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BULFINCH, S. G.
(STEPHEN GREENLEAF)

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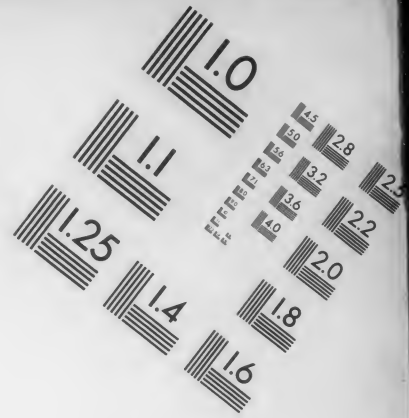
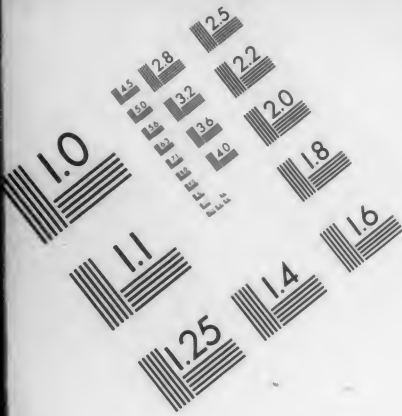


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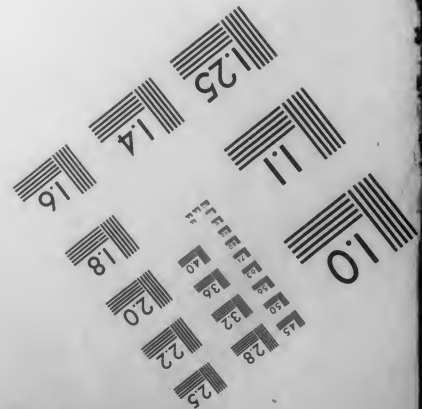
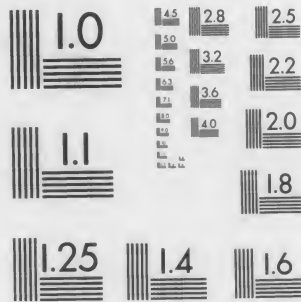
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STUDIES

IN THE

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

(BY)

STEPHEN G. BULFINCH, D.D.,

(AUTHOR OF "MANUAL OF THE EVIDENCES.")

BOSTON:

WILLIAM V. SPENCER,

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TO
JOHN GORHAM PALFREY, D.D., LL.D.,
PASTOR, THEOLOGIAN, STATESMAN, HISTORIAN;
AND, IN ALL POSITIONS,
FAITHFUL TO FREEDOM AND TO TRUTH,
This Volume
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,
BY
ONE OF HIS PUPILS.

2125

P R E F A C E.

THE brief "Manual of the Evidences of Christianity," published in 1866, was intended chiefly as a class-book. In preparing it, however, the author could not have satisfied himself or others, had he acted merely as a compiler. The arguments brought against historical Christianity in our age are very different from those which were formerly urged; the attitude of its opponents is more respectful, their theories are more ingenious, their pleas more specious, than in former times. Recent investigation has shown new means of defence for the truth, while it compels the candid defender to hesitate before using some that were formerly employed. In preparing, therefore, a small volume for the use of Academic and Sunday Classes, the author felt it his duty to go over the whole ground, accepting no conclusion and repeating no argument of previous writers without such examination as should convince his own mind that no valid objection lay against it.

The preparation of the "Manual," therefore, left

results which could not be compressed within the intended volume. During the three years which have since passed, the author has devoted the leisure he could command to further researches in the same direction. With this fresh labor he has combined a revision of former studies, and of articles published from time to time in the "Christian Examiner" and the "Monthly Religious Magazine." He has endeavored to avoid repeating what he had said in the "Manual," except where this was necessary to clearness of expression. To several friends, whose aid has been kindly given to his investigations, he returns his grateful acknowledgments.

It is but just to himself to state, that this work was far advanced, and the first two or three chapters of it in the printer's hands, before he saw either of the valuable articles, by Dr. James Freeman Clarke, now publishing in the "Atlantic Monthly Magazine."

The present work, though connected with the former, may be read independently of it; nor does it supersede the other for the purpose for which that was designed. The two, however, may most suitably be used in succession; the "Manual" as giving to the student a general view of the subject, and this book as investigating more fully those portions of it which are, at the present time, of most interest and importance.

S. G. B.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., May, 1869.

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EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE Christian religion has been, for eighteen hundred years, regarded by its adherents as of supernatural origin, — a revelation from God, communicated by peculiar inspiration, and attested by miracles. Those who denied to it this character have seldom professed to be its followers or its friends. At present the case is different. Christianity, as a supernatural revelation, is the object of attack, — frequent, bold, and ably conducted, — on the part of persons who claim the Christian name, and exercise the office of Christian ministers.

About forty years ago, controversy in New England had scarcely ever touched the authority of revelation. The community at large entertained no doubt of the divine mission and the miraculous credentials of Jesus Christ, however they might be divided respecting his rank in the universe, or the influence of his death. The theological student might indeed meet such doubt; it came before him in the regular course of his studies; he

looked over, with little interest, a few of the old English Deists, and with more attention examined the arguments of Hume; but the standard replies removed his fears lest the foundations of his faith should be unsound; and so the subject was dismissed, and the mind turned willingly to themes that were occupying public attention. Very different is the state of opinion and feeling now. The topics that were then chiefly discussed excite but little interest; not because they are unimportant in themselves, but because the arguments on both sides have been so often and so fully presented. The doubts of the present day relate to the authority of Christianity itself.

To many, however, these doubts appear of small importance. Religion, they say, has its true place in the heart, not in the understanding. Those among us who deny the especial divine mission of Jesus Christ yet own him to be the best of teachers, and ascribe to him an inspiration, superior in degree, though similar in kind, to that which has been shared by all great minds,—by Moses and Socrates, by Homer and Shakspeare. Truth cannot be more true because it comes from the lips of Jesus; and if we receive the truth with love and obedience, it will matter little whether we admit all the claims that are made for him who brings it. By such arguments as these, many who reverence the Savior are deluded into thinking that there is really no important difference between belief in him and rejection of his claims. They do not consider that there may be truths which are not self-evident, but revealed from heaven by an authoritative messenger, and that the veracity and the whole moral character of the Savior are implicated in

the correctness of his assertions respecting his own commission.

We would be far from denying the moral excellence of many who reject supernatural Christianity. None can doubt their sincerity and their courage. They often exhibit in their conduct the influence of the religion whose holy lessons they learned in childhood. But the dangerous influence of the opinions they hold, though thus neutralized in them, will show itself, we fear, in another generation, educated in a Christianity which has been deprived of its authority. Already we find, as might be expected, among those who hold these views, an indifference to public worship and disuse of Christian ordinances. It is intimated too, that, however great the benefits conferred on the world by Jesus, the honor now paid to him interferes with the freedom of the mind and the progress of truth; and that it were well that his name, like the names of other great teachers of the past, should cease to be prominently brought forward. But in our own view it is the person of Christ, the manifestation of divine holiness and love in his character, and especially the exhibition of them in his death, which has, more than aught else, subjected to his religion the hearts of mankind. A cold system of philosophy can never move the world. To do this, requires an object that can engage our affections. Such an object—a Mediator, an image of the Father's moral perfection—is more than ever necessary to us now, under the tendency of modern science to substitute the conception of the laws of nature for the idea of a personal God. We will not enlarge, however, on the serious consequences to public morals which may be anticipated from the prev-

alence of the opinions to which we refer. If those opinions are true, our fears are vain: let the truth prevail, and it will vindicate itself. We object not to the zeal with which such views are advanced by those who sincerely believe them; but we who regard them as untrue cannot but consider them as also morally dangerous. If God has indeed given us a revelation, it must have been because a revelation was needed; and the treasure which we thus possess we feel bound to defend, by whatever arguments we can fairly employ, and thus to do our part for its transmission unimpaired to those who shall come after us.

To understand the present state of the controversy with regard to the claims of Christianity, it is necessary to look into the history of the past. For this purpose we must first extend a glance beyond the Atlantic.

The country which, for a century past, has taken the lead in philosophical and theological speculation is Germany. Her learned men, patient and laborious, examine deeply whatever subject engages their attention. The peculiar constitution of the country has produced a singular combination of freedom in opinion with restraint in regard to form. Germany is so tolerant of new opinions that it has little occasion to be tolerant of new sects. A man born a Lutheran remains a Lutheran, in regard to the outward forms of the Church. But so long as he observes these forms, or at least sets up no other in opposition to them, he may believe, preach, and write what he pleases, from the highest Calvinism to the lowest Naturalism. As the whole country is divided into numerous states, each governed by its own prince, if a scholar of eminence is out of favor at one

court or university, he may very probably find employment and honor at another. Hence arises a great variety of opinions, together with the utmost boldness in expressing them.

The sceptical spirit with regard to the authority of Christianity, which had manifested itself in the English Deists and the French Encyclopedists, made its first marked impression in Germany through the writings of Hermann Samuel Reimarus, Professor of Philosophy in Hamburg. In 1754, three years after the commencement of the "Encyclopédie" in France, Reimarus published a work on "The Principal Truths of Natural Religion." This was followed by the remarkable Essays, known as the "Wolfenbüttel Fragments." They were written by Reimarus, and circulated in manuscript among his friends; but coming into the hands of the famous Lessing, at that time Librarian at Wolfenbüttel, he gave them to the world as "Fragments of an Anonymous Writer" (Fragmente eines Ungeannten), pretending that he had found them in the library under his charge. The theory of these Fragments was, that the plan of Jesus was political in its nature, and was defeated by the Jewish authorities; that his disciples invented the story of his resurrection, and modified his system as circumstances required. The publication of these Fragments, commenced in 1773, created a strong sensation. Among the theologians of Germany who rallied in defence of their religion, two classes soon became marked. The majority adhered to all which they had been accustomed to receive and teach. Others, however, believed that, in order to defend the essential truth of religion, it was necessary to distinguish it, by

a careful and independent criticism, from all which was justly liable to the attacks of the new infidelity. Hence came the movement to which the name of Rationalism is most distinctly given. It was an attempt to apply the principles of reason to the interpretation of Scripture, — a worthy purpose, for true reason and a true revelation can never contradict each other. If, in the prosecution of that purpose, many were led to abandon important truth, this result should not render us insensible to the aid which biblical criticism has derived from the labors of those eminent theologians by whom it was undertaken.

Prominent among these were Semler, Michaelis, and Eichhorn. By the last, especially, the attempt was made to explain the Old Testament and some portions of the New on the principle of mythical interpretation. This is nothing else than the idea, to some extent correct, that the narratives which we meet are to be understood, not as literally true, but as expressing what was believed at the time when they were written. A myth, or mythic story, is a narrative, either conveying truth in the form of fable, or, more usually, conveying some portion of original truth adorned and magnified by the additions it has received from the successive persons who have related it, one to another, until it reached the historian who committed it to writing. The earliest part of the Bible, especially, was thought to possess this character. The story of Adam and Eve, in their temptation, fall, and expulsion from the Garden of Eden, was explained, not unnaturally, to be a mythic or figurative account of the process by which man — whether it be the individual or the race — loses the happiness of innocence. The

account of the building of the Tower of Babel, and the consequent dispersion of mankind, was regarded as a myth of a different description, the narrative of a real event, but magnified and adorned with supernatural incidents, from the imagination of successive relaters of the story.

This mythic system of interpretation was by many writers used in a reverent spirit, and without a denial of the especial divine commission and miraculous works of the Savior. The sceptical tendency, however, which was first indicated and encouraged by the writings of Reimarus, continued to develop itself, and employed against Christianity a method of criticism which was but a bolder application of that which had been used in its explanation and defence. The disposition to undervalue, and ultimately to reject the miracles, derived strength also from the rise of a system of philosophy which sought for the evidence of truth only within the soul.

This system, the Transcendental, introduced by Immanuel Kant, presents a subject too vast for more than a superficial view. We can best describe it to the general reader by saying that it teaches us to look to the instincts of our nature. Bacon and Locke had taught the world to seek truth by looking around; Kant and his followers sought it by looking within. The disciples of the former busied themselves in collecting evidence, comparing known facts, and reasoning out truth from these; the latter watched the utterance of the individual consciousness, and deduced thence their philosophy. Innate ideas, intuitive knowledge, these were the basis of the new system. Kant compared his method to that of Copernicus, who, dissatisfied with the attempts of his predecessors to explain the motions of the heavenly

bodies, sought instead to understand his own, and, in learning that he moved round the sun, found the key to the explanation of all other motion. Thus from the study of the human mind itself did Kant derive the knowledge of the universe. A beautiful instance of this is found in his second great work, the "Investigation of the Practical Reason" (*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*), where, from man's consciousness of a moral law, he proves first the freedom of the will; then the existence of a moral world, a perfection unattainable in time, and therefore implying and proving eternal life; and lastly, the existence of the perfect Ruler of this perfect world, the Moral Governor and God of all. Kant's own character was pure and noble, his life of eighty years was rich in works of benevolence, and his death marked by fortitude and submission. "I do not fear death," he said, "for I know how to die. I assure you that if I knew this night was to be my last, I would raise my hands and say, 'God be praised!' The case would be far different if I had ever caused the misery of any of his creatures."

The system introduced by this great philosopher drew attention to a class of truths which had not received sufficient regard from previous modern writers. We recognize something noble, true, and divine in the thought that the seemingly spontaneous utterance of man's heart is from the source of all truth,—that every human being is in some degree inspired. Yet we cannot but perceive that this conception, if taken too unrestrictedly, is capable of leading to false and dangerous inferences. It is a possible thing to mistake the dictate of passion which ought to be restrained, for that pure

impulse which ought to be obeyed; and he who makes it his rule to "act up to his nature," and look within him for his only guide, may find himself obeying that evil "law of his members" which wars against the "law of his spirit." But the tendency of the Transcendental philosophy with which we have now chiefly to do is that which relates to a miraculous revelation. Many, indeed, who hold that philosophy are believers, not only in historical Christianity, but in what is called its Orthodox form; but with many others the influence of this system has produced a different result. To such it has suggested thoughts like these: If truth be innate in the soul, what need is there of a revelation to communicate it? If truth be discernible at first sight, what need of miracles to prove it? It was the obvious tendency of Transcendentalism to disparage and treat as unimportant all outward evidence. Many of the writers of that school did not so much deny the truth of the Christian miracles as their value for purposes of proof, declaring that the intrinsic beauty and excellence of the religion were proof enough for them, and that miracles could add nothing to the strength of their belief.

The great thoughts of Kant became the inspiration for a host of writers. The poet Schiller compared him to a single rich man feeding numerous beggars; to a king whose buildings give employment to an army of laborers. Yet among the successors of Kant were men whose ability and whose fame appear second only to his. Such were Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, in the last of whom philosophy seemed to many to reach its greatest height of sublimity, to others its lowest depth of absurdity. The views of Hegel tended

towards Pantheism, which confuses the Divine Being with the universe which he created. According to this writer, the Divine Being is everywhere present in nature, but comes to consciousness of himself only in man. To us this statement seems incompatible with the infinity of God, and even with his personal existence as distinct from his works. Many of the disciples of this philosopher, however, understood it differently. Some of them were zealous defenders of the orthodox system, and in the idea of God's coming to self-consciousness in man they recognized the Church doctrine of the Divine Incarnation in Christ. Hegel himself regarded his system as reconciling philosophy with the Christian religion and its established institutions; and one of his later public addresses was a eulogy on the principles of the Lutheran Church, as embodied in the Augsburg Confession. Very different was the course of Schopenhauer, another disciple of Kant, whose philosophic wanderings found their close in the dreary regions of Atheism and Pessimism.

Contemporaneous with Hegel was the celebrated and excellent Schleiermacher, who was born in 1768, and died in 1834. In 1799 he published his "Discourses on Religion, addressed to the Cultivated among its Contemners." With this work commenced a better day for the religious life of Germany. Schleiermacher recognizes, as essential to a true religious philosophy, a personal experience of the need and value of religion. The soul then realizes a consciousness of its own immortal nature, and of its dependence upon God. Ther from the same Christian consciousness are developed the great doctrines of the Christian faith, the soul com-

ing into vital union with the Savior, who, while one with God, is at the same time the ideal of humanity. Thus by the path of the Transcendental Philosophy does this great teacher arrive at the same reverent and loving recognition of the Son of God which thousands of obscure disciples have obtained by the simpler testimony of the written word.

While we must view with respect the learning, ability, and piety of Schleiermacher, we discern even in him the tendency of his philosophical system to weaken the regard of its disciples for the outward, and especially for the supernatural, evidence of the gospel. Schleiermacher, indeed, did not reject the miraculous. He admitted the necessity of one miracle, in the introduction of a new element of purity and power into the world in the person of Jesus Christ, the first of the human race to whom was granted a full consciousness of the Divine presence. The great change thus effected he considered as nothing less than a new creation. He admitted, too, that the miraculous element cannot be removed from the Gospels without throwing doubt on the whole connection of their accounts. But from his ground, miracles appear, not as proofs of Christianity, but as incumbrances to it. He, and many German theologians, yielded to the tendency to undervalue outward proof, because they possessed a substitute which they regarded as more valuable. It is unjust, therefore, to denounce Transcendentalism indiscriminately as the denial of Christianity; it is enough to say that it depreciates that species of evidence on which in preceding ages its defenders had chiefly been accustomed to rest its claims.

The Transcendental system, however, as modified by

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Hegel, involved consequences, not admitted indeed by that philosopher, but which, in the fearless logic of Feuerbach, appeared not only as the denial of Christianity, but as avowed Atheism. Others, as Bruno Bauer, denouncing even Feuerbach as inconsistent, found in the depth of Atheism a lower deep. To use the words of an author, himself widely removed from belief in supernatural Christianity, "These writers made it their express employment to daub with abuse, to stamp as by-words, to banish from the actual world as spectres, not religion alone, no! all ideal powers, whatever names they might bear, all moral ordinances of the State as of society, all love and inspiration, which raises itself above the miserable first person singular." (Schwarz, "Zur Geschichte der neuesten Theologie," page 228.)

While writers of this class, to follow the expression of the author just quoted, were placing the gravestone of a great philosophic movement in Berlin, where Kant had made its commencement, and while the more moderate school of Schleiermacher still revered Christianity on the evidence of their own hearts, not denying its miraculous character, but not depending upon it, there were others who entirely rejected the supernatural element, yet continued to bear the Christian name. There were strong inducements to prevent them from laying it aside.

They derived their support from the Christian institutions of their country, holding places of emolument as pastors and professors of Divinity. And apart from any personal interest, they might from higher motives seek some middle way between the old belief which

they had abandoned and an attitude of hostility to that religion which they saw was the main support of private morals and public order. The problem, then, to be worked out was, how to reconcile a rejection of all that is miraculous in Christianity with the retention of the Christian name.

Various were the methods adopted to achieve this difficult undertaking. Dr. Paulus, in his "Commentary on the New Testament," and his "Life of Jesus," the latter work published in 1828, attempted to explain every miracle in such a manner as at once to preserve the veracity of the Gospels, and do away with everything supernatural. Thus, in Matthew xvii. 27, he represents that Peter was directed to catch a fish and sell it, as the means of procuring the needed money. Other writers brought to the common cause the suggestion that Jesus had some coadjutors, unknown to the apostles and evangelists, and by whose aid he performed these apparent miracles. Others more prudently attempted no explanation, contenting themselves with preaching on the moral lessons of the gospel, and passing over in silence, or treating as allegory whatever they did not recognize as fact. At length the mythic theory was brought to its perfection through the labors chiefly of Dr. David Frederick Strauss.

As the views of this writer have been discussed in our "Manual," and will again come before us in the following pages, we will not enlarge upon them here, except to notice the very curious examination, in the concluding sections of Strauss's "Life of Jesus," of the problem recently spoken of, how a clergyman is to reconcile the rejection of the miraculous with the reten-

tion of the Christian name. It is there pointed out that the gospel story, however false in itself, has a true meaning. If it be not true that God was incarnate in the man Jesus, it is true that the Infinite enters into, and manifests itself in the finite. The true Christ, the true Son of God, is not a single man, but all mankind. "Humanity is the union of the two natures, — it is the child of the visible Mother and the invisible Father, Nature and Spirit; it is the worker of miracles, in so far as in the course of human history the spirit more completely subjugates nature," and so on. ("Life of Jesus," § 151.) "It is an evidence of an uncultivated mind to denounce as a hypocrite a theologian who preaches, for example, on the resurrection of Christ, since, though he may not believe in the reality of that event as a single sensible fact, he may, nevertheless, hold to be true the representation of the process of spiritual life, which the resurrection of Christ affords." (§ 152.) Strauss, indeed, answers in part this sophistry, which, with all his errors, he was too manly to take as his own guide; but his production of it, and the lengthened account he gives of the devices by which an unbeliever may reconcile it to his conscience to retain his place as a Christian minister, with his cautious avoidance of a decision on the subject, sufficiently indicate that the instances were neither few nor obscure in which such unworthy conduct had been pursued.

Since the production of his first great work, the "Life of Jesus," the views of Dr. Strauss became modified to some extent by those of another eminent scholar, who had formerly been Strauss's instructor, Dr. Ferdinand Christian Baur, Professor at Tübingen, — views which

have been ably supported not only by him, but by many younger writers, who with himself are known as "The Tübingen School." It is the boast of this school to apply to scriptural criticism not the facts alone, but the philosophy, of history. To those who differ from them, they appear sometimes rather to reconstruct history from imagination. The theory of the Tübingen school may be characterized as that of "Tendency." The books of the New Testament were mostly written, they conceive, not by simple-minded men, keeping in view their professed object, but by authors who had each his especial purpose to serve, his *tendency*, to the promotion of which he consciously or unconsciously made his narrative to conform. None can deny to Dr. Baur the praise of vast learning and great acuteness; but his reasoning sometimes reminds the reader of a pyramid standing on its point. The foundation bears no fair proportion to the structure built upon it. Long and circumstantial narratives of the sacred writers are discredited, on account of inferences acutely drawn from a few texts. Thus the statement, given in Galatians ii. 11, of a difference between Peter and Paul in a single instance, is made the chief proof of a total disagreement between those two apostles; and on such ground the Book of Acts is pronounced to be, not authentic history, but a falsified account, which owed its origin to a "reconciling tendency." Two texts in the Apocalypse establish the conclusion that its writer was bitterly opposed to the teaching of Paul; and Dr. Baur, reversing the decision of antiquity, considers the Apocalypse as having a higher claim to be recognized as the work of John than the Gospel which bears his name. The inference is readily drawn

that the original apostles — Peter, John, and their companions — believed as their Master had taught them; and the religion, as they received it from him, and communicated it to others, was a mere form of Judaism, not a system for all mankind. It was Paul, we are told, who, deriving his commission, not from Jesus nor his earlier followers, but from his own fervid genius, whose inspiration he took for the voice of Heaven, received this imperfect and narrow system, freed it from its Jewish restrictions, and made it a religion such as all nations could receive. But having no acquaintance with the real Jesus, who was simply a Jewish teacher of morality, he substituted for him a fiction of his own, a divine being whose chief object in coming into the world was to die as a sacrifice for its sins. Thus, according to Dr. Baur, grew Christianity. Strange that he should have continued to rank himself among its teachers!

Among recent European writers who have followed in the path of Rationalism, we have occasion only to mention Renan and Schenkel. While agreeing with their predecessors in utterly discrediting the miraculous element in Christianity, these writers exhibit a decided reaction in their warmer appreciation of the character of the Savior, and in their recognition of the delineation of that character in the fourth Gospel. Renan was disposed to regard that Gospel as written by John. Schenkel, while assenting to the teaching of Baur, of its later origin and unhistorical character, still maintains, with singular inconsistency, that its author, an unknown writer of the second century, entered more fully into the spirit of Jesus than the disciples who had sat at his feet, and communicated to the world what they had heard

from him. These modifications of the former destructive criticism are significant.

It must not be supposed that the assailants of supernatural Christianity in Germany have been left in undisputed possession of the field. The ancient faith of the Church has been illustrated by such names as Tholuck, Neander, Ewald, Dorner, Tischendorf, with many less celebrated; and the balance of opinion at present is said to incline in favor of the recognition of the Christian Scriptures as authentic, and of Jesus Christ as the divinely commissioned Savior of mankind.

The Transcendental Philosophy first attracted public attention in this country about 1830. The rich treasures of German literature had then become better known than before, and were in this neighborhood received with the more interest from the enthusiasm excited by the personal character and romantic history of Dr. Follen, an exile from Germany for his liberal opinions on political subjects, and the freedom with which he had expressed them. This excellent man, as gentle as he was brave, after some professional study with Dr. Channing, entered the ministry, and soon became a highly acceptable preacher, though in a language which he had but recently learned. His participation in the anti-slavery effort impaired his popularity; yet he was about to enter on the duties of a village pastor, when God took him to himself. Dr. Follen was a reverent believer in Christianity, as divinely given and miraculously attested.

In 1836, the publication here of Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" presented the quaint but interesting picture of a German student, of great learning, but far re-

moved from the habits of common life, first losing himself in a wilderness of universal doubt, then restored to peace and self-content by fixing his mental eye upon the light within. In 1838, Mr. R. W. Emerson, who had, some years before, resigned his pastoral charge on conscientious grounds, delivered the annual discourse before the Cambridge Divinity School. It contained expression to which Professor Henry Ware, Jr., of that institution, felt it his duty to reply, in a sermon on "The Personality of the Deity." The controversy was continued by the Rev. George Ripley, of Boston, in support of the Transcendental opinions, and by Professor Andrews Norton in defence of the traditional faith of the Christian Church. The new doctrines attracted the belief, and awoke the enthusiasm of a wide circle of the young and ardent, while the novelty of the views presented, and the strangeness of the expressions employed, moved the surprised community sometimes to grave displeasure, and oftener to mirth. Even those who shared the excitement of that time now look back upon it with a smile at the memory of its extravagances; yet that excitement had its advantages, and expressed its portion of truth. It deserved respect, as does every serious movement of thoughtful minds; and it contributed to ripen, and prepare for their present usefulness, some of those to whom our community now looks as its ablest and safest guides.

In May, 1841, Theodore Parker, then minister of the Church at West Roxbury, preached his celebrated sermon on "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity," which brought distinctly before the public the question of

the supernatural and authoritative claims of our religion. In following years, the deserved fame of Mr. Parker as a scholar and reformer, won for his views in theology a currency to which in themselves, in our opinion, they have little claim. Among writers now living, we will speak only of the honored pastor of the First Unitarian Church in Philadelphia. The views of Dr. Furness do not imply a rejection of miracles, but a theory respecting them which owns their reality as facts, and insists strongly on the holiness of the Great Teacher who wrought them, and in some sense on his authority. The theory of Dr. Furness, in all its details, will probably be accepted by few; but the richness of thought and feeling with which it is developed will make for his works a permanent place among the literary treasures of Liberal Christianity.

More recently than Transcendentalism, another system has arisen, whose point of view is directly opposite. "The Positive Philosophy" appears to be the culmination of a method of thought, to which the researches of modern science had for years been habituating those who engaged in them. Those researches had established more and more the idea of an irreversible order in nature, the supremacy of law, and the infrequency of exceptions to it. Those phenomena which former ages had ascribed to the immediate action of the Deity — the thunder, the earthquake, the comet — were shown to be the results of causes no more divine than the rest of nature, and subject to laws as definite and as unchanging as any that are recognized in the most ordinary events. A soulless ball of fire had taken the place of Apollo's

chariot,* and the magician who could rule the storm was superseded by the almanac-maker. Hence came a disposition to disown all that could not be seen, weighed, and measured, — all, at least, that did not affect the electrometer; and this disposition, while exerting in thousands its materializing, unspiritual influence, rose in some to the pretensions of a philosophical system. While Transcendentalism looks to the phenomena of consciousness alone as the source of knowledge, the Positivism of Auguste Comte looks to all observed phenomena except those of consciousness. It regards as the only proper objects of science those which are cognizable by the senses. The system as presented by Comte was Atheism; for he recognized no God distinct from the generalization of man. Some, however, who are called Positivists, claim to stand on Christian ground, and expand the system of Comte, to its great improvement, but to the loss of its distinguishing characteristics.

It would seem to need no proof that a Transcendentalism which disowns the Positive, and a Positivism which disowns the Transcendental and the spiritual, must be alike partial and deficient. And yet we find advocates of either system, not only rejecting that view which is the complement of their own, but deriving from their aversion to this an objection to the religion of the gospel. The Transcendentalist cannot appreciate favor-

* "Wo jetzt nur, wie unsre Weisen sagen,
Seelenlos ein Feuerball sich dreht,
Lenkte damals seinen goldnen Wagen
Helios in stiller Majestät."

SCHILLER, "*Die Götter Griechenlands.*"

ably the external evidence for Christianity. To him miracles cannot prove, nor testimony support, a system which, to his mind, must stand or fall on its own merits. On the other hand, the Positivist disowns as unscientific all teaching that declares the regular order of nature to have suffered interruption; nor do his habits of thought aid him to appreciate ideas connected with such unsubstantial things as faith and holiness and heaven. Would that the advocates of both systems would judge more fairly. Each might look at the evidence most congenial to his own mode of thought; the material philosopher might recognize the positive evidence of outward facts, and the testimony of martyrs and historians; and the more spiritual, if he felt that such proof was to him unimportant, might still be willing to accept it as true, connected as it is with a system which harmonizes with his innate sense of truth, and responds to his highest aspirations. That Christianity derives its proof alike from the visible and the invisible worlds, should commend it to both schools of philosophy, instead of drawing upon it the opposition of either.

In order, indeed, to command our full assent, the proof of our religion must be thus complex. The evidence of miracle is insufficient, unless it be given in behalf of a system which in its own aspect is worthy of God; and though this testimony of its intrinsic worth is the most valuable, yet to a large class of minds the evidence of miracle is also necessary to confirm it as a revelation from above.

Thus have we traced the scepticism with regard to the claims of Christianity which has of late appeared among

us, to its origin in the speculations of two foreign schools of philosophy, the Transcendental and the Positive, which, opposed to each other in all else, have alike led many of their followers not only to the rejection of Christianity, but to the denial of all religion, and the subversion of the principles of morality. The view we have taken exhibits to us alike the presumption of the human intellect and its weakness. Philosophers have tried to measure the Infinite, and have thought to dethrone the Almighty; and yet their minds have been too narrow to take in the just claims of the system which supplies the deficiencies of their own.

The view we have taken reveals to us this fact, important in its bearing on the argument before us, that the denial of the historical and supernatural claims of Christianity, though among us it may be expressed in measured and reverent language, and by those who have a title to our respect for their learning, sincerity, and moral worth, is not only historically connected with the Deism of former days in France and England, but with systems of philosophy — the Hegelian and the Comtean — which are partial, bewildering, and presumptuous. These systems have, with many of their followers, resulted in the denial of God's existence and of man's immortality, unsettling thus the foundations of all virtue; while the more frequent conclusion of the Hegelian speculations has been a cloudy Pantheism, in which God, though his being was recognized, no longer appears as a Person, capable of loving, to whom the human heart can aspire in love, and human need can address itself in prayer with the hope of a benignant answer.

Let then those who feel inclined to enter the paths of modern Anti-supernaturalism, know to what they tend. It is right to examine fairly, but it is also right to examine with our eyes open; and so great is the attraction to many minds, of speculations that are presented in the proud names of learning, science, and free inquiry, that we claim no undue advantage for the truth we would defend, when we remind those who would examine its evidences, that the great foreign writers who invite them to deny the divine mission of the Savior, have rejected also the doctrines of a conscious individual existence in a future state, and of the being of a personal God.

We have reason to trust that the wretched sophistry by which, according to the representation of Strauss, some German clergymen attempt to satisfy their consciences in preaching a religion in which they do not believe, would find few in this country to practise or to defend it. We think that our young theologians are less apt to disguise their own doubts, than to fall into the opposite and nobler error, of making themselves appear more unbelieving than they really are. No one, indeed, ought to be unjust to himself, nor to fill with needless disquiet the minds of a worshipping assembly. But the churches of our land are Christian churches; and every one who aspires to lead their devotions is understood to be a Christian in his belief. Every honorable man, before he seeks the office of a pulpit instructor, will satisfy himself of his right to bear that name, not in some comprehensive meaning ingeniously adapted to it, but in the sense it possesses in the common usage of mankind. As every patriot soldier in our late war,

even before he took the oath, had recognized by his enlistment his allegiance to his country, so they who would bear office in the Christian host, take, by an obvious implication which no ingenuity can set aside, the vow of allegiance to its Crucified Leader.

CHAPTER I.

RELIGIONS OTHER THAN CHRISTIAN.

THE Christian Religion claims to be a revelation from God, especially communicated, and miraculously authenticated. In order to judge fairly of the probable validity of this claim, an inquiry is needful into the systems held by nations which are not Christian. If we find that those systems stand on a level with that of the Gospel, in the elevation of their idea of God, and the purity and power of their moral influence, we shall naturally infer, either that all are alike divine, or that all are alike human. But if we find in all other systems signs of human imperfection, defective ideas of the Supreme Being, and incomplete views of man's duty, while the religion of the Bible alone presents to us a perfect rule of faith and practice, the difference in the systems will render probable their different origin. It will be evident that those which are thus defective are "of the earth, earthy," while we shall not wonder that the Christian regards the Founder of his religion as the "Lord from heaven."

Again, if we find in the various religions of unchristianized mankind, traces of a purer faith from which they originated, — if, while their own history has been one of uniform deterioration, evincing a tendency in the human mind towards idolatry and general corruption, they all present indications of a period when the human race

believed in one Almighty God, — we shall naturally inquire, Whence came that purer faith of the days of old? The observed tendency of mankind to Polytheism forbids the supposition that men in primitive ages sought out for themselves the sublime truth, from which their successors, whether cultivated or savage, have ever since departed. We shall be led then to the conjecture of a primitive revelation. And if we find the fact of such a revelation taught in the ancient records of that one system which we have already discovered to be alone true, complete, and worthy of a divine origin, we shall derive hence at once a confirmation of its claims, and an explanation of the source whence that portion of truth was derived, which we find blended with the errors of heathenism.

MOHAMMEDANISM.

In this examination of religions other than Christian, we take first that of Mohammed. Except the Jewish system, the Mohammedan is the most nearly connected with the Christian. It resembles it in the acknowledgment of One, Supreme, Eternal God, the Ruler of the world, and the Judge of human actions. But this grand truth cannot entitle Mohammedanism to stand in competition with the religion of the Bible, for from that religion it was derived. The Arabian prophet knew something of Christianity, though in a corrupted form. He knew much more of Judaism; and it was from that religion that the noblest features of his system were borrowed.

Accustomed as Christians have been to regard Mohammed as an impostor, it is but lately that justice has been done, either to the man or the doctrine which he taught.

The religion of the Koran should be regarded in contrast, not to the Christianity of our age, nor even to that of the seventh century, but to the gross idolatry which existed in Arabia when Mohammed arose. Some tribes worshipped the sun, moon, and stars; one, near the Persian Gulf, had adopted the fire-worship of the neighboring nation; the goddesses Allat, Menat, and Al-Uzza, were adored, — the last under the form of a tree. All, however, united in a superstitious reverence for the Caaba, or holy house of Mecca, which seems to have been not so much a place for prayer to be offered, as itself the object of fetichistic worship. For this medley of religions, Mohammed substituted the belief in one God, the Almighty Sovereign of the Universe. Excited by the opposition he encountered, he represented it as the chief duty of those who would serve this Divine Monarch, to destroy, by force of arms, all forms of idolatry. These, and their followers, were represented as hateful in the sight of God, while the "true believers" were his favored servants. The prophet, and his successors, whether bearing the title of Caliph or Sultan, were delegates of the Most High, and commissioned, therefore, by Him to rule with absolute power.

From this blending of truth with error, arose the strength and the weakness of Islamism. For a century it was irresistible in its course of conquest. The Mohammedan warrior went forth in the name of God, to do God's work, and under the lead of God's "Commander of the Faithful." But with the cessation of conquest the animating spirit of the system lost much of its strength, while its darker features, bigotry, pride, injustice, despotism, sensuality, became more and more prominent.

The manly subjection of the soldier to his chief, and the religious obedience of the believer to his spiritual head, gave place to the relation of slave to despot; no aristocracy of birth, no limitation of constitutional law, filled up the dreary interval between the cottage and the throne, or gave protection to the subject against the oppression of sultan or pasha. On the other hand, where countries or provinces had been conquered, no wise conciliation aimed at the blending of the different races into one. Conversion was the only condition of freedom; the Christian or Hindoo subject was but a conquered and enslaved enemy. The weakening of the central authority and the oppression of the people followed with equal certainty. A striking example of this is given in the history of Servia. The Janissaries of that province had been banished, and their property confiscated by Sultan Selim III., on account of their tyrannical and rebellious conduct. They leagued themselves with Paswan Oglou, the rebel Pasha of Widin, attacked Servia, and were repulsed by its energetic governor, with a force levied from among its Turkish and Christian inhabitants. But Moslem pride and bigotry were alarmed; the Mufti declared that it was against the law to drive the faithful from their possessions in favor of the Rayahs. So the Sultan made peace with the rebel Paswan, and readmitted the Janissaries into Servia. When afterwards they murdered the faithful governor, and again oppressed the people, the sovereign had nothing to employ against them but empty threats, which excited them to new atrocities, and thus led to the revolution which wrested the province from the Turkish power.* Similar causes

* See Ranke's "Servia," Chap. VI.

led to similar results, in the Greek Revolution, and recently in the insurrection in Crete. Oppression, lust, and faithlessness have given provocation, and thus hastened the fall of a power that merited its fate. Nor were these crimes incidental merely; they resulted naturally from the principles of bigotry, pride, and despotism which are identified with the institutions of the Mohammedan religion.

While that religion has been thus marked by crime in its relation to the subject, it has appeared in colors as dark in the imperial family. It has been known for centuries that the policy of the Turkish court was to put to death any whose birth might render them rivals to the reigning sovereign. This is referred to by Shakespeare, in whose time an atrocious instance of this imperial fratricide had taken place.* It may be thought that this was the custom of a darker age; but shortly after the accession of Mahmoud II., in 1808, in order to secure his throne, the infant son of Mustafa IV. was put to death, and four women of the seraglio also, lest they should give birth to children of royal descent. Such are some of the atrocities of Mohammedanism.

* "Brothers, you mix your sadness with some fear:
This is the English, not the Turkish court;
Not Amurath an Amurath succeeds,
But Harry Harry."

Henry IV., Second Part, Act V. Sc. II.

BRAHMINISM.

In comparing Christianity with the religion of Hindostan, we need not repeat the details which have been so often presented, of the cruelties and impurities of Indian idolatry. It is sufficient to refer to such practices as the exposure of the dying and the hastening of their death on the banks or in the waters of the Ganges; the burning of widows on the funeral pile of their husbands; and the condition of those who, shrinking from such a fate, drag out a miserable existence of constant mourning and penance; this too, when marriage and widowhood may have commenced when they were yet but children. But it may be replied when these, and the still darker atrocities of impure idolatry, are named, that they are but corruptions introduced into a religion which was originally pure Monotheism. A few words then are needed on this subject.

It appears from the researches of competent scholars, that Monotheism was the early religion of India. If this was originally held in its pure form, it became at length corrupted into Pantheism. The object of reverence was Brahma (the expanded, the vast). This word in its neuter form, Brahmā, or Brahm, denotes the impersonal essence from which all nature is self-evolved; "not an object of worship, but merely of devout contemplation." "As milk changes to curd, and water to ice, so is Brahmā variously transformed and diversified, without aid of tools or exterior means of any sort." Of this being, the human soul "is a portion, as a spark in the fire. The relation is not as that of master and ser-

vant, ruler and ruled, but as that of whole and part."* But the mind could not be satisfied with this dreamy system. The same word therefore, in its masculine form, Brahmā, denotes a deity who is personal and active, but limited in his sphere to the one work of creating. Again, as men felt the need of a protector as well as a creator, this character was borne by Vishnu, the Preserver. But they saw that, notwithstanding his power, evil, decay, and death existed; and to account for these, they recognized a third deity in Siva, the Destroyer. These were the Indian Trimurti, or Trinity; and from these, in their various manifestations and descendants, the countless gods of Hindoo idolatry have proceeded. We find then that as soon as Brahminism took a single step beyond the great idea of God, which it seems to have received from the original revelation, that step was error, and led to more and more of error and corruption. The ancient sacred books of the Hindoos have been much commended, and placed by some in favorable comparison with the sacred books of Christianity. But as Oriental scholars have more fully ascertained the real character of these books, it appears that they are mostly composed of prayers, addressed, not to the One God, but to the firmament, fire, the earth, the air, the sun and moon, and to spirits. Their mythology personifies the objects of nature; and while they may teach in some passages that these deities are all resolvable into three, — fire, the air, and the sun, — or even into one, yet the worship of the elements, "the creature,

* Passages from the *Brahma-sutras*, translated by Mr. Colebrooke.

rather than the Creator," is the general doctrine of the much-praised Vedas.

While therefore the great error of Mohammedanism was in its recognizing God exclusively as sovereign, that of Brahminism, in its purest form, appears to have been the very opposite. The Hindoo did not own Brahmā as sovereign at all, but conceived of him either as synonymous with nature, or as the impersonal source from which nature proceeds, neither controlling its forces nor interested in its well-being.

Another peculiarity of the Hindoo religion is in the system of caste, and particularly in the high claims of its priestly class. The Brahmins, the hereditary spiritual aristocracy of Hindostan, were anciently the exclusive possessors of knowledge, inviolable in person and property, and supposed to be possessed of power, by their curse, to inflict pain even on the gods. The Sudra, the member of the lowest caste, was the mere human animal. If he presumed to read the Vedas, he was punishable with death. The superior classes had a higher nature than his. They were "twice born." But beyond even the Kshatriya and the Vaisya, the Brahmin was exalted. He must keep himself and his race pure. It was to be his ambition to rise into identity with God — absorption back into the impersonal Brahmā.

If we find here a resemblance to the Christian doctrine of regeneration, we remember that in Christianity it is not the accident of descent which makes one man to differ from another; but that it recognizes in the humblest the image of God, and offers to him its second birth, not as the privilege of a proud caste, but as the gift of God's Spirit to the lowly minded.

BUDDHISM.

The history of Buddhism in its early period appears to have been briefly the following. As we have already seen, Brahminism was originally a modification of Monotheism, teaching that the One God exists in perfect repose, and that the universe is a succession of emanations from him. This doctrine became corrupted, first by the introduction of the Trimurti, Vishnu and Siva being associated with Brahmā, and afterwards by innumerable steps of degradation. The care of this religion was committed to a race of priests, the Brahmins. Side by side with these, — like the prophets, and afterwards the Rabbins of Israel; besides the priests of the race of Aaron, — was a succession of sages; men whose commission to instruct the people was not from family descent, but from the light within them. Buddhism was the protest of these men against the increasing corruption. It aimed to vindicate at once the honor of God and of man. In opposition to the growing idolatry, it proclaimed one supreme and all-embracing Intelligence; such is the meaning of the word Boodh. In opposition to the exclusive pretensions of the Brahmins, it declared that all intelligences, of men and even of animals, were parts of that boundless Mind. Such were the doctrines, — sublime truth blended with error, which Gautama, or Sakya-muni, a devotee of princely rank, and the most eminent of these sages, taught in the groves of Benares, perhaps a thousand years before the Christian era.

The greatest error of this ancient sage was evidently in retaining the Brahminical conception of God as an

inactive and indeed impersonal being, a divine substance, the thinking Mind of the world rather than its animating Soul, and liable to be confounded with the world itself. From this error arose, as we have seen, the idolatry of Brahminism; from the same cause there came, in the system founded by Sakya-muni, first Pantheism, then Atheism, and then, to fill the dreary void of a godless universe, the deification of the heavenly bodies, of animals, and of human beings, but above all, of the founder of the religion himself. The infinite Intelligence was forgotten; a Being alike inactive and inconceivable could not be the object of worship; but the rule of the world was consigned to a succession of limited intelligences, and Gautama was acknowledged as the Boodh to reign for five thousand years. At the end of that time he is to surrender his office to some other deified mortal, and to attain *nirvana*, absorption into the infinite. Meantime, while governing the universe, he has his representative on earth; for his spirit inhabits the bodies of a succession of pontiffs, who, under the name of Dalai Lama (Ocean-like Priest), exercise at once, like the Pope, a wide-spread spiritual control, and a limited temporal sovereignty. The resemblance extends to other features of Romish Christianity, — to the celibacy of the priesthood, the monastic life, and the mendicant order. In one absurdity, Buddhism stands alone. The worshipper in its temples need not repeat a prayer. All that is required is, to turn a wheel or drum on which the prayer is written, which is thus brought to the notice of the Deity.

In comparing Christianity with this system, we have to admit that our religion also has become corrupted.

But the difference is perceivable in this; that in Buddhism, as in Brahminism, we can point to a fundamental error in the system itself. Christianity, like Buddhism, teaches of one God, who is everywhere; but it teaches also that he is our Creator and our Father. It tells us that man is made in God's image, and is God's child; but it does not tell us that the finite can ascend to share the throne of the Infinite.

With regard to the position of their founders, and the apparent causes of their success, there is a wide difference between Buddhism and Christianity. Sakya-muni was a philosopher, neither claiming supernatural inspiration nor miraculous power, — whatever legends may have gathered around him in the lapse of near three thousand years. His personal character had little to do with his system, except to commend it by the attraction, alike of his honest purpose and of his mistaken asceticism. That he left his wife and children, to give himself to retirement and meditation, may have given him sanctity in the estimation of his countrymen, but in the light of Christianity it appears as an abandonment of duty. The spread of his system is easily accounted for. It was a reform, undertaken by one who united the influence of princely station, of reputed wisdom and holiness, and probably of eloquence. The chief doctrine he proclaimed was a form of Monotheism, which the popular religion had forgotten, but did not deny. The institution of caste he undermined, rather than controverted. In some Buddhist countries it still exists, though in an enfeebled state. Buddhism thus made extensive progress in India before the persecution arose, which drove it from the country, and rendered its followers an army of mission-

aries, well prepared to subject to its sway the regions of south-eastern Asia, where probably, at that remote period, there was no well-developed system, either of civilization or religion, to rival its claims and oppose its progress. What a contrast was this to the fierce attacks which Christianity sustained from the moment of its birth! Its Founder, not born, like Sakya-muni, in a royal station, gathered his adherents among the poor, and gave his life as the penalty for teaching the truth. His followers had to encounter the opposition, first of their own national rulers, and then of the far mightier Roman empire. The doctrine they proclaimed was not an attempt to bring again into notice principles recognized by the popular religion. It was the very reverse of the prevalent idolatry, and encumbered by the fact that its author had been crucified, — "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." On the other hand it claimed, — what Buddhism in its early years did not claim, — to be a miraculous revelation. It did not, like Buddhism, give way before persecution; but held its ground and achieved its triumph where it had first been promulgated. Its prevalence, under such circumstances, and in the face of such opposition, is a strong proof of the validity of its title to a divine origin.

CONFUCIUS.

About five centuries before Christ, and not far from the same interval after Sakya-muni, — though some consider them as nearly contemporaneous, — appeared the philosophic legislator of China. Confucius (Koong-foo-tse) was of high descent by both parents, his father

having been a distinguished officer of the government. This circumstance probably directed his attention to statesmanship, and made the duty of the subject the central point in his system of morals. Like Sakya-muni, he sacrificed domestic duty to ambition, disguised as the desire of usefulness; for after his wife had borne him a son, he divorced her, in order to give himself entirely to study. His life was spent in an interchange of official station and compelled retirement; sometimes the minister of princes, and applying his theories to advance the happiness of the people; at other times obliged to give way to the envy and malignity of his rivals; perhaps also to their superior practical ability, for the man of theoretic genius is not always the man of business. But whether in power or in retirement, he had around him a band of attached disciples; and after his death, his memory was honored, and his teaching became the acknowledged code of morals of the empire.

Confucius can hardly be said to have taught a religion. Some have questioned whether he recognized a God. He did however acknowledge a First Cause, or Reason of things, "eternal, infinite, indescribable, indestructible, without limits, omnipotent and omnipresent." The central point of influence of this Cause he supposed to be in the blue firmament (Tien), and declared it to be the supreme duty of the prince, in the name of his subjects, to present offerings to Tien, particularly for obtaining a favorable seed-time and an abundant harvest. Besides this, he ordained the worship of ancestors; the spirits of the good being permitted to visit such places as their descendants might set apart for such memorial

rites. To these devotional services was added in after times the worship of the philosopher himself, to whose memory a temple is erected in every city, while his numerous descendants are said to be the only hereditary nobility of China.

The worship of ancestors was in harmony with the ethical system of Confucius, the great idea of which was morality founded on filial reverence. The relation of children to a father illustrates that of subjects to their emperor. A paternal despotism is thus the ideal government of Confucius. The duties of mankind appear to be comprised in what with children we should call good behavior. Not attaining to the Christian rule of the regulation of the heart, Confucius gave precepts, often excellent, often trifling, for the regulation of the life. In a word, his system seems the introduction, as a law for mankind, of the morals and the politics of an orderly school-room. In this light, we may readily understand how he attained to the negative form of the "Golden Rule:" "Do nothing to others which you would not be willing that they should do to you." This is the rule of good behavior, the rule of justice. It has been given by other Gentile moralists, and appears in the Talmud as a precept of Rabbi Hillel. But Christ gave the law in its positive form: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." This is the law, not of justice merely, but of all-embracing benevolence.

The account we have given of the system of Confucius may explain the hold it took and retained upon the regard of the Chinese nation. It was adapted to their form of government. It gained the favor of princes,

even of the best among them; for while it sustained their power, it taught them to exercise it as fathers of their people. It endeared itself to the people by the sanction it gave to family order, and family affection among the living, and to that tender feeling which bids us commemorate the dead. But it was hostile to freedom, fatal to independence of thought and action. Its tendency was to a rigid formalism in outward conduct, with little to call forth the powers of the mind, or to purify and elevate the feelings of the heart. The result we perceive in the fixed and petrified condition of Chinese civilization.

"Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay!" *

The system of Confucius is, however, not alone dominant in China. The worshippers of Taou (Reason), acknowledging Laou-tse, the teacher of Confucius, as their leader, appear to have been originally speculative and experimental philosophers, as Confucius was a practical moralist. Buddhism was introduced into China in the first century of the Christian era, by an emperor who felt the want of something more distinctly religious than either of these systems. The three sects, followers of Confucius, of Laou-tse, and of Fo or Buddha, seem to dwell together in harmony; and if there was formerly any violent struggle among them, its remembrance has faded with the lapse of time. That there have been, however, jealousy, and court intrigue, and crime in connection with this difference of religious opinion, is indicated by the facts that, in 1780, the Grand Lama visited Peking by invitation of the

* Tennyson's Locksley Hall.

emperor, and that he died soon after his arrival there, not without strong suspicions of poison. But it may be that the three systems had the less to cause dissension, as they occupied different portions of the field of human thought. Their doctrines do not appear contradictory to each other, but each of them limited, and all unsatisfactory. Neither of them, nor all combined, can satisfy the wants of the human soul. Their insufficiency, and the power of Christianity to supply it, are well represented in the words of Professor Maurice.

“ If you did hear of a people which had for ages the strongest conviction that the authority of the Father was the one foundation of society, but had never been able to connect this conviction with the acknowledgment of anything mysterious and divine; of a society which for ages has not been able to prevent a certain body of its subjects from dreaming that there is a mysterious and divine Word or Reason speaking to the wise man, out of which dream, however, no fruits had proceeded but impostures and delusions; if you were told, that into the heart of this society Buddhism had come, with its strange testimony of a Spirit in the human race, the ordinary manifestations of which are seen in very ignorant priests, its perfect manifestation often in an infant; if you heard that these doctrines had never been able to combine, and yet that no one could succeed in banishing the other from an empire in which order and unity are prized as the highest blessings of all; nay, that experience had proved to reluctant sages that none of these elements of discord could safely be extinguished, that each was in some strange way needful to the permanence of that which it seemed to undermine; — and if after

this you heard of a faith which assumed that the ground of all things and all men is a Father; that He has spoken and does speak by his Filial Word to the hearts and spirits of men, so making them wise, and separating them from what is base and vain; that this Filial Word has been made flesh and dwelt among men, and has given them power to become sons of God; and that through Him a Spirit is given to dwell with men, to raise up a new spirit in them, to unite them to each other, to make them living portions of a living body; — if, I say, these two sets of facts were presented to you side by side, would not you feel there was some strange adaptation in the one to the other; that there was in the last the secret principle and power for which it was evident from the former that China had through centuries been asking in vain?” *

The systems we have examined, with that of classic mythology, and the Persian belief in the two contending powers of good and evil, and the wild fancies of the Icelandic Edda, all present a contrast to Christianity in many obvious aspects. One alone we shall point out, but that one includes the rest. These systems are all partial, Christianity is universal. The Persian religion takes but a partial view of evil, not discerning that Divine wisdom uses it as the means of good. The Greek mythology is limited by its realistic character. It is the worship of substantial forms, men and women, only of greater strength and more ethereal frame, dwelling in a local habitation. The Hindoo system is

* The Religions of the World, and their Relations to Christianity. By Frederick Denison Maurice, M. A., &c. Pages 223, 224.

limited on the side of mysticism, acknowledging an all-embracing but impersonal Divine essence, — and, subordinate to this, the personification of the elements and of divine attributes. Buddhism resembles this in its Pantheistic tendency, and recognizes no living and active God beyond a deified mortal; and the state religion of China is little beyond a state system of morals. Even Mohammedanism, derived as it is from the religion of the Bible, has been untrue to its origin in representing God too exclusively as sovereign. In contrast to these, we find in Christianity the doctrine of One Supreme God, who fills all space, and is inconceivable in the greatness of his attributes, but who yet loves the beings he has made; who exercises over them a just government, yet hears their prayers and mercifully accepts their penitence; who, while our Divine Sovereign, is yet our Father in Heaven. As we have seen, in the extract given from Maurice, the various systems prevalent in China, corresponding each to a distinct portion of the religion of Christ, so it is with the other beliefs of mankind. Each of the systems of Paganism has its part; Christianity has the whole. The object which religion presents is too vast for the human mind, without distinct divine assistance, to contemplate in all its aspects. Zoroaster beheld it on one side, Sakya-muni on another, the Greek on a third, and the Arabian on a fourth; the Son of God alone, "who is in the bosom of the Father," presents to us, in his instructions and in his life, the being who is at once the Persian's Source of Light, the Buddhist's Infinite Essence, the majestic Ruler of heaven as beheld by the Greek, and the Sovereign of mankind as contemplated

by Mohammed, while all these conceptions are transcended and perfected in that of the Father, who "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son."

We have next to remark in relation to the various systems of religion which we have examined, that they all bear traces of an original Monotheism. Nor is it the case with these alone. We need not investigate all the systems of brutal idolatry that have at any time disgraced humanity. It would seem a waste of time to compare Christianity with these. Yet the rudest Fetichism which worships stocks and stones, seems the relic of a forgotten doctrine of a universally pervading divine presence, and if universally pervading, necessarily One. The Classic System, amidst its multitude of gods, still subjected all the mythologic family to the sway of Jupiter, "the Father of gods and men." In the Scandinavian mythology, Odin, the supreme ruler of the existing world, is himself to be destroyed, with all the mythologic family, in the great rebellion of Loke; but the catastrophe brings before us the mention of a Being far greater. "Then the powerful, the valiant, he who governs all things, comes out from his lofty abode, and renders divine justice."*

In the religion of the ancient Persians, notwithstanding the recognition of Ahriman, the Power of Evil, as the rival of Ormuzd, the traces of original Monotheism are distinct; for both Ormuzd and Ahriman alike proceed from Zerouane, Time without bounds, — or, in one word, the Infinite.

We find then, everywhere, traces of an original doctrine

* Edda, quoted in Butler's *Horæ Biblicæ*.

of One God; and we find everywhere but in Christianity, and the Jewish and Mohammedan systems which are connected with it, that this doctrine has become corrupted. If then the tendency of mankind has been thus generally to Polytheism, whence came that original idea of One God? Men could not have developed it for themselves; developed it, too, or generally, so all but universally, when their tendency has manifestly lain in the opposite direction. The inquiry brings us back to the Bible statement of an original revelation, an intercourse of the Divine Being with early patriarchs, preceding the Jewish and the Christian dispensations. We might conceive the idea of some superior Being or Beings to be intuitive; but we cannot believe this respecting the idea of One God, when the tendency of the human mind was always to turn to the worship of many.

There was then, we have reason to believe, an original revelation to mankind. This conclusion, to which we thus arrive, from observing its traces in man's subsequent religious history, is not *à priori* incredible nor improbable, if a creative act be admitted. For such an act would be in itself miraculous; that is, it would be an act of the Supreme, out of the common course of nature.* If we believe then in the miracle of man's creation, we may well believe also in that of his instruction. That the Almighty should give to the being he had made, some knowledge of the source from whence he came, and the purpose for which he was designed, is no more than might be naturally expected of creative

* Manual, § 2, page 4.

goodness. There was then, we more fully conclude, an original revelation.

From this conclusion, two others of great importance follow.

First, this result directly confirms the religion of the Bible, because the truth of an original revelation is stated there. Whatever interpretation is put upon the narratives of the book of Genesis, it cannot be questioned that they represent the human race as in its earliest existence, ruled and instructed by its Creator in an especial manner. Nor can it be denied that the patriarchal religion, according to those accounts, was the belief in One God. When we find, therefore, the earliest narratives of the Scriptures coinciding in their representations with what we learn from another source to be the truth, we are encouraged to trust their later testimony as alike true, and to give credit to the claim of especial divine revelation for the religion they communicate.

Secondly, if the fact of an original revelation is established, or rendered in any degree probable, then to the same degree, the strongest objection against the supernatural authority of Christianity is removed. For the objection that is most felt in this age is to miracles, regarded as an interruption of the common course of nature. But if such an interruption has once taken place, it may occur again. The improbability is, indeed, so far removed, that there comes instead of it an antecedent probability that God, who had once interfered for the guidance of his children, would afford that guidance again, if at any time it should be equally needed.

CHAPTER II.

REVELATION, PRIMITIVE AND JEWISH.

SHELLEY, in the notes to his atheistic poem of "Queen Mab," quotes in capitals, as if the question were unanswerable, the following sentence from D'Holbach's "Système de la Nature:" "S'il a parlé, pourquoi l'univers n'est-il pas convaincu?" "If he (God) has spoken, why is not the universe convinced?" The objection these words convey against revelation is probably felt by many. It might be expressed at length in such terms as these: "If the Creator of the world saw fit to reveal himself to his children, would he not make the communication alike to all, and in such a manner that it could not be misunderstood? Would he not write his commands in letters of living light upon the heavens, where all could not but read? Nay, has he not in fact been thus impartial? Does not nature, does not his voice within us, reveal all that we need to know? And would a wise and just Being choose one obscure nation as the peculiar objects of his care, and depositaries of his revealed will?"

If we take the doctrines of natural religion, as they have been given to us by the great writers of ancient or of modern times, we find in them sublime truths, to which our hearts readily yield assent. We learn that all nature testifies to the existence, the eternity, omnip-

otence, and other exalted attributes of the Most High; to the excellence of virtue, and the reality of its great reward in a future life; and we are on the point of admitting the force of the challenging question, If nature teaches all these truths, what need is there of a revelation?

We hear, too, in these days, much of the teaching of God's Spirit to all mankind. Many who deny the authority of the Jewish and Christian revelations do not hesitate to admit that Moses and Jesus were inspired; but they claim that every good man is inspired also. In former times, it was the ignorant fanatic, who, unable to read the Bible, declared that he had no need of it, and asserted a personal inspiration for every wild fancy of his own. But now the claim of such inspiration is made by accomplished scholars, and not for themselves alone, but for all mankind. Here, then, is a second source of knowledge, which seems amply sufficient. What need of a miraculous revelation by Moses or by Christ, when nature teaches all that we need to know, and when, besides this, the voice of God is always testifying of his truth to every human heart?

Before, however, we withdraw from the guidance of the Lord Jesus Christ, let us inquire how this double leadership of nature and of the Spirit sufficed for mankind before the birth of our Savior. Had nature, or had any voice within the soul, taught the great doctrines of religion to all men alike? If so, why were all nations except the Jews sunk in idolatry, paying worship to the host of heaven, to the powers of nature, to their own passions personified, to forms of the animal and even of the vegetable creation, to stocks and stones, to anything

rather than to the one living and true God? Why is it that to this day, everywhere, beyond the influence of the Jewish and Christian religions, a similar idolatry prevails? Why, in ancient times, did those philosophers who had left the gross superstitions of their countrymen, wander into errors of different kinds, some maintaining that pleasure was the only good, while others turned from it with ascetic scorn; some ascribing the rule over all things to a fate that controlled the actions of gods and men, and others declaring that there was no God, and that the universe was merely the result of chance? Why, even at present, in the most enlightened nations, and with all the instruction which Judaism and Christianity have incidentally furnished, do those who are thought to be foremost in wisdom appear to wander in darkness the moment they reject the faith of the gospel, one denying the belief in a future life, another rejecting the being of a God, and others yet, under the pretence of superior purity, setting aside the most common principles of virtuous conduct? Is this the boasted teaching of nature, which leads now to superstition, and now to atheism? Was there no occasion that God should speak by Moses, when, in Egypt, then the most enlightened country in the world, the mass of the people worshipped calves, and dogs, and vegetables; and the priesthood, if better instructed, went on teaching a religion that they knew was a lie? No. There is, we admit, such a thing as natural religion; there is a divine voice in every human heart. But that voice must be listened for with reverence; it does not infallibly teach either the ignorant savage or the self-sufficient sage; and the teachings of natural religion, plainly as they now commend them-

selves to the understanding, were never clearly and fully declared, until they found utterance from inspired lips.

Man needs, then, a revelation. It is the belief of Christians that this need has been met at three distinct periods of the world's history; — first, in primitive or patriarchal times; next, in the communications made to the Israelitish race; and lastly, in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. It matters not to our present purpose, that from some points of view, these may appear continuous — the patriarchal shading off into the Jewish, and this into the Christian. This fact, if rightly contemplated, shows the continuity and consistency of the divine dealings; but the periods remain sufficiently distinct to be separately treated.

Of the Primitive Revelation, our assurance rests most distinctly on the testimony of Scripture. This informs us of divine communications made to Adam and to Noah, both represented as ancestors of the whole human race; and whatever allegorical or mythical explanation may be given to these narratives of primitive times, the purpose of the sacred writers is sufficiently clear, to teach that God revealed himself to the fathers of mankind. We have found a confirmation of this truth while examining the heathen systems of religion; for their tendency, being everywhere downward, indicates the height of their source. If the efforts of the human mind in India, through ages of comparative civilization, have but corrupted more and more the original Monotheism, it is not likely that the human mind, unassisted, discovered that Monotheism in the barbarous ages that preceded; and when we find the testimony of India con-

firmed by that of all the heathen world besides, each form of idolatry bearing witness to a purer faith that preceded it, we cannot avoid admitting an original revelation. The bestowment of this materially affects the charge of partiality which is brought against the religion of the Old Testament.

The original revelation must have been given to the ancestors of all mankind; for the traces of it remain in all systems since. And even if the descent of all mankind from a single pair be denied, it remains certain that the progenitors of the race were few in number, in comparison with the millions of their descendants. Instruction given to these few, then, would be communicated to their children. But at any subsequent period, when the earth was generally inhabited, the idea of a universal revelation becomes more difficult to conceive. Its authentication must be miraculous, whether by an outward voice, or by any other sign, from heaven or on earth. Then, as no nation is to be distinguished above another, each one must have its prophet or its Messiah, and its own series of miracles, to establish his commission. And when the disciples of these various inspired leaders met on the boundaries of their separate realms, a constant miracle would be required to prevent variance and jealousy among those who had heard the divine message from different lips. Again, the wonders wrought by each holy messenger, though they might establish his authority with those who witnessed them, would possess far less weight with others. If all, then, are to have the same advantages, these miraculous signs must be multiplied for the personal instruction of all. And as the memory of them would grow dim with time,

the necessity of impartial favor to each generation would require that the miracles should be repeated from age to age. Then if the miracles were not unanswerably convincing, their purpose would not be fulfilled; if they were, faith would be forced, not free; the voluntary action of the pious will in giving its adhesion to the truth would be forestalled, and only a slavish obedience could be rendered to an overwhelming evidence. Yet that evidence, if it forbade doubt, could not excite deep, reverential interest. Miracles would be matters of too common occurrence for this. Taking place continually, or at stated intervals, they would lose the dignity of divine interpositions. They would become, as it were, a part of the course of nature, only retaining enough of singularity and abruptness seriously to interfere with the confidence of mankind in the stability of nature's laws. That these laws will be regularly maintained, that the order of external things will be the same to-morrow that it was yesterday, is most important to human happiness, and even to human life. It is only thus that we can have assurance that a given course of conduct will produce its proper results, and thus be encouraged to do right, and warned against what is wrong. But if miracles were things of every day, all this confidence would be lost. We find this exemplified in reading those works of antique literature, into which supernatural machinery enters largely; such, for instance, as Tasso's "Jerusalem Delivered." Surrounded on every side with signs and wonders, here with magic power, and there with divine interpositions, we perceive that the common rules of life are set aside. It is not zeal or valor that can be depended on to win the battle, but the

might of some magician on the one side, or guardian angel on the other. Thus would it be, to the peril of all consistent judgment, all free choice, and all manly energy, if miracles were rendered common; and common they must be, if the revelation God has given is to be communicated in the same manner, and with the same advantages for receiving it, to all his children, of every nation, and in every age of the world.

And such a system, however it might commend itself to the minds of theorizing philosophers, is not conformable to the divine method of instructing the human race, as we discover that method from the analogy of nature. It is not the plan of Providence to act on the dead level of a measured equality. On the contrary, variety of advantages appears to be the very law of God's dealings with mankind. Scarce two nations are precisely equal with regard to the degree of civilization they have attained. The Eastern Hemisphere had been the abode of culture in art and science for thousands of years before our Western World was discovered; yet, even there, portions, as the interior of Africa, are still in midnight darkness. So, too, it is with the knowledge which nature yields us of the Divine Being. God's power and wisdom are inscribed upon the heavens. The stars as they roll show forth the glory of Him who made them; and it would seem as if here, indeed, was a revelation that, being open to the eyes of all, was given with perfect impartiality. But how differently is that revelation of God in nature appreciated and understood! The savage tribes understand it not. They see the glorious arch above glow, night after night, with its innumerable lights; but they have never been taught to infer from it

the existence of a creative spirit; and if the mighty lesson cannot be entirely unread, yet are their ideas of its meaning inadequate and obscure. The magnificent spectacle is meant for all God's human offspring to profit by at length; but generations unnumbered have passed, and other generations will pass, before the knowledge of its mysteries shall be conferred alike on all.

But an objection yet remains. We may give up, it may be said, the idea of a perfect equality in the divine communication of knowledge. If a revelation was to be made, once for all, of course some must be nearer to it, in place or in time, than others. But that God should select one nation, as he is said to have chosen the Jews, should have made them his own peculiar people, given them laws for their guidance, sent prophets to remonstrate with them when they went astray, protected them in captivity and brought them back to freedom, while all the other nations, more powerful and more cultivated, were left in the darkness of idolatry, this surely would prove a partiality inconsistent with the justice and benevolence of the divine character.

Would it prove this, we may ask in return, if it should appear that a revelation of God's will was originally made to all, and that it was only by their own fault that other races lost that inheritance of God's visible favor which Abraham and his descendants retained? We have seen the proof that there was an original and impartial revelation; but the world at large forsook the worship of the living and true God. Abraham remained faithful to it; and he left that faithfulness, as at once a solemn charge and a precious heir-loom to his children. He and his race were not selected arbitrarily, nor other

tribes arbitrarily excluded; but, all having been treated alike at first, they who turned to idolatry were only left in the darkness they had chosen, while the faithful patriarch was favored with an increase of the light he loved. The selection of Israel, then, appears no longer inconsistent with justice, or with the usual course of God's providence. It was, in the Divine Being, justice, not partiality, that conferred on faithfulness its appropriate blessing, making the chosen race the depositaries of divine instruction in degrees still higher, and protecting them through the varied course of their national existence, until the time should come for conferring, through their means, on other races also, the blessing which had hitherto been their own.

Again, the selection of the Jewish race for the reception, development, and extension of religious truth, partial as it may seem, is in strict analogy to the actual working of the Almighty's plans, in other departments of the training of mankind. Other nations besides the Hebrews have had their own peculiar tasks and privileges. Greece gave to the world the love of beauty, alike in literature and art. Hers were the great masterpieces of epic, dramatic, and lyric poetry; hers the great triumphs of oratory; hers the development of a nobler grace in sculpture than the colossal but rude images of Egypt had ever possessed; hers the achievements in architecture that make the ruins of her temples still the admiration of the world. Rome, on the other hand, was the great teacher in the art of ruling. What her poet said of her near two thousand years ago — that the task of Rome was to govern the nations — is true even yet, through the influence of Roman law upon the

institutions of many a land. Thus did God assign to the Jewish race to be the leaders of mankind in religious knowledge and religious feeling. That leadership they hold, unquestionably. Till any other portion of the great family of man can produce hymns as lofty as the Psalms of David, or representations of the Almighty as sublime and as true as the strains of Isaiah, the religious pre-eminence of the Hebrew race must be admitted. It is unquestionable that providentially they were God's chosen instruments for declaring divine truth; and if providentially, wherefore not also miraculously?

We find in the selection of the Hebrew race to be the depositaries of sacred truth an analogy still closer to the dealings of Providence. Observing the course of history from the earliest ages, among Gentiles as well as Jews, we find everywhere some persons exercising the priestly office, the instructors of their fellow-men in matters of religion. Often we find especial families or races of men chosen, the Brahmins among the Hindoos, no less than the race of Aaron among the Israelites, to bear testimony before all the people to the existence of something unseen, but superior to all else. Thus, among the nations of the earth, the Hebrews were the priestly nation. As the individual priest in the community, as the house of Levi among the twelve tribes, as the house of Aaron in the tribe of Levi, so was the nation itself, among all the inhabitants of the earth, deputed to receive the heavenly treasure, and communicate it to all the rest. The Christian revelation, indeed, abolished this distinction. Under it the true priesthood of the earth consists not of the descendants of any one tribe or nation, but of the sincere followers of Christ. Thus speaks an

apostle: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people."* Our Savior, we are told, "hath made us kings and priests unto God."† But it has been well observed that our Lord, in his language respecting the new birth, "gathers up the very meaning of the old dispensation, shows us what a truth was involved in every part of it, how every part had been prepared for the full revelation of this truth. His coming was, no doubt, to destroy the barrier between Jew and Gentile, but not till that barrier had been proved to have its justification in the very condition and being of man, in his relation to God and to the world. If there is a flesh in man, by obedience to which he becomes degraded, sensual, idolatrous, — if he naturally is obedient to this flesh, and can only attain the rights of a spiritual creature when the Lord of all raises him above his nature, above himself,—then we can understand why a whole nation should have been called by its position in reference to other nations, by its strength and weakness, righteousness and sins, by the experience of all its individual members, to set forth this mighty fact, in which the eternal destinies of mankind must be involved." ‡

The selection of the Jews as the peculiar people of God was not, then, for their own sake alone. To keep alive on earth the belief in his own existence, in his attributes of unity, spirituality, power, and love, until other branches of the human race should be prepared to receive that belief, was the great purpose which God

* 1 Peter ii. 9.

† Rev. i. 6.

‡ Maurice, Religions of the World, and their Relations to Christianity. Part II. Lecture II. Page 186.

accomplished by the selection of Israel. Abraham, found faithful in a faithless generation, left his idolatrous kindred, that he and his might retain their purity of worship. To him, then, the promise was given, not only of the number and glory of his own descendants, but that in his seed should "all nations of the earth be blessed." For long ages the prediction remained unfulfilled. If we can imagine a celestial being contemplating the earth and its inhabitants through those ages, we may conceive that to him the purpose of Divine Providence may have been deeply mysterious. He would see far and wide through the earth the appalling and impure rites of heathen worship, — here parents sacrificing their children to Moloch, there festivals held in honor of Ashtaroth, the Syrian Venus, accompanied with acts of vile debauchery. In one land alone would he witness the worship of a spiritual God, recognized as the Creator of heaven and earth, a Being whose eyes were too pure to behold iniquity. Over every altar in other realms would he perceive some image; in one country a human form of matchless grace, in another some grotesque combination of various animals, or a many-headed or many-handed monster; but at the one altar in Jerusalem would he see neither statue nor painting, for the God that was worshipped there had forbidden any such degrading representations of his invisible, inconceivable majesty. And what would strike our beholder most with amazement would be, that while in other lands men pursued their course of error with no voice to bid them pause, around that altar at Jerusalem were prophets speaking in the name of God, and by admonitions and warnings restraining the people from

following the evil example of other nations. Well might the angelic spectator exclaim, "Why is this? Why has the favor of the Almighty thus been granted to a single race? Why this sacred light given only to Judah, and withheld from every other section of the world?" "These things," said an apostle, "the angels desire to look into." But how would the doubts of the inquiring spirit be removed, and his anxiety be changed to joy and praise, if it was granted him to perceive that all the privileges bestowed on Judah were intended, in the course of ages, for the advantage of all mankind; if he witnessed at length the appearance of the Savior, heard from his lips the law of universal love, and saw his disciples going forth to declare the equal privileges of Jew and Gentile! Yes, in Jesus Christ, "out of Zion went forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The Old Testament dispensation attained its purpose in the events of the New; and then, as a plant that has borne its fruit, it faded and died. Less than forty years after the crucifixion of Jesus, the nation that had rejected him sank as a political power, and its stately and time-honored form of worship ceased, never again to be renewed. All that was partial, all that was preparatory, came to an end. The universal religion, brought by Jesus Christ, remained and prospered; it conquered the heathenism that, clothed with imperial power, assailed it with all the violence of persecution; it extended its sway from land to land through the civilized world; the darkness of barbarism grew light before it; and, strong as in its earliest days, it still goes forth, "conquering and to conquer."

CHAPTER III.

GREEK AND ROMAN CIVILIZATION.

WE have, in the previous chapters, found cause to believe in an original revelation, communicated by the Creator to his human offspring. We have seen that the belief that he continued to manifest himself to one especial family and nation as he did not to the rest of mankind, involves nothing contrary to his impartial justice. For a continuous revelation to all mankind would have involved a constant succession of miracles, and thus have interfered with man's confidence in the stability of the laws of nature, with his freedom of choice and action, and with the right development of his character; while there was no partiality, but an action consistent with justice and analogous to the course of Providence elsewhere, in leaving the heathen world to the darkness they had chosen, and conferring on the faithful patriarch still fuller revelations, thus constituting him and his descendants the priests of mankind, commissioned at length to impart the true religion to the world at large.

It is the belief of Christians that this commission was fulfilled in Jesus Christ; that the great purpose for which the Jewish race was set apart, was accomplished when a member of that race, divinely called and qualified, proclaimed a religion more spiritual than that of Moses, adapted, not, like that, to a single race, but to universal reception, and when his disciples, obeying his

commands, went forth "into all the world," to "preach the gospel to every creature."

But the inquiry recurs with regard to the Christian revelation, which first attracted our attention with regard to any revelation at all. Was it necessary? We cannot believe that God would interpose in a remarkable manner without suitable occasion. Did such occasion exist when Jesus came into the world? Philosophers had then lived, the greatest, or at least among the greatest, whom the world has known — Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Cicero. Great advancement had been made in civilization. Sculpture and painting, poetry and eloquence, the art of war and the arts of peace, had been cultivated with a success which after ages have admired and emulated, but seldom surpassed. Long years of discord had given place to a firm and orderly government. The world was at peace. Laws which, on the whole, were wise and just, were regularly administered. What need was there of a revelation in the reign of Augustus?

While, however, we admit what the world had attained, let us also observe in what it was deficient. Notoriously, the mass of the people had no correct views of God. The deities they worshipped had all the passions of men, and indulged them in a degree that would have rendered men unendurable by their race. Not to repeat the well-known tales of the lawless violence, the implacable revenge, the shameless impurity of the other gods, Jupiter himself, the ruler of all, the best representation heathenism could offer of the infinite majesty of heaven, was at one moment engaged in some base intrigue, and at another sleeping, regardless of his im-

perial office, outwitted by the crafty Juno with the cestus of Venus.*

Such were the gods of popular belief. But in the reign of Augustus, the educated classes had no faith in these, nor, definitely, in any God at all. They continued to appear in the temples, and take part in rites which they despised, but which they thought useful as a mode of influencing the people; for themselves, some thought there were gods, some that there was none, and the greater part that probably there might be.

With regard to the doctrine of a future life, the state of opinion was much the same. The mass of the people believed in Elysium and Tartarus — regions of shadowy existence, differing in degrees of dolefulness; as the shade of Achilles, the most honored in Elysium, told Ulysses that he would rather be slave to a poor man on earth than reign over all the dead.† Of the educated, some thought it probable that there would be a future life; but the greater part had not even this approach to faith upon the subject.

Thus the advance of knowledge and refinement in other respects had failed to introduce correct views with regard to religion. And the reason is sufficiently obvious. The experience and observation of man acquaint him with the world around him, and with the world within. He learns to work upon the materials which nature presents; to cultivate the earth, to cleave and carve wood, fuse metals, and quarry stone. His processes become more skilful and delicate as time advances,

* Iliad, Book XIV., lines 153-351.

† Odyssey, Book XI., lines 487-490.

and he attains to high excellence in the arts from the guidance of nature and his own intelligence. The mind, too, is open to his survey; and from the testimony of his own consciousness he can construct noble theories of philosophy. But there is also a world above; and of the facts connected with that world neither outward nature nor inward consciousness affords him adequate information. A stronger proof of this cannot be needed than the fact already adverted to, that even now, with all the intelligence that eighteen centuries have added to that possessed in the days of Augustus, those philosophers who deny the Christian revelation are far from agreement with regard to the most important truths of natural religion.

And if heathenism, whether assisted or not by the dim traditions of a primitive revelation, had failed to inform man of the truth respecting the object of worship, it had failed also in instructing him how worship should be rendered. Idol feasts, especially of such deities as Ashteroth and Venus, were marked by the most debasing impurity. The hideous custom of human sacrifices prevailed among almost all the nations of antiquity. The two great epic poets represent their heroes, Achilles* and Æneas, as offering such sacrifices at funeral rites; and the coolness with which the incident is mentioned by Virgil shows that such crime against man and God, if not common in the age of Augustus, was, at least, not regarded with horror.† The custom of human sacrifice

* Iliad, Book XXIII., line 175.

† "Sulmone creatos
Quatuor hic juvenes, totidem quos educat Ufens,

was continued, occasionally, as late as the reign of Diocletian, and was therefore abolished only by the triumph of Christianity.

With regard to the observance of the moral law, it might be thought that here, at least, the instruction of nature would be sufficient. But although the moral sense and conscience of mankind have always borne testimony to duty, the history of heathen nations shows that a revelation was needed here also, to give clearer and fuller views of right, and still more, to supply motives of adequate strength for its observance. The age when our Savior appeared exemplifies this the more, as the unparalleled success of the Roman arms had introduced the influence of luxury and ambition, to the corruption alike of public and private virtue. Freedom was no more. It was not deserved; it was not wished for; it would not have been appreciated nor maintained if it had come. Domestic slavery existed in its most atrocious form; the very life of the bondman being at the discretion, or rather at the caprice, of his master; as instanced in the well-known incident of the slave who had accidentally broken a crystal vase being ordered to be thrown into the fish pond for his offence. The great public pastime of the Romans was the spectacle of murder in the amphitheatres. A form of sensuality that cannot now be named, was practised without shame,

Viventes rapit; inferias, quos immolet umbris,
Captivoque rogi perfundat sanguine flammam."

Æneid. Book X. 517-520

"Vinxerat et post terga manus, quos mitteret umbris
Inferias, cæso sparsuros sanguine flammam."

XI. 81, 82.

and almost without concealment. Nor did the age of Augustus exhibit heathen corruption at its worst; the course was still downward; and though Christianity soon began to apply a counteracting influence, yet before that influence could be fully exerted, the world was to see how far human folly and wickedness could go in the reigns and the persons of a Caligula, a Nero, and an Elagabalus. The last, the most disgusting of tyrants, was a priest, a fanatical devotee of the god from whom he derived his name. Heathenism could sink no lower than this.

It will be urged, however, that although the religion of antiquity was thus deficient, its philosophy was the noblest that the world has seen. No modern name has eclipsed those of Socrates and Plato. And, to select one whose life had ended not long before the Christian era, how few in any period of the world have left a fame to be compared with that of Cicero! We see in him not only the orator and statesman, employing his unequalled talents for the punishment of the rapacious Verres, for the defence of the injured and oppressed, to sustain the cause of order against Catiline, and that of liberty against Antony; but the philosopher, devoting the scanty leisure of a busy life to the preparation of imperishable essays on Duty and Immortality, while the circumstances of his death give him a place among the martyrs of freedom. If the teaching of nature could form such a character, what need of a revelation? Even allowing that the unrecognized influence of earlier divine teaching had shared in its production, yet since the result was there, what need was there of a new revelation to the age that had seen a Cicero?

To these questions it may be replied, that we cannot take a single exceptional case, or a few such cases, as a standard of the progress or the power of mankind. To judge of the necessity of a revelation, we need to know, not what the greatest and best among millions could become, but what mankind at large could attain. Yet even these exceptional cases show, by their imperfection, how low must have been the condition of public morality in the midst of which they appeared so brilliant. We have selected this instance of Cicero in good faith, as one of the brightest that antiquity presents. And yet, upon a closer survey of his history, we find the conduct of this great man not only marked by the grossest vanity, and by repeated desertion of his political principles, but in various instances by still graver offences. We find him forsaking her who had been his wife for thirty years, and marrying, almost immediately, a young maiden, whose extensive property had been placed under his charge; we find him repeatedly guilty of falsehood, and implicated in such acts of violence and rapacity as he had denounced in others with the most indignant eloquence. We do not, indeed, judge these offences in him by the strict standard of Christian morality. Rather do we look on him, and on other illustrious men of heathen antiquity, with an admiration like that with which we view feats of dexterity performed by one who is chained or crippled. Our wonder is that so much should be achieved under circumstances so unfavorable.

And allowing the eminence of the ancient philosophers, not only in the theory but in the practice of virtue, they could not exert a purifying influence upon the mass of mankind. There needs, for such an influence,

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something more ardent and more engaging than philosophy: more ardent to inspire the efforts of the teacher; more engaging to win the attention of the people. The philosophers never expected nor attempted to instruct the mass of their countrymen. They left these to the guidance, such as it was, of the national religion, to which they themselves paid outward respect. Among the last words of Socrates was a request to his friend to offer a sacrifice to Æsculapius. Such acquiescence in the popular superstition was not the way to effect an extensive reform in faith or morals. And even if the philosophers had undertaken such a task, their instructions were given in a form too abstract to engage general attention, and had no authoritative sanction to enforce them. In Christianity, on the other hand, there was, to arrest the inquirer and to guide the learner, the charm and example of a perfect character; and the precepts given possessed an authority more than human, as being communicated by one who was the delegate of heaven.

The failure of philosophy to instruct mankind is evident from an observation of the period between its highest attainments in the age of Plato and the birth of Christ, — a period of about four hundred years. During this time, if ever, the influence of philosophy should have been seen, in improving the morals and the condition of mankind; yet at the close of this period corruption had greatly increased; the ancient patriotic spirit of Greece and Rome had departed with the ancient simple manners; liberty was no more; and while religion had lost its influence over cultivated minds, the mass of the people were still in blind subjection to heathen

superstition. Philosophy then, as a reforming power in the world, had been tried and found wanting.

Its insufficiency, too, was confessed by some of its ablest teachers. A few passages from ancient writers may suffice to show how the need of a revelation was felt and acknowledged by those who were best qualified to appreciate what philosophy could accomplish.

In the "Second Alcibiades" of Plato, Alcibiades is represented as on his way to the temple to offer his devotions, when he meets Socrates. The philosopher draws from him an acknowledgement of his own ignorance and that of mankind respecting the true worship, and advises him to wait with patience until he can be instructed. Alcibiades inquires from whom the instruction is to come. Socrates replies, from one who is concerned for his good; but there is now a cloud before his mind, which must be removed before he can see such objects aright. The young man declares his earnest desire to learn, and his readiness to obey any command of this mysterious teacher, if he may thereby become better. Socrates assures him of the willingness of the promised instructor; and they agree that it is best not to render sacrifices until he shall manifest himself, for which Alcibiades expresses his strong desire.

The design of Socrates in this dialogue was probably to awaken serious thought; and the promised Teacher was that Divine Presence of which Socrates was conscious, and which in his own case he characterized as an attendant "demon" or spirit. However this may have been, the passage contains a striking admission of the ignorance of mankind in general as to the true service of God.

In the "Apology," Socrates uses the following language: "You may give over all hopes of amending men's manners for the future, unless God be pleased to send you some other person to instruct you."

Again, in the "Phaedon," after Socrates has discoursed on immortality, and observed that full knowledge of divine things was not to be attained till the soul was separated from the body, the practical result is given in the answer of Simmias. It is best, then, he says, if we cannot by all our study find out the truth, "to take the best and most probable results of human reason, and steer our course by these, unless one could proceed by a clearer and safer way, in a stronger vessel, as by some divine revelation."

Lord Bolingbroke, who maintains the opposite opinion, yet observes, "But it must be admitted that Plato insinuates in many places the want, or the necessity, of a divine revelation to discover the external service God requires, and the expiation for sin, to give stronger assurances of the rewards and punishments that await men in another world, — and to frame a system of the whole order of things, both in this world and the next."*

Among the sects of Grecian philosophy there is one which claims especial attention from its near approach to Christian morality, and the noble characters of some of its disciples. The Stoics were the followers of Zeno, who lived three hundred years before Christ. The basis of the Stoic system was the idea of living according to nature; not, however, the nature of the individual, but universal nature. But among all things, while some

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v., page 214.

were bad, and some indifferent, wisdom and virtue alone were good. To these, therefore, the life must be conformed. The truly wise man is represented as perfect and sufficient in himself; pain and evil, which subdue the rest of mankind, are powerless over him; he feels them, but does not yield to them. While we cannot but recognize much that is noble in these thoughts, we perceive at once their deficiencies, in the want of a principle of religious obligation, and of that humility which, recognizing human weakness, would have sought and welcomed the hope of aid from a higher power. These deficiencies are strikingly apparent in the belief and practice of the Stoics with respect to suicide. The wise man, perfect and independent, was, of course, master of his own life; whether he should retain or leave it, was but a question of convenience; and though he must never admit that pain had conquered him, yet to prefer death to other means of suffering had in it a boldness which prevented the proud spirit of the Stoic from discerning his own inconsistency.

Thus Zeno himself, when near a hundred years old, took his own life, because he had broken a joint of his finger by a fall. Perhaps some remainder of superstition mingled with his motives, for he declared he considered the accident a summons from the invisible world.

The most memorable disciples of the Stoic school were Cato the younger, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. The determination of Cato to destroy himself rather than yield to a conqueror, has been held up to admiration; yet it was rather a flight from what he dreaded, than a triumph over it. Wise and virtuous as he was, he judged too rashly, if he thought that there was no more

that he could do for his country; for none can tell what influence he might have exerted in the stormy times that followed.

Epictetus was at first a slave, and Stoicism in him was exemplified by the utmost patience under the cruelty of his master. One day, when this man was torturing him by twisting his leg, Epictetus smiled, and quietly said, "You will break it;" and when it did break, only remarked, "Did not I tell you so?" Possessed of such heroic patience, he appears to have differed from the other Stoics on the subject of suicide. He afterwards obtained his freedom, and was, during a long life, a teacher of philosophy. He left nothing in writing, but his sayings were given to the world by his pupil, Arrian.

Marcus Aurelius exhibited the virtue of Stoicism in a station the most strongly contrasted to that of Epictetus. Adopted by Antoninus as heir of the empire, he exercised over himself that continual watchfulness which enabled him wisely to govern others. A lover of peace, he was called to reign at a period of continual warfare; but triumphed over all his enemies by his energy and wisdom, and secured their future allegiance by his clemency. But for his persecution of the Christians, his memory would be almost without a stain. But that persecution is the less excusable in him from the very greatness of his character in other respects. As an energetic ruler, it cannot be pleaded for him that the cruelties inflicted during a series of years were unknown to him; as a wise ruler, he should have been raised above superstition and vulgar prejudice; and as a humane ruler in other departments of his office, his feelings must have shrunk from the crime which mistaken policy

prompted him to commit, and from which his Stoic philosophy had not the power to save him.

It is probable that the virtue of Aurelius, and even that of Epictetus, owed much to the unsuspected influence of Christian ideas. Epictetus was a slave at Rome not many years after the persecution of the Christians under Nero. In the steadfastness of the martyrs in that persecution, all Rome received a lesson of patience beyond what Stoicism had ever taught; and even they who knew not the religious motive of that patience, might be led to admire and imitate its practical exhibition. The difference between Epictetus and the earlier Stoics, respecting suicide, appears to indicate that a new influence had been added to theirs. In the time of Marcus Aurelius, Christian thought must have penetrated society still more deeply; and the Emperor, who in his "Meditations" ascribes all of good that he had attained to the instruction and example of his parents and teachers, may, probably, have omitted one influence which had had its part in making him what he was, and whose blessing he had mistakenly repaid with persecution.

The number, however, was small, of those whom heathen philosophy, in the elevated form of Stoicism, could lead in the path of virtue. Its principles were too abstract and cold for human nature in general. Men needed the recognition of a heavenly Father, the example of a perfect Savior. The want of a revelation, often felt and acknowledged by the philosophers, was realized still more deeply by those who had not light like theirs to guide them. And this want was further testified by the eagerness with which the world received that revelation when it came. While Epictetus and Aurelius were

giving forth the best rays of heathen wisdom, already mingled, perhaps, with a light whose origin they did not recognize, that light was eagerly hailed by ever increasing thousands. With the uneducated, heathenism had possession of the ground; with the educated, philosophy. These were sustained against the intrusion of the new religion by all the power of the state; a power which was unsparingly exerted in a succession of persecutions. Yet the new system lived and triumphed. The world would not have embraced it had it not felt its need.

CHAPTER IV.

APOLLONIUS, THE CHRIST OF PHILOSOPHY.

THE advance of Christianity in the heathen Roman Empire was opposed not only by the force of persecution, and by the arguments of such writers as Celsus and Porphyry. About two hundred years from the birth of Christ, the attempt was made to set up a rival to him, in the interest of heathenism. Such appears to have been the origin of the biography of Apollonius of Tyana, written by Philostratus at the command of the Empress Julia Domna, and purporting to be derived from an ancient document, the narrative of Damis, the companion and friend of Apollonius.

We have, then, in the life of Apollonius, the best effort of classic cultivation to surpass the narratives of the life of Jesus. The four evangelists had given to the world a portraiture of superhuman excellence; and a philosopher at the imperial court undertook a similar task. We shall see how he succeeded.

In preparing this chapter, we have had before us not only the recent entertaining book of M. Réville,* but that of Dr. Baur on which it is founded, and the work of Philostratus himself.

The birth of Apollonius is thought to have nearly coincided in date with that of Jesus. His native place,

* Apollonius of Tyana, the Pagan Christ of the Third Century. By Albert Réville.

Tyana, was a city of Cappadocia in Asia Minor; and he pursued his early studies at Tarsus, not far off, possibly under the same teachers from whom the youthful Saul was receiving the elements of Grecian learning. If we may believe Philostratus, whose account we shall now follow, the birth of the future sage had been foretold to his mother by Proteus, the changeful and prophetic deity, who became incarnate in his person. A flock of swans sang at his birth, as at that of Apollo. In youth he embraced with great zeal the philosophy of Pythagoras, and became so famous for the beauty of his person and his early wisdom, that his biographer traces to him a proverb of the neighborhood, "Whither run you so fast? Is it to see the young man?" Having observed the five years' silence prescribed to the disciples of Pythagoras, he set out on his travels. At Nineveh he was joined by Damis, afterwards his biographer. Babylon, which other authorities represent to have been then in desolation, he found to be still a royal capital, with walls a hundred and fifty feet high, and nearly a hundred in thickness. In India, he received instruction from divine sages, who dwelt on the summit of a mountain, surrounded by mists and miracles. Returning thence, the fame of his wisdom went before him. He converted Ephesus to philosophy and virtue, and restored concord to divided Smyrna. The people of the former city, being afflicted with the plague, sent messengers to Smyrna for Apollonius. He transferred himself to Ephesus in a moment, and drove away the plague by a treatment equally strange and energetic. The evil spirit which occasioned the disease appeared in the form of an old beggar. Apollonius directed that this person

should be stoned to death in the theatre; and when the heap of stones was removed, there appeared under it, not the murdered beggar, but a living dog. One might fancy that this story had its foundation in Apollonius having taught the Ephesians to guard their city from the plague by sternly excluding the squalid poverty in whose rags the infection lay concealed.

Apollonius soon after visited the site of ancient Troy, where he called up the shade of Achilles, and received from him answers to several questions. Achilles, though so long dead, retained his hatred of the Trojans; so that he warned Apollonius to dismiss from his company one of his disciples, because he was descended from Priam. It is not to the sage's honor that he obeyed this admonition.

In Corinth, Apollonius opened the eyes of an enamoured youth to the fact that his bride was an evil spirit; and caused the marriage feast, with its gold and silver vessels, cup-bearers and cooks, to vanish into air.

At Athens, a youth irreverently laughing at Apollonius's instructions, the sage pronounced him possessed by a demon, and ejected it forthwith, the demon proving his presence by overthrowing a statue.

More credibly, and highly to his honor, he is related to have censured the gladiatorial combats of the Athenians. "He refused going to their assembly when invited, saying the place was impure and polluted with blood." With the Pythagoreans generally, he offered only bloodless sacrifices, and abstained from animal food, and even from clothing of whose fabric any animal growth formed a part.

From Olympia, he wrote to the Ephori of Sparta,

who had sent him a deputation, and enjoined them to restore the ancient simplicity of manners. The magistrates, more submissive to good advice than magistrates usually are, complied at once, and were favored with a truly laconic letter of commendation.

Subsequently, on a visit to Sparta, he heard of a young man who was to be tried on the charge of neglecting the affairs of the republic for his own commercial pursuits. He visited him, and by rousing his pride of ancestry, and representing to him the ignoble character of mercantile transactions, brought him to tears of repentance. He then obtained his pardon from the Ephori. Besides the improbability of the story, representing the laws of Lyeurgus to be in force at Sparta in the corrupt age of Claudius, we have to notice its false morality and ruinous political economy, in condemning useful labor as dishonorable.

Apollonius soon after visited Rome, where Nero had recently ascended the throne. The account of the excesses which that Emperor was committing does not agree with the statements of authentic history, according to which, the first five years of his reign were marked by wise government and becoming deportment, under the guidance of Seneca and Burrhus.

At Rome, Apollonius met the funeral of a young maiden, and commanding the attendants to set down the bier, touched the girl, pronounced a few words over her, and awakened her from her seeming death. While other circumstances of this story seem derived from the miracle at Nain, the doubt expressed by the biographer whether death had actually taken place, reminds us of the Savior's expression in relation to the daughter of

Jairus, "The maiden is not dead, but sleepeth." The relations of the girl presented Apollonius with a hundred and fifty thousand drachmas, which he settled on her as a marriage portion.

We next find him at Cadiz, examining the phenomena of the tides, whose cause he pronounced to be winds, blowing from caverns by the side of the ocean, and drawn in again alternately, like human breath.

In Spain, Apollonius encouraged the rebellion of Vindex against Nero. Returning eastward to Syracuse, he was informed of a recent prodigy, in the birth of a child with three heads. From this he foretold the accession and transient reigns of three Emperors; soon after verified in the persons of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius.

After many wise instructions given in Greece, Apollonius reached Alexandria some time before the arrival of Vespasian in that city. That conqueror sought his advice in regard to the acceptance of the empire; and yielded to his counsel, not to restore the republic, but to ascend the throne. Apollonius at the same time informed him of the burning of the Capitol at Rome, which had taken place only the day before.

The Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls was exemplified in a lion, which Apollonius saw in Egypt, and declared to be animated by the spirit of the ancient king Amasis. The lion wept while Apollonius told his story, and the philosopher comforted him with regal honors.

Apollonius next visited the Gymnosophists, or unclothed philosophers of Ethiopia, who received him with respect, commanding a tree to make obeisance to him.

He held with them a long discussion on the respective merits of the Indian sages and themselves.

In the reign of Titus, as in that of his father, Apollonius was in high favor; but under Domitian, he encouraged Nerva and others to rebellion against that tyrant. Domitian sent to arrest him, but he anticipated his intention by hastening at once to Rome. After imprisonment and other ill treatment, he was examined before the Emperor. He appeared with dignity, even with haughtiness; defended himself against the charges brought, but admitted that men called him a god, and declared that every good man was entitled to that appellation.

He explained, however, some words he had used before the statue of Domitian, in a manner that seems more ingenious than truthful. His defence was successful; and the Emperor acquitted him of all charges. The philosopher thanked Domitian for this vindication, but blamed him for encouraging informers; and, quoting a line of Homer, "Thou canst not slay me, for to thee I am not mortal," vanished from his presence. The same day he was seen at Puteoli, a hundred and fifty miles distant.

The philosopher afterwards visited the cave of Trophonius, the son of Apollo, and remained several days in his realms of darkness; returning afterwards to the surface of the earth, by a passage before untrodden, in Aulis, about fifty miles from Lebadea, where he had disappeared.

Returning to Ephesus, the philosopher gave instructions to a crowd of admiring disciples. One day, while thus teaching, he suddenly let his voice fall, as if

alarmed, — then resumed his conversation in a lower tone, — then paused entirely. After that, advancing a few steps, he cried out, "Strike the tyrant, strike!" He stood for some time in silent attention, and then declared to the astonished crowd that Domitian had that instant been slain. The historian, Dion Cassius, who undoubtedly had this story from Philostratus, with whom he was a fellow-courtier, improves upon it by making Apollonius utter the very name of the regicide. "Well done, Stephanus! Courage, Stephanus! Strike the murderer! Thou hast struck him, hast wounded him, hast slain him!"

At length, at an age of from eighty to upwards of a hundred years, according to different estimates, Apollonius passed from earth in some mysterious manner. His tomb, like that of Moses, was not known. One account represents him as having disappeared in the temple of Diana, while virgin voices were heard singing, "Leave the earth, ascend to heaven!"

The teaching of Apollonius was in accordance with the Pythagorean philosophy, to the truth of which he brought the attestation of the sages of India, and of the demigod Trophonius. That philosophy inculcated personal purity, the restraint of appetite, the contempt of wealth and luxury, and the performance of benevolent actions. One of its most prominent doctrines was the transmigration of souls; and from this followed the comparative unimportance of the event of death. The Pythagorean might say, if in a lower sense than the Christian,

"It is not death: what seems so is transition."

Pythagoras declared that he remembered his former life, when he was Euphorbus, slain at the siege of Troy. The Indian sage Iarchas, whom Apollonius visited, claimed to have been once King Ganges, son of the river of that name. Apollonius himself, more modestly, only asserted that he was once the master of an Egyptian merchant ship.

Many of the sayings ascribed to the Tyanean sage are full of dignity and beauty. In others the arrogance of the sophist is discernible. The following may serve as instances.

In one of the letters ascribed to him, after a complaint almost identical with that of Jesus, that "a prophet hath no honor in his own country," he adds, "I know well, indeed, how good it is for one to hold the whole earth for his country, and all men for his brothers and friends, since we are all of divine lineage, and come from one Father; and since there is a universal community of nature, by which every one, wherever and however he may be situated, whether barbarian or Grecian, is still always a man." In this noble language we recognize Christian sentiments; but we cannot forget that Philostratus lived two centuries after Christ, and when the prominent ideas of Christianity had become known through every class of society.

In the Apology of Apollonius, intended to have been delivered before Domitian, are these words: "Dost thou ask me to which class I belong, to the rich or the poor? I answer, to the richest of all; for that I stand in need of nothing, is to me Lydia and the Pactolus."

After the death of Apollonius, or rather, we should say, after the appearance of his biography by Philostratus,

divine honors were rendered to him in various places, and especially at Tyana. He is said to have appeared, after his death or ascension, to the dismay and conversion of a young man who denied the immortality of the soul; — a story probably copied from the account of the conversion of St. Paul. Much later, we are told, the Emperor Aurelian beheld the deified philosopher, commanding him to spare Tyana, which he had intended to destroy; but as this was after the book of Philostratus had appeared, it will need no miracle to explain it. The relenting thoughts of the conqueror might well take, in sleep, the form of the acknowledged protector of the condemned city.

There is an evident resemblance between the wonders ascribed to Apollonius and those recorded of Jesus Christ. The mysterious birth, foretold by Proteus, and heralded by the song of swans, reminds us of the annunciation, and of the vision of the shepherds at Bethlehem; the control over evil spirits, as in the cases of the Ephesian beggar, the Athenian youth, and the lamia at Corinth; the restoration to life of the young maiden at Rome; the descent into the under world at Leba-dea; the ascension in the temple of Diana, and the vision afforded afterwards for the conversion of an unbeliever, — all these are imitated, designedly or undesignedly, from the Christian history. His disappearance from the presence of Domitian seems copied from incidents, apparently similar, in the life of Jesus; as when he, "passing through the midst of" his enemies, "went his way," or when, after breaking bread with the two disciples at Emmaus, he "vanished out of their sight."

The sage of Tyana was, no doubt, a real person, a wandering teacher of the Pythagorean philosophy. He may have been the counsellor of Proconsuls and Emperors, may have plotted with Vindex and advised Vespasian, though the nearer historians, Tacitus and Suetonius, make no mention of him. But we are safe in asserting, that if he visited India, the Brahmins with whom he conversed did not have the power of floating in the air; and that the marriage feast at Corinth did not literally vanish at his reproof.

Let us compare the accounts of his life with those of the Gospels respecting Jesus. Here are two persons, who lived at about the same time, and to both of whom wonderful works are ascribed. The history of the one contains a mass of stories, mythical, if not consciously false. Can we infer from this that the history of the other is liable to the same charge?

No; for in the first place, a wide difference exists between the documentary evidence in the two cases. The authority claimed by Philostratus was that of the manuscript said to have been written by Damis. For the existence of this manuscript we have only the word of Philostratus; for his account was published after the death of the Empress from whom he claims to have received the document. The story respecting Damis himself is scarcely credible. He is said to have joined Apollonius when the latter was very young, and to have been still his companion, and sent by him on a message from Ephesus to Rome, when they both must have been at least eighty years old. There is strong reason, then, to believe, apart from the wonders it relates of Apollonius, that the narrative, if it was the genuine work of Damis, was

altered and enlarged by Philostratus in the most reckless manner.

Compare with this the records of Christianity. The Gospels are four documents instead of one; they were preserved, not in a single family, but by the whole Christian community; we have them still in our hands, in the same condition in which they were known to the early church; while the original account of Apollonius, said to have been written by his companion, is confessedly lost; and we have the Gospels authenticated by a succession of witnesses, from the early part of the second century, while there is one witness alone, and that a much later one, for the original biography of Apollonius.

In the second place, the words and deeds of Jesus were committed, not only to these writings, but to the reverent and conscientious memory of chosen men, his apostles and their associates, who devoted their lives to the work of proclaiming his religion. Even should it be proved that the written records were of later date, there must have been from the first an unwritten gospel in the preaching of the early disciples; and to this collected and generally authentic tradition from the eye-witnesses, the historians must have resorted as their most obvious means of information. Apollonius, on the other hand, founded no permanent school. The Apollonians, if such a sect existed, passed away so soon, and so utterly, that the only trace of their having ever been, is in a doubtful assertion of Philostratus.

In the third place, the stories told of Apollonius show their falsehood by other traits than their miraculous character. The wonders are grotesque, — a speaking tree, a weeping lion, tripods moving of their own accord.

We find also serpents with magic jewels in their heads, vases containing the wind and the rain, and stones which eagles place in their nests as talismans to protect their young from serpents. How do these accounts contrast with the majestic exhibitions of power by the Founder of the Christian faith; especially when we remember that the biographer of Apollonius had before him the miracles of Christ, to copy, and if possible to excel, in those which he should ascribe to his own sage!

Still further, let any one compare the character of the Tyanean philosopher with that of the Man of Nazareth. Apollonius is the perfection of a heathen sage, — cold, commanding, egotistic, urging on mankind the claims of a philosophy, which, with some lofty thoughts, combines others that are partial, unnatural, or utterly false. Jesus of Nazareth has the warm heart of a gentle human being; and while he leads his followers in devotion to the Father, he lays down his own life for the good of mankind, leaving to all following ages the divine example of self-sacrifice.

In Apollonius, heathen wisdom and classic culture did their best — having the life of Jesus, too, before them — to produce a counterpart to Him who “spake as never man spake.” Imperial power and priestly influence joined their aid to establish the reputation of the teacher of Tyana, and to obscure that of the teacher of Nazareth. But the reverent love of mankind turned from the cold and shadowy form of philosophic arrogance, and chose the service of Him whose claims were authenticated alike by external proof, and by the beauty and holiness of the message that he brought from God to man. The legendary life of Apollonius faded from

the memory of mankind at large, and was left as an object of transient interest to the few who love to search in libraries for what is curious in the records of the past. But the Gospel of Christ, opposed in its progress by monarch and priest and sophist, speedily won its way to the throne of visible empire, while it established an ever-widening dominion over the minds and hearts of men.

CHAPTER V.

MORAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

THAT the Christian religion is one of surpassing moral excellence and spiritual beauty and elevation, is generally admitted. Its own intrinsic worth presents that evidence which appeals to the heart, and without whose reception by the heart, all other proof must be in vain. The Sermon on the Mount, the Parables, the account of the parting conversation of Jesus with his disciples, and that of the crucifixion, — these are their own best witnesses.

We have, in the preceding "Manual," taken a view of the harmony of Christianity with nature, and its adaptation to the powers and capacities of man; of its morality, and of the character of its Founder. (Sections 5 to 8.) Without repeating what has there been said, we shall now present a few thoughts in the same connection.

Christianity claims reception on account of the holiness of its precepts. If its opponent points to the evils that have existed in Christian nations, and to those crimes especially that have been wrought in the very name of Christianity, — to the usurpations of the Papal power, the bloodshed of the Crusades, the tyranny of the Inquisition, we have but to turn to the New Testament to perceive that none of these evils and crimes are

chargeable upon the Gospel. Those evils have existed, those crimes have been committed, not in obedience to the commands of Christ, but in defiance or in ignorance, alike of his precepts and of his spirit. Equally without authority from him has been the institution of the monastery and the convent; for though he commanded his disciples to follow him, it was to a life of active exertion for the good of mankind, not to one of lonely meditation, having the good of the individual for its only object. It is but within the last two centuries that Christians have learned, — if they have even yet fully learned, — that persecution for opinion's sake is as wrong as it is foolish, and that the spirit of their Master requires them to triumph over enmity by gentleness, not by force; yet the law on these subjects was given eighteen hundred years ago, by his sacred lips, when he told his followers not to forbid the action of their fellow-disciple because he walked not with them, and when he rebuked those who would have called down fire upon the Samaritan village. (Mark ix. 38-40; Luke ix. 49-56.) Thus do the very weaknesses and sins of Christ's disciples, when compared with the law by which they have professed to be guided, bear witness to its superhuman excellence.

The Christian law is that of perfect purity, in thought no less than in word and action; of impartial justice, of universal love. It reveals to us, as the object of devotion, God, not as another name for nature, like Brahminism and Buddhism in their purest forms, nor only as a Sovereign, like Mohammedanism; but as "Our Father in heaven." It presents to us, as the object of our love, second only to Him, man, our brother; the hum-

blest of the race, and the most widely separated from us, being like ourselves a child of the Universal Father.

Again, the excellence of Christianity appears in the character of its Founder. In Jesus Christ we have the perfect exemplification of the law which he gave. Had the New Testament been but a code of morals, without the light which the character of Jesus sheds upon it, it would not have engaged, as it has, the attention and reverence of mankind. "Love your enemies," is a noble precept; but had it stood alone, men would have disregarded it, as difficult to understand, and impossible to obey. It was the exemplification of the precept by Jesus himself, when on the cross he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," that made it at once intelligible and impressive.* And so of the whole law which the Savior taught. We know what is meant by the love of God and man, because we see them illustrated in him. We learn from the scene in Gethsemane the spirit in which we should pray, from the scene on Calvary that in which we should suffer. And not only does the life of Jesus thus make clear to us the meaning of his precepts, but showing us the divine beauty of virtue, it engages our emotions of admiration, love, and gratitude, to aid in the fulfilment of the duties pointed out.

We may say more than this. The character of Jesus

* It is an illustration of the difficulty which the most enlightened Christians find, of rising to the full height of their Master's spirit, that the author of "Eecce Homo," in the same book which contains the beautiful chapter on Forgiveness, endeavors to explain away the prayer of Jesus on the cross, as if he had in mind only the Roman executioners! Eecce Homo, chap. xxi., page 298.

is itself a revelation to mankind of the character of God. Heathenism endeavored to represent that which is divine by earthly emblems, by images made in forms sometimes bestial, sometimes grotesque, sometimes in all the beauty and dignity with which Grecian genius could invest the human figure. Christianity forbids all such representations as unworthy, but it gives us a nobler image of the Deity in an exalted human soul. This alone can rightly represent God to man. For man is made in the image of God, intellectually and morally; and the highest conception we can form of our Creator is to take what is noblest and holiest in man, and combine with it the attribute of infinity. That we may do this more worthily, there has been placed before us a perfect human being. He possessed that perfection by a most intimate union with God. "I am in the Father," he said, "and the Father in me." (John xiv. 10.) How that union was attained, Christians have not agreed in conceiving. An interesting view is that of Schleiermacher, who maintains that Christ possessed, by especial divine gift, a consciousness of the presence of God, so entire as to conform his own will in all things to that of the Being whom he felt as dwelling within him; that he thus was the crowning miracle of creation, the completion of the grand succession of God's works, the Perfect Man.*

It is in consequence of this union of Christ with God, that believers are able to attain a more devoted rever-

* See an article on "Schleiermacher and his View of Christ," in the Monthly Religious Magazine for February, 1869, by the author of this volume.

ence, a more tender love, towards the Almighty, since they can contemplate him in Christ. In the purity of Jesus we see imaged to us the holiness of God; in the Savior's miracles we discern the power and the mercy of Him from whom he came; above all, in the whole life of Jesus, devoted to the rescue of mankind from sin, and accomplishing that object even by the death of the cross, we have the most vivid representation possible of the infinite love of God to man, and of the strength of his purpose that his human children should become holy.

In one respect this view of "God in Christ" appears more important in this age than ever before. The refinement of modern ideas, through the progress of science, has done much to weaken our conception of the personality of God; and there is danger that by the habit of referring the phenomena of nature to mechanical and chemical forces, we may cease to recognize the living power of God's will; and that as by reasoning we conclude that he can have no emotions that imply change and weakness, we may be tempted to doubt the efficacy of prayer, and even lose the conviction of God's love, his justice, and his compassion. But we cannot understand the Infinite by contemplating him in one aspect alone. In the boundless deep of his nature, qualities that seem to us opposed may co-exist, as rivers run into the ocean from opposite shores, and find their resting-place sufficient to contain them all. If we would escape from the coldness of Pantheism, it must be by contemplating God as revealed to us in the words of Christ, and as imaged forth to us in his tender and exalted character.

Thirdly, the religion of Christ claims our belief, by the power it has evinced to nerve and sustain its martyrs. The first and greatest of these was the Savior himself. The next that died in attestation of his Gospel had learned from him to pray for the forgiveness of his enemies. (Acts vii. 60.) From that time forward, for near three hundred years, Jewish and heathen hatred called the church to sustain a succession of persecutions, endured with constancy and meekness that well illustrated the power of their faith. Men in the feebleness of age, like Polycarp, found strength to be firm to the end; philosophers like Justin showed that the life of a student had not taken from them the courage to face danger; and women of gentle nurture, like Perpetua, could withstand the entreaties of a father, and the unconscionable pleading of an infant child, alike urging them to save their lives by apostasy.

The constancy of these martyrs shows the power of the religion by which they were sustained. In the case of the earliest, as of those among the apostles who thus suffered death, and of the evangelists who encountered the danger of it, their constancy gave the most convincing assurance of their faithfulness in the accounts they had given of the life and teaching of Jesus. The testimony of the later martyrs has been invalidated by referring to instances in which similar sufferings have been endured with similar constancy, in the defence of error. Thus in those mutual persecutions of Catholic and Protestant, which have been the shame of past centuries, the victims cannot all have been martyrs for the truth; yet there was no difference in the firmness with which they bore their sufferings. Thus Renan, in his book

on the Acts, gives an interesting account of the sect of Babists, in Persia, and the persecutions endured by them in our own age. But in all these cases, we may reply, the sufferers not only were sustained by their own ardent faith, but they had before them the example of the early Christian martyrs; for it is probable that traditions of that example had been preserved, even in Persia. We desire not, however, to strain this argument too far. Let it be enough that it fully proves the sincerity of the early Christians, and the power of their religion to sustain them in the extremity of suffering.

Yet again, Christianity claims reception from us, for the aid it has given in the diffusion of intelligence, the advancement of civilization, the improvement of the condition of mankind. The social evils which yet remain are so great that as we look upon them we are apt to feel as if nothing had been gained, and the Gospel, as respects its influence over human society at large, had been a failure. But it is because we see only the present, that we do not realize its immense superiority to the heathen past. Much also is to be allowed for a counteracting cause, which, but for Christianity, would have carried back the world to utter barbarism. This was the invasion and conquest of the Roman Empire by the wild hordes of northern Europe. Centuries of corruption, with luxury, idolatry, and despotism, had so weakened the manhood of the southern regions, that not even the adoption of Christianity could win back for the Empire more than a transitory splendor; and the transfer of the seat of government to the East, left the Western portion the most feebly defended, while it was the most strongly attacked. Thus, in the fifth century, the

Christian Empire of Rome came to an end. The countries that composed it, Italy, France, Spain, and Britain, with some regions to the north and the south of these, were overwhelmed by a flood of barbarism. Science, art, and learning were objects of indifference, if not of scorn, to the fierce invaders; but in the religion of the nations they had conquered, they found that which could first restrain and then elevate and enlighten them. The Christian priests were the civilizers of the new barbarism. The monastic institutions, which we are apt to regard as monuments alone of folly and indolence, were providentially made, first, the retreat of learning and piety before the barbarian sword, and then the central points of missionary effort, to teach the conquering savages alike the arts of this life, and the holy doctrines connected with the life to come. Yet it was centuries before Europe attained a stage in civilization, corresponding to that which it had lost. The influence of Christianity, then, though ceaselessly at work, has been delayed, for a period of seven hundred years, — from the fifth to the twelfth century, — by its contest with the barbarism of the northern nations. When, at length, civilization prevailed, it was Christianity that had won its battle.

We may discern the power of the Gospel of Christ in the removal of evil institutions, by a glance at the history of domestic slavery. That hideous system has been overthrown in three successive forms, and ever by the influence of Christian truth. First, in the classic form, the worst of all in one respect, because it gave the master the power of life and death. Some progress had been made, even under the heathen Emperors, in

favor of humanity to the bondman; but it was by edicts of Constantine that the murder of a slave was placed on the same level with that of a freeman, and that the forcible separation of families was forbidden.* By these and similar laws, and still more by the influence of Christianity on the hearts of individual masters, Roman slavery gradually passed away. Then came the lighter form of feudal villeinage; to perish in its turn by the advance of a civilization which Christianity guided, and in no small degree by the direct interference of Christian ministers. "When the dying slaveholder," says Macaulay, "asked for the sacraments, his spiritual attendants regularly adjured him, as he loved his soul, to emancipate his brethren, for whom Christ had died. So successfully had the Church used her formidable machinery, that before the Reformation came, she had enfranchised almost all the bondmen in the kingdom except her own, who, to do her justice, seem to have been very tenderly treated." †

Last came the American form of slavery. We have seen this pass away before the storm of civil war; but the war itself would not have taken place but for the increasing opposition to the continuance of the slave system, and the certainty that the power to maintain it against that opposition was gradually passing away. And though the church has often been angrily charged with indifference to the cause of freedom, yet the impulse of the anti-slavery movement came from Christianity. It was from the principles of the Society of Friends that the foremost champion and the foremost

* Penny Cyclopædia, Art, Slavery.

† History of England, Chapter I.

poet among the Abolitionists derived their reverence for the rights of man. Christian ministers, Channing and Follen, and many others, were among the prominent advocates of the cause; and if the defenders of the evil institution brought up in its favor some obscure passages, principally from the Old Testament, these were more than counterbalanced by the plain teaching of the Bible, that all men are children of God, destined alike to immortality, and that justice and benevolence are to be shown to all. Thus for the third time, it was Christianity before which slavery gave way.

It would be interesting to trace the influence of the Gospel in other departments of the progress of civilization. But the repeated abolition of slavery may serve as a sufficient example. We hope, too, that the subject may be presented to the public with a fulness adapted to its importance, by the publication of the Lectures delivered recently before the Lowell Institute, on the Debt of the World to Christianity, by our friend the President of Meadville Theological School.

It is a great error to suppose that Christianity rests alone on outward miracles as evidences of its truth. Besides the characteristics of it which have been named, there are other proofs of its divine excellence which may well be called moral miracles. Its very existence is such a miracle, when viewed in connection with its early history. That a peasant of Galilee, whom his countrymen caused to be crucified, should have put down the mighty idolatry of Rome, and established the belief in his teachings as the religion of civilized mankind, is a miracle grander than that he should have raised the

dead. In the words of Coleridge, "Christendom is the best proof of Christianity."

Again, at the present day, the moral and spiritual efficacy of Christianity is a constant succession of wonders. Still does Jesus make the blind to see; for he opens the mental eye which sin had darkened, that it may discern what is beautiful and glorious in purity, peace, justice, and benevolence. Still does he bid the lame walk; for he aids the unsteady feet of the wanderer from virtue to re-enter and to pursue her sacred paths. Still does he raise the dead, the morally dead, the "dead in trespasses and sins," to a better life than had been theirs before. Not then alone by visible miracles in the distant past, not by voices speaking alone to one favored nation, but by testimonies ever recurring, and which every willing mind can comprehend, does God accredit to us his sacred messenger.

ARGUMENT OF SCHLEIERMACHER.

Those disciples of the Transcendental Philosophy who have retained their Christian faith, have naturally relied rather on arguments of the kind now before us, than on the evidence of miracles. It will be our endeavor, in what remains of this chapter, to point out the path which some of them have pursued, by developing the train of thought upon this subject, as presented in various portions of Schleiermacher's great work on "Christian Faith," and in the last of his "Discourses on Religion."

Religious systems, this writer observes, are distinguished into the Natural and the Positive. Positive

religions are those which claim to have been revealed from some superhuman source; Natural religion, that which is authenticated by nature alone. This, however, it will be found by universal experience, never exists by itself, as the actual faith of any portion of mankind. It derives its origin from the positive religions of the world; the process for its attainment being to compare these in their highest forms, — the Christian, the Jewish, and the Mohammedan, — to leave out whatever is peculiar to any one of them, reserving only those great truths in which they all unite.

It follows from this, that Theism, as Natural religion is sometimes designated, cannot fairly claim to be a rival of Christianity. It is, in fact, only Christianity abridged. What it teaches is true, but it is not truth which philosophers discovered for themselves. The people had it before the philosophers. The part which the latter had in its preparation was not that of development, but of mere omission. The truth of Christianity, then, is acknowledged by its opponents, in regard to much that is of most importance in its teachings, as the Being and the Unity of God, his Fatherly love, his providential care, the future life of man, and his accountability for his conduct. And these opponents never would have attained these truths, had they not been contained in those systems of Positive religion, among which Christianity is acknowledged by all to hold the highest place.

Claiming thus in behalf of Christianity the honor which has been appropriated by Theism, we can, by a chain of argument, prove more distinctly the claims of our religion to the character of a revelation from above.

In the first place, the position is laid down that a religious community cannot derive its origin from circumstances entirely within the community which preceded it. To produce a new effect, there must be a new cause. A system of religion worn into formalism, and from which all living spirit had departed, could not of itself break forth into new life, adopt new doctrines and forms, and furnish the impulse to a new activity.

In the origin of all new systems, then, the establishment of great religious communities, we must recognize, besides preceding circumstances, the working of an original personality. The new law comes from a new prophet; or rather, since a new law alone cannot properly be called a new religion, and the office of prophet is not identical with that of religious founder, the new system of faith requires as its producing cause, a personage of high endowments, eminently possessed of the powers of discovering and communicating truth, and of exercising control over his fellow-beings. To the impulse which raises up and empowers such a personage, the term inspiration may not improperly be applied.

Such has been the origin, so far as we can discern, of all great systems of religion. In regard to some forms, their date goes back to such distant periods that their actual history cannot be traced. And some, as the Greek and Roman mythology, present a conglomeration of different previous systems of faith. But history, so far as we can trace it, agrees with the principle thus reached by transcendental reasoning, that when the minds of great masses of men have been stirred to the adoption of a new religious system, it was because they were under the influence of an inspired leader.

But all such leaders, except one, have shown the limits of their inspiration by admitting into their systems the qualifying influences of space and time. They have been local, national, not universal. Brahminism owns the sacred river and the sacred mountain of Hindostan. Mohammedanism, in its frequent ablutions, marks itself as the religion of a warm climate, and calls its votaries to pilgrimages which would be impossible to those living at a distance from its Arabian birthplace. Judaism is confessedly the system of a single people, and a single small province; however, its limitation may be justified in view of its being only preliminary to a more full revelation. Christianity alone is for all men, everywhere; adapted equally to the savage and the sage, the Asiatic and the European, not localizing the dwelling of the Almighty in a temple or mountain, nor confining his worship to any form of sacrifice or order of priesthood. The principles it inculcates are the universal ones of truth, purity, justice, and benevolence, with trust and love towards God. In view of this, its essential characteristic, Christianity holds of right the position of the universal, the absolute religion. Whatever would otherwise claim the name of revelation, ceases to merit it in the presence of this; and if the founders of other systems may be said in some degree to be inspired, of Christ it may be truly said that the Father "giveth not the spirit by measure unto him."

Again, if we look more closely to the great idea of the Christian revelation, we find in it what we can trace only to a source more than human. That idea is of redemption from the power of sin. Our consciousness as human beings tells us of want, deficiency, impurity

in ourselves; our consciousness as Christians tells of this want supplied, this deficiency met, this impurity changed to purity, by the influence of our religion. To what can we trace such thoughts and feelings? Not to the ordinary powers and influences of human nature; for what is pure can never be introduced by the intercourse of the impure. "It must be from a source which was pure in itself, — and this sinless source is thus identified with the Founder of Christianity. By the common rule, of reasoning from effect to cause, we trace back the purifying influence of our faith upon our own hearts to the pure and holy Savior. For the work of redemption in which he leads us, no human source is sufficiently exalted; we must trace it, then, to a divine source, recognizing in him one who possessed that perfect sinlessness which marked him as the representative of God to man."*

The thoughts thus presented are in part the same which have been offered in an earlier chapter of this book, respecting the universality of Christ's teachings, and their adaptation to the nature of man. The argument of the illustrious German is but a development of that process of the heart by which one who has been under the dominion of sin recognizes the Gospel as that which has brought him deliverance, and rests his faith on Christ, because he has experienced his worth as a Savior.

* Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube, and Reden*; also Strauss, *Life of Jesus*. Section 148.

CHAPTER VI.

ATTEMPTS TO ALTER OR IMPROVE CHRISTIANITY.

THE force of the moral argument for Christianity has been felt by many minds, which would have been slow to receive the religion on the evidence of miracle. Of this class, probably the greater part have, for the sake of the internal proof, quieted their own doubts with regard to the external. Others, however, have thought that a distinction might be made between Christianity as a moral system, and Christianity as an historical and supernatural religion. The attempt to mark this distinction has been made by two persons, eminent alike for character and station.

President Jefferson, in those hours which he found, even among the cares of state, to hold intercourse with the highest thoughts, prepared an arrangement of the life and teachings of Jesus, leaving out all that was outwardly miraculous. His biographer says:—

"The book oftenest chosen for reading for an hour or half an hour before going to bed was a collection of extracts from the Bible. During the year 1803, while Mr. Jefferson was in Washington, 'overwhelmed with other business,' he spent two or three nights, 'after getting through the evening task of reading the letters and papers of the day,' in cutting such passages from the evangelists as he believed emanated directly from

the lips of the Savior, and he arranged them in an octavo volume of forty-six pages. This selection is thus described by him to his revolutionary friend, Charles Thompson, January 9th, 1816.

"I, too, have made a wee little book from the same materials, which I call the Philosophy of Jesus. It is a paradigm of his doctrines, made by cutting the texts out of the book, and arranging them on the pages of a blank book, in a certain order of time or subject. A more beautiful or precious morsel of ethics I have never seen; it is a document in proof that *I am a real Christian*, that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus, very different from the Platonists, who call *me* infidel and *themselves* Christians and preachers of the Gospel, while they draw all their characteristic dogmas from what its author never said nor saw. They have compounded from the heathen mysteries a system beyond the comprehension of man, of which the great reformer of the vicious ethics and deism of the Jews, were he to return to earth, would not recognize one feature. If I had time I would add to my little book the Greek, Latin, and French texts, in columns side by side."

"It was in the winter of 1816-17, it is believed, that Mr. Jefferson carried out the design last expressed. In a handsome morocco-bound volume, labelled on the back, 'Morals of Jesus,' he placed the parallel texts in four languages."

"It is remarkable that neither of these collections were known to Mr. Jefferson's grandchildren until after his death. They then learned from a letter addressed to a friend that he was in the habit of reading nightly from them before going to bed."

The above extracts are from Randall's *Life of Jefferson*, Volume III., pages 451, 452. In the Appendix are given the Tables of Contents of the two volumes. The title of the earlier collection is "The Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth, extracted from the account of his life and doctrines as given by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Being an abridgment of the New Testament for the use of the Indians, unembarrassed with matters of fact or faith beyond the level of their comprehensions."

There is something deeply interesting in the view thus given, of the President, amid the pressing claims of his office, caring thus for the spiritual elevation of that race which was passing away before the advance of his own; and seeking the means for their improvement in those Scriptures whose supernatural authority, it is probable, he did not receive.

More recently, the distinguished East Indian, Rammohun Roy, published for the benefit of his countrymen a compilation which he called "The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness." It consisted of the teachings of the Savior, extracted from the four Gospels, but omitting, as far as possible, the connecting narrative. Much interest was excited in England and in this country, by what was confidently regarded as the conversion of a learned and virtuous heathen, to Christianity. Rammohun Roy expressed no disrespect to the historical parts of the Scriptures; but he thought it unnecessary and useless to present them to his countrymen, conceiving that the miraculous accounts they contained would rather excite prejudice than allay it. Whether Rammohun Roy himself believed fully in Christianity as a divine revelation, is a subject on which opinions have

differed. His intercourse and apparent sympathy for years were chiefly with Unitarians; but after his death, he was claimed by some as a convert to the doctrines of the Church of England. He had not, however, openly renounced the Hindoo religion, and embraced the Christian, by receiving baptism, but retained his rank as a Brahmin to the last.

An opinion respecting Jesus, similar to that expressed by Mr. Jefferson, appears to be entertained by some of the more liberal-minded of the modern Jews. A remarkable book was published at Altona in 1853, entitled "History of Rabbi Jeshua, the son of Joseph, the Nazarene, called Jesus Christ" (*Geschichte des Rabbi Jeschua ben Joszef hanootzri, genannt Jesus Christus*). The author, a Jewish Rationalist, maintains that Jesus, though no worker of miracles, was a wise and good reformer, who suffered by an unjust sentence, in consequence of his patriotic and devout endeavors. He claims to be sustained in this opinion by ancient manuscripts to which he has had access; but fails to give a distinct and satisfactory account of their antiquity and authority. To the same effect he quotes the language of an older Jewish writer, a Rabbi among the Karaites, a sect of the Jews who own the authority of the Old Testament alone, rejecting the Rabbinical traditions. His words are as follows: "Rabbi Jeshua was, according to the opinion of the friends of truth, a wise man, pious, righteous, and God-fearing, and shunned what was evil. He gave no command nor discourse which varied from the written divine law, much less in opposition to the teaching of Moses." He goes on to say that different doctrines were introduced afterwards by the followers of Jesus, and especially by Paul.

We shall have occasion hereafter to examine the credibility of this supposition, in connection with the theory of Dr. Baur, which strongly resembles it. The question, too, whether it is possible, with fairness and consistency, to separate the natural and the supernatural in the Savior's life and teachings, believing the one and rejecting the other, will best be answered after an examination of the historical record, and of the evidence on which it rests. At present, these various attempts in that direction are introduced for the testimony borne to the surpassing excellence of the Christian religion, by persons who refuse to receive it as a miraculous revelation.

It is observable, too, that the approval thus expressed is not pronounced upon a mere selection from the words of Jesus; as a modern scholar, searching through the idolatrous prayers of the Vedas, may find here and there a lofty thought; but Mr. Jefferson and Rammohun Roy took the whole of the Savior's precepts, finding nothing in the Gospels to reject except the miracles. The approval of the Karaite Rabbi is expressed in words not less comprehensive.

But there are those who argue that however excellent the character of Jesus and his precepts may have been, and however important the moral revolution which he effected in the world, there is no propriety in receiving him or his instructions "as a finality." The Gospel, according to this view, is a thing of the past; its work was part of that to which all ages have contributed, in building up the civilization of the present. Whether the principles which Jesus taught were original with him or not, and whether he held them with any mixture

of error, are now, it may be said, questions of small importance. The world has learned what was valuable in the lessons of Jesus: what matters it from whom the instruction came? Galileo discovered that the earth revolves on its axis. We all believe this truth; but who now reads the writings of Galileo, or cares about the laborious process by which he may have attained the knowledge that is now so familiar?

To this we reply, that it is not with the Gospel of Christ as it is with the works of discoveries in natural science. When the principles they have searched out are once made known, the obvious wants of man cause them to be employed. Men need food and clothing; they desire the comforts of life, and aspire after its luxuries; there is no danger then that their knowledge of the ways and means of gaining these objects will be unused. But the spiritual wants of man are not so pressing in their claims. It is not enough that men should know what is morally right, in order to secure their doing it. There must be motives, sanctions accompanying the law, to insure for it attention and obedience. These motives, these sanctions, are found in Christianity, considered as of divine revelation. If Jesus had arrived at the knowledge of the true principles of virtue by the exercise of unaided human powers, if he had enforced his precepts only by prudential maxims having application to the present life, then his teachings might have been classed with those of other discoverers. But it is not so. He taught in the name of God. He claimed authority as one whom the Father had sanctified and sent. His words are in the accent of command. They are not to be assented to as good reasoning, but to be

obeyed as laws. And their authority as laws is substantiated by the sanctions both of reward and punishment, and of each of these in the future world as well as in this. Nor are these solemn sanctions, nor is this voice of authority superfluous, in reference to the class of subjects upon which they are employed: for there are so many temptations to do wrong, so many difficulties in the way of doing right, that even with all the advantage we have in being thus taught of God, we are apt continually to wander into evil. We cannot dispense then with this authority, these threatenings, these promises. We need them, as a child needs to be guided, instructed, and restrained.

In the natural sciences mankind have advanced step by step, each successful laborer being passed and superseded by his successor. The wonderful and brilliant discovery of one year is in familiar use in the next, and serves as the foundation for discoveries perhaps more wonderful still; and so the volume which contains its first announcement rests unread on the shelves of old libraries, and the knowledge which at first was so rare and precious, becomes combined with the general mass of information possessed by the race. But who has excelled Jesus of Nazareth? What volume of moral instruction has superseded the Gospel? It is eighteen hundred years since the New Testament was written, and in every other branch of knowledge men have made wonderful advances; but in the knowledge of God, and of their own duty and destiny, that book is still the manual of the civilized world. Is it asked if men have not gone beyond it? They have not come up to it. It seems to us sometimes as if they had not learned its first

lessons. Certainly men in general, in Christian countries, are yet far from understanding, applying, and exemplifying the Sermon on the Mount, the divine discourse contained in its first few pages. The New Testament is not superseded then. We cannot do without it. It is not like those books of a philosophy long since thoroughly learned, that we can now lay aside, forgetting even their authors' names, and retaining only the principles they have taught us.

An evidence of the excellence of Christianity may be found in the failure of all attempts to improve upon it. We have seen already that some have tried to make a selection from its teachings, and engage the attention of mankind to its moral precepts alone. Others have endeavored to go beyond its instructions, and, as in secular science one author builds his system on that of his predecessor, to construct new religions on the basis of the Gospel. This was very early sought after in the Gnostic and Manichean systems; the one an endeavor to combine Christianity with principles from the Greek philosophy, the other undertaking to reconcile it with the teachings of Zoroaster. Those attempted improvements have passed away, and Christianity remains.

The Mohammedan system, which we have already considered, may be regarded as another endeavor to improve on the religion of the Bible. But Mohammed knew more of the Old Dispensation than he did of the New. He failed entirely to reach the spiritual elevation of Christianity; and by a most unhappy mixture of elements in the two religions, each of which was good in its own place, he produced that result of narrow bigotry, pride, and persecution, which we have already con-

templated. The Jewish state being a theocracy, Jehovah being recognized as its sovereign, idolatry was treason, and was punished as such. But Judaism never claimed, and never was intended, to be a universal religion. The Jews were not a proselyting people. Christianity, which is a universal religion, disowns the theocratic principle. Its kingdom is not of this world, and its Founder taught no lessons of intolerance. Mohammed joined together, in unfit alliance, the theocratic principle of the Jews, and the Christian claim to universal diffusion. Hence came a religion of aggression and conquest, of pride and aversion to improvement, of intolerance and persecution. Thus Mohammedanism not only failed as an improvement upon Christianity, but by attempting to transcend the local and limited character of Judaism, it stained itself with a blot that Judaism never knew. The gross impurity of the system, its allowance of polygamy, its degradation of woman, need but to be mentioned, to show how far it fell short of the religion it attempted to supersede.

Of the modern pretended revelation of Mormonism, we shall speak at length, in a separate chapter, the rather that its presence and increase render it a subject of great importance in itself, as well as in its application to our present argument. Two other systems there are, which may be deemed continuations or intended improvements of the Gospel. One is that of the Roman Catholic church, which, claiming to be still infallibly inspired, adds to the teaching of the Scriptures those of the Fathers, and especially the decisions of Councils, as of equal authority. How has the religion of Jesus Christ been improved in the Romish church? Its doctrines,

originally simple, have been covered with a burden and a shroud of mystery; its ministers, originally unpretending men, have been exalted into a hierarchy; its worship has been darkened by a cloud of ceremony, and its moral conduct has been stained by the impurities of a Borgia, the cruelties of the Inquisition, and the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

An attempt of a different character we may notice in the New Jerusalem, or Swedenborgian church. This adds to Christianity, as understood by others, discoveries or revelations of its own. Swedenborg was a man of singular and varied genius, with a mind enriched by liberal culture in youth, and afterwards by many years of scientific research, and of intercourse with men of the highest rank and intelligence. His advantages for the acquisition of knowledge appear in strong contrast to the youth, the limited education, and the obscure provincial sphere, of Jesus. Swedenborg claimed for himself especial divine instruction. This claim, however, we have no present occasion to examine; for we are arguing, not against Swedenborgians, but against unbelievers. But whether he had or had not an extraordinary commission from above, we look in vain for any truth of importance which the seer of Sweden added to the Gospel. The position he claimed was only that of its reverent interpreter. That he shed light on some passages of the New Testament may well be conceded. But the Sermon on the Mount remains still unsurpassed for the beauty and holiness of its precepts; the Lord's Prayer still unequalled for sublimity and comprehensiveness of devotional expression. The learned and venerable sage of Stockholm, with all his great endowments,

did but illustrate, not supersede or eclipse, the young and uneducated Teacher of Nazareth.

From the survey we have taken in this and the preceding chapters, we come to the following conclusions:—

That a revelation of the Divine nature and will was needed by mankind; and that it was needed at the time when Christianity appeared, notwithstanding the great advancement then attained in philosophy, science, and art.

That the existence of this need, and the adaptation of Christianity to supply it, are proved by the eagerness with which it was received, and the rapidity with which it was extended, notwithstanding the opposition of heathen superstition and of imperial power; while philosophy in vain endeavored to rival it, and some of the noblest philosophers had expressed, in language almost prophetic, the deep want of human nature which their own systems could not supply, and their aspiration for a clearer light.

That Christianity is not only a good and pure system of morals, but that it, and it alone, is a universal religion. The teachers of Greece, Persia, India, and China have, in the local and temporary limitations of their instructions, the stamp of insufficiency, while the doctrine of Christ alone possesses the marks of divine perfection, and therefore of divine origin.

That this is attested to us, among other witnesses, by an interesting class of writers, who, while unconvinced of the supernatural commission of the Savior, have yet turned with admiration to his precepts, acknowledging

them as the sufficient rule of life, and the "guide to peace and happiness."

That Christianity was not only necessary in the age when it was given, but is necessary still. Its Founder spoke, not like other teachers, but with divine authority, and his own personal character constitutes, at once the best explanation, and one of the most powerful attractions, of the system which he gave. And unlike the works of uninspired discoverers, which have been superseded by those of their successors, the Gospel of Christ remains, after eighteen centuries, not only unsurpassed, but unequalled; the attempts that have been made to build upon it a more advanced religion do but excite our wonder, our indignation, or our pity; attempts to improve it, as by the alleged continuance of inspiration in the Romish church, or its alleged recurrence in the Swedenborgian, have either signally failed, or have succeeded only by bringing into clearer view what was in Christianity already; while minds of the greatest power, such as Luther's, have found the noblest exercise of that power, not in adding anything to the teachings of the Gospel, but in removing the additions which had but obscured its original simplicity and beauty.

CHAPTER VII.

MORMONISM.

BETWEEN the long-established possessions of the United States and those which lie on the coast of the Pacific, extends a vast wilderness, where, till within a few years, the foot of civilized man has rarely penetrated, and where, even yet, travel is difficult, dangerous, and confined to a few roads, worn by the steps of that multitude who have been led westward by the attractions of the Land of Gold. Far in that wilderness is a valley, singular in its geographical character, and peopled by singular inhabitants. Lofty mountain ranges gird it, their highest points covered with perpetual snow. Sharp peaks arise, in various fantastic forms. As the traveller reaches an eminence towered over by these heights, and itself eight thousand feet above the level of the sea, he sees before him, beyond the dark fringe of pines, a silver lake, expanding in ocean-like magnificence. Suddenly, — so a traveller has described it, — he sees his companions fall on their knees; the air resounds with the mingled noise of joyful shouts, and prayer, and weeping; as when, in the East, a company of devout pilgrims greet for the first time the blended minarets and domes of Jerusalem. The scene is Oriental in many of its circumstances. That gleaming lake is like the Dead Sea of old Palestine, of bitter waters, wherein no living

thing is found. Those devotees approach a city, holy in their view as Jerusalem to the tribes of Israel, for there presides one whom they reverence as a prophet of the Lord. But to one who is with them, but not of them, the thought occurs of another city which stood by the Dead Sea in old time, and he recognizes in the city of the Western Salt Lake not a new Jerusalem, but a second Sodom.

Pass on beyond the dark pine barrier, and descend the shelving ranges, — the successive boundaries from age to age of the vast inland sea, which has gradually contracted to its present dimensions. Pass on, here by springs of salt, there by fountains of boiling water, and enter the city. It is of vast extent, but thinly peopled, surrounded by fortifications which might resist an attack of predatory Indians, but which, commanded by the surrounding eminences, would be slight protection against a civilized assailant. As you proceed, the signs of Oriental and of Western life are strangely mingled. Here are stores, and warehouses, and shops, bearing on their fronts the familiar names that meet us in our New England streets; there rises the wall of a temple, designed apparently to rival Solomon's in magnificence, but resembling rather some European cathedral. And there again, sight of shame and sign of approaching doom, appear the buildings of a harem, where some man, who has enjoyed from youth the light of civilization and of the Gospel, keeps his numerous wives. Over the portico of the lordliest mansion frowns a bronze lion. That, known as the Lion House, is tenanted by seventeen or eighteen of the wives of him who reigns in this strange community with the blended authority of

Moses and Solomon, — Brigham Young, "the Lion of the Lord."

In order to understand this singular commonwealth, it will be necessary for us to go back some years, to trace the course of him who gave the first impulse which resulted in what we now behold.

Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon Church and State, was born in Sharon, Vermont, December 23, 1805. During his childhood, his parents removed to Palmyra, New York. His education was very limited, his occupation, that of a farmer. The account given by himself, of the manner in which he received the system which he taught, is briefly the following: At the age of fourteen or fifteen he was affected with religious feelings, and much disturbed in mind on account of the diversity among the sects of Christians. Fearful that, in making a choice among them, he might be led into error, he withdrew into the woods for the purpose of prayer. Here a horror of great darkness fell upon him, and he fancied himself on the verge of destruction through the malice of some infernal enemy. He exerted all his powers to implore deliverance, and suddenly he saw a pillar of light above his head, brighter than the sun, which gradually descended till it rested on him. He now saw two personages, who proved to be no other than the Eternal Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not to continue the details of this strange, and, to us, revolting narrative, Smith, according to his own account, was informed that the American Indians were a remnant of ancient Israel, but a degenerate remnant, — the relics of a once mighty branch of that sacred stock, which had filled this continent with populous cities, flour-

ishing in arts and arms, until the greater part of them were, for their unworthiness, destroyed; but that the records of their former greatness had been safely deposited in the earth. He was directed to the spot where these treasures were preserved; and, after several visits there, the Book of Mormon, written on plates of gold, in characters which Smith styled "reformed Egyptian," was taken from its long repose, and delivered to the new prophet by angel hands.

There is a strange mixture of the burlesque with this bold blasphemy. With the plates inscribed in this unknown language was found a singular instrument, through which alone they could be interpreted. This was the Urim and Thummim, mentioned in the Holy Writ as the means by which communications were made from the Divine Guide of the people in ancient times. Much have commentators and people been bewildered to know in what the Urim and Thummim, "lights and perfections," as the words mean, consisted. Smith solved the mystery in a way which no commentator probably had imagined before. They were a pair of spectacles, "two transparent stones, set in the two rims of a bow." This wonderful instrument enabled him who wore it to understand the meaning of the otherwise unknown language before him.

The gold plates found by Smith have not been often seen by other eyes than his. Certificates, however, are produced, from a few persons, mostly members of Smith's own family, and of another by the name of Whitmer, who profess to have seen and handled them. The testimony of Smith's early associates suggests, however, a probable conjecture of their origin. Smith,

it appears, was engaged in youth with a set of men who devoted themselves to the business of digging for hidden treasure; the places where treasure was buried he pretended he could find by means of a stone placed in his hat. It is possible that, in some of his digging adventures, he may have lighted on some relics of the past, sufficient to suggest to his own mind, and to pass off upon the minds of others, the fraud which proved so successful. This supposition is confirmed by the actual discovery, in an ancient mound at Kinderhook, New York, of some metal plates inscribed with unknown characters, — the work, it has been supposed, of that former race, more civilized than the Indians, the traces of whose greatness exist in various parts of the continent, but chiefly in Mexico and Central America.

From his gold plates translated, or from some other source, Smith produced a volume in the English language, — the Book of Mormon, or Mormon Bible. This work, had it been his own composition, would have given him a claim to be regarded as not only the most daring of religious impostors, but as possessing powers of fictitious composition, which, considering his scanty education, would border on the miraculous. Genius he certainly possessed; but it did not make him the author or the translator of the Book of Mormon. That strange production was from another source; and little did its real author imagine the evil use to which his composition would be applied.

The true origin of the Book of Mormon is sufficiently established. In the year 1809, the Rev. Solomon Spalding, a clergyman in the State of New York, who had left his profession from feeble health, failed in that

business to which he had afterwards given his attention. He now removed to New Salem, in Ohio, and sought to occupy himself by writing, choosing as the object of his undertaking a fictitious tale founded on the Scripture history, and on the theory, which was not original even with him, that the Indians of North America were descended from the Israelites of old. The idea of this tale was suggested to him by the numerous mounds and forts in the neighborhood of his new residence, the relics of a former race. He entitled his work, "The Manuscript Found." Mormon and his son Moroni were among his leading characters, as in the publication which Smith professed to have translated from the golden plates. In 1812, the manuscript of this work was deposited with a bookseller named Patterson, of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania; but before any arrangement was made for its publication, the author died, and the manuscript remained unclaimed in Patterson's possession. The printer lent the manuscript to Sidney Rigdon, a compositor in his office, and at the same time a preacher in the "Christian Connection." Rigdon was much interested in the romance, and repeatedly stated that he had taken a copy of it. He afterwards became associated with Smith, as one of the principal leaders among the Mormons.

In 1839, the widow of Spalding, then residing in Monson, Massachusetts, stated these facts in one of the newspapers of Boston. She further declared, that a Mormon female preacher, having appointed a meeting at New Salem, where her husband had resided, read and repeated copious extracts from their sacred book. These extracts were immediately recognized by some of those

present, as part of the work of Mr. Spalding, which they had read or heard in manuscript. Mr. John Spalding, the brother of the author, was present at the meeting. Recognizing his brother's work, and amazed and afflicted at its perversion to the vile purpose of a religious imposture, he rose, and with tears declared the true origin of the passages which they had heard. He afterwards stated the same on oath; particularizing that his brother's work gave an account of the journey of a portion of the Israelites from Jerusalem by land and sea, until they arrived in America under the command of Nephi and Lehi, and that it also mentioned the Lamanites. This account of the contents of Mr. Spalding's book identifies it with the Book of Mormon.

Rigdon replied to the statement made by Mr. Spalding's widow, vehemently denying its charge against himself. Little weight can be attached to this denial; yet it is possible that the manuscript came into the hands of Smith through different means. In 1825, Smith was employed in the neighborhood of Hartwick, New York, where the trunk containing Spalding's manuscripts was deposited. It is stated that after the appearance of the book of Mormon, and its recognition by Spalding's friends, this trunk was examined, and only one manuscript found, being that of an earlier attempt to construct a story of the Indians deriving their origin from a colony of the Latins. The other papers had been removed, and the remembered manuscript has never been recovered.*

* See the testimony in *Mormonism, its Leaders and Designs*; by John Hyde, Jr., formerly a Mormon Elder, &c. New York, 1857. Chapter XI. See also *The Mormons, or Latter Day Saints*.

The Book of Mormon, thus identified as the work of a retired clergyman, is a romance which reflects no little credit on the imagination of its author. We condense it, as far as possible, in the following abstract.

In the first year of Zedekiah, king of Judah, when the destiny of the nation was darkening towards the calamity of the captivity in Babylon, a devout man, named Lehi, was moved by the warnings of Jeremiah and other prophets, to flee from Jerusalem. He took with him his four sons and their wives, and travelled till they came to the great ocean. Here Nephi, the youngest of the sons, by Divine direction, built a vessel, in which the whole company embarked. On the voyage, the elder brothers mutiny, and bind Nephi; but as he alone has been instructed from Heaven how to manage the vessel, they are obliged to reinstate him in the command. At length they reach land, — this Western continent, near two thousand years before its discovery by Columbus. After their arrival, Laman and Lemuel, the elder brothers, again revolt; and this division between the members of the family becomes perpetuated in their descendants, under the names of Lamanites and Nephites, — the Nephites being generally obedient and virtuous, the Lamanites rebellious and unbelieving. Cities arise, kings reign, and prophets exhort. These prophets are represented as predicting the coming of the Savior; and in clearer language than that of the prophets of the Old Testament. At length the Savior himself appears on this continent, after his ascension,

London, 1852; pages 31-36. Utah and the Mormons, by Benjamin G. Ferris, late Secretary of Utah Territory. New York, 1854.

as recorded in the New Testament. His teaching is described in language copied from the genuine Scriptures. He ascends to heaven, and his Gospel is preached among the Nephites, and, to some extent, among the Lamanites. But at length the Nephites "dwindle in unbelief;" the infidels gain the ascendancy; the true believers become extinct, and their last prophet, Mormon, consigns to the earth the plates that contain the record of the nation, "to be brought forth in due time by the hand of the Gentiles."

We need not trace the steps by which, with the charm of this strange romance, and of Smith's bold assertion and commanding mind, the Mormon church was organized and extended; or chronicle their successive removals, from New York to Ohio, and thence to Missouri. The rude justice of our border settlements too often dispenses with the safeguards of law; and the Mormons were accused of such practices that the feelings of the people everywhere were excited against them. Among the charges brought against them was that of anti-slavery; but if this was true at the time, they soon became as faithful believers in the "patriarchal institution" as any of its advocates could desire; maintaining that the African race was twice doomed, bearing the mark of Cain united with the curse of Ham, through the marriage of the latter with a descendant of the first murderer.

Another charge was that of a community of wives. This they declared to be a calumny, but the later conduct of the sect gives reason to believe that there was, even then, some foundation for it. Probably the imprudent language of some among them, who talked

of their determination to possess the whole State of Missouri, and suffer none to live near them who were not of their church, created more hostility than any immoralities. However this may have been, the popular rage was aroused. The tale of their expulsion from Missouri fills one of the saddest pages in the strange, sad history of that State. The Mormons say, in a document published soon after, "Men were shot down like wild beasts, or had their brains dashed; women were treated with insult, until they died in the hands of their destroyers; children were killed while pleading for their lives. All entreaties were vain and fruitless; men, women, and children alike fell victims to the violence and cruelty of these ruffians."

From Missouri, the Mormons took refuge in Illinois. Here they built a town, to which they gave the name of Nauvoo, from the Hebrew *navah*, or, The Beautiful; established a flourishing community, and built a costly temple. But their evil reputation followed them. Assertions were made and believed, that the prophet and his chief confederates were guilty of gross impurities, deluding their victims by pretended revelations. An opposition newspaper was commenced in Nauvoo itself, and its first number contained the affidavits of sixteen women, charging such crimes on Smith, Rigdon, and others. The prophet, acting as Mayor of the city, destroyed the office and presses of the newspaper, and burnt the papers and furniture. This high-handed act aroused the State. Smith refused to obey a warrant for his arrest. Illinois was in arms, and the Governor took the field in person. At his appeal to them, pledging the honor of the State for their protection, Joseph and

his brother Hiram Smith surrendered themselves, the former saying, "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter, but I am calm as a summer's morning. I have a conscience void of offence, and shall die innocent." His anticipations were verified. On the 26th of June, 1844, the same day on which they had received a visit from the Governor, with renewed promises of protection, a band of nearly two hundred men, with blackened faces, overpowered the small guard at the jail, and murdered the prisoners. The assailants completed their own dishonor by brutally insulting the body of their victim.

Thus died Joseph Smith, the Mohammed of the nineteenth century, if the application of that name to him is not a wrong to the Arabian prophet. For the faith of Mohammed was at least, as we have already seen, a great advance upon the previous idolatry of his countrymen; while the doctrine of the Western deceiver rejects what is highest and purest in the prevalent religion, and degrades its followers to a grovelling materialism, and a worse than Asiatic sensuality. We had once the privilege of hearing Smith address an audience at Washington. He held their attention through a long discourse, defending his tenets, and complaining of the oppressions suffered by his people in Missouri. He was a man of powerful frame, a commanding voice, and a ready flow of language. He said little of his own claims as a prophet, except to deny the charge of having derived the Book of Mormon from Spalding's manuscript; but labored chiefly to conciliate favor to his sect, as a harmless and industrious people, whose religion differed little from that of other Christians, and who had been subjected to gross and cruel persecution.

Dismayed by the fall of their leader, and the excitement in the public mind against themselves, the Mormons were not without internal difficulty from the question of succession to the chieftainship of their sect. But all competitors at length gave way to Brigham Young, a man possessing much of the courage and ability of Smith. This leader saw the necessity of yielding to the storm which had been aroused against them in Illinois, and determined on a retreat to the regions of the remoter West. It is not within the limits of our purpose to follow their history further, nor to conjecture how the important questions will be settled that must arise, as the advancing tide of regular emigration breaks against the rocky barriers of Utah. Only let the hope and purpose be cherished by all who love the honor of the American and of the Christian name, that there shall be no repetition of such scenes as accompanied the exile of the Mormons from Missouri and Illinois.

Having thus briefly sketched the rise of this singular denomination, we have now to remark upon its doctrines and practices. We have brought it as an argument for the divine origin of Christianity, that all attempts to improve upon it, during the eighteen centuries of its existence, have been failures. Christianity has not been superseded; it has not been improved. If we wish to find it in its best form, we must take it, not with the additions that centuries of learned labor have made to it, but as it was preached in the streets of Jerusalem and the villages of Galilee. And we have now brought forward, for comparison with its

original beauty, the latest attempt of human boldness to develop from it a superior system. What do we find that system to be?

The first thing that strikes us in it is, that, insensible to the spiritual beauty of the Gospel, it ignores it and goes back to the Jewish Law. The Book of Mormon, we have seen, is founded on the Old Testament. It records the imagined history of Hebrew kings and prophets, who continued to a Hebrew race on this continent the same institutions which David and Solomon, Elijah and Isaiah, administered in ancient Palestine. True, the book makes mention of the coming of the Savior, both as having been foretold, and as actually occurring; but the admission of this great fact as a theological truth does not materially alter the Jewish aspect of the system. To one at all acquainted with modern Jewish literature, the resemblance to it of the Book of Mormon is obvious. There is the strongest similarity between the modes of thought of the real descendants of Abraham, and those of the class who claim so strangely, considering some of their practices, the name of "Latter Day Saints."

We are far, indeed, from charging on the modern Jews, who faithfully adhere to the religion of their ancestors, those gross corruptions, which, developing continually, have made the Mormon faith synonymous with impiety and impurity. Yet the resemblance of the Jewish and Mormon explanations of Scripture is extremely striking. Those prophecies of the Old Testament which Christians apply in a spiritual manner to the establishment of the kingdom of God in the hearts of men, the Jews interpret literally, to the building up

of a real, substantial kingdom, a Jerusalem of actual wood and stone. The Mormons interpret the passages in the same way, only with this difference, that their Zion is to be in this Western world, while the real Jews expect their royal city to be rebuilt in its pristine glory on the same spot where David reigned and Solomon consecrated the Temple. Such is the spirit of the Mormon system. It sees in the glorious promises of the Bible assurances of earthly grandeur; it narrows down every noble figure of the old inspiration to a mere literal rendering.

"We believe," says one of their forms of confession, "in the literal gathering of Israel, and in the restoration of the ten tribes, that Zion will be established on the Western continent, that Christ will reign personally on the earth a thousand years, and that the earth will be renewed, and receive its paradisiacal glory."

"O, ye saints!" exclaims Orson Pratt, one of their leaders, in a sermon, "O, ye saints, when you sleep in the grave, don't be afraid that your agricultural pursuits are forever at an end; don't be fearful that you will never more get any landed property; but if you are saints, be of good cheer, for when you come up in the morning of the resurrection, behold there is a new earth."

The Mormon faith teaches that the Almighty Being exists in human form, interpreting literally every passage of the Bible which ascribes to him human members or human passions. And this error, which might seem in itself comparatively harmless, is unhesitatingly carried out to results with which we will not defile our pages. Suffice it to say, that in Mormonism, the eternity, spir-

itality and unchangeableness of God are forgotten. He is represented as a Being who began to have existence, and will have an end; the representations of him fulfilling the words of Scripture, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself."

The allowance of polygamy, the most obviously offensive peculiarity of Mormonism, was not generally proclaimed until after the death of its founder. But Smith cannot be acquitted of sanctioning this evil custom. An indignant protest was made against the charge of such immorality; but that very protest, coupled with the subsequent open avowal of the practice, shows that it was a legitimate and not remote consequence of the earlier acknowledged principles of the sect. Years ago, Martha Brotherton testified that Smith had endeavored to induce her to marry Brigham Young, he having one wife then living; — that he justified the proposal, and told her that he would take the responsibility in the sight of Heaven. And the testimony is not improbable, for polygamy is a natural inference from other Mormon doctrines. Setting the Old Testament above the New, and their own false Testament above both, the allowance of this "patriarchal institution" follows of course. Thus the enormity which is now publicly practised in Utah was committed in secret years before, when prudence dictated its concealment.

Renan, in his work on "The Apostles," remarks of Mormonism, "Five hundred years hence, learned professors will seek to prove its divine origin by the miracle of its establishment."* Before, however, the

* Page 299 of the translation.

growth of the Mormon delusion can fairly be brought into comparison with that of Christianity, a longer time must elapse, and more important conquests be made, than have yet been accomplished by it. The great difference, too, must be kept in view, that while the Gospel inculcated a system of strict self-restraint, the impostor of the West connected his religious doctrines with the interests and the pleasures of the present life. The advantages of a land speculation, and the more than Oriental indulgence of animal passion, were combined with tenets in which something that is called religion is brought down to the understanding of the ignorant and the taste of the depraved. While, then, Christianity is not superseded, nor even improved upon by Mormonism, the success of that system, should it be more fully attained than it is at present, will fail to establish its truth. The nineteenth century has not, in the religious system to which it has given birth on this continent, outdone the revelation of the first.

CHAPTER VIII.

BABISM.

STILL more recently than the appearance of the Mormon sect in the United States, a form of religious belief has arisen in the opposite quarter of the globe, remarkable alike from the character of its founder, its sudden success, and its tragic extinction, if indeed it can yet be considered as extinguished. To this delusion, reference has already been made, in connection with Renan's comparison of the constancy of its martyrs with those of Christianity.* In the inquiry which we are now pursuing, — whether Christianity has been excelled by any subsequent system, — an examination of Babism naturally finds place.

Scid Ali Mohammed, or Mirza Ali Mohammed, as he was afterwards called, was born in Persia, about the year 1812. The names given him combined those of the prophet and his son-in-law, Ali, whose memory is venerated in Persia beyond that of any but the prophet himself; while the titles Scid and Mirza marked him as one of the numerous descendants of Mohammed. He was, however, born in a private and comparatively humble station, and his early education comprised only the most common branches of knowledge. Employed

* The Apostles, pages 299, 300.

at first in mercantile pursuits, he forsook them at the age of twenty-three, and betook himself to Kerbela, regarded as a sacred city, from its containing the tomb of the sainted Houssein. Here he remained for five years, in the practice of fasting, prayer, and meditation, and receiving instruction in a system of Mohammedan mysticism, — that of the Sheikhtes.

To understand this system, one must go back to the form of the Mohammedan religion established in Persia. The Persians are of the Sheah sect, distinguished for the reverence in which they hold the memory of Ali, the son-in-law, and one of the successors of Mohammed. With this prince, certain others are associated in popular reverence, ending with Mehdi or Mahdi, the "twelfth Imam," who is expected to return to life and assume the empire of the world.* The reverence paid to these personages resembles that rendered by Roman Catholics to the saints.

About the beginning of the present century, a teacher named Sheikh Ahmed founded the school of mysticism to which we have referred. He taught that the universe emanated from the Supreme Being, and that all the good were embodiments of his all-pervading spirit. Especially the twelve Imams, the objects of popular reverence, were, according to him, personifications of the divine attributes, Ali standing at the head of all. In this system an inclination towards Pantheism seems

* A similar superstition among the Druses, with regard to the Caliph Hakem, forms the subject of Browning's "Return of the Druses." The delusion which the poet was depicting from imagination, was at the same time acted out in a more distant land, in larger proportions and with a more tragic termination.

to have been combined, not only with a corrupted Mohammedanism, but with the ancient Persian tendency to believe in emanations and incarnations. It may, however, be more favorably regarded, as an attempt to give a more spiritual meaning to the popular superstition.

The seat of Sheikh Ahmed's school was at Kerbela; and there his successor, Sheikh Kazem, taught, when the young Ali Mohammed became his pupil. The doctrine of the Sheikhtes, with which, probably, even thus early, some views of political regeneration were connected, had become so popular that in the province of Irak alone it numbered a hundred thousand adherents. The Sheikh appointed naibs, or representatives of himself, for the various provinces, and thus there existed throughout the kingdom a formidable force, bound together by religious and political association.

Ali Mohammed soon attracted the attention of his fellow-disciples and of the Sheikh himself, by his pure character, his austerities and devotions, even by his reserve in speech, in connection with the wisdom he displayed when he saw fit to break silence. Sheikh Kazem would never clearly designate who should be his successor. He would say, "He is in the midst of you," "You will seek for him and find him;" and once, when Ali Mohammed entered the hall, and took his accustomed place near the door, the master suddenly exclaimed, "There he is!" The words were little thought of at the time, but were recalled to memory, when, after Sheikh Kazem's death, the majority of his disciples fixed on Ali Mohammed as their chief. He received, either from an expression of his own, or from that of one of

his principal adherents, the name of the Gate of Truth. The word Bab, meaning Gate, thus became his title, and furnished a new designation for his political and religious partisans.

The doctrines of the Bab appear to have been an advance on those of his predecessor. He taught that the Supreme Being comprised in himself all infinite attributes; that the law of God was to be obeyed in the spirit rather than in the letter; that nothing which God had made was in itself impure; and that woman is not the slave of man, but his equal. The first of these doctrines appears to dethrone the heavenly family of the twelve Imams; the second went against the lifeless formalities into which a religion is apt to degenerate; the third was practically applied against the Mohammedan prohibition of wine, while the fourth opposed the custom of divorce at the pleasure of the husband, and the whole Oriental system of the seclusion and degradation of woman. To these tenets, another was added, more dwelt on in the new Koran than aught else, — that in Ali Mohammed the twelfth Imam had returned to life, and that he and his followers were to rule the world.

Instead, however, of seeking or priding himself on these honors, Ali Mohammed seems to have conducted himself with modesty and with prudence. He was repeatedly arrested, and subjected to examination, once before an assembly of dignitaries, gathered round the heir-apparent of Persia, a youth of seventeen, and nominally governor of the province. Before this court it is said that he appeared with great dignity, making no answer to some questions, but declaring himself to

be the expected Imam. This account, which bears marks of being copied from the examination of Jesus before the Jewish high priest, is the less credible, as such a claim would have led to his immediate condemnation to death. As it was, the Persian government acted towards him at this time with a lenity hardly to be expected in a Mohammedan despotism. For a time he was at large under surveillance, and, when in confinement, was mostly allowed to receive the numerous visitors who sought him. Political events, however, and the rash and criminal action of his followers, brought his singular career to a bloody close.

Among the proselytes of his religion was a lady of noble birth, called Kourret-oul-Ain — Light of the Eyes. To the great displeasure of her relatives, she threw aside the veil, worn by all women of respectability in the East, and went around the city of Kasvin where she dwelt, organizing a branch of the followers of the Bab. At length one of her relatives, a Moudjtchid or religious officer of the city, having tried all means to win her back, pronounced a solemn anathema against the Bab and his doctrine. Soon after, as he was going to the mosque in the early morning, three of the Babists rushed upon him and put him to death. The murderers were seized and executed, and Kourret-oul-Ain obliged to leave the city. Many of her fellow-believers accompanied her. At the same time disturbances had commenced elsewhere.

At this critical time the Shah of Persia died (September 5, 1848). Such an occurrence in a despotism is often the signal for anarchy, and such was now the case. The prime minister, aware of his own unpopu-

larity, fled to Kerbela, where the tomb of the Imam Hussein afforded an inviolable sanctuary. The heir-apparent was but a youth, and a new ministry had to be formed. Among other disturbances of the public peace, the Babists burst into insurrection. Kourret-oul-Ain, the heroine of Kasvin, entered with her adherents the city of Miami, and proclaimed the doctrine of the Bab. She was joined by some of the inhabitants, but the greater part rose against her, and compelled the insurgents to leave the city.

A more important outbreak took place in the province of Mazanderan, on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. Its leaders were Hadji Mohammed Ali, and Moulla Houssein. The latter, a brave man, whose views were chiefly political, had been influential in securing the spiritual chieftaincy to the Bab, having been first designated for it himself; and he now conceded the superiority in religious matters to his colleague, bending the knee before him, and saluting him as "most high lord." They fortified themselves at a place known as the tomb of Sheikh Tabersi. Here they repulsed, with courage and skill alike remarkable, successive attacks made upon them by the Persian forces.

Meantime, the government of the young Shah had been organized, and turned its attention to the suppression of the Babist rebellion. Prince Mehdi Kouli Mirza, Governor of Mazanderan, and a near relative of the sovereign, with two other princes, laid siege to Sheikh Tabersi, but was driven into disgraceful flight by a sudden sally of the besieged. His camp was set on fire, and the two princes who accompanied him lost their lives. The government had, however, the acknowledged head of

the rebellion, the Bab, in its hands; and, with little wisdom, instead of using his influence, or at least continuing to hold him as a hostage, they resolved to put him to death. Four of his principal adherents had the same fate appointed them, unless they would deny their master, denounce him as a hypocrite and impostor, and spit in his face. Three of them yielded to these dishonorable terms; among them was Seid Houssein, who had been, according to his own declaration, the amanuensis of the Bab in writing his new Koran, but who is thought by the author from whom this account is derived, to have composed it himself.* The fourth showed a nobler spirit. When the miserable Seid Houssein had cursed his master and offered him the unmanly insult, Agha Mohammed Ali kissed his hands with the most profound respect, and cried aloud to the people with solemn voice, "This is the Gate of the Truth, the Imam of Islam."

The execution, according to the authority just referred to, was by shooting; and for this purpose a Christian regiment was employed, lest the religious feelings of Mohammedan soldiers should interfere with the work assigned them. Agha Mohammed Ali, "with a loud and calm voice, repeated fragments of prayers composed by his master. The Bab kept silence. His pale and handsome face, with black beard and small mustaches, his distinguished figure and bearing, his white and delicate hands, his clothing simple but exquisitely neat,

* Bab et les Babis, ou le Soulèvement Politique et Religieux en Perse, de 1845 à 1853. Par Mirza Kazem-Beg. Journal Asiatique, 6th series, volumes vii. and viii. The author is Professor and Privy Councillor at St. Petersburg. See vol. vii., p. 61.

everything finally in his person awoke sympathy and compassion." The Governor and others addressed the crowd, speaking of the blood that had been shed in various parts of Persia, through the persevering hostility of the Babists, especially of the murder of the holy man at Kazvin, and the enemy still fortified in Mazanderan. The first fire of the soldiers, instead of even wounding the Bab, cut the cords by which he was bound. The prisoner rushed towards the people, and would probably have been rescued under the general impression of a miracle, had the executioners been Mohammedans. But the Christian soldiers ran forward, and showing to the crowd the cord which had been broken, bound their prisoner anew. Agha Mohammed Ali was first put to death; afterwards, the master whom he had so faithfully and bravely owned. "The crowd dispersed in silence, but many bore in their hearts germs of hostility against the government." This scene took place July 19, 1849.

At Sheikh Tabersi, Moulla Houssein fell in battle. After many strange experiences, and terrible suffering, Hadji Mohammed Ali made proposals for peace. Prince Mehdi Kouli Mirza, the same who had once so ingloriously fled, promised liberal terms, and sent a horse, splendidly caparisoned, for the use of the insurgent leader; but when the latter, with his attendants, entered the camp, they were attacked and overpowered, many slaughtered on the spot, and others more deliberately tortured to death. Hadji Mohammed Ali, and five others, were publicly executed at the capital of the province. Another leader, Moulla Mohammed Ali, who was defending Zengan, was owned as successor of the Bab.

Meantime the war continued in other parts of Persia, but we cannot enter into its details; the government made efforts at conciliation, but the treachery and cruelty displayed in Mazanderan had destroyed all faith in their offers; the strife was desperate, and when the few survivors of the siege of Zengan were brought to the capital, it was said that each of them had cost the kingdom fifteen hundred lives.

Persecution raged for a time, and then subsided; a year and a half of peace succeeded, but it was interrupted by a new crime. As the Shah was going forth to hunt, he was fired upon by several Babists, and wounded, though not dangerously; this treasonable act aroused again the vengeance of the government. The Babists were sought out, not only in the capital, but throughout the kingdom, and put to death, enduring torture with heroic constancy. Kourret-oul-Ain, the heroine of Kasvin, was privately executed. These appalling scenes took place in the autumn of 1852.

In various respects, the history of Mirza Ali Mohammed, surnamed the Bab, presents startling resemblances to that of the Savior. Claiming descent from an ancient prophet king, he was yet, like Jesus, born in a lowly station; still he was regarded by his followers as the sovereign of his nation and of mankind, whose advent had been long foretold and ardently expected. After leading a life of purity, and uttering words of wisdom, he was put to death, through the hostility of his own government, but by the hands of foreign soldiers; and, before his execution, he was denied by some of his most prominent followers; nay, the very form of contumely with which they were compelled to treat him, was the

same which had been used towards the Savior in the hall of the high priest.

It is high honor for a teacher of wisdom thus to bear in his own history a resemblance to that of the Redeemer; and we would fain believe that Mirza Ali Mohammed was worthy of the distinction. But we cannot forget that the claim was made for him, that he was "the Gate of Truth, the Imam of Islam," the subject of ancient prophecy, the worker of present miracles, and the destined possessor of universal empire. How far he himself advanced these claims, it is impossible to decide, since the accounts differ widely; but his acquiescence in them is implied in his whole history. A public denial of his supposed supernatural commission would not only have conciliated the government and saved his own life, but, by weakening the rebellion, would have saved the lives of thousands more. His silence proved that he accepted the honors rendered him; his martyrdom proves that he believed them to be his due. That in this belief he was deluded, needs no other evidence than his own death and the extermination of his party.

He was, then, we judge, not consciously an impostor, but a sincere and amiable, yet deluded believer in his own divine commission. Perhaps there was truth in the account given by some, that as he spent much time in prayer on the roof of his house, exposed to the rays of the sun, and the burning wind of that climate, a disease of the brain had part in his self-deception.* He appears, too, rather as the nominal and imaginary, than

* Journal Asiatique, vol. vii., page 337.

as the real head of his party. Its governing spirit seems rather to have been Moulla Houssein Bouchroui, the gallant defender of Sheikh Tabersi; a warrior and politician, who probably believed more in his own good sword than in any prophet. He nominated Ali Mohammed to the spiritual chieftainship, reserving to himself only the title of his naib or vicar, and acting with the utmost energy to extend the sect. Seid Houssein, too, who saved his life by abjuring and insulting his master, is supposed by the authority before us to have been the real author of his Koran. It is possible that thus the quiet and dreamy enthusiast was but a tool in the hands of men of more practical ability, but less purity of character, than himself.

Even in acknowledging that purity of character, we must remember that Ali Mohammed was, through nearly his whole life after assuming the leadership, either a prisoner, or constantly watched by the servants of the government. He could not take part, personally, in the insurrection of his party. That their outbreak was marked not only by deeds of courage, but by acts of assassination, is a reproach to the religious teaching they had received. We hear of no such deeds in the early history of Christianity. The resemblance between the Persian teacher and the Man of Nazareth would have been more near, had Jesus commanded Peter to draw his sword, instead of directing him to sheathe it, and had he committed the task to Judas to write down his law.

While we admit, too, the elevation of sentiment apparent in some of the doctrines of Babism, we cannot forget that these are derived, by direct descent, from the

Gospel. It is well remarked by our historian, that if Mohammedanism is regarded as a schismatic form of Christianity, Babism may be considered a purified branch of that schism. The constant intercourse, too, of Persia with Christian nations, the existence of large bodies of Christians, especially the Nestorians, within the kingdom, and the mystical philosophy of the Sooffees, derived probably from Christianity in a former age, all contributed to prepare the way for that sect, and that instructor, whose brief history adds a chapter of mournful interest to the records of a land once foremost among the nations.

The enemies of the Babists have ascribed to them, probably with great exaggeration, the preaching of doctrines subversive of morality. While we pay no attention to such charges, we certainly find in the Oriental religion of the nineteenth century, as we have found in the American, nothing in character or in doctrine to supersede the Christian system, or eclipse the glory of its Founder.

CHAPTER IX.

MIRACLES.

IN treatises upon the Evidences of Christianity in general, the subject of miracles has held the foremost place. Around this, indeed, the other portions of the argument have centred; the genuineness and authenticity of the documents being objects of attention, chiefly because it is on their testimony that the miracles rest, while the sufferings of martyrs are brought forward to prove the sincerity of the witnesses to these miraculous accounts, and prophecies with their fulfilment are but miracles in another form. Nay, the moral excellence of Christianity, and the correctness and elevation of its views respecting God and man, are urged not only for their intrinsic worth, or to win love and admiration to the religion, but as moral miracles which could not have existed but for a special divine interposition. Miracle has thus been the very centre, we might almost say the centre and circumference, of Christian Evidences.

And yet there is at the present day a very general tendency to depreciate miraculous evidence. This tendency is not confined to sceptical writers; but many who receive the miracles as facts, still regard them as of no great importance when viewed as evidence. Thus Schleiermacher argues that the miracles were not the means of converting the Jews in the age of Christ, who

witnessed them; still less, therefore, can they be such to us who have to receive them through a long line of successive writers. It would be easy, were it necessary, to name eminent living theologians, who represent the miracles as unimportant with regard to the proof they afford, or argue that it is inexpedient to adduce them in evidence; because the tendency of the age, on account of the discoveries of science, is to discredit all statements of that kind.

We may take it for granted that those who use such language, mean by miracles, only the outward acts recorded as having been performed by Jesus and other teachers, not including under that name such moral miracles as are to be found in the excellence of Christ's teaching and character, and the providential protection extended over the Jewish religion. Even as thus limited, however, the objection against urging the testimony of miracles suggests various observations.

In the first place, the miracles cannot be ignored. To say nothing of the Old Testament, the Gospels and Acts are full of them. From the annunciation to the ascension, the life of Jesus is miraculous. If such narratives do not strengthen our faith in the religion, they weaken it; if not proofs of its truth, they are burdens upon it.

They are burdens, however, that must be borne, if we take the religion as it comes to us. If we make it over again to suit our own taste, by the method of Strauss, Renan, or any others, we can, indeed, leave out the miracles, but consistency will oblige us to leave out much beside. The prayer of Jesus on the cross comes to us on similar authority to that which tells us

of his resurrection, but in smaller proportion; for all the Gospels testify to the latter, while Luke alone gives witness to the former. If, then, the miracles are an inseparable part of the narrative, we are not at liberty, if we would be candid and consistent, to put them out of sight, and try to commend Christianity by reasoning which seems to imply that these stories are alike incredible and unimportant. And if God saw fit to authenticate the revelation which he gave, by deeds of divine power, we have no right to lower its claims, and suppress part of its credentials, in deference to any prevalent spirit of scientific scepticism.

Let it be observed, however, that no intelligent advocate of miracles maintains that they can prove a religion by themselves alone. The system must also be worthy of such proof. If a religion was proclaimed which taught doctrines or inculcated practices unworthy of God, as, for instance, the custom of human sacrifices, no miraculous evidence ought to make us believe it. We should rather, if all other expedients failed, go back to the refuge of the Pharisees, and say that the miracles were wrought by the prince of the devils; and the reply which Jesus made, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" would not be applicable to such a case; for the religion being satanic, the wonders that upheld it might well be satanic too.

To render a miracle credible, or susceptible of being believed upon evidence, there must be first a sufficient occasion for it. Such is the rule of nature, recognized by Horace in its application to poetry:

"Nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit." *Ars Poetica*, l. 191, 192.

"Let not a God appear, unless the occasion be worthy."

Thus far in the history of the human race, there appears to be but one subject with regard to which miracles are presented, which can be recognized as well authenticated. That subject is religion, the purpose of the miracles being to give evidence to communications of God's nature and will to man. And we can easily see that this subject, above all others, presents that character which the rule above stated requires. For the attainments of art and science, human research might suffice; but knowledge with regard to the spiritual world can only be communicated from that world; and, while thus beyond man's attainment except by revelation, it is of the greatest practical importance to him, as informing him of the ground and obligation of duty, of his connection with his Creator, and his destiny beyond the grave. Here, and here alone, since the creation of mankind, appears to be the fit occasion for a divine intervention.

There are those indeed, who, believing in the miracles of Christianity, take a different view respecting them. They hold that the spiritual world is very near us, and that intercourse between its inhabitants and those who are still in the flesh, is not so uncommon as has been stated above. On this view, the miracles recorded in the Bible are but the most distinguished and important instances of a communication between the natural and the spiritual worlds, which, if not constantly, is at least even now occasionally taking place. Such was the universal opinion in past ages. It then displayed itself in the belief in charms and omens, magic and witchcraft. It was a necessary part of this belief, that intercourse with the spiritual world, if sometimes allowable, was in

other instances deeply criminal; hence arose probably many actions of real criminality, in those who endeavored to gratify their malignant passions by the aid of demons; hence, too, originated those horrible cruelties, which not only threw a stain on the early history of New England, but blackened more deeply the records of every country in Europe. The recollection of these awful effects of delusion should render us extremely careful not to admit, without the most convincing evidence, the belief in intercourse with the spiritual world as it has been revived in the present age.

Yet if any should be convinced, not only that the wonders of modern spiritualism are amply attested, but that no natural force, whether known or undiscovered, can possibly have produced them, these wonders may still, we conceive, be reconciled with the rule already given. In conformity to that rule, they would become important if there was ground to consider them the credentials of a new revelation; and if either now or in future they should be accompanied by statements of faith, whose character indicated a divine source, the signs themselves will command an assent which has not yet been given, however abundant the witnesses to their occurrence. It would then appear that in the present age a communication has been opened anew between the world of matter and the world of spirit; and for the same great purpose for which it was opened in the days when Christ was on earth, — the authentication of a message from on high.

This, we have said, appears to have been the only purpose of miraculous interposition since the creation of mankind. That creation itself was a series of miracles,

Geology affords abundant evidence; for it shows that after long periods, successive forms of plants, and successive races of animals appeared for the first time; nor does it, in the opinion of such naturalists as Professor Agassiz, confirm the "development theory," that animals were formed by gradual change from others, the first animals from plants, and these from inorganic matter. There must, then, have been successive creations; that is, successive miracles. The last of these, as witnessed by Geology, was the creation of man. In the view of Schleiermacher, the mission of Christ was also a creation, the creation of what the world had not before seen, a perfect man, endowed with a consciousness of the Divine presence, which preserved him from all sin, and exalted him so highly, that miracle was to him only the natural exertion of his wonderful powers. But this view, however interesting, is not necessary to bring the divine action in revelation into harmony with that in creation. Both show that the Almighty does not leave the laws of nature to operate alone; that he regards and superintends his works; and that, regular as is his constant operation, he has not precluded himself from occasional more visible manifestation.

Again, without the miraculous element in Christianity, we should be deprived in a great degree of the evidence it affords of the love of our Heavenly Father. If Jesus derived the instructions he communicated from his own unaided wisdom, if he had no authority but that of a virtuous reformer, and wrought no wonders but those which the powers of nature would enable any one to perform, then we have no message from on high; we lose the proof which that message would have given us,

that the Ruler of nature is our Friend and Father. Prayer to him has not then the encouragement it would derive from the assurance that he is willing to hear us. If nature is governed by inflexible laws alone, then there is truth in that reasoning which tells us that it is in vain to pray, for prayer can have no effect upon the Divine dealings; but if we know that the Ruler of all once gave back, at the prayer of Jesus, the spirit of Lazarus to the frame it had forsaken, then we know that there is a personal God; that he hears the prayers of his servants; and we are encouraged to hope that he will answer them, though not now by miracle, yet by the dealing of his providence. It is the miracles, therefore, that secure us from a cheerless Pantheism, assure us of the presence of a loving Father, and encourage us to pray to him, not as an unnatural and false device for exciting our own feelings, but with the simple faith that he hears our prayers and will answer them.

Not only, then, do we regard miracle as inseparable from Christianity, but we do not desire to separate it. We count it, not as a burden to the religion, but as an important part of it, not only accrediting the holy Messenger, but giving the assurance of paternal interest on the part of Him from whom he came. Miracle has been called the seal of revelation; it is more; it is the signature of the Living God, and we recognize in it the handwriting of our Father.

We have now to examine the views with regard to miracle, taken by the most prominent of its recent opponents, Strauss, Parker, and Renan.

D. F. STRAUSS.

The explanation given by Dr. Strauss of the manner in which the Gospels came to be written, is the following: There lived in Judea, eighteen hundred years ago, a man named Jesus, of whom very little authentic information has reached us. It is probable that he was a virtuous man, who, endeavoring to reform abuses, incurred the displeasure of those in power among his countrymen, was by them delivered up to the Romans, and was crucified. He neither wrought miracles while living, nor rose from the dead. His disciples, however, believed him to have been sent by God, and propagated this belief throughout the civilized world. Stories were told respecting him, and these, as they passed from mouth to mouth, among his wondering disciples, became magnified and multiplied, adorned with supernatural accompaniments, and with marks of superhuman magnanimity. One prolific source of these stories was the Old Testament prophecies; for whatever had there been predicted of a great deliverer to come, the followers of Jesus fancied must have been fulfilled in their master; and from the thought that it must have been fulfilled, the next step was to assert that it had been fulfilled.

From this mass of stories, circulating in the early Christian community, the writers of the first three Gospels, who were not, however, the persons whose names they bear, composed their histories, in good faith, believing that the tales they recorded were true. The Gospel ascribed to John, Strauss conceives to have been written at a later period than the rest, by some disciple who

had derived his knowledge of Christianity through the medium of others, from the apostle John, to whom the author intended that it should be ascribed; that this author had a high reverence for the memory of the apostle, and desired, as far as possible, to exalt him; that he was, also, deeply imbued with the peculiarities of the Alexandrian school, which appear not only in his introduction, but in the language ascribed by him to John the Baptist, and to Christ. This writer, according to Dr. Strauss, is much less trustworthy than the other Evangelists; the conversation with Nicodemus is a philosophical myth, or rather, in plain terms, a fiction, even to the very existence of that person; the raising of Lazarus equally fictitious; and the conversations held by our Savior with his apostles, as recorded by this writer, deserving of no confidence. Strauss, indeed, modified these views greatly in his third edition; but the concessions which he then made, fatal as they threatened to be to his own theory, were explicitly recalled in the fourth.

It will be noticed that this bold theory throws doubt, not upon the miracles alone. Those incidents in the life of Christ which are marked by anything of peculiar magnanimity or piety, — whatever appears as the fulfilment of any ancient prophecy, — whatever parable or precept resembles at all what is recorded of other teachers, or what the Jews would naturally expect of their Messiah, — all these come under suspicion of being the products of that most fertile spirit of invention with which the early Christians, if we are to believe this writer, made for themselves a leader, to account for their own otherwise unaccountable existence. The touching expressions of Jesus on the cross are considered as invented for him

scarce less than the exhibition of divine power in the raising of Lazarus. Nothing, in fact, remains to us of the Founder of Christianity, from the analysis of this writer, but the shadow of one who was executed by crucifixion, in Judea, and who was, probably, a virtuous teacher and reformer.

We remark upon this ingenious and daring theory, that it is not the result of impartial examination into the evidence of the New Testament history. It is an effort to reach a conclusion which had been already determined on. Strauss sets out with laying down the principle, derived from his philosophical opinions, that a miraculous revelation is an impossible thing. Ranking confessedly with the "extreme left," or ultra portion of the Hegelian school, Strauss, as a matter of philosophy antecedent to historical investigation, denies the possibility of miracles, and the doctrine of an individual resurrection. "A life beyond the grave," he says, "is the last enemy which speculative criticism has to oppose, and if possible, to vanquish."* "When, in the first place, a solution of the difficulties which I find in the biblical history, satisfactory to myself, is put before me; and when, secondly, a solution of the philosophical views which I have against the possibility of a miracle, then will I allow myself to be convinced." "A miraculous operation upon natural objects, or products of art,—as turning water into wine, or multiplication of loaves,—admits of no possible explanation. Even the conception of such a possibility is so far out of the question, that I must lose my senses, before I could receive any thing of the kind." †

* *Christliche Glaubenslehre*, ii. 739.

† *Streitschriften*, Heft iii. 18, 155. See Dr. Beard's *Voices of the Church*, pp. 21, 33.

To some, probably, the very fact that this author, supposed to be an impartial judge, has decided against the miraculous character of Christianity, may have had influence enough to unsettle their belief. Let such observe that he comes to his task with a foregone conclusion. Who could be admitted as a juror, with the declaration upon his lips that he must lose his senses before he could believe in the innocence of the prisoner he is to try?

In the next place, we have, as will be shown in a subsequent chapter, the evidence of a series of writers, extending back to the very times of the apostles, to the authenticity of the Gospels, as having been written by persons who, as one of them expresses it, "had perfect understanding of all things, from the very first." (Luke i. 3.)

Thirdly, these Gospels stand not alone. Strauss himself admits distinctly the testimony of the Acts, and the Epistles, as proving that the apostles believed in the resurrection of their Master, the greatest miracle of Christianity. His admissions here, are in the following words. They are of great importance, as the unwilling testimony of a most competent judge, alike to the authority of the documents referred to, and to the belief of the earliest Christians in the resurrection of their Lord.

"From the Epistles of Paul, and the Acts, it is certain that the apostles themselves had the persuasion, that they had seen the Arisen." (*Leben Jesu*, vol. ii. p. 652, first edition. Translation, vol. iii. p. 365.)

"For the rest, the passage from the First Epistle to the Corinthians is not hereby weakened, which, un-

doubtedly genuine, was written about the year 59 after Christ, therefore not thirty years after his resurrection. Upon this information, we must admit, that many members of the first community, still living at the time of the composition of that Epistle, particularly the apostles, were persuaded that they had witnessed appearances of the risen Christ." (Ibid., vol. ii. p. 629. Translation, iii. 345.)

Strauss supposes the apostles self-deceived, through the excited state of their minds. But if we cannot take their own evidence with regard to what themselves had seen, it is hard to say what possible evidence would convince us of the fact to which they testify.

Fourthly, the time that elapsed between the personal ministry of Christ and the writing of the Gospels, is utterly too short to allow such a growth of myths, traditions, or marvellous stories, as this theory requires. Such stories are of slow growth. In the cases which this author quotes as similar, hundreds of years elapsed before the facts of history became clothed with the fairy garb of popular tradition. Yet he would have us believe that in about thirty years from the death of Jesus, while many of those who had seen and heard him must have been yet living, the true idea of him had been completely supplanted in the minds of men, by that of a being scarce less different from him in moral than in supernatural greatness. It is seventy years since Washington ceased to breathe. Is his life, — idolized as his memory is amongst us, — is his life so obscured by popular traditions that we cannot depend upon the information we receive concerning it?

But in our view the most convincing reply to the

fancy of the German theorist is to be drawn from the perfections of our Lord's character, and of the religion which he gave. This subject we have already contemplated. We have seen how perfect in every moral grace, how far beyond all other instructors of mankind, was the character of him who appeared as the delegate of the Father, and the example of men. The religion, too, which he gave, has stood for ages the test of hostile criticism, and of rivalry with the best efforts of human genius; yet it is unsurpassed, unvanquished, unequalled. And this holy life, this perfect system, if we are to believe Dr. Strauss, were not even the invention of an artful mind. They grew by chance, — the material furnished piecemeal by the popular fancies of Jews and early Christians, — and put together without design or art, yet forming, when combined, the object of admiration to the world, the aim of vain endeavor to excel or equal, through centuries of the highest civilization. When we can believe of some noble ship, whose proportions exhibit the perfection of naval architecture, that it was put together in mere sport by untaught rustics, from driftwood which they had gathered from the banks of a stream, then may we believe that the divine portraiture of the Savior in the Gospels was the combination of unfounded popular fancies, and that his holy law, of purity, humility, peace, and love came from no higher source than the imagination of a sect which sprung up by a strange chance in narrow-minded Galilee, lascivious Corinth, and blood-stained Rome.

THEODORE PARKER.

The memory of this eminent man is held in respect among us, well merited by his great talents, his extensive learning, and especially by his services in the cause of freedom. But we have now to examine, not the character of the individual, but the views he expressed on the subject of the Christian miracles; and we have frequent occasion to guard ourselves against being led into error by the authority of popular names.

The work of Mr. Parker to which we shall particularly refer, is his volume entitled "A Discourse of Matters pertaining to Religion." This, though written at a comparatively early period of his course, discusses the subject in question more fully than any of his later writings; and if his opinions were afterwards modified, it was by receding still further from Christianity as commonly held.

The "Discourse" exhibits great learning and much ingenuity, and in many passages gives evidence of an ability to comprehend and appreciate the beauty of holiness, as it is presented in the life and the precepts of Christ. The author delineates the various forms in which, as he conceives, the religious sentiment has developed itself, as Fetichism, Idolatry, Monotheism — following in this the arrangement of Comte. Of these forms the last is the noblest; and he considers Christianity, as it was proclaimed and exemplified by Jesus himself, as the pure or absolute system of Monotheism. Christianity, therefore, is true; not on the ground of its alleged miracles, but on its internal evidence. This is,

he argues, the proper test, moral truth commending itself to the mind in a way similar to mathematical truth; miracles, therefore, are superfluous at best, and the evidence on which those of Christianity are sustained, he considers essentially defective.

There is a wide difference between the system of this writer and that of Strauss, with which it is probably often confounded. In reference to Christianity, Mr. Parker begins with establishing the excellence of the preceptive and moral part of Christianity, and thence proceeding to the miracles, pronounces them useless, and not satisfactorily proved. Strauss, on the other hand, commences with the miracles, pronounces them impossible, and proceeds to propose and establish a theory to account for the origin of these remarkable stories. But in dissolving the miracles into thin air, he does not, like Parker, spare the moral and preceptive parts of the Gospels, or the example of Christ. With stern impartiality, and apparently in utter blindness to the grandeur and loveliness of what he sweeps away, he explains, one by one, discourse, parable, prayer, miracle, beneficent action, and patient endurance, into fictions, leaving little more than the fact that a man of Nazareth, named Jesus, lived, taught, and was crucified. The extravagance and impossibility of Strauss's theory is, that he supposes this immense harvest of myths to have grown, from scarce any beginning, into popular belief in the course of a single generation. Apart from this insuperable objection, his system is consistent and perfect, — a masterpiece of skill misapplied, — a triumph of intellect, "clear, but O, how cold!"

On the other hand, the system of Mr. Parker, warm

with a feeling recognition of the holiness of the Savior's character and precepts, is by this very recognition rendered inconsistent with itself. Rejecting the miracles, he still retains his faith in narratives which are supported by the same external evidence. He retains the superstructure of Christianity while he removes the foundation on which it rests. Mr. Parker gives no theory of the miracles;—hence the apparent strength of his argument, disguising its real weakness. He does not attempt to explain how the historians, on whose veracity he relies for a correct account of Christ's words and natural actions, were so egregiously deceived or deceivers as falsely to ascribe to him supernatural actions. Had any such attempt been made, we may reasonably conclude that it would not have succeeded better than those of Paulus, Venturini, and others, whose absurdity has been sufficiently proved by the acute and self-consistent logic of Strauss.

We cannot but notice the manner in which Mr. Parker classes the ancient revelation, given, as we believe, by God through Moses, with the systems of Pagan idolatry. He is fond of such expressions as these: "Every nation, city, or family has its favorite God, — a Zeus, Athena, Juno, Odin, Baal, Jehovah, Osiris, or Melkartha, who is supposed to be partial to the nation which is his 'chosen people.'" "Neither the Zeus of the Iliad, nor the Elohim of Genesis, nor the Jupiter of the Pharsalia, nor even the Jehovah of the Jewish prophets, is always this" — (the Being of infinite power, wisdom, and love). "Romulus, Æacus, Minos, Moses, receive their laws from God." These passages occur in the section of the fifth chapter, first book, which treats of Polytheism. If the

point can be made out that the Jews were Polytheists, let it be proved; but till we have at least some pretence of proof, let not the monstrous conclusion be coolly taken for granted.

The fourth chapter of Mr. Parker's third book is entitled "The Authority of Jesus, its Real and Pretended Source." In this chapter he argues, first, that "the only authority of Christianity is its truth," — and that this being self-evident, testimony is altogether superfluous and unnecessary. To such an argument, already referred to, it is, perhaps, enough to reply that it appears to confuse two things different in their nature, — moral and demonstrative reasoning. Mathematical truths, the subjects of demonstration, can acquire no force from testimony, to those whose minds are capable of appreciating the description of evidence on which they properly rest. Moral truths are intrinsically different. They admit of degrees in our persuasion of them, according to the considerations which may be urged for and against them; and among such considerations, that of testimony, whether natural or supernatural, may properly find a place.

In his next section, Mr. Parker speaks "of the authority derived from the alleged miracles of Jesus." To this authority he objects at the outset that the claim is not peculiar to Christianity, as other religions also claim to be miraculous in their character. To this objection the reply is obvious, Let the other religions *prove* their miracles, as those of Christianity are proved. For the visions of Mohammed we have nothing but his own word. The wonders of Grecian mythology are attested only by the poets, and by traditions whose origin none pretended to verify. So too with the Scandinavian and Oriental

mythologies. Of the pretended Catholic and Mormonite miracles, some have been fully exposed as deceptions, and all are combined with systems whose internal evidence of untruth is too strong to allow them to be provable by any miracles. Notwithstanding the assertions to the contrary, with which this section abounds, the miracles of the Bible stand alone, as claiming to rest on appreciable evidence, and in connection with a system of belief, worthy of such support. This last is one of those considerations which Mr. Parker overlooks. He argues about miracles and internal evidence as if to believe the one were to reject the other; as if it were impossible or inadmissible to unite them, and let them strengthen one another. So far from this being the case, it is admitted by all intelligent advocates of the Christian miracles, that the high character of the system in favor of which they are adduced, is a most important consideration, an indispensable one, indeed, for their own credibility. This important principle is well laid down in an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, for October, 1847. The author of that article says, in speaking of a test of miracles, "But the rule of rules which approaches as nearly to a test as the nature of the subject seems to allow, is the rule which makes the force of evidence from miracles depend on their conjunction with internal evidence, and on their conspiring with a high and worthy object." "As the main ground of the admissibility of such attestations is the worthiness of the object, — the doctrine, to receive them, its unworthiness will discredit even the most distinctly alleged apparent miracles, and such worthiness or unworthiness depends solely on our moral judgment of the consistency of the doctrine with

other acknowledged truths." In accordance with this view, the writer quotes the sentiments of Johnson, Arnold, Doederlein, Pascal, and Whately.

The question, What is a miracle? Mr. Parker answers with distinctness, and in a manner deserving of particular attention. "A miracle," says he, "is one of three things: 1. It is a transgression of all law which God has made; or, 2. A transgression of all known laws, but obedience to a law which we may yet discover; or, 3. A transgression of all law known or knowable by man, but yet in conformity with some law out of our reach."

Declaring a miracle under the first definition to be impossible, and that what the second definition describes is no miracle at all, he distinctly admits the possibility of the third hypothesis. This admission the Christian may accept with full satisfaction. It corresponds to the character which is most properly assigned to the miracles of Jesus. None can suppose them arbitrary acts, without reason, and therefore without law. But how they were wrought, in conformity to what system, we know not, nor is it probable we ever shall know, until we become clothed with immortality.

He next inquires, Did miracles occur in the case of Christianity? On this question he observes correctly that it is purely historical, to be answered like all other historical questions, by competent testimony.

We have now come to the very kernel of the nut — the section in Mr. Parker's book upon which its trustworthiness depends. If he can convince us that there is not sufficient competent testimony to prove the miracles of the Bible, historical Christianity is overthrown, and

we must content ourselves with such fragments of the fabric as with our author's assistance we can save from the crumbling mass. If he fails to prove this, and if, on the contrary, the evidence of miracles stands uninjured by the assault here made upon it, his entire theory falls. If the miracles are actually proved, it is idle to argue that there is no need of them. Such arguments will not prevent us from believing them.

And what do we find in this all-important section? An attempt like that of Paulus, to explain the miracles on natural principles? One like that of Strauss, to account for the origin of such stories when no corresponding actions had taken place? Nothing of the kind. The witnesses, the very witnesses, to whom Mr. Parker has given the highest praise in declaring that the religious system they have transmitted to us is the absolute, the true religion — these witnesses he now attempts to discredit by some cursory observations on their discrepancies, and our uncertainty as to their authority. He compares the canonical Gospels with the apocryphal; a comparison which, as we shall see in another chapter, will, when fairly carried out, increase our faith in the genuine documents, by the strong contrast they present to those wretched imitations. He admits the very strong evidence which exists from the Epistles as well as the Gospels, for the resurrection; but enumerating with great exaggeration the circumstances which in his opinion render that miracle incredible, he declares that he cannot believe such facts on such evidence. He leaves unmentioned, however, the strongest of the evidences for the resurrection — the fact that Christ's doctrine, instead of remaining crushed by the death of its promulgator,

immediately rose and diffused itself through the world, arming its adherents with the strength of the martyr spirit, and uniting on its banners the name of the resurrection with that of Jesus.

Next follows a comparison of the miracles of Christ with those ascribed by monkish historians to St. Bernard, — with the wonders of the Salem witchcraft, — with the case of Richard Dugdale, the "Surey Impostor." The miracles of St. Bernard and the Salem wonders, possess, in Mr. Parker's opinion, more evidence than the miracles of Christ. He does not say "better evidence," and it seems hardly possible that such can have been the meaning he intended to convey. The comparisons he suggests are worth following out.

St. Bernard, of Clairvaux, is known to us through the medium of Church History, as one who wrought wonders by genius, eloquence, courage, and genuine though mistaken piety. He is asserted by monkish historians to have wrought miracles also. The difference between these narrators and those who record the miracles of the Savior, is sufficiently obvious. Bernard moved among those who were disposed to receive his actions and his teachings with the greatest reverence; to look for miracles from him, not to question his power to perform them: the narrators of his wonders incurred no risk of martyrdom for their attestation, but rather were encouraged to invent miracles by the ideas of their age, to which pious frauds were not unknown. In these respects the case was entirely different with the miracles of Christ. They were wrought in the midst of jealous enemies; they were witnessed and recorded by men who must have known that their lives were endangered by

the testimony they gave. Above all, there could not be in the case of Bernard, that occasion for miracles, that "*dignus Deo vindice notus*," which can alone be presented by the great occasion of making a revelation to mankind.

The miracles ascribed to St. Bernard appear in connection with his advocacy of the second crusade. When, about the middle of the twelfth century, the Christian kingdom of Jerusalem, established by the victories of Godfrey of Bouillon, was threatened by the Saracens, and the important outpost of Edessa had already fallen, the Christians of the East sent a suppliant embassy for aid to their western brethren. Kings and people were alike excited; but the most powerful advocate of the new crusade was Bernard, then at the height of his popularity and power. He was one of those persons who seem born to command others. When he entered the monastic life, his influence carried five companions with him; and after he became abbot, he procured the recognition, by France and England, of Pope Innocent II. over his rival, Anacletus. He refused the archbishopric of Milan, met and vanquished the celebrated Abelard, and, to use the language of Mosheim, his "word was a law," and his "counsels were regarded by kings and princes as so many orders to which the most respectful obedience was due."

Bernard, in preaching the crusade, visited the cities on the Rhine; and in each, we are told, he restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and cured the lame and the sick; thirty-six miracles are recorded as performed in one day. The disciples who followed him could not help regretting that the tumult wherever he

appeared, prevented their seeing several of his miracles. Philip, Archdeacon of Liege, gives a detailed relation of those which were wrought in the space of a month, appealing to the authority of ten eye-witnesses. There is good reason to believe, therefore, that if not by Divine interposition, yet by the effect of strong excitement on the nerves of the sick, some cures were actually wrought.

But, unfortunately for his fame as a worker of miracles, Bernard claimed also the character of a prophet. In the excess of his zeal for what he thought a holy cause, he foretold, in the name of the Most High, a series of splendid triumphs. The effect of such promises, from one so eloquent and so honored, was such that, in his own words, he depopulated cities and provinces. Glowing with faith and courage, the strength of Europe came forth to the rescue of the Holy Land.

The crusade, however, was utterly a failure. Two or three years were spent in constant disaster and suffering; and then the remnant who survived returned, having accomplished nothing. There was a general outcry against Bernard, and he could but make the feeble defence, that his prediction of success was of course conditional, and that it was not fulfilled because of the unworthiness of the crusaders. Notwithstanding this apology, the result of the crusade clearly settles the question as to Bernard's prophetic foresight. As effectually, if not as obviously, it settles that relating to his miraculous power; unless we can believe that the Almighty would impart that power to a mistaken enthusiast, to enable him to lead thousands of his fellow-men to destruction.

As to the Salem witchcraft, into a degrading comparison with which Mr. Parker brings the miracles of our Lord, did he never read that many of the very persons most implicated in that delusion subsequently acknowledged their error? Could he point in the New Testament history to a recantation on the part of John or of Peter, like that of Chief Justice Sewall? We may, indeed, with good reason consider all the surviving witnesses and agents in those melancholy transactions as uniting in the repentant acknowledgments that were afterwards made by the public voice of New England. The remarks made on the miracles of St. Bernard are also in part applicable here. The witnesses were sustained by the general public feeling. There may have been some cases in which, through the strong delusion of the period, the victims admitted their own guilt, and thus insured their own execution; but the cases were probably far more numerous in which they resolutely maintained their innocence, even when life might have been saved by pretence of acknowledgment and repentance. But here more strikingly than in the case before mentioned, the most obvious difference is in the occasion for the miracle. That God should interrupt the common laws of nature to gratify the malevolence of some wicked woman or child, who wished to inflict some petty injury on a neighbor, is a supposition so absurd as to defy all testimony to prove it. That God should, at some few solemn periods in the history of a world, give some miraculous attestation to those truths which are of most importance to man to know, is to the reflecting mind more probable than that he should leave his children entirely to the doubtful light of nature.

"But now," says Mr. Parker, "admitting in argument that Jesus wrought all the miracles alleged; that his birth and resurrection were both miraculous; that he was the only person endowed with such miraculous power,—it does not follow that he shall teach true doctrine." This argument is hardly worth a serious answer.

The section concludes, and with it the chapter, with a repetition of the argument, that if Christianity be true, its truth is self-apparent, and therefore miracles are unnecessary; fortified by a quotation from Locke, in which, according to our author, that philosopher admitted the worthlessness of miracles. Such, indeed, would be the conclusion derived from a cursory examination of that passage, under the guidance of Mr. Parker's italics: such was not the meaning of Locke. All that is claimed in the passage is, that reason must be the judge of miracles—first, of the nature of the action alleged to be miraculous, and secondly, of the credibility of the doctrine, to maintain which the miracle is said to have been wrought. "The miracles," he says, "are to be judged by the doctrine, not the doctrine by the miracles." To this, as properly understood, every intelligent Christian assents. It is but the expression, in other words, of the rule already quoted from the *Edinburgh Review*, the rule which makes the force of evidence from miracles depend on their conjunction with internal evidence, and on their conspiring with a high and worthy object.

It is admitted that miraculous evidence would not be competent to convince us of the truth of an inhuman, degrading, sensual doctrine; to set up again the bloody

altar of Moloch, or the licentious rites of Astarte. But is the miraculous evidence, therefore, worthless, which assures us that the holy words of Jesus are not merely the musings of a sage, but the message of God? To Mr. Parker, it appears those words, recommended by their intrinsic truth, needed no other sanction. To many it is not so. To the mass of mankind it is not, and it never can be, a matter of indifference whether the doctrines of a future life, and of divine providence, have or have not the seal of miracles. Thanks be to God, that the holy seal is plain and clear; and that every investigation of its authority establishes more firmly the genuineness of the impression it bears from the chancery of heaven.

RENAN.

Among recent writers against the historical truth of the Gospel records, none has attracted so much attention as M. Ernest Renan. His "Life of Jesus" possesses much of the interest of a romance; and for the reason that he has, like a writer of fiction, derived his narrative in great part from his own imagination. With his liveliness of fancy there is blended, however, a genuine admiration for the character — imperfectly as he appreciates it — of the glorious Personage he attempts to describe. This admiration is exhibited in such language as the following:—

"This confused medley of visions and dreams, this alternation of hopes and deceptions, these aspirations incessantly trampled down by a hateful reality, at length found their interpreter in the incomparable man to whom

the universal conscience has decreed the title of Son of God, and that with justice, since he caused religion to take a step in advance, incomparably greater than any other in the past, and probably than any yet to come." (Close of Chap. I.)

"Hillel, fifty years before him, had pronounced aphorisms closely analogous to his. By his poverty, endured with humility, by the sweetness of his character, by the opposition which he made to the hypocrites and priests, Hillel was the real teacher of Jesus, if we may say teacher when speaking of so lofty an originality." (Chap. III.)

"In his great soul such a faith (in the power of prayer) produced effects entirely different from those which it produced upon the multitude. With the multitude, faith in the special action of God led to a silly credulity, and to the deceptions of charlatans. To him it gave a deep idea of the familiar relations of man with God, and an exaggerated faith in the might of man: admirable errors, which were the principle of his power." (Chap. III.)

"Hillel, however, will never be considered the real founder of Christianity. The palm belongs to him who has been mighty in word and in work, who has felt the truth, and, at the price of his blood, has made it triumph. Jesus, from this double point of view, is without equal. His glory remains complete, and will be renewed forever." (Chap. V., close.)

"Whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing; his legend will call forth tears without end; his sufferings will melt the noblest hearts; all

ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus." (Close of the book.)

From the regard for the character of Christ which is thus expressed, and the lively fancy which fills up those blanks in the Savior's life, which occur by the surrender of the miraculous element, it has resulted that this book, though in some sense written against Christianity, has in another point of view aided its progress. Persons have read Renan who could not have been induced to hear or to read the work of a professed defender of the Gospel; and they have thus seen in the character of Christ traits of divine beauty. Among those who have thus been brought to reverence Jesus, some, we trust, have learned to believe on him as their Savior.

M. Renan disclaims prejudging the miracles of Christianity. He disclaims denying the possibility of miracles. "We do not say," he remarks, "miracles are impossible. We say, there has been hitherto no miracle proved." (Introduction, page 44, of Wilbour's translation.) Our methods of investigation, he reminds us, are now scientific. If a miracle were now asserted to have taken place, an inquiry would be made into it by a scientific commission. No such investigation was made, or could be made, in regard to the miracles ascribed to Jesus.

To this argument it may be replied, in the first place, that the age of Jesus and his apostles was not as different from our own as is here alleged. Careful investigation was not then impossible; nay, careful and even hostile examination was then actually made. Of this, we find a distinct example in the case of the blind man restored to sight, as described in the ninth chapter of

John. The national council of the Jews examined the man, and cross-examined him. They heard other witnesses; they summoned his parents; they exhorted him to confess a deception. With all their investigation they could gain from the man himself, and from other witnesses, no different account, but that he had been blind, and had received from Jesus the gift of sight.

Their decision against Jesus was not the result of their examination, but of predetermined hostility, occasioned by the attitude in which Jesus stood towards themselves, and availing itself, probably, in this instance as in others, of the subterfuge of ascribing the cure to the power of evil spirits. If it be said that we have this narrative only on the authority of a writer, who is thought by many not to have been an eye-witness, or even contemporaneous, we reply, that doubt on this subject has only arisen from an unwillingness to receive miraculous narratives; that the Gospel of John is in fact better authenticated than the works of most other historians of a period equally distant, and that Renan himself admits it to be genuine. As another instance of a miracle investigated by high authority, of hostile disposition, we may take that of the lame man cured at the gate of the Temple (Acts, Chaps. III. and IV.); and as still another, and more important, that of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In this case we have the story told by the Roman guards, — or at least, told of them by the Jews, — a story which the Christian historian never could have invented, since it would make against himself or his cause, while its improbability can be seen at once when we consider the despondency of the disciples after the death of their Master, the high,

devoted, and truthful spirit which they always exhibited, and the absence of any motive on their part to keep up, after his crucifixion, a deception which could only expose them to persecution.

Again, while the miracles of Jesus were thus well attested in the age in which they occurred, they were not isolated occurrences, but connected with a system, some of whose elements were of the kind that are not bounded by space and time. To the moral miracles of Christianity we have already paid some attention, in the comparison we have made of it with heathen systems, and with the best efforts of the human mind to surpass it, and set it aside. Other moral wonders we may contemplate in the marvellous teaching of the Jewish nation, their constant expectation of a Messiah, and their obvious rejection by God's providence, after they had rejected God's appointed Messenger. Such moral miracles render probable the introduction of material miracles, for they indicate a divine interposition; they show that the Almighty recognized an object of sufficient importance to direct to its attainment his course of providential government. If then, for the same great object, outward miracles were needed, the same divine purpose would be carried forward by bestowing them.

We need not enter into the details of M. Renan's survey of the life of Jesus. His general account is that inspired by the teaching of nature, the traditions of his people, and his own wonderful genius; the young carpenter of Nazareth commenced his work of the regeneration of his country and of mankind in a cheerful spirit; that as opposition rose and increased, he became more stern, perhaps more ambitious, and less true; that

he, in some instances — at least in the raising of Lazarus — descended to share in deception; — that when he found all turning against him, and that he could accomplish his work in no other way but by his death, he prepared himself, with true greatness of soul, for that event, and gave up his life in attestation of the great doctrines he had proclaimed. Contrary to most writers of his class at the present day, Renan admits the genuineness of the Gospel of John. His reasoning on this subject is of importance, and will be considered in our view of the question to which it relates. Admitting this, however, he is obliged to account, in some way, for the story of Lazarus. The mode by which he does this is extraordinary. The family at Bethany, according to him, became impatient at the long delay of Jesus in asserting his claims. To urge him forward, they devised a singular fraud. Lazarus, who had been sick, feigned death, and his sisters mourned for him with all the customary signs of grief. Jesus came, and was induced, by their urgency and expressions of firm belief, to make trial of his own power to raise the dead; and at his word, Lazarus raised himself from his pretended lifelessness. Jesus, if he was afterwards convinced that there had been an imposture, yet allowed the story of his miracle to pass uncontradicted. It is scarcely needful to point out the objections to this supposition. It ascribes to the family at Bethany the most contradictory feelings and conduct. They revere Jesus as the wise and holy messenger of God, yet they presume upon his ignorance and folly to play off upon him a most shameful deception; to excite God's Messiah to do God's work, they commit an act of falsehood and impiety.

He, whom they have so grossly deceived — great and good Reformer as he is — neither takes offence at their presumption, with regard to himself, nor at its violation of the honor due to God, but quietly permits himself to be made a sharer in their crime.

We have seen in the case of Strauss, that the attempt to reconstruct Christianity, by removing its miracles, arose from the principles of a false philosophy, according to which miracles were impossible. Thus it is also with Renan, and the fact should be kept in mind by all who are in danger of being led away by his fanciful book. The contrast of Renan's whole mode of thought and style of principle with the strict simplicity and deep religious feeling of the Gospel of Christ, has been well set forth by Dr. Beard, of England, in his "Manual of Christian Evidence." (London, 1868.) For our own purpose, two extracts from Renan's writings will be sufficient. The first, by its loose morality, indicates a deficiency in one of the most important conditions for appreciating the character of Jesus, and the other exhibits how religiously one can talk who disowns religion; how a plain question can be answered by shrouding it in a mist of words, and how the existence of God can be denied and his name retained.

"There are often people, like clergymen, riveted, as it were, to an absolute faith; but even among them, a noble mind rises to the full extent of the issue. A worthy country priest, through his solitary studies and the simple purity of his life, comes to a knowledge of the impossibilities of literal dogmatism; and must he, therefore, sadden those whom he formerly consoled, and explain to the simple folk those mental processes which they can-

not comprehend? Heaven forbid! There are no two men in the world whose paths of duty are exactly alike. The excellent Bishop Colenso showed an honesty, which the Church, since her origin, has not seen surpassed, in writing out his doubts as they occurred to him. But the humble Catholic priest, surrounded by timid and narrow-minded souls, must be quiet. O, how many close-mouthed tombs about our village churches hide similar poetic reticence and angelic silence! Do those who speak when duty dictates, equal, after all, in merit those who in secret cherish and restrain the doubts known only to God?" ("The Apostles:" Carleton's edition, page 51.)

Perhaps this apology for hypocrisy is ironical. We have heard such language before; and it is well chosen to weaken the influence of those who defend Christianity, by the insinuation that they do not themselves believe it. Our second extract is as follows:—

"To those who, planting themselves on substance, ask me, 'Is he, or is he not, this God of yours?' Ah! I shall reply, God! It is he that is, and all the rest but seems to be. Granting even that for us philosophers another word might be preferable; besides the unfitness of abstract words to express clearly enough real existence, there would be an immense inconvenience in thus cutting ourselves off from the sources of poetry in the past, and in separating ourselves by our speech from the simple who adore so well in their way. The word God, possessing as it does the respect of humanity, the word having been long sanctioned by it, and having been employed in the finest poems, to abandon it would be to overturn all the usages of language. Tell

the simple to live a life of aspiration after truth, beauty, moral goodness — the words would convey no meaning to them. Tell them to love God, not to offend God, they will understand you wonderfully. God, Providence, Immortality! good old words, a little clumsy, perhaps, which philosophy will interpret in finer and finer senses, but which it will never fill the place of to advantage. Under one form or another, God will always be the sum of our supersensual needs, the category of the ideal, the form, that is, under which we conceive the ideal, as space and time are the categories of bodies, that is to say, the form under which we conceive of bodies. In other words, man placed in the presence of beautiful, good, or true things, goes out of himself, and, caught up by a celestial charm, annihilates his pitiful personality, is exalted, is absorbed. What is that, if it be not adoration?" (Essay on Feuerbach and the New Hegelian school, in "Studies in Religious History and Criticism;" New York: page 340.)

CHAPTER X.

AUTHENTICATION OF THE RECORDS.

THE accounts we have of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ come to us in the four Gospels; and, in addition to these, there are other documents, some connected with previous ages, and some with the time immediately after that of Jesus, the whole constituting that volume so widely known and revered as "The Bible."

Whence does this volume come? and how do we know anything of the age and authority of its contents? These are questions that occur to thousands of minds, and in many instances never receive a definite and correct answer. How do I know, the inquirer may continue, that the whole collection was not forged, either lately, or in ages of greater darkness than the present? I have heard that Luther was excited to those studies that made him a reformer, by finding a Latin Bible in the convent library; but how do I know that Luther did not write it himself?

This last question may be thought too absurd for any one to ask, since even an intelligent child would soon think of the answer, that the Roman Catholics, who hold Luther in abhorrence, have substantially the same Bible as the Protestants. This answer, obvious as it is, involves an important principle, and carries us far back into the past, with sure conviction that the Scriptures we

reverence existed then. The principle is this, that if two rival sects or parties agree in owning the authority of the same work, and in declaring that it came down to them from before their division, their testimony is to this extent undoubtedly true. If the work had been written by either party after their separation, their rivals never would have accepted it as authority, or give credit to any story of its higher antiquity.

This first step, then, has carried us back beyond the time of Luther, showing that the Bible has been in existence more than three hundred and fifty years. A second step will take us much further. Ask any one who has travelled in Greece or Russia what sacred books are revered in those countries, and he will answer, with surprise at your question, that they have the Bible, the same Scriptures with ourselves, only in their languages instead of ours. The Greek church, to which the inhabitants of those countries belong, ceased to have communion with the Latin or Western church about the year 1050. Our Scriptures then must have come to us from a higher antiquity than the date of this separation.

The sect of Nestorians became separated from the Greek church about the year 430. They are still in existence; American missionaries have had friendly intercourse with them, and one of their bishops has visited this country. They hold, and have ever held, the same Scriptures with ourselves. Those Scriptures then must have been generally received at the date thus designated; and to be thus received, as the authoritative books of the religion, they must have come down from a still more ancient period.

This description of argument can be extended still

further back, with regard to the books of the New Testament, as known to have been acknowledged by sects which then divided between them the Christian church. Thus the great Arian controversy, which arose in the year 317, makes it certain that our sacred books were received by all parties in the reign of Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor. In that reign, Eusebius, Bishop of Casarea, a man of high distinction in church and state, wrote an Ecclesiastical History. The account which he gave of the Scriptures will claim our attention hereafter; at present, continuing our former method of argument, we find in the controversies, which divided the church before Constantine, proof of the general reception of the sacred books at a very early period. We may have occasion to follow this proof out more minutely in relation to some particular writings.

With regard to the Old Testament, we can trace, in the same way, much further back; for those venerable Scriptures are held in reverence by the Jews, as well as by Christians, and must, therefore, have been received as genuine and authentic before the rise of Christianity.

To go back still further, we are told that in the reign of Josiah, the high-priest found the Book of the Law in the Temple, and that the king read therein, with an emotion, which gives the idea that he then saw the volume for the first time.* From this, some have fancied that Hilkiah, the high-priest, did not find the Book of the Law, but forged it; that he made up artfully the five books ascribed to Moses, partly it might be, from previously existing documents, but partly also from his

* 2 Kings xxii. 8-13.

own imagination. But we know, that in the time of Josiah, there was a rival branch of the Hebrew race, then, indeed, mostly in captivity or exile, but who afterwards reappeared as the Samaritans — a small remnant of whom is yet in existence. Nothing would have induced these people to receive as genuine a volume of the Law, forged by their ancient rivals; but they always have received as genuine, and as possessing the highest authority, copies of those same early writings ascribed to Moses, that the Jews and ourselves read. This fact shows us that the book found in the days of Josiah was no forgery of that age, but dated back to a time at least as early as the reign of Solomon — a thousand years before the Christian era.

Such is the testimony afforded by varying sects. Thus, from those divisions which have often been regarded as unmixed evil, has Divine Providence brought an important argument in defence of revelation.

But suppose our doubter should inquire, What assurance have I that what I have been told is true respecting ancient sects, controversies, and historians; respecting even the belief of men at this day in other countries than my own?

To relieve his doubts, he must be reminded that not only a general reliance on the truth of what is told us is the foundation of all intercourse of man with man; but that when the testimony is given by common report to statements respecting which thousands must have been informed, and when that evidence is all one way, without being contradicted or questioned by any witness, our very nature compels us to believe it. Thus, the statement that the Russians are of the Greek church,

and that they yet receive the same Scriptures with ourselves, is one which, if false, would be set aside by the testimony of thousands. It may be received, therefore, undoubtingly, testified, as it is, by common fame. So even with regard to events in the history of ages past; if they are such as must have been notorious at the time of their occurrence, and if the testimony respecting them be all favorable, they are entitled to our belief. Our reception of them as true may indeed be affected by their own apparent probability or improbability, by the number of the witnesses, and other considerations; but it is safe to admit the truth of those statements which have been handed down by universal consent, respecting the characters and conduct of distinguished men.

There is another branch of the evidence on which we receive, not only the Scriptures, but the literature of ancient times in general; this consists of references and quotations, by which authors testify to other authors who have preceded them.

Sometimes this testimony is direct. We take up, for instance, the biography of an eminent writer. The author of the biography gives an account of the works composed by the subject of his memoir. If we take up one of those works, and doubt as to its authorship, we are reminded of this direct testimony of the biographer, and we doubt no longer. Or, instead, let us take in hand a book on some department of science. We find in it quotations from another book on the same subject, giving the author's name as well as repeating his words. We turn to the book which bears the name of the author quoted, and we find the quotation there, on the page to which reference had been made. The genuineness of

that book, then, is testified by the writer who quoted from it. By thousands of such references, the literature of preceding ages is linked together; and he who would throw doubt on the general reception of any ancient author, must account for all the quotations of his works from their date to the present time.

An instance of the difficulty of such a task, is presented by the effort of Father Hardouin, a learned but fanciful writer, two centuries since, to dispute the genuineness of many classical writings. While he admitted that Virgil wrote the *Georgics*, he asserted that the *Æneid* was composed by monks in the thirteenth century, and falsely ascribed to Virgil. If such an absurd fancy needed argument to disprove it, the references to the *Æneid* in ancient writers would be sufficient. Omitting Horace and others, who do not specify the poems of Virgil to which they refer, we find the *Æneid* mentioned by Propertius and Ovid, contemporaries of its author, and by Statius, Juvenal, and Martial in the next century, while Silius, Pliny the Elder, Tacitus, and Quintilian speak of Virgil in a manner which only the existence of the *Æneid* can explain. To destroy the credit of these witnesses would require the erasure of all references to their works, as well as to the *Æneid* itself, in the writings of subsequent authors.

Now the evidence to the genuineness of the four Gospels from quotations and references in later writings, is of the same character with that which so clearly proves the early existence of the *Æneid*, and its reception as the work of Virgil. Not to dwell needlessly on later writers, there is a vast mass of Christian literature, consisting of the works of "the Fathers," as they are styled,

— Christian writers, from the first to the sixth century. Among these writers, the more recent refer to the more ancient; and most of them refer to the Gospels, and other books of the New Testament. Besides the Fathers, there were early writers who were regarded by most as heretical, and heathen writers against Christianity. Some works of both these classes remain; and others, which have perished, have still been quoted in such a manner by those of the Fathers who replied to them, that we can gather from these quotations valuable references to the Scriptures.

The evidence of these early writers has been often brought forward; with great fullness in the celebrated work of Lardner, and more briefly by Paley and others. It is condensed in our "Manual" (sections 12 to 15), after careful revision, lest any witness should be brought forward of whose testimony there was reasonable doubt. In dispensing, after such examination, with the evidence of Barnabas, Ignatius, and Hermas, we pronounced no decision against the genuineness of the works ascribed to those writers, but set them aside as still in controversy. For our present purpose we will examine three of the earliest witnesses, each in connection with one of the next generation; taking thus together John the Elder — if not the Apostle — and his pupil Papias, Polycarp and his pupil Irenæus, and Justin and his pupil Tatian.

Papias was bishop of Hierapolis in Asia, early in the second century, — about A.D. 116, — and quotes as his authority, "John the Presbyter," or Elder. As this term became at length distinctly attached to an order of church officers, many have supposed that it was applied

to the instructor of Papias to distinguish him from John the Apostle. It is evident, however, that in primitive times the terms bishop or overseer, presbyter, and even apostle, were used much more loosely than in later ages. (See Acts xx. 17, 28; xiv. 14.) Peter and John are called Elders (1 Peter v. 1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1), the latter using the name as if it was his customary or favorite designation, in Epistles, which even if their genuineness be questioned, at least mark the use of language in the early age of Christianity; and "Elder" would have been the worst possible designation to apply to a writer for the purpose of distinguishing him from the apostle who was near a hundred years old. We can scarcely doubt, therefore, that Papias was a disciple of John the Apostle. Even if otherwise, his teacher was a Christian minister, whose earlier life had been contemporaneous with those evangelists of whom he spoke. His account was as follows:—

"The Elder said, that Mark, being the interpreter of Peter, carefully wrote down all that he retained in memory of the actions or discourses of Christ; not, however, in order, for he was not himself a hearer or follower of the Lord; but afterwards, as I said, a companion of Peter, who taught in the manner best suited to the instruction of his hearers, without giving a connected narrative of our Lord's discourses. Such being the case, Mark committed no errors in thus writing some things from memory; for he made it his sole object, not to omit anything which he had heard, and not to state anything falsely."

Of Matthew, he says, "Matthew wrote the oracles in

the Hebrew language, and every one interpreted them as he was able."*

This distinct testimony of Papias is strongly supported by two passages in the Epistles of Peter. In the first Epistle, chapter v. 13, he speaks of Mark affectionately as his son. In the second Epistle, chapter i. 15, he says, "Moreover, I will endeavor that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance;"—a promise which received its explanation and fulfilment in the Gospel which this beloved companion wrote from his dictation. The "undesigned coincidence" of these passages in three different writings, is a strong proof of the account given by Papias; and while it also confirms the genuineness of the Epistles of Peter, yet, even if that was denied, it would still prove the very early existence of a belief in the church that Mark stood in an especially near and tender relation to Peter, and that that Apostle at least contemplated the preparation of a Gospel.

Another hearer of the Apostle John was Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, respecting whom his disciple Irenæus bears explicit testimony. "I can tell the place," he says, "in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, and how he related his conversation with John and others who had seen the Lord, and how he related their sayings, and what he had heard concerning the Lord, both concerning his miracles and his doctrine, as he had received them from the eye-witnesses of the word of life; all which Polycarp related agreeably to the Scriptures."

In this account of the testimony of this venerable man,

* Eusebius, *Ecl. Hist.*, Lib. III., ch. 39. See Norton's *Genuineness of the Gospels*, Vol. I., p. 243.

who, at eighty-six years of age, laid down his life as a martyr for Christ, the mention of the miracles is especially worthy of notice, as showing that these wonderful works constituted, in the minds of the apostles and their companions, an inseparable part in the ministry of their Lord. The accounts given by Polycarp from the lips of the apostles are stated also to have been "agreeable to the Scriptures." What Irenæus understood by "the Scriptures," is perfectly clear, so far as relates to the four Gospels, of which he gives a distinct account, with the names of their authors, and the order in which they were written. Besides his testimony respecting his master, we have numerous references to the Gospels in an Epistle by Polycarp himself. (See "Manual," section 13, pages 42, 44.)

We have, in the united evidence of Justin Martyr and his disciple Tatian, a testimony similar in character to that just adduced. Justin was, by his education, qualified to discriminate among writings; and by the early period at which he lived, must have been familiar with the opinions of the apostles and their immediate successors; while his death as a martyr gives to us the highest assurance of his sincerity. In his writings, still extant, are many quotations apparently from our Gospels; and his account of incidents respecting Jesus, is so ample as to afford nearly a complete life of the Savior, differing but in two unimportant particulars from that given by the evangelists. He does not, however, refer to our Gospels by name, but speaks of them under the general term of *Memoirs* or *Recollections*. From this circumstance, some authors have denied that our Gospels were known to him.

Justin was put to death in or about the year 164. Shortly after his death, his disciple Tatian published an "Address to the Greeks," or Heathen, vindicating the faith for which his master had suffered. Tatian afterwards expressed some opinions, on account of which he has been regarded as a heretic by later writers. His heresy seems to have been, in its origin, merely the respectable one of over-strictness in self-restraint. He is considered as the first of the Encratites, a term which may be literally translated *Temperance men*. His ascetic views either led him into, or were encouraged by, the Gnostic doctrine of the evil of matter. Tatian composed a *Diatessaron*, or *compend of Four Gospels*, of which Theodoret, a writer two hundred years later, gives us some information. He found the book in use in his diocese, and removed it, because, he says, Tatian had cut away "the genealogies, and all else which shows that the Lord was born of the race of David according to the flesh." He testifies, however, that the book was in use among Catholic Christians, and gives no hint that the four Gospels which it abridged were any other than those which were generally received. Indeed, his mention of the genealogies which had been cut away, identifies two of them with our Matthew and Luke.

Eichhorn and others have endeavored to maintain that Tatian's four Gospels were different from ours. Their proof is from a passage in Epiphanius, a writer of the fourth century, who says that some call Tatian's compilation "the Gospel according to the Hebrews." As Matthew, it is known, wrote in Hebrew, it is probable that this name may have been given to his Gospel as

employed by Tatian.* But the evidence is so ample shortly after, from Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, and many others, to the general use of our Gospels near the end of the second century, that no reasonable doubt remains of their identity with "the four" which were employed by Tatian.

We have then this writer, a man whose heresy proceeded from an over-punctilious morality, a man who had the Christian courage to stand forth for the Gospel over the grave of his martyred instructor, bearing witness for our four Gospels, as the true records of the life of Christ. He was the pupil of Justin, and converted to Christianity by him. From Justin, then, he received his knowledge of the books in use among Christians. If Justin had not known and approved the four Gospels, Tatian would not have used them. If Justin's "Memoirs" had been a different book, Tatian would have used that also, presenting a harmony of five Gospels instead of four. Justin's profession of Christianity was made about the year 132. Carefully trained in philosophy, a native of Palestine, and a student at Alexandria, he must have known what books were held by his new associates to be authentic records of their faith. His authority, then, thus strongly inferred from that of his disciple Tatian, carries our four Gospels far back towards the times of the Apostles.

* For another conjecture, see Norton's *Genuineness*, Vol. III., p. 279, note.

CHAPTER XI.

MANUSCRIPTS, VERSIONS, COINS, MONUMENTS.

WE have seen, in the last chapter, something of the historical and traditional proof, on which we receive the sacred writings, and especially those of the New Testament. A proof of a different description is furnished by ancient Manuscripts, and by the early Versions or Translations of the Scriptures. Our belief receives confirmation also from existing relics of the past, whether in the shape of coins, or of more massive monuments.

Of course, if we possessed the original manuscript of any work, fully certified to be such, its evidence would be of the highest value. This, however, is not the case, either with regard to the books of the New Testament, or to any other writing of that distant age. But there are manuscripts in existence, of the works of antiquity, whether secular or sacred; manuscripts in great numbers, and some of them of very early date.

The art of printing was discovered about the middle of the fifteenth century. Previous to that time copies of books were multiplied by the hand alone. We should be in error to conclude, however, that they were always excessively rare. Copying was pursued by numbers as a regular business; by others as an occupation for leisure time. After the general reception of Christianity, the copying of the Scriptures was undertaken by many

from religious motives; and wealthy and even imperial penmen made their manuscripts splendid with coloring and gilding. Still later, the monastic life gave to its votaries an abundance of time, which was employed by numbers of them in preparing copies of the Scriptures, and other religious books, and of the classical authors.

The writing and deciphering of manuscripts present many particulars worthy of attention. Nothing perhaps is more curious than the restoration of a manuscript which had been partially obliterated to make way for other writing. Parchment, the material most valued for such writing, was of high price, especially in the middle ages, when there were few who understood the method of preparing it. The person then, who desired to copy some work which was then in high esteem, would take an old parchment book, and, erasing in part the letters with which it was covered, would use it as if it were new material. But in process of time, as his writing lost its freshness, that which he had tried to efface would attract attention, — and might, by chemical means, be entirely restored. Such is the history of one of the most valuable manuscripts of the New Testament, the "Codex Ephremi Rescriptus," in which the ancient letters had been ineffectually erased, in order to write upon the same parchment the works of St. Ephrem the Syrian. Such a manuscript is called a Palimpsest, "rubbed again," from the Greek *πάλιν*, again, and *ῥάω*, to rub.

The comparative value of manuscripts of the same work depends, of course, upon their antiquity. The period at which a manuscript was written can be determined from various circumstances. One of these is the

material, the oldest in existence being some copies of Pentateuch, in Hebrew, on rolls of crimson leather; most of the manuscripts, however, which are older than the sixth century, are on parchment. The inner bark of some trees, called in Latin *Liber*, in Greek *Biblos*, was so commonly used for writing on, that these words came to have, in those languages, the meaning of "book." Especially the fibrous coating of the Egyptian reed, called *papyrus*, from which the word paper is derived, supplied the principal material for books from very early times till the seventh or eighth century, when paper made of cotton began to take its place.

Another circumstance indicating the age of manuscripts is the method of writing; the older ones being written upright, — or in the way commonly called "printing with the pen," — and all in capitals, or "uncial letters," without division of words, or marks of punctuation or accent. A knowledge of the period when successive changes began to appear, will, therefore, in most instances, enable the accomplished scholar to decide on the age of the manuscript before him.

In many instances the copyist has himself dated his manuscript; in others, marginal notes, by a later, but still ancient hand, fix their own date by some allusion to contemporaneous persons or events, and thus show the still older origin of the manuscript they illustrate.

In these and other ways the age of these interesting relics can, with considerable accuracy, be determined. The number of them known to be in existence is very large, and additions are constantly made to it by discoveries in old libraries, and especially in the monasteries of the East. In those monasteries, these ancient treas-

ures have been kept for centuries, safer perhaps through the very superstition and ignorance of their guardians, than if they had been freely used by them, or parted with to others. Some, however, have been brought from these hiding-places none too early. In one instance "a learned traveller, mentioned by Mr. Curzon, in inquiring for manuscripts, was told that there were none in the monastery; but when he entered the choir, to be present at the service, he saw a double row of long-bearded holy fathers, shouting the Kyrie eleison, and each of them standing, to save his bare legs from the damp of the marble floor, upon a great folio volume, which had been removed from the conventual library, and applied to purposes of practical utility in the way here mentioned. These volumes, some of them highly valuable, this traveller was allowed to carry away with him, in exchange for some footstools or hassocks, which he presented to the monks." *

In one of the monasteries in Egypt, Archdeacon Tattam found the floor of a vault covered with manuscripts and fragments of books, eight inches deep, which had lain there, apparently, many years. From these he was able to purchase three hundred and seventeen books, in whole or in part, in Syriac, Aramaic, or Coptic, which, with many similar treasures, are now in the British Museum. †

In the work from which these facts are derived, it is stated (page 5) "that the integrity of the records of the Christian faith is substantiated by evidence in a tenfold proportion more various, copious, and conclusive

* History of the Transmission of Ancient Books, by Isaac Taylor, page 234.

† Idem., page 250.

than that which can be adduced in support of any other ancient writings." That this statement is correct with regard to manuscripts will be evident from a comparison elsewhere made. (Pages 180, 181.) Of the history of Herodotus, there are fifteen manuscripts known, of which several are not older than the middle of the fifteenth century. Of the Greek Testament, in whole or in part, nearly five hundred *ancient* manuscripts have been examined. If the more recent ones are included, the whole number of manuscripts of the Gospels, or portions of them, was stated some years since at six hundred and seventy.

With regard to the antiquity of manuscripts, the same author states as follows: —

"A Virgil, in the Vatican, claims an antiquity as high as the fourth century; there are a few similar instances; but generally the existing copies of the classics are attributed to periods between the tenth and fifteenth centuries. In this respect, the Scriptures are by no means inferior to the classics. There are extant copies of the Pentateuch, which, on no slight grounds, are supposed to have been written in the second or the third century; and there are copies of the Gospels, belonging to the third or the fourth, and several of the entire New Testament which unquestionably were made before the eighth."

Nor have these copies been found in one locality alone. Among the most ancient of them, for instance, the Alexandrian manuscript, was from the city in Egypt whose name it bears; having been brought thence to Constantinople by the patriarch Cyril, who afterwards presented it to Charles I. of England. The Codex Bezae, on the other hand, was said by the reformer

Beza to have been found in the monastery of St. Irenæus, at Lyons, in France; and the recently discovered Sinaitic manuscript was procured by Professor Tischendorf, on behalf of the Russian government, from the monastery on Mount Sinai, in Arabia. These instances show the wide diffusion of the sacred writings, rendering it more difficult to conceive how any forged document could have been received into general circulation as a part of holy Scripture.

We have spoken in the "Manual" (page 52), of the early versions of the New Testament. To illustrate their value, we will take a single instance. Among the manuscripts in the British Museum, of which we have already spoken, rescued by Dr. Tattam from an Egyptian vault, Dr. Cureton discovered a copy made in the fifth century, of a translation of the Gospels into Syriac, of still higher antiquity. There is a well known Syriac version, called the Peshito (plain or literal), which has long been considered the oldest; but this is older still. In various places this version has been altered to make it conform to the Peshito; the older translation being corrected by that which was more recent, and supposed therefore to be more accurate. Other considerations unite in fixing the date of this "Curetonian Syriac version" in the second century. Our four Gospels, therefore, not only existed at that time, but they were then so highly valued that men would undertake the labor of translating them into other languages.*

The support given to the authority of ancient books

* Remains of a very ancient Recension of the Four Gospels in Syriac, &c., by William Cureton, D. D., F. R. S. London, 1858. Preface, pages i., iv., lxviii.

by features of nature and monuments of art, deserves more lengthened mention than the plan of this work permits. Of the features of nature, we find that the geography of Palestine agrees with the statements made respecting it in the Bible so fully, as to extort an expression of delighted acquiescence, even from Renan. He says, —

"The scientific commission for the exploration of ancient Phœnicia, of which I was the director in 1860 and 1861, led me to reside on the frontiers of Galilee, and to traverse it frequently. I have travelled through the evangelical province in every direction; I have visited Jerusalem, Hebron, and Samaria; scarcely any locality important in the history of Jesus has escaped me. All this history, which, at a distance, seems floating in the clouds of an unreal world, thus assumed a body, a solidity, which astonished me. The striking accord of the texts and the places, the wonderful harmony of the evangelical ideal with the landscape, which served as its setting, were to me as a revelation. I had before my eyes a fifth gospel, torn but still legible, and thenceforth, through the narratives of Matthew and Mark, instead of an abstract being, which one would say had never existed, I saw a wonderful human form live and move."*

Among the monuments of art, we find in the city of Jerusalem remarkable confirmation of what the Old Testament tells us of its history. Mr. Taylor, in the last chapter of the work already quoted, gives a vivid description of the various fortunes of this city, which

* Life of Jesus. Introduction, page 45.

has been continuously inhabited for three thousand years; refers to the accounts in the books of Kings and Chronicles, and still more to the incidental allusions in the Prophets, which imply the might of the ancient Jewish empire, and the wealth and luxury of its capital; and compares with this the results attained by recent excavation in the long-trodden streets of Jerusalem; summing up his argument in the following words:—

“Here, then, the two portions of an inferential argument come into contact; and it is just at the basement line of the palaces and the mansions of the ancient Jerusalem that they do so. The juncture is of this sort: we hold in our hand the various literature of an ancient people; this literature has traversed the fields of time in those several modes of conveyance to which, in the preceding pages, we have given attention; it has thus come into our hands safely; it stands attested in modes so many and so sure, that now to speak of it as if it were questionable, would be a mere prudery and an affectation. Up and down throughout these writings we find incidental notices of the sumptuous style of the upper classes of the people in their modes of living, and in the decoration of their public and private buildings; at least it is so as to what were the visible parts of such structures. The kings and the nobles of the Hebrew monarchy were men of great wealth; ample revenues were at their command, and they spent their incomes magnificently. Looking to the documents—the parchment rolls—the volumes of the prophets of those ages, such are the inferences we must derive from them.

“But what objects are those that present themselves

when, with the pick in hand, we go down to the levels of the ancient Jerusalem? What we there find are courses of highly-wrought masonry, with which, as to the dimensions of the single blocks, and the labor that has been bestowed upon them, nothing can be compared, unless it be in Egypt, and at Palmyra. The inference is valid, namely, that the people of this city,—even those whose structures, sacred and domestic, underlie the monuments of eight or nine successive empires or kingdoms,—the primeval people must have been wealthy, and far advanced in the arts, and large also in their conceptions, and bold in their enterprises. They were a people great and well civilized, and they were so at a time when, as the Greek historian tells us, the ancestors of his nation were petty marauders by sea and land, and were feeding upon acorns!”

In a similar manner are the Biblical accounts confirmed by what is known of other ancient cities,—those of Egypt on the one side, with Nineveh and Babylon on the other; the recent explorations, which have brought to light the palaces, statues, and inscriptions of former days, adding continually new details of agreement to the testimony already afforded by them to the truth of the early Scripture history. Light is shed upon the faith, the patience, the sufferings, and the success of the early disciples by the Catacombs of Rome,—those vast caverns beneath the city, from which stone was formerly taken for its buildings, and which were used by the persecuted Christians as places of assembly, and also as places of burial. The inscriptions they cut in those

* Transmission of Ancient Documents; near the end

rocks, where the remains of their martyrs were deposited, still bear witness to the faith that animated them, to the persecutions to which that faith subjected them, and to the patient, loving, and trusting spirit with which those persecutions were endured.

Not the least curious of the ancient monuments in the illustration they afford are the coins that are found scattered far and wide throughout the world. The testimony which these bear to the truth of history may be exemplified by one which is before us as we write. It bears on one side a head, with the inscription, "Louis XVI., Roi des François,"—not, according to the old style of territorial sovereignty, "Roi de France,"—with the date 1791. On the other side appears an angel writing on a tablet, with the inscriptions "Règne de la Loi," and "L'An 1 de la Liberté." How strikingly does this confirm what history tells us of that brief period in the French Revolution, when the royal authority, though greatly circumscribed, was still acknowledged! The Jewish coins extant are of the age of the Maccabees, and chiefly of the time of Simon, the high-priest, about a century and a half before Christ; they bear emblems of religious service, such as sacrificial cups, censers, and a sprig supposed to represent Aaron's rod. Some remarkable illustrations by ancient coins, of the accuracy of the book of Acts, are mentioned in the "Manual," section 15, page 53.

But all these sources of illustration yield in importance to that which is given by the influence of the Gospel on human society. The institutions of our own age, and, if we have any faith in history, the institutions of ages past, for at least fifteen hundred years, have been

founded upon Christianity, and testify to their origin. Not only has the cross been emblazoned on banners, but it has been deeply impressed on the minds, the characters, and the customs of princes and of people. The power which even now, in its comparative weakness, is strong enough to delay the progress alike of popular revolution and of scientific advancement, and which, in the middle ages, spread over all Europe a shade at once darkening and protecting,—the power of the Papacy,—different as it is from what enlightened Christianity would sanction, still shows, like a deformed child of giant parentage, the greatness of the source from which it sprung. Civilization cannot indeed be traced to Christianity exclusively; but those institutions that mark the humanity of modern times, the hospital, the common school, nay, the monastery, which gave protection to the weak and the oppressed in a darker age,—these are the monuments of Christianity. The changes made in the habits and usages of men attest its power: the more lenient treatment of criminals, of prisoners, and of debtors; the softening of the customs of war; the better appreciation of the poor, and more humane conduct towards them; and the thrice-won victory over slavery, abolished, as we have already pointed out, in its classical, its feudal, and its American forms,—all these are but portions of the marks impressed deeply on the history and the condition of mankind, of that great blessing which God gave the world, eighteen centuries since, in the coming of the Son of Man.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIRST THREE GOSPELS.

IN judicial investigation, reliance is justly placed on the account that is supported by the testimony of several persons. One witness may be himself deceived, or may intend to deceive others. With each additional one the probability of such mistake or falsehood is diminished, and that not merely in simple proportion to the number of those who testify. If they are independent of each other, so that they cannot contrive between them what story they shall relate, their agreement upon the same account affords a proof of its truth, much greater than the sum of their separate assertions.

The absence of concert between witnesses may be proved by various circumstances. If they tell precisely the same story, incident for incident, and word for word, their close agreement, instead of establishing their truth, suggests a suspicion that they have combined to deceive; but if they give substantially the same account, with those slight variations that might be expected to result from different degrees of attention, or different habits of thought, their narrative appears more natural, and is more probably true.

These remarks on evidence are applicable to the first four books of the New Testament, known as the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The antiq-

uity of these records is, as we have already seen, vouched for by a succession of writers, reaching back from our own day to near the very time when they were composed. We have, then, for the truth of the things recorded of our Savior, the evidence, in the first place, of several witnesses, and these witnesses the persons best qualified to give information; two of them being the Apostles Matthew and John; and the other two being companions of the Apostles, and deriving from them principally the testimony which they have transmitted.

Let it be supposed, however, that we knew not who these writers were; that the account given by Irenæus, instead of being confirmed by other writers, was controverted by them, or that we possessed only these four Gospels, with no statement at all how they came into existence. Let us apply to the four unknown witnesses, as they would be in that case, the remarks already made respecting the rules of evidence.

We should, even in that case, have four distinct and independent witnesses, agreeing on a history, in all important particulars, one and the same. They are independent witnesses, for they differ from each other in matters of detail, as people never would differ who had concerted their story. Not one of them has copied his account from the others, for there is not one of them who has not told us some things peculiar to himself. Yet though independent, they harmonize in their accounts. The picture of the Savior, presented by them all, is the same; and it is a representation such as no other writer ever conceived. His meekness, his beneficence, his miraculous power, his figurative mode of instruction, his rejection by the Jews, his betrayal, con-

demnation, death, and resurrection, are essentially the same, in the accounts of all. This story, then, which they combine in telling, must be substantially true. It would be a miracle more incredible than any that they record, that four independent witnesses should each invent a tissue of falsehood, and that all their falsehoods should agree.

The agreements and differences among the Gospels require, however, an examination somewhat more minute.

The agreement is greatest among the first three Gospels; which, for this reason, are often designated as the Synoptic Gospels. Much of the account is the same in all the three; sometimes in the very same words, sometimes only a word or two in the sentences of one being different from those of the others. And yet, elsewhere, the three vary greatly. Each, as has been said, tells us some things which the others do not mention. Thus Matthew alone tells of the flight of Joseph and Mary into Egypt, and the massacre of the innocents by Herod; and alone gives us an extended and consecutive recital of the Sermon on the Mount. Luke alone relates the incidents attending the birth of John the Baptist, the parables of the Prodigal Son, and of the Good Samaritan, and the display of the Savior's mercy on the cross to the penitent thief; and Mark, the writer of the shortest Gospel, has a number of brief and graphic touches, peculiar to himself. This singular agreement of the three synoptic gospels, in great part blent with differences quite as singular, presents one of the most curious problems for critical ingenuity to explain. They are too unlike to have been copied from each other; yet

how else could they, in so many cases, closely resemble each other, not only in sentences, but in paragraphs of considerable length?

In view of this difficulty, different theories have been adopted, agreeing in this, that one evangelist copied from another; but it has been hard to determine which was the original. Weisse, in 1838, followed by Wilke and Bruno Bauer, advocated the idea that the others borrowed from Mark. Of that short Gospel, only twenty-seven verses are not contained in either Matthew or Luke. It was therefore supposed that the original Mark (Ur-Markus, in German) did not contain these twenty-seven verses, but that they were added afterwards in some copies, while larger additions in others formed the Gospel we call Matthew's, and additions still different gave us that which we call Luke's. Unfortunately for this theory, however, these verses, though so few, are of that kind that bear most distinctly the stamp of authenticity. Among them are several which contain Hebrew or Syriac words,—“Boanerges” (iii. 17), “Talitha cumi” (v. 41), “Ephphatha” (vii. 34), and “Abba” (xiv. 36). We can easily conceive that one impressed with the dignity of the Savior's bearing, or with the wonders which he wrought, should have the very words he uttered so stamped upon his memory, that in telling the story afterwards he should repeat them in the original language; but no one would be likely to retouch a story already plainly told, by adding to it an unintelligible word. Another passage, in relating the cure of a blind man, gives his singular expression, “I see men as trees walking” (viii. 24); another repeats the conversation of Jesus

with the father of the epileptic youth, who seems at first to have doubted the Savior's power, but at length burst forth with the touching words, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief." (ix. 24.) Elsewhere we read the singular incident of the youth who, at the arrest of Jesus, escaped from the soldiers by leaving in their hands the sheet in which he had hastily wrapped himself. (xiv. 51, 52.) Who can imagine that these vivid touches of nature were later additions? Such additions generally mark themselves by an interruption of the narrative into which they are unskillfully inserted; but such is not the case here. The "original Mark," then, must have contained these passages; and if so, it is highly improbable that the other evangelists would have omitted them in copying.

The theory, therefore, appears untenable that supposes the other synoptical Gospels to be derived in any degree from that of Mark. Even if, however, it were accepted, to the extent necessary to account for the resemblances between the three, we must still recognize the other portions of Matthew and Luke as equally authentic. Their own merit answers for them. The Sermon on the Mount, as told by Matthew, the parables of the Prodigal Son and of the Rich Man and the Beggar, as related by Luke, were no additions from an inferior source, but bear the impress of the great original mind which even those who deny his divine commission must recognize in the Founder of Christianity.

If the conception of Mark's Gospel as the source of the other two cannot be sustained, still less can there be any probability in a similar conjecture respecting either of the others. If Matthew is thought to have

been the original, we have to account for the parables in Luke; if Luke be preferred, we must find an origin for the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. In either case, Mark presents a difficulty; for though we may easily conceive of one writing an abridgment of the other Gospels, it cannot be explained how, in such a case, he should have added those touches of nature which have already been mentioned. The Tübingen school, therefore, under the lead of Dr. F. C. Baur, have advocated an explanation the farthest possible from that already spoken of. According to them, our Gospels were not the oldest. There was a Gospel of the Hebrews; another, of the Egyptians; another, of Peter; and another, of the Ebionites or Nazarenes. These probably were much the same. The "Memoirs of the Apostles" (*απομνημονεύματα*), mentioned by Justin, constituted still another. From one or more of these various sources our evangelists borrowed, Matthew writing first, Luke afterwards, and Mark last. Thus where their accounts are similar, they copied from the same original; where they differ, they had different authorities. To this it is to be added that the writers, except perhaps Matthew, had each his particular purpose; — for "Tendency" is the idol of the Tübingen school. Matthew's Gospel was, consciously or unconsciously, in the interest of Peter and the Jewish Christians; Luke's in that of Paul and his Gentile converts; while Mark exhibits an endeavor to reconcile differences.

According to this theory, the Synoptical Gospels are none of them original documents, nor do they come from the immediate age of the Apostles. Why, or how the much more valuable original Gospels should have

been lost, and their memory have so nearly perished that their existence can only be uncertainly conjectured, we are not informed, nor is it easy to conceive. The names given to these supposed Gospels occur, indeed, in early writers; but it seems probable that the Gospel of the Hebrews, and that of the Ebionites, were our present Gospel of Matthew, which is known to have been first written in Hebrew; while the Gospel of Peter was no other than that of Mark, written, as Papias and Irenæus inform us, from the instructions of that Apostle. The "Memoirs" mentioned by Justin, we have already seen, by comparing his testimony with that of his pupil Tatian, must have been our present Gospels; and these also, with perhaps some other attempts at evangelical composition, were those alluded to by Luke in his preface. There was, indeed, a "Gospel according to the Egyptians" in existence towards the end of the second century; but the fact that it was not then received into the canon presents strong evidence against its claim to original authority. The theory of Baur has been greatly modified by his later followers. Of these, Hilgenfeld admits the date of Matthew's Gospel in its original form (*Ur-Matthæus*,) between A. D. 50 and 60; and of its revised edition between 70 and 80. Köstlin places our Matthew not far from 70. Mark is dated by Hilgenfeld, from 80 to 100; and Luke, by Hilgenfeld and Köstlin, from 100 to 110.*

The explanation offered by Professor Norton, of the resemblances and differences of the first three Gospels, appears to us still the best; and we give it as we re-

* See Schwarz, *Zur Geschichte der Neuesten Theologie*, pages 191, 192.

ceived it forty years since from that revered instructor, by whom it was afterwards embodied in his great work on the Genuineness of the Gospels. (Vol. I., Note D., pages c-ccvi.) In the preaching of the Apostles and others to the early church, the incidents of the life of Jesus must have borne a part, prominent beyond any other subject, and beyond what even that has been in any subsequent age. What the converts chiefly wanted to know of their teachers was, what the Master had done, and taught, and suffered. And this narrative was not only the most interesting in itself, but it was what those early teachers were most competent to tell. They were not philosophers, carefully trained to pronounce disquisitions on points of morals; they were plain men, most natural and most successful in their addresses when they told a plain story, of which their memory and their heart were alike full. Telling this story often, in each other's presence, their accounts of it assumed more and more a similar and a permanent character. When Matthew and Mark and Luke undertook, independently of each other, to record what they knew of the life of Jesus, they had probably no documents before them, but they had strongly impressed on their memories those incidents of their Master's life which they had heard related a thousand times, and the very words in which those incidents had long been customarily told. They took these incidents, they took those very words, from this generally received account among Christians, and each added such further particulars as he had been able to learn. Thus it happened that in so many passages their accounts appear precisely the same, while in

others each evangelist gives us circumstances which no one else relates.

On this theory, and even on the supposition that fragmentary notes of our Savior's life and teachings had been used first by one evangelist and afterwards by another, we have still, on the whole, three separate and independent witnesses. Even on the theory of Baur we have as many, only that the original witnesses are lost, and we receive their testimony at second hand. In either case, therefore, we have the life of Jesus, as reported to us by more than one of those who heard his voice, and beheld his wonderful works. To these is to be added the Fourth Gospel, — ascribed by the voice of antiquity, as we believe correctly, to the Apostle John. The ground on which we receive it as his work, will be our next subject of inquiry.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

THERE are few questions now presented for the examination of theologians, of more pressing interest than that of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. If that professed account of the life of Jesus was not the work of the Apostle John, but of some unknown writer in the middle of the second century, — if, instead of recording facts that actually occurred, and discourses that were actually given, this writer derived his narrative from his own imagination, — and if in all this he had an especial purpose in view, coinciding with a tendency then existing to alter and corrupt the faith which Jesus had introduced, then must we change our ideas of our Master and of his religion in respects far more important than any that are recognized by the understanding alone. We might consent to part with the sublime declaration of the Golden Proem, identifying the Savior as the incarnate Wisdom of God; — but what could compensate us for his parting words of love to his disciples? We might give up our belief that he spoke the command, "Lazarus, come forth;" but how could we resign that brief text, "Jesus wept"? Christianity, without the Gospel of St. John, would still be the world's richest treasure; a king, without his crown, is still a king; but the faithful subject would not part with the

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diadem; nor would we willingly spare from the glories of our Redeemer the Gospel in which he speaks to us, in the most spiritual, and the most loving tones.

But this prejudice, if so we are to call it, must not make us refuse to follow the guidance of truth. It will have, however, its legitimate weight, if it only counterbalances other prejudices, — that which influences many minds in favor of novelty, — and that with which, deeply impressed with the depth of German learning, the student imagines that the most daring criticism of Germany must be right in its conclusions.

In considering the claim of the Fourth Gospel to be the genuine work of the Apostle John, we are struck, in the first place, with the very recent origin of any doubt upon the subject. In the early catalogues, those of Irenæus, the fragment found by Muratori, and Eusebius, the book is named among those which were received without question; and from those early days to near the present century, no author expressed a doubt upon the subject, those writers of course excepted, who, directly attacking Christianity, threw aspersions indiscriminately upon all its records. Evanson, in 1792, first stated a doubt of the genuineness of the Gospel. He was followed by Bretschneider in 1820. Some writers endeavored to show that two different pens were employed upon the book; but their arguments were fully set at rest by Baur, who pointed out the unity of the book in style and purpose. His theory was, "that the book was written at the earliest about the year 160, in the midst of the Gnostic, Montanistic, and Quartodeciman controversies; and that it had a strong connection with those movements, not roughly rejecting on either

side, but also not mediating by weak compliance; but so that all the different currents should appear carried back upon a higher standpoint, and connected in a higher unity. On this account has it found, even from its presentation, the most general assent."

The tempting, but unreliable character of Dr. Baur's mode of reasoning, may be illustrated by the supposition that some foreign writer should hereafter undertake to write the history of the United States, and finding that misunderstandings had arisen in the present century between the different sections, which resulted at length in civil war, should maintain that the document known as "Washington's Farewell Address" must be a forgery, palmed upon the world by some benevolent deceiver, about the middle of the nineteenth century, for the sake of composing these sectional differences by the influence of a great name.

Of the high estimate formed by this great writer of the intellectual and spiritual worth of the Gospel which he thus attempts to invalidate, and of the reason which prompted that attempt, he has left a remarkable testimony in the following passage: —

"A Gospel which, since it came forth into the light from the darkness of its origin, has obtained in the Christian consciousness of all centuries such an expressive testimony of its genuine evangelical spirit, can lose nothing of its value by all the results of historical criticism; it still remains the only tender and right Gospel (*das einzige zarte rechte Evangelium*), which stands above all others, and distinguishes itself above them in a peculiar manner. Criticism cannot, indeed, without entangling itself in inextricable self-contradiction, ever

admit that it is the work of the Apostle John; but the creative spirit which produced it from itself is the same, whether the individual who was the subject of this spirit may have been called thus or otherwise."*

While we receive with pleasure the strong testimony here given to the value of the Fourth Gospel, we cannot but notice the reason assigned for denying to it an apostolic origin. Criticism requires it, in order to avoid a self-contradiction. Knowing what criticism means with Baur, — that it involves speculation, theory, and especially a decision upon writings with reference to their supposed tendency as determining their age and authorship, we perceive that in his judgment the genuineness of the Fourth Gospel is rejected, not for want of proof, but from considerations anterior to the discussion of its evidence.

That evidence, so far as it is external, we have already, to some extent, surveyed in our "Manual" (pages 40, 41), in the lists of sacred books given by Eusebius, the Muratorian fragment, and Irenæus. The testimony of the last is of especial importance in the present case, as he had been the pupil of a pupil of John. Polycarp, in instructing Irenæus in the Christian faith, must have referred to his own venerated instructor more frequently than to any other; and if he had never spoken of John's having written a Gospel, Irenæus would not afterwards readily have been convinced that such was the case.

We can, however, go back beyond the time of Irenæus. Justin, who suffered martyrdom, A. D. 164, though he does not name this Gospel, nor any other, has such references as assure us of its existence and recep-

* Baur in Theol. Jahrbücher, 1844, page 698.

tion in his time. He speaks of "the Word having been made flesh;" represents the Baptist as saying "I am not the Christ;" and refers, in three instances, to words of Jesus which we find only in the Fourth Gospel.*

Papias, as we have seen, while vouching for the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, makes no mention of the others. We have, however, already seen reason to identify his instructor, "John the Elder," with the Apostle John. We can perceive then, why, in relating what this Elder had told him respecting other Gospels, he should make no mention of John's. That was the Elder's own work, known as such to Papias, and to all the Christians around; its origin was no longer to be accounted for; but respecting those which Matthew and Mark had written, the information which Papias treasured up and imparted was new and interesting. This state of the case agrees entirely with what is evident from the inspection of the Gospels, as well as from the account of Irenæus, that the other Gospels were known to John, and that his was written in part with the object of supplying their deficiencies. In the times of Irenæus, and afterwards, the evidence is abundant, and receives great strength, from the very distant sections of the church which the witnesses represent. Irenæus himself, as we have seen, testifies alike for the East where he was educated, and for the West where he presided in the church. The canon of Muratori gives the opinion of the Italian churches; its early date is shown by its reference to the Roman bishop, Pius (A. D. 142 to 157), with the words "most recently, in our own times" (nuperrime, temporibus nostris). Tertullian at Car-

* Norton's Genuineness, &c., Vol. I. p. 232.

thage, and Clement of Alexandria, and Origen in Egypt, unite to give us the general assurance of the widely-spread church in the beginning of the third century. Origen declares that our four Gospels "are the only ones received without controversy in the whole church of God which is under heaven." This list of witnesses from Asia Minor, Gaul, Rome, Carthage, and Egypt, is confirmed by the Peshito, and the probably still more ancient Curetonian, Syriac versions.*

Some other witnesses are deserving of mention. Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, in 196, quotes from the Gospel of John the statement that the apostle whose name it bears "leaned upon the Lord's breast." "Even Hilgenfeld, one of the most forward of the Tübingen critics, does not longer deny that the expression is drawn by Polycrates from John xiii. 25." † We shall see hereafter the importance of this testimony.

Theophilus of Antioch, in his letter to Autolyceus, written in 181, designates John as one of the "bearers of the Spirit" (*πνευματιφόροι*), and refers to the beginning of his Gospel. The same author brought out an interpretation of the *four* Gospels, the number specified being a proof that they were those which we possess.

Omitting the quotations by Athenagoras, about A. D. 177, and Apollinaris, Bishop of Hierapolis, about A. D. 170, we come to Tatian, the disciple of Justin Martyr, whose verification of the four Gospels has already been mentioned. Of the four, from which he composed his Diatessaron, that of John was one, according to the

* Riggenbach. Die Zeugnisse für das Evangelium Johannis.

† Essays on the Supernatural Origin of Christianity, by Professor George P. Fisher, of Yale College.

express admission of Volkmar, one of the latest defenders of the theory of Baur. In his "Address to the Greeks" also, of earlier date than the Diatessaron (or about A. D. 165), Tatian quotes repeatedly from John's Gospel. As we have already pointed out, the connection of this author with his instructor Justin, gives to his use of our present Gospels something of the authority of the preceding generation.

It may be asked, Were there none who early disputed the authority of the Fourth Gospel? Candor compels us to admit that there were; yet, as "the exception proves the rule," the presence of a few obscure opponents renders more distinct the consent of the vast majority of the church. The first notice of any who denied the authority of John's Gospel is by Irenæus. That early Father has the following words, preserved to us only in a Latin translation (3, 11, 9): "But others, to frustrate the gift of the Spirit, which, in most recent times, has been poured forth upon the human race according to the will of the Father, do not admit that form which is according to the Gospel of John, in which the Lord promised to send the Paraclete; but they reject together the Gospel and the prophetic spirit. Unhappy, truly, who indeed choose to be false prophets themselves, but repel the grace of prophecy from the church; suffering like those, who, on account of persons that come in hypocrisy, abstain themselves also from the communion of the brethren."* Without

* "Alii vero, ut donum spiritûs frustrentur, quod in novissimis temporibus secundum placitum Patris effusum est in humanum genus, illam speciem non admittunt, quæ est secundum Joannis evangelium, in qua Paracletum se missurum Dominus promisit. Sed

pausing to seek an explanation of all the obscurities of this passage, it is sufficient to remark, that the persons mentioned in it appear to have rejected or undervalued John's Gospel, not from doubt respecting its origin, but because of their dislike to something it contained. It was thought to favor some views respecting the Holy Spirit, which they considered fanatical. But notwithstanding their rejection, Irenæus, who, through his instructor Polycarp, had the best means of information, and with him the Christian Church in general at his early day, acknowledged with reverence the Gospel according to St. John.

Two later writers, Philastrius (Hær. 60) and Epiphanius (Hær. 51), relate that these persons also rejected the Apocalypse, ascribing both works to the heretic Cerinthus. Their opinion was prompted by dislike of Montanism. Epiphanius marked them with the name of Alogi, bearing the two meanings of "rejecters of the Logos" and "unreasonable."* Excepting this obscure sect, there are found no early opponents of this Gospel; for the fact that the Ebionites used only the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which was probably the same as Matthew's, does not testify against the genuineness of that ascribed to John. The same may be said of the exclusive use of Mark by some of the Docetæ, and of a mutilated copy of Luke by Marcion. Various heretical leaders had each his chosen document,

simul et evangelium et propheticum repellunt spiritum. Infelices vere, qui pseudopropheta quidem esse volunt, prophetica vero gratiam repellunt ab ecclesia, similia patientes his, qui propter eos, qui in hypocrisi veniunt, etiam a fratrum communione se abstinent."

* Riggenbach.

preferred apparently for sectarian reasons, but they do not appear to have borne witness against the apostolic origin of the writings which they did not use. Those writings come to us on the testimony, not of any exceptional class, but of the great body of Christian believers throughout the civilized world.

Turning from the strictly external evidence to that which is internal, we in the first place notice the language. According to Ewald, a most competent judge, in no writer of the New Testament is there a language that in spirit and in utterance has more the ring of the true Hebrew. The formation of abrupt sentences instead of orderly sequence, the frequent omission of connecting particles, and the prevalence of "and" and "then," answering the Hebrew copulative conjunction, are features of this character.

The very difference between this Gospel and the other three, which seems an argument against it, furnishes, when more closely examined, proof of its authenticity. It fits in with the Synoptical Gospels, furnishing what they do not give. The repeated visits to Jerusalem, of which John alone makes mention, must have taken place, from their connection with facts stated by the other evangelists, such as the discipleship of Joseph of Arimathea, and the intimacy of the Savior with the family at Bethany. Christ himself, too, uses the words, in his lament over Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thy children together" (Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke xiii. 34); words entirely irrelevant, if he had never visited the city since his childhood.

In particular narratives, the completion of the accounts from these different sources, by each other, is very dis-

tinctly marked. Among many instances, we take the following: Luke (xxii. 27) records the words of Christ, at his last supper, "I am among you as he that serveth;" John furnishes the explanation of these words, in the menial office which the Savior had just discharged, — that of washing the disciples' feet. (xiii. 4–12.) From Luke alone it would seem that Pilate acquitted Jesus very strangely, after he had declared himself a king. (xxiii. 1–4.) John supplies the missing link, by telling us that Jesus had explained to Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world, but that he was a teacher of the truth. (xviii. 36, 37.) Sometimes an apparent difference is easily reconciled. Thus, in John i. 44, Bethsaida is called the city of Andrew and Peter, while the Synoptics all speak of Peter's house in Capernaum. (Matt. viii. 5, 14, and parallel passages.) But the mention, in the same connection, of "Peter's wife's mother," suggests the explanation, that the apostle, though a native of Bethsaida, was at home in Capernaum by reason of his marriage there. But what forger of a later age would have varied from the Synoptics on a point of so little importance? We may make a similar observation on all the points of apparent difference. The fourth evangelist, whoever he was, must have known the Synoptical account. His venturing to differ from it so widely in appearance, though we think so little in reality, can only be explained by the unconsciousness of truth.

Critics have tried to convict this writer of ignorance respecting the geography of the Holy Land, because, according to the best established reading, he speaks of Bethany on the Jordan. (i. 28.) In the time of Origen,

no such place was known there, and he altered the reading to Bethabara. Both words have the same meaning, that of "crossing-place," — a name equally appropriate to a village, whether by a river or on a hill. It is evident that the evangelist well knew the Bethany on the Mount of Olives. (xi. 18.) His mention, then, of the other "crossing place" on the Jordan, was not from ignorance, but from familiar knowledge of the country, and of the names by which places were known in his time. A similar attempt to convict the apostle of error, has been made with regard to the name Sychem (iv. 5), which he was thought to have substituted, through ignorance, for Shechem; but the existence of a place of that name in Samaria has been shown, both from mention of it in the Talmud, and from modern research in that vicinity.*

Not much more successful is the argument founded on the designation of Caiaphas as "high priest that same year" (xi. 49), as if the writer had thought the high priesthood was an elective office. It is known that the Roman authority frequently transferred the dignity from one to another, but not at regular intervals. Caiaphas held the office more than ten years; the evangelist does not deny this; he only states that Caiaphas was high priest during that important year of which he writes.

Another objection is drawn from the manner in which the writer speaks of "the Jews," as if he himself were not one of their number. In some instances he evidently uses the word in its narrower application, the

* Wieseler, Chronol. Synop. der vier Evangelien, p. 256, &c. Lightfoot's *Horæ Hebraicæ*, p. 93; Rauner's *Palästina*, third edition, p. 146; quoted by Riggenbach.

Jews (Judæi) being the inhabitants of Judæa, the southern province of Palestine, as distinguished from Galilee. (iii. 25; vii. 1; xi. 8.) It is to be remembered, also that the apostle, when he wrote, had long resided among Gentiles, and had become separated from his own nation by their bitter opposition to the cause to which he was devoted. It is, perhaps, no more singular that he should speak of "the Jews" as if he did not belong to them, than that a citizen of the United States, who had long since emigrated from France, should speak of "the French" as if he had not been a native of their country.

To the objection which has been derived from the difference between this Gospel and the others, in regard to the scene, the incidents, and the character of the Savior's ministry, we find a sufficient answer in the testimony of antiquity, that John wrote his Gospel after the other evangelists, and with a knowledge of what they had written; that he wrote it, therefore, expressly to supply their deficiencies, narrating incidents which they had omitted, and ascending to spiritual heights which they had not reached. Thus, Clement of Alexandria, about the year 200, writes as follows: "But John, last of all, perceiving that what had reference to the body in the Gospel of our Savior was sufficiently detailed, and being encouraged by his familiar friends, and urged by the Spirit, wrote a spiritual Gospel."

The Gospel of John merits the name thus given it. The mind of John appears to have been deeper, more full of lofty thought and tender sentiment, than those of his fellow-disciples. Not improbably he had received superior advantages of early education. In fact, if the tradition respecting his youth is correct, the teaching of

Jesus came to him as a part of his education, at that period of life when the heart is more sensitive to all high and pure influences than it is apt afterwards to be. He had hung enraptured on the Savior's words, and penetrated deep into their meaning, when it had been veiled from others. Few of the miracles does the beloved disciple record, and scarcely any of the parables. The wonderful acts could be seen by all; the stories, entertaining and striking, could be set down from memory by more common minds; but it was left for the friend of Jesus to transmit to us the deep conversation with Nicodemus on the New Birth, the instruction on the spiritual nature of God which Christ uttered to the Samaritan woman, the promise of the Comforter, and the mystic prayer that the disciples should all be one, as Christ himself was one with God.

The style of the Savior's teaching in John's Gospel, though different from that in the Synoptics, is not more different than may be accounted for by the different characters of mind in the writers. They agree in this, that the style of the Savior was highly figurative, and from the boldness of the figures he employed, sometimes difficult to be understood by those around him; as when, in the earlier Gospels, he told them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and they thought that he spoke literally of the leaven of bread; and as, in the Gospel of Luke, he told them, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one," and they in their simplicity showed him two swords, with which they were already provided; not understanding his meaning, that they should arm their minds, not their hands, for the conflict that was before them.

Thus, too, in John, the Savior washes the feet of the disciples, and commands them to wash one another's feet; and some Christians may have thought he was instituting an external rite, instead of giving a precept of humility.

We have said that John gives hardly any parables; we might have said, none; for what are called parables in his Gospel, are not narratives, but comparisons. But the same fertility of fancy is displayed in the comparisons of the Vine and of the Shepherd, that is shown in the parables of the Sower and of the Prodigal Son. If Luke had been the reporter of the first mentioned illustrations, he would have written, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a householder, which had a vine," and so on, instead of directly, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." The difference in the style, instead of showing a different origin for the account, proves that the writer was no mere imitator; — and thus we may say of other differences. A forger, who, a century after the time of Christ, had endeavored to palm a spurious gospel on the world, would have been likely to copy, with servile minuteness, the features of the true.

The difference between the portraiture of the Savior, as given by the Synoptics and by John, has been beautifully illustrated by that which is observable between the representations of Socrates by Xenophon and by Plato.* Xenophon was a man of practical mind, a soldier and a statesman; Plato, a philosopher of deep investigation as well as of original genius. Their ac-

* Bleek, referred to by Prof. Fisher.

counts bear the mark of their respective personalities; yet, combined together, the one supplies the deficiencies of the other.

One of the arguments against the genuineness of the Fourth Gospel is founded on its language respecting the Logos, the Word, or personified Wisdom of God. (John i. 1-14.) In this, the Tübingen school of critics see traces of Gnosticism — an early heresy, which endeavored to refine Christianity by combining it with what then passed for spiritual philosophy. Dating the development of this system near the middle of the second century, they assign that as the earliest period when the Fourth Gospel can have been written. For the same reason Dr. Baur denied the genuineness of some of the Epistles of St. Paul. We propose to examine his argument in connection with those Epistles. It is well known, however, that language similar to that used in the Fourth Gospel with regard to "the Word of God," was employed long before the rise of Gnosticism. Philo, a Jewish writer, of Alexandria in Egypt, contemporary with the Savior, makes use of it, and the apocryphal book called the Wisdom of Solomon, whose author also was a Jew of the Alexandrian school, describes the Word as leaping down from heaven out of God's royal throne, and touching heaven while it stood upon the earth. (xviii. 15, 16.) If it be questioned how the ideas of the Alexandrian school became known to the Apostle John, the answer is obvious. John, according to the ancient accounts, wrote his Gospel in his old age. He then resided in the Proconsular Asia, whose great cities, such as Ephesus and Smyrna, carried on constant intercourse with Alexandria, and with every other centre

of Greek civilization. Can it be wondered at that he should show an acquaintance with philosophic ideas and expressions which had been in use in the Alexandrian school for a hundred years?

But the use of the term in the Revelation, which Dr. Baur admits to be the genuine work of John, is in itself a sufficient answer to his objection. Describing the Savior in his exaltation, as going forth to conquer the world, the poet says, "His name is called the Word of God." (Rev. xix. 13.) Dr. Baur passes this over very slightly, with the remark, that the expression is not here used in the true sense of the Logos doctrine. Without inquiring, however, what peculiar shade of thought Dr. Baur regards as the true sense of that doctrine, it is sufficient for us that the expression "the Word of God" is used, and that it is applied to the manifestation of the Almighty in Christ and in his Gospel. This comes very near to the thought in the first chapter of John's Gospel. It suggests the conclusion that the two passages are from the same author. Yet should it be denied that the Apocalypse was from the hand of John, it is unquestionably of such early date, that its application of the term Logos to Christ, may well illustrate the similar use of that term in the Fourth Gospel.

We have next to speak of the objection drawn from the raising of Lazarus, which is represented as a miracle too extraordinary to have been omitted by the other evangelists if it had really taken place. The answer generally given to this is, that when the Synoptics wrote, Lazarus and his sisters were probably still living, and might have been pointed out to persecution by a mention of the connection in which they had stood with Jesus;

while at the later date of John's Gospel, they had all passed away. We may add, that even were they then living, the Jewish power to injure them was then broken. We would hazard, as a further answer, the following conjecture: When Jesus reached Bethany, he was on the road to Jerusalem, and only two miles from it. It seems highly probable that on his visit of consolation and relief to his private friends at Bethany, he would prefer to go with but two or three chosen companions, sending the rest of his company forward to the neighboring capital. Among these confidential friends was John, as on other occasions; and thus he became the only eye-witness among the evangelists, and almost the only one among the apostles, of the wonder that took place. When we add to this that the occurrence, great as it was, was succeeded soon after by the still greater and more startling occurrences of the Savior's trial, death, and resurrection, we may wonder the less that it was omitted by writers who did not witness it themselves.

But the most important argument against the genuineness of the Fourth Gospel, is that which is founded on its different representation of the time of the last supper from that which is given by the Synoptics. These state unequivocally that Jesus kept the passover with his disciples. The language of the Fourth Gospel seems to imply that the last supper with his friends was before the passover. The thirteenth chapter begins with the words, "Now, before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come." The disciples interpreted certain words said by Jesus to Judas at the table, to mean, "Buy those things that we have need of against the feast" (xiii. 29), and the next morning

the accusers of Jesus "went not into the judgment hall lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover." (xviii. 28.) These expressions prove, it is said, that Jesus partook of his last supper, not on the great feast day, but at least one day before. If this construction be received, there is a contradiction between John and the Synoptics.

Further, this construction of John's language is strengthened by the expression by which he seems to identify Christ himself with the paschal sacrifice. He quotes and applies to Christ the direction given with regard to that sacrifice, — "a bone of him shall not be broken." (xix. 36.) Christ, then, says Dr. Baur in substance, is represented by the author of the Fourth Gospel as the true paschal lamb; suffering on the same day when the paschal lamb was slaughtered. He is made to meet his disciples at supper on the day before the passover, in order that he may suffer himself on the day of the passover; thus fulfilling the type at the very time for which it was appointed.

Having made a discovery of this "tendency," Dr. Baur proceeds to connect it with the Quartodeciman controversy respecting the time of keeping Easter, inferring that the Fourth Gospel was written with reference to that controversy, and to give the Occidental party therein some apparent apostolical authority. Of course this would carry its date down to the period at which that controversy was agitated; and an earlier period could scarcely be assigned to it than the middle of the second century.

Further still, the argument against the genuineness of the Gospel is thought to be strengthened by the fact,

that while the Occidental Christians might plead the authority of this Gospel for their custom, the Orientals did actually and strongly plead the authority of John himself for theirs. Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, near the close of the second century, declared with the utmost solemnity, that the Asiatic churches, in celebrating Easter on the very day of the Jewish passover, did but observe the custom transmitted them by the venerable Apostle John himself. We have, therefore, concludes Dr. Baur, the personal authority of the Apostle John directly opposed to the view presented in that Gospel which claims to be called by his name.

With regard to this ingenious argument, we have in the first place to remark, that it proves too much. If we are to believe Dr. Baur, it was in the midst of a controversy which shook the whole Christian church, — a controversy of such importance that Polycarp of Smyrna is said to have gone to Rome to confer with Anicetus on account of it, the apostolical and evangelical authority being thus far entirely on one side, that suddenly the opposite side produced a document, purporting to be of the very highest character — a gospel, and the work of an apostle, — of that very apostle too, to whom the other party looked up as their especial patron and founder. To say nothing of the absurdity of supposing the glorious Gospel of John to have been written for the sake of an obscure inference from some few verses in it with regard to a point of ceremony, how came it that the fraud was not suspected, nay, was not detected in a moment? What would be the emotions of Polycarp, when, in his conference with Anicetus, he heard for the first time passages quoted from a Gospel purporting

to be from his own great master, but of which he had never heard before? Or to come some years lower down, when Polycrates of Ephesus solemnly appealed to his own gray hairs, and to the elders by whom he had been instructed, in reference to the Apostle John's mode of keeping Easter, why had he no word to say against the atrocious fraud which ascribed a recently-written book to that same apostle, in order to bring his testimony on the wrong side? So far from this, Polycrates is, as we have seen already (page 212), one of the witnesses for this very book! By none of those engaged in this controversy was a word of objection to this Gospel uttered. Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, knew of none on the part of his venerable teacher. Eusebius, who described the proceedings of the Council of Nicaea, where this Quartodeciman controversy was finally settled, and where the Oriental party must have brought forward their objections, still speaks of the Gospel of John as of unquestioned genuineness, carefully discriminating it, and others with it, from those respecting which any doubt existed. There have been successful literary frauds, but such a fraud as this was never heard of; — to bring in, as the work of a distinguished man, a forged document, contradictory to his practice, and to the opinions and practice of the school which he had founded, and to obtain for it universal reception, without the slightest objection on the part of that school. We may reverse the reasoning of Dr. Baur, and say with truth, that the apparent bearing which the Gospel of John has upon the Quartodeciman controversy, is a proof that it cannot have been introduced while that controversy was in agitation. The Orientals, the disciples of John,

would not have forged a work which made against their principles; and the Occidentals could not have introduced it without a protest from those among whom the apostle had lived and labored, and who must have known that no such work existed from his pen.

But how, then, it may be asked, can the objection be surmounted, that the book is contradictory to the known practice of St. John, as Polycrates describes it? We answer, that the contradiction is in appearance only. The question between the Eastern and Western churches was, whether they should keep as a Christian festival the Jewish passover, or the Sunday that followed it. The Eastern churches kept the passover itself; the Western kept the Sunday after. The reason of this difference is sufficiently obvious, in the fact that the Jewish Christians were more numerous in the East, and naturally continued the observance of the same day to which, as Jews, they had always been accustomed; while the Western Christians, being principally converts from heathenism, were indifferent to the Jewish custom, but observed the first day of the week following, being the day of the Savior's resurrection. Of course, St. John, being a Jew by birth, was likely to follow the customs of his nation in all matters of indifference; and the account of Polycrates is therefore undoubtedly true, that he, when the season came round which had witnessed his beloved Master's death and resurrection, observed it especially on that same day that had been observed for more than a thousand years. Is this a proof that the document cannot have come from him which testifies that it was on that day the Savior was crucified? It is true that Easter, as it became afterwards distinctly fixed

in the customs of the church as commemorative of the resurrection, would not seem to be suitably observed on that which was the day of the crucifixion; but we should err in ascribing to the Apostle John the finical ritualism of a later age. Had he given a thought to the question whether he should change, in his observance, the day to which he had as a Jew been accustomed, he would probably have answered, that the day of his Lord's death was as full of precious memories to him as the day on which he arose; and that if those memories were in part mournful, yet the mournfulness had been allayed by the event that followed, while there remained the joy of the great salvation which that death had accomplished. He kept, then, the ancient anniversary, and the whole Oriental church kept it also. They all knew that it could not possibly be the real anniversary of the resurrection; that took place on, at least, the third day afterwards; but they kept it in memory of the season during whose successive days the great sacrifice had been offered, and the great triumph over death achieved.

But if we have succeeded in disentangling the question before us from the Quartodeciman controversy, the objection still remains that the Fourth Gospel appears to assign a different date to the last supper from that assigned by the others. The best as well as the simplest answer to this, appears to be, that John uses the word *Passover* in a comprehensive sense, including not only the banquet on the lamb, but the whole subsequent week of festivity. This sense of the word is fully authorized by the passage in the book of Deuteronomy (xvi. 1-8), prescribing the feast. "Thou shalt sacrifice the passover unto the Lord thy God, of the flock and the herd;"

literally, sheep and oxen. "Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith," that is, with the passover, that term being thus extended to include the sacrifices, of larger as well as smaller animals, through the whole week. When, therefore, the disciples were supposed to be preparing, on the evening of the last supper, what they needed "against the feast," and when, on the next day, the priests guarded against legal defilement, "that they might eat the passover," they had in view, not the paschal supper, but the celebration of the subsequent days.

We find in this Gospel an attestation of its own authority, of a remarkable character. In the last verse but one it is said, "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true." These words appear to have been added by another hand. In the use of the first and third persons, the writer distinguishes himself from him of whom he speaks. The strong exaggeration too, of the next verse, is unlike anything else in this Gospel, and betrays a different hand. If these two verses, then, were added by another person, and added so early as to be found in all existing copies of the Gospel, we have the direct testimony of a contemporary to the fact that this Gospel was written by the beloved disciple. If, on the other hand, these verses were written by the author of the work, they contain such a direct assertion on his part, of his own apostolic authority, as can be found in neither of the other Gospels; an assertion, which, if the work were not genuine, would deprive its publication of all excuse, and present it in the aspect of an unmitigated forgery. Well may

Renan observe, "We have no example in the apostolic world, of a forgery of this kind." *

While, however, the author, or a contemporary on his behalf, thus claims the place of an apostle, the name is veiled beneath a circumlocution. He calls himself "another disciple" (xviii. 15), and "the disciple whom Jesus loved." (xiii. 23; xxi. 7, 20.) This seems only to be accounted for by admitting the genuineness of the work.

The modern opponents of the authenticity of this Gospel generally admit that its author desired it to pass for the production of the Apostle John. Strauss ascribes it to some one who had come from a Johannan school; and Baur conceives that one object of its composition was, to give the authority of an apostolic name to the Occidental side in the controversy respecting the time of keeping Easter. If, then, the author desired either to do honor to the Apostle John, or to make use of his authority, why should he conceal his name? It were better for either purpose to declare it as openly as possible. He scruples not to tell us that Peter followed his Lord to the high priest's hall of judgment; why should he veil the name of the disciple who accompanied him? Why, but that he was that disciple himself, and used a circumlocution, either from real modesty or from an affectation of it?

Kindred to the last topic named is that of the prominence given to this unnamed apostle. This prominence is especially marked in the contrast in which he stands to Peter. Peter, wishing to know whom Jesus meant,

* Life of Jesus, p. 26.

must beckon to the beloved disciple, who reclines next to Jesus; Peter can only stand at the high priest's door, till the beloved disciple, who has familiar access there, introduces him; at the sepulchre, they rival each other in forwardness, but the palm, on the whole, is awarded to the beloved disciple, who "saw and believed;" and finally, in the scene by the lake, though a solemn charge, and the prediction of a martyr's death, are given to Peter, yet the beloved disciple, who had first recognized his Lord, is favored with a mysterious prophecy, which seemed to indicate some more exalted destiny. All this cannot be accidental on the part of a forger, who merely wished to avail himself of the authority of the Apostle John. It was either the work of that apostle himself, or of some ardent admirer of him, who sought occasions to exalt his glory.

But is such ardent admiration of a venerable religious teacher consistent with the wholesale falsehood of which this supposed disciple of John was guilty? And why, we may ask again, should he have suppressed the name of that teacher whom he so idolized? If, on the other hand, we suppose the Gospel to have been written by John himself, there are various suppositions which explain the prominence thus given to that apostle. We may discern in it the effect of vanity. Peter and John were the most distinguished of the band; and the aged teacher may have unconsciously dwelt on every little circumstance in which he had the advantage. Such is the view taken by Renan. Or, we may suppose that the apostle simply told the truth, only that he remembered best those particulars in which he had borne a part. We are more inclined to see here a contest of Christian

principle with acknowledged temptation, than a dull, impassive faithfulness. The apostle was conscious of a wish to assert his own equality, at least, with him who was even then regarded as the chief of the band. The wish made him dwell, more than another would have done, on minute incidents favorable to his own claims; but the consciousness of that wish, recognized by a faithful heart, made him veil his name. Thin as the veil was, he meant that it should be an effectual disguise; but all concealment was at an end, when some loving follower, probably after the apostle's death, added to his manuscript the words, "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true."

The supposition is worth a moment's pause to consider, which regards not these closing words alone, but the whole Gospel, as having been written, not by John himself, but by his immediate hearers, from the accounts which he had repeatedly given them. There are some things which give probability to this theory, especially the manner in which, more than once, the discourses of Jesus pass insensibly into the amplifications of his historian. This seems like the style of an extemporaneous speaker, in whose language there are no quotation marks to tell us where he ceases to repeat another's words, and begins to explain them with his own. This theory does not conflict with our reception of the Gospel as that of John. If it came from his disciples, repeating to us his words, it is in fact his. But the probability in its favor is not sufficient to outweigh the uniform tradition of the church; and the phenomena previously spoken of appear more consistent with the direct authorship of the beloved disciple.

We conclude, then, that the Fourth Gospel is the genuine work of the Apostle John. The various objections which have been brought forward, are all susceptible of explanation; and were they stronger than they are, they would be more than equalled by the difficulties which must attend the opposite theory. If we consider it to have been composed in the middle of the second century, we have to account for the fact of its universal reception, as attested by ample authority at the end of that century. Every difference that exists between this Gospel and the others, would increase the difficulty of imposing the forgery upon the church. It is to us inconceivable that had it thus been introduced, no trace of controversy, or of opposition with regard to it, should remain, save in the obscure heresy of the Alogi.

But this is not to us the strongest consideration in its favor. The intellectual power, the spiritual insight, the hallowed warmth of love to God and man, which this Gospel manifests, are its strongest, as well as its highest proof. We listen with composure to a critic of Shakespeare, when he tells us that it is doubtful whether that great master wrote *Titus Andronicus*, or *Pericles Prince of Tyre*. The critic may be right, for those plays are comparatively inferior productions. But if he tells us that *Lear* and *Hamlet* have been wrongly ascribed to him, we answer that they bear the indubitable stamp of Shakespeare's genius. If he who wrote *Macbeth* did not write these, there were two Shakespeares. The greatest of dramatic poets, whom the whole world beside has not equalled before or since, had his equal in a writer, who yet saw fit to give the credit of his own splendid works to his great rival, and let his own name be forgotten. Thus, if the Fourth Gospel be not authentic,

the moral miracle of Christianity is doubled. There were two Christs — two religious teachers, endowed with the highest gifts of intellect and feeling. One gave the Sermon on the Mount and the parable of the Prodigal Son; the other imagined the conversation at the Well of Sychar, and the holiest words of the Last Supper: but this last glorious teacher threw away the fame that might have been his, by the folly and sin of attributing his own great thoughts to the Savior, whom he alone could equal. Who was he? What author of that age was capable of the wondrous forgery? No: we recognize in the Fourth Gospel the stamp of Heaven; in its great subject, God's Messiah; and in his biographer, the Beloved Disciple.

CHAPTER XIV.

BAUR'S VIEW OF THE ACTS.

IN investigating the claims of the Fourth Gospel to apostolic authority, we have found their chief opponents in "the Tübingen School," and especially in its master-spirit, the late Dr. Ferdinand Christian Baur. We have now to examine the views of the same author with regard to the Book of Acts and the Epistles of St. Paul.

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles is among those which the ancient catalogues, as we have seen, record as having been received without question by the early church. It bears, too, very strong internal evidence of its own character, as the work of a companion of the Apostle Paul. (See "Manual," section 19.) Among the testimony afforded to it by the Epistles, we may add to what has been said already, that Luke, its traditional author, is recognized as a companion of Paul in three passages (Col. iv. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 11; Philemon 24), which at least show the belief of the church respecting him at a very early period. The abrupt ending of the Acts, too, with the statement that Paul had dwelt two years at Rome, marks the date of this composition as before the Neronian persecution in A. D. 64. The book ends in a cheerful spirit. The great teacher, whose history it records, is comparatively at liberty,

preaching the gospel in the capital of the civilized world. Would the writer have closed his biography in this cheerful strain, if that period of the church's peaceful growth had already been succeeded by the horrible tortures which the worst of tyrants inflicted on those Christians to whom public prejudice attributed the burning of the city? Above all, would a writer in any subsequent age, giving a fictitious account of the ministry of Paul and other apostles, have failed to embellish his narrative with the story of their death? If the Book of Acts was written with a "reconciling tendency," should we not find in it the statement which comes to us from early tradition, that Peter and Paul were sufferers together in the persecution under Nero, while words of mutual respect and encouragement from the two holy martyrs would show the studied attempt to obliterate all remembrance of former discord?

It is on the supposition of such discord that Dr. Baur's theory is founded. And this supposition itself rests in great part on the passage, Galatians ii. 11-14, where Paul relates his expostulation with Peter, on the inconsistent conduct of the latter towards the Gentile converts. There was, then, this author maintains, a decided opposition between these two apostles; the others of the original apostolic band, especially James and John, taking side with Peter, and opposing the admission of Gentiles into the church unless they first, as far as was possible, became Jews, while Paul appeared as the advocate of a free and spiritual system. Through his efforts it was that Christianity burst its original bonds of narrow Judaism, and became a religion for the civilized world.

The resemblance and the difference are alike noticeable, between this view of Baur's and that of which we have before spoken, as taken by some Jewish writers. The Karaite Rabbi (page 104), like Baur, regards Jesus as an excellent teacher of morals, but entirely on the platform of the Jewish law, while he represents Paul as bringing in other views. But while Baur regards this apostle as the great improver of Christianity, the Jew represents him as its great corrupter. For ourselves, if compelled to choose between the two opinions, we should assent to that of the German theologian. While, however, we agree with him in according to the Apostle Paul the honor of being the great champion of a free and universal Christianity, we believe that he was not its earliest assertor; that the doctrine of deliverance from Jewish restrictions was implied, if not expressed, in the teachings of Christ himself (especially in John iv. 21-23); that it was proclaimed by Peter (Acts x.), and sanctioned by the assembly of the apostles at Jerusalem (Acts xi. 18; xv. 23-29).

These results we gather from the Book of Acts. But Dr. Baur having adopted a different theory, it becomes necessary for him to dispose of that book, by assigning it to a later age, and stating the tendency with which it was written. That tendency he conceives to have been apologetic. It was a defence of the course pursued by Paul, and involved a reconciliation of that course with the conduct and principles of the other apostles. For this purpose, Peter and his companions are represented as more liberal than they really were; in the passages quoted above, for instance, and in their reception of Paul. (Acts xxi. 20-25.) On the other side, Paul is

described as showing a greater conformity to the Jewish law than was consistent with his character.* (xvi. 3; xviii. 18; xxi. 26.) History is thus made to bend to theory; the clear principle laid down in the Book of Acts, that the Jewish Christians should observe the customs of their nation, but that the Gentiles were not to be required to become Jews (xxi. 20, 25), is represented as a compromise imagined by a later fabulist, and Paul's own statement, in one of his unquestioned Epistles, that he had pursued a conciliatory course towards all (1 Cor. ix. 19-22), is utterly disregarded.

We have to remark upon this theory, that it supposes, on the part of the early Christians, an astonishing readiness to be deceived. If one should at this day write a life of Dr. Channing, representing him to have been always in accord with the theologians of Andover, it would not find unopposed reception as authentic history.

Dr. Baur is undoubtedly correct in the opinion, that the powerful mind of Paul saw, more distinctly than the Jewish Christians in general, the universal character of the religion he had adopted, and the necessity of emancipating it from Jewish forms. Nor are the controversy that soon arose upon this subject, and the existence of some difference of opinion and conduct, even among the apostles themselves, new discoveries to any who have read with attention the Acts and the Epistle to the Galatians. Dr. Baur's development of this controversy, and his comments on its connection with the Epistle just named, and with others, are highly interesting and instructive. Especially so is his account of the

* Baur. Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi, pages 6, 7, 129, &c.

Epistle to the Romans, in which the Apostle of the Gentiles brought the great question between himself and his opponents before the judgment of the church in Rome; a church which originated in the number of Jewish converts, who, from various causes, had met together in the capital of the world; a church which was already assuming metropolitan importance from its strength and position; a church at once Jewish in its origin, and liberal from its locality, and which was thus well fitted to hear and pass judgment on the mighty plea.* That plea related to the question, Is the Jew superior, and the Gentile inferior; or are both alike in their spiritual wants, and in the application to both of the salvation brought by Jesus Christ? And on the decision of this the momentous result depended, whether Christianity should thenceforth be the religion of an inconsiderable Jewish sect, or that of the civilized world.

Thus far we have assented to the representations of this able writer, and have been well pleased to render him that praise which he deserves, as setting in clearer light views, which, though not unknown before, seem in his pages to possess the beauty of originality. But when he represents the earlier apostles themselves as combining with those who opposed the authority of Paul; when he dwells upon the incidental reproof to Peter (Gal. ii. 11-14), as a decided breach between the two apostles, a deadly offence that was never forgotten nor forgiven by the Jewish disciples; when he imagines the

* Baur. Das Christenthum und die Christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte, pages 62, 63.

party "of Cephas," and that "of Christ," in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. i. 12) to have been opponents of the apostle, sustained by the authority of his great rival; when he represents the violence committed against Paul at Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 27) as the act of Jewish Christians, — we must strongly express our dissent. We regard the author as following out his theory to results not only needlessly dishonorable to the early disciples, but contrary to the clear evidence of history. According to the representations, in the Book of Acts, of the council at Jerusalem (chap. xv.), and of the reception of Paul at his last visit (xxi. 17-25), the conduct of the primitive Christians presented a most beautiful example of mutual liberality among persons of different circumstances and habits of thought.

The account given in the Acts of the acquiescence of the original apostles in the liberty accorded to the Gentile Christians, is confirmed by Paul himself in the very passage which is the principal support of Baur's theory. (Gal. ii. 11-14.) The very cause of the reproof given to Peter at Antioch was, not that he was the champion of the Jewish party, but that he had not courage to maintain the liberal stand he had at first taken. This vacillation is as consistent with the weakness which showed itself occasionally in Peter's character, as his supposed personal hostility and official opposition to Paul, on account of that reproof, are inconsistent with his general nobleness and conscientious spirit. That the stricter Jews were uneasy at the conduct of the Gentile converts, and still more at that of some Jewish Christians living among the Gentiles, is evident from the Acts and the Epistles. That persons who came well

recommended from Jerusalem to Corinth, and who were probably worthy men, though narrow-minded and intrusive, were scandalized at the position Paul had taken, and placed themselves in opposition to him, is implied in some of his expressions. (2 Cor. iii. 1.) But that these persons were sent by the other apostles, and especially by Peter, to watch, oppose, and censure him, on account of his more liberal views, are inferences, in our opinion, not warranted by the expressions of the apostle, and inconsistent with the best historical information we possess.

The wildness of Dr. Baur's speculation, when in pursuit of a "tendency," may be exemplified in his theory respecting Simon, the Samaritan impostor, mentioned in Acts viii., and known in history as Simon Magus.

There is an ancient book, the Clementine Homilies, in which Peter and Simon Magus appear as interlocutors. The book is a sort of religious romance, describing the researches of Clement, a Roman youth, for the true system of religion. This book, written near the end of the second century, has been sometimes confused with the writings of the early Christian Father, Clement of Rome, but has no true connection with that author. Baur maintains that it is written in a strongly Jewish spirit, and supposes that under the name of Simon Magus the writer intends to indicate Paul. That apostle is not, indeed, openly attacked; but, in the argument of Peter against Simon Magus, expressions are introduced which are plausibly applied to the great teacher of the Gentiles. From this work, in connection with his own theory of the division between Paul and Peter,

and of the unhistorical character of the Acts, Dr. Baur derives the conclusion that Simon Magus never existed, but that his character was invented as a degrading picture of the Apostle Paul! * Every discordant circumstance is easily brought into harmony when an ingenious theory is to be defended. Simon was a Samaritan, Paul a Jew; but, to remove this objection, we are told that Jewish hate found satisfaction in representing its object as belonging to the apostate race. Simon appears and disappears in the Acts before Paul's conversion. True, it is replied; but the writer, who himself was friendly to Paul, arranged it thus for the very purpose of preventing that discovery which German sagacity has worked out. The name of Simon, which belonged to the Apostle Peter, would seem strangely chosen to designate his great rival; but this, too, we are to understand, had a deep design, that a false Simon might present the stronger contrast to the true. But the most remarkable instance of ingenuity is yet to be named. How could the Apostle Paul, disinterested and independent as he always showed himself, be accused of the base attempt at bribery, which perpetuated the name of the Magian in the crime of "simony"? Hear the reply. Did not Paul, on his last journey to Jerusalem, bring "alms to his nation" (Acts xxiv. 17) which he had collected among the Gentile converts, far and wide? (Rom. xv. 26-31; 1 Cor. xvi. 1-4.) And would not Jewish-Christian malice represent this as an endeavor to bribe the brethren at Jerusalem to a recognition of his usurped apostolical authority?

* Das Christenthum, p. 91.

It is all clear then. Simon the Magian is turned into a shadow; his attempt at bribery was really Paul's noble charity. How it was received, we are left, indeed, in some doubt. According to the account in Acts xxi. 17-20, it was received very graciously. We hear nothing there of any one replying to the offer, "Thy money perish with thee," as Peter is represented as replying to Simon Magus. But the tradition which did not scruple to alter the offender's name, nation, character, and crime, would find no difficulty in so slight a thing as changing a gracious acceptance into a stern rejection.

This tradition, wicked as it was in these changes, appears to us, in one respect, singularly merciful. Calumny, in general, delights in ascribing to its object things which he did not do; but calumny, in this instance, ascribes what Paul did to an imaginary person: no, not what Paul did, but what his enemies wished to have it believed that he did. We doubt if any one could obtain damages for slander against a person who had told false stories, not about him, but about a non-entity.

The reason for which the malice of Paul's opponents is supposed to have taken this singular way of expressing itself, is not less remarkable. They would not name Paul as the object of their slander, because they desired that his memory should utterly perish from the earth.* These slanderers were, indeed, in a difficult position. Their hate to the apostle prompted two inconsistent proceedings, — to treat him with silent contempt, so that his name should be forgotten; and to blacken his memory

* Das Christenthum, p. 105.

by false charges. The manner in which they solved the difficulty was ingenious. They said nothing against the apostle, but brought their charges against a man of straw! But, unfortunately for their object, Europe remembered its great teacher in despite of their silence, and their man of straw bore patiently the whole weight of their calumnies for century after century, till the Tübingen school discovered for whom the burden was really intended.

CHAPTER XV.

BAUR'S VIEW OF THE EPISTLES.

WE have examined, in the two preceding chapters, the opinions of Dr. F. C. Baur with regard to the authorship of the Fourth Gospel and the authenticity of the book of Acts. We propose now to consider his views in relation to some of the Epistles of St. Paul.

Dr. Baur receives as genuine the most important letters of the great apostle—those to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians. In this he adds his testimony to that of Strauss, who, in a passage already quoted (page 151), characterizes the First Epistle to the Corinthians as "unquestionably genuine," and declares that it establishes the fact, "that many members of the primitive Church, especially the apostles, were convinced that they had witnessed appearances of the risen Christ." We are accustomed to consider the four evangelists as the historical witnesses of our faith; but here is a testimony to its greatest miracle from another source, not less distinct and authoritative than theirs; and its genuineness is certified by those very writers who have expended the greatest learning and ingenuity to invalidate the statements of the Gospels.

These Epistles being admitted, there remain, as usually ascribed to St. Paul, the numerous shorter ones, and that to the Hebrews. With regard to the last,

doubts have been entertained from a very early age. The others, however, have, from the same antiquity, been handed down as genuine. We do not propose to examine the claims of all, but to consider the ground on which Dr. Baur rejects the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians.

His discussion of this subject is contained in a volume, the title of which, translated, stands as follows: "Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ: his Life and Actions, his Letters and his Doctrine. Stuttgart: 1845." The critic admits, in speaking of the Epistle to the Ephesians, that its Pauline origin has never, till recently, been questioned; and a similar admission would undoubtedly be made with respect to Colossians. His argument against them is derived, not from adverse testimony, but from what he considers the indications presented by their contents.

In the first place, he reasons, from the strong resemblance between Ephesians and Colossians, against the genuineness of one, if not of both. The former he judges to be an expansion of the latter, or the latter an abridgment of the former. He prefers the first-named hypothesis, because Colossians, though shorter, contains some elements additional to what the two Epistles have in common, especially in those local and personal allusions which contribute most to the aspect of a genuine work. Whatever, then, be the origin of Colossians, its sister Epistle is considered to be invalidated. The apostle, with his strong, original mind, would not have written the same thing in substance to two different churches.

This is a singular argument. In general, if we

would defend the genuineness of a book, we consider its resemblance in thought and expression to another work, ascribed to the same author, as something in its favor — unless, indeed, the similarity be that of servile imitation. Of such similarity the pretended Epistle to the Laodiceans is an example. This, which may be found among the Apocrypha of the New Testament, is a mere cento of texts from the genuine writings of St. Paul. Not a trace of originality enlivens the tarnished lustre of its stolen thoughts. How different this from the Epistles now before us! The fourth and following chapters of Ephesians may be regarded as an amplification of the third and fourth of Colossians; but the amplification is from a master-hand. The warning in the fourth chapter, "Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath," and the description of the Christian's spiritual armor in the sixth chapter, — both of which are found in Ephesians alone, — bear the same stamp of a great, original, and holy mind as the exhortations to parents and children, masters and servants, which are common to the two; and, if it be thought that Colossians was the copy, from what passage in Ephesians did the copyist derive the bold and beautiful figures in which he prompts to follow Christ in his ascension by seeking all high things — regarding our earthly, sinful life as no more existing, and our true life hidden with Christ in God? (Col. iii. 1-4.) This last thought is indeed truly Pauline, in the same vein with Rom. viii. 10, and 2 Cor. v. 14; yet it is not copied from those passages, but has an original beauty of its own.

Our critic, however, does not hold that one of these

Epistles is genuine and the other forged, but condemns both together. In so doing, he does not appear to perceive that he encounters the very difficulty which he had just urged against the common belief. It is certainly very unlikely that two persons should, without consent, have forged two pretended Epistles so like each other as these; nor does it seem credible, that, when one had forged Colossians, another counterfeiter should have received this base coinage as true, and given us forgery upon forgery. The only supposition remaining for Dr. Baur is, that the pretended author repeated himself—the supposition which he had already repudiated as applied to St. Paul. It would be, indeed, less probable in the case of a forger than in that of the apostle; for the latter, writing naturally, would not guard himself against repeating the same thoughts in letters to different persons, while one who was fabricating false Epistles would take especial care against whatever might bring his work into suspicion.

But the great argument of Dr. Baur against the genuineness of these two Epistles is drawn from what he considers the indications of Gnosticism which they contain.

It is difficult for us, in the nineteenth century, to conceive the state of mind, that, in the second century, found its expression in the strange mythology of Gnosticism. Perhaps we can imagine it best by remembering, that, although the fables of the old religion had then ceased to be objects of faith to the cultivated classes, they were still objects of admiration. Mr. Lecky, in his recent "History of the Rise and Influence of Rationalism," has well pointed out, how, in Greece and

Rome, as subsequently in mediæval Italy, the æsthetic element took the place of the superstitious, and the forms that had once been worshipped as divine were afterwards scarce less adored as beautiful or majestic. Hence we may conceive how, when cultivated Greeks embraced Christianity, they missed, in the new religion, something which had fascinated their taste, though it had not won their belief. They had nothing of that horror of idolatry which the Old Testament had imparted to the Jews. Probably, on the other hand, they considered the worship of images the only method by which religion could be rendered acceptable to the uneducated masses. For themselves, they knew, as well as St. Paul, "that an idol is nothing in the world;" but they had been used to admire the majestic forms enshrined in the temples, and to allegorize the stories told by the poets. They had formed thus a new mythology for themselves, whose deities were not Jupiter, Minerva, and Venus, but Power, Wisdom, and Beauty; and they thought—or rather, perhaps, without deliberately thinking, they felt—that Christianity would be improved by annexing to it a mythology somewhat similar.

And, indeed, the systems they invented, strange and obscure as they are, are not without something of a poetic charm. They represented the Infinite, in the solemn majesty of his eternal existence, which none shared with him but venerable Silence. From these proceeded Mind, the Only-begotten, and his sister and partner, Truth. With a long succession of beings such as these did Valentine and his fellow-Gnostics people the "Pleroma," the Fulness, the Perfection. One of

these æons, named Sophia or Wisdom, endeavoring too ambitiously to comprehend the Infinite, was cast out for a time from the Pleroma; and, in her sufferings, relieved by the efforts of the æon Christ, we find obscurely set forth the strugglings of the human spirit, and the divine aid communicated by the Redeemer. One might almost think, that the Gnostics, while unconsciously depicting the ill success of their own ambitious theorizing, had uttered a prophecy which was to find its fulfilment in the Hegelian philosophy of Germany. There Wisdom endeavors to comprehend the Infinite, deciding that he "only comes to self-consciousness in man," and, losing itself in a labyrinth of words, wanders in darkness, until it finds the light that Christ alone can give.

Few would imagine, in reading the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, that any ingenuity would see in them marks of the strange, Gnostic system of polytheistic Christianity. Yet so it is. Dr. Baur discovers such traces in various passages of the two Epistles, but chiefly in the first chapter of Colossians. "By him," the apostle says, "were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers." In these words the æons are supposed to be referred to. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness" (the whole Pleroma) "dwell." These verses will sufficiently exemplify the argument which, with great ingenuity, fixes upon expressions found in these Epistles, and used also by the Gnostic writers, and concludes therefrom that these Epistles were written, not by St. Paul, but by some one at a

later period, when the Gnostic system had become, to a considerable extent, developed.

Thus, some thousand years hence, may some student, examining the history of this country with a strong propensity to doubt wherever doubt is possible, question the genuineness of an ancient document that purports to be "Articles of Confederation" among the thirteen original States, — that form of union under which our Revolutionary war was waged, and our independence established. "Confederation!" he will say; "Confederate States! — we know well to what period such expressions belong. They date from the civil war of 1861–65. The document is evidently spurious. It was forged by some writer on the Southern side in that war, for the purpose of strengthening in the minds of his party the conviction that they were maintaining the principles of their fathers." As it may then be replied, that "Confederation" was an English word in common use before 1861, so may the answer be given to Dr. Baur, that "Pleroma," meaning fulness, was a Greek word in common use long before the strange mythology of the Gnostics was invented. It is a word in common use by St. Paul in those Epistles which Dr. Baur himself acknowledges to be genuine. (See Rom. xi. 12, 25; xv. 29. Gal. iv. 4.)

However the apostle may use terms which were afterwards employed by the Gnostics, the doctrine he lays down is essentially different from theirs. Their system divided the honors which it rendered among a numerous family of æons: the apostle recognizes but one "image of the invisible God," in whom "it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell." Before this essential

difference, — the difference between Christianity and polytheism, — a mere verbal similarity becomes insignificant.

It appears to us that the free employment, in these Epistles, of terms which the Gnostics afterwards appropriated, is a proof, not against their genuineness, but strongly in its favor. Had these works been written after the development of Gnosticism, they would either have been unquestionably on its side, or have been carefully guarded against all suspicion of assent to it. Had the writer been favorable to the new sect, we should have had at least its earliest ideas introduced; such as the fancy that the God of the Jews was not the Supreme God, and the fancy that the æon Christ withdrew from the man Jesus before his crucifixion. Had the writer been unfavorable to Gnosticism, it is not probable that he would have tranquilly used, in familiar senses, words which had become identified with a system of error. So early did Gnosticism appear in the Church, that books written in entire unconsciousness of its existence must have a date assigned them very near the age of the apostles.

The resemblance of the texts we have quoted, and of other portions of these Epistles, to Gnostic thought and modes of expression, may be accounted for by a different theory from that of Dr. Baur. The Gnostics may have derived their forms of language from the passages in question, which it is known they quoted in their controversial writings. Perhaps, also, the train of thought which at length resulted in Gnosticism had begun to develop itself in the apostle's time, and had influenced the common modes of expression. These he used

because they were used by those around him, and had not yet become connected with a system of error.

The two Epistles we have noticed, and the remaining books of the New Testament, are by no means essential to the evidence of Christianity. They are, however, too valuable to be lost; too full of holy lessons for us to resign them, without examination, to the claims of a rash and destructive criticism. For the purpose of this work, the specimen now presented, of the arguments brought against them by the modern school of scepticism, may be sufficient.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE APOCRYPHAL NEW TESTAMENT.

A NEW edition of the book bearing this title has recently been published in Boston. It is a reprint of that brought out about half a century since, by Hone, in London, and of which a Boston edition of 1832 is now before us. There are other collections of documents thus entitled, in the ancient languages, from the original one by Fabricius to the recent labors of the German scholars, Thilo and Tischendorf; and a new edition in English has recently appeared abroad.

No reasonable objection can be made to the publication of these old writings, either in their original form or translated into English. But the collection made by Hone was accompanied by prefaces and remarks of which the purpose was obvious — to discredit the Christian Scriptures. The idea was suggested that our religion is founded on a mass of legendary accounts; that of these, some were arbitrarily selected by early church councils or individual leaders, to be preserved with care and honored as the word of God, while the rest, possessing equal claims, were rejected, and, as far as possible, put out of sight. Thus speaks the preface to the first edition, reprinted in those which followed:—

“After the writings contained in the New Testament were selected from the numerous Gospels and Epistles

then in existence, what became of the books that were rejected by the compilers?”

The utter falsity of this view is discernible on a slight inspection of the evidence afforded by ancient Christian writers. This has been presented in this work, and in the “Manual,” which preceded it. Many of the Christian writers who enter into this subject lived more than a century before the Council of Nice, at which, this author would have us believe, the “selection” was made. The personal knowledge of several among them would go back a century and a half before that Council. They speak of our present Gospels and other Scriptures as genuine and authentic, and do not thus speak of the documents that are brought forward to compete with them. They speak thus, not referring to any decree of a preceding council, but simply as people mention facts that are well known to themselves and to all around them.

The late Rev. Dr. Lamson, one of our foremost scholars, especially in the department of ecclesiastical history, speaks thus of the edition to which we refer, in an article in the “Christian Examiner” for March, 1833.

“The compiler of the Apocryphal Testament, who is evidently hostile to Christianity, designs to convey the impression that the books now composing our New Testament were arbitrarily selected from a mass of writings possessing the same or similar claims to respect. This is the object of the prefatory notices to the several pieces, in constructing which he has drawn largely on Jones (‘New and Full Method of settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament’), often taking from him whole sentences without acknowledgment. But these are

so adroitly strung together, with the help of a little coloring, and a dexterous use of the arts of insinuation and suppression, that they can hardly fail to perplex and mislead the unlearned reader. Such disingenuous artifice requires to be exposed. We cannot too strongly protest against its use. It is difficult to believe that any real lover of truth can ever resort to it. Such wisdom cometh not from above."

If the volume was published free from these insidious prefaces and remarks, we should welcome its appearance as an important aid to the evidences of Christianity. Let these old documents be diffused far and wide. Let every candid doubter peruse them, and compare them with the genuine New Testament. We have no fear for the result.

There are portions of this volume, however, which are not properly included under its title. We receive the New Testament as containing the earliest records of Christian history, and what remains of the writings of its earliest preachers. A collection called *The Apocryphal New Testament* should comprise, then, only such documents as claim a similar character. But the writings ascribed to the "Apostolical Fathers," — Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Hermas, — whether genuine or not, belong to a later period, and should have no place in such a collection. The letter bearing the name of Barnabas has a higher claim, its reputed author having been one of the earliest preachers, and being styled an apostle in Acts xiv. 14. This letter has gained in the opinion of scholars since the discovery that it forms a part of the ancient Sinaitic manuscript. But the internal evidence is against it, as has been well stated by

Mr. Norton, in the first volume of his work on the "Genuineness of the Gospels." We will glance in succession at those portions of this book which are more properly classed under the title "*Apocrypha of the New Testament.*"

The first of these is "The Gospel of the Birth of Mary." This, Dr. Lamson tells us, in the article already referred to, is supposed to have been a forgery by Seleucus or Lucius, a disciple of Marcion, in the second century. It is mentioned, by Epiphanius in the fourth century, as "an impudent forgery." It tells us that Joachim and his wife Anna, being without offspring, were comforted by angels, and assured of the birth of a holy child. Mary is born to them, and is marked with especial proofs of divine favor. She is at length to be betrothed, and all the unmarried men of the lineage of David are required to present their rods to the high priest, that he may know, by a miraculous sign, who is the predestined bridegroom. The aged Joseph at first withdraws his rod, but, being called on, presents it again, when the holy dove descends and alights upon it. The narrative ends with the birth of Christ.

The same story is told, with variations, in the second document, — "The Protevangelion," — ascribed to the Apostle James the Less, but really as destitute of authority as its predecessor. From this we extract the following account of what Joseph saw when the hour was come for the birth of Jesus.

"As I was going," said Joseph, "I saw the clouds astonished, and the fowls of the air stopping in the midst of their flight. And I looked down towards the earth, and saw a table spread, and working people sit-

ting around it; but their hands were upon the table, and they did not move to eat. They who had meat in their mouths did not eat; they who lifted their hands up to their heads did not draw them back, and they who lifted them up to their mouths did not put anything in; but all their faces were fixed upwards." The sheep and kids were equally motionless, "and the shepherd lifted up his hand to smite them, and his hand continued up."

From this we pass to still greater puerility in "The First Gospel of the Infancy." In Thilo's edition this is given in Arabie, with a Latin translation. It obtained a degree of credit in the East, and appears to have been in the hands of Mohammed and his coadjutors in writing the Koran. It purports to be from "The Book of Joseph the High Priest, called by some Caiaphas"—a personage from whom we should not have expected an attestation of miracles wrought by Christ. The first it records is, that the infant Redeemer spoke in his cradle, saying to his mother, "Mary, I am Jesus, the Son of God, that Word which thou didst bring forth according to the declaration of the Angel Gabriel to thee, and my Father hath sent me for the salvation of the world." At the arrival of Joseph in Egypt with the child Jesus, an idol announces, "The Unknown God is come hither, who is truly God," and forthwith falls from its pedestal. Passing over a number of legends, some of them too revolting for our pages, we are told, in chapter seven, of "a young man, who had been bewitched, and turned into a mule, miraculously cured by Christ being put upon his back, and married to the girl who had been cured of leprosy." We have, in chapter eight, the story of the robbers Titus and Dumachus, as told

in Longfellow's "Golden Legend;" in chapter nine, "two sick children cured by water wherein Christ was washed." In chapter fifteen is the famous miracle of the birds made by Jesus of clay, and gifted with life, with the account of wonders wrought in a dyer's shop. We next hear of his assisting Joseph at his trade of a carpenter; not by ordinary labor, but by miraculously changing the size of articles which Joseph had made too small or too large, especially a throne for the king of Jerusalem. Some stories are added which are not without a certain kind of beauty; but these are followed by others as inconsistent with the character of Jesus as with justice and humanity. Jesus appears as the tyrant of his playmates, putting to death by his word a boy who had destroyed his fish-pool, and another who had accidentally run against him. He appears next as the assuming teacher of his teachers, of whom one who attempted to chastise him has his hand withered, and dies.

"The Second Gospel of the Infancy," bearing the name of Thomas, contains the repetition of some of these incidents, with some other miracles of the vindictive kind.

The letters between Jesus and Abgarus, King of Edessa, are better conceived than most of these apocryphal writings; so well, indeed, that some authors of note have received them as genuine. The prince invites the great prophet to his city, which, he says, is indeed small, but neat, and large enough for them both; and Jesus declines in words of dignity and kindness. Tradition adds that he presented his picture to Abgarus, and sent his disciple Thaddeus to cure him of his leprosy. We hear this story of Abgarus first from Euse-

bius, in the fourth century, who professes to derive it from the public records of Edessa. It is unfortunate for its credit, however, that, if it were true, it would have been of too much importance to remain so long unknown. It would have been a precedent, given by Jesus himself, settling the great question about the reception of heathens into the Christian Church, and must have been appealed to in such discussions as those of Acts xi. and xv.

We come now to "The Gospel of Nicodemus, formerly called the Acts of Pontius Pilate." This is a romance, which may have been written without the intention of deceiving. It is hard to believe that any one should suppose a tale so utterly at variance with history could deceive any one. According to this account, at the trial of Jesus, numbers of those whom he had miraculously relieved gave evidence in his favor, and the Roman standards bowed before him. After his crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea, who had been imprisoned, is miraculously delivered; the soldiers and other persons give testimony to the resurrection. The Jewish Council, moved by this, inquire further into the claims they had so decidedly rejected. Charinus and Lenthius, two young men who had risen from the dead, relate to them what had transpired in the spiritual world at the crucifixion. Their narratives, given in writing, agree in every respect; and after these are completed, the writers vanish. The Jewish priests and rulers, being required by Pilate, search their sacred books, and declare their conviction that Jesus, whom they had crucified, "is Jesus Christ the Son of God, and true and Almighty God." This astonishing confession, which

the whole history of the Jewish nation since proves never to have been made, closes the "Gospel of Nicodemus," as translated in the book before us. There is attached to it, however, in the Greek copies, as given in Thilo's and Tischendorf's editions, an account of the subsequent fate of Pilate. That magistrate is summoned to Rome, examined before the emperor, and condemned to death for allowing the crucifixion of Christ. He dies penitent, however, and his head is received by an angel. Another account, equally authentic, forbids us to rejoice in this eminent convert, but introduces to us another, even more distinguished. According to this, the emperor in wrath commands Pilate to appear before him. Pilate comes, but has put on the seamless robe of Christ, for which the soldiers had cast lots. Under the charm of this sacred garment the emperor's wrath melts away, and Pilate is twice graciously received; but the garment being taken from him, the charm is lost, and the emperor sends him to prison, where the unjust judge takes his own life. It is hard to dispose of the body, on account of the disturbance made by evil spirits wherever it is deposited; but it is finally left in the wild recesses of the Swiss mountains. Tiberius, in the most edifying manner, professes his faith in the Savior.

The "Gospel of Nicodemus" is followed by the "Apostles' Creed," respecting which, it is sufficient to repeat, from the book before us, the remark of Archbishop Wake: "As it is not likely that, had any such thing as this been done by the apostles, St. Luke would have passed it by, without taking the least notice of it, so the diversity of creeds in the ancient Church, and that not only in expression, but in some whole articles,

too, sufficiently shows that the Creed which we call by that name was not composed by the twelve apostles, much less in the same form in which it now is."

"The Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans" is a letter of nineteen verses, made up of sentences collected from the genuine writings of St. Paul. It is evidently founded on the verse, Col. iv. 16, where reference is made to such an epistle, now lost.

The Epistles purporting to have passed between Paul and Seneca are fourteen in number, and are marked by ceremonious politeness and insignificance. Think of Paul's cautioning Seneca not to put himself in danger of the emperor's displeasure by speaking in favor of the Christians (chap. viii.), and of his regretting that he had to place his own name before Seneca's in the ordinary Roman method of commencing a letter! (Chap. x.) Seneca, on the other hand, while complimenting his "dearest Paul" on the loftiness and sublimity of his sentiments, is somewhat uneasy on the subject of his inelegant Latin!

"The Acts of Paul and Thecla" is a romantic tale, written evidently after the introduction of the false idea of the merit of celibacy. Thecla, a noble lady of Iconium, whose house was next to that in which Paul preached, hears his exhortations and becomes a convert. She in consequence refuses to marry Thamyris, to whom she is betrothed. She undergoes unheard-of persecutions, and is saved by astonishing miracles. Fire will not burn her, nor wild beasts devour her. Released at length, she retires to a desert, where she leads the life of a hermitess. At length, at ninety, she escapes from a danger — not very probable at that age — by the rock

opening, and affording her a retreat, closing behind her when she had entered it.

Such are the Apocrypha of the New Testament. Let any one compare them with the genuine records of our faith, and there needs no argument to prove the difference. A gold coin and a copper counterfeit are not more easily distinguished. Let us apply such comparison in some particular instances.

Among the stories of the "Infancy" select the best; not the revolting legends of cures wrought with baby-clothes or washing water, nor those of childish anger armed with divine power, but such as that of Jesus changing his playmates into sportive kids, and then restoring them to their proper forms; and compare this, pretty as it is in its way, with the single beautiful incident recorded of his childhood by Luke — that, in his eagerness to learn, he staid over-long in the temple, in company with gray-headed teachers of the law. We see at once which is more worthy of the future prophet, and of that God who grants miraculous power only for the greatest and most serious purposes.

Compare the trial of Jesus before Pilate according to the "Gospel of Nicodemus" with the same trial according to the "Gospel of John." In the one, Pilate confuses himself with Herod (vi. 23), and sentences the prisoner in the face of miracles, partly reported in evidence, and partly witnessed with his own eyes. In the other, there is no confusion of history, and no testimony is given in favor of the prisoner, save that of his own innocent and glorious aspect. The obscure but suggestive words of Pilate in the genuine Gospel, "What is truth?" are in the false one dilated into a vapid conversation.

We have already compared the "Epistle to the Laodiceans" with the "Epistle to the Colossians." The one is borrowed, every sentence of it, from the writings of Paul. The other, strongly as it resembles that to the Ephesians, has yet its own distinctive character. Read the beautiful third chapter, beginning, "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;" and, if you can, believe with Baur, that "Colossians" is as spurious as "Laodiceans."

Compare, again, "The Acts of Paul and Thecla" with the "Acts of the Apostles." In the one, the morality is false, the great principle of Christianity being made to consist in a monastic asceticism; the miracles are of the most overwhelming kind, yet heathen judges and people witness a succession of them before they cease from their persecuting rage. In the other, our dealing is with human beings; the morality is pure and healthy; and the miracles which are recorded occur at wide intervals, as signs and encouragements, indeed, but not as public subversions of the order of nature.

The modern school of scepticism would have us believe that the books of the New Testament were made up of legendary accounts, forged or gathered by persons who knew not what was true and what was false. Our answer is, we have such accounts; here they are; behold them, and see their emptiness! If the Fourth Gospel were what you tell us, it would be like the "Gospels of the Infancy," or the "Gospel of Nicodemus." If Christianity were what you suppose, its instructions would be as void of all moral worth as its records would be full of silly stories and extravagant miracles. But

the early Church committed no such folly as to receive these fictitious accounts as of equal value with the true. Far as we can trace back towards the very earliest period, the Church proclaimed, by the voice of Irenæus, of Origen, and of a host of others, that it received as canonical and authentic, the New Testament, substantially as it is now in the hands of every Christian believer.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES.

WE have spoken, in a previous chapter, of the Jewish revelation; and the subject of its connection with the Christian, particularly as regards the prophecies of the Old Testament, has been, to some extent, presented in our "Manual" (sections 29-31.) A few remarks, however, will now be offered.

In the first place, it is worthy of observation, that the evidence of Christianity is but little embarrassed by those questions which have from time to time arisen with respect to the Old Testament. Repeatedly has it been thought that our religion was in danger from this source. When Galileo asserted the motion of the earth, and when modern geology brought its proof of the existence of this world for ages before the date which Christian scholars had derived from the examination of Scripture, many were alarmed, and many were indignant. There was no cause for indignation, for science must be free; there was no cause for alarm, for God's truth is safe in his keeping. Indignation and alarm passed away, and Christianity stood firm, though its teachers were obliged to remodel some of their opinions. Thus it will be still, to whatever results the careful study of nature and of Scripture may lead the man of science and the theologian.

We are not of those, therefore, who anticipate any evil, or perceive any cause of angry excitement, from such investigations as those of Bishop Colenso. Rather do we anticipate—and to our own mind the anticipation is already in part fulfilled—that such free investigation will remove difficulties, and cause the truth of divine revelation to appear more gloriously than it ever yet has done. But the theme is too vast for us to enter on, and belongs rather to the department of scriptural criticism than to that to which this book is devoted.

We have now to speak of the prophecies of the Old Testament which found their fulfilment in the New. We shall not repeat the task, already pursued in the "Manual," of enumerating individual prophecies. Indeed, to us the argument seems much more powerful, derived from the collective prophecy of the Jewish nation. That nation's whole existence, indeed, before Christ, was prophetic, as its existence since its rejection of him, has been a standing testimony to the truth of his divine commission, a wonder of many ages, which may at length find its fitting close in some magnificent display of providential mercy, showing that "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew."

The subject which particularly claims our attention is the objection brought against the application of the prophecies to Christ, on the ground that his character and office were different from those which had been predicted. The Jews, we are told, expected a temporal monarch; Jesus bore, instead, the office of a moral and religious teacher: they expected a triumphant prince; he lived in poverty, and died a death of suffering, and, as then considered, of shame.

It was, undoubtedly, on account of these differences between their expectations and his fulfilment, that the Jewish people rejected Jesus while living, and have persevered in that rejection the rather since the contrast was completed by his death. Yet it is obvious that in this they have preferred a low and literal interpretation of the prophecies to one more exalted. What would have been the deliverance of Judea from the Roman power, compared to the deliverance of the world from ignorance and sin? What the splendor of a Jewish throne to the empire which Jesus has for centuries exercised over the human race? That the nation rejected their Messiah, because he came in a character so far beyond their highest anticipations, shows not the correctness, but the inadequacy, of their judgment. It shows also the intellectual and spiritual glory of the Leader, who could rise to thoughts so far superior to those of his people. Many an aspirant has attempted to fulfil the Jewish expectation of an earthly monarch; but it was Jesus alone who rose above that expectation, avoided those who "would take him by force and make him a king," and deliberately chose the crown of thorns in preference to a crown of gold, and the kingdom of truth and love rather than one of earthly splendor.

The prophets had a very imperfect conception of the glories of the Messiah's kingdom; but the divine purposes, to whose accomplishment they looked forward, were truly fulfilled in Christ and his religion. And the fact that while he applied their predictions to himself, his greatness was of a nature that far transcended the most exalted visions of prophetic inspiration, constitutes to our mind an important proof of the divinity of his

mission. The more fully it can be shown that the prophets had no conception of a peaceful, spiritual, self-denying Messiah, the greater the glory of the exalted soul that could look beyond their brilliant presentations of an earthly throne, to discern and to claim the true, divinely constituted royalty.

We believe that the prophets were inspired in a manner different from other writers, however great or good. That difference we conceive to have been one, not of degree, but of kind. Had it been of degree merely, Isaiah might have given us sublimer poems than Homer: as it is, he has given us predictions, which have received their fulfilment in Christ. We distinguish, too, between the inspiration of these Hebrew bards and that of other poets, whose anticipations of the future have sometimes been peculiarly happy. An unknown Latin author, claiming the name of Seneca, foretold the discovery of America; Bishop Berkeley foresaw the greatness of the United States. We recognize in these the great thought, the happy coincidence; but in the Hebrew prophets we recognize the especial divine communication.

Was that communication made to all the prophets, or to a few, or to one only among them? Dr. Palfrey, in his "Lectures on the Jewish Scriptures and Antiquities" (Lectures XIX and XXXIV.), and his "Relation between Judaism and Christianity," restricts the divine message in the Old Testament times to its earliest portion, believing that the idea of the Messiah was given to the world chiefly in those words of Moses (Deut. xviii. 15), "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like

unto me : unto him ye shall hearken." The later Messianic predictions he conceives to have been echoes of this. But the announcement in Deuteronomy appears too indefinite to be thus singled out ; nor do we know any other that can claim such exclusive honor. It may be that some of the long line of prophets received the great thought from those who went before them ; but, until some mode of distinguishing between direct and secondary prophecies is suggested, we can but consider all as dictated by the same inspiration.

But that inspiration did not make the prophets acquainted with all truth ; they were not infallible. If one of them had been, the world would have needed no future guide. If Isaiah had foreseen in its fulness the spiritual teaching of Jesus, Isaiah might have revealed it, and the coming of Jesus have been forestalled. The prophets saw but in part — God alone is omniscient.

What did they see? We will use that metaphor of sight ; for it is the one which the prophets themselves use to express the method in which the Divine purposes were made known to them. We are told of "the vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem." We may find the metaphor of sight a better guide than that of breath, implied in the word "inspiration."

In our common, natural vision, the beholder has before him an object, of which he sees some parts more clearly than others. The different parts are not always seen in their right proportions. If it be a prospect, prominent parts are at once recognized, while intervening spaces are less subject to observation. Nor can distances be accurately determined. Objects which lie

in the same line of vision may naturally be supposed much nearer to each other than they really are. Especially if the remotest object seen be of great dimensions, as a mountain, arresting the attention, and shutting out all beyond, its proportions may be mistaken, and it may be supposed both nearer and smaller than it actually is.

Thus it was with the "vision" granted to the prophets. From time to time, their eyes were open to discern the future. They saw there objects relating to the present interests of their own country and of others ; and beyond, they saw the waving fields, the towering cities, the majestic temples, of a period of civilization, peace, and happiness, far surpassing anything that they had known. "The mountain of the Lord's house, established on the top of the mountains," closed the view ; and there, it seemed, they might discern, far off, a majestic figure, of colossal proportions, that seemed to preside over all below, while the Divine glory hovered above his head. God's wisdom and goodness displayed to them the scene ; their own minds were to interpret it. What name should they give to that happy country but that of their own Israel? What should that holy city be but their own Jerusalem? And that glorious personage whom they owned as God's Anointed, God's Messiah, — who should he be but the king, the heir of the old royal line, who should, at that predestined time, be on the throne? What wonder if, while the eye failed to measure distances with correctness, each prophet thought that the Messiah before him was either the prince he served, or the heir that had just been born? if the writer of the seventy-second Psalm iden-

tified him with Solomon, and Isaiah (chap. ix.) with the young Hezekiah?

We believe, then, that the vision of the prophets was not only subjective, but objective, in the general foresight of a great and heaven-sent Deliverer. That they called him king when they might have called him prophet or sage, detracts but little from this foresight; for who but a king, could they suppose, would exercise such power, and confer such blessing? We may question, too, whether either of these titles would have fitted the actual position of Jesus Christ as well as that which was employed. "Prophet" would have designated him as a member of the old order, not the founder and presiding spirit of a new; and "sage" would have been the title of a self-constituted teacher, not of one sent by God. That the demand of Jesus for the reverence and obedience of mankind was, in many respects, a personal claim, has been so well illustrated in the recent suggestive volume, "Ecce Homo," and is a fact so familiar to every believer's heart, that we need linger no more on the task of excusing the prophets for the assertion of his kingly dignity.

And there were some to whom a nearer vision was granted. We will not enter into the criticism of the famous passage, Isa. lii., liii.; but one thing is clear — that, whether from this passage or from others, some of the Jews had derived the idea of a suffering Messiah. And this idea in them is the more remarkable, as it was contrary to their general train of thought, their expectations and hopes, and as they resorted to a far-sought supposition to explain it. Thus says Strauss (*Life of Jesus*, Part III., Chap. I., § 112):—

"Jewish writings are by no means destitute of passages in which it is distinctly asserted that a Messiah would perish in a violent manner; but these passages relate, not to the proper Messiah, the offspring of David, but to another, from among the posterity of Joseph and Ephraim, who was appointed to hold a subordinate position in relation to the former."

The Jewish nation, then, guided by its prophets, not only for ages looked forward to an exalted and divinely commissioned Leader, who should establish a universal and everlasting dominion, but it had received the impression from the same ancient prophets, that this triumph was to be accompanied by suffering and death. Confused by this apparent inconsistency, they strove to reconcile it by supposing two divine messengers, one bearing the character of a conqueror, the other that of a victim. At length One appeared in whom both these anticipations were fulfilled, and in a far loftier, more spiritual manner, than either the nation or the prophets themselves had imagined. When the young Teacher of Nazareth declared the coming of the kingdom of God, the world threatened the natural reward of insane fanaticism — utter and contemptible failure; and the world did what it could to accomplish its threat, for it crucified him. But, notwithstanding this, the prophecy of the old Jewish Church has been fulfilled. That crucified Messiah has established a dominion which has lasted eighteen hundred years, has conquered half the world, and is on its course of conquest still. Thus do the prophecy and its fulfilment match into and prove each other. Separate them, and each part appears as a delusion. If Jesus did not fulfil the Messianic proph-

ecies, those prophecies were idle dreams. If the prophecies did not relate to Jesus, his whole ministry was founded on mistaken presumption. But if a sway extending over the world is wider than one over Palestine, and if a reign over the hearts and lives of men for centuries is as worthy the name of kingdom as the pomp of an earthly prince, then that which Jesus founded was a true sovereignty, and he is the Messiah, the Heaven-anointed King.

