healed, all Jerusalem would have hurled back the falsehood on his head, and on the cause which it was his aim to establish.

Now, we ask if in these two notable miracles there was any possibility of mistake or false impression. Both of these men were public beggars, occupying the most public place, so that all could see and know them. We naturally find our attention strongly arrested by such specimens of human suffering. How impossible, therefore, that there could be any deception or mistake in these cases !

The supposition, therefore, that the first Christians might have been deceived by false appearances, must, in view of these very remarkable cases, be given up.

It is not necessary to multiply examples ; or we might speak of the raising of Lazarus,—a character well known, much respected and beloved, lying in the grave *four* days,—and then, in view, not merely of the disciples, but of the Jews, called back to life. In such an event, there is no room for false impressions. But

many, if not most of the miracles wrought by Christ and his apostles, were wrought in public, under such circumstances as to impress the mind with the power of God.

THE SECOND SUPPOSITION.

The second supposition, that Christ and his apostles were deceivers, finds no footing, if we have proved that they who saw the miracles, and have transmitted their testimony, could not themselves have been deceived by false appearances.

It seems that we have a very simple and natural history of Jesus Christ, in which, among other things, the evangelists affirm that he wrought miracles to prove his divine mission. Now, we find that, somehow or other, this remarkable person succeeded in making hundreds, and even thousands, believe in his religion. This belief was founded on his doctrines as authenticated by miracles. Where is the proof that he deceived them? Had he been a deceiver, he would certainly have taken a very different course from the one which he did adopt, as well as exhibited a very different doctrine and deportment.

The Jews expected their Messiah to come in regal pomp, and with overwhelming displays of temporal power. Had Jesus aimed to deceive the people, and pass for that which he was not, he would have arranged his advent in view of these impressions, and put on the robes of earthly state and dignity. He would not have been known as one born in a stable, nor have dwelt for thirty years in an obscure village. But he took a course directly opposite to the expectations of his countrymen, and proclaimed himself the Messiah by the purity of his doctrine, and the wonderful miracles which he wrought.

The impostor seeks, ordinarily, either wealth or grandeur. But look at Jesus, and see how his whole course proclaims the very opposite motives! As to wealth, he "had not where to lay his head;" and as to notoriety or fame, it was such as crowned him with thorns and nailed him to the cross.

In the impostor there is always a something that betrays the wickedness of his character and his designs; but in *Jesus* there is nothing — as even infidels admit — but the purest benevolence, and the most unsullied moral virtue. Some infidels have even recommended his exam-

ple for moral purity — not reflecting on the inconsistency; for, if he is not divine when he claims to be, and if his miracles are only impositions when he asserts they are his Father's testimony, then surely he would be as far from moral virtue as the most arrogant impostor could be.

There is no middle ground between denying his goodness and branding him as an impostor; or admitting his truth and purity, and thereby conceding the reality of his miracles. But who dares arraign his purity of character? What proofs of uprightness and inflexible moral virtue have ever been exhibited equal to his? Not one of his enemies could allege aught against him. The opponents of Christianity, who wrote in the first centuries, can find nothing whereby to impugn his virtue. This is truly wonderful; and if any man, with such a character as that of Christ before him, can charge imposture on his miracles, or assert that Jesus claimed to do what he could not and *did* not do, that man must be proof against all testimony, and prefer bold assertion to fact and argument.

Now, the fact that Jesus induced a belief in him, as the holy one, among so many of all ages, and every condition of life, from a Magdalen

to a Nicodemus, proves that he was what he professed to be; and the fact that, in a subsequent age, the believers had so multiplied that the Roman empire was filled with them, is strong proof that there was no imposture, and could not have been.

The apostles also sustained a character for self-denial and virtue as nearly like that of their Master as human nature exalted by religion could sustain. Their bitterest enemies have nothing to allege against them but their devotion to a new religion. "They were chargeable," says Pliny, "with no vice," their only crime being that "they worshipped Christ as God," and would not worship the gods of Rome. There is one uniform testimony to their voluntary relinquishment of the world, their cheerful endurance of sufferings, and their heroic fortitude in death. Nearly all the apostles, for believing in Jesus and preaching his resurrection,—a fact which most of them had witnessed,—suffered the loss of all things, and at last sealed their testimony with their blood.

In the circumstances, then, under which the miracles were wrought, it is impossible the witnesses could have been practised upon by any deceptive arts. There is, next, a pledge in the

moral virtues of the Author of our religion, that no imposition could have been practised. There is, moreover, the same pledge in the high character for integrity and virtue uniformly sustained by the apostles and early Christians; and, last, in the inflexible adherence to their faith, even when to maintain it they had to sacrifice property, fame, and even life itself.

I will close this branch of the subject by an illustrative or hypothetical case.

It has been customary in some ages to extort confession by means of torture. Suppose, then, you should witness this operation. A man of respectable character and well-known virtue is brought forward. His inquisitors inform him that, if he continues to assert the existence of a particular fact, he shall be placed upon the rack, and have the screws drawn upon him. But he calmly reasserts it. His enemies then put him under torture, until his joints are dislocated. The agonized sufferer is then asked if he retracts his statement; but he firmly answers *No*. Would you not believe that man to be sincere? The torture proceeds, and the man actually dies in asserting, without the least alteration or modification, the same fact. Should not his testimony be received? Suppose that hundreds

should follow his example, and die by torture for asserting the same thing,—could there be any doubt that these were true witnesses, that they testified to what they actually knew, especially if they were known to be men of unimpeachable integrity?

These were the circumstances under which thousands suffered and died, bearing a united testimony to the divinity, the miracles and the resurrection, of Christ. Some of these martyrs were learned men, and many of them high in earthly dignities and distinctions. Old and young, male and female, submitted to ignominy, persecution, poverty and death. What stronger proof can be given, or can be asked, for the sincerity of their belief, and the truth of their testimony?

Sceptic. “All this, I admit, is strong reasoning; but, still, I would not believe unless I saw a miracle wrought myself.”

Perhaps, my friend, you would not even *then*. Many in Christ's day saw the miracle, but denied the power of God in it. This they did as pertinaciously *after* as *before* the miracle was wrought. No; the mind that cavils, that loves its sins, and loves not God, “would not be per-

suaded, even though it were to see one rise from the dead.”

There must be a preparation of *heart* in order to a proper appreciation of moral evidence. This is the grand secret; and when this is obtained, objections are very likely to flee away.

CHAPTER VI.

PROOF FROM THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY.

Prophecy defined — The highest evidence that can be given of supernatural visitation — False prophets — Delphic oracles — Aristotle's and Cicero's opinion of these oracles — Prophecies in the Old Testament — Prophecy concerning the posterity of Abraham — Prophecy respecting Ishmael — The Bedouins — Prophecy respecting the land of Canaan — Prophecies relating to Tyre, Nineveh and Babylon — Prophecies concerning Christ — Daniel's and Isaiah's prophecy — Prophecy respecting the success of the gospel.

THE last species of proof, under the *external* evidences, which we shall adduce in favor of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, is the fulfilment of prophecy.

Prophecy is defined by one writer to be "*a miracle of knowledge*;" and he adds, "it is the highest evidence that can be given of supernatural communication with the Deity, and of the truth of a revelation from God."

"The man," says he, "who reads a prophecy

and perceives the corresponding event, is *himself* the witness of the miracle. He sees that thus it is; and that thus *by human means* it could not possibly have been. A prophecy yet unfulfilled is a miracle yet incomplete; and these, if numerous, may be considered as the seeds of future conviction, ready to grow up and bear their fruit whenever the corresponding facts shall be exhibited on the theatre of the world. So admirably has this sort of evidence been contrived by the wisdom of God, that, in proportion as the lapse of ages might seem to weaken the argument from miracles, that very lapse serves only to strengthen the argument derived from the completion of prophecy."

FALSE PROPHETS.

There have been, in all ages and countries, those who pretended to divine and to foretell future events. Some of these pretended prophecies were from motives of gain, and others from motives of influence and ambition. Some — as among the ancient Greeks and Romans — were encouraged from motives of state policy; but, in all, there are palpable marks of imposture so plain, that no person can possibly confound the

true and the false prophet, or be at a loss to distinguish the inspired prophecies from the heathen oracles.

We know, from scripture, that cotemporary with the prophets of God there were lying prophets, who sought influence in this peculiar way, and endeavored to impose, not only on the people, but on the monarchs of Israel themselves.

These prophets, however, took care so to shape their predictions as to admit of an ambiguous or two-fold application.

DELPHIC ORACLES.

The same ambiguous character belongs to all the famous Delphic oracles, and, in fact, to the entire predictions ventured upon by the soothsayers of Greece and Rome.

Aristotle observes, with respect to these divinations, "that pretended prophets express themselves in *general* language. In a game at odd and even, a man may say whether the number *be* odd or even much sooner than *what* it is, and that such a thing *will* happen than *when*. Therefore, those who deliver oracles never define *when*."

Cicero, likewise, has the following remark: "If this be foretold, *who* is the person meant, and *what* is the *time*? The writer conducted himself so dexterously that any event whatever will suit his prophecy, since there is no specification of men and times."

Such is the admitted character of heathen diviners; and who will pretend to compare them with God's prophets, who spake not only of events to come, but who defined the times, persons, places, and all the minute circumstances, of the predicted events?

The heathen oracles were pronounced in mysterious secrecy, whilst the prophets of God delivered, without solicitation, their prophecies openly before the people.

The events which were foretold were often both complicated and remote, depending on the arbitrary will of many, and arising from a great variety of causes, which concurred to bring them to pass.

PROPHECIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

In considering the argument from prophecy, we must include the Old Testament as well as the New, since many of the most striking predic-

tions were uttered and fulfilled within the chronology of that remarkable book. Some of the most striking events in the civil history of the world have taken place in perfect accordance with the predictions of the Old Testament; and facts too palpable to be denied exist, at this moment, in verification of these prophecies.

When we examine these sacred books, among other things we find a chain of prophecies, uttered from the time of Abraham,—nay, even from the origin of our race,—down to the closing book of the New Testament.

Some of these prophecies respect the state of the Jews — as the changes in their own civil history; others relate to neighboring nations and empires; others announce the coming of a Messiah; and, finally, prophecies delivered by Christ and his apostles.

Many of the events which have taken place in exact accordance with these predictions are known and acknowledged to have occurred subsequent to the prophetic announcement, and cannot, therefore, be mere histories.

PROPHECY CONCERNING THE POSTERITY OF ABRAHAM.

The Jews, by common consent, trace their

origin to Abraham. How astonishing is it that so numerous a people as they once were should be descended from *one* man! Yet so it is. This nation numbered, in less than five hundred years from the time of Abraham, six hundred thousand men, besides women and children; and this census is abundantly confirmed by the testimony of profane writers.

But all this had come to pass in exact accordance with prophecy. It was told Abraham that his seed should be as the stars for number, and that, too, at a time when there was no ground for hope, humanly speaking, that he would have any posterity.

PROPHECY RESPECTING ISHMAEL.

There exists at present a predatory people in the East, whose habits, and life, and character, are very peculiar, and have been such as they are, with almost no variation, for many centuries. This we know from profane history, and from the concurrent accounts of travellers. They are called Arabs.

Now, as they live about the region where the scenes of scripture are laid, it would be natural

to inquire if that book has any allusion to this people.

We find, in the Scriptures, that one branch of Abraham's posterity was superseded by another, and that the former branch was cast out to give place to the latter. The one cast out was named Ishmael, and the true heir was named Isaac, from whom the Jewish nation came. But what became of Ishmael? According to the Scriptures, he wandered with his mother into the wilderness of Paran, where he became expert in archery, and his mother married him to an Egyptian woman, by whom he had twelve sons. From the twelve sons of Ishmael are derived the twelve tribes of the Arabians still subsisting; and Jerome says that in his time they called the districts of Arabia by the names of their several tribes.

Here is a chain of facts truly astonishing. The Arabs who now exist with unanimous consent trace their origin to Ishmael and his twelve sons. The very names of these sons are still common appellations among them.

But let us look at their *history* and *habits*, as well as their origin. God said of Ishmael, "I will make him a great nation;" and a great nation he became when the Saracens made their

rapid and extensive conquests during the middle ages, and erected one of the largest empires that ever was in the world.

He was also to be “a wild man.” “His hand was to be against every man, and every man’s hand against him.” And this has ever been true of him, and is true of him to this very day. Sesostris, Cyrus, Pompey, Trajan, and other ancient monarchs, endeavored in vain to subjugate them. They are a wild, independent people, to this day.



“Freedom’s fierce, unconquered child,
The Bedouin robber, nursling of the wild.

With whirlwind speed he guides his vagrant band,
Fire-eyed, and tawny as their subject sand.
On foam-bossed steeds impetuous all advance,
Whirl the broad sabre, couch the quivering lance ;
Ardent for plunder, emulate the wind,
Scorn the lone level, leave the world behind ;
While the dense dust-cloud rears his giant form,
And, rolled in spires, reveals the threatening storm.”

Says one, “The history of this remarkable people, and their manner of life for four thousand years, is, of itself, a sufficient argument for the divine origin of the Pentateuch.”

PROPHECY RESPECTING THE LAND OF CANAAN.

It was predicted that the Jews should have the land of Canaan for their possession, and that for their sins they should be driven out of it for a season, but that at last it should be theirs for a permanent inheritance.

Every person familiar with the Jewish history knows that, for the most part, this was truly verified. For a thousand years they enjoyed the land of Canaan. Then, for their wickedness, God sent the tribes of Judah and Benjamin into captivity. He declared it should be for seventy years, which was so. For six hundred years

after the restoration they held it, and then again, for their wickedness in crucifying the Messiah, they were driven out,— and this, too, was predicted,— and they continue to this day a vagrant and down-trodden people. But as the prophecy relating to their return from Babylon was exactly fulfilled, so will their restoration to this long-deserted land be a renewed verification of the truth of the prophecies.

In the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses gives a prediction of what God would bring upon the nation in case of their disobedience, namely, “They should be scattered among all people, from one end of the earth unto the other. They should find no rest. They should be oppressed and crushed always. They should be left few in number among the heathen. They should pine away in their iniquity in their enemies’ land. They should become an astonishment, a proverb and a by-word, unto all nations.”

It is only necessary to go to profane history to discover the truth of these prophecies. Under the Chaldeans and Romans a circumstantial fulfilment of these threatenings took place. And their situation to this day is a literal fulfilment of the words of Moses.

Since the destruction of Jerusalem they have

been scattered among all nations; in the very words of sacred prophecy, "they have found no ease, nor have the soles of their feet had rest." "Their life," especially in the East, "has hung in doubt before them; they have had fear day and night, and have had none assurance of their life."

Yet, notwithstanding all their oppressions, they have still continued a separate people, without incorporating with the nations, and they have become an astonishment and a by-word among all the nations whither they have been carried. The very name of a Jew has been used as a term of peculiar reproach and infamy.

Finally, it was foretold that their plagues should be wonderful and of long continuance. And have not their plagues continued more than seventeen hundred years? What nation has suffered so much, and yet endured so long? What nation has subsisted as a distinct people, in their *own* country, so long as the Jews have done in their dispersion into all countries? *And what a standing miracle is thus exhibited to the world, in the fulfilment, at this very time, of prophecies delivered more than three thousand years ago!* Is not this proof

all-sufficient that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?

PROPHECIES RESPECTING TYRE, NINEVEH AND
BABYLON.

The prophet Ezekiel (chapter 26) pronounces a very striking prediction respecting the city of Tyre,—one of the most flourishing and opulent cities then in existence. It runs thus: “Therefore, thus saith the Lord God: Behold I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers. I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets, in the midst of the sea; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God; and shall become a spoil to the nations.”

The very agent to commence this fearful destruction is named,—Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Now, all history confirms the truth of these predictions. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the *old* city. Alexander the Great employed the

ruins in making a causeway from the island on which it stood to the continent.

“It is no wonder, therefore,” says a learned traveller, “that there are no remains visible of the ancient city.”

After various reverses, it was at last sacked and completely razed, in the year 1289, by the Mamelukes; so that it is now literally but a barren rock, on which the fishermen are seen to spread their nets.

The same prophet (Ezekiel) declared, concerning Egypt,—one of the most ancient and powerful kingdoms in the world,—that God would bring it down subject to other nations, and cause its pride and its glory to fall. More than two thousand years ago was this prophecy uttered. Not long afterwards, Egypt was successively attacked and conquered by the Babylonians and Persians. Alexander wrested it from Persia. Then the Romans took it. After them the Saracens and the Mamelukes; and now it is tributary to Turkey. Thus, for so many ages, has this once proud empire bowed under a foreign yoke. How exact the fulfilment of the divine prediction!

NINEVEH.

Nineveh was the metropolis of the Assyrian Empire; a city vast in extent, and containing a population of more than six hundred thousand. Its utter destruction was foretold by the prophets Nahum and Zephaniah; and even some of the circumstances, such as that "while they were overcome with drunkenness their enemies should surprise and take them." (Nahum 1: 10.) And history confirms the fact, that the Medians, under the command of Arbaces, being informed of the drunkenness that prevailed in their camp, assaulted them with success and overcame them: and, until recently, even the site of this great city could not be ascertained.

BABYLON.

Not less striking were the prophecies upon Babylon, which not only declared its overthrow, and the manner in which and the person by whom (namely, Cyrus) it should be accomplished, but adds, in the sublimest strain of prospective desolation: "The wild beasts of the desert shall be there; and the owls shall dwell

therein, and it shall be no more inhabited forever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighboring cities, so shall no man dwell therein. Thou shalt be desolate forever, saith the Lord. Babylon shall become heaps,— a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment and a hissing, without an inhabitant. Babylon shall sink and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there: but wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there; and dragons in their pleasant places.”

And has Babylon ever been rebuilt? Has it ever been reinhabited? Do the stately columns stand to tell of its former splendor? Or is it all desolation? Says Mr. Rich, an English traveller: “It is as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.” He mentions “perceiving the bones of sheep, doubtless brought there and consumed by wild beasts, many dens of which are in various parts. He found quantities of porcu-

pine quills, numbers of bats and owls; and every doleful creature seemed to have made these ruins their asylum." How true to the prediction is all this!

The prophet Daniel predicted with such minute accuracy the overthrow of Babylon by the Persians, and their subjugation by the Grecians under Alexander the Great, and the division of Alexander's dominion into four parts, and then the rise of the Roman power, which swallowed up the whole, and became one vast republic, different from all preceding governments,—he predicted all this so exactly as it took place, that some infidels have asserted that it must have been written subsequent to the events. But against this supposition the whole Jewish nation are witnesses; for never was there a book more generally known, more widely dispersed, and more universally received, than this.

We have before us, in these prophecies, a striking proof that the men who uttered them must have been under the divine teachings. Who can foretell a future contingent event but the omniscient God, or one whom he inspires? How could Moses know the state of the Jews, their captivity and their dispersion, and their actual condition up to this very date, if God had

not spoken by him? And can any man look at these living witnesses for the truth (the Jews), scattered in every land, as if to hold up to the infidel eye a perpetual refutation of his creed, and still deny that the prophets were inspired of God?

Go, wander over the ruins of Tyre, Egypt and Babylon, and the very desolation will speak of God's unerring word!

PROPHECIES CONCERNING CHRIST.

But the great burden of prophecy is yet to be considered; namely, the coming of Christ. Every other event is subsidiary to this, every ray converges towards this luminous point. "To *Him* give all the prophets witness." Every Jewish sacrifice was a sort of prophecy that pointed to Him. "The seed of the woman" was first announced by God himself. Every sacred writer caught the strain. The prophet's eye, whichever way it glanced, never lost sight of this all-attractive vision.

Nor did the prophets proclaim only in *general* terms his coming; they were explicit as to his person, his character, his teachings, his outward condition, his sufferings, his death, his triumph

over death, his success in subjugating the hearts of men.

The *time*, also, of his advent, was definitely fixed, and the manner in which the nation would treat him. Let us glance at some of these points.

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah till Shiloh come.” (Gen. 49 : 10.) This prophecy, no person doubts, was written ages before the event took place. It declares that the Jews shall exist as a nation until the coming of the Messiah. Now, if their political existence as a nation is at an end, then has the Messiah come. And has not the sceptre long since been broken? When Jesus came and established his spiritual kingdom, the tribe of Judah was dispersed, and confounded with the other tribes of Israel.

Daniel points out the precise time when Messiah was to appear, declaring that he would “make an end of sin, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness.”

From the time that Artaxerxes gave command to rebuild Jerusalem,—which was accomplished by Nehemiah,—he says is four hundred and ninety years (seventy weeks of years); and according to this prediction Christ came at the end

of the seventy weeks; or, as Dr. Scott says, "In the seventieth week the Messiah was cut off, but not for himself."

Daniel goes on to say: "That the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood."

How the tide of Roman invasion rolled in upon Jerusalem, within less than half a century after the death of Christ, is well known, and corroborates most strikingly the prophet's words.

It was predicted that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, of the tribe of Judah. How wonderful that, by an over-ruling Providence, Augustus, the Roman emperor, should have ordered a general census, by which Joseph and Mary were proved to be of the line of David! And Paul says, "It is evident our Lord sprang out of Judah."

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY.

With what a graphic pen has Isaiah sketched the character of Christ! He predicted he should be born of a virgin; that he should be destitute of the external glory which usually recommend-

ed a person in the eyes of the nation,—yet in the eye of God he was to be “elect, precious, a chief corner-stone.” And this corner-stone was to become a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to the Jews; that they should fall on this rock, and that, in their attempts to overthrow it, should be themselves scattered and broken to pieces.

He was to preach the gospel to the poor, to give sight to the blind, health to the sick, and light to them that sat in darkness. He was to be a teacher of the Gentiles. Nations were to do him homage, and his reign was to be peace and righteousness.

Such is the portrait of our Lord sketched by Isaiah; and, if he had followed Jesus from the manger to the cross, he could not have given us a more striking likeness.

But read his fifty-third chapter, where he predicts his sufferings and death! You would think, almost, that he sat at the foot of the cross, and, with pen dipped in the blood that flowed from it, had portrayed the mournful scene of the crucifixion. “He was wounded for our transgressions. He is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so *he* openeth not his mouth. He made

his grave with the wicked and with the *rich* in his death. He was numbered with the transgressors, bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Who can read this, and compare the meek sufferer's conduct and death with it, and not admit that Isaiah's lips must have been touched with a coal from heaven's altar?

It was this fifty-third chapter that smote down the infidelity of the Earl of Rochester, and led him, with his dying breath, to call upon the Lamb of God for salvation.

PROPHECIES OF CHRIST HIMSELF.

There were prophecies uttered by Jesus himself and by his apostles, and recorded in the New Testament, equally illustrative of inspiration.

Christ repeatedly foretold his own death and resurrection, and even the circumstances attending the former: that "he must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the chief priests and elders, and be killed; that the Jews would deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked, and scourged, and crucified:" all of which we know took place.

He foretold that he should be betrayed by *one* disciple, and deserted by *all*; that Peter would deny him before the cock crew thrice. He foretold that after his resurrection he would go before them into Galilee.



He predicted the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the effect,—namely, that the apostles should work miracles and speak with tongues,—all of which came to pass.

How accurately he predicted the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Romans ! Matthew published this prediction but five years after the crucifixion ; and it was forty years after that event that the destruction took place, and under circumstances such as our Lord had described. The enemy cast a trench about the city, and carried on the siege until it was taken ; and the Temple was not only destroyed, but, as Jesus predicted, its very foundations were overturned by Titus, the Roman general ; so that it might almost be said, literally, “ Not one stone was left upon another.”

PROPHECY RESPECTING THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL.

Before his ascension, our Saviour commanded his disciples to “ go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” He promised them his divine presence, and assured them of success. Need we say how certainly that promise was fulfilled ? How, against all the opposition of Jews and pagans, did the gospel go forward, and fill the Roman empire with its glorious triumphs ! In less than three hundred years it took possession of the throne of the Cæsars.

Can any person believe that these prophecies were conjectural? Can any, in his senses, deny their fulfilment? And were not the men who could thus minutely foretell future events inspired of God?

Thus to *miracles* we add the testimony of *prophecy*. What a living monument of God's truth are the scattered but degraded Israelites! How does the fierce Arab, with his hand against every man, proclaim the same truth!

Go, search for Babylon, once the mistress of the world! Read in her desolation, her undefined site, the fulfilment of prophecy.

Look at Egypt and Ethiopia! Look at Jerusalem! Where is her once splendid Temple? From those desolate regions, and by a thousand voices, the Bible demands that its holy and divine origin should be by all acknowledged.

CHAPTER VII.

INTERNAL EVIDENCES.

Testimony of the Scriptures concerning God — Appropriate representations of his attributes — His providence and moral government — The doctrines — Man's fallen state — Man's original uprightness — Faith in the merits of another — Victory over the world — A future retribution — A resurrection of the body — The *mortality* of the Scriptures proof of their divinity — Testimony of infidels to the morality of the Bible — Voltaire's testimony — Earl of Rochester's — Rousseau's — Bolingbroke's — The morality of the Bible examined — The law of the ten commandments — Precepts of the law — Contrast of the morals of Christianity and heathenism — Testimony of a French traveller — Testimony of Governor Howal and Sir J. Shane — Unity of the Scriptures — Supposed contradictions of Scripture — Moral tendency of the Bible — Its influence on states and governments ; on literature and the arts — Progress of the gospel.

WE are now prepared to open and examine the internal marks of inspiration which lie on the face of the book thus authenticated by miracles and by prophecy.

In doing this, the nature of its doctrines, the purity of its moral teachings, its style, and the tendency of its whole tone and spirit on the improvement and happiness of mankind, will come into view.

If, in this examination, there should be found any doctrine or precept of injurious moral tendency, we should feel, at once, that, notwithstanding all that has been said, there was still ground for hesitation. But of this we have no fear.

In reading the Koran, we discover a licentious tendency in some of its revelations, an adaptation to gratify the lower passions of our nature. We see also many absurdities. Mahomet talks about a cock "crowing so loud as to be heard all over creation;" and of angels whose eyes are so far apart as to require several days' journey to pass between them; and many other things so foolish that the mind of a child would reject them.

But how different is the whole tenor of the Scriptures! Everything *there* is serious and soul-elevating. Its revelations are worthy of God, and exalt his character in the eyes of the created universe.

TESTIMONY OF THE SCRIPTURES CONCERNING
GOD.

In regard to the Scriptures, we are struck with one grand idea, namely, that, throughout, they keep before the mind their great Author. *God* is the great subject of these revelations. This is a sublime thought, and well calculated to impress the mind in favor of the inspiration of the Bible.

That the light of reason teaches something on this point, we do not deny; but not enough,—not so much as a moral, accountable, and especially a *sinful* being, needs to know. What reason teaches respecting his existence, power, wisdom and goodness, the holy Scriptures confirm and illustrate. But the Bible ascends still higher, and reveals his holiness, his justice, and his mercy. Where nature *leaves* us, the Bible takes us up; and where reason falters, *faith* spreads her wings, and urges her sublime flight, until we are ushered into the invisible world, and stand before the presence of Him who inhabiteth eternity.

Now, shall a book which has *God* for its great subject be lightly esteemed, or its claim to inspiration be rashly questioned?

But in what light does this book represent God? It speaks of him as “the great first cause, and last end of all things.” It invests him with the attribute of *eternity*. “From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”

He is the great source of all being — the fountain of all good; himself the uncreated and eternal good. It thus makes him *omnipotent*. “He speaks, and it is done.” He says, “Let there be light, and there is light.”

It speaks of him as “*the only living and true God* ;” elevating him thus above all the idols and imaginary deities with which the heathen world is filled.

The Scriptures speak of God as *infinite in wisdom*. His mighty mind contrived the universe; foresaw every effect, and arranged every law that regulates the natural world. “He is over all, and through all, and in all.” This wisdom is employed in bringing forth results which are to astonish contemplating intelligences both in earth and in heaven.

The sacred writers speak of God as *holy*. He cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence. This is just such a character as, prior to experience, we should suppose God would possess. It would fix the seal of reprobation upon any book pro-

fessing to be a revelation from God, if it held up his character as impure, or as approving impurity in his creatures. Why, then, shall not the opposite effect be produced, and a conviction of its divinity be felt, when it represents God as the Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity ?

Impostors would not be apt to make their God so opposite to themselves in character ; and, therefore, the fact that everywhere the sacred writers delight to dwell upon the holiness of God is proof positive of their own purity and uprightness.

The Scriptures represent God also as *merciful*. He is holy, but he is forgiving. Just is he to punish the violation of his law ; yet, when the sinner shows signs of repentance, he is ready to forgive.

Can any view of the divine character be more consistent, more perfect, than this ? Speaks it not of a supernatural influence exerted on the minds of the sacred writers ? Does it look in the least like imposture ?

The sacred Scriptures speak of the *providence* of God as extending over all the affairs of this world ; and refer every event, however small, to his invisible hand. Is not this in consonance with truth and reason ? Who can survey this

complex scene — these perpetual changes, and yet this undisturbed routine — without acknowledging an overruling Providence ?

The Scriptures make Jehovah a *Moral Governor*. They declare that all accountable beings are bound to obey him. The rule of right and wrong they make known ; and they plainly declare that the great Governor of the Universe will call all to a final account, when they must answer for the deeds done in the body.

Such are some of the views which the Book of books sets forth respecting the character of God. Are these views *for* or *against* its claims to divinity ?

But the Sceptic, I see, wishes here to put in a word. Let us hear what he has to say.

Sceptic. “I was going to say that it seems very strange to me, and not a little derogatory to the Divine Being, to speak of him as you do, and yet to represent him as having hands, and eyes, and feet, and actuated, as it were, by the passions of men.”

At first view, this does seem a little strange ; and yet, how else could God speak to men, who *themselves* are men of sense and feeling ? Is there any other conceivable way in which our Creator could impress our souls but through

our associations with sensible objects, thus appealing to our eyes, ears, and affections? This mode of address, taken in connection with the exalted character of God, just alluded to, impresses the mind the more deeply with his wisdom and goodness.

Sceptic. "But another thing which I cannot understand, and at which my reason revolts. You represent God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, — three persons and yet one God. How can we accept this?"

Our aim is first to show that the Bible is from God. If *that* be settled, then all its revelations are to be accepted, whether we can comprehend them or not. If this doctrine of the *trinity* be found in the Bible, it is the part of faith to accept it. It will not do for worms of the dust to array their reason against God's revelations. How could we expect to comprehend God, or, by searching, to find out the mode of his existence?

THE DOCTRINES.

What are the *doctrines* which the Bible reveals for human belief? Are they such as to prove the book inspired? The answer to this

question will convince any candid mind that the Scriptures have powerful claims upon our belief.

Man's Fallen State.

One of the great facts or doctrines of the Bible is, that *man is a fallen and guilty creature*. This doctrine, we know, is not relished by the self-righteous heart. It is far from being agreeable to man's personal vanity and selfish hopes of future happiness. But why this revulsion at the doctrine of human guilt? Is it because the doctrine has no foundation in fact? Is the actual state of mankind such as to give it the lie? Does the child unfold its moral powers with angel sweetness, showing no opposition to the parental commands, or to the restraints of virtue? Does the youth choose the path of piety, and naturally find his happiness in serving God? Do men seek the divine glory,—hate sin, and practise holiness? I need only *ask* these questions.

Why, then, are men opposed to the doctrine of native moral corruption? Surely not because it is a *false* doctrine. No; but because it is *not* false, but fearfully *true*.

Now, we ask if impostors, who sought influ-

ence and popularity, would place *first* on the list of their tenets, and urge as fundamental, a belief of so repugnant a doctrine? Is it to be supposed they would represent man as "dead in trespasses and sins"? Would they be likely to say that "the heart was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"?

Yet this doctrine accords with facts, as developed in the temper and conduct of mankind. The whole history of our race sets the seal to it, and every human conscience gives it its sanction.

Man's Original Uprightness.

But, along with this doctrine of our apostate state, the sacred writers declare our *original uprightnes*s,—that man was once in favor with God, and that there are the remnant indications still in us of this once happy state. How true is this to nature! Man is forever reaching after a felicity which seems to elude his grasp. There are the strivings of conscience, thoughts of a future retribution, combined with the mournful impressions of departed purity.

Can we deny to a book which explains and illustrates these feelings and impressions so plainly the claim of inspiration?

Duty of Repentance.

Grounded on this doctrine is another, which the Bible presents; namely, the *duty of repentance*, by confessing and forsaking our sins. This is also a very prominent truth in the Holy Scriptures.

If man is a wanderer from God, it is his duty to return to him. If he has offended him, by transgressing his laws, it is his duty to confess the same, and to ask the divine forgiveness. If moral obligation exist at all, so much as this must be admitted.

True to nature and to facts, the Bible comes to man as a *transgressor*, and says "*repent.*" "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Here, then, is another evidence that the writers of this book must have been divinely inspired. Had they sought reputation and earthly glory, they would have taken an opposite course; and, like the false prophet, promised their disciples indulgence, rather than self-mortification and personal humiliation.

Faith in a Crucified Saviour.

Another doctrine prominent in this revelation is, that God accepts the sinner only on the condition of *faith in a Saviour who died for sin, or was made a sin-offering.*

From the time that Abel sacrificed a lamb, as the proof that his faith rested on sacrificial blood, until now, every sinner who expects on solid grounds the favor of God must and does exercise faith in a crucified Saviour.

This is a very peculiar and striking doctrine, which pervades the Scriptures, and which all men are bound to believe and act upon, if ever they be restored to the divine favor. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "There is none other name given under heaven, amongst men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus." "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

This doctrine places man in the dust as a sinner, and obliges him to look for deliverance and salvation to another, "able and willing to save,"—a doctrine as humbling to the proud heart as any which can be conceived.

Yet this doctrine is the prominent and pecu-

liar doctrine of Christianity. "I determined," says Paul, "to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We need not show how the doctrine of a mediator accords with the actual state of the sinner as a transgressor under God's government; nor how it suits our poor, sin-disabled nature, which sighs for help whilst lying in the horrible pit and the miry clay. We have only to ask the objector if men who aimed at any object but the glory of God would be likely to frame a doctrine so calculated to meet with opposition from both Jews and Gentiles.

The Jews hated it, because they were resolved to go to heaven in their own fancied right; and the Greeks counted it only foolishness. Everywhere men said, "Away with it." This they said until they saw their guilt as sinners, and then the doctrine was welcomed, and the cry was, "Lord, save me or I perish."

Yet is this doctrine "the wisdom of God." "To all who believe it is the power of God unto salvation."

Who, but inspired men, would have gone forth and proclaimed, in face of all the prejudices of

the Jews, belief in a crucified Saviour as the only condition of mercy and salvation?

Victory over the World.

One of the duties insisted upon, in connection with faith in Christ, is a separation of the heart from the world. To be Christ's disciples, we must forsake in heart the pleasures of the world; that is, they must be held in less esteem than his service.

Now, it is natural to man to love the world; nay, to make it his chief pursuit. Its gains and its pleasures are considered the chief good. In what religion, but the religion of Christ, are men required to forsake earth in order to gain heaven? Yet reason teaches us that this is not absurd. If there is beyond the present life a scene of spiritual existence, where the soul must find its happiness in loving and serving God, it seems natural that some sort of preparation for such enjoyment should be made; that we should begin to relax our hold of these all-enslaving pleasures, in order to be qualified for a participation in those bright spiritual scenes. If the soul has never unclasped its affections from earthly vanities, nor known of better things, how

can it possibly be prepared for the pure joys of heaven?

Hence, we see the propriety of Christ's command, to forsake and overcome the world. But what a doctrine for *impostors* to teach! How strange that they should give us a religion requiring us to give up sensual pleasures, to crucify the flesh, to bear meekly the scorn and contempt of the world, and to look for our treasure and our reward in heaven! Strange doctrine this for impostors to teach!

Future Retribution.

The Bible reveals a state of rewards and punishments in a future world. It declares that God will hold men accountable for "the deeds done in the body."

How does this feature of the Christian system strike the mind? Can we reasonably deny that in the experience of the human soul there is a foundation for such a doctrine? Does not the idea of accountability enter into all the relations of society? Is it not recognized from the nursery to the highest civil tribunal?

But when we touch the point of man's responsibility to God, we hear from sinful man a rebellious murmur. But will not the idea of

accountability be acknowledged when we stand at the judgment-seat of Christ?

How clearly does this doctrine, which gleams on every page of the Bible, attest its inspiration! It is true to the voice within us, which sounds in premonitory notes our flight to the judgment!

A Resurrection.

The Scriptures declare that there will be “a resurrection both of the *just* and of the *unjust* ;” that “all who are in their graves shall come forth,” at the last great day; and that *then* the fates of all will be pronounced and fixed forever.

Where, but in the Christian religion, is a resurrection foretold? Yet is it in beautiful accordance with the analogy of nature.

Shall the flower drop its seed in the earth, and reproduce another form of fragrant beauty? Shall spring awaken in fresh glories from a wintry desolation? Shall the vapors flow off towards heaven, and form themselves into clouds of gilded radiance? — And shall this body of finest mould and most curious workmanship go back to dust and be no more? No, says the voice of Scripture; it shall arise “a spiritual

body ;” and according to what a man has sowed here, *that* will he reap hereafter.

Such is the character of God which the Bible reveals, and such are some of its prominent doctrines ; bearing, as we think, the stamp of heaven’s own signature. There is about them a sublimity, and purity, and fearful import, which no reader can mistake for mere human productions. They as certainly show the mind of the Deity as does the thunder-cloud his majestic footsteps. Speak of these doctrines as the invention of low-born fishermen ! The supposition is absurd.

Place these sublime revelations by the side of any productions penned by uninspired man, and it is like lifting up a taper towards the light of the sun. An artificial tree or flower may be formed to look, from a distance, something like a real one. But come near, and the delusion vanishes. The fine, soft touch of nature is not *there*. God’s works bear his own peculiar signature ; and this book as certainly evinces its heavenly origin as the verdure of earth or the lights of the firmament.

THE MORALITY OF THE SCRIPTURES PROVES
THEIR DIVINE ORIGIN.

If a book, purporting to be a record sent from God, should inculcate precepts at variance with the social happiness of man, or in any way tolerant of vice, it might be at once pronounced an imposture; for the only idea we can form of God is associated with moral purity. Now, the Bible, as we shall see, is not wanting in this essential impress of its divinity.

TESTIMONY OF INFIDELS TO THE MORALITY OF
THE BIBLE.

By the testimony of infidels themselves, we might show that this book inculcates the purest morality; their objections against it being, principally, its claim to be a divine revelation.

Voltaire's Testimony.

“Wherever society is established, *there* it is necessary to have a religion; for religion, which watches over the crimes that are secret, is, in fact, the only law which a man carries about **with him**; the only one which places the punish-

ment at the side of guilt, and which operates as forcibly in solitude and darkness as in the broad and open face of day."

Would the reader have thought it? These are the words of Voltaire. And how applicable are they to the religion of the Bible!

Earl of Rochester's Testimony.

The Earl of Rochester laid the objections to the Bible where they ought to be laid. Said he, laying his hand on the Bible, "*There is true philosophy. This is the wisdom that speaks to the heart. A bad life is the only grand objection to this book.*"

"Rousseau."

Rousseau's acknowledgments are to this effect. "I will confess to you, further, that the majesty of the Scripture strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the gospel has its influence on my *heart!!* Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction; how mean, how contemptible, are they, compared with the Scriptures! The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the *morality*, contained in the gospels; the marks of whose truths are so striking and invincible, that the inventor

would be a more astonishing character than the hero.”

To the inquiry how the infidel Rousseau could honestly make such concessions, we answer, because his *conscience* approved what his evil *heart* opposed. His judgment was convinced of the excellency of Christianity, but his ungovernable passions could not brook its restraints. *Pride and passion are the secret springs of infidelity.*

Bolingbroke.

In Bolingbroke's writings may be found such sentences as the following :

“Supposing Christianity to have been a human invention, it has been the most amiable invention that was ever imposed on mankind *for their good*. Christianity, as it came out from the hand of God, if I may use the expression, was a most simple and intelligible rule of belief, worship and manners, which is the true notion of a religion. The gospel is, in all cases, *one continued lesson of the strictest morality.*”

But mark the inconsistency of these writers ! How *could* impostors invent a system of morality the purest and most practical in the world ? All

these precepts are put forth, not as their own original conceptions, but as coming directly from Jehovah. How can we reconcile these two things, namely, that men should inculcate the highest standard of morality, including *strict veracity*, and yet, in doing it, be themselves, all the while, deceivers and impostors?

THE MORALITY OF THE BIBLE EXAMINED.

Let us now take a glance at the morality of that book which even infidels have been obliged in this respect to commend.

The first decisive act of immorality, after the melancholy account of the fall, is truly a frightful one. It is nothing less than the horrible crime of murder and fratricide. God is represented as coming forth against the murderer, branding him with the mark of vengeance, and exiling him from the privileges of religion.

As wickedness increased, and the power of human lust broke over all restraint, the Almighty again came forth to vindicate his law, and a whole generation were swallowed up by the flood. A similar retribution fell upon the licentious cities of the plain.

Nor did God spare his own servants, when

guilty of immorality. Noah was humbled in sight of his own children, and Lot was cursed in his descendants to the latest generation.

THE LAW OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

At length, and with a view to set forth distinctly the obligations of moral purity, and give motive and sanction to virtue, God enacted a law which embraced the whole duty of man, and enjoined it under the sanction of most fearful penalties.

This code of morality, contained in the ten commandments, expresses the will of God in relation to our duties, first, to God himself, and, secondly, to our neighbor.

Dr. Paley has well remarked, that “the morality revealed in the Scriptures is not an original invention, but a declaration from God of obligations existing always and from the nature of the case. It is giving definite ideas of moral duty, together with motives and sanctions to influence to its performance.”

First Precept of the Law.

The first precept of the moral law enjoins supreme love to God. It is levelled against

idolatry, a most debasing and immoral system of belief and worship.

This duty of loving God supremely depends not simply on the fact that it is commanded, but results from the nature of the case, from the relation of a dependent, accountable creature to God, the Creator.

The sin of making gold, or honor, or sensual love, a divinity, results not simply from the fact that God has forbidden it; but is in itself wrong, and *would* be if the commandments were unknown to us.

The design of a revelation is not to make *that* wrong which before was innocent, but to give motive and sanction to the eternal principles of right, to declare definitely what *is* and what always *must* be wrong, and to show what is and what always must be right. And hence the law of nature, or conscience, and the law of God, when the mind is properly enlightened, speak the same language.

Now, we argue that a book which goes thus to the foundations of moral rectitude, and sets forth what is right and what is wrong in the relations of Creator and creature, sanctioning and sustaining the verdict of conscience, cannot be a production of impostors or of enthusiasts.

The Third Commandment.

In the third commandment, the Almighty guards his own name and attributes from irreverence, declaring that He will "not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

How necessary such a precept was, may be seen from the almost universal propensity in man to desecrate the name of God. Even where His law is recognized, and where the institutions of religion are operative, the horrible practice is indulged.

It is manifest that, were this vice to become general, religion would be extinct. The first act of religion is *reverence*.

Comparing the morality of the Scriptures, in this respect, with the tolerated customs of the most cultivated heathen, we see the superiority of the former.

As to profaneness, it was never considered a vice at all. To swear "by the immortal gods" was equally the practice of the most respectable as well as the most worthless. "We may find in the heathen philosophers," says a writer, "customary swearing commended, if not by their precepts, yet by the examples of their best

moralists,—Plato, Socrates, Seneca, and the Emperor Julian,—in whose works numerous oaths occur.”

Frequent and shocking as the practice of profane swearing is in Christian countries, it is by no means general, and the edict of Jehovah against it has exerted a powerfully restraining influence on the lawless tongue.

The Arabs scarcely utter a sentence without an accompanying oath; and all the heathen, ancient and modern, are greatly addicted to the practice.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,” is a precept which implies a high regard for the honor of Jehovah, and does not savor of imposture or artifice in him who indited it.

The Fourth Commandment.

The observance of the Sabbath, in which the special duties of religion are to be performed, is another safeguard to general morality which this divine law furnishes.

It were impossible fully to estimate the value of this day and its services on the moral habits of society. Where it is treated with contempt, or turned into a day of riot, every vice prevails

to a most fearful extent. It is this day which lifts the soul of man above the grovelling earth, and obliges him to think of his duty and his destiny. It arrays before the mind the obligations of virtue and piety, and enforces them by the awful sanctions of a future retribution. Do all these sanctifying influences look like the work of enthusiasts or impostors?

The Fifth Commandment.

The fifth commandment respects the reverence and obedience due from the child to its parent, and from the young towards the aged.

And here we think that even the objector to revelation must concede the fitness and beauty of this precept of the decalogue. The feeling of respect and the principle of subordination to the will of a parent is a natural duty of the child. The existence of society and government is intimately connected with its discharge. Where this duty is violated, the parent is obliged to exact its performance. But when the child becomes the patron and the parent dependent, what then is to secure respect on the part of the offspring?

In heathen countries, the children, feeling the aged parents to be a burden, endeavor to get rid

of them. When old and infirm, they carry them into some desert place and leave them to die. And in Christian countries, where the commands of God are not regarded, there is at times great cruelty secretly practised towards them.

Now, God has guarded against this; and his law requires that the reverence which was rendered in childhood shall be continued in adult years.

How wise and gracious a provision! We all know that the attachment of parents to children is stronger than that of children to parents. There was no need of a law to insure the love of a mother towards her child. Nature is law enough here. But the selfish, reckless heart of youth is taught that God will adjudge him guilty for any act of disobedience or disrespect towards his parent. "Honor thy father and mother" is the commandment.

The Sixth Commandment.

There is ever a tendency in man to take summary vengeance on an enemy. Cupidity, also, and sometimes revenge, prompts to the dreadful deed of blood. Suicide has also been resorted to, — and by heathen writers even recommended, — in order to put an end to present sufferings.

Against all this, and in direct opposition to it, stands the sixth commandment of the decalogue. By this precept, human life is held inviolate, except where the Almighty, for judicial reasons, empowers the magistrate to take it away.

No man now may take his own life, or that of his neighbor. "Thou shalt not kill" is the solemn prohibition, which guards the life of man from violence and death. Nay, by the strict interpretation of this precept, whosoever *hateth* his brother is a murderer. A prohibition so merciful and defensive shows the divine source whence it must have emanated.

The Seventh Commandment.

The next precept of the decalogue is levelled against unbridled lust. It guards and keeps pure the fountains of domestic love. It is the grand conservative statute in favor of marriage, and is thus promotive of civilization and social happiness. Sunder the marriage tie, destroy the confidence between husband and wife, and the felicities of social life would receive a death-blow. They actually did under the reign of atheism in France, where such a scene of debauchery ensued as would have disgraced the land of Sodom and Gomorrah.

On this subject the practices of the Greeks and Romans were truly disgusting. Some of their writers maintained the lawfulness of adultery; and crimes the most beastly and unnatural — too horrible to speak of — were quite frequent among them.

This is the great and sweeping vice of all pagan communities. Their temples and shrines are but the polluted haunts of debauchery; and even their religion demands this wholesale prostitution, by which all that is noble in man or woman is defiled and destroyed.

Now, shall we repudiate a book, or question the divine origin of a law, which opens its artillery against this polluting vice? which demands that the passions shall be confined within limits which Heaven has prescribed? which looks at the foundations of domestic happiness, and provides for the security of chastity, and for the proper training of our offspring? Shall infidels question the inspiration of men who teach that “marriage is honorable in all, but that whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”? who plead for the domestic circle, and all the endearments of home? who brand the licentious as violators of God’s law, and declare that only the pure in heart shall see God?

Surely there is internal evidence here that a book inculcating such moral purity could have come from none but a divine source !

The Eighth Commandment.

The next precept of the decalogue secures the right of property, and holds him guilty who shall dare to invade it. "Thou shalt not steal."

Some infidel writers — Voltaire among the rest — were accustomed to laud the practices of the Greeks and Romans, with a view, if possible, to depreciate, by comparison, the Christian system. But, to say nothing of their gross licentiousness, were they not guilty of the mean and degrading vice of theft ?

Plutarch bestows great praises on the customs of the Lacedemonians ; yet the same writer acknowledges that theft was encouraged in their children, in order to sharpen their wits, and to train them up in all sorts of cunning, watchfulness and circumspection, whereby they were more apt to serve well in their wars. Hence, as might be expected, and as Herodotus observes, "their actions were generally contrary to their words, and there was no dependence upon them in any matter."

Who is there so ignorant as not to perceive

the superiority of Christian morals? And who but must discover that the right of obtaining and holding personal property, together with a security by law for such property, is that which distinguishes a flourishing and orderly commonwealth from a mere savage horde, where he who is strongest takes all?

The Ninth Commandment.

Strict veracity is next enjoined, and the false witness is branded as guilty. *Truth* is one of the noblest attributes of virtue. The liar and deceiver are names given to the great apostate angel, the enemy of God and man. Where truth is not, there can be no certainty, no virtue. Truth presides even over the arcana of nature. She sits upon the very throne of the universe. She pervades all mind and matter. She is the bond of friendship, the pledge of honorable intercourse, the safeguard of law, the incentive to study, and the great reward of intellectual exertion. She gives basis to hope, substance to faith, and reality to expectation. To complete the eulogy, she came from heaven robed in visible glory, the distinct personification of the Deity, and spoke to us in the life, ministry and death, of the Son of God.

Such is truth ! Such is she as exhibited in the Bible ! Between man and man it is enjoined that nothing be spoken contrary to the truth. Is this the precept of an impostor ? Can the sacred writer perpetrate a forgery, tell a holy lie (pardon the paradox !), speak in the name of God, and warn against falsehood,— can he do this, and yet be himself the most impious, heaven-defying liar in the universe ? Why, even “the father of lies” himself, it seems to me, could not be guilty of this !

What a contrast does the Bible present to the outrageous impositions of the Arabian impostor ! How powerful has been its influence to secure the sacred bond of confidence in social and commercial life !

Look, in contrast, at pagan nations ! Montesquieu says, “The Chinese are the most void of common honesty of any people upon earth ; and even the laws permit them to cheat and defraud.”

Lord Anson, in his Voyages, observes : “That *lying*, cheating and stealing, abound among them ; and that, if you detect them in fraud, they calmly plead the custom of the country.”

An intelligent French traveller, speaking of the Hindoos, says : “The Brahmins keep these

people in their errors and superstitions; and scruple not to commit tricks and villanies so infamous, that I could never have believed them, if I had not made ample inquiry into them."

Governor Howel thus characterizes them: "A race of people who, from their infancy, are utter strangers to the idea of common faith and honesty."

Sir John Shane, Governor-general of Bengal, speaking of the same people, says: "A man must be long acquainted with them before he can believe them capable of that bare-faced falsehood and deliberate deception which they daily practise."

What a state of society must that be where lying is thus prevalent! Have we nothing to thank the Bible for, in this respect? Can its enemies deny to it an influence all-important in promoting veracity, and thus binding together the social fabric? Will any man who believes the Bible be other than an honest man? With this precept before him, can he falsify either by word or act?

It is in vain to reply that there are men professing Christianity who have been guilty of deception, and men who are infidels who have been true to their word. All we say, in answer,

is, that the infidel, in this case, has obeyed the Bible, and the professor has become the infidel. After all, our business is with the Book, and with its holy precepts. Convict that *Book*, if you can, of deception. We are not answerable for hypocrisy. All *true* believers are honest men. They hate a lie, and they love the truth; and the Scriptures recognize such, and such only, as genuine disciples.

The Last Commandment.

In the closing precept of the decalogue, God lays his prohibitory mandate on the very principle of wrong in the heart,—“Thou shalt not covet;” and thus is the axe laid at the root of all evil. Not only may we not *do* wrong, but, according to this precept, may not even *desire* wrong. How holy and how just is this precept!

In closing this brief view of scriptural morality, we may fairly put the question, Can a book thus characterized be less than divine? Can a book which puts God upon the throne, to be supremely loved and obeyed;—which forbids irreverence and profaneness; which hallows for purposes of devotion one day in seven; which commands filial reverence and obedience; which

guards human life from violence; which throws up intrenchments against human lust, securing inviolate the marriage vow; which protects the right of property, and enjoins veracity and honesty in all the forms of human intercourse; which restricts even the thought of evil; — can such a book, we ask, be the work of deceivers? Can it be less than inspired?

UNITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

There is a strong internal mark of inspiration in the *unity* of the sacred writings.

We find, upon examination, that the Bible was written at different times, and by different individuals. Some of it is historical, some devotional, some doctrinal, and some preceptive. The writers were of different grades. Some were priests, some kings, and some plain, unlettered men. The style in which sacred truth is clothed is so peculiar that it is easily distinguishable from apocryphal writings of the same date, and yet there is also considerable diversity in it. Yet, amid all this, a divine unity reigns throughout. Has the Bible ever been charged justly with any important discrepancy? Does one of the sacred writers represent the character of God

in a particular light, and another contradict him? Does one teach a doctrine which another condemns? Does one teach a truth which another denies? Does one represent a fact as having occurred, and another make an opposite statement?

Investigate closely the whole book, in its connections, and you will find it characterized by unity and consistency. A thorough examination will convince the most prejudiced that, in all important matters, there is entire unity. Though written by so many different individuals, in different ages of the world; embracing so much history; inculcating so many doctrines and precepts; though relating to various customs, and to various countries; though embracing a long chain of chronological events, and much geographical allusion,—amid all this variety, the sacred Scriptures exhibit an astonishing unity and consistency.

The trifling variations in narration, sometimes alleged against the New Testament writers, only go to prove that there was no combination or previous concert among them.

Some speak of circumstances which others have omitted; but all agree in the leading facts and features of Christianity. In all that is

essential they perfectly agree. Thus are they shown to be honest, faithful witnesses of the truth.

SUPPOSED CONTRADICTIONS OF SCRIPTURE.

Even where there is a *seeming* contradiction in some small particulars, it will be found, upon a candid investigation, that the point is very unimportant, or may be explained, according to the principles of true and fair interpretation of one part by another.

“Wherever,” says a writer, “one text of scripture seems to contradict another, we should, by a serious consideration of them, endeavor to discover their harmony; for the only way to judge rightly of particular passages in any book is to consider its whole design, method and style, and not to criticize some particular parts of it, without bestowing any attention upon the rest.” “This equitable principle should be applied to the investigation of scripture difficulties. Some passages are indeed explained by the Scriptures themselves, which serve as a key to the elucidation of others. Thus, in one place it is said that ‘*Jesus* baptized,’ and in another it is stated that ‘*He* baptized not.’ The former passage

is explained to be intended not of baptism performed by himself, but by his disciples, who baptized in his name. Compare John 3: 22 with 4: 1, 2."

"A narrative is not to be rejected by reason of some diversity of circumstances with which it is related; for the character of human testimony *is substantial truth under circumstantial variety*, whereas a close agreement induces suspicion of confederacy and fraud. Important variations are not always deemed sufficient to shake the credibility of a fact; and, if this circumstance be allowed to operate in favor of profane historians, it ought at least to be admitted with equal weight in reference to the sacred writers."

Says Bishop Horne, speaking of the disingenuousness of infidels in bringing forward objections to the Scriptures: "Pertness and ignorance may ask a question, in *three* lines, which it will cost learning and ingenuity *thirty* pages to answer. When this is done, the same question shall be triumphantly asked again the next year, as if nothing had ever been written on the subject. And as people in general, for one reason or other, like short objections better than long answers, in this mode of disputation (if

it can be styled such) the odds must ever be against us, and we must be content with those for our friends who have honesty and erudition, candor and patience, to study both sides of the question.”

MORAL TENDENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

No man can say that the tendency of divine truth is *bad*. Even infidels have recommended the Bible as useful to society, and salutary in its effects on civil institutions. The quotations already made from their writings go to show this.

BENEVOLENCE OF THE GOSPEL.

“While the gospel,” says one of its defenders, “prescribes the best rules for promoting family peace and domestic happiness, it has also removed the great obstacles which have often impeded it. The condition of the inferior and dependent ranks of society has been ameliorated, and every varied form of human misery finds some alleviation from the active diligence of private benevolence, and the munificent provisions of public charity. The heathen had no public

places for the accommodation of the sick, the poor, the widow or the orphan; nor was there a single hospital in the whole heathen world: whereas every Christian country abounds with charitable institutions for these humane purposes.

“The flow of beneficence proceeding from this divine source has scarcely left any means untried for meliorating the sufferings of the poor. It has extended itself to the abodes of guilt and crime, and has attempted to put within the reach of the prisoner all the comforts that are compatible with the strict claims of justice; and it has even reached the inferior animals, by procuring for them gentle treatment, and constituting them objects of legal protection. In vain may we search, in the writings of pagan moralists, for exhortations to benevolence like this.”

ITS INFLUENCE ON STATES AND GOVERNMENTS.

“From society generally, let us ascend to the influence of Christianity on the religion and government of states and countries.

“Wherever the gospel has spread, we have the most satisfactory evidence of its mighty efficacy as a means of improving the present condition of man. Polytheism and idolatry, together



with human sacrifices and all their attendant cruelties and profligate immoralities, have been abolished. And as soon as nations and governments became Christian, they were actuated by that mild, benevolent and generous spirit, which the early believers had displayed even in the midst of calumny, insult and persecution. Those princes who embraced Christianity became more humble than their heathen predecessors, blended Christianity with their civil institutes, and trans-

mitted into their political codes the humanity and benevolence inspired by their religion. Fewer kings were murdered and fewer revolutions took place in Christian than in pagan states. It is the power of the gospel alone that has greatly reformed the laws of nations, and has diminished the horrors of war. That it has not hitherto been sufficient to banish unjust wars from the earth, is true; and, as an acute writer has forcibly remarked, 'It would have been wonderful if it *had*, seeing it has never yet been cordially embraced by the majority, nor, perhaps, by the preponderating part of any nation. Nevertheless, it has had its influence, and that influence has been of the most beneficial kind for the happiness of man.' "

EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY ON LITERATURE AND THE ARTS.

"But the blessings conferred by Christianity on the world are not confined to ameliorating the moral, civil, religious and political condition of mankind; the most polished nations now in existence are indebted to it for the preservation and diffusion of literature, and the elegant arts of painting, statuary, architecture and music.

Christianity has been instrumental in preserving and disseminating moral, classical and theological knowledge in every nation where it has been established."

"On the subversion of the Greek empire, by the Mahometans, in 1453, literature took refuge in the west of Europe, where many of the clergy were among its most strenuous supporters. At length learning emerged from the silence of the cloister, and her appearance was followed by a revival of all the blessings which she so eminently bestows. The Reformation promoted still more the cause of learning, and its general diffusion has been aided most signally by the discovery of the art of printing. The modern opposers of revelation, however, reasoning in a retrograde motion, ascribe all our improvements to philosophy. But it was *religion, the religion of Christ, that took the lead*. The Reformers opened to us the Scriptures, and broke all those fetters that shackled human reason. Philosophy crept humbly in her train, profited by her labors and sufferings, and now ungratefully claims all the honor and praise to herself. Luther, Melancthon and Cranmer, preceded Lord Bacon, Boyle, Newton and Locke."

It is thus to Christianity, directly or indirectly,

we owe all that distinguishes us in mind and morals from the almost senseless tribes of besotted heathen. And will any say, after all, that the Bible is the work of impostors? Can we look with any other feelings but those of abhorrence upon efforts to weaken its authority or to lessen its influence?

When we take into view the subjects upon which this book treats, the unity and consistency of the whole, the sublimity and purity of its doctrines and its language, the lives and martyrdom of its writers, can we deny to it a divine origin?

Though we have presented but a portion of the evidence which has been collected on this subject, have we not shown you enough to fix in your minds a permanent belief that the Scriptures are of high and sacred origin? Though no audible voice is heard, yet does not its silent eloquence speak to the heart? Who can trace the life of Jesus, so sublimely pure,—who can listen to his instructions, especially his sermon on the mount, and his tender, touching parables,—who can witness his death, so mysterious, yet so glorious, fulfilling as it did the voice of prophecy,—and not feel, in his deepest soul, that the Bible is a true and inspired record?

PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

Look, also, at the astonishing progress of this gospel! It is a standing miracle, that books containing an unvarnished chain of facts, written for the most part by men of obscure name and lowly circumstances, should have exerted such an influence, for eighteen centuries, over states and empires! A book written by such men has displaced or superseded the proud volumes of Plato, Pythagoras and Seneca. It has had more sway in rousing and improving the human intellect than all the books of mere human composition in the world.

These sacred volumes have overturned the foundations of empires, have shaken down the thrones of despots, have founded and reared the temple of liberty. They have subjected the loftiest minds to their control. They have rooted out, or effectually curbed, the most malignant passions. Assailed by every artifice which human or infernal malice could suggest, they have outlived these attacks, and are now rising in influence, multiplying their copies by millions, and pouring their heavenly light through every language upon every dark land.

Does not such a book bear the pure signature of Heaven? By whomsoever written, through what medium soever it may have flowed, it has upon it the stamp of God's eternal truth. There is no book like it. There is nothing that approaches to a likeness of it. There is a mysterious grandeur in its very *existence*. It speaks in human language, but it gives not human sentiments. It is full of light on subjects the most momentous. What a responsibility to be within the influence of such a book! When we read it we should be reverent. If it tell us of a dreadful doom that awaits the ungodly, if it speak to our consciences in tones of prophetic warning, we should give heed as to the voice of God. It is the only book which can guide us safely through this world by its counsels, and afterward conduct us to glory.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CANONICAL SCRIPTURES, ETC.

The Canon — Its meaning — The true books ascertained by *internal* marks — Clearly distinguishable from apocryphal — Historical proof abundant so far back as the second century — Ancient manuscripts — Scripture versus science — A late form of scepticism — Objections considered — Unity of the race — God's omnipotence in connection with miracles a sufficient answer to scientific objections — Plenary inspiration — Conclusion.

HAVING thus presented, in a very condensed form, the evidences for the inspiration of the holy Scriptures, both *external* and *internal*, we might here rest our cause, in the hope that all candid minds will be established in the truth and divine origin of our religion. But there are some questions which an inquisitive mind would be likely to ask still, in reference to the Scriptures; and some aspects of infidelity as

now developed, which require from us some further remarks.

THE CANON.

One of these questions respects the canon,—a word which is used to signify that the books received by us as sacred are the very ones which were so received by the first Christians.

“How do we know,” says the Sceptic, “that *all* these books have a just claim to inspiration?”

We answer, first, there are in *all* of them, we think, *internal* marks that they are inspired. Read one of these books, and then read an apocryphal one, and you will be struck with the difference.

Second, we have historical proof, coming down to us in a regular chain, of their authenticity, and of their being the very ones regarded by the first Christians as inspired.

The Romanists have included in the canon the books commonly called apocryphal; but they were not included by the first Christians, nor are they now by the rest of Christendom considered genuine.

But, in regard to the books of the New Testament, even the Romanists coincide with Protest-

ants in accepting, as well authenticated, the whole of the New Testament.

These books do not depend merely on the decrees of councils for their genuineness. They are authenticated by such evidence as is thought sufficient in the case of any other ancient writings.

“They were extensively diffused and read in every Christian society; they were valued and preserved with care by the first Christians; they were cited by Christian writers of the second, third and fourth centuries, — as Irenæus, Clement, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, &c.; and their genuineness is proved by those who were contemporary with the apostles themselves.

“The four gospels, and most of the other books of the New Testament, were collected either by one of the apostles, or some of their disciples and successors, before the end of the first century. The catalogue of canonical books furnished by the more ancient Christian writers, as Origen about A. D. 210, Eusebius and Athanasius in 315, and many others, agree with that which is now received among Christians.”

Third, we have quite a number of very ancient manuscripts, reaching in their date almost back to primitive Christianity, which may be

referred to as containing the books which are now considered canonical. Putting all these proofs together, we think there can scarcely be a doubt remaining that the books now received as genuine are so; and that they should be so received by all.

SCRIPTURE VERSUS SCIENCE.

Another query, often suggested at the present day, is, or rather *respects*, the apparent contrariety between the Bible and the teachings of philosophy or natural science.

One form which this scepticism assumes is in relation to some of the miracles recorded in both the Old and New Testaments. In my remarks under the head of miracles, I aimed to meet this difficulty; for, if the definition there given of a miracle be correct, there is nothing either absurd or unreasonable in the fact that, for *a great moral consideration*, the laws of nature by Him who imposed them may, for a season, be suspended or reversed.

Certainly God could make the sun appear to stand still; he could detain the light, apparently, or even really; and, being omnipotent, could prevent any disaster which might, according to

scientific calculations, attend such an arrest of the order of the universe. What has science to say, when *Omnipotence* is concerned?

So in regard to many other miracles, which were wrought in contravention of physical laws: it is this very fact, which makes them miraculous, and which alone gives them value as attesting the inspiration of God's word. You can't believe this and that, because it is contradicted by science? Is *that* the ground to take, when nothing but miracles can authenticate a divine commission? How can it ever be ascertained that God has given a revelation, unless he shall thus set his seal to it? On this ground, you must deny the possibility of an authentic revelation.

The grand question to be considered is, Are the proofs clear and convincing that such miracles by God's power were wrought? Read the evidences adduced in this book, and then deny the fact if you can!

It is easy for scientific men to insinuate their objections, and for German scholars to find in the miracles only some oriental legend, or myth, or allegory; but the simple narration of scripture declaring these miracles cannot be thus easily set aside.

Similar objections have been made in regard to some other points; as, for example, *the unity of the human race*, all descending, as the Scriptures declare, from one pair, all involved in the sin of that first Adam, and to be redeemed and saved by the intervention of the second Adam, "the Lord from heaven"—a great truth, lying at the foundation of the system of redemption.

It is easy to get up a popular objection to this idea of the unity of the race, from the diversity of appearance and complexion in the different tribes of men; and it sounds very plausible to institute analogies between animals and men, and even between men and vegetables, to talk learnedly about development and classification, and thus indirectly aim to discredit the word of God.

But science owes too much to the Bible to undertake to weaken its influence over the public mind and conscience. By such an attempt she is committing direct suicide. With an authentic, Heaven-inspired Bible she rose; and when she proves it a forgery, if that were possible, she inflicts on herself her own death-wound.

The young mind cannot be too well guarded, in these days of scientific lectures and books of science,—falsely so called,—wherein insinua-

tions are at times thrown out, as to the credibility of some of the scriptural statements, or endeavoring to explain them so as to do away all their force, and discredit the whole book in which they are recorded.

Having once settled the point that this book is from God, let nothing weaken the force of that conviction; but to all objections founded on human reasoning, or apparent deductions of science, oppose this grand idea: God has inspired this book, and God is omnipotent. He can write things above my reason in its present reach; and he can, for great moral considerations, reverse or suspend the laws of nature which he has himself imposed.

PLENARY INSPIRATION.

Some believe the Bible as a *whole*,—think it inspired for the most part, consider it as of sacred obligation as to most things which it reveals,—but they have much to say in the way of exceptions. There are mixed up with its revelations, as they think, many orientalisms and exaggerations, and many things were the result of Jewish ideas and prejudices, and other things grew out of the superstitions of the times, or of the prevailing

philosophy, &c. Now, such latitudinarianism as this goes far to overturn the entire fabric of Bible truth, and prepares the way for open and rank infidelity.

One will except to one thing, and another to another, and soon there will be no Bible left. This crevasse began to be opened about thirty years ago in New England, and now the stream of infidelity is rushing and roaring with an impetuosity which threatens to sweep away the very churches which originated it. A half-inspired Bible is all that infidelity asks; and especially when it is left to every man to say what part he thinks inspired, and what part not inspired. This is all infidelity asks; and, with this conceded, she will scatter forever what little faith is left in God's word, even by those who still call themselves Christians.

Let us, then, hold fast to our Bibles as inspired, believing that, if things are contained therein which we cannot see the bearings of, or which may be above our comprehension, yet that there may be a reason in the divine mind for their insertion, and that what we know not now we shall know hereafter, when "we shall see face to face, and when we shall know as we are known."

INFIDELS CONVERTED BY THE SCRIPTURES.

There are some remarkable instances of the conversion of sceptics by the Bible itself, when reading it with a view to its refutation. Such, it is said, was the case with Lord Lyttleton, whose *Life of St. Paul* has been given as the result of his faith in a book the truth of which he had doubted, if not rejected, but which, upon a careful perusal, he found to be the wisdom and the power of God. Among other things, this nobleman was led particularly to examine the life, character, and conversion of St. Paul; and the conclusion forced upon him by such investigation was not only that this eminent Jew was converted to Christianity, but that the circumstances of his conversion, and his subsequent career, gave proof indisputable that the religion of Christ was entitled to the claim of a divinely-inspired system.

In a letter to Gilbert West, Esq., he says :
“ In a late conversation we had together upon the subject of the Christian religion, I told you that, besides all the proofs of it which may be drawn from the prophecies of the Old Testament, from the necessary connection it has with

the whole system of the Jewish religion, from the miracles of Christ, and from the evidence given of his resurrection by all the other apostles, I thought the conversion and the apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, was of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine revelation." And, in the conclusion of his observations on the life of St. Paul, he says, referring to the difficulties which a sceptical mind encounters in the Bible: "The only part, therefore, that can be taken is to account, in the best manner that our weak reason is able to do, for such seeming objections; and, where that fails, to acknowledge its weakness, and acquiesce under the certainty that our very imperfect knowledge or judgment cannot be the measure of the divine wisdom, or the universal standard of truth. So, likewise, it is with respect to the Christian religion. Some difficulties occur in that revelation which human reason can hardly clear; but, as the truth of it stands upon evidence so strong and convincing that it cannot be denied without much greater difficulties than those which attend the belief of it, as I have before endeavored to prove, we ought not to reject it upon such objections, however mortifying they may be to our pride.

That, indeed, would have all things made plain to us; but God has thought proper to proportion our knowledge to our wants, not to our pride.”

Gilbert West, Esq.

At the time that West and Lyttleton lived and wrote, about a hundred years ago, infidelity was the order of the day, especially among a certain class of educated and influential minds. The Scriptures, if alluded to, were spoken of with contempt. But West, who had imbibed the prevalent notions,—or, rather, who had more doubts than belief in regard to the Christian religion,—having read certain treatises impugning the veracity of the apostles in regard to the resurrection of Christ, determined to take up this one department of the Christian faith, and examine it for himself. This he did as an accurate lawyer would do in any serious and important case which might be submitted to him. His account of the matter is as follows: “The following *observations*,” he modestly remarks, “took their rise from a pamphlet entitled ‘The Resurrection of Jesus Considered, in answer to the Trial of the Witnesses, by a Moral Philosopher;’ the author of which, in order to overturn

the testimony of the evangelists, has attempted to show that they contradict each other in the accounts they have given of the fact. To this pamphlet there came out two learned and ingenious answers; but I must confess that I was not so fully satisfied with their manner of clearing the sacred writers from the contradictions charged upon them. This set me upon reading and examining with attention the Scriptures themselves; and, with no other bias than what arose from the astonishment I was under, at finding writers who, for above these sixteen hundred years, have been reputed holy and inspired, charged with such a contrariety in their accounts as ill agree with either of those epithets. Of the truth of this charge, therefore, I acknowledge I had great difficulty to persuade myself. And, indeed, it was not long before I discovered, as I imagined, the vanity and weakness of such an imputation; which, however, I cannot style altogether groundless, since it has an appearance of being founded in the words of the gospel, though in reality that foundation lies no deeper than the outside and surface of the words. Neither will I call it malicious, since, having, upon further inquiry, found it to be of a very ancient date, I know not the first

authors of it, and consequently can form no judgment of their intentions. What I have to offer in defence of the evangelists is built, in like manner, upon the sacred text, whose true meaning I have endeavored to investigate and prove, by comparing their several accounts with each other, and noting the agreement and disagreement of the circumstances.

“ But, although the clearing the sacred writers from the imputation of contradicting each other was the principal, and, indeed, sole object I had in view; yet, having in the pursuit of this object perceived the light breaking in upon me still more and more the further I advanced, and discovering to me, almost at every step, some new circumstances which tended to illustrate and confirm the testimony given by these inspired historians to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I was induced by these discoveries to go very far beyond my first design, into a consideration of the evidences of this great and important article; — not those only recorded in the sacred writings, but others arising from subsequent events and facts, of which we have, by several ways, many clear and unquestionable proofs.

“ The method in which I have proceeded in

this consideration is as follows : I have begun with laying down the order in which the several incidents related by the evangelists appear to have happened ; and, in the next place, I have made some observations upon the method and manner in which the proofs of this astonishing event were laid before the apostles, who were appointed to bear witness of it to all the world. And to these I have, in the third place, added an exact and rigorous examination of the proofs themselves ; from all which I have endeavored to show that the resurrection of Christ was most fairly and fully proved to the apostles and disciples, those first converts and preachers of Christianity.”

“From this account of the rise, progress, and design of these observations, the reader will perceive that they were first begun with the view of obtaining satisfaction for myself upon some difficulties in the evangelical history of the resurrection ; and that they are now published with the hopes of their being as useful to others as they have been to me. This is the chief, if not the sole end that a layman can reasonably propose to himself in publishing anything upon a subject of this nature ; for I am not ignorant how little reputation is to be gained by writing

on the side of Christianity, which by many people is regarded as a superstitious fable, not worth the thoughts of a wise man, and considered by more as a mere political scheme, calculated to serve the power and interest of the clergy only. How absolutely groundless both these opinions are, will easily appear to any one who will take the pains to examine fairly and impartially the proofs and doctrines of the Christian religion; proofs established upon facts, the surest foundations of evidence, and doctrines derived from inspiration from the great Author of reason and Father of all mankind. Whoever hath either neglected or refused to make this examination can have no right to pass his judgment upon Christianity, and should, methinks, for the same reason, be somewhat cautious of censuring those who acknowledge it to be of divine institution; especially as he will find in the list of Christians the great and venerable names of Bacon, Milton, Boyle, Locke, and Newton,—names to whose authority everything should submit but truth; to whom they themselves thought it not beneath their superior talents to submit, though she required them to believe in Christ.”

Another Instance.

Travelling at the South, in the year 1826, I was pained to find infidelity prevalent among leading and respectable men. The Bible was regarded by many as a book fit only for the weak and the credulous, whilst the works of infidels were in high repute. Still, as a clergyman, I was received with respect, and entertained with a generous hospitality, even by those who denied the faith that was dear to me. Occasionally, however, it was my pleasure to meet with one who had relinquished his dark creed, and had cordially embraced the truth as it is in Jesus. The history of such conversions interested me greatly, as illustrating the grace of God, and as confirming the truth of the Scriptures. An instance of this kind came under my personal observation, which I will describe.

Dr. B., a highly influential citizen of the State of Georgia, had long professed himself a disbeliever in the Bible as a divine revelation. In fact, he had never allowed a copy of the Scriptures to come into his family. It was a book which he habitually derided, considering it as a mere collection of fables, got up by priestly artifice for sinister purposes. As might be ex-

pected, Dr. B.'s moral conduct corresponded with his infidel notions,—that is, it was loose in the extreme. His was emphatically an irreligious household. The children were entirely without religious culture, and were, of course, destitute of all the restraints and amenities which Christianity furnishes where her moral teachings are admitted. For, say what they will, infidels are obliged often to confess that our religion has an effect to purify and sweeten the sources of domestic bliss. But, in this family, religion was a word never named but with a sneer, and its professors were never alluded to but for the sake of ridicule. Dr. B. was addicted to gambling. He was passionately fond of the cock-pit, and not unfrequently selected the Sabbath as the day most convenient for the indulgence of this vice. He would travel many miles on a Sabbath morning to meet his boon companions, and engage in this odious form of gambling. How shocking, to think of desecrating God's holy day by a sport so cruel, and a practice so vile and degrading! But infidelity stupefies the conscience, and obliterates the sentiment even of natural pity and humanity.

It so happened that in the town where Dr.


B. resided an auction of household furniture took place, which the doctor attended. He had no particular motive for going to this auction, except to see how his neighbor's chattels went off, — a matter of mere curiosity with him, as he wanted no additional household wares, — but he felt inclined to go and witness the sale. To be there without bidding on any article seemed to him not exactly the thing; so, when an old family Bible was put up, he thought he would bid on that, — not out of any respect that he had for the book, but more probably out of sport, and to create a smirk among his neighbors, who knew him to be an avowed infidel. But another motive influenced him, as he informed me. The Bible contained a great many pictures, which he thought would amuse his younger children; and he determined on that account to have it. It was knocked down to him, and, taking it home, he threw it down on to the floor, saying, “There, children! you will find some pretty pictures in that book.” The children seized it, and very soon divided the pictures among them, scattering the leaves about in every direction. Every now and then a leaf would be picked up and thrown into the fire. One Sabbath morning, when Dr. B. was preparing to visit a neighbor-

ing town to engage in his favorite mode of gambling, he was in the act of shaving, and, not finding a piece of paper in his pocket to wipe his razor upon, he glanced around the room, and discovered a leaf of the old Bible. Before he used it for the purpose he had in view, a pang of conscience suddenly was felt. "This," said he to himself, "is the last remnant of that old Bible; I will see what there is on it before I use it." So he sat down and read. Among other things, it contained the words, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Having read it through, he used it for shaving-paper, and prepared to start on his journey. "But somehow," said he, "those words, 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon,' kept ringing in my ear; and I found myself actually repeating them, without much reflection as to their meaning or application. But, the further I went, and the nearer I drew to the end of my ride, the more those words sank into my soul. I tried to shake off the impression; called myself a fool for thinking a moment on the subject; and, when I began the sport, entered with more than ordinary enthusiasm into the play. My bets were large and reckless, and I lost much money on the occasion. At length, I turned my

face homeward. But now I was a miserable man. My life of sin stared me in the face; my conscience, once roused, spoke in thunder-tones of my guilt. Still rang in my ear and in my soul those dreadful words, 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.' I had been serving Mammon all my days, and God I had wholly neglected. Conviction of sin fastened itself strongly in my mind; and I could scarce maintain my position in the saddle, so wretched and forlorn was my condition. When I got home, my first business seemed to be to find a place of retirement, and to cry to insulted Heaven for mercy and forgiveness. This I did, and kept on praying, until, by the grace of God, mercy came, and hope to the chief of sinners dawned upon my soul; and now, sir, that precious Book, which I had so long despised, which I had treated with such contempt, suffering it to be torn to pieces by my children, taking the last leaf to wipe my razor upon,—that precious Book, by one short sentence, and that the last that my eyes rested upon, convicted me of sin, brought me to see my lost state, and led me to the cross of Jesus as the only hope set before me. Can I, sir, fail to love the Bible, or can I be in doubt that its words are spirit and life, and that,

without note or comment, it can reach the conscience and convert the soul?" Dr. B. became a member of the Methodist church, and at the time I visited him was exerting a widespread and happy influence on the community among whom he resided. His family was now a truly Christian household. The now venerated Bible had a prominent place in it; and the morning and evening sacrifice ascended, as I doubt not, acceptable to God. The Sabbath, instead of being desecrated as heretofore, was now a day consecrated to divine worship. How great the change! What a providence was that which led the infidel to the auction; which put the Scriptures into his hand, and which preserved that last mutilated leaf, which, as he observed, was so torn and defaced that he could not make out much more than the words, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon;" what a providence, I say, in all this! And who can doubt that the finger of God was there; or that the Bible, which accomplished so great and glorious a change in him and in his family, is a work other than that which it claims to be,—the inspired oracles of God? A book which can convert the gambler and the profane swearer into the moral and upright citizen, which can

throw over a household the atmosphere of the affections, and infuse the spirit of love among all its members,—a revolution which was effected in Dr. B. and his family,—such a book surely claims a respectful perusal even from those who may be so unfortunate as to have discredited its divine original.



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