THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES
PART ONE

Evidences Of The Divine Authority Of The Holy Scriptures
by Richard Watson.

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES:

Or, a View of the

EVIDENCES, DOCTRINES, MORALS, AND INSTITUTIONS

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

BY RICHARD WATSON.

A NEW EDITION,
WITH A COPIOUS INDEX, AND AN ANALYSIS
BY J. M’CLINTOCK.

COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES.
(One Digital Volume - Ed.)

TWENTY-SIXTH EDITION.

NEW YORK: HUNT & EATON.
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1889.
PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION.

This edition of the INSTITUTES contains the “Analysis” heretofore published as a separate volume. It is also furnished with a pretty copious Index, the want of which has long been felt. It is hoped that the work will be found better adapted, both for students and general readers, than ever before.

Had not the work been stereotyped, the undersigned would have gladly revised the body of the book, especially so far as to present the Greek quotations in a more correct and sightly form.

J. M'CLINTOCK.

New-York, May 6, 1850.
ADVERTISEMENT TO THE LONDON EDITION.

The object of this work is to exhibit the EVIDENCES, DOCTRINES, MORALS, and INSTITUTIONS of Christianity, in a form adapted to the use of young Ministers, and Students in Divinity. It is hoped also that it may supply the desideratum of a BODY OF DIVINITY, adapted to the present state of theological literature, neither Calvinistic on the one hand, nor Pelagian on the other.

The reader will perceive that the object has been to follow a course of plain and close argument on the various subjects discussed, without any attempt at embellishment of style, and without adding practical uses and reflections, which, however important, did not fall within the plan of this publication. The various controversies on fundamental and important points, have been introduced; but it has been the sincere aim of the Author to discuss every subject with fairness and candour: and honestly, but in the spirit of “THE TRUTH,” which he more anxiously wishes to be taught than to teach, to exhibit what he believes to be the sense of the Holy Scriptures, to whose authority, he trusts, he has unreservedly subjected all his own opinions.

London, March 26, 1823.
ANALYSIS OF WATSON’S THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES.

GENERAL DIVISION.

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J. M’Clintock

PART FIRST. EVIDENCES OF THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

OUTLINE.

I. PRESumptive evidence.

A. That a direct revelation would be made in some way.

B. That it would be made in this way, i.e., in the manner in which Christianity professes to have been revealed.

II. DIRECT evidence, preliminary to the introduction of which are considered

(1.) The kind and degree of evidence necessary to authenticate a revelation.

(2.) The use and limitation of reason in religion; after which the positive evidences are introduced under the following heads: — viz.

(I.) EXTERNAL EVIDENCE.

I. Preliminaries.

(A.) Antiquity of the Scriptures.

(B.) Uncorrupted preservation of the books of Scripture.

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(B.) From prophecy.

Real predictions were delivered.
Objections to the proof from PROPHECY answered.

(II.) INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

(A.) The excellence and beneficial tendency of the doctrines of Scripture.

(B.) Moral tendency of the Scriptures.

(C.) Style and manner of the sacred writers.

(III.) COLLATERAL EVIDENCE. And finally

(IV.) Miscellaneous OBJECTIONS are answered.

PRESUMPTIVE EVIDENCE.

A. Presumptive evidence that a direct revelation would be made in some way.

I. (Chap. 1.) MAN A MORAL AGENT.

a.) Man has always been considered capable of performing moral actions, which are — voluntary actions, having respect to some rule.

b.) Antecedent to human laws, there must have been a perception of the difference of moral actions, because many actions would be judged good or evil, were all civil codes abolished.

c.) This perception may be traced, in part, to experience and observation of the injurious tendency of vice, and the beneficial results of virtue; — but

d.) It cannot be so traced entirely. There has been, among all men, a constant reference to the will of God, or of supposed deities, as a rule to determine the good or evil of the conduct of men.

We derive from these considerations two weighty presumptions: supposing the Theist to grant the existence of a Supreme Creator, of infinite, power, wisdom, &c.: —

FIRST, (from a, b, and c,) That those actions which men consider good, have the implied sanction of the will of the Creator.
SECOND, That they were originally, in some way, enjoined as his law, and
their contraries prohibited.

II. (Chap. 2.) THE RULE WHICH DETERMINES THE QUALITY OF MORAL
ACTIONS MUST BE PRESUMED TO BE MATTER OF REVELATION FROM GOD.

a.) Creation implies government — and government implies law — which
must be revealed: — and a revelation of divine will may be made either,
(1.) By significant actions, or (2.) By direct communication in language.
The Theist admits that (1) has been done. The Christian admits (1) and (2)
both: declaring (1) to be insufficient, and the question is, On which side is
the presumption of truth?

b.) We assert that natural indications are insufficient for the formation of a
virtuous character, and illustrate the deficiency by reference to temperance
— justice — benevolence — worship — prayer — a future state, and the
pardon of sin.

III. (Chaps. 3., 4., 5.) A is proved BY THE WEAKNESS OF HUMAN REASON
AND THE WANT OF AUTHORITY IN HUMAN OPINIONS.

a.) Granting that a perfect reason could determine the moral quality of
actions, — Yet (1.) That perfect reason is not to be found; (2.) Men differ
greatly in their reasoning powers; (3.) Men are not sufficiently
contemplative, nor sufficiently honest, for such inquiries; (4.) We find that
men bring down the rule to the practice, rather than raise the practice to
the rule.

b.) But supposing truth discovered, and intellectual men appointed to teach
others, what authority have they?

1. We answer a priori, no other authority than the opinion of a teacher,
which might be received or not.

2. And facts are sufficiently in proof of this. — Cicero, &c.

c.) (Chap. 4.) But reason, alone, cannot determine the moral quality of
actions. (1.) Reason is an erring faculty, and its exercise is limited by our
knowledge. (2.) It is one thing to assent to a doctrine when discovered and
proposed, and another to make such discovery originally. (3.) The
principles of (what is called) natural religion command the assent of
reason, but the question is, Whence came they? (4.) Certainly they were
never mentioned as discoveries, either by the sacred writers, or sages of antiquity.

d.) In fact, sober views of great religious truths have been found nowhere, since patriarchal times, save in the sacred writings: — thus,

(1.) Existence of GOD. Ancient doubts. Modern Budhists.

(2.) Creation of matter. Eternity of matter was the doctrine of the Ionic, Platonic, Italic, and Stoic schools. Aristotle.

(3.) Individuality of the human soul.

(4.) Doctrine of Providence. Ancients believed in conflicting and subordinate gods.


e.) (Chap. 5. *) Those truths which are found in the writings and religious systems of the heathen can be traced to revelation.

(1.) There was a substratum of common opinions among all early nations, in regard to facts and doctrines which are contained in the Old Testament: — thus, golden age, sacrifice, formation of the world, &c.

(2.) Adam, a moral agent, must have had instruction from the Creator, and his knowledge might easily have been transmitted to Noah’s time, for Methuselah was contemporary with both Adam and Noah. Then after the flood, the system would of course be propagated by Noah’s descendants, and we find it received in the family of Abraham. Subsequently it was doubtless vastly diffused by the dispersions and restorations of the children of Israel. Nine conclusions.

IV. A is proved by the NECESSITY OF REVELATION, — evinced,

a.) By the state of religious knowledge among the heathen, (chap. vi,) with regard to the first principles of religion: viz.

1. God. The notion of subordinate deifies obtained equally with that of one supreme God. The eternity of matter and its perversity, not to be controlled even by God, were favourite opinions.
2. Providence. If admitted at all, the doctrine was vitiated and counteracted by other opinions. The Epicureans denied it; Plato joined *fortune* with God; and Polytheism gave up the world to opposing and conflicting powers.

* The notes to this chapter are very valuable, and should be studied carefully, in connexion with the text.

3. Future state. Oriental doctrines of *transmigration* and *absorption*. Periodical destruction and renovation. Aristotle, Democritus, Heraclitus, and Epicurus either *denied* or refused to countenance the doctrine of the soul’s existence after death. Cicero doubted; Pliny and Cesar denied it; Seneca wavered.

b.) By the *state of morals* among the heathen. (Chap. 7.)

1. Their moral and religious systems were doubtless from a common source,

2. But the *rules* had become involved in obscurity, their injunctions lacked *authority*, and the general *practices* of men had become vicious. The subject is illustrated by adverting to certain precepts of the second table, and showing that, although heathen nations have been sensible of the obligation of these, among all of them the *rule* has been perverted in theory and violated in practice.


   (2.) *Hatred* and *revenge*. Cicero. Aristotle.

   (3.) *Adultery*, *divorce*, *fornication*, &c. Laws in regard to these, though acknowledged, yet grossly violated among heathen nations, even down to crimes πάρα φυσίν.

   (4.) *Theft* and *rapine*. Honesty almost unknown among heathen


c.) By the fact, that *their religions themselves were destructive of morality*. (Chap. 8.)

1. Their gloomy superstitions fostered *ferocity* and *cruelty*. Human sacrifices among ancients, and also in modern Africa, Asia, and America.
2. Their religions were as productive of impurity as of bloodshed Roman Flora\*ia. Mysteries. Indian temple worship.

B. Presumptive evidence that a direct revelation would be made in this way, 1.e., in the manner in which Christianity professes to have been revealed.

a.) A supernatural manifestation of truth should,

1. Contain explicit information on those subjects which are most important to man;

2. Accord with the principles of former revelations:

3. Have a satisfactory external authentication;

4. Contain provisions for its effectual promulgation;

b.) All these conditions are fulfilled in the Scriptures.

1. They give information as to God, man, a Mediator, Providence, future state, &c,

2. Three distinct religious systems, the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian, harmonize in their doctrines and objects.

3. The Mosaic and Christian revelations profess to rest on external evidence.

4. Provision made (1.) By writing. (2.) By commemorative rites, (3.) By accredited teachers.

II. DIRECT EVIDENCE.

Two preliminaries.

(1) (Chap. 9.) The evidences necessary to authenticate a revelation.

1. EXTERNAL, principal and most appropriate: if not to the immediate recipient, at least to those to whom he communicates it. There are two branches of the external proof, Miracles and Prophecy.

(a.) Miracles.

1. Definition. 1.) Popular. 2.) Philosophic. 3.) Theological.
2. *Possibility* of miracles.

3. Distinction between *real* miracles and *prodigies*. Criteria.

4. Necessity of connexion between even such *real miracles*, the *messenger*, and his message.

5. *Human testimony sufficient to establish the credibility of miracles.*

   (1.) Hume’s objection.

   (2.) Replies to it by *Paley* — *Llandaff* — *Campbell*.


(b.) PROPHECY.

   1. *Possibility* not to be denied. Dilemma.

   2. *Adequateness* as a proof.

2. INTERNAL.

(a.) Nature of the evidence.

(b.) Its rank in the scale of evidence.

   1. Not *necessary*: sufficient proof *without* it: but nevertheless useful.

   2. Not *primary*, but confirmatory. The contrary opinion not only supposes us capable of judging *fully* of the doctrines revealed, but also renders the external testimony comparatively nugatory. Two sources of this error.

      (1.) The notion that miracles might be wrought to attest unworthy doctrines.

      (2.) A confounding of the *rational* with the *authenticating* evidence.

   3. Not *so well adapted* to the mass of mankind as external evidence.

3. COLLATERAL. Nature of the evidence stated.

(II.) (Chap. 11.) *The use and limitation of reason in religion.*

(a.) USE of reason in regard to revelation.
1. To investigate the evidences of its divine authority.

2. To interpret the meaning of the record.

(b.) LIMITATION.

1. It must not decide in cases where the nature of things is not known. either by or without revelation.

2. The things compared must be of the same nature, and the comparison must be made in the same respects.

These preliminaries being settled, we now proceed to adduce positive evidences, of which there are three heads, viz.: —

I. EXTERNAL EVIDENCE.

(A.) Preliminaries.

(A.) (Chap. 12.) ANTIQUITY OF THE SCRIPTURES,

a.) The persons who were the immediate instruments of these revelations, existed at the periods assigned. Proved,

(1.) By the very existence of 1.) The Jewish polity; and 2.) The Christian religion.

(2.) By the testimony of ancient authors.


2. As to Christ. Suetonius, Tacitus.

b.) The books which contain the doctrines are of the date assigned to them. Proved,

(1.) As to Old Testament.

1. By the language in which it is written.

2. By Josephus’ Catalogue.

3. By the Septuagint, and by Samaritan Pentateuch.

4. By Leslie’s Argument, which gives four rules for determining the truth of matters of fact, all which are applied with success to the Old Testament, viz.:
(1.) The matter of fact must be cognizable by the senses.
(2.) The matter of fact must be publicly done.
(3.) The matter of fact must be commemorated by monuments and outward actions,
(4.) Which must date from the time of the matters of fact.

(2.) As to *New Testament*.
1. By Leslie’s Argument, as before.
2. By internal evidence from the narration itself.
3. Testimony of adversaries. CELSUS, PORPHYRY, HIEROCLES, JULIAN.
4. Quotations by subsequent authors, from the apostles downward.

(B.) (Chap. 13.) **UNCORRUPTED PRESERVATION OF THE BOOKS OF SCRIPTURE.**

a.) *The books are SUBSTANTIALLY the same as when written.* Proved,

(1.) As to *Old Testament*. By the list of Josephus, Septuagint, and Samaritan Pentateuch.

(2.) As to *New Testament*, By the Catalogues of Origen, Athanasius,

b.) *But it can be shown also, that they have descended to us without any material alteration whatever.*

(1.) As to *Old Testament*.

1. *Before the time of Christ*, they were secured from alteration by their being generally known, — by the jealousy of the Samaritans, — by the public reading on Sabbath, — by Chaldee Paraphrase and the Greek version.


3. All this is confirmed by the *agreement of the manuscripts* in all important respects.

(2.) As to *New Testament*.

1. From their *contents*. Same facts and doctrines.
2. *Impossibility of corruption* because of general knowledge of the books, and mutual restraints of orthodox and heretics, Eastern and Western churches.

3. *From the agreement of the manuscripts.*

4. *From the agreement of ancient versions and quotations.*

*(C.) (Chap. 14.) CREDIBILITY OF THE TESTIMONY OF THE SACRED WRITERS.*

1. That they were persons of *virtuous and sober character* was never denied.

2. They were in *circumstances to know the truth* of what they relate. They could not be deceived, for instance, as to the feeding of the four thousand, gift of tongues, &c.

3. They had *no interest* in making good the story. Their interests all lay in the opposite direction.

4. Their account is *circumstantial*, and given in a learned age, when its falsity might easily have been detected.

*(II.) After these preliminaries, establishing the genuineness and authenticity of the books, it remains now to present the argument.*

*(A.) FROM MIRACLES.*

1. (Chap. 15.) *Their reality proved.*

(a.) Definition of a *true* miracle.

(b.) *Claims* of Scriptural miracles to be considered *true*, illustrated —

1. As to those of *Moses*. Darkness, destruction of first-born passage of Red Sea, falling of manna.

2. As to those of *Christ*. Illustrated especially by the greatest miracle, the RESURRECTION, in regard to which it is shown,

a. That *Christ was really dead.*

b. That *the body was missing.*
c. Every attempt to account for (b,) except on the supposition of a resurrection, is absurd, and

d. That the story was confirmed by the subsequent testimony and conduct of the disciples.

(2.) (Chap. 16.) Objections answered.

(a.) It is asserted that miracles have been wrought in support of other doctrines.

I. On the authority of Scripture. For, it is said,

(1.) That Scripture gives instances of such: e. g., of magicians in opposition to Moses, and the raising of Samuel by the witch of Endor, etc. In reply to this,

1. As to the feats of the magicians, it is to be noticed, 1. That they were professed wonder-workers; 2. That they could imitate but three of Moses’ miracles; 3. That their works were wrought to maintain the equality of their idols with Jehovah. Two explanations are given.

1. Some suppose these were exercises of legerdemain.

2. Our author admits a supernatural evil agency: which is not unreasonable, inasmuch as the design was, not to disprove the divinity of Jehovah, but to maintain their own authority.

2. As to the witch of Endor, and Satan’s bearing our Lord through the air: — Granting these events to have been miraculous, it cannot be shown that they were wrought in opposition to a divine mission.

(2.) That Scripture assumes the possibility of such. Deuteronomy 13:1; Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:8, 9. As to this,

1. Notice the nature and work of Satan. — Six points.

2. Observe the limitations of the power of evil spirits, four points: (1.) No work of creation. (2.) No power of life and death. (3.) No knowledge of future events. (4.) No certain knowledge of the thoughts of men.

3. Apply these considerations to show

(1.) That no real miracle can be performed in opposition to the truth. Illustrated,
(1.) By the case of the Egyptian magi.
(2.) By that of false Christs, &c.

(2.) Nor any prophecy be uttered implying certain knowledge of future events: though great sagacity may be exhibited. N. B. No evidence recorded in favour of falsehood that might not readily be refuted on the spot by counter evidence.

II. On the authority of profane writers. Miracles of Aristeas, Pythagoras, Alexander, Vespasian, Apollonius Tyanmus, and the Romish Church. To this we reply,

(a.) These pretended miracles are all deficient in evidence.

(b.) They are insulated and destitute of any reasonable object, while the miracles of Scripture combine for the establishment of one system.

(B.) From Prophecy.
(1.) (Chap. 17.) Their reality proved.

(a.) Preliminary considerations.
1. The instances are numerous.
2. Many have clearly come to pass.
3. They all tend to one great end.
4. This last characteristic is peculiar to the Scripture prophecies.
5. There is no obscurity in them that can be a just ground for cavil.
6. The double sense of prophecy, so far from being an objection, is a confirmation of the infinite wisdom that inspired it.

(b.) Examples of such predictions.
1. The prediction to Adam of the protracted conflict between the serpent and the seed of the woman, with the ultimate triumph of the latter.
2. Jacob’s prediction respecting the time when Shiloh should come.
3. Predictions respecting the Jewish nation, viz. — (1.) Their apostacies. (2.) Their punishments. (3.) Their restoration.
4. Predictions *respecting the Messiah.*

   (1.) Upward of *one hundred* distinct predictions as to his birth, life, sufferings, death, and resurrection.
   (2.) Wonderful prophecy, especially, contained in Isaiah 53.

(2.) (Chap. 18.) *Objections answered.*

(a.) It is objected to some of the prophecies, *that they were written after the event.* This cannot be sustained: illustrated as to Isaiah and Daniel.

(b.) The *Scripture prophecies are compared to the heathen oracles.* Let us take the Delphic oracle for an example. Of this we say,

1. None of its predictions ever went deep into futurity.

2. Its responses were ambiguous.

3. Venal and servile, it was easily corrupted. None of which can be alleged of Scripture prophecies.

(c.) The character of the prophets is aspersed. E. g., Balaam, and Jewish false prophets. Singular proceeding to condemn the true on account of the false, who were not received by the Jews themselves.

(d.) It is asserted that some of the prophecies have failed.

1. Promise to Abraham. Ans. But this was fulfilled in the time of David and Solomon.

2. Promise of great wealth and dominion to the Jews. (*Voltaire.*) Ans. Civil blessings promised conditionally, and spiritual blessings generally predicted under figures of speech.

3. Prediction of Isaiah to Ahaz. Ans. This was fulfilled.

4. Prophecy of Jeremiah to Zedekiah. Ans. This was fulfilled in all particulars, as far as we know.

5. That of Ezekiel respecting the desolation of Egypt. Ans. We know not that it has *not* been fulfilled: and the very same prophecy contains a prediction that has been remarkably accomplished.
Sundry actions of the prophets have been ridiculed. Ans. They were appropriate to the occasions, and in accordance with primitive and oriental usage.

II. INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

Notice two preliminaries.

1. The distinction between rational and authenticating evidence.

2. Those doctrines which have no rational evidence do not suffer in authority on that account.

We have now to consider,

A. The excellence and beneficial tendency of the doctrines of Scripture. Among which are

a. The existence of God — his character, attributes, &c.

b. The moral condition of man: viz.

1. The race is absolutely vicious.

2. And vicious in consequence of a moral taint in their nature: for the evil is not to be accounted for by the influence of education or example, as some vainly say.

3. The divine government, in regard to man, is of a mixed character.

c. The atonement. Doctrine much objected to, as being deficient in rational evidence. The Christian doctrine of atonement is grounded on

1. Future punishment, which is

2. Unlimited: for which two arguments may be assigned. (1.) Present analogies. (2.) Doctrine of immortality.

3. The problem of the possibility of pardon, without such a relaxation of the divine government as would effectually nullify it, can only be solved by this great doctrine. Repentance and reformation are not only unavailing, but would, from the nature of the case, be impracticable. Illustration, Zaleucus.

d. Doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit.
1. No physical objection to this doctrine.
3. It is adapted to the moral destitution of man.
4. It presents an affecting view of the divine character.
5. It elevates our aspirations, and encourages us to the performance of the most difficult duties.

This branch of the internal evidence may be properly closed by noticing

(e.) The wonderful agreement in doctrine among the writers, though numerous, and writing at different periods.

(B.) Moral tendency of the Scriptures.

a) It has been asserted that the Bible has an immoral tendency, because it records the failings of some of its leading characters! Answered: — These frailties are always recorded for admonition; illustrated by David’s case.

N. B. The moral characters of Blount, Tyndal, Hobbes, Voltaire, &c., not very honourable to the cause which they espouse.

b.) Compare pagan morality with that of the Scriptures.

1. Great moral qualities attributed to the divine Being were abstract with them; but in Christ they are all exemplified.
2. No authority for moral rules among Pagans.
3. Their apprehension of moral principles was indistinct.
4. The same writers among heathen are of a lower grade than among Christians.

(C.) Style and manner of the sacred writers.

a.) Style, various, as it should be, being the productions of different individuals, in different ages. Marsh. Michaelis.

b.) Manner, artless and natural, possessing all the simplicity of truth.

III. Collateral evidence.
(A.) MARVELLOUS DIFFUSION OF CHRISTIANITY, especially during the first three centuries, confirmed by Tacitus, Pliny, Justin, Tertullian, Origen, until A. D. 300, when Christianity became the established religion of the Roman empire.


IV. MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

Preliminary remarks. (Chap. 20.)

1. Objections are often raised in great ignorance of the volume itself.

2. Hasty theories have been constructed, which have been found or thought to contradict the Scriptures; thus Deism arose in the sixteenth century in France, and in the seventeenth in England.

3. Herbert, Hobbes, Shaftesbury, and Hume, the chief English infidels; and the great principle of error with them all, is that of Herbert of Cherbury, viz., “the sufficiency of our natural faculties to form a religion for ourselves, and to decide upon the merits of revealed truth.”

I. Objections on moral grounds.

1. The command to the Israelites to exterminate the Canaanites. Ans. It cannot be proved inconsistent with the character of God to employ human agents, as well as natural, in such a work.

2. Law in Deuteronomy authorizing parents to accuse their children, &c. Ans. In fact this was a merciful regulation.

3. Intentional offering of Isaac by Abraham.

   Ans. (1.) Abraham had no doubt of the divine command.
   (2.) He obeyed, in faith that God would raise his son.

4. Indelicacy and immodesty have been charged upon the Scriptures.

   Ans. (1.) These sins are everywhere denounced as offensive to God.
   (2.) The passages alluded to are generally prohibitions of crime.
   (3.) The simplicity of early manners is to be considered.
Several others might be adduced, but a little skill in the languages and antiquities of Scripture will always clear up the main difficulties.

II. Objections on philosophical grounds.

1. Infidels are fond of contrasting (what they call) the simplicity of the book of nature with the mystery of the book of God.

Ans. (1.) Many doctrines and duties are comprehensible.

(2.) Facts may be revealed, and yet be incomprehensible: e. g., it is revealed that God is omnipresent, but not how he is so, &c.

(3.) But even in their boasted natural philosophy, revelation and mystery go hand in hand. The real causes of the phenomena named gravitation, cohesion, evaporation, &c., are unknown; and even in pure mathematics, such incomprehensibles occur.

2. From the minuteness of the earth as contrasted with the vastness of the material universe, infidelity argues the insignificance of man: thence the improbability of redemption.

Answered, (1.) By Dr. Beatty. (2.) By Granville Penn.

3. Objections are brought against the Mosaic chronology from two sources:

(1.) The chronology of ancient nations.

(2.) The structure of the earth.

As to the (1) class, the ancient chronologies are rapidly losing character, especially the Hindoo and Chinese, which make the greatest pretensions to antiquity. No reliance whatever is placed upon them.

As to the (2) geological objection, two solutions have been offered.

1. That the days of the Mosaic history are indefinite periods.

2. That an indefinite time elapsed between the beginning spoken of in Genesis 1:1, and the work of the six days.

To both these solutions our author objects, and prefers the views of Mr. Granville Penn.

4. It is objected that light was created on the first day, and the sun not until the fourth.
Several solutions.

5. Objections to Mosaic account of the deluge.

6. Objections as to number of animals taken into the ark with Noah.
PART SECOND. DOCTRINES OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

OUTLINE

I. DOCTRINES RELATING TO GOD.

(A.) Existence: (Ch. 1.)

(B.) Attributes: (Ch. 2.-7.)

(C.) Persons:

(I.) Doctrine of Trinity, (Ch. 8, 9.)

(II.) Divinity of Christ, (Ch. 10.-15.)

(III.) Humanity of Christ, (Ch. 16.)

(IV.) Personality and Deity of the Holy Ghost, (Ch. 17.)

II. DOCTRINES RELATING TO MAN.

(A.) Original sin: (Ch. 18.)

(B.) Redemption:

(I.) Principles of, (Ch. 19.-22.)

(II.) Benefits of, (Ch. 23.-29.)

I. DOCTRINES RELATING TO GOD. — (Ch. 1.-17.)

(A.) — EXISTENCE OF GOD. (Ch. 1.)

(I.) Source of the idea.

I. From the sacred writings.

1. From the names of God as recorded in Scripture:

2. From the actions which the Scriptures ascribe to him:

3. From the attributes with which they invest him.

II. From the sacred writings alone.

1. The language of the Christian philosophers, in regard to the Deity, is very different from the inconsistent and grovelling views of the sages of antiquity: e. g., Barrow, Pearson, Lawson, and Newton, are quoted.

2. The question of man’s ability to discover the existence of a first cause, cannot be determined by matter of fact
3. Nor can the abstract probability of such discovery be sustained. (1.) Uneducated man is a creature of appetite: — but he cannot be educated without civilization and society: — these have never existed, and we may safely say, can never exist, without a religious basis: but by the hypothesis, that basis, viz., the idea of God, is wanting.

(2.) Clear as the argument a posteriori now appears to us, yet all history shows that the eternity of matter has been an impassable barrier in the way of human reasoning, unaided by revelation, in the attempt to establish a divine existence.

(3.) The doctrine of innate ideas is exploded.

(II.) Proofs.

I. Preliminary observations.

(a.) On the relation of cause and effect.

1. The principle is, that nothing exists or comes to pass without an efficient cause.

2. Hume (probably following Hobbes) objects to this principle on the ground, that what we suppose to be necessary connexions, in nature, are or may be only habitual sequences, and that we cannot demonstrate them to be otherwise.

3. Answered by Dugald Stewart, who admits Hume’s doctrine indeed, but nullifies its evil results, by his distinction between efficient and physical causes. But

4. Our author supposes the true state of the case to be

(1.) That there are efficient causes, and that the relation between them and their effects is necessary.

(2.) That there are physical causes, the relation between which and their effects is necessary in this sense, viz., that GOD has established a certain order in nature, by which his own efficiency exerts itself. This is a very different notion from the unsatisfactory one of habitual sequence.

(b.) On the distinction between argument a priori and a posteriori. Superiority of the latter in this case.
II. Proof of the existence of God.

1. Locke’s argument. “I exist: I did not always exist: whatever begins to exist must have a cause: that cause must be adequate: this adequate cause is unlimited: it must be God.”

2. Howe’s argument. The same, but more expanded, thus: (1) Somewhat hath existed from eternity: hence (2) must be uncaused: hence (3) independent: hence (4) necessary: hence (5) self-active and hence (6) originally vital, and the source of all life.

III. Proof of the intelligence of God.

1. Dr. Samuel Clarke’s argument from the intelligence of man, and the variety, order, excellence, and contrivance of things: and especially from the existence of motion.

2. This last (viz., motion) expanded, from Howe’s Living Temple.

3. The basis of NATURAL THEOLOGY, as found in Howe’s Living Temple, — “Whatever exists, with the marks of wisdom and design upon it, had a wise and designing CAUSE. “ Illustrations,

(1.) A watch presented to an observer for the first time.

(2.) Much more, the heavenly bodies exhibit wisdom and contrivance.

(3.) The human frame especially.

1. The double members and their uses.
2. The eye, with its curious optical mechanism.
3. The spine: and, besides the frame of the body,

(4.) Its animal functions, and those of terrestrial creatures, viz.:

1. Growth.
3. Spontaneous motion.
4. Sensation.

(5.) Intellectual powers of man.

4. The instances of the watch, the eye, the double organs, and the spine largely illustrated by quotations from Paley’s Natural Theology.
IV. Proof of the personality of God.

(III.) Remarks.

I. Absurdity of Atheism.

1. As to the eternity of the world.
2. As to the eternity of unorganized matter.
3. Some modern schemes of Atheism, viz.:
   (1.) Buffon’s organic molecules.
   (2.) The system of appetencies. No other answer necessary than that these schemes are entirely wanting in evidence.

II. Character of the argument a priori.

1. It is unsatisfactory, and tends to lead men away from the sure argument, pointed out by Scripture, from “the things which do appear.”
2. The existence itself of a supreme Being can hardly be shown by this method. Indeed, even Dr. S. Clarke first proves the existence of “one unchangeable and independent Being,” a posteriori.
3. Some objections to Dr. S. Clarke’s view of the necessary existence of the supreme Being.

The being of God is necessary, because it is undervived; not underived because it is necessary.

(B.) — ATTRIBUTES OF GOD. (Ch. 2.-7.)

I. UNITY. (Ch. 2.)


1. The Scriptural notion is, that GOD is a pure simple being: so one, that there are no other gods: so one, that there can be no other gods.
2. If we admit the Scriptures, we admit a Deity: if we admit one God, we exclude all others.

(II.) Evidence from reason.
1. *A priori* argument is here unobjectionable, if logical.

(1.) Dr. Clarke’s shown to be useless.

(2.) Wollaston’s, Wilkins’, and Pearson’s arguments stated.

(3.) The best argument of the kind is that from the idea of *absolute perfection*.

2. *Proofs* may be derived also from the *works* of God.

(1.) In the *harmony* of the universe we discern but one *Will* and one *Intelligence*, and therefore but One Being.

(2.) *Uniformity of plan* in the universe, is a proof of the unity of God. Illustrations by Paley.

(III.) *Importance of this doctrine*.

The unity of God the basis of all true religion.

II. SPIRITUALITY. (Ch. 2.)

(I.) *Scriptural testimony*: “*GOD is a SPIRIT.*” Similar passages abound.

The immateriality of the divine Being is important, because of its connexion with the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul.

(II.) *Evidence from reason*, both as to the *spiritual* nature of *GOD*, and the *unthinking* nature of matter.

1. *GOD* is intelligent, therefore *GOD* is a spiritual Being, because intelligence is not a property of matter. For

(1.) *Unorganized* matter is certainly unintelligent, hence intelligence cannot be an *essential* property of matter: but *it is* an essential attribute of Deity, hence the Deity cannot be material.

(2.) Nor is *intelligence the result of material organization*, for

1. *Vegetables* are unintelligent.

2. Were intellect *constantly* conjoined with animal organization, we could deny the *necessity* of such connexion, but we deny this supposed constant connexion, and thus take away the basis of Priestley’s argument. This denial is based upon the following:
a.) The organization of the human frame is often perfect after death. But dead men do not think.

b.) The organism of Adam’s body was complete before he became a “living soul.”

(3.) But we may be told, that the subject supposed in the argument is a living organized being. This introduces a new element, viz., life, into the argument; but

1. Vegetables live, and yet do not think.
2. The organic life of Bichat is common to animals and vegetables.
3. The animal life is defined by Bichat, Lawrence, and even by Cuvier, to be the “sum total of its functions of a certain class.” Absurdity of this shown by quotations from Rennell and Barclay.

(4.) Further proofs that matter is incapable of thought, drawn from its essential properties of extension, impenetrability, divisibility, &c., none of which belong to thought.

(5.) The notions, matter and mind, are merely relative. Reid. Stewart. Immateriality of brutes not denied.

III. ETERNITY. (Ch. 3.)

1. Scriptural notion, God had no beginning and shall have no end: “From everlasting to everlasting,” &c.

2. These representations evidently convey something more than the mere idea of infinite duration. Life is essential to God: he lives by virtue of his own nature, which can be said of him alone.

3. Some obscure notions of the eternity prevailed among the heathens, probably derived from the Jewish Scriptures.


(1.) Duration, as applied to God, is an extension of the same idea, as applied to ourselves.

(2.) The objection to this, (viz., that it would argue imperfection,) arises from the confounding succession in the duration with change in the substance.
(3.) If it be said that *succession* is only an artificial method of conceiving or measuring duration, it may be answered, that leagues measure the ocean, but leagues are not the ocean, though both leagues and the ocean may actually exist.

**IV. OMNIPOTENCE.** (Ch. 3.)

(I.) *Scriptural testimony.*

1. Reasons why this attribute is so much dwelt upon by the sacred writers, viz., to secure the *obedience, worship,* and *confidence* of man.


(a.) By the fact of *creation.*

(b.) By the *vastness* and *variety* of the works of God.

(c.) By the *ease* with which he is said to create and uphold all things.

(d.) By the *terrible* descriptions given of the divine power.

(e.) By the subjection of all *intelligent* beings to his will.

3. The power of all these descriptions lies in their *truth.*

4. The works of GOD *manifestations,* but not the *measure,* of his omnipotence.

(II.) Only *limitation* to the divine power: no working of contradictions, or impossibilities.

**V. OMNIPRESENCE.** (Ch. 3.)

1. Scriptural testimony.

2. Heathen notions of omnipresence: some striking, but all defective.

3. Similar errors pervade the infidel philosophy of modern times.

4. The Scriptural phrases in which this doctrine is conveyed, must be taken in their common-sense acceptation.

5. Illustrations of this doctrine from the material world, quoted from Amory and Paley.

6. The *a priori* argument stated.
7. The manner in which God is everywhere present, incomprehensible.

VI. OMNISCIENCE. (Ch. 4.)

(I.) Scriptural statement of the doctrine.
1. Direct texts: “Great is the Lord, his understanding is INFINITE,” &c.
2. Argument in Psalm 94, from the communication of knowledge to men, illustrated by a quotation from Tillotson.
3. The sacred writers refer to the works of God for confirmation.

(II.) The Pagans had many fine sentiments in regard to the divine omniscience, but the moral of the doctrine was wanting.

(III.) The doctrine of foreknowledge examined. Unquestionably it is a Scriptural doctrine; but from its difficulty, &c., three theories have arisen:

1. Theory of Chevalier Ramsay. “It is a matter of choice in God, to think of finite ideas.” Answer to this theory,
   1. God’s omnipotence is an infinite capacity, but omniscience actually comprehends all things that are or can be.
   2. Choice implies a reason, and that implies knowledge of the things rejected.
   3. Some contingent actions have been foreknown by God, and indeed foretold by his prophets.

2. Theory, — “That prescience of contingent events implies a contradiction, hence the absence of such prescience is no dishonour to God.” Answer,
   (a.) This theory is defective so long as the Scriptures are allowed to contain prophecies of rewardable and punishable actions, such as
   1. The long course of events connected with the destruction of Babylon.
   2. The contingencies involved in the destruction of Jerusalem.
   (b.) The principle, that “certain prescience destroys contingency,” cannot be sustained. 1.) The manner of the divine prescience is indeed incomprehensible, but the fact is undeniably asserted in Scripture; but 2.)
The principle itself is founded upon a sophism, which lies in supposing that *contingency* and *certainty* are opposed to each other: while in fact they are not; but *contingency* and *necessity*. It is *knowledge*, and not influence. Opinions of Dr. Samuel Clarke, Dr. Copleston, and Curcellæus.

(3.) Theory, — “That the foreknowledge of God must be supposed to differ so much from anything of the kind in ourselves, that no argument respecting it can be grounded on our imperfect notions.” — maintained by Archbishop King and Dr. Copleston. Objections to this theory are,

(a.) The difficulty is *shifted*, not taken away.

(b.) These notions are dangerous: — for if, in the language of Archbishop King, “we can have no *proper notion* of the faculties we ascribe to the divine Being,” we have no proper revelation of the divine character at all. But, to examine more minutely, we say that this theory *introduces* difficulties, instead of removing them; and

1. It *assumes* that our notions of God are framed from the results of our *observation* of his works, &c., which is not the case; — they are derived from express revelation.

2. We may form a *true* notion, though not an *adequate* one, of the divine perfections. To be *incomprehensible* is not to be *unintelligible*.

3. This theory *assumes* that the nature of God is *essentially* different from the spiritual nature of man, which is not the doctrine of Scripture.

4. Wherever the language of Scripture is metaphorical, it is distinctly so; — so that the argument drawn from the ascription of *bodily* functions, and even of human *passions*, to the divine Being, fails when applied to intellectual and moral powers.

(c.) We say then, lastly, that there is no incongruity between divine prescience and human freedom, unless *influence* be superadded to necessitate the human will, Quotation from Edwards.

VII. IMMUTABILITY. (Ch. 5.)


(II.) Confirmations from *observation.*
1. The stability of the general order of nature.

2. The moral government of God, and

(III.) This immutability is not temporary, but a sovereign, essential perfection of the Deity, as we learn from Scripture. He changes not, because he is "the Lord."

(IV.) The divine immutability is not contradicted, but confirmed, by the variety of his operations, regards, and affections, toward the same creatures under different circumstances.

(V.) Cautions are necessary against certain speculations on the divine immutability — such as, that there are no emotions and no succession of ideas with God, — or, according to Ridgely, that “God’s knowledge is independent of the object known.”

1. In these, the distinction between things possible and things actual is overlooked.

2. And also the distinction between God’s knowledge of all possible things, and of those things to which he determined, before the creation, to give actual existence.

(VI.) The liberty of God is closely allied to his immutability, and a proper idea of this will correct the false notions above alluded to.

VIII. WISDOM. (Ch. 5.)

(I.) The Scriptures testify abundantly to the nice application of God’s knowledge to secure his own ends.

(II.) A few of the characters of the divine wisdom, as thus exhibited.

1. It acts for worthy ends.

2. Its means are simple: great effects from few elements.

3. Variety of equally perfect operation: e. g. (1.) Variety of form. (2.) Variety of magnitude.

4. The connexion and dependence of the works of God.

5. The means by which offending men are reconciled to God, — the most eminent manifestations of the wisdom of God.
IX. GOODNESS. (Ch. 6.)

(I.) Scriptural testimony.

1. It is goodness of nature, an essential perfection of the divine character.

2. It is efficient and inexhaustible: — it “endureth forever.”

3. The divine Being takes pleasure in the exercise of it: — he “delights in mercy.”

4. Nothing, capable of happiness, comes from his hand, except in circumstances of positive felicity.

(II.) Evidence from the natural and moral world.

(1.) The dark side. 1.) Positive evils on the globe: volcanoes, sterility, &c. 2.) Diseases and sufferings of the human race. 3.) Sufferings and death of animals.

(2.) The bright side. 1.) Design of every contrivance essentially beneficial: e. g., teeth are contrived to eat, not to ache. But to this may be objected (1) venomous animals, and (2) animals preying upon one another.

As to (1.) So far as the animal itself is concerned, the contrivance is good.

As to (2.) The following points are to be considered. 1.) Immortality on earth is out of the question. 2.) Is not death in this way better than decay? 3.) The system is the spring of motion and activity to brutes.

The bright side. 2.) The happiness of animal existence. 3.) Many alleviations of positive evils. 4.) Many ills are chargeable upon man’s own misconduct. Consider an individual case, — the good circumstances about him far counterbalance all other.

(3.) The theory of optimism: viz., that the present system is the best which the nature of things would admit.

1. The very principle of this hypothesis implies an unworthy notion of God: considering it (1) as to natural, (2) as to moral evils.

2. We deny, then, that “whatever is, is best.” We can not only conceive a better state of things, but can show that the evils of the present state do not necessarily exist. Sin has entered into the world, and God is just, as well as good.
The state of the world exactly answers to the Scriptural representations of the relations between man and God. Illustrated by quotations from Gisborne, 1.) As to the actual appearance of the globe. 2.) By reference to the general deluge. 3.) By the human frame. 4.) By the occupations of man — farmers — shepherds — miners — manufacturers — merchants.

(III.) The origin of evil. There are four leading opinions.

1. Necessity.
2. The Manichean doctrine of duality.
3. The doctrine that God is the author of sin. And
4. That evil is the result of the abuse of moral freedom.

1. Refutes itself.
2. Is now given up.
3. Found among the most unguarded Calvinistic writers, but now generally abandoned.
4. Is the opinion generally adopted, and agrees with the Scriptural statement of the creation and fall of man.

(IV.) The mercy of God is a mode of his goodness.

X. HOLINESS. (Ch. 7.)

Preliminary. 1. It is clear that God “loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity.”

2. And this from some essential principle of his nature. This principle we call holiness, which exhibits itself in two great branches, viz.: —

(I.) JUSTICE,

1. Character of, when particular, (not universal.)

(a.) Legislative, which determines man’s duty and binds him to its performance.

(b.) Judicial or distributive, which respects rewards and punishments; and is either 1) præmiative, or 2) vindictive, but always impartial.

2. Reconciled with the divine administration.

(a.) By the fact that man is under a dispensation of mercy.
(b.) By the doctrine of general judgment, which is grounded on that of redemption.

3. Inferences.

(a.) That great offenders may prosper in this life, without impeachment of God’s government.

(b.) That God’s children may be afflicted and oppressed.

(c.) That an administration of grace may be apparently unequal without injustice. But,

(d.) As nations have no posthumous existence, national rewards and punishments have been in all ages visible and striking.

(II.) TRUTH, which in Scripture is contemplated under the two great branches of veracity and faithfulness.

1. His veracity regards his word. No deception here.

2. His faithfulness regards his engagements, which never fail.

A few general ascriptions of excellence may here be noticed. 1.) God is perfect. 2.) God is all-sufficient. 3.) God is unsearchable. Support each by Scriptural passages.

(C.) — PERSONS OF THE GODHEAD.

(I.) DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY. (Ch. viii, 9.)

I. Preliminary remarks and explanations.

1. This doctrine cannot be demonstrated either a priori or a posteriori. Attempts of Poiret, Kidd, &c., noticed. It rests entirely on Scripture.

2. Pretensions to explain this doctrine are highly objectionable.

3. Perhaps it may be admitted that types and symbols of the mystery of the trinity are to be found in natural objects.

4. Explanation of the term person: 1.) In ordinary language. 2.) In a strict philosophical sense. It is not applied in the latter sense to the divine Being; but the distinct persons are represented as having a common foundation in one being: the manner of the union being incomprehensible. Objection to the term, as not being Scriptural, answered.

II. Importance of the doctrine stated, (I.) Chiefly in answer to Dr. Priestley.

1. The knowledge of GOD is fundamental to religion.

2. Dr. P. allows its necessity “to explain some particular texts.” But we can show that these “texts” comprehend a large portion of Scripture.

3. Our views of God, as the object of our worship, are affected.

4. Dr. P. objects, “that no fact in nature, nor purpose in morals, requires this doctrine.”

   1.) As to the natural world, (1.) It is adapted to the scheme of orthodox Christianity, and not to Socinianism, which does not admit of redemption. (2.) The duration of the natural world, is another relation to theology. It was made for Christ.

   2.) As to morals. (1.) Morals are conformity to a divine law, which must take its character of its Author. (2.) Faith is obedience to command, and therefore part of morals.

(II.) Importance of this doctrine, on broader grounds.

1. Our love to God, which is the substance of religion, is essentially affected by our views of this doctrine.

2. In other equally essential views, the denial of Christ’s divinity essentially alters the Christian scheme, viz.

   1.) The doctrine of atonement is denied by Socinians, though inconsistently admitted by Arians.

   2.) Views of the evil of sin are essentially modified.

   3.) The character of Christian experience essentially changed, as to repentance, faith, prayer, love, &c.

   4.) The religious affections of hope, trust, joy, &c., are all interfered with.
5.) The language of the Church of Christ must be altered and brought down to these views.

6.) The doctrine of divine agency must be changed.

3. The denial of the doctrine of the trinity affects the credit of the Holy Scriptures; for if this doctrine be not contained in them, their tendency to mislead is obvious.

III. Difficulties are said to attend the reception of this doctrine. But,

1. Mere difficulty in conceiving of what is proper to God, forms no objection.

2. No contradiction is implied in this great doctrine.

3. The Arian and Socinian hypotheses do not relieve us from difficulties.

IV. Scripture testimony. (Ch. 9.)

Preliminary. Every argument in favour of the trinity flows from the principle of the absolute Unity of God, which is laid down in the Scriptures with the utmost solemnity, and guarded with the utmost care by precepts, threatening, and promises. But in examining what the Scriptures teach concerning this ONE GOD, we find that,

A. The very names of God have plural forms, and are connected with plural modes of speech.

Examples: Deuteronomy 6:4; Aleim; Adonim, &c.

B. Three persons, and three ONLY, are spoken of in Scripture under divine titles. Example


2. The vision of Isaiah, with the allusions to it by St. John and St. Paul in the New Testament.

3. Various passages in the New Testament might be cited — in which sometimes two, sometimes three, but never more than three, persons are spoken of. 1 John 5:7, is laid out of the argument, as uncertain.
C. The great proof on which the doctrine rests: — the multiplied instances in which two persons are spoken of, as associated with God in his perfections.

1. The outline of Scriptural testimony is given, as to the Son.

2. The same as to the Spirit.

Therefore, as the Scriptures uniformly declare but one God, and yet do throughout declare three persons Divine, — we harmonize these apparently opposite doctrines in the proposition — the three persons are one God. These views are maintained in the orthodox church, and are chargeable with no greater mystery than is assignable to the Scriptures. We do not give up the unity of God. The Socinian unity is a unity of one: ours is a unity of three.

(II.) Divinity of Christ, (Ch. 10-15,) proved,

A. By His Pre-Existence, (Ch. 10.)
B. Because He Was the Jehovah Of the Old Testament, (Ch. 11.)
C. Because Divine Titles Are Ascribed To Him, (Ch. 12.)
D. Because Divine Attributes Belong To Him, (Ch. 13.)
E. Because Divine Acts Are Ascribed To Him, (Ch. 14.)
F. Because Divine Worship Is Paid To Him, (Ch. 15.)

A. Pre-Existence of Christ. (Ch. 10.)

The pre-existence of Christ, if established, though it does not affect the Arian, destroys the Socinian hypothesis: hence both ancient and modern Socinians have bent all arts of interpretation against those passages which expressly declare it, of which the following are examples: —

1. John 1:15: “He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me.” The Socinians interpret the last clause in the sense of dignity, and not of time. But John uses the same phrase elsewhere in regard to priority of time. If the last referred to the dignity of Christ, it would have been ἐστι, not ἦν, — he is, not he was.

2. The passages which express that Christ came down from heaven.

(1.) The early Socinians supposed that Christ was translated to heaven after his birth. Unsupported by Scripture.
(2.) The modern Socinians conveniently resolve the whole into figure: —  
1. Ascending into heaven. 2. Coming down from heaven.

3. John 6:62: “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend to where he was before?”

4. The phrase, to “be sent from God.”

5. John 8:58: “Before Abraham was, I am.”

6. John 17:5: “The glory which I had with thee before the world was.” It has thus been shown that Christ had an existence previous to his incarnation, and previous to the very foundation of the world.

B. JESUS CHRIST THE JEHOVAH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. (Ch. xi,)

In the Old Testament we cannot fail to notice the frequent supernatural appearances to the ancient patriarchs and prophets. The facts cannot be disputed; and in order to show their bearing upon the question of the divinity of Christ, we have three propositions to establish, viz.: —

I. The person who made these appearances was truly a DIVINE PERSON.

1. Proof. He bears the names of the divine Being, and was the object of worship to the Israelites. (1.) Hagar in the wilderness. (2.) Abraham in the plains of Mamre. (3.) Isaac and Jacob. (4.) The same Jehovah visible to Moses. The same JEHOVAH attended the Israelites.

2. Objections. (1.) This personage is called “the Angel of the Lord.” Ans. Angel is a designation of office, not of nature. The collation of a few passages will show that JEHOVAH and the Angel of the Lord, in this eminent sense, were the same person. (2.) The Arian hypothesis is, that the appearing angel was Christ personating the Deity. Shown to be untenable. (3.) The Socinian notion is the marvellous doctrine of occasional personality, to use Priestley’s term. Mysterious and absurd enough.

II. This divine person was NOT God the Father.

1. The argument from the passage, “No man hath seen God,” &c. is plausible, but cannot be depended upon.

2. The real argument is from the appellation angel.
III. This divine person was the promised Messiah, and consequently Jesus Christ.

(1.) Scriptural proof.

1. Jeremiah asserts that the new covenant was to be made by the same person who made the old: “Behold the days come,” &c.

2. Malachi’s striking prediction, “Behold I will send my messenger,” &c. This prophecy is expressly applied to Christ, by St. Mark.

3. “The voice of him that crieth,” &c. Here the application of the prophecy was expressly made to our Lord, by the Baptist.

4. “Behold a virgin shall conceive,” &c. “Unto us a child is born.”

5. Psalm 68. is applied by St. Paul to Christ.

6. Christ is represented by St. Peter, as preaching by his Spirit in the days of Noah.

7. St. Paul, 1 Corinthians, “Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted.”

8. Hebrews 12:25, 26, “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.”

(2.) Confirmation by the testimony of the fathers, viz.: — Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Clemens, Origen, Theophilus, Cyprian, Hilary, and Basil.

(3.) Two objections to this doctrine from Scripture are easily answered.

1. “God who at sundry times,” &c. Ans. We do allow the occasional manifestation of the Father to be recorded in the Old Testament.

2. “If the word spoken by angels,” &c. Here the apostle refers to the judicial law which was given through angels. They were not the authors of the law, but the medium of its communication to men.

IV. Divine titles ascribed to Christ. (Ch. 12.)

If the titles given to Christ in the Scriptures are such as can designate a divine Being, then is Christ divine, otherwise the Scriptures deceive.

I. The title JEHOVAH.
Instances of this have already been given, and indeed Socinians admit the fact by their attempts to explain it away: — thus Dr. Priestley asserts that the name JEHOVAH is sometimes given to places. Miserable pretence. Force of the argument distinctly stated.

II. The title LORD, (Κυρίος,) which is applied to Christ in the New Testament, is in its highest sense universally allowed to belong to God: and we can show that it is applied to Christ in this highest sense.

1. Both by the LXX. and the writers of the New Testament, it is the term by which the name JEHOVAH is translated.

2. When the title is not employed in the New Testament to render the name Jehovah, it is still manifest, by the context, that the writers considered and used it as a divine title.

III. The title GOD. It is admitted even by Socinians, that Jesus Christ is called God. We have then to show

1. That in its highest sense, the term GOD involves the notion of absolute divinity. Sir I. Newton and Dr. S. Clarke consider it a relative term, importing, strictly, nothing more than dominion. Ans. (1.) By Dr. Waterland. (2.) By Dr. Randolph.

2. That the term is found used of Christ in this highest sense.

(1.) Matthew 1:23, “EMANUEL — God with us.” The Socinians object to this passage, 1.) That it is of doubtful authority; but this objection rests on (confessedly) a narrow foundation. 2.) That the divinity of Christ can no more be argued from the name EMANUEL, than the divinity of Eli, whose name signifies “my God.” But this was the common name of Eli; not so Emanuel, which was a descriptive title, given by revelation.

(2.) Luke 1:16, 17: “And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the LORD THEIR GOD,”

(3.) John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the WORD was with God, and the Word was God,” &c. 1.) The Logos in this passage is called God, in the highest sense. Three reasons. 2.) Criticism on the Greek article, annexed by Dr. Middleton. 3.) Socinians assert that γίνομαι never signifies to create. Ans. It is thus used in the following passages:

Hebrews 4:3; Hebrews 11:3; James 3:9. 4.) They translate the
passage also, “All things were made for him.” This interpretation effectually destroys the other. But δια, with a genitive, denotes not the final but the efficient cause.

(4.) John 20:28: “Thomas answered… my Lord and my God.” Socinians make this a mere ejaculation!

(5.) Titus 2:13: “Looking for that blessed hope… great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

(6.) Hebrews 1:8: “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.” Two Socinian objections answered.

(7.) 1 John 5:20: “This is the true God, and eternal life.”

(8.) Romans 9:5: “Whose are the fathers… God blessed forever.” 1.) Four points to be noted in regard to this text. 2.) All attempts to weaken the force of this powerful passage have failed.

IV. The title “KING OF ISRAEL.” The writers of the New Testament could not use this appellation in a lower sense than that which it holds in the Old Testament: it is sufficient to show that it was understood by the Jews to imply divinity. 1.) Nathanael’s exclamation, and 2.) The expressions of the revilers at the crucifixion, are sufficient proofs of this.

V. The title “SON OF GOD,” demands a larger notice, inasmuch as Socinians restrain its significance to the mere humanity of Christ; and many who hesitate not to admit the divinity of Christ, coincide with the Socinians as to the Sonship. This subject is treated as follows: —

The fact is not disputed, that the title Son of God was applied to Christ. The question then is, what this title imported. One opinion is,

(I.) That the title was assumed by Christ because of his miraculous conception. But

1. Our Lord always permitted the Jews to consider him the son of Joseph.

2. When arguing with the Jews, expressly to establish that God was his Father, Christ made no reference to the miraculous conception.

3. Nathanael knew not but Christ was son of Joseph, yet called him “The Son of God, and the King of Israel.”
4. The confession of Peter. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” was made without reference to the miraculous conception; and probably before that fact was made known to the apostles.

(II.) Another opinion is, that the title, “SON OF GOD,” was simply an appellation of Messiah, — an official, not a personal designation. But the evangelical history fully refutes this notion, by showing that the Jews regarded the title “SON OF GOD” as necessarily involving a claim to divinity, but did not so regard “MESSIAH.”

(III.) In the Old Testament we find that the title, “Son of God,” was a personal designation; that the Sonship was essential, but the Messiahship accidental.

1. Psa. 2: “Thou art my SON, this day have I begotten thee.” (1.) This cannot be interpreted with reference to the miraculous conception. (2.) Nor with reference to the resurrection; for 1.) Christ was asserted to be the “beloved Son,” before his resurrection; and 2.) Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, tells us that the resurrection of Christ was the declaration of his Sonship, not the ground of it. Argument corroborated by a quotation from Witsius.

2. Proverbs 8:22. Solomon introduces the personal wisdom of God, under the same relation of a Son.

The ancient Jewish writers speak of the generation of “Wisdom,” and by that term mean “the Word.”

3. Micah 5:2: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephrata,” &c. This passage carefully distinguishes the human nature from the eternal generation: — as two goings forth are spoken of, 1.) A natural one, “from Bethlehem to Judah;” 2.) Another and higher, “from the days of eternity.”

The glosses of Priestley and others, which would make this passage refer to the promises or purpose of God from everlasting, are shown to be absurd.

4. Proverbs 30:4: “What is his name, and what is his Son’s name,” &c. Here there is no reference to Messiahship.

Thus the Scriptures of the Old Testament furnished the Jews with the idea of a personal Son in the divine nature.
The same ideas of divine Sonship are suggested in the New Testament.

1. “When Jesus was baptized… This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (1.) This name, Son of God, was not here given with reference to the resurrection. (2.) Nor with reference to the Messiahship. Nor (3.) With reference to the miraculous conception. It must follow then that Christ was, in a higher nature than his human, and for a higher reason than an official one, the “Son of God.”

2. The epithet, “only begotten,” affords further proof of the Sonship of Christ in his divine nature.

3. Those passages which declare that all things were made by the Son, and that God “sent his Son,” imply that the Creator was the Son of God before he was sent into the world.

It is assumed, but not proved, by some, that the title Son is thus applied by a mere interchange of titles between the human and divine nature.

4. Those passages which connect the title “Son” immediately, and by way of eminence, with the divinity, remain to be considered. Such are — “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” John 5:17. “I and my Father are one.” John 10:30. “Art thou the Son of God?” Ans. by Christ: “Ye say that I am.”

5. In the apostolic writings we find equal proof that the title “Son of God” was used even by way of opposition to the human nature, (1.) Romans 1:3, 4: “Declared to be the Son of God with power,” &c. (2.) The apostle’s argument in the first chapter of Epistle to Hebrews. (3.) Romans 8:3: “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.” (4.) “Moses was faithful as a servant, but Christ as a SON.” (5.) All those passages in which the first person is called the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Recapitulation of the argument.

(V.) Importance of the admission of the eternal filiation of our Lord.

Some divines, believing the divinity of Christ, have yet opposed the eternal Sonship; but they have nearly, if not quite, adopted Unitarian modes of interpretation; and on a point confessedly fundamental, they differ from the opinions held by the orthodox church in all ages. The following
consequences of denying the divine filiation of Christ are worthy of note:

1. A loose method of interpretation.

2. The destruction of all *relation* among the persons of the Godhead.

3. The loss of the Scriptural idea, that the Father is the *fountain* of Deity.

4. The same of the perfect *equality*, and yet *subordination*, of the Son.

5. The overthrow of the doctrine of the love of the Father in the gift of his Son. Episcopius’s argument.

**(VI.)** *Objections* to the divine Sonship considered.

**VI.** The title *WORD*. Used principally by the evangelist John. Two inquiries arise here, viz.: —

**I.** *Whence the evangelist drew the use of this appellation?* Ans.

(1.) From the *Scriptures* of the Old Testament: by quotations from which it is shown to be a *theological* and not a *philosophic* title; and one which had received the stamp of inspiration. a. Genesis 15:1. b. Psalm 18:30. c. 1 Samuel 3:21. d. 2 Samuel 7:21; 1 Chronicles 17:19.

(2.) The *Targums* further evince the theological origin of this appellation. Illustrated by a number of quotations and references.

(3.) Philo and the philosophic Jews, then, may be spared in this inquiry; but it can be shown, 1. That if Philo possessed the idea of a personal Logos, he did not derive it from Plato. 2. That he *did* derive it from the established theology of his nation.

**II.** *What reasons led the evangelist to adopt this appellation?* It is supposed that John wrote with a view to the suppression of the Gnostic heresy: in order to afford the clearest refutation of those who denied the pre-existence of Christ.

**III.** *Argument from its use, against Socinianism.*

1. St. John says, the Logos “was that light, but John Baptist was not.” Here is a parallel between *two persons* — not between a *person* and an *attribute*. 
2. The Logos became man. But how could an attribute become man? The personality of the Logos being established, his divinity follows of course.

D. CHRIST POSSESSED OF DIVINE ATTRIBUTES. (Ch. 13.)

God is made known to us by his attributes. Should, then, the same attributes be found ascribed in Scripture to Christ, we infer directly that Christ is God.


II. OMNIPRESENCE is ascribed to him. (1.) “No man hath ascended up to heaven,” &c. (2.) “Where two or three are gathered together,” &c. (3.) “Lo, I am with you always,” &c. (4.) “By him all things consist.”

III. OMNISCIENCE is ascribed to Christ. Two kinds of knowledge peculiar to God:

1. A perfect knowledge of the thoughts and intents of the human heart. This is expressly attributed to Christ. (1.) “He knew what was in man.” (2.) The word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (3.) Interpretation of Mark 13:32.

2. The knowledge of futurity. This is also ascribed to Christ, John 6:64, and 13:11; and all the predictions uttered by him, and which are nowhere referred by him to inspiration, are in proof of his possessing this attribute.

IV. OMNIPOTENCE is ascribed to Christ. (1.) Revelation 1:8. (2.) To the Jews he said, “What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” (3.) All the Scriptural argument from the ascription of divine attributes to Christ, may be summed up with his own remarkable declaration, “All things which the Father hath are mine: John 16:15.

E. DIVINE ACTS ARE ASCRIBED TO CHRIST. (Ch. 14.)

I. Creation. Socinians admit that creation out of nothing is the work of a divine power, and therefore interpret those passages of the New Testament which speak of Christ as a Creator, as referring to a moral creation, or to the regulation of all things in the evangelical dispensation. Absurdity of this.
1. The creation of “all things” is ascribed to Christ, in the introduction to St. John’s Gospel. This can only be understood of a physical creation.

2. “By whom also he made the worlds.” Hebrews 1:2. Two Socinian glosses are offered.

(1.) To render the words, “for whom also;” &c. But δια with a genitive, never signifies the final cause, setting aside the absurdity of the worlds being made for a mere man.

(2.) To understand “the worlds” — тοὺς αἰώνας — for the gospel dispensation; — but the same phrase is used in the eleventh chapter, where it can only be understood of a physical creation: — and in the close of the, first chapter the apostle reiterates the doctrine of the creation of the world by Jesus Christ.

3. Colossians 1:15-17: “Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by him were all things created,” &c.

Socinian gloss: — “Here is meant the great change introduced into the moral world by the dispensation of the gospel.”

(1.) The Arian notion, that by “first-born” is meant “first created,” is easily refuted. As to date of his being, he was “before all created things.” As to the manner of it, he was by generation, not creation.

(2.) As for the Socinian gloss, it makes the apostle say, that Christ was the first-made member of the Christian Church; and the reason for this is, that he made the Church!

II. The preservation of the universal frame of things is ascribed to Christ.

III. The final destruction of material nature is also expressly attributed to him.

IV. Our Lord claims, generally, to perform the works of his Father: also, to possess original miraculous powers.

V. He promises to send the Holy Spirit.

VI. The forgiveness of sins, unquestionably a peculiar act of Deity, claimed by Christ.

F. DIVINE WORSHIP PAID TO CHRIST. (Ch. 15.)
(a.) The fact established.

I. Prior to his ascension.

1.) The case of the leper. 2.) Of the blind man. 3.) The disciples.

N.B. Our Lord did not receive these acts of worship as a civil ruler.

II. Subsequent to his ascension.

1.) Luke 24:51, 52: “He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven, and they worshipped him,” &c. 2.) The prayer of the apostles, when filling up the place of Judas. 3.) Supplications of Stephen, the protomartyr. Futility of the Socinian gloss, and that of Dr. Priestley. 4.) Paul’s prayer, when afflicted with the “thorn in the flesh.” 5.) Paul’s prayer in behalf of the Thessalonians.

III. Adoration of Christ among heavenly beings.


IV. All the doxologies to Christ, and all the benedictions made in his name, in common with those of the Father and the Holy Spirit, are forms of worship.

(b.) Its bearing examined.

1. From the avowed religious sentiments of the apostles, they could not pay religious worship to Christ unless they considered him a divine person.

2. We collect the same from their uniform practice.

3. The Arian doctrine of supreme and inferior worship refuted by Dr. Waterland.

4. The Socinians, more consistently, refuse to “honour the Son as… . the Father.” The passage, Philippians 2:5-7, is shown to contain the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, without which it cannot be rationally interpreted.

(III.) PERSON OF CHRIST. (Ch. 16.)

I. HUMANITY of Christ. In the early church it was necessary to establish that Christ possessed a real human nature. Notice the following
1. **Erroneous opinions.** 1.) The Gnostics denied the real existence of the *body* of Christ. 2.) The Apollinarian heresy rejected the existence of a human *soul* in our Lord. 3.) Among those who held the union of the two natures in Christ, there were various opinions — those of the Nestorians, Monophysites, and Monothelites.

2. The *true sense* of Scripture was given by the *Council of Chalcedon*, in the fifth century: — with whose formula the Athanasian Creed agrees, and the orthodox church has adopted this creed. Certainly, without keeping in view the *completeness* of each nature, we shall find it impossible, in many places, to apprehend the sense of the Scriptures.

**II.** The *union of the two natures of Christ in one hypostasis* is equally essential to the full exposition of the Scriptures. The following passages illustrate this: —

1. “The Word was made *flesh*.”

2. “The Church of *God*, purchased by *his own blood*.”

Digression — to examine Dr. P. Smith’s view of orthodox language.

3. “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*.”

4. “When he had *by himself* purged our sins,” &c.

These and similar passages may be embraced under the two following classes: — 1.) Those which speak of the *efficacy* of the sufferings of Christ for remission of sins. 2.) Those which argue from the compassion, &c., of our Lord, to the exercise of confidence in him.

**III. Errors as to the person of Christ.**

1. Arianism: so called from its author, Arius, whose characteristic tenet was that Christ was the first and most exalted of creatures.

2. Sabellianism: which, asserting the divinity of the Son and the Spirit, and denying the personality of both, stands equally opposed to Arianism and Trinitarianism.

3. Socinianism, in which the two former are now nearly merged. This last has been fully refuted by the establishment of the Scripture doctrine of a
trinity of divine persons in the unity of the Godhead, which involves a refutation of the other two heresies.

(IV.) PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY GHOST. (Ch. 17.)

I. As to the manner of the Being of the Holy Ghost — the orthodox doctrine is, that as Christ is GOD by an eternal FILIATION, so the Spirit is God by PROCESSION from the Father and the Son. The doctrine of procession rests on direct Scripture authority, as stated by Bishop Pearson.


2. The very expressions which are spoken of the Holy Spirit in relation to the FATHER, are also spoken of the same Spirit in relation to the SON.

II. Arius regarded the Spirit as created by Christ; but afterward his followers considered the Holy Ghost as the exerted energy of God, which notion, with some modifications, is adopted by Socinians.

III. Scriptural argument for the personality and deity of the Holy Ghost.

(a.) From the frequent association in Scripture of a person, under that appellation, with two other persons, one of whom, “the Father,” is by all acknowledged to be divine; and the ascription to each, or to the three in union, of the same acts, titles, authority, and worship, in an equal degree.

1. Association of the three persons in creative acts.
2. Do. in the preservation of all things.
3. Do. in the inspiration of the prophets.
4. Do. as objects of supreme worship.
5. Do. in the form of baptism.

(b) Some other arguments for

(1.) The personality of the Spirit. 1.) He proceeds from the Father and Son, and cannot therefore be either. 2.) Many Scriptures are absurd unless the Holy Ghost be a person. 3.) The Holy Ghost is spoken of in many passages where personification is impossible. 4.) The use of masculine pronouns and relatives in the Greek of the New Testament, in connexion with the neuter noun πνεῦμα — Spirit.
The divinity of the Spirit. 1.) He is the subject of blasphemy. 2.) He is called God. 3.) He is the source of inspiration.

II. DOCTRINES RELATING TO MAN. — (Ch. 18.-xxix.)

(A.) — ORIGINAL SIN.

   I. Man’s primitive condition.
   II. Testimony of Scripture as to the fall of man.
   III. Results of the fall, to Adam and his posterity.

I. MAN’S PRIMITIVE CONDITION.

(I.) Adam was made under law, as all his descendants are born under law.

1. There is evidence of the existence of a moral as well as a natural government of the universe.

2. The law under which all moral agents — angels, devils, or men — are placed, there is reason to believe, is, in its great principles, the same.

3. Each particular law supposes the general one. Law was not first introduced into the world when the law of Moses was engraven on the tables of stone.

(II.) The history of man’s creation in brief.

1. The manner of the narration indicates something peculiar and eminent in the being formed. “And God said, Let us make man in our image,” &c.

2. The image of God — in what did it consist?

   (1.) Not in the body.

   (2.) Not in the dominion granted to man in this lower world.

   (3.) Nor in any one essential quality: — as the evidence of Scripture is sufficiently explicit, that it comprises what may be lost and regained.

   (4.) But, theologically speaking, we have

   (a.) The natural image of God — consisting of spirituality, immortality, and intellectual powers.
(b.) The moral image proved from the following passages of Scripture: —
(1.) Ecc. 7: “God made man upright.” (2.) Colossians 3:10. (3.) Ephesians 4:24. (4.) “And God saw… and behold it was very good.”

(5.) As to the degree of Adam’s perfection in the image of God, there are two extreme opinions. Without falling into either of these; we have the following conclusions: —

1. Adam was sinless both in act and principle.
2. He possessed the faculty of knowledge, and also
3. Holiness and righteousness, which express not only sinlessness, but positive and active virtues.

3. Objection to the creation of man in the moral image of God, by Dr. Taylor, answered.

(1.) The fallacy of the objection lies in confounding habits of holiness with the principle.
(2.) Answer quoted from Wesley.
(3.) From Edwards.

4. Final cause of the creation of man — the display of the glory of God, and principally of his moral perfections.

II. THE FALL OF MAN.

The Mosaic account, (the garden, serpent, &c.,) teaches of, (1) the existence of an evil spirit; (2) the introduction of a state of moral corruptness into human nature; and (3) a vicarious atonement for sin. There are three classes of opinions held among the interpreters of this account.

(I.) Class. Those which deny the literal sense, and regard the whole narration as an instructive mythos.

(A.) Two facts sufficiently refute these notions.
1. The account of the fall of the first pair is a part of a continuous history. If, then, the account of the fall may be excepted as allegorical, any subsequent portion of the Pentateuch may in like manner be taken away.
2. The \textit{literal sense} of the history is referred to, and reasoned upon, \textit{as such}, in various parts of Scripture.

\textbf{(B.) Objections} have been started to the literal and historical interpretation, of which the following are specimens: —

1. “It is unreasonable to suppose that the fruit of the \textit{tree of life} could confer immortality.” But

   \textbf{(1.)} Why could not this tree be the \textit{appointed} means of preserving health and life?

   \textbf{(2.)} Why may not the eating of the fruit be regarded as a sacramental act?

2. “How could the fruit of the \textit{tree of knowledge} have any effect upon the intellectual powers?”

   \textbf{(1.)} Surely the tree might be called “the tree of knowledge of good and evil,” because by eating of its fruit man came to know, by sad experience, the value of the good he had forfeited, &c. ; or,

   \textbf{(2.)} It was the \textit{test} of Adam’s fidelity, and hence the name was proper.

3. Objection has been made to the account of the \textit{serpent}, \textbf{(a.)} That it makes “the invisible tempter assume the body of an animal.” Who can prove this to be impossible? \textbf{(b.)} “But the serpent spoke!” So did Balaam’s ass. \textbf{(c.)} “But Eve was not surprised.” Why should she? or, if she were, the history need not mention so slight a matter. \textbf{(d.)} “But the serpent was unjustly sentenced, if merely an instrument.” The serpent certainly held its rank at the pleasure of the Creator.

\textbf{(C.) Tradition} comes in to support the literal sense of the history.

1. The ancient Jewish writers, Apocrypha, &c.

2. The various systems of heathen mythology — Greek, Egyptian, Indian, Roman, Gothic, and Hindoo.

\textbf{(II.) Class.} Those who interpret the account \textit{in part literally and in part allegorically}. Sufficiently answered by quotation from Bishop Horsley.

\textbf{(III.) Class.} Those who believe that the history has, in perfect accordance with the literal interpretation, a mystical and higher sense than the letter. This sentiment, without running into the extravagances of mysticism, is the
orthodox doctrine. The history is before us; — but rightly to understand it, these four points should be kept in view, viz.: —

1. Man was in a state of trial.
   (1.) This involved power of obedience and disobedience.
   (2.) That which determines to the one or the other, is the will.
   (3.) Our first parents were subject to temptation from intellectual pride, from sense, and from passion.
   (4.) To resist such temptation, prayer, vigilance, &c., were requisite.

2. The prohibition of a certain fruit was but one part of the law under which man was placed.
   (1.) Distinction between positive and moral precepts.
   (2.) The moral reason for this positive precept — as indeed for probably all others — may be easily discovered.

3. The serpent was but the instrument of the real tempter, who was that evil spirit whose Scriptural appellatives are the Devil and Satan. Existence and power of this spirit clearly declared in Scripture.

4. The curse of the serpent was symbolical of the punishment of Satan. This symbolical interpretation defended by three considerations.

III. RESULTS OF THE FALL.

(I.) To Adam, inevitable death, after a temporary life of severe labour.
   1. Statement of opinions as to the extent and application of this penalty.
      (a.) Pelagian notion, — Adam would have died had he not sinned.
      (b.) Pseudo-Arminian doctrine of Whitby and others.
      (c.) Arminius’s doctrine, taken from his writing. With this nearly agree the Remonstrants, Augsburg Confession, Church of England, French and Scottish churches.

2. Import of the term death, as used in Scripture.
   (a.) “Death came into the world by sin.”
(b.) It does not imply annihilation.

(c.) It extends to the soul as well as to the body, thus embracing (1.) Bodily death, i.e., the separation of the soul from the body. (2.) Spiritual death, i.e., the separation of the soul from God. (3.) Eternal death, i.e., separation from God, and a positive infliction of his wrath in a future state.

Taylor’s objection answered by Wesley and Edwards.

(II.) This sentence extended to Adam’s posterity.

1. The testimony of Scripture explicitly establishes a federal connexion between Adam and his descendants. Romans v; 1 Corinthians 15:22.

2. The imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity, is the result of this connexion. Not mediate — not immediate — but the legal result of sin.

3. The consequences of this imputation are, 1.) Death of the body. 2.) Spiritual death. 3.) Eternal death.

4. Objections are raised against this doctrine — of two kinds, viz.: — one against high Calvinism, which we leave to take care of itself; and the other against the legal part of this transaction, without considering, in connexion with it, the evangelical scheme. The case may be considered.

(1.) With regard to adults. The remedial scheme offers, a.) In opposition to bodily death — the resurrection. b) In opposition to spiritual death — spiritual life. c.) In opposition to eternal death — eternal life.

(2.) With regard to infants, a.) The benefits of Christ’s death are coextensive with the sin of Adam, (Romans 5:18;) hence all children dying in infancy partake of the free gift. b.) Infants are not indeed born justified; nor are they capable of that voluntary acceptance of the benefits of the free gift which is necessary in the case of adults: but, on the other hand, they cannot reject it; and it is by the rejection of it that adults perish, c.) The process by which grace is communicated to infants is not revealed: the administration doubtless differs from that employed toward adults. d.) Certain instrumental causes may be considered in the case of children, viz., the intercession of Christ; ordinances of the church; prayers of parents, &c.

(III.) The moral condition in which men are actually born into the world.

I. Several facts of experience are to be accounted for.
1. That in all ages great and general national wickedness has prevailed.

2. The strength of the tendency to this wickedness, marked by two circumstances: — 1.) The greatness of the crimes to which men have abandoned themselves. 2.) The number of restraints against which this tide of evil has urged its course.

3. The seeds of the vices may be discovered in children in their earliest years.

4. Every man is conscious of a natural tendency to many evils.

5. The passions, appetites, and inclinations, make strong resistance, when man determines to renounce his evil courses.

II. To account for these facts, we derive from Scripture the hypothesis, — that man is by nature totally corrupt and degenerate, and of himself incapable of any good thing. The following passages contain this doctrine: — 1.) Genesis 5:3: “Adam begat a son in his own likeness.” 2.) Genesis 6:5: “Every imagination,” &c. 3.) Genesis 8:21: “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” 4.) Book of Job 11:12; 5:7; 14:47; 15:14. 5.) Psalm 51:5; 58:3, 4. 6.) Proverbs 22:15; 29:15. 7.) Romans 3:10, quoted from Psalm 14. 8.) That class of passages which speak of evil as a distinguishing mark not of any one man, but of human nature: Jeremiah, &c. 9.) Our Lord’s discourse with Nicodemus, John 3:10.) Argument in third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

The doctrine of the natural and universal corruption of man’s nature, thus obtained from Scripture, fully accounts for the above-mentioned five facts of experience. Let us see how far they can be explained on.

III. The theory of man’s natural innocence and purity. This doctrine refers these phenomena to

1. General bad example. But 1.) This does not account for the introduction of wickedness. 2.) How could bad example become general, if men are generally disposed to good. 3.) This very hypothesis admits the power of evil example, which is almost giving up the matter in dispute. 4.) This theory does not account for the strong bias to evil in men, nor for the vicious tempers of children, nor for the difficulty of virtue.
The advocates of this doctrine refer also to

2. Vicious education, to account for these phenomena. But 1.) Where did Cain get his vicious education? 3.) Why should education be generally bad, unless men are predisposed to evil. 3.) But, in fact, education in all countries has in some degree opposed vice. 4.) As for the other facts, education is placed upon the same ground as example.

IV. Some take a milder view of the case than the orthodox, denying these tendencies to various excesses to be sinful, until they are approved by the will. But why this universal compliance of the will with what is known to be evil, unless there be naturally a corrupt state of the mind, which is what we contend for. The death of children proves that all men are “constituted” and treated as “sinners.”

V. Nature of original sin.

1. A privation of the image of God, according to Arminius.

2. No infusion of evil into the nature of man by God, but positive evil, as the effect, is connected with privation of the life of God, as the cause.

3. As to the transmission of this corrupt nature, the Scriptural doctrine seems to be that the soul is ex traduce, and not by immediate creation from God. This doctrine does not necessarily tend to materialism.

4. It does not follow from the corruption of human nature that there can be nothing virtuous among men before regeneration. But all that is good in its principle is due to the Holy Spirit, whose influences are afforded to all, in consequence of the atonement offered for all. The following reasons may be assigned for the apparent virtues that are noticed among unregenerate men: — 1.) The understanding of man cannot reject demonstrated truth. 2.) The interests of men are often connected with right and wrong. 3.) The seeds of sin need exciting circumstances for their full development. 4.) All sins cannot show themselves in all men. 5.) Some men are more powerfully bent to one vice: some to another.

But all virtues grounded on principle, wherever seen among men, are to be ascribed to the Holy Spirit, which has been vouchsafed to “the world,” through the atonement.

(B.) — REDEMPTION. (Ch. 19.-29.)
(I.) PRINCIPLES OF REDEMPTION. (Ch. 19.-22.)

I. Principles of God’s moral government. (Ch. 19.)

The penalty of death was not immediately executed in all its extent upon the first sinning pair. Why was it not? In order to answer this question, the character of God, and the principles of his moral government, will be briefly examined.

(I.) The divine character is illustrated by the extent and severity of the punishments denounced against transgression.

(II.) It is more fully illustrated by the testimony of God himself in the Scriptures, where

1. The divine holiness, and

2. The divine justice, are abundantly declared. Justice is either, 1) universal, or 2) particular, — which latter is commutative, (respecting equals,) or distributive, (which is exercised only by governors.) Of the strictness and severity of the distributive justice of God, the sentence of death is sufficient evidence.

(III.) Connexion between the essential justice of God, and such a constitution of law and government.

1. The creation of free human beings involved the possibility of evil volitions and acts, and consequently misery.

2. To prevent these evils was the end of the divine government, the first act of which was the publication of the will or law of God: the second, to give motives to obedience, happiness, justice, fear.

3. It was necessary to secure obedience, that the highest penalty should be affixed to transgression.

4. Admitting its necessity, its institution was demanded by 1.) The holiness; 2.) The justice; and 3.) The goodness of God.

(IV.) Does the justice of God oblige him to execute the penalty? The opponents of the doctrine of atonement deny this; but we can show that

1. Sin cannot be forgiven by the mere prerogative of God: for
(1.) God cannot give up his right to obedience, without indifference to moral rectitude.

(2.) Nor can the Deity give up his right to punish disobedience, without either (a) partiality, if pardon be granted to a few; or (b) the abrogation, in effect, of law, if pardon be extended to all.

2. Nor does repentance, on the part of the offender, place him in a new relation, and thus render him a fit object of pardon. Those who hold this doctrine, admit the necessity of something which shall make it right as well as merciful for God to forgive. But we deny repentance to be that something; for

(1.) We find no intimation in Scripture that the penalty of the law is not to be executed in case of repentance.

(2.) It is not true that repentance changes the legal relation of the guilty to God, whom they have offended. They are offenders still, though penitent.

(3.) So far from repentance producing this change of relation, we have proofs to the contrary, both from the Scriptures and the established course of providence.

(4.) The true nature of repentance, as stated in the Scriptures, is overlooked by those who hold this doctrine.

(5.) In the gospel, which professedly lays down the means by which men are to obtain the pardon of their sins, that pardon is not connected with mere repentance.

II. Death of Christ propitiatory. (Ch. 20.)

In this and the two following chapters, we investigate that method of love, wisdom, and justice, by which a merciful God justifies the ungodly: first, examining the statements of the New Testament; secondly, the sacrifices of the law; and thirdly, the patriarchal sacrifices: — from which investigation we hope to show clearly the unity of the three great dispensations of religion to man, the patriarchal, Levitical, and Christian, in the great principle, “that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. And first,

A. Proof from the New Testament. (Ch. 20.)
I. Man’s salvation is ascribed in the New Testament to the death of Christ, and

1. The Socinian considers the death of Christ merely as the means by which repentance is produced in the heart of man.

2. The Arian connects with it that kind of merit which arises from a generous and benevolent self-devotion. But

II. The New Testament represents the death of Christ as necessary to salvation; not as the meritorious means, but as the meritorious cause.

1. The necessity of Christ’s death follows the admission of his divinity.

2. The matter is put beyond question by the direct testimony of Scripture: “thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead,” &c.

III. The New Testament informs us that Christ died “for us,” that is, in our room and stead.

1. All those passages in which Christ is said to have died “for” ὑπὲρ or αὐτῶν) men, prove that he died for us not consequently but directly, as a substitute.

2. Those passages in which he is said to have “borne the punishment due to our offences,” prove the same thing.

Grotius clearly proves that the Scriptures represent our sins as the impulsive cause of the death of Christ.

3. The passage in Isaiah liii, “the chastisement of our peace was upon him,” &c., is applied to Christ by the apostles.


IV. Some passages of the New Testament connect, with the death of Christ, the words propitiation, atonement, and reconciliation.

1. Propitiation.

(1.) Definition — to propitiate is to atone, to turn away the wrath of an offended person.
(2.) The Socinians, in their improved version, admit that it was “the pacifying of an offended party;” but insist that Christ is a propitiation, because “by his gospel he brings sinners to repentance, and thus averts the divine displeasure.” On this ground, Moses was a propitiation also.

(3.) Socinians also deny the existence of wrath in God: — in order to show that propitiation, in a proper sense, cannot be taught in Scripture. But Scripture abundantly asserts that “God is angry with the wicked.”

In holding this Scriptural doctrine, we do not assert the existence of wrath as a vengeful passion in the divine mind: this is one of the many caricatures of orthodoxy by Socinianism.

2. Reconciliation occurs, Colossians 1:19, 22; Romans 5:10, 11; 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19.

(1.) The expressions “reconciliation,” “making peace,” imply a previous state of mutual hostility between God and man. This relation is a legal one, as that of sovereign and criminal. The term enmity, used as it respects God, is unfortunate; but certainly something more is implied in reconciliation than man’s laying aside his enmity to God.

(2.) Various passages of Scripture go directly to prove this. Romans 5:11; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 2:16.

(3.) Socinian objection to the doctrine of reconciliation answered.

V. Some texts speak of redemption in connexion with the death of Christ, e. g., Romans 3:24; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

(1.) The Socinian notion of a gratuitous deliverance is refuted by the very terms used in the above-cited passages: such as λυτρώμα, to redeem, &c.

(2.) The means by which it has been attempted to evade the force of these statements must be refuted. They are

1. “That the term redemption is sometimes used for simple deliverance, when no price is supposed to be given.” Answer,

a. The occasional use of the term in an improper manner, cannot be urged against its strict signification.
b. Our redemption by Christ is emphatically spoken of in connexion with the γυντρον, or redemption price; but this word is never added to the deliverance effected for the Israelites by Moses.

2. “That our interpretation of these passages would involve the absurdity of paying a price to Satan.” Answer,

a. The idea of redemption is not to be confined to the purchasing of a captive.

b. Nor does it follow, even in that case, that the price must be paid to him who detains the captive. Our captivity to Satan is judicial, and satisfaction is to be made, not to the jailer, but to him whose law has been violated.

3. “That our doctrine is inconsistent with the freeness of the grace of God in the forgiveness of sins.” Answer,

a. Dr. Priestley himself, in requiring penitence from the sinner, admits that grace may be free, while not unconditional.

b. The passage of St. Paul which Dr. P, quotes, runs thus: “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

c. When sin is spoken of as a debt freely remitted, it is clear that a metaphor is employed.

VI. The nature of the death of Christ is still further explained in the New Testament, by the manner in which it connects our justification with faith in the blood of Christ; and both our justification and the death of Christ with the “righteousness of God.” Romans 3:24-26.

(a.) Thus the forgiveness of sin is not only an act of mercy, but an act of justice.

(b.) The steps of this “demonstration” of the righteousness of God are easily to be traced; for,

1. The law is by this means established in its authority and perpetuity.

2. On any other theory, there is no manifestation of God’s hatred of sin, commensurate with the intense holiness of the divine nature.
3. The person who suffered the penalty of the law for us was the Son of God — in him divinity and humanity were united: and thus, as “God spared not his own Son,” his justice is declared to be inflexible and inviolable.

The Socinians object that “the dignity of a person adds nothing to the estimation of his sufferings.” But (1,) the common opinion of mankind in all ages is directly against this; and (2,) the testimony of Scripture is explicit on this point.

4. Though all men are brought, by the death of Christ, into a salvable state, yet none of them are brought from under the authority of the moral law.

VII. “The satisfaction made to divine justice,” is a phrase which, though not found in Scripture, is yet of theological value, and deserves to be considered.

(I.) There are two views of satisfaction among those who hold the doctrine of atonement, viz.: —

1. That the sufferings and death of Christ are, for the dignity of his nature, regarded as a full equivalent and adequate compensation for the punishment of the personally guilty by death.

2. That Christ made satisfaction for our sins, not because his death is to be considered a full equivalent for the remission of punishment, but because his suffering in our stead maintained the honour of the divine law, and yet gave free scope to the mercy of the lawgiver.

Both these are defective, but the first may be admitted, with some explanations.

(II.) Some explanatory observations then are necessary.

1. The term satisfaction is taken from the Roman law, and signifies the contentment of an injured party by anything which he may choose to accept in place of the enforcement of his obligation upon the party offending. As a just governor, then, God is satisfied, — contented with the atonement offered by the vicarious death of his Son.

2. The effect produced upon the mind of the lawgiver is not the satisfaction, as the Socinians would say, of a vengeful affection.
3. Nor is the death of Christ to be regarded merely as a wise and fit expedient of government; for this may imply that it was one of many possible expedients, though the best.

(III.) The Antinomian perversion of these phrases needs to be refuted.

1. Antinomians connect the satisfaction of Christ with the doctrine of the imputation of his active righteousness to believers; but, 1.) We have no such office ascribed in Scripture to the active righteousness of Christ. 2.) This doctrine of imputation makes Christ’s sufferings superfluous. 3.) It leaves man without law, and God without dominion. 4.) This is not satisfaction in any good sense: it is merely the performance of all that the law requires by one person substituted for another.

2. The terms full satisfaction and equivalent, are taken by the Antinomians in the sense of payment of debts by a surety; but we answer, He who pays a debt for another, does not render an equivalent, but gives precisely what the original obligation requires.

3. The Antinomian view makes the justification of men a matter of right, not of grace. On their view, we cannot answer the Socinian objection, that satisfaction destroys the free nature of an act of forgiveness.

VIII. It is sometimes said that we do not know the vinculum between the sufferings of Christ and the pardon of sin. But Scripture seems to give definite information on this point, in declaring the death of Christ to be a “demonstration of the righteousness of God.”

IX. Objection is made to the justice of the substitution of the innocent for the guilty. But,

1. It has always been considered a virtue to suffer for others under certain circumstances; and the justice of such acts has never been questioned. Still,

2. It is wrong to illustrate this doctrine by analogies between the sufferings of Christ and the sufferings of persons on account of the sins of others. And,

3. The principle of vicarious punishment could not justly be adopted by human governments in any case whatever. But,
4. In regard to the offering of Christ, — the circumstances, (1) of the willingness of the substitute to submit to the penalty, and (2) his right thus to dispose of himself, fully clear up the question of justice.

The difficulty of reconciling the sufferings of Christ with the divine justice lies rather with the Socinians than with us. [Ezekiel 18:20, is satisfactorily explained by Grotius.]

B. Proof from the sacrifices of the law. (Ch. 21.)

Having adduced, from the New Testament, cogent proofs of the vicarious efficacy of Christ’s death, we proceed, by the light of the argument already made good, to examine the use made of the sacrificial terms of the Old Testament; and first, the sacrifices of the law.

The terms taken from the Jewish sacrifices, (such as “Lamb of God,” “Passover;” &c.,) when used by the writers of the New Testament, would be not only absurd, but criminally misleading both to Jews and Gentiles, unless intended to teach the sacrificial character of the death of Christ.

It is necessary to establish the expiatory nature of the Jewish sacrifices, and their typical character, both of which have been questioned. To prove that

I. The Levitical sacrifices were expiatory, it is only necessary to show that the eminent sacrifices were such.

The notion that these sacrifices were mere mulcts or fines is disproved

1. By the general appointment (Leviticus 17:10, 11) of the blood to be an atonement for the souls.

2. By particular instances: e. g., Leviticus 5:15, 16.

3. By the fact, that atonement was required by the law to be made by sin-offerings and burnt-offerings for even bodily distempers and disorders.

4. By the sacrifices offered statedly for the whole congregation.

5. By the sacrifice of the passover.

II. The Levitical sacrifices were also types.

A type is a sign or example, prepared and designed by God to prefigure some future thing. St. Paul shows that the Levitical sacrifices were such.
1. In his general description of the typical character of the “church in the wilderness.”

2. In his notice of the Levitical sacrifices in particular.

3. The ninth chapter of Hebrews gives direct declarations of the appointment and designation of the tabernacle service to be a shadow of good things to come.

III. Sacrificial allusions are employed in the New Testament to describe the nature and effect of the death of Christ, not figuratively, but properly.

(a.) Illustrated in various passages: — 1. For he hath “made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” 2. Ephesians 5:2: “Christ loved us, and gave himself for us,” &c. 3. The whole argument of St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews. 4. “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood,” &c.

(b.) Illustrated by distinction between figurative and analogical language. Quotation from Veysies’ Bampton Lectures.

IV. As to the objection, that the Jewish sacrifices had no reference to the expiation of moral transgression, we observe,

1. That a distinction is to be made between sacrifices as a part of the theopolitical law of the Jews, and sacrifice as a rite practised by their fathers.

2. Atonement was ordered to be made for sins committed against any divine commandment.

3. But if all the sin-offerings of the Levitical institute had respected legal atonement and ceremonial purification, that circumstance would not invalidate the true sacrifice of Christ.

C. From the patriarchal sacrifices. (Ch. 22.)

Having shown that the sacrifices of the law were expiatory, we proceed now to show the same of the Ante-Mosaical sacrifices. The proofs are,

I. The distribution of beasts into clean and unclean.

II. The prohibition of blood for food.

III. The sacrifices of the patriarchs were those of animal victims, and their use was to avert the displeasure of God from sinning men: e. g., those of
Job, Noah, and Abel. But as this last has given rise to controversy, we shall consider more at large.

**IV. Abel’s sacrifice.**

1. As to the matter of it, — it was an *animal* offering: not wool or milk, as Grotius and Le Clerc would have it, but the “firstlings of his flock.”

2. This animal offering was indicative of Abel’s faith, as declared by the apostle, Hebrews, chapter 11.

3. But Davison, in his “Inquiry,” asserts that the divine testimony was not to the “specific form of Abel’s oblation, but to his *actual righteousness*.”

The objections to this view of the matter are many.

(1.) It leaves out entirely all consideration of the difference between the sacrifice of Abel and that of Cain.

(2.) It passes over Abel’s “faith,” as evinced in this transaction.

(3.) The apostle is not speaking of the general tendency of faith to induce a holy life, but of faith as producing certain *acts*; and his reference is to Abel’s faith, as expressing itself by his offering a more excellent sacrifice.

(4.) St. John’s *incidental* allusion to Abel’s personal righteousness does not in the least affect the statement of Paul, who treated professedly, not incidentally, the subject. And Genesis 4:7, may be considered in two views: either, a.) to “do well” may mean, to do as Abel had done; or, b) the words may be considered as a declaration of the principles of God’s righteous government over men.

4. If then Abel’s *faith* had an immediate connexion with his sacrifice, the question occurs, to what had that faith respect? Let us illustrate the object of the faith of the elders, from Hebrews xi, and then ascertain the object of Abel’s faith also, from the *acts* in which it im-bodied itself. In this chapter, then,

(1.) Faith is taken in the sense of *affiance* in God; and supposes some promise or revelation on his part, as the warrant for every act of affiance, — as in the cases of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, &c.

(2.) This revelation was antecedent to the faith; but the *acts* and the *revelation* had a natural and striking conformity to each other: e. g., Noah,
&c. Our inference, then, as to Abel’s sacrifice, is, that it was not eucharistic merely, but an act of faith, having respect to a previous and appropriate revelation. The conclusion imbedded in the words of Archbishop Magee is warranted by the argument.

(3.) But it may be asked, What evidence have we from Scripture that such an antecedent revelation was made? We have

(a.) The necessary inferences from the circumstances of the transaction, which, combined with the apostle’s interpretation of them, enable us sufficiently to defend this ground. The text which may be wanting in the Old Testament is often supplied by the inspired comment in the New: e.g., the manna, the rock, &c…. If it be argued that such types were not understood, as such, by the persons among whom they were first instituted, the answer is, — 1. Either they were in some degree revealed to such as prayed for light, or we must conclude that the whole system of types was without edification to the Jews, and instructive only to us. 2. We have, in Hebrews xi, in the case of Abraham, a direct proof of a distinct revelation, which is nowhere recorded as such in the Mosaic history.

(b.) Besides these inferences, however satisfactory, we have an account, though brief, of such revelation. (1.) The brevity of the account in the Mosaic history, is doubtless not without good reason; and (2,) brief as it is, we can easily collect, from the early part of Genesis, no unimportant information in regard to primitive theology. (3.) It is in regard to the first promise that we join issue with Mr. Davison; believing that his view of it (Inquiry, &c.) contains, with some truth, much error. For, a.) It is assumed, contrary to evidence, that the Book of Genesis is a complete history of the religious opinions of the patriarchs; and he would have the promise interpreted by them. so as to convey only a general indistinct impression of a deliverer, and that the doctrines of the divinity, incarnation, &c., of that deliverer were not in any way to be apprehended in this promise. Let us see, then, whether the promise, “interpreted by itself,” must not have led the patriarchs many steps at least toward these doctrines, b.) The divine nature of the promised Redeemer, we are told, was a separate revelation. But surely, the work assigned to him — the blessings he was to procure — the power that he was to exercise, according to the promise, — were all indications of a nature superior to humanity, and to the angels, c.) The doctrine of the incarnation was contained also in the promise: this restorer was to be of “the seed of the woman.” d.) So of the
doctrine of *vicarious sufferings*: “the heel of the seed of the woman was to be bruised,” &c.

(4.) It is urged by Mr. Davison, that the faith spoken of in Hebrews xi, had for its simple object, that “God is the rewarder of such as diligently seek him.” But,

(a.) Though this is supposed as the groundwork of every act of faith, yet the special acts recorded have each their special object; and, (b.) This notion could not be at all apposite to the purpose for which this recital of the faith of the elders was addressed to the Hebrews. Two views may be given of this recital: — 1. That the apostle adduced this list of worthies as examples of a steady faith in all that God had then revealed to man, and its happy consequences. 2. That he brought them up to prove that all the “elders” had faith in the Christ to come. Nor is this stronger view difficult to be made out, as we may trace in the cases of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, &c., a respect more or less immediate, to the leading object of all faith, the Messiah himself.

Enough has been said to prove that the sacrifice of Abel was expiatory, and that it conformed, as an act of faith, to some anterior revelation.

V. A divine origin must be ascribed to sacrifice.

1. The evidence of *Scripture* is of sufficient clearness to establish the divine origin of the antediluvian sacrifices; but,

2. The argument drawn from the *natural incongruity* of sacrificial rites ought not to be overlooked: which is strong even as to the *fruits* of the earth, (the offering of which cannot be shown to originate either in reason or in sentiment,) and still stronger as to *animal* oblations.

The divine institution of expiatory sacrifice being thus carried up to the first ages, we perceive the unity of the three great dispensations of religion. the PATRIARCHAL, the LEVITICAL, and the CHRISTIAN, in the great principle, “*that without the shedding of blood there is no remission.*”

(II.) BENEFITS OF THE ATONEMENT. (Ch. 23.-xxix.)

A. JUSTIFICATION. (Ch. 23.)

*Preliminary.* All natural and spiritual good must be included among the benefits derived to man from the atonement; but we shall now treat
particularly of those which constitute what is called in Scripture man’s SALVATION.

The fruits of the death and intercession of Christ are —

1. To render it consistent with a righteous government to forgive sin,

2. To call forth the active exercise of the love of God to man, which displays itself.

(1.) In the variety of the divine dispensations.

(2.) In the revelation of the divine will, and declaration of God’s purposes of grace.

(3.) In the institution of the Christian ministry.

(4.) In the influences of the Holy Spirit.

The act of mercy by which man is reconciled to God, is called in the Scriptures, JUSTIFICATION.

I. Statement of the Scriptural doctrine.

1. Justification, the remission of sin, the non-imputation of sin, and the imputation of righteousness, are phrases of the same import: of which the following passages are proof: — Luke 18:13, 14; Acts 13:38, 39; Romans 3:25, 26; 4:4, 8.

2. The importance of maintaining this simple view of justification, — viz., that it is the remission of sins, — will appear from the following considerations: —

(1.) We are taught that pardon of sin is not an act of prerogative, done above law; but a judicial process, done consistently with law.

(2.) That justification has respect to particular individuals.

(3.) Justification being a sentence of pardon, the Antinomian notion of eternal justification becomes a manifest absurdity.

(4.) We are guarded, by this view of justification, against the notion that it is an act of God by which we are made actually just and righteous.
(5.) No ground is afforded for the notion that justification imports the *imputation to us of the active and passive righteousness of Christ*, so as to make us both positively and relatively righteous.

**II. Doctrine of imputation.**

There are three opinions: —

(I.) The high Calvinistic, or Antinomian scheme, which is, that “Christ’s *active* righteousness is imputed unto us, as ours.” In answer to this we say,

1. It is nowhere stated in Scripture.

2. The notion here attached to Christ’s *representing* us, is wholly gratuitous.

3. There is no weight in the argument, that “as our sins were accounted his, so his righteousness was accounted ours;” for our sins were never so accounted Christ’s, as that. he *did* them.

4. The doctrine involves a fiction and impossibility inconsistent with the divine attributes.

5. The acts of Christ were of a loftier character than can be supposed capable of being the acts of mere creatures.

6. Finally, and fatally, this doctrine shifts the meritorious cause of man’s justification from Christ’s “obedience unto death,” to Christ’s active obedience to the precepts of the law. Quotations are made in confirmation from Piscator and Goodwin.

(II.) The opinion of Calvin himself and many of his followers, adopted also by some Arminians. It differs from the first in not separating the active from the passive righteousness of Christ; for such a distinction would have been inconsistent with Calvin’s notion, that justification is simply the remission of sins.

This view is adopted, with certain *modifications*, by Arminians and Wesley.

But there is a manifest difference, which arises from the different senses in which the word *imputation* is used: the Arminian employing it in the sense of accounting to the believer the benefit of Christ’s righteousness: the Calvinist, in the sense of reckoning the righteousness of Christ as ours. A
slight examination of the following passages will show that this notion has no foundation in Scripture: — Psalm 32:1; Jeremiah 23:6; Isaiah 45:24; Romans 3:21, 22; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:18, 19. In connexion with this last text, it is sometimes attempted to be shown that as Adam’s sin is imputed to his posterity, so Christ’s obedience is imputed unto those that are saved; but (Goodwin on Justification) 1.) The Scripture nowhere affirms either the imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity, or of the righteousness of Christ to those that believe. 2.) To *impute* sin, in Scripture phrase, is to charge the guilt of sin upon a man, with a purpose to punish him for it. And 3.) As to the *imputation* of Adam’s sin to his posterity, — if by it is meant simply that the guilt of Adam’s sin is charged upon his whole posterity, let it pass; but if the meaning be that all Adam’s posterity are made, by this imputation, *formally* sinners, then the Scriptures do not justify it.

(III.) The imputation of *faith* for righteousness.

(a.) *Proof* of this doctrine.

1. It is expressly taught in Scripture, Romans 4:3-24, etc.; nor is *faith* used in these passages by metonymy for the object of faith, that is, the righteousness of Christ.

2. The testimony of the church to this doctrine has been uniform from the earliest ages — Tertullian, Origen, Justin Martyr, &c. — down to the sixteenth century.

(b.) *Explanation* of the terms of the proposition, that “faith is imputed for righteousness.”

(1.) *Righteousness.* To be accounted *righteous*, is, in the style of the apostle Paul, to be *justified*, where there has been personal guilt.

(2.) *Faith.* It is not faith generally considered, that is imputed to us for righteousness, but faith (trust) in an atonement offered by another in our behalf.

(3.) *Imputation.* The non-imputation of sin to a sinner is expressly called. “the imputation of righteousness without works;” the imputation of righteousness is, then, the non-punishment or pardon of sin; and by imputing faith for righteousness, the apostle means precisely the same thing.
The objection to the doctrine of the imputation of faith for righteousness admit of easy answer.

(1.) The Papists err in taking the term justification to signify the making men morally just.

(2.) A second objection is, that if believing is imputed for righteousness, then justification is by works, or by somewhat in our selves. In this objection, the term *works* is used in an equivocal sense.

(3.) A third objection is, that this doctrine gives occasion to boasting. But 1.) This objection lies with equal strength against the doctrine of imputed righteousness. 2.) The faith itself is the gift of God. 3.) The blessings which follow faith are given in respect to the death of Christ. 4.) Paul says that boasting is excluded by the law of faith.

III. *The nature of justifying faith;* and its connexion with justification.

1. Faith is, 1) assent; 2) confidence; and this faith is the *condition* to which the promise of God annexes justification.

2. Justification by faith alone is clearly the doctrine of Scripture. Some suppose this doctrine to be a peculiarity of Calvinism; but it has been maintained by various Arminian writers, and by none with more earnestness and vigour than by Mr. Wesley.

3. The general objection to this doctrine is, that it is unfavourable to morality. The proper answer to this *old* objection is, that although we are justified by faith *alone*, the faith by which we are justified is not alone in the heart which exercises it: “faith is *sola*, yet not *solitaria.*” Some colour is given to this objection by the Calvinistic view of final perseverance, which we disavow.

4. Various errors have arisen from unnecessary attempts to guard this doctrine.

(1.) The Romish Church confounds justification and sanctification.

(2.) Another opinion is, that justifying faith includes works of evangelical obedience.

(a.) The Scriptures put a plain distinction between faith and works.
(b.) It is not probable that Christ and his apostles meant more by this Word than its fixed and usual import.

(3.) A third notion, — that faith apprehends the merits of Christ, to make up for the deficiency of our imperfect obedience, — is sufficiently refuted by the fact, that no intimation of it is given in Scripture.

(4.) The last error referred to is that which represents faith as, per se, the necessary root of obedience. Perhaps those who use this language do not generally intend to say all that it conveys.

IV. A few theories on the subject of justification remain to be stated and examined.

(1.) The doctrine held by Bishop Taylor, Archbishop Tillotson, and others, that “regeneration is necessary to justification,” is an error whose source appears to be two-fold: (a) from a loose notion of the Scriptural doctrine of regeneration; and (b) from confounding the change which repentance implies, with regeneration itself.

(2.) Another theory is that propounded by Bishop Bull, in his *Harmonia Apostolica*, which has taken deep root in the English Church: the doctrine being, that justification is by works; — those works being such as proceed from faith, are done by the assistance of the Spirit, and are not meritorious. Instead of reconciling St. James to St. Paul, Bishop Bull takes the unusual course of reconciling St. Paul to St. James: but

(a.) St. Paul treats the doctrine of justification *professedly*; St. James *incidentally*.

(b.) The two apostles are not addressing themselves to persons in the same circumstances, and hence do not engage in the same argument.

(c.) St. Paul and St. James do not use the term justification in the same sense. Lastly, the two apostles agree with each other upon the subject of faith and works.

(3.) A third theory is maintained by some of the leading divines of the English Church: which is, that men are justified by faith only, but that faith is mere assent to the truth of the gospel. The error of this scheme consists in the partial view which is taken of the nature of justifying faith.
A fourth theory defers justification to the last day. In answer to this, we say,

a.) It is not essential to pardon, that all its consequences should be immediately removed.

b.) Acts of private and personal judgment are in no sense contrary to a general judgment.

c.) Justification now, and at the last day, are not the same: — a.) They are not the same act. b.) They do not proceed upon the same principle.

The last theory is that of collective justification, proposed by Bp. Taylor, of Norwich: which only needs to be stated, not refuted.

**B. CONCOMITANTS OF JUSTIFICATION. (Ch. 24.)**

**I. Regeneration** is a change wrought in man by the Holy Spirit, by which the dominion of sin over him is broken, so that with free choice of he serves God.

1. Repentance is not regeneration, but precedes it.

2. Regeneration is not justification, but always accompanies it. Which may be proved

   (1.) From the nature of justification itself.

   (2.) From Scripture: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”

**II. Adoption** is that act by which we who were enemies are made the sons of God and heirs of his eternal glory; and is that state to which belongs freedom from a servile spirit, &c. . . with the Spirit of adoption, or the witness of the Spirit, by which means only we can know that the privileges of adoption are ours. The doctrine of the witness of the Spirit is clearly taught in the Epistles: it is sometimes called assurance, but as this phrase has been abused, it should perhaps be cautiously employed.

   (1.) There are four opinions on the subject of this testimony of the Spirit.

   1. That it is twofold: — 1.) A direct testimony of the Spirit. 2.) An indirect testimony, arising from the work of the Spirit in the heart.
2. That it is twofold, also: — 1.) The fruits of the Spirit in the heart of the believer. 2.) The consciousness, on the part of the believer, of possessing faith.

3. That there is but one witness, the Holy Spirit, acting concurrently with our own spirits.

4. That there is a direct witness, which is the special privilege of a few favoured persons.

(2.) Observations on these four opinions.

1. All sober divines allow that Christians may attain comfortable persuasions of the divine favour.

2. By those who admit justification, it must be admitted that either this act of mercy must be kept secret from man, or there must be some means of his knowing it: and if the former, there can be no comfortable persuasion, &c. ; but, on the contrary, Scripture declares that the justified “rejoice.”

3. If the Christian, then, may know that he is forgiven, how is this knowledge to be attained? The twofold testimony of the Spirit and heart declares it Romans 8:16.

4. But does the Holy Spirit give his testimony directly to the mind, or mediatly by our own spirits, as Bishop Bull and Mr. Scott affirm? To the latter doctrine we object, — that the witness is still that of our own spirit; and that but one witness is allowed, while St. Paul speaks of two.

5. Neither the consciousness of genuine repentance, nor that of faith, is consciousness of adoption; and if nothing more be afforded, the evidence of forgiveness is only that of mere inference.

6. “But are not the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, &c., sufficient proof of our adoption, without a more direct testimony?” Nay: these very fruits (at least love, joy, and peace, which cannot be separated from the others) presuppose not only a pardon, but a clear persuasion of that pardon.

The witness of the Spirit is direct, then, and not mediate; nor is this a new doctrine, as may be easily shown by quotations from Luther, Hooper, Andrew, Usher, Hooker, &c. The second testimony is that of our own spirits, not to the fact of our adoption directly, but to the fact that we have,
in truth, received the Spirit of adoption, and that we are under no delusive impressions.

(C.) — ON THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT. (Ch. 25.-28.)

The Calvinistic controversy forms a clear case of appeal to the Scriptures, by whose light we propose to examine it. In regard to the extent of the atonement,

I. Our proposition is, that Jesus Christ did so die for all men, as to make salvation attainable by all men, and we prove it by

1. Passages which expressly declare the doctrine.

(a.) Those which say that Christ died “for all men,” and speak of his death as an atonement for the sins of the whole world.

(b.) Those which attribute an equal extent to the death of Christ, as to the effects of the fall.

2. Passages which necessarily imply the doctrine, viz.: —

(a.) Those which declare that Christ died, not only for those that are saved, but for those who do or may perish.

(b.) Those which make it the duty of men to believe the gospel; and place them under guilt, and the penalty of death, for rejecting it.

(c.) Those in which men’s failure to obtain salvation is placed to the account of their own opposing wills, and made wholly their own fault.

II. We have to consider what our opponents have to urge against these plain statements of Scripture. In the first place, they have no text whatever to adduce which declares that Christ did not die for the salvation of all, as literally as those which declare that he did so die. They merely attempt to explain away the force of the passages we have adduced. Thus —

1. To our first class of texts they object that the terms, “all men,” and “the world,” are sometimes used in Scripture in a limited sense. This may be granted; but the true question yet remains, whether in the above-cited passages they can be understood except in the largest sense. We deny this,

(1.) Because the universal sense of the terms used is confirmed either by the context of the passages in which they occur, or by other Scriptures.
(2.) Nor can the phrases “the world,” &c., be paraphrased as “the world of the elect;” for

**a.)** The *elect* are in Scripture *distinguished* from the *world.*

**b.)** The common division of mankind in the New Testament, is into only two parts, viz., the disciples of Christ, and “the world.”

**c.)** When the redemption is spoken of, it often includes both those who had been chosen out of the world, and those who remained still of the world.

**d.)** In the general commission, “Go ye into all the world,” the expression “into” has its fullest latitude of meaning,

**e.)** This restrictive interpretation gives gross absurdity to several passages of Scripture. *(John 3:16-18.)*

2. To our second class of texts those which *imply* the unrestricted extent of Christ’s death — certain qualifying answers are given. Thus —

(1.) As to those which speak of Christ having *died for them that perish.*

**a.)** “Destroy not him,” &c. *(Romans 14:15.* Poole’s paraphrase on this text, “for whom, in the judgment of charity, we may suppose Christ died,” completely counteracts the argument of the apostle. Scott, also, by explaining this as a “caution against doing anything which has a tendency to destroy,” takes away, completely, the motive on which the admonition is grounded.

**b.)** “Denying the Lord that bought them,” &c. *(2 Peter 2:1.* The interpretations of Scott and Poole are evasions of the force of the text, which is, that their offence was aggravated by the fact of Christ having bought them.

**c.)** The case of the apostates, *(Hebrews 6:4-8, and 10:26-31.* Calvinists deny that the apostates referred to were ever true believers, or capable of becoming such. But,

1. Paul did not hold out that to the Hebrews as a terror which he knew to be impossible.

2. If these apostates never were believers, they could not be admonitory examples.
3. To represent their case as a “falling away” — if it had never been hopeful — was an absurdity of which Paul would not be guilty.

4. But what the apostle affirms of their previous state, clearly shows that it had been a state of salvation.

5. The Calvinistic interpretations are below the force of the terms employed; and they are above the character of reprobates.

(2.) As to those which make it the duty of men to believe the gospel, and threaten them with punishment for not believing, — the Calvinistic reply is, that it is the duty of all men to believe the gospel, whether they are interested in the death of Christ or not; and that they are guilty and deserving of punishment for not believing. But if Christ died not for all such persons, we think it plain that it cannot be their duty to believe the gospel; and to settle this point, we must determine what is meant by believing the gospel. The faith which the gospel requires of all, is, “trust in our Lord Jesus Christ;” true faith, then, and not merely assent, is implied in believing the gospel. But of those for whom Christ did not die, such faith cannot be required; for,

1. It is impossible.

2. God could not command what he never intended.

3. What all are bound to believe in, is true.

(3.) As to the last class of texts, viz., those which impute the blame and fault of their non-salvation to men themselves, the common reply is, that if men willed to come to Christ, they would have life; but,

1. Put the question to the non-elect; and either it is possible for them to come to Christ, or it is not: if the former, then they may come to Christ without receiving salvation; if the latter, then the bar to their salvation is not in themselves.

2. The argument from this class of texts is not exhausted; for they expressly exclude God from all participation in the destruction of sinners. “God willeth all men to be saved,” &c. Texts which gave rise to the ancient notion of a secret and revealed will of God: a subterfuge to which perhaps few Calvinists in the present day are disposed to resort.

EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT — CONTINUED. (Ch. 26.)
As the Calvinists have no direct texts in support of their doctrine, they resort mainly to implication and inference. The words election, calling, and foreknowledge, are much relied upon in their arguments. We shall now proceed to examine the Scriptural meaning of them.

**I. ELECTION.** Three kinds of election are mentioned in Scripture.

**I.** That of individuals to perform some special service: e.g., Cyrus was elected to rebuild the temple; Paul, to be the apostle of the Gentiles.

**II.** Collective election.

**(a.)** Explanation of its use in Scripture.

1. Of the Jews, as the chosen people of God.

2. Of the calling of believers in all nations to be in reality what the Jews had been typically.

**(b.)** Inquiry as to its effect upon the extent of the atonement.

1. With respect to the ancient election of the Jewish church.

   (1.) That election did not secure the salvation of every Jew individually.

   (2.) Sufficient means of salvation were left to the non-elect Gentiles.

   (3.) Nay, the election of the Jews was intended for the benefit of the Gentiles — to restrain idolatry and diffuse spiritual truth.

2. With respect to the election of the Christian Church.

   (1.) That election does not infallibly secure the salvation of the Christian.

   (2.) It concludes nothing against the salvability of those who are not in the church.

   (3.) Christians are thus elected, not in consequence of, or in order to, the exclusion of others; but for the benefit of others as well as themselves.

**(c.)** Collective election is frequently confounded with personal election, by Calvinistic commentators, especially in their expositions of

**PAUL’S DISCOURSE. Romans 9.-11.**
I. Which we shall examine, first, to determine whether personal or collective election be the subject of it.

(1.) The exclusion of the Jew is the first topic: the righteousness of which exclusion Paul vindicates against the objections raised in the minds of the Jews.

a.) By showing that God had limited the covenant to a part of the descendants of Abraham: (1.) In the case of the descendants of Jacob himself. (2.) From Jacob he ascends to Abraham, 5. 7. (3.) The instance of Isaac’s children, 5. 10-13. On the passage, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,” which has often been perverted, we remark: 1. The apostle is here speaking of “the seed,” intended in the promise. 2. This is proved by Genesis 25:23: “Two nations are in thy womb,” etc. 3. Instances of individual reprobation would have been impertinent to the apostle’s purpose.

b.) By asking the objecting Jews to say whether in these instances there was a failure of God’s covenant with Abraham, he expressly denies any unrighteousness in them. But those who would interpret these passages as referring to personal unconditional election and reprobation, are bound to show how they could be righteous.

c.) By the statement, “So then, it is not of him that willeth,” etc. — containing a beautiful allusion to the case of Isaac and Esau.

(2.) The next point of the discourse is, to show that God exercises the prerogative of making some notorious sinners the special objects of his displeasure. Here again the example is taken from the Jewish Scriptures; but observe, it is not Ishmael or Esau, but Pharaoh, a Gentile, who was a most appropriate example to illustrate the case of the body of the unbelieving Jews, who were, when the apostle wrote, under the sentence of a terrible excision.

(3.) In verse nineteen the Jew is again introduced as an objector: “Why doth he yet find fault?” &c.

(a.) This objection, and the apostle’s reply, are usually interpreted as inculcating upon nations visited with penal inflictions, the impropriety of debating the case with God. This interpretation is hardly satisfactory; for,
1. What end is answered by teaching a hopeless people not to “reply against God?”

2. If this be the meaning, the apostle’s allusion to the parable of the prophet, Jeremiah, chap. 18, is inappropriate; as that parable supposes the time of trial, as to such nations, to be not yet past.

3. “Dishonour” is not destruction; no potter makes a vessel on purpose to destroy it.

4. This interpretation supposes that the body of the Jewish nation had arrived already at a state of dereliction, which is not the case.

(b.) A different view of this part of Paul’s discourse is presented. The objection of the Jew goes upon the ground of predestination, which is refuted, not conceded, by the apostle, as follows: —

1. The “vessel” was not made “unto dishonour,” until the clay had been “marred:” i.e., the Jews were not dishonoured until they had failed to conform with the design of God.

2. Jeremiah, interpreting the parable, represents the “dishonoured” as within the reach of the divine favour upon repentance.

3. What follows verse twenty-two, serves still further to silence the objector. The temporal punishment of the Jews in Judea is alluded to by the apostle, as a proof both of sovereignty and justice; but that punishment does not preclude the salvability of the race.

(c.) The metaphor of “vessels” is still employed; but by “vessels of dishonour,” and “vessels of wrath,” the apostle means vessels in different conditions. The first, being part of the prophecy which signified the dishonoured state in which the Jews, for punishment and correction, were placed under captivity in Babylon: the second, with reference to the prophecy in nineteenth Jeremiah, had relation to the coming destruction of the temple, city, and polity of the Jews, by the Romans. There could be no complaint of injustice or unrighteousness, in regard to this destruction; for,

1. It was brought upon themselves by their own sins.

2. Moreover, these vessels (adapted to destruction by their own sins) were endured with much long-suffering.
The tenth and eleventh chapters contain nothing but what refers to the *collective rejection* of the Jewish nation, and the *collective election* of all believing Jews and Gentiles into the visible Church of God. The discourse, then can only be interpreted of collective election; and we now proceed.

**II.** To examine it *secondly,* with reference to the question of *unconditional* election, that is, an election of persons to eternal life without respect to their faith or obedience. Such election finds no place in this chapter, though there are several instances of unconditional election; but we deny that the spiritual blessings of piety spring necessarily from it, or that unbelief and ruin follow in like manner non-election. The discourse abundantly refutes such opinions.

(1.) The descendants of Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob were elected, but true faith and salvation did not follow as infallible consequents. So were the Gentiles at length elected, but obedience and salvation did not necessarily follow.

(2.) The cases of *non-election* or *rejection* were not infallibly followed by unbelief, disobedience, and punishment: e. g., the Ishmaelites — the Edomites — the rejected Jews in the apostolic age.

(3.) The only argument of any weight, for the ground that *individuals* are intended in this discourse, is, that as none are acknowledged to be the true church but true believers, therefore individual election to eternal life must necessarily be included in the notion of collective election; and that true believers only, under both the old and new dispensations, constituted the “election” — the “remnant according to the *election of grace*.” In this argument there is much error.

1. It is a mere assumption, that the spiritual Israelites, in opposition to Israelites by birth, are anywhere called the “election,” or the “remnant,” &c.

2. It is not true, that under the old dispensation the election of which the apostle speaks was confined to the spiritual seed of Abraham: e. g., case of Esau and Jacob and their descendants.

3. This notion is often grounded on a mistaken view of verses 6-9 in this chapter: the view, namely, that in this passage Paul distinguishes between the spiritual Israelites and those of natural descent; while the fact is, that he
distinguishes between the descendants of Abraham in *a certain line*, and his other descendants.

4. Though we grant that the election of bodies of men to church privileges involves the election of individuals into the true church, — still this last, as Scripture plainly testifies, is *not* unconditional, as the former is, but depends upon their repentance and faith.

We have thus shown that the apostle treats of unconditional *collective* election, but not of unconditional individual election.

(III.) The *third* kind of election is *personal* election, or the choice of individuals to be the heirs of eternal life.

a.) It is not denied that true believers are styled in Scripture the “elect of God;” but the question arises, What is the import of that act of grace which is termed “an election?” We find it explained in two clear passages of Scripture. To be elected, is to be separated from “the world,” and to be “sanctified by the Spirit, and by the blood of Christ;” hence, election is not only an act done in *time*, but subsequent to the administration of the means of salvation.

b.) The Calvinistic doctrine, that God hath from eternity chosen unto salvation a set number of men *unto* faith and final salvation, presents a different aspect, and requires an appeal to the Word of God. It has two parts: 1. The choosing of a *determinate number of men*, and, 2. That this election is *unconditional*.

A. As to the *choosing of a determinate number of men*, it is allowed by Calvinists that they have no express Scriptural evidence for this tenet. And

(1.) As to God’s *eternal* purpose to elect, we know nothing except from revelation; and that declares, (a) that he willeth *all* men to be saved: (b) that Christ died for *all* men, in order to the salvation of all: and (c) the decree of God is, “He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;” and if God be unchangeable, this must have been his decree from all eternity: (d) if the fault of men’s destruction lies in *themselves* — as we have proved — then the number of the elect is capable of *increase* and *diminution*.

(2.) This doctrine *necessarily* carries with it that of the *unconditional reprobation* of all mankind except the elect, which cannot be reconciled,
(a) with the love of God; (b) with the wisdom of God; (c) with the grace of God; (d) with the compassion of God; (e) with the justice of God; (f) with the sincerity of God; (g) with the Scriptural doctrine that God is no respecter of persons; (h) with the Scriptural doctrine of the eternal salvation of infants; (i) and, finally, with the proper end of punitive justice.

B. We consider now the second branch of this doctrine, viz., that personal election is unconditional.

(1.) According to this doctrine, the Church of God is constituted on the sole principle of the divine purpose, not upon the basis of faith and obedience, which manifestly contradicts the Word of God.

(2.) This doctrine of election without respect to faith contradicts the history of the commencement and first constitution of the Church of Christ.

(3.) There is no such doctrine in Scripture as the election of individuals unto faith; and it is inconsistent with several passages which speak expressly of personal election: e. g., John 15:19; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14.

(4.) There is another class of texts, referring to believers, not individually, but as a body forming the Church of Christ, which texts, containing the word election, are ingeniously or perversely applied by Calvinists to the support of their doctrine, when in fact they do not contain it. Such is Ephesians 1:4-6. Now in regard to this text, it might be shown, (a) that if personal election were contained in it, the choice spoken of is not of men merely; but of believing men; but (b) it does not contain the doctrine of personal election, but that of the eternal purpose of God to constitute his visible church no longer upon the ground of descent from Abraham, but on that of faith in Christ.

(5.) Finally, the Calvinistic doctrine has no stronger passage to lean upon. We conclude by asking, if this doctrine be true, (a.) Why are we commanded “to make our election sure?” (b.) Where does Scripture tell us of elect unbelievers? (c.) And how can the Spirit of truth convince such of sin and danger when they are, in fact, in no danger?

II. Having thus considered election, we come now to examine those texts which speak of the calling and predestination of believers.
The words "call" and "calling" occur frequently in the New Testament. The parable in Matthew 22:1-14, seems to have given rise to many of these; and a clear interpretation of it will explain the use of the phrase in most other passages.

a.) Three classes of persons are called in the parable. (1.) The disobedient persons who made light of the call. (2.) Those embraced in the class of "destitute of the wedding garment." (3.) The approved guests.

b.) As to the call itself. (1.) The three classes are on an equality. (2.) No irresistible influence is employed. (3.) They are called into a company, or society, before which the banquet is spread.

These views explain the passages in which the term is used in the epistles: in none of them is the exclusive calling of any set number of men contained.

The Synod of Dort attempt to reason the doctrine from Romans 8:30. But this passage says nothing of a "set and determinate number of men." It treats indeed of the privileges and hopes of believers, but not as secured to them by any such decree as the Synod of Dort advocates; for,

(1.) The matter would have been out of place in St. Paul’s lofty conclusion of his high argument on justification by faith.

(2.) The context relieves the text of the appearance of favouring the doctrine.

(3.) The apostle does indeed speak of the foreknowledge of believers, taken distributively and personally, to church privileges; but this strengthens our argument against the use of the passage made by the Synod of Dort: for 1. Foreknowledge may be simple approval, as in Romans 11:2; and 2. If it be taken in this passage in the sense of simple prescience, it will come to the same issue; for believers, if foreknown at all, in any other sense than all men are foreknown, must have been foreknown as believers.

(4.) As to the predestination spoken of in the text, the way is now clear: the foreknown believers were predestinated, called, justified, and glorified.

EXAMINATION OF CERTAIN PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE SUPPOSED TO LIMIT THE EXTENT OF CHRIST’S REDEMPTION, (Ch. 27.)
1. John 6:37: “All that the Father giveth to me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” The Calvinistic view of this text is, that a certain number were “given” to Christ; and as none others can come to him, the doctrine of distinguishing grace is established. 

(1.) Our first objection to this view is, that Christ placed the reason of the Jews’ not coming, in themselves. John 5:38, 40, 44, 46.

(2.) The phrase, “to be given” by the Father to Christ, is abundantly explained by the context.

2. Matthew 20:15, 16. The Calvinistic view here is, that God has a right, on the principle of pure sovereignty, to afford grace to some, and to leave others to perish in their sins. The fact that this passage is the conclusion of the parable of the vineyard, is sufficient refutation of the interpretation.

3. 2 Timothy 2:19. This text bears no friendly aspect toward Calvinism.

4. John 10:26: “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.” It is a sufficient reply to the Calvinistic view of this text, to state that men are called “the sheep of Christ” in regard to their qualities and acts, and not with reference to any supposed transaction between the Father and Christ.

5. John 13:18. The term “know” in this text is evidently used in the sense of discriminating character.

6. John 15:16. The word “chosen” in this text is gratuitously interpreted (by Calvinists) as relating to an eternal election; but Christ had “chosen them out of the world,” which must have been done in time.

7. 2 Timothy 1:9: “Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling,” &c. No personal election spoken of here. The parallel passage, Ephesians 3:4-6, shows that the apostle was speaking of the divine purpose to form the church out of both Jews and Gentiles.

8. Acts 13:48: “And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”

(1.) If the Gentiles, who believed, only did so because they were “ordained” so to do, then the Jews, who believed not, were not guilty, as it is affirmed, of putting the word away from them.
(2.) The Calvinistic view carries with it the notion that all the elect Gentiles at Antioch believed at once, and that no more remained to be converted.

(3.) Some Calvinists render the words “determined,” or “ordered,” for eternal life.

(4.) In no place in the New Testament where the same word occurs, is it ever employed to convey the meaning of destiny, or predestination.


10. Proverbs 16:4. The true meaning is, that God renders even those who have made themselves wicked, the means of glorifying his justice in their punishment.

11. John 12:37-40. Quotation from Isaiah. In examining this passage, we find,

(1.) That it does not affirm that the eyes of the Jew should be blinded by a divine agency, as Mr. Scott and the Calvinists assume. In every view of the passage, the responsible agent is “THIS PEOPLE” — the perverse and obstinate Jews themselves.

(2.) A simple prophecy is not a declaration of purpose at all; but the declaration of a future event.

(3.) Even admitting the Calvinistic view of this passage, it would afford no proof of general election and reprobation, since it has application to the unbelieving part of the Jews only.

12. Jude 1:4. These certain men had been foretold in the Scriptures, or their punishment predicted. There is nothing here of eternal purpose.

13. 1 Corinthians 4:7: “For who maketh thee to differ from another?” A favourite argument with Calvinists is founded on this text; and a dilemma raised on the supposition of gospel offers being made to two men, why one accepts and the other rejects? They answer that election alone solves the question. But,

(1.) Put the question as to one man, at two different periods; — and election will not solve this difficulty: of course, then, it will not solve the other.
(2.) The question of the apostle has reference to gifts and endowments, not to a difference in religious state.

(3.) Following out their view, the doctrine would follow, that sufficiency of grace is denied to the wicked, — which would remove all their responsibility.

14. Acts 18:9, 10: “…for I have much people in this city.” This may mean, either that there were many devout people in the city, or that there would be many subsequently converted there.

THEORIES WHICH LIMIT THE EXTENT OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST. (Ch. 28.)

We shall notice in this chapter the doctrines of predestination, etc.

I. As stated by Calvin himself, and by Calvinistic theologians and churches.

(I.) Calvin.

1. Statement of his opinions, from the “Institutes.”

2. His answers to objections shown to be weak and futile, e. g.,

a.) The objection that the system is unjust: which he answers by asserting that it is the will of God: thus making four evasions — 1, 2, 3, 4.

b.) The objection that if corruption is the cause of man’s destruction, the corruption itself was an effect of the divine decree: which he answers by referring again to the sovereign will of God.

3. His attempts to reconcile his doctrine with man’s demerit, and to relieve it of the charge of making God the author of sin, shown to be feeble and contradictory.

4. His system not reducable to sublapsarianism.

5. His tenets shown to be in opposition to the doctrines of the first ages.

6. Their history from the time of Augustine to Calvin.

(II.) Calvinistic theologians and churches.

1. Three leading theories prevalent among the reformed churches prior to the Synod of Dort.
a.) **Supralapsarian.** (1.) **Decree:** to save certain men by grace, and to condemn others by justice. (2.) **Means:** creation of Adam, and ordination of sin. (3.) **Operation:** irresistible grace, producing faith and final salvation. (4.) **Result:** that reprobates have no grace, and no capacity of believing and of being saved.

b.) Also **supralapsarian,** but differing somewhat from (a.), viz., that it does not lay down the creation or the fall as a mediate cause, foreordained of God for the execution of the decree of reprobation; but yet Arminius shows that, according to this view, the fall is a **necessary means** for its exercise, and thus God is made the author of sin.

c.) **Sublapsarian.** In which man, as the object of predestination, is considered as fallen.

(1.) **Statement of the doctrine.** Its basis is, that the whole human race are liable to eternal death in consequence of Adam’s transgression.

(2.) **Refutation.** “The wages of sin is death,” but “sin is the transgression of the law.”

1. If the race be contemplated as contained **seminaly** in Adam, then the whole race would have perished in Adam, without the vouchsafement of mercy to any.

2. If contemplated as to have not only a potential but a real existence, then the doctrine is, that every man of the race is absolutely liable to eternal death for the sin of Adam, to which he was not a consenting party.

3. If the foreknowledge of actual transgression be contemplated by the decree, then the actual sins of men are either evitable or necessary: if the former, then reprobates may be saved; if the latter, none are responsible.

4. It is alleged that Paul represents all men under condemnation to eternal death in consequence of their connexion with the first Adam; but,

a.) In the gospel “this is the condemnation, that men love darkness rather than light.” Hence the previous state of condemnation was not unalterable.

b.) In Scripture, final condemnation is always placed upon the ground of **actual sin.**

c.) The true sense of the apostle in Romans v, is to be obtained from a careful examination of the entire argument. He is not representing, as
Calvinists have it, the condition in which the human race would have been if Christ had not interposed, but its actual condition, both in consequence of the fall of man and the intervention of Christ.


By extracts from Acts 1:1, 4-6, 10, and 15, it is clear that Dr. Heylin gave a true summary of the eighteen articles on predestination, in the following words: — “That God, by an absolute decree, hath elected to salvation a very small number of men, without any regard to their faith and obedience whatsoever; and excluded from saving grace all the rest of mankind, and appointed them by the same decree to eternal damnation, without any regard to their infidelity and impenitency.”

3. *The Church of Scotland* expresses its doctrine on these topics in the answers to the 12th and 13th questions of its large catechism; in which there appears a strict conformity to the doctrines of Calvin.

4. *The Church of the Vaudois*, in Piedmont, by the Confession of A. D. 1120, establish the doctrine that Christ died for the salvation of the whole world; but in the seventeenth century pastors were introduced from Geneva, and the Confession of 1655 embraces the doctrine and almost the very words of Calvin on this point.

5. *The French Churches*, in their Confession of 1558, declare Calvinistic sentiments, but the expressions are guarded and careful.

6. *The Westminster Confession* gives the sentiments of the English Presbyterian Churches, and of the Church of Scotland. In chapter iii, the doctrine of predestination is advanced in conformity with the most unmitigated parts of Calvin’s Institutes.

II. As held in certain modifications of the Calvinistic scheme.

(I.) *Baxterianism:* advanced by Richard Baxter, in his treatise of *Universal Redemption*, and in his *Methodus Theologicae*; but derived from the writings of Camero, and defended by Amyraut and others.

1. It differs from High Calvinism, as to the doctrine of satisfaction: as the system explicitly asserts that Christ made satisfaction by his death equally for the sins of every man. Baxter draws many “absurd consequents from the doctrine which denieth universal satisfaction.
2. But from an examination of his entire scheme, it amounts only to this, — that although a *conditional satisfaction* has been purchased by Christ for all men, yet Christ has *not* purchased for all men, the power of performing the required condition of salvation. Baxter gives to the elect irresistible effectual grace; but to others *sufficient grace*, which is called by himself, aptly enough, “sufficient *ineffectual* grace.” He admits that all men may have grace to bring them *nearer* Christ; but coming nearer to Christ, and nearer to saving faith, are with him quite distinct. His concern seems to be, to show, not how the non-elect might be saved, but how they might with some plausibility be damned. Quotations from Curcellœus, Dr. Womack, and Maclaine, are in point.

(II.) *Dr. Williams’s* scheme is in substance the same as the theory of supralapsarian reprobation. In all other mitigated schemes, the “sufficiency of grace” is understood in Baxter’s sense. The labour of all these theories is to find out some pretext for punishing those that perish, independent of the Scriptural reason, the rejection of a mercy free for all.

III. As to their origin. They seem to have arisen, not from a careful examination of Scripture, but from metaphysical subtleties, for by these they have at all times been chiefly supported.

(I.) *Eternal decrees.*

1. This term is nowhere employed in Scripture: its signification, (if it be used at all,) must be controlled by Scripture. The decrees of God can only Scripturally signify the determination of his will in his government of the world he has made.

2. These decrees are, in Scripture, referred to two classes: (1) a determination *to do* certain things; and (2) a determination to permit certain things to be done by free and accountable creatures. This last does not involve the consequence of making God the author of sin.

3. That many of the divine decrees are *conditional* we have the testimony of Scripture, which abounds with examples of decrees to which conditions are annexed. We have also instances, as in the case of Eli, of the revocation of the divine decrees.

(II.) *The prescience of God.*
1. The Calvinistic popular argument is, that as the final condition of every man is foreseen, it must be certain, and therefore inevitable and necessary. The answer is, that certainty and necessity are two perfectly distinct predicaments, — as certainty exists in the mind fore-seeing, but necessity qualifies the action foreseen.

2. The scholastic argument.

(a.) The schoolmen distinguish between (1.) *Scientia indefinita*, the knowledge of possible things, and (2.) *Scientia visionis*, the knowledge which God has of all real existences; to which the anti-predestinarians added (3.) *Scientia media*, to express God’s knowledge of the actions of free agents, and the divine acts consequent upon them.

(b.) Absolute predestination is identified with *scientia visionis* by the Calvinists: illustrated by an extract from *Hill’s Lectures*.

The sophistry of Dr. Hill’s statement lies in this, that the determination of the divine will to produce the universe is made to include a determination “to produce the whole series of beings and events that were then future:” while among the “beings” to be produced were some endowed with free will. If this be denied, then man is not accountable for his personal offences: if allowed, then his (say) sinful acts cannot have been determined in the same manner by the divine will, as the production of the universe and the beings which composed it.

(III.) The human will.

1. Calvinists find it necessary to the consistency of their theory that the *volitions*, as well as the *acts*, of man should be placed in bondage; and their doctrine fairly stated is, that the will is determined to one class of objects, no other being possible. The Scriptural doctrine is, that, by the grace of God, man — who without that grace would be *morally* incapable of choosing anything but evil — is endowed with the power of choosing good.

2. More moderate Calvinists contend that transgressors are responsible for their evil acts, because they are done willingly, although their will could not but choose them. We reply, that this is only the case where the time of trial is past, as in devils and apostates; and then only because these are personally guilty of having vitiated their own wills: but the case is different as to probationers; for,
(1.) It is decided by the Word of God, that men who perish might have “chosen life.”

(2.) The natural reason of mankind is in direct opposition to the doctrine.

3. The metaphysical doctrine is, that the will is swayed by motives which arise from circumstances beyond the control of man; but,

(1.) This still leaves us in the difficulty, that men are bound by a chain of events established by an almighty power.

(2.) The doctrine is contradicted by the language of men in all countries and ages.

(3.) We deny the necessary connexion between motive and volition. That the mind acts generally under the influence of motives may be granted, but that it is operated upon by them necessarily, is contradicted,

(a.) By the fact of our often acting under the weakest reason, which is the character of all sins against judgment; and,

(b.) By the fact that we have power to displace one motive by another, and to control those circumstances from which motives flow.

(IV.) The divine sovereignty.

The Calvinistic doctrine is, that God does what he wills, only because he wills it. But it can be shown from Scripture, that the acts of the divine will are under the direction of the divine wisdom, goodness, and justice.

(V.) The case of heathen nations is sometimes referred to by Calvinists as presenting equal difficulties to those urged against election and reprobation. But the cases are not parallel, unless it be granted that heathen, as such, are excluded from heaven.

1. Heathen are bad enough, but the question is not what they are, but what they might be: they are under the patriarchal dispensation, and

2. St. Paul affirms that the divine law has not perished from among them, but that if they live up to the light which they possess they may be saved.

(VI.) Irresistible grace. We admit that man, in his simply natural state, is insufficient of himself to think or do anything of a saving tendency; and that when the Holy Spirit is vouchsafed, we are often entirely passive in the
first instance: but we contend that the grace of God has been bestowed upon all men, inasmuch as all are required to do those things which have a saving tendency. These premises

1. Establish the justice of God in the condemnation of men, and

2. Secure the glory of our salvation to the grace of God.

(D.) — FURTHER BENEFITS OF REDEMPTION. (Ch. 29.)

I. *Entire sanctification* of believers. That there is a distinction between a regenerate state and a state of perfect holiness, is sufficiently proved by the exhortations to believers in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and 2 Corinthians 7. 1.

1. The *time* when we are to expect this blessing has been disputed. It is admitted that the soul must be entirely cleansed before it can pass into heaven, but many contend that the final stroke to corruption can only be given at death; but

(1.) The promise of sanctification is nowhere restricted in Scripture to the article of death.

(2.) The soul’s union with the body is nowhere represented as a necessary obstacle to its entire sanctification. Romans vii, has indeed been adduced in proof of this, but it is clear that the apostle is giving the experience of one yet under the *law*, and not in a state of deliverance by Christ.

(3.) This doctrine is disproved by those passages which connect sanctification with the subsequent exhibition of its fruits in life.

(4.) It is disproved, also, by all those passages which require us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit; for these are required of us in perfection and maturity, and necessarily suppose the entire sanctification of the soul from the opposite and antagonist evils.

(5.) This doctrine involves other antiscriptural consequences: — that the seat of sin is in the flesh; and that the flesh must not only lust against the spirit, but on many occasions be the conqueror.

We conclude, then, that as sanctification can neither be referred to the hour of death, nor placed subsequently to this life, it is an attainment to which believers are called during this life.
2. The manner of sanctification. It may be, (1) gradual, or (2) instantaneous,

3. Objections to this doctrine.

(1.) It supposes future impeccability. Nay: the angels sinned, and so did our first parents.

(2.) It renders the atonement and intercession of Christ superfluous; Nay: for this state of sanctification is maintained by the constant influences of the Holy Spirit, vouchsafed through Christ’s intercession.

(3.) It shuts out the use of the prayer, “Forgive us our trespasses.” But, a) this prayer is designed for men in a mixed condition, b) All sin must not be continued, in order that this prayer may be employed. And c) The defects and infirmities of a being naturally imperfect, are not inconsistent with moral holiness.

II. The right to pray is another benefit which accrues to believers; and so is

III. The special providence of God.

IV. Victory over death is also awarded to them.

V. The immediate reception of the soul into a state of blessedness. “The sacred writers proceed on the supposition that the soul and the body are naturally distinct and separable, and that the soul is susceptible of pain or pleasure during that separation.” Quotation from Campbell.

VI. Resurrection of the body. There is some dispute in regard to this doctrine — whether it implies a resurrection of the substance of the body, or of a minute and indestructible germ.

1. The only passage of Scripture which seems to favour the germ theory is 461535 1 Corinthians 15:35: “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” These two questions both imply a doubt as to the fact, not an inquiry as to the modus agendi; and the apostle answers them by showing, in answer to the first question, that there is nothing incredible in the thing; and in answer to the second, that the doctrine of our reunion with the body implies nothing contrary to the hopes of liberation from the
“burden of this flesh,” because of the glorified qualities which God is able to give to matter.

2. There are several *difficulties* connected with this theory; for on its hypothesis

(1.) There is no resurrection of the *body*; for the germ cannot be called the body.

(2.) There is no *resurrection* from *death* at all, but a *vegetation* from a secret principle of life.

(3.) It is substantially the same with the pagan doctrine of metempsychosis.

An objection to the resurrection of the body has been drawn from the changes of its substance during life. This does not affect the doctrine, that the body which is laid in the grave shall be raised up. “But,” we are told, “the same bodies that sin may not be punished.” We answer, that the soul is the only rewardable *subject* — the body is its *instrument*.
PART THIRD. — MORALS OF CHRISTIANITY.

OUTLINE.

(I.) The moral law. (Ch. 1.)
(II.) The duties we owe to God. (Ch. 2, 3.)
(III.) Duties to our neighbour. (Ch. 4.)

(I.) THE MORAL LAW. (Ch. 1.)

Preliminary observations: —

(1.) The morals of the New Testament are not presented to us in the form of a regular code.

(2.) The divine authority of the Old Testament is everywhere presupposed.

I. The moral laws of the Old Testament pass into the Christian code.

1. The ceremonial law is repealed, being adumbrative and temporary;

2. The political law also; but

3. The moral precepts are not repealed; but even incidentally re-enacted. *Scil.,* Christ’s declaration, “I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil;” and Paul’s, ” Do we then make void the law through faith?” The argument, then, from the want of formal re-enactment, has no weight.

4. The entire decalogue is brought into the Christian code by a distinct injunction of its separate precepts.

II. These laws, in the Christian code, stand in other and higher circumstances than under the Mosaic dispensation.

1. They are extended more expressly to the *heart.*

2. They are carried out into a greater variety of duties.

3. There is a more enlarged injunction of positive and particular virtues.

4. All overt acts are connected with corresponding principles.

5. These laws are connected with promises of divine assistance.

6. They have a living illustration in the example of Christ.
7. They are connected with higher sanctions.

III. All attempts to teach morals, independent of Christianity, must be of mischievous tendency.

1. Because such attempts convey the impression that reason alone could discover the duty of man.
2. Because they displace what is perfect for what is imperfect.
3. Because they turn away from the revealed law to inferior considerations such as beauty, fitness, &c.
4. Because they either enjoin duties merely outward in the act, or else assume that human nature is able to cleanse itself.
5. Because that by separating doctrines from morals, they propose a new plan, other than that of the gospel, for renovating and moralizing the world. Yet moral philosophy, if properly guarded, and taken in connexion with the whole Christian system, is not to be undervalued.

IV. As to the reasons on which moral precepts rest, it may be remarked,

1. Some rest wholly on the authority of a revealer;
2. Others are accompanied with manifest rational evidence;
3. Others partially disclose their rationale to the anxious inquirer.

V. With respect to the application of general precepts, wide observation is necessary.

1. The precepts must be general.
2. Exceptions to general rules should be watched with jealousy.

VI. Grounds of moral obligation.

1. “Eternal and necessary fitness of things,” leaves the question still open.
2. “Moral sense,” also unsatisfactory; for
   (a.) Its indications are neither perfect nor uniform.
   (b.) Its mandates have no authority.

4. The will of God, then, the only true ground of moral obligation. The obligation is founded on the relation of the creature to the Creator.

VII. Nature of moral rectitude. (Payne’s view.)

1. We sustain various relations to God.

2. We sustain various relations to each other.

Virtue is the conformity or harmony of man’s affections or actions, with the various regulations in which he has been placed; and since these relations were constituted by God, rectitude may be regarded as conformity to the moral nature of God, the ultimate standard of virtue.

(II.) THE DUTIES WE OWE TO GOD. (Ch. 2, 3.)

Summed up in Scripture under the word godliness, embracing

I. Internal principles.

1. Submission to God.

(a.) Grounded on the obligations (1) of creation, (2) of redemption.

(b.) Regulated by his will, which is the highest rule of moral virtue,

   (1) Because of its authority.
   (2) Because it defines and enforces every branch of duty.
   (3) Because it annuls every contrary rule.
   (4) Because, instead of lowering its claims to suit man’s weakness, it connects itself with the offer of strength from on high.
   (5) Because it accommodates itself to no man’s interests.
   (6) Because it admits no exceptions in obedience.

2. Love to God.

(a.) Its nature.

(b.) Its importance in securing obedience.

3. Trust in God.

(a.) Grounded on the divine injunction. Probable reason, to secure our peace of mind.
(b.) Measured by the divine promises of help in the word of God.

(c.) Hence connected with conversion, necessarily.

4. Fear of God.

(a.) Its nature: — (1.) Reverential, not servile; yet (2.) Involving a sense of our conditional liability to his displeasure.

(b.) Its practical influence.

5. Holiness rests upon these moral principles and habits.

II. External duties.

A. Prayer.


(b.) The reason on which it rests. We can infer from Scripture,

1. That it cannot of itself produce in man a fitness for the reception of God’s mercies.

2. That it is not an instrument but a condition of grace.

3. But that it preserves in men’s minds a sense of God’s agency in the world, and of the dependence of all creatures upon him.

(c.) Objections to this duty.

1. One is founded on predestination.

  a. Answer on predestinarian principles insufficient and contradictory.

  b. True answer, that although God has absolutely predetermined some things, there are others which he has conditionally predetermined.

2. A second is founded on the perfections of the divine character. Paley’s answer.
3. A third is, that it is hard to conceive how prayer can affect the case of others.

a. If it were so, that would not affect the duty.

b. But it is no harder to conceive than why one man’s virtues or vices should affect the condition of others, which is the case every day.

(d.) Division of prayer. Four branches.

1. Ejaculatory.

a. Its nature.

b. Its advantages.

2. Private.

a. Founded upon Christ’s injunction and example.

b. Designed to produce unlimited confidence in God our Father.

3. Family.

a. Paley’s view of it defective.

b. Its obligation shown, (1.) From the very constitution of a family. (2.) From the fact that the earliest patriarchal worship was family worship, which was not revoked either by Judaism or Christianity.

c. Its advantages.

4. Public.

a. Its obligation shown. (1.) From the example of public worship among the Jews. (2.) By inference, from the command to publish the gospel implying assemblies. (3) By direct precepts, e. g., Paul’s Epistles are commanded to be read in churches. (4.) From the practice of the primitive age, shown from St. Paul and St. Clement.

b. Its advantages.

(e.) Forms of prayer.

1. Worship should be spiritual — which was doubtless the character of that of the primitive Church. Latin and Greek corruptions. The liturgies of the reformed churches purified from these corruptions.
2. Objections to forms of prayer.

a. Absolute. But

(1.) This objection involves principles which cannot be acted upon.


b. It is objected, that “forms composed for one age become unfit for another.” But,

(1.) The form may be modified.

(2.) In fact, such forms have not become obsolete among us.

(3.) If opinions become unscriptural, the form is a safeguard against heresy.

c. “The repetition of the form produces weariness and inattention. Answer,

(1.) The devout will not grow weary.

(2.) The undevout will, even if extempore prayers are used.

d. “Forms must take too general a character.” Answer,

(1.) This is not true of the Liturgy of the Church of England.

(2.) If extempore prayer be allowed also, the objection has no weight.

3. Objections to extempore prayer.

a. It gives rise to extravagant addresses to God. Ans. This will only be the case where the preachers are foolish or incompetent.

b. It confuses the minds of the hearers. Ans. This lay against the inspired prayers in the Bible when first uttered; and would now lie against all occasional forms. Facts, too, disprove it.

4. Conclusion. That each mode has its advantages, and that their proper combination forms the best public service.

B. Praise and thanksgiving.

a. Psalms and hymns, to be sung with the voice, and united with the melody of the heart, are of apostolic injunction.
b. Uses. 1) To acknowledge God. 2) To promote suitable sentiments of
gratitude and dependence in our hearts.

C. Observance of the Lord’s day. (Ch. 3.)

I. Obligation.

(I.) Though the observance is nowhere enjoined in so many words, yet, on
the supposition that the Sabbath was instituted at the creation, we derive
its obligation with great clearness from the Scriptures.

a. As to the observance of a Sabbath in general.

(1.) Inferentially, from the history of its observance from the creation
down to the period of the gospel narrative, while no Scripture indicates its
abolition.

(2.) Directly, since the decalogue is binding on us, proved,

(a.) By our Lord’s declaration, that he “came not to destroy the law and
the prophets.”

(b.) By the text, “the Sabbath was made for man.”

(c.) By St. Paul’s reply, (Romans 3:31,) “Do we then make void the
law through faith?”

b. As to the observance of a particular day: —

(1.) The change from the seventh to the first day was made by inspired
men.

(2.) This change did not alter the law of the Sabbath, which was not so
circumstantial as to require uniform modes of reckoning time, and
observance of latitudes and longitudes for its fulfilment.

(3.) The original command says nothing of the epoch when the reckoning
should begin. (Holden)

(4.) But, for the sake of public worship, the Sabbath should be uniformly
observed by a whole community at the same time.

(II.) But it has been denied that the Sabbath was instituted at the creation.

a. Paley’s ground, as summed up and answered by Holden. His principal
ground is, “that the first restitution of the Sabbath took place during the
sojournning of the Jews in the wilderness;” and from the passage in Exodus 16, he infers,

1. “That if the Sabbath had been instituted at creation, there would be some mention of it in the history of the patriarchal ages.” But this history is very brief: there are omissions in it more extraordinary, e. g., prayer and circumcision. The Sabbath is hardly mentioned in Joshua, Judges, Ruth, &c.: but the observance of it seems to be intimated by the division of time into weeks, in the patriarchal history.

2. “That there is not, in Exodus 16, any intimation that the Sabbath was only the revival of an ancient institution.” But the fact is, that it is mentioned exactly in the way an historian would, who had occasion to speak of a well-known institution.

3. Genesis, chap. 2, is next adduced by Dr. Paley as not inconsistent with his opinion, as he concurs with those critics who suppose that Moses mentioned the sanctification of the Sabbath in that place, by prolepsis, in the order of connexion, not of time. But this doctrine is altogether gratuitous, and also inconsistent with the design of the sacred historian to give a clear and faithful history.

The law of the Sabbath, then, is universal, and not peculiar to the Jews.

II. Mode of observing the Christian Sabbath.

1. There are two extremes: (1.) To regard the Sabbath merely as a prudential institution; (2.) To neglect the distinction between the moral and the ceremonial law of Moses: but yet,

2. Those precepts of the Levitical code which relate to the Sabbath are of great use to us, though, independent of these,

3. We have throughout the Scriptures abundant guidance, — by which we learn, a.) That the Sabbath is to be a day of rest and devotion. b.) That works of mercy are not unlawful, c.) But that the management of public charities is too secular an employment for the Sabbath. d.) And that amusements and recreations are out of place, nay, sinful.

(III.) DUTIES TO OUR NEIGHBOUR. (Ch. 4.)

I. CHARITY, which is to be considered,
1. As to its source.  
That source is a regenerated state of mind.

2. As to its exclusiveness. It shuts out all 1) anger; 2) implacability; 3) revenge; 4) prejudice; 5) evil-speaking; 6) petty aggressions, though legal; 7) artificial distinctions, as its limitations.

3. As to its active expression.  
(1.) It delights in sympathy, liberality, &c., as it is not merely negative. (2.) It dictates and regulates works of mercy. (3) It teaches us that we are only stewards of the divine goodness.


(I.) Ethical justice respects,  
A. Man’s natural rights, which are,  
1. Right to life; which is guarded by the precept, “Thou shalt not kill,” &c.  
2. Right of property: guarded by the law, “Thou shalt not steal nor covet.”  
3. Right of liberty. Manstealing is classed in the New Testament with the greatest crimes. In noticing the question of slavery, we remark,  
(a.) That slavery did exist under the Jewish law; but of a much milder type than that which prevailed in the surrounding nations; and all that can be inferred from it is, that a legislature may, in certain cases, be justified in mitigating, rather than abolishing, the evil.  
(b.) Every Christian government binds itself to be regulated by the principles of the New Testament, which are obviously opposed to slavery.  
(c.) Modern African slavery of course calls loudly for the application of such principles. The slaves have never lost the right to liberty; and that liberty should be restored. The manner of its restoration is in the power of government, provided, 1. That the emancipation be sincerely determined upon at some future time. 2. That it be not delayed beyond the period which the general interest of the slaves themselves prescribes. 3. That all possible means be adopted to render freedom a good to them.  

B. The question may be asked, whether man himself has the power of surrendering these great natural rights at his own option?
1. With respect to life.

(1.) Where duty calls, (as in case of invasion, or when our allegiance to Christ must otherwise be laid down,) we are not only at liberty to take the risk, but bound to do it.

(2.) Suicide was considered unlawful by the ancients, on the ground of its being a violation of God’s appointment; and modern ethical writers have added little to the force of their doctrines on the subject. Of course their views are inefficient. “Thou shalt not kill,” is the divine prohibition against killing ourselves as well as others: — not, “Thou shalt do no murder,” as Archbishop Whately incorrectly quotes, and then reasons upon. The crime of murder lies in the fact that man is made in the image of God — immortal. Self-murder is unpardonable.

(3.) Duelling involves the two crimes of murder and suicide.

2. With respect to property. Christianity teaches us that property is a trust; and that gambling, prodigality, &c., are violations of that trust.

3. Liberty cannot be voluntarily parted with under the Christian dispensation.

C. The right of conscience is now to be considered.

1. The duty of religious worship and opinions, and the right to the profession of the latter and practice of the former, are strictly correlative; and as the obligation to perform the duty cannot be removed, so neither can the right to its performance be destroyed.

2. But government has authority to take cognizance of the manner in which this right is exercised, and can interfere (1,) where the worship is vexatious to society in general; or (2,) the opinions subversive of the principles of social order; or (3,) where dangerous political opinions are connected with religious notions.

3. The case of those who reject revelation must be considered on its own merits.

(1.) Simple Deism may afford such a plea of conscience as the state ought to admit, though rejected by a sound theologian.

(2.) To Atheism no toleration can be extended by a Christian government; — for, a) jurisprudence cannot coexist with such doctrines; b) they are
subversive of the morals of the people; and, c) no conscience can be pleaded by their votaries for the avowal of such tenets.

(II.) **Economical justice** respects those relations which grow out of the existence of men in families.

1. Relation of husband and wife, founded on the institution of marriage.

(1.) **Obligation** of marriage. General, but not imperative, on every man, in all circumstances. Exceptions require the justification of an equal or paramount obligation.

(2.) **Ends** of marriage.

(a.) To produce the greatest number of healthy children.

(b.) To fix the relations which give rise to the domestic affections, etc.

(c.) To prevent polygamy, which, 1, was forbidden by the original law, although the practice of the Jews may have fallen short of it; 2, was expressly forbidden by Christ in his discourse with the Pharisees; 3, is forbidden also by nature.

(d.) To prevent fornication, which it does, 1, by providing for a lawful gratification of the sexual appetite; 2, by the mutual love which it presupposes in the parties, without which the institution is profaned.

(3.) **Character** of the marriage contract.

(a.) It is partly a civil contract — being under the control of the State for weighty reasons.

(b.) It is also a religious act, in which vows are made to God by the contracting parties. Though the Scriptures do not expressly assign its celebration to the ministers of religion, yet the State has wisely done it.

(4.) **Rights and duties** of marriage.

2. Duties of children. Comprehensiveness of the precept, “Honour thy father and thy mother,” embracing

(1.) **Love**, comprising esteem and gratitude.
Reverence, comprising, a,) the desire to please; b,) the fear to offend; c,) the external manifestation of these in honour and civility; and, d,) the support of parents when in necessity.

Obedience, which is to be universal, except in cases of conscience. This rule is most severely and frequently tried in regard to marriage. Here, a.) The child is not bound to marry at the command of the parents. b.) But should not violate their prohibition, except only when the parties are of age, and then only if, 1,) the opposition is to a child’s marrying a religious person; or, 2,) is capricious; or, 3,) is unreasonable.

Duties of parents.

Love, implying,
(a.) The natural instinct of affection, cultivated by religion.
(b.) The care and support of offspring.

Instruction, which includes,
(a.) The education of children in a way suited to their condition.
(b.) Their training in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord” — as the parent is a priest in his own family: and,
(c.) The affording them a godly example.

Government, which should be,
(a.) Mild and gentle.
(b.) Firm and faithful, implying even the use of corporeal punishment when necessary.

Provision for the settlement of children in the world is a duty of parents, only limited by their ability.

Duties of servant and master.
(a.) This is a relation which must exist, as equality of condition is impossible.
(b.) But it is a source of great evil, when unregulated by religion.
(c) The precepts of the New Testament go to prevent this evil, by assigning,

1. The duties of servants, viz., honour and obedience — which are to be cheerful and from the heart.

2. The reciprocal duties of servants and masters; involving obedience on the one part, and kindness, moderation, and justice, on the other; and,

3. The religious duties of masters, including — 1. Religious instruction. 2. The observance of the Sabbath. 3. Existing influence in favour of religion.

(III.) Political justice.

1. Origin of power.

(a.) The Scriptures declare government to be an ordinance of God.

(b.) The doctrine of a “social compact” is therefore unscriptural.

(c.) Paley’s view, which places the obligation in the will of God, as collected from expediency, is too loose: that will is declared in Scripture.

2. Rights and duties of sovereign and subject reciprocal.

(a.) Duties of government, — enactment of just laws, etc. Obligation grounded on direct passages of Scripture.

(b.) Duties of subjects, — obedience, tribute, prayer, &c.

3. Question, “How far does it consist with Christian submission to endeavour to remedy the evils of a government?”

(a.) No form of government is enjoined in Scripture. Hence there is no divine right in particular families.

(b.) Resistance to an established government, whatever may be its form, is consistent with duty only in certain extreme cases. There are two kinds of resistance: —

1. Of opinion. In order to be lawful, this resistance must be, (1) just; (2) directed against public acts; (3) practical; (4) deliberate; (5) not factious; (6) not respecting local but general interests.

2. Of force. This may be divided into two kinds: —
(1.) That of a controlling force in the government: e. g., the British Parliament, which can refuse supplies, etc. This resistance, which is implied by a constitution, is lawful, when advisedly and patriotically employed.

(2.) That of arms. Three cases may be supposed: —

a.) Where the nation enjoys and values good institutions. Here unjust aggressions will not succeed.

b.) Where popular opinion is only partly enlightened. Here the work of improvement should precede resistance. Should the despot triumph, patriotism will suffer. Should the reformers triumph, the ignorant mass run on into licentiousness: e. g., French Revolution and Parliamentary War.

c.) Where the sovereign power acts, by mercenaries or otherwise, in opposition to the views of the majority. Here resistance is justifiable: e. g., Revolution of 1688.

(c.) The case of rival governments.

(d.) Resistance for conscience’ sake.
PART FOURTH. — INSTITUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

OUTLINE.

I. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Ch. 1.

II. THE SACRAMENTS. Ch. 2.-4.

(I.) Number and nature of sacraments, (Ch. 2.)
(II.) Sacrament of baptism, (Ch. 3.)
(III.) Sacrament of Lord’s supper, (Ch. 4.)

I. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Ch. 1.

The Church of Christ, in its largest sense, consists of all who have been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ; in a stricter sense, it consists of those who are vitally united to Christ. Taken in either view, it is a visible, permanent society, bound to obey certain rules; and of course government is necessarily supposed to exist in it. We have four points to examine in this chapter: —

I. The nature of this government. It is wholly spiritual, for,

1. It is concerned only with spiritual objects.

2. Its only punitive discipline is comprised in “admonition,” “reproof,” “sharp rebukes,” and finally, “excision from the society.”

II. The persons to whom this government is committed. It is necessary here to consider the composition of the primitive Church, as stated in the New Testament.


2. Whether the words bishop and presbyter express two distinct sacred orders, has been a subject of much controversy. But it may be easily shown that there is no distinction of order, whatever distinction of office may exist.

(I.) The argument from the promiscuous use of these terms in the New Testament seems incontrovertible. Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; Philippians 1:1; 2 John 1; &c.
A distinction between bishops and presbyters did indeed arise at a very early period; but it proves nothing for a superior order, nor for diocesan episcopacy; for it cannot be shown that the power of ordination was given to bishops to the exclusion of presbyters; and this early distinction may be easily accounted for.

a.) It became expedient, doubtless, in the meetings of presbyters, at a very early period, that one should be chosen to preside over the rest; but the practice, as testified subsequently by Jerome, was founded solely upon expediency. It is to be remembered, that the primitive churches were formed very much upon the model of the Jewish synagogues.

b.) As Christianity made its way, the concerns of the districts of country surrounding cities naturally fell under the cognizance of the bishops of those cities. Thus diocesans arose; subsequently, metropolitans, primates, patriarchs; and finally the pope came in.

(3.) The doctrine of succession cannot be made out; and if it could, would only trace diocesan bishops to the bishops of parishes.

(4.) As for episcopacy itself, it may be freely allowed as a prudential regulation, wherever circumstances require it. But it may be questioned whether presbyters could lawfully surrender their rights of government and ordination into the hands of a bishop, without that security which arises from the accountability of the administrator.

3. On the subject of the church itself, very different views have been held.

(1.) The Papist view contends for its visible unity throughout the world, under a visible head.

(2.) The modern Independent view goes as far the other way. The persons appointed to feed and govern the church being, then, those who are called “pastors,” we have now to notice,

III. The share which the body of the people have in their own government.

a. General views.

1. The connexion of church and state gives rise to questions of peculiar perplexity and difficulty. We do not consider the church in this state.
2. The New Testament view of the churches is, that they are associations founded upon conviction of the truth of Christianity, and the obligatory nature of the commands of Christ; and the mutual interdependence of pastors and people, with perfect religious liberty, is everywhere recognized in it.

3. Questions of church government are often argued on the false ground that the governing power, in churches to which communion is perfectly voluntary, is of the same character as when it is connected with the civil authority. Nothing can be more fallacious.

4. In settling church government, there are pre-existing laws of Christ, which cannot be neglected or set aside. The government of the church is in its pastors, open to formal modifications; and it is to be conducted with such a concurrence of the people as shall guard against abuse, without interfering with the Scriptural exercise of pastoral duties.

b. These views applied to particular cases.

(1.) As to the ordination of ministers. This power was never conveyed by the people: it was vested in the ministers alone, to be exercised on their responsibility to Christ.

(2.) As to the laws by which the church is to be governed. Those which are explicitly contained in the New Testament are to be executed by the rulers, and obeyed by the people.

(3.) Other disciplinary regulations are matters of mutual agreement; but democratic tendencies are to be shunned.

(4.) Power of admission and expulsion rests with the pastor, as also that of trying unworthy servants.

IV. The ends to which church authority is legitimately directed.

1. The preservation and publication of sound doctrine: called by systematic writers, potestas δογματική: which may be thus summed up: —

(1.) To declare the sense in which the church interprets the language of Scripture.

(2.) To require all its members to examine such declarations of faith with docility and humility; while their right of private judgment is not violated.
(3.) To silence within its pale all preaching contrary to its standards.

2. The power of regulation: called, technically, potestas διατακτικη.

3. The power of inflicting and removing censures: potestas διακριτικη.

(1.) Undoubtedly this power lies in the church: it has, however, been sadly abused.

(2.) The claims of the Romish Church, in this particular, are arrogant assumptions: e. g., views founded on the gift of the keys to St. Peter.

The labour of church government, and its difficulty, will always be greatly mitigated by a steady regard, on the part of both pastors and people, to duties as well as to rights.

II. THE SACRAMENTS. Ch. 2.-4.

(I.) NUMBER AND NATURE OF THE SACRAMENTS. (Ch. 2.)

I. Number of the sacraments. Two only, baptism and the Lord’s supper, are instituted in the New Testament, and admitted by Protestants; the Romish Church added five others.

1. The word used by the Greek Fathers was μυστήριον; the Latin term is sacramentum, which signified (1,) a sacred ceremony, and (2,) the oath of fidelity taken by the Roman soldiers. For both these reasons, probably, the term was adopted by the Roman Christians.

2. The sacraments are to be viewed as federal acts, which view sweeps away the five superstitious additions of the Romish Church — confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction.

II. Nature of the sacraments. There are three leading views.

1. That of the Church of Rome, gratia ex opere operato, that the sacraments contain the grace they signify, and confer it, by the work itself. The objections to this doctrine are,

(1.) It has no pretence of authority from Scripture, nay,

(2.) It is decidedly antiscriptural.

(3.) It debases the ordinance into a mere charm.
(4.) It tends to licentiousness.

(5.) It causes the virtue of the ordinance to depend upon the intention of the administrator.

2. The opposite view is that of the Socinians, to which some orthodox Protestants have carelessly leaned, — that the sacraments are valuable solely as emblems of the spiritual and invisible. This scheme is as defective as that of the Papists is excessive.

3. The third opinion is that of the Protestant churches: — expressed in the language (1.) of the Heidelberg Catechism, (2.) of the Church of England, (3.) of the Church of Scotland, containing the same leading views, that the sacraments are both signs and seals. (a.) Sense in which they are signs. (b.) Sense in which they are seals.

(II.) SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM. (Ch. 3.)

The obligation of baptism rests upon (1,) the example of our Lord; (2,) his command to the apostles, Matthew 28:19; (3,) upon the practice of the apostles themselves.

I. The nature of baptism.

a. The Romanists consider baptism by a priest as of itself applying the merits of Christ to the person baptized; and from this view arises their distinction between sins committed before and after baptism. The Lutheran Church places the efficacy of this sacrament in regeneration; nor has the Church of England departed entirely from the terms used by the Romish Church. The Quakers reject the rite altogether; and the Socinians merely regard it as a mode of professing the religion of Christ.

b. The orthodox view is, that baptism is a federal transaction. It is of great importance to establish the covenant character of this ordinance.

(1.) The covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17:7, was the general covenant of grace, and not chiefly a political and national covenant. There are five distinct stipulations, under which — though they were promises of temporal advantages — are conveyed a higher and spiritual covenant of grace.

(2.) Circumcision was its “sign and seal,” both temporally and spiritually.
(3.) As a seal of restriction, circumcision was done away by Christ.

(4.) Paul’s different views of circumcision may be explained by considering the different principles on which circumcision might be practised after it had become an obsolete ordinance — 1, 2, 3, 4.

(5.) Baptism is, to the *new* covenant, what circumcision was to the old, and took its place by *the appointment of God*. This may be argued, 1. From our Lord’s commission to the apostles, Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15, 16. 2. From the words of our Lord to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born,” &c. 3. From Colossians 2:10-12, “And ye are complete in him,” &c. 4. From Galatians 3:27-29, “For as many of you as have been baptized,” &c. 5. From 1 Peter 3:20: “Which some time were disobedient,” &c.

a. Baptism is here called the *antitype* of Noah’s salvation by the ark, because his building and entering it were the visible expression of his faith.

b. The meaning of the passage will vary with the rendering of the word ἐπερωτήμα; but

c. However that word is rendered, the whole text shows that baptism, when an act of true faith, becomes an instrument of salvation.

(6.) Baptism, both as a *sign* and *seal*, presents an entire correspondence to the ancient rite of circumcision.

1. As a *sign*. Circumcision exhibited the *placability* of God; held out the promise of justification; and was the sign of sanctification: so baptism exhibits the divine placability; is the initiatory rite into the covenant of pardon; and is the symbol of regeneration. But baptism as a *sign*, is more than circumcision, implying the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in its *fulness*.

2. As a *seal*. As in circumcision blessings were pledged on the *part of God*, so in baptism are all spiritual gifts pledged; and as in circumcision a holy life was promised on the *part of the believer*, so in baptism do we pledge ourselves to the obedience of Christ. Booth’s objection, and the reply.

II. *Subjects of baptism*.

a. All *adults* who possess faith in Christ.

b. *Infant children*. The practice of infant baptism may be shown to rest upon the strongest basis of Scriptural authority.
(1.) Infants were circumcised: baptism takes the place of circumcision: therefore the absence of an explicit exclusion of infants is sufficient proof of their title to baptism.

(2.) The fact that the baptism of infants is nowhere prohibited in the New Testament, must have been misleading to all men, and especially to Jewish believers, if it were not proper.

1. Baptisms were common among the Jews; their proselyte baptism was a baptism of families, and comprehended their infant children.

2. The words of Peter at the Pentecost, “Repent, and be baptized; for the promise is unto you and to your children,” could not have been understood by the Jews except as calling upon them and their children to be baptized. Reasons, 1, 2, 3.

(3.) Infant children are declared by Christ to be members of his Church.

1. They were so under the old dispensation, and no change was made.

2. We have our Lord’s direct testimony to this point — in two remarkable passages: a) Luke 9:47, 48; b) Mark 10:14. Notice the Baptist evasions of the argument from this latter passage.

(4.) The argument from apostolic practice next offers itself.

As to the absence of any express mention of infant baptism, instead of bearing in favour of the Baptists, it is a strong argument against them; for such an extraordinary alteration as the forbidding of infant baptism would have required particular explanation. The baptisms of whole houses, mentioned in the Acts, are sufficient proof of the apostolic practice; they were either (1) instances of apostolic action, which would cover the whole ground, or (2) peculiar cases; and even if this latter be admitted, the Baptist must still show, that neither in the family of

1. The Philippian jailer, nor in that of

2. Lydia, nor yet in that of

3. Stephanas, (1 Corinthians 1:16,) were there any infants at all, which, to say the least of it, is very improbable.

(5.) The last argument may be drawn from the antiquity of the practice of infant baptism.
1. We have strong presumptive proof of its antiquity in the fact, that if it were ever introduced as an innovation, it was introduced without controversy!

2. Tertullian (second century) was the only ancient writer who opposed infant baptism; but his very opposition proves the practice older than himself: he never speaks of its novelty.

3. Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Origen, mention infant baptism as the practice of their times; and in A. D. 254 the question of deferring baptism to the eighth day was discussed.

4. The Anabaptists are of modern origin.

III. Benefits of baptism.

1. To the adult believer it is, (1) the sign of his admission into the covenant of grace; (2) the seal, on the part of God, of the fulfilment of all its provisions; (3) the pledge, on his own part, of steadfast faith and obedience.

2. To the infant it conveys a pledge of divine grace; the present blessing of Christ; the gift of the Holy Spirit; and the respect which God has to the believing act of the parents.

3. To the parents it is a blessing also.

IV. Mode of baptism. This is comparatively of little moment, but has been the subject of much controversy. In considering the doctrine, that the only legitimate mode of baptizing is by immersion, we notice,

a. Several presumptions against it.

(1.) It is not expressly enjoined.

(2.) It is unsuitable to many climates and circumstances; nay, sometimes impossible.

(3.) It puts away the consideration of health and life in many cases.

(4.) It is likely to distract the thoughts.

(5.) It is improbable that the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost were immersed, or that the jailer’s family were.
(6.) The practice is not a decent one.

b. *The argument from antiquity.*

(1.) Immersion is ancient, — so is anointing with oil, &c.

(2.) Aspersion and affusion are also ancient, — witness Tertullian, Cyprian, Gennadius, Aquinas, Erasmus.

(3.) The baptism of *naked* subjects was ancient, — doubtless a superstitious extension of the original rite.


(1.) Use of the word βαπτίζω.

1. The verb, with its derivatives, signifies either to dip, stain, wet with dew, &c.


(2.) Cases of baptism (in the New Testament) adduced commonly in proof of immersion.

1. John’s baptism, “They were baptized of him in Jordan,” therefore they were immersed, is the argument. But,

(a.) The object of this passage was to declare the place, not the mode of John’s baptism.

(b.) The “baptism with the Holy Ghost” sufficiently illustrates the mode of John’s baptism, the same form of words being used in regard to both.

(c.) The character of the river, and the scarcity of water, accounts for the place of baptism, and for the language employed here to fix it. River baptism does not necessarily imply immersion. Quotation from Wolfe.

2. Our Lord’s baptism. “He went up straightway out of the water.” Matthew 3:16. This does not favour immersion more than any other mode of baptism.
3. The eunuch’s baptism. “And when they were come up out of the water,” &c. Acts 8:38. If this proves any immersion, it proves that Philip was immersed as well as the eunuch. But εἰς and ἐκ do not necessarily mean into and out of.


(3.) Argument from Romans 6:3, 4: “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism,” &c. Here the Baptists suppose a comparison is instituted between the burial of Christ and immersion. But,

1. If such resemblance be intended by “buried,” why not also by “planted” and “crucified” both which terms are used in the same connexion?

2. The type of our death, burial, and resurrection as believers, in this passage, is not the clumsy one of immersion; but the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord.

We conclude, therefore, that the pouring out of water was the apostolic mode of administering the ordinance, and that washing and immersion were introduced later, along with other superstitious additions to this sacrament.

(III.) SACRAMENT OF LORD’S SUPPER. (Ch. 4.)

Agreement and difference between baptism and the Lord’s supper, as stated in the Catechism of the Church of Scotland. We notice now,

I. The institution of the ordinance.

1. As baptism took the place of circumcision, so the Lord’s supper was instituted in place of the passover.

2. It was instituted by Christ, immediately after celebrating the passover for the last time with his disciples.

II. Its perpetuity and obligation. From 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, we learn,

1. That Paul received a special revelation as to this ordinance.

2. That the command of Christ, “This do in remembrance of me,” was laid by Paul upon the Corinthians.
3. That he regarded the Lord’s supper as a rite to be often celebrated.

III. Its nature.

1. Various views of

(1.) The Church of Rome, which held the doctrine of transubstantiation; of an intrinsic value in the elements themselves, of the elements being proper objects of worship and homage; and of the cup being withheld from the laity.

(2.) Luther, who held that though the bread and wine remain unchanged, the body and blood of Christ are received together with them: the doctrine of consubstantiation.

(3.) Carolostadt and Zuingle, who taught that the bread and wine are the signs of the absent body and blood of Christ. This view is adopted, with some liberality, by the Socinians.

(4.) The Reformed Churches, which reject both transubstantiation and consubstantiation, but go further than the Socinians, in declaring that to all who remember Christ worthily, he is spiritually present in the sacrament.

2. Sacramental character of the ordinance.

(1.) As to Christ. The words, “This is my body,” &c., show that the Lord’s supper is a visible sign that the covenant was ratified by the sacrificial death of Christ.

(2.) As to the recipients. It is a recognition of their faith in the sacrificial death of Christ.

(3.) As a sign, it exhibits, a) the love of God, b) the love of Christ, c) the extreme nature of his sufferings, d) the vicarious character of his death, e) the benefits derived from it through faith.

(4.) As a seal, it is, a) a pledge of the continuance of God’s covenant, b) a pledge to each believer of God’s mercies, c) an exhibition of Christ as the spiritual food of the soul, d) a renewed assurance of divine grace.

IV. General observations.

1. The ordinance excludes, not only open unbelievers, but all who deny the atonement.
2. All are disqualified who do not give evidence of genuine repentance and desire for salvation.

3. Every church should shut out such persons by discipline.

4. But the table of the Lord is not to be surrounded with superstitious terrors.

5. There is no rule as to the frequency of celebrating the ordinance.

6. Its habitual neglect by professing Christians is highly censurable.
PART FIRST

EVIDENCES OF THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

CHAPTER 1. — MAN A MORAL AGENT.

The theological system of the Holy Scriptures being the subject of our inquiries, it is essential to our undertaking to establish their Divine authority. But before the direct evidence which the case admits is adduced, our attention may be profitably engaged by several considerations, which afford presumptive evidence in favour of the revelations of the Old and New Testaments. These are of so much weight that they ought not, in fairness, to be overlooked; nor can their force be easily resisted by the impartial inquirer.

The moral agency of man is a principle on which much depends in such an investigation; and, from its bearing upon the question at issue, requires our first notice.

He is a moral agent who is capable of performing moral actions; and an action is rendered moral by two circumstances, — that it is voluntary, — and that it has respect to some rule which determines it to be good or evil. “Moral good and evil,” says Locke, “is the conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions to some law, whereby good or evil is drawn upon us from the will or power of the law maker.”

The terms found in all languages, and the laws which have been enacted in all states with accompanying penalties, as well as the praise or dispraise which men in all ages have expressed respecting the conduct of each other, sufficiently show that man has always been considered as an agent actually performing, or capable of performing moral actions, for as such he has been treated. No one ever thought of making laws to regulate the conduct of the inferior animals; or of holding them up to public censure or approbation.
The rules by which the moral quality of actions has been determined are, however, not those only which have been embodied in the legislation of civil communities. Many actions would be judged good or evil, were all civil codes abolished; and others are daily condemned or approved in the judgment of mankind, which are not of a kind to be recognized by public laws. Of the moral nature of human actions there must have been a perception in the minds of men, previous to the enactment of laws. Upon this common perception all law is founded, and claims the consent and support of society; for in all human legislative codes there is an express or tacit appeal to principles previously acknowledged, as reasons for their enactment.

This distinction in the moral quality of actions previous to the establishment of civil regulations, and independent of them, may in part be traced to its having been observed, that certain actions are injurious to society, and that to abstain from them is essential to its well being. Murder and theft may be given as instances. It has also been perceived, that such actions result from certain affections of the mind; and the indulgence or restraint of such affections has therefore been also regarded as a moral act. Anger, revenge, and cupidity, have been deemed evils as the sources of injuries of various kinds; and humanity, self government, and integrity, have been ranked among the virtues; and thus both certain actions, and the principles from which they spring, have, from their effect upon society, been determined to be good or evil.

But it has likewise been observed by every man, that individual happiness, as truly as social order and interests, is materially affected by particular acts, and by those feelings of the heart which give rise to them; as for instance, by anger, malice, envy, impatience, cupidity, &c; and that whatever civilized men in all places and in all ages have agreed to call vice, is inimical to health of body, or to peace of mind, or to both. This, it is true, has had little influence upon human conduct; but it has been acknowledged by the poets, sages, and satirists of all countries, and is adverted to as matter of universal experience. While therefore there is in the moral condition and habits of man something which propels him to vice, uncorrected by the miseries which it never fails to inflict, there is also something in the constitution of the human soul which renders vice subversive of its happiness, and something in the established law and nature of things, which renders vice incompatible with the collective interests of men in the social state.
Let that then be granted by the THEIST which he cannot consistently deny, the existence of a Supreme Creator, of infinite power, wisdom, goodness, and justice, who has both made men and continues to govern them; and the strongest presumption is afforded by the very constitution of the nature of man, and the relations established among human affairs, which with so much constancy dissociate happiness from vicious passions, health from intemperance, the peace, security, and improvement of society from violence and injustice, — that the course of action which best secures human happiness, has the sanction of HIS will, or in other words that HE, by these circumstances, has given his authority in favour of the practice of virtue, and opposed it to the practice of vice.

But though that perception of the difference of moral actions which is antecedent to human laws, must have been strongly confirmed by these facts of experience, and by such observations, we have no reason to conclude that those rules by which the moral quality of actions has, in all ages, been determined, were formed solely from a course of observation on their tendency to promote or obstruct human happiness; because we cannot collect either from history or tradition, that the world was ever without such rules, though they were often warped and corrupted. The evidence of both, on the contrary, shows, that so far from these rules having originated from observing what was injurious and what beneficial to mankind, there has been, among almost all nations, a constant reference to a declared will of the Supreme God, or of supposed deities, as the rule which determines the good or the evil of the conduct of men; which will was considered by them as a law, prescribing the one and restraining the other under the sanction, not only of our being left to the natural injurious consequences of vicious habit and practice in the present life, or of continuing to enjoy the benefits of obedience in personal and social happiness here; but of positive reward and positive punishment in a future life.

Whoever speculated on the subject of morals and moral obligation in any age, was previously furnished with these general notions and distinctions. They were in the world before him; and if all tradition be not a fable, if the testimony of all antiquity, whether found in poets or historians, be not delusive, they were in the world in those early periods when the great body of the human race remained near the original seat of the parent families of all the modern and now widely extended nations of the earth; and in those early periods they were not regarded as distinctions of mere human opinion and consent, but were invested with a Divine authority.
We have then before us two presumptions, each of great weight. FIRST, that those actions which among men have almost universally been judged good, have the implied sanction of the will of our wise and good Creator being found in experience, and by the constitution of our nature and of human society, most conducive to human happiness. And, SECOND, that they were originally in some mode or other prescribed and enjoined as his law, and their contraries prohibited.

If therefore there is presumptive evidence of only ordinary strength, that the rule by which our actions are determined to be good or evil is primarily a law of the Creator, we are all deeply interested in ascertaining where that law exists in its clearest manifestation. For ignorance of the law, in whole or in part, will be no excuse for disobedience, if we have the opportunity of acquainting ourselves with it; and an accurate acquaintance with the rule may assist our practice in cases of which human laws take no cognizance, and which the wilfully corrupted general judgment of mankind may have darkened. And should it appear either that in many things we have offended more deeply than we suspect, whether wilfully or from an evitable ignorance; or that, from some common accident which has befallen our nature, we have lost the power of entire obedience without the use of new and extraordinary means, the knowledge of the rule is of the utmost consequence to us, because by it we may be enabled to ascertain the precise relation in which we stand to God our Maker; the dangers we have incurred; and the means of escape, if any have been placed within our reach.
CHAPTER 2. — THE RULE, WHICH DETERMINES THE QUALITY OF MORAL ACTIONS, MUST BE PRESUMED TO BE MATTER OF REVELATION FROM GOD.

It is well observed by a judicious writer, that “all the distinctions of good and evil refer to some principle above ourselves; for, were there no Supreme Governor and Judge to reward and punish, the very notions of good and evil would vanish away: they could not exist in the minds of men, if there were not a Supreme Director to give laws for the measure thereof.” (Ellis’s Knowledge of Divine Things, &c.)

If we deny the existence of a Divine law obligatory upon man, we must deny that the world is under Divine government, for government without rule or law is a solecism; and to deny the Divine government, would leave it impossible for us to account for that peculiar nature which has been given to man, and those relations among human concerns and interests to which we have adverted, and which are so powerfully affected by our conduct: — certain actions and habits which almost all mankind have agreed to call good, being connected with the happiness of the individual, and the well being of society; and so on the contrary. This too has been matter of uniform and constant experience from the earliest ages, and warrants therefore the conclusion, that the effect arises from original principles and a constitution of things which the Creator has established. Nor can any reason be offered why such a nature should be given to man, and such a law impressed on the circumstances and beings with which he is surrounded, except that both had an intended relation to certain courses of action as the sources of order and happiness, as truly as there was an intended relation between the light and the eye which is formed to receive its rays.

But as man is not carried to this course of action by physical impulse or necessity; as moral conduct supposes choice and therefore instruction, and the persuasion of motives arising out of it; the benevolent intention of the Creator as to our happiness could not be accomplished without instruction, warning, reward, and punishment; all of which necessarily imply superintendence and control, or, in other words, a moral government. The
creation therefore of a being of such a nature as man, implies Divine
government, and that government a Divine law.

Such a law must be the subject of revelation. Law is the will of a
superior power; but the will of a superior visible power cannot be known
without some indication by words or signs, in other terms, without a
revelation; and much less the will of an invisible power, of an order
superior to our own, and confessedly mysterious in his mode of existence,
and the attributes of his nature.

Again, the will of a superior is not in justice binding until, in some mode, it
is sufficiently declared; and the presumption, therefore, that God wills the
practice of any particular course of action, on the part of his creatures,
establishes the farther presumption, that of that will there has been a
manifestation; and the more so if there is reason to suppose that any
penalty of a serious nature has been attached to disobedience.

The revelation of this will or law of God may be made either by action,
from which it is to be inferred; or by direct communication in language.
Any indication of the moral perfections of God, or of his design in forming
moral beings, which the visible creation presents to the mind; or any
instance of his favour or displeasure toward his creatures clearly and
frequently connected in his administration with any particular course of
conduct, may be considered as a revelation of his will by action; and is not
at all inconsistent with a farther revelation by the direct means of language.

The Theist admits that a revelation of the will of God has been made by
significant actions, from which the duty of creatures is to be inferred, and
contends that this is sufficient. “They who never heard of any external
revelation, yet if they knew from the nature of things what is fit for them to
do, they know all that God will or can require of them.” They who
believe that the Holy Scriptures contain a revelation of God’s will, do not
deny that indications of his will have been made by action; but they
contend that they are in themselves imperfect and insufficient, and that they
were not designed to supersede a direct revelation. They hold also, that a
direct communication of the Divine will was made to the progenitors of the
human race, which received additions at subsequent periods, and that the
whole was at length embodied in the book called, by way of eminence,
“The Bible.”
The question immediately before us is, on which side there is the strongest presumption of truth. Are there, in the natural works of God, or in his manner of governing the world, such indications of the will of God concerning us, as can afford sufficient direction in forming a perfectly virtuous character, and sufficient information as to the means by which it is to be effected? We may try this question by a few obvious instances.

The Theist will himself acknowledge, that temperance, justice, and benevolence, are essential to moral virtue. With respect to the first, nothing appears in the constitution of nature, or in the proceedings of the Divine administration, to indicate it to be the will of God that the appetites of the body should be restrained within the rules of sobriety, except that, by a connection which has been established by him, the excessive indulgence of those appetites usually impairs health. If therefore we suppose this to amount to a tacit prohibition of excess, it still leaves those free from the rule whose firm constitutions do not suffer from intemperate gratifications; it gives one rule for the man of vigorous, and another for the man of feeble health; and it is no guard against that occasional insobriety which may be indulged in without obvious danger to health, but which nevertheless may be excessive in degree though occasional in recurrence. The rule is therefore imperfect.

Nor are the obligations of justice in this way indicated with adequate clearness. Acts of injustice are not like acts of excessive intemperance, punishable in the ordinary course of providence by pain and disease and premature death, as their natural general consequences; nor, in most instances, by any other marked infliction of the Divine displeasure in the present life. From their injurious effects upon society at large, indications of the will of God respecting them may doubtless be inferred, but such effects arise out of the grosser acts of fraud and rapine; those only affect the movements of society, (which goes on without being visibly disturbed by the violations of the nicer distinctions of equity which form an essential part of virtue,) and never fail to degrade and corrupt individual character. Rules of justice, therefore, thus indicated, would, like those of temperance, be very imperfect.

The third branch of virtue is benevolence, the disposition and the habit of doing good to others. But in what manner except by revelation are the extent and the obligation of this virtue to be explained? If it be said, that “the goodness of God himself as manifested in creation and providence
presents so striking an example of beneficence to his creatures, that his will, as to the cultivation of this virtue, may be unequivocally inferred from it,” we cannot but perceive, that this example itself is imperfect, unless other parts of the Divine conduct be explained to us, as the Scriptures explain them. For if we have manifestations of his goodness, we see also fearful proofs of his severity. Such are the permission of pestilence, earthquakes, inundations: and the infliction of pain and death upon all men, even upon infants and unsinning animals. If the will of God in favour of beneficent actions is to be inferred from the pleasure which is afforded to those who perform them, it is only indicated to those to whom a beneficent act gives pleasure, and its non-performance pain; and it cannot therefore be at all apprehended by those who by constitution are obdurate, or by habit selfish. The rule would therefore be uncertain and dark, and entirely silent as to the extent to which beneficence is to be carried, and whether there may not be exceptions to its exercise as to individuals, such as enemies, vicious persons, and strangers.

Whatever general indications there may be in the acts of God, in the constitution of human nature, or in the relations of society, that some actions are according to the will of God, and therefore good, and that others are opposed to his will, and therefore evil; it follows then, that they form a rule too vague in itself, and too liable to different interpretations, to place the conduct of men under adequate regulation, even in respect of temperance, justice, and beneficence. But if these and other virtues, in their nicest shades, were indicated by the types of nature, and the manifestations of the will of God in his moral government, these types and this moral government are either entirely silent, or speak equivocally as to subjects of vital importance to the right conduct and effectual moral control, as well as to the hopes and the happiness of man.

There is no indication, for instance, in either nature or providence, that it is the will of God that his creatures should worship him; and the moral effects of adoration, homage, and praise, on this system, would be lost. There is no indication that God will be approached in prayer, and this hope and solace of man is unprovided for. Nor is there a sufficient indication of a future state of rewards and punishment; because there is no indubitable declaration of man’s immortality, nor any facts and principles so obvious as to enable us confidently to infer it. All observation lies directly against the doctrine of the immortality of man. He dies, and the probabilities of a future life which have been established upon the unequal distribution of
rewards and punishments in this life, and the capacities of the human soul, are a presumptive evidence which has been adduced, as we shall afterward show, only by those to whom the doctrine had been transmitted by tradition, and who were therefore in possession of the idea: and, even then, to have any effectual force of persuasion, they must be built upon antecedent principles furnished only by the revelations contained in Holy Scripture. Hence some of the wisest heathens, who were not wholly unaided in their speculations on these subjects by the reflected light of those revelations, confessed themselves unable to come to any satisfactory conclusion. The doubts of Socrates, who expressed himself the most hopefully of any on the subject of a future life, are well known; and Cicero, who occasionally expatiates with so much eloquence on this topic, shows by the skeptical expressions which he throws in, that his belief was by no means confirmed. If, therefore, without any help from direct or traditional instruction, we could go as far as they, it is plain that our religious system would be deficient in all those motives to virtue which arise from the doctrines of man’s accountability and a future life, and in that moral control which such doctrines exert: the necessity of which for the moral government of the world is sufficiently proved, by the wickedness which prevails even where these doctrines are fully taught.

Still farther, there is nothing in those manifestations of God and of his will, which the most attentive contemplatist can be supposed to collect from his natural works and from his sovereign rule, to afford the hope of pardon to any one who is conscious of having offended him, or any assurance of felicity in a future state, should one exist.

Some consciousness of offence is felt by every man; and though he should not know the precise nature or extent of the penalty attached to transgression, he has no reason to conclude that he is under a mild and fondly merciful government, and that therefore his offences will in course be forgiven. All observation and experience lie against this; and the case is the more alarming to a considerate mind, that so little of the sad inference that the human race is under a rigorous administration, depends upon reasoning and opinion: it is fact of common and daily observation. The minds of men are in general a prey to discontent and care, and are agitated by various evil passions. The race itself is doomed to wasting labours of the body or the mind, in order to obtain subsistence. Their employments are for the most part low and grovelling, in comparison of the capacity of the soul for intellectual pleasure and attainments. The mental powers,
though distributed with great equality among the various classes of men, are only in the case of a few individuals ever awakened. The pleasures most strenuously sought are therefore sensual, degrading, and transient. Life itself, too, is precarious: infants suffer and die, youth is blighted, and thus by far the greater part of mankind is swept away before the prime of life is attained. Casualties, plagues, famines, floods, and war, carry on the work of destruction. In the majority of states the poor are oppressed, the rich are insecure, private wrong is added to public oppression, widows are wronged, orphans are deprived of bread, and the sick and aged are neglected. The very religions of the world have completed human wretchedness by obduriating the heart, by giving birth to sanguinary superstitions, and by introducing a corruption of morals destructive of the very elements of well-ordered society. Part of these evils are permitted by the Supreme Governor, and part inflicted, either by connecting them as consequents to certain actions, or to the constitution of the natural world more immediately: but, whether permitted or inflicted, they are punitive acts of his administration, and present him before us, notwithstanding innumerable instances of his benevolence, as a Being of “terrible majesty.”

To remove in part the awful mystery which overhangs such an administration, the most sober Theists of former times, differing from the horde of vulgar blasphemers and metaphysical Atheists who have arisen in our own day, have been ready to suppose another state of being, to which the present has respect, and which may discover some means of connecting this permission of evil, and this infliction of misery, (often on the apparently innocent,) with the character of a Governor of perfect wisdom, equity, and goodness. But in proportion as any one feels himself obliged to admit and to expect a state of future existence, he must feel the necessity of being assured, that it will be a felicitous one. Yet should he be conscious of frequent transgressions of the Divine law; and at the same time see it demonstrated by facts occurring daily, that in the present life the government of God is thus rigorous, the only fair conclusion to which he can come is, that the Divine government will be conducted on precisely the same principles in another, for an infinitely perfect being changes not. Farther discoveries may then be made; but they may go only to establish this point, that the apparent severity of his dispensations in the present life are quite consistent with justice, and even the continued infliction of punishment with goodness itself, because other moral agents may be benefited by the example. The idea of a future life does not therefore
relieve the case. If it be just that man should be punished here, it may be required by the same just regard to the principles of a strictly moral government, that he should be punished hereafter.

If then we are offenders against the Majesty of so dread a being, as the actual administration of the world shows its Governor to be, it is in the highest degree necessary, if there be in him a disposition to forgive our offences, that we should be made acquainted with it, and with the means and conditions upon which his placability can become available to us. If he is not disposed to forgive, we have the greatest cause for alarm; if an inclination to forgive does exist in the Divine Mind, there is as strong a reason to presume that it is indicated to us somewhere, as that the law under which we are placed should have been expressly promulgated; and especially if such a scheme of bestowing pardon has been adopted as will secure the ends of moral government, and lead to our future obedience, — the only one which we can conceive to be worthy of God.

Now it is not necessary to prove at length, what is so obvious, what if we had no method of knowing the will and purposes of God, but by inferring them from his works and his government, we could have no information as to any purpose in the Divine Mind to forgive his sinning creatures. The Theist, in order to support this hope, dwells upon the proofs of the goodness of God with which this world abounds, but shuts his eyes upon the demonstrations of his severity; yet these surround him as well as the other, and the argument from the severity of God is as forcible against pardon, as the argument from his goodness is in its favour. At the best, it is left entirely uncertain; a ground is laid for heart-rending doubts, and fearful anticipations; and, for any thing he can show to the contrary, the goodness which God has displayed in nature and providence may only render the offence of man more aggravated, and serve to strengthen the presumption against the forgiveness of a wilful offender, rather than afford him any reason for hope.

The whole of this argument is designed to prove, that had we been left, for the regulation of our conduct, to infer the will and purposes of the Supreme Being from his natural works, and his administration of the affairs of the world, our knowledge of both would have been essentially deficient; and it establishes a strong presumption in favour of a direct revelation from God to his creatures, that neither his will concerning us, nor the hope of
forgiveness, might be left to dark and uncertain inference, but be the subjects of an express declaration.
CHAPTER 3. — FARTHER PRESUMPTION OF A DIRECT REVELATION

from the Weakness and Corruption of human Reason, and the want of Authority in merely human Opinions.

If we should allow that a perfect reason exercised in contemplating the natural works of God and the course of his moral government, might furnish us, by means of an accurate process of induction, with a sufficient rule to determine the quality of moral actions, and with sufficient motives to obedience, yet the case would not be altered; for that perfect reason is not to be found among men. It would be useless to urge upon those who deny the doctrine of Scripture, as to the fall of man, that his understanding and reason are weakened by the deterioration of his whole intellectual nature. But it will be quite as apposite to the argument to state a fact not to be controverted, that the reasoning powers of men greatly differ in strength; and that from premises, which all must allow to be somewhat obscure, different inferences would inevitably be drawn. Either then the Divine law would be what every man might take it to be, and, by consequence, a variable rule, a position which cannot surely be maintained; or many persons must fail of duly apprehending it. And though in this case it should be contended, that he is not punishable who obeys the law as far as he knows it, yet surely the ends of a steady and wisely formed plan of general government would on this ground be frustrated. The presumption here also must therefore be in favour of an express declaration of the will of God, in terms which the common understandings of men may apprehend, as the only means by which sufficient moral direction can be given, and effectual control exerted.

The notion, that by rational induction the will of God may be inferred from his acts in a sufficient degree for every purpose of moral direction, is farther vitiated by its assuming that men in general are so contemplative in their habits as to pursue such inquiries with interest; and so well disposed as in most cases to make them with honesty. Neither of these is true.

The mass of mankind neither are, nor ever have been, contemplative, and must therefore, if not otherwise instructed, remain ignorant of their duty; for questions of virtue, morals, and religion, as may be shown from the
contentions of the wisest of men, do not for the most part lie level in the minds of the populace without a revelation. 15

It is equally a matter of undoubted fact, that in all questions of morals which restrain the vices, passions, and immediate interests of men, conviction is generally resisted, and the rule is brought down to the practice, rather than the practice raised to the rule; so that the most flimsy sophisms are admitted as arguments, and principles the most lax displace those of rigid rectitude and virtue. This is matter of daily observation and cannot be denied. The irresistible inference from this is, that at least, the great body of mankind, not being accustomed to intellectual exercises; not having even leisure for them on account of their being doomed to sordid labours; and not being disposed to conduct the investigation with care and accuracy, would never become acquainted with the will of the Supreme Governor, if the knowledge of it were only to be obtained from habitual observation and reasoning. — Should it be said, “that the intellectual and instructed part of mankind ought to teach the rest,” it may be replied, that even that would be difficult, because their own knowledge must be communicated to others by the same process of difficult induction through which they attain it themselves, or rational conviction could not be produced in the minds of the learners. The task would therefore be hopeless as to the majority, both from their want of time and intellectual capacity. But, if practicable, the Theistical system has no provision for such instruction. It neither makes it the duty of some to teach, nor of others to learn. It has no authorized teachers; no day of rest from labour, on which to collect the auditors; no authorized religious ordinances by which moral truth may be brought home to the ears and the hearts of men: and, if it had, its best knowledge being rather contained in diffuse and hesitating speculation, than concentrated in maxims and first principles, embodied in a few plain words, which at once indicate some master mind fully adequate to the whole subject, and suddenly irradiate the understandings of the most listless and illiterate, — it would be taught in vain.

Let us however suppose the truth discovered, the teachers of it appointed, and days for the communication of instruction set apart. With what authority would these teachers be invested? They plead no commission from Him whose will they affect to teach, and they work no miracles in confirmation of the truth of their doctrine. That doctrine cannot, from the nature of things, be mathematically demonstrated so as to enforce conviction, and it would therefore be considered, and justly considered, as
the opinion of the teacher, and nothing but an opinion, to which every one might listen or not without any consciousness of violating an obligation, and which every one might and would receive as his own judgment agreed with or dissented from his unauthorized teacher, or as his interests and passions might commend or disparage the doctrine so taught.  

Facts are sufficiently in proof of this The sages of antiquity were moral teachers; they founded schools; they collected disciples; they placed their fame in their wisdom: yet there was little agreement among them, even upon the first principles of religion and morals; and they neither generally reformed their own lives, nor those of others. This is acknowledged by Cicero: “Do you think that these things had any influence upon the men (a very few excepted,) who thought and wrote and disputed about them? Who is there of all the philosophers, whose mind, life, and manners, were conformable to right reason? Who ever made his philosophy the law and rule of his life, and not a mere show of his wit and parts? Who observed his own instructions, and lived in obedience to his own precepts? On the contrary, many of them were slaves to filthy lusts, many to pride, many to covetousness,” &c.

Such a system of moral direction and control, then, could it be formed, would bear no comparison to that which is provided by direct and external revelation, of which the doctrine, though delivered by different men, in different ages, is consentaneous throughout; which is rendered authoritative by Divine attestation; which consists in clear and legislative enunciation, and not in human speculation and laborious inference; of which the teachers were as holy as their doctrine was sublime; and which in all ages has exerted a powerful moral influence upon the conduct of men. “I know of but one Phædo and one Polemon throughout all Greece,” saith ORIGEN, “who were ever made better by their philosophy; whereas Christianity hath brought back its myriads from vice to virtue.”

All these considerations then still farther support the presumption, that the will of God has been the subject of express revelation to man, because such a declaration of it is the only one which can be conceived ADEQUATE; COMPLETE; OF COMMON APPREHENSION; SUFFICIENTLY AUTHORITATIVE; AND ADAPTED TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MANKIND.
CHAPTER 4. — FARTHER PROOFS OF THE 
WEAKNESS AND UNCERTAINTY OF 
HUMAN REASON.

The opinion, that sufficient notices of the will and purposes of God with respect to man, may be collected by rational induction from his works and government, attributes too much to the power of human reason and the circumstances under which, in that case, it must necessarily commence its exercise.

Human reason must be taken, as it is in fact, a weak and erring faculty, and as subject to have its operations suspended or disturbed by the influence of vicious principles and attachment to earthly things; neither of which can he denied, however differently they may be accounted for.

It is another consideration of importance that the exercise of reason is limited by our knowledge; in other words, that it must be furnished with subjects which it may arrange, compare, and judge: for beyond what it clearly conceives its power does not extend.

It does not follow, that, because many doctrines in religion and many rules in morals carry clear and decided conviction to the judgment instantly upon their being proposed, they were discoverable, in the first instance, by rational induction; any more than that the great and simple truths of philosophy, which have been brought to light by the efforts of men of superior minds, were within the compass of ordinary understandings, because, after they were revealed by those who made the discovery, they instantly commanded the assent of almost all to whom they were proposed. The very first principles of what is called natural religion are probably of this kind. The reason of man, though it should assent to them, though the demonstration of them should be now easy, may be indebted even for them to the revelation of a superior mind, and that mind the mind of God.

This is rendered the more probable, inasmuch as the great principles of all religion, the existence of God, the immortality of the human soul, the accountableness of man, the good or evil quality of the most important moral actions, have, by none who have written upon them, by no legislator, poet, or sage of antiquity, however ancient, been represented as discoveries made by them in the course of rational investigation; but they
are spoken of as things commonly known among men, which they propose to defend, explain, demonstrate, or deny, according to their respective opinions. If we overlook the inspiration of the writings of Moses, they command respect as the most ancient records in the world, and as embodying the religious opinions of the earliest ages; but Moses nowhere pretends to be the author of any of these fundamental truths. The book of Genesis opens with the words, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;” but here the term “God” is used familiarly, and it is taken for granted, that both the name and the idea conveyed by it were commonly received by the people for whom Moses wrote.

The same writer gives the history of ages much higher than his own, and introduces the patriarchs of the human race holding conversations with one another in which the leading subjects of religion and morals are often incidentally introduced; but they are never presented to us in the form of discussion; no patriarch, however high his antiquity, represents himself as the discoverer of these first principles, though he might, as Noah, be a “preacher” of that “righteousness” which was established upon them. Moses mentions the antediluvians who were inventors of the arts of working metals, and of forming and playing upon musical instruments; but he introduces no one as the inventor of any branch of moral or religious science, though they are so much superior in importance to mankind.

In farther illustration it may be observed, that, in point of fact, those views on the subjects just mentioned which, to the reason of all sober Theists, since the Christian revelation was given, appear the most clear and satisfactory, have been found nowhere since patriarchal times, except in the Scriptures, which profess to embody the true religious traditions and revelations of all ages, or among those whose reason derived principles from these revelations on which to establish its inferences.

We generally think it a truth, easily and convincingly demonstrated, that there is a God; and yet many of the philosophers of antiquity speak doubtingly on this point, and some of them denied it. At the present day, not merely a few speculative philosophers in the heathen world, but the many millions of the human race who profess the religion of Budhu, not only deny a Supreme First Cause, but dispute with subtlety and vehemence against the doctrine.

We feel that our reason rests with full satisfaction in the doctrine that all things are created by one eternal and self-existent Being; but the Greek
philosophers held that matter was eternally co-existent with God. This was the opinion of Plato, who has been called the Moses of philosophers. Through the whole "Timæus," Plato supposes two eternal and independent causes of all things; one, that by which all things are made, which is God: the other, that from which all things are made, which is matter. Dr. Cudworth has in vain attempted to clear Plato of this charge. The learned Dr. Thomas Burnet, who was well acquainted with the opinions of the ancients, says that "the Ionic, Pythagoric, Platonic and Stoic schools all agreed in asserting the eternity of matter; and that the doctrine, that matter was created out of nothing, seems to have been unknown to the philosophers, and is one of which they had no notion."

Aristotle asserted the eternity of the world, both in matter and form too, which was but an easy deduction from the former principle, and is sufficiently in proof of its Atheistical tendency.

The same doctrine was extensively spread at a very ancient period throughout the east, and plainly takes away a great part of the foundation of those arguments for the existence of a Supreme Deity, on which the moderns have so confidently rested for the demonstration of the existence of God by rational induction, whether drawn from the works of nature, or from metaphysical principles; so much are those able works which have been written on this subject indebted to that revelation on which their authors too often close their eyes, for the very bases on which their most convincing arguments are built. The same Atheistical results logically, followed from the ancient Magian doctrine of two eternal principles, one good and the other evil; a notion which also infected the Greek schools, as appears from the example of Plutarch, and the instances adduced by him.

No one enlightened by the Scriptures, whether he acknowledges his obligations to them or not, has ever been betrayed into so great an absurdity as to deny the individuality of the human soul; and yet where the light of revelation has not spread, absurd and destructive to morals as this notion is, it very extensively prevails. The opinion that the human soul is a part of God, enclosed for a short time in matter, but still a portion of his essence, runs through much of the Greek philosophy. It is still more ancient than that, and, at the present day, the same opinion destroys all idea of accountability among those who in India follow the Brahminical system. "The human soul is God, and the acts of the human soul are therefore the acts of God." This is the popular argument by which their crimes are justified.
The doctrine of one supreme, all-wise, and uncontrollable Providence, commends itself to our reason as one of the noblest and most supporting of truths; but we are not to overlook the source from whence even those draw it, who think the reason of man equal to its full development. So far were pagans from being able to conceive so lofty a thought, that the wisest of them invented subordinate agents to carry on the affairs of the world; beings often divided among themselves, and subject to human passions; thereby destroying the doctrine of providence, and taking away the very foundation of human trust in a Supreme Power. This invention of subordinate deities gave birth to idolatry, which is sufficiently in proof both of its extent and antiquity.

The beautiful and well-sustained series of arguments which have often in modern times been brought to support the presumption “that the human soul is immortal,” may be read with profit; but it is not to be accounted for, that those who profess to confine themselves to human reason in the inquiry, should argue with so much greater strength than the philosophers of ancient times, except that they have received assistance from a source which they are unfair enough not to acknowledge. Some fine passages on this subject may be collected from Plato, Cicero, Seneca, and others, but we must take them with others which express, sometimes doubt, and sometimes unbelief. With us this is a matter of general belief; but not so with the generality of either ancient or modern pagans. The same darkness which obscured the glory of God, proportionally diminished the glory of man, — his true and proper immortality. The very ancient notion of an absorption of souls back again into the Divine Essence was with the ancients, what we know it to be now in the metaphysical system of the Hindoos, a denial of individual immortality; nor have the demonstrations of reason done any thing to convince the other grand division of metaphysical pagans into which modern heathenism is divided, the followers of Budhu, who believe in the total annihilation of both men and gods after a series of ages, — a point of faith held probably by the majority of the present race of mankind. \[f^{10}\]

These instances might be enlarged; but they amply show that they who speak of the sufficiency of human reason in matters of morals and religion neglect almost all the facts which the history of human opinion furnishes; and that they owe all their best views to that fountain of inspiration from which they so criminally turn aside. For how otherwise can the instances we have just mentioned be explained? and how is it, that those fundamental
principles in morals and religion, which modern philosophers have exhibited as demonstrable by the unassisted powers of the human mind, were either held doubtfully, or connected with some manifest absurdity, or utterly denied by the wisest moral teachers among the Gentiles, who lived before the Christian revelation was given? They had the same works of God to behold, and the same course of providence to reason from, to neither of which were they inattentive. They had intellectual endowments, which have been the admiration of all subsequent ages; and their reason was rendered acute and discriminative by the discipline of mathematical and dialectic science. They had every thing which the moderns have except the Bible; and yet on points which have been generally settled among the moral philosophers of our own age as fundamental to natural religion, they had no just views, and no settled conviction. “The various apprehensions of wise men,” says Cicero, “will justify the doubtings and demurs of skeptics, and it will then be sufficient to blame them, si aut consenserint alii, aut erit inventus aliquis, qui quid verum sit invenerit, when others agree, or any one has found out the truth. We say not that nothing is true; but that some false things are annexed to all that is true, tanta similitudine ut iis nulla sit certa judicandi, et assentiendi nota, and that, with so much likeness, that there is no certain note of judging what is true, or assenting to it. We deny not that something may be true; percipi posse negamus, but we deny that it can be perceived so to be; for quid habemus in rebus bonis et malis explorati, what have we certain concerning good and evil? Nor for this are we to be blamed, but NATURE, which has hidden the truth in the deep, naturam accusa quae in profundo veritatem penitus abstruserit.” (Vide De Nat. Deorum, lib. 1, n. 10, 11. Acad. Qu. lib. 2, n. 66, 120.)

On this subject Dr. Samuel Clarke, though so great an advocate of natural religion, concedes, that “of the philosophers, some argued themselves out of the belief of the very being of a God; some by ascribing all things to chance, others to absolute fatality, equally subverted all true notions of religions, and made the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and a future judgment needless and impossible. Some professed open immorality, others by subtle distinctions patronized particular vices. The better sort of them, who were most celebrated, discoursed with the greatest reason, yet with much uncertainty and doubting, concerning things of the highest importance, — the providence of God in governing the world, the immortality of the soul, and a future judgment.”
If such facts prove the weakness and insufficiency of human reason, those just thoughts respecting God, his providence, his will, and a future state, which sometimes appear in the writings of the wisest heathen, are not however, on the contrary, to be attributed to its strength. Even if they were, the argument for the sufficiency of reason would not be much advanced thereby; for the case would then be, that the reason which occasionally reached the truth had not firmness enough to hold it fast, and the pinion which sometimes bore the mind into fields of light, could not maintain it in its elevation. But it cannot even be admitted, that the truth which occasionally breaks forth in their works was the discovery of their own powers. There is much evidence to show, that they were indebted to a traditional knowledge much earlier than their own day, and that moral and religious knowledge among them received occasional and important accessions from the descendants of Abraham, a people who possessed records which, laying aside the question of their inspiration for the present, all candid Theists themselves will acknowledge, contain noble and just views of God, and a correct morality. While it cannot be proved that human reason made a single discovery in either moral or religious truth; it may be satisfactorily established, that just notions as to both were placed within its reach, which it first obscured, and then corrupted.
CHAPTER 5. — THE ORIGIN OF THOSE TRUTHS WHICH ARE FOUND IN THE WRITINGS AND RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS OF THE HEATHEN.

We have seen that some of the leading truths of religion and morals, which are adverted to by heathen writers, or assumed in heathen systems, are spoken of as truths previously known to the world, and with which mankind were familiar. Also, that no legislator, poet, or philosopher of antiquity, ever pretended to the discovery of the doctrines of the existence of a God, of providence, a future state, and of the rules by which actions are determined to be good or evil, whether these opinions were held by them with full conviction of their certainty, or only doubtfully. That they were transmitted by tradition from an earlier age; or were brought from some collateral source of information; or that they flowed from both; are therefore the only rational conclusions.

To tradition the wisest of the heathen often acknowledge themselves indebted.

A previous age of superior truth, rectitude, and happiness, sometimes called the golden age, was a commonly received notion among them. It is at least as high as Hesiod, who rivals Homer in antiquity. It was likewise a common opinion, that sages existed in ages anterior to their own, who received knowledge from the gods, and communicated it to men. The wisest heathens, notwithstanding the many great things said of nature and reason, derive the origin, obligation, and efficacy of law from the gods alone. “No mortal,” says Plato in his republic, “can make laws to purpose.” Demosthenes calls law εὐρήμα καὶ δῶρον Θεοῦ, “the invention and gift of God.” They speak of νομοὶ αγραφοί, “unwritten laws,” and ascribe both them, and the laws which were introduced by their various legislators, to the gods. Xenophon represents it as the opinion of Socrates, that the unwritten laws received over the whole earth, which it was impossible that all mankind, as being of different languages, and not to be assembled in one place, should make, were given by the gods. Plato is express on this subject: “After a certain flood, which but few escaped, on the increase of mankind, they had neither letters, writing, nor laws, but obeyed the manners and institutions of their fathers as laws: but when colonies separated from them, they took an elder for their leader, and in their new
settlements retained the customs of their ancestors, *those especially which related to their gods: and thus transmitted them to their posterity; they imprinted them on the minds of their sons; and they did the same to their children.* This was the origin of right laws, and of the different forms of government.” (*De Leg. 3.*)

This so exactly harmonizes with the Mosaic account, as to the flood of Noah, the origin of nations, and the Divine institution of religion and laws, that either the patriarchal traditions embodied in the writings of Moses, had gone down with great exactness to the times of Plato; or the writings of Moses were known to him; or he had gathered the substance of them, in his travels, from the Egyptian, the Chaldean, or the Magian philosophers.

Nor is this an unsupported hypothesis. The evidence is most abundant, that the primitive source from whence every great religious and moral truth was drawn, must be fixed in that part of the world where Moses places the dwelling of the patriarchs of the human race, who walked with God, and received the law from his mouth. \(^{f12}\) There, in the earliest times, civilization and polity were found, while the rest of the earth was covered with savage tribes, — a sufficient proof that Asia was the common centre from whence the rest of mankind dispersed, who, as they wandered from these primitive seats, and addicted themselves more to the chase than to agriculture, became in most instances barbarous. \(^{f13}\)

In the multifarious and bewildering superstitions of all nations, we also discover a very remarkable substratum of common tradition and religious faith.

The practice of sacrifice, which may at once be traced into all nations and to the remotest antiquity, affords an eminent proof of the common origin of religion; inasmuch as no reason drawn from the nature of the rite itself or the circumstances of men, can be given for the universality of the practice: and as it is clearly a positive institute, and opposed to the interests of men, it can only be accounted for by an *injunction*, issued at a very early period of the world, and solemnly imposed. This injunction, indeed, received a force, either from its original appointment, or from subsequent circumstances, from which the human mind could never free itself. “There continued,” says Dr. Shuckford, “for a long time among the nations usages which show that there had been an ancient universal religion; several traces of which appeared in the rites and ceremonies which were observed in religious worship. Such was the custom of sacrifices expiatory and
precatory; both the sacrifices of animals, and the oblations of wine, oil, and the fruits and products of the earth. These and other things which were in use among the patriarchs, obtained also among the Gentiles.”

The events, and some of the leading opinions of the earliest ages, mentioned in Scripture, may also be traced among the most barbarous, as well as in the Oriental, the Grecian, and the Roman systems of mythology. Such are the FORMATION OF THE WORLD; the FALL AND CORRUPTION OF MAN; the hostility of a powerful and supernatural agent of wickedness, under his appropriate and Scriptural emblem, the SERPENT; the DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD BY WATER; the REPEOPLING OF IT BY THE SONS OF NOAH; the EXPECTATION OF ITS FINAL DESTRUCTION BY FIRE; and, above all, the promise of a great and Divine DELIVERER. fn14

The only method of accounting for this, is, that the same traditions were transmitted from the progenitors of the different families of mankind after the flood; that in some places they were strengthened, and the impressions deepened by successive revelations, which assumed the first traditions, as being of Divine original, for their basis, and thus renewed the knowledge which had formerly been communicated, at the very time they enlarged it: and farther, that from the written revelations which were afterward made to one people, some rays of reflected light were constantly glancing upon the surrounding nations.

Nor are we at a loss to trace this communication of truth from a common source to the Gentile nations; and also to show that they actually did receive accessions of information, both directly and indirectly, from a people who retained the primitive theological system in its greatest purity.

We shall see sufficient reasons, when we come to speak on that subject, to conclude that all mankind have descended from one common pair.

If man is now a moral agent, the first man must be allowed to have been a moral agent; and, as such, under rules of obedience; in which rules it is far more probable that he should be instructed by his Maker by means of direct communication, than that he should be left to collect the will of his Maker from observation and experience. Those who deny the Scripture account of the introduction of death into the world, and think the human species were always liable to it, are bound to admit a revelation from God to the first pair as to the wholesomeness of certain fruits, and the destructive habits of certain animals, or our first progenitors would have been far more exposed.
to danger from deleterious fruits, &c, and in a more miserable condition through their fears than any of their descendants, because they were without experience, and could have no information. But it is far more probable, that they should have express information as to the will of God concerning their conduct; for until they had settled, by a course of rational induction, what was right, and what wrong, they could not, properly speaking, be moral agents; and, from the difficulties of such an inquiry, especially until they had had a long experience of the steady course of nature, and the effect of certain actions upon themselves and society, they might possibly arrive at very different conclusions.

But in whatever way the moral and religious knowledge of the first man was obtained, if he is allowed to have been under an efficient law, he must at least have known, in order to the right regulation of himself, every truth essential to religion, and to personal, domestic, and social morals. The truth on these subjects was as essential to him as to his descendants, and more especially because he was so soon to be the head and the paternal governor, by a natural relation, of a numerous race, and to possess, by virtue of that office, great influence over them. If we assume, therefore, that the knowledge of the first man was taught to his children, and it were the greatest absurdity to suppose the contrary, then, whether he received his information on the principal doctrines of religion, and the principal rules of morals, by express revelation from God, or by the exercise of his own natural powers, all the great principles of religion, and of personal, domestic, and social morals, must have been at once communicated to his children, immediately descending from him; and we clearly enough see the reason why the earliest writers on these subjects never pretend to have been the discoverers of the leading truths of morals and religion, but speak of them as opinions familiar to men, and generally received. This primitive religious and moral system, as far as regards first principles, and all their important particular applications, was also complete, or there had been neither efficient religion nor morality in the first ages, which is contrary to all tradition, and to all history; and that this system was actually transmitted, is clear from this, that the wisdom of very early ages consisted not so much in natural and speculative science, as in moral notions, rules of conduct and an acquaintance with the opinions of the wise of still earlier periods.

The few persons through whom this system was transmitted to Noah, for in fact Methuselah was contemporary both with Adam and Noah, rendered
any great corruption impossible; and therefore the crimes charged upon the antediluvians are violence and other immoralities, rather than the corruption of truth; and Noah was “a preacher of righteousness,” rather than a restorer of doctrine.

The flood, \(^{17}\) being so awful and marked a declaration of God’s anger against the violation of the laws of this primitive religion, would give great force and sanction to it, as a religious system, in the minds of Noah’s immediate descendants. The existence of God; his providence; his favour to the good; his anger against evil doers; the great rules of justice and mercy; the practice of a sacrificial worship; the observance of the Sabbath, the promise of a Deliverer, and other similar tenets, were among the articles and religious rites of this primitive system: nor can any satisfactory account be given, why they were transmitted to so many people, in different parts of the world; why they have continued to glimmer through the darkness of paganism to this day; why we find them more or less recognized in the mythology, traditions, and customs of almost all ages ancient and modern, except that they received some original sanction of great efficacy, deeply fixing them in the hearts of the patriarchs of all the families of men. Those who deny the revelations contained in the Scriptures, have no means of accounting for these facts, which in themselves are indisputable. They have no theory respecting them which is not too childish to deserve serious refutation, and they usually prefer to pass them over in silence. But the believer in the Bible can account for them, and he alone. The destruction of wicked men by the flood put the seal of Heaven upon the religious system transmitted from Adam; and under the force of this Divine and unequivocal attestation of its truth, the sons and descendants of Noah went forth into their different settlements, bearing for ages the deep impression of its sanctity and authority. The impression, it is true, at length gave way to vice, superstition, and false philosophy; but superstition perverted truth rather than displaced it; and the doctrines, the history, and even the hopes of the first ages, were never entirely banished even from those fables which became baleful substitutes for their simplicity.

In the family of Abraham the true God was acknowledged. Melchizedec was the sovereign of one of the nations of Canaan, and priest of the most high God, and his subjects must therefore have been worshippers of the true Divinity. Abimelech the Philistine and his people, both in Abraham’s days and in Isaac’s, were also worshippers of Jehovah. and acknowledged
the same moral principles which were held sacred in the elect family. The revelations and promises made to Abraham would enlarge the boundaries of religious knowledge, both among the descendants of Ishmael, and those of his sons by Keturah; as those made to Shem would, with the patriarchal theology, be transmitted to his posterity — the Persians, Assyrians, and Mesopotamians. In Egypt, even in the days of Joseph, he and the king of Egypt speak of the true God, as of a being mutually known and acknowledged. Upon the arrival of the Israelites in Canaan, they found a few persons in that perhaps primitive seat of idolatry, who acknowledged “Jehovah to be God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath.” Through the branch of Esau the knowledge of the true religion would pass from the family of Isaac, with its farther illustrations in the covenants made with Abraham, to his descendants. Job and his friends, who probably lived between Abraham and Moses, were professors of the patriarchal religion and their discourses show, that it was both a sublime and a comprehensive system. The plagues of Egypt and the miraculous escape of the Israelites, and the destruction of the Canaanitish nations, were all parts of an awful controversy between the true God and the idolatry spreading in the world; and could not fail of being largely noised abroad among the neighbouring nations, and of making the religion of the Israelites known. (JENKIN’S *Reasonableness of Christianity*, vol. i, chap. 2.) Balaam, a Gentile prophet, intermixes with his predictions many brief but eloquent assertions of the first principles of religion; the omnipotence of Deity, his universal providence, and the immutability of his counsels; and the names and epithets which he applies to the Supreme Being, are, as Bishop Horsley observes, the very same which are used by Moses, Job, and the inspired writers of the Jews, namely, *God*, the *Almighty*, the *Most High*, and *Jehovah*; which is a proof, that, gross as the corruptions of idolatry were now become, the patriarchal religion was not forgotten nor its language become obsolete.

The frequent and public restorations of the Israelites to the principles of the patriarchal religion, after they had lapsed into idolatry, and fallen under the power of other nations, could not fail to make their peculiar opinions known among those with whom they were so often in relations of amity or war, of slavery or dominion. We have evidence collateral to that of the Scriptures, that the building of the celebrated temple of Solomon, and the fame of the wisdom of that monarch, produced not only a wide-spread rumour, but, as it was intended by Divine wisdom and goodness, moral
effects upon the people of distant nations, and that the Abyssinians received the Jewish religion after the visit of the queen of Sheba, the principles of that religion being probably found to accord with those ancient traditions of the patriarchs, which remained among them.  The intercourse between the Jews and the states of Syria and Babylon on the one hand, and Egypt on the other, powers which rose to great eminence and influence in the ancient world, was maintained for many ages. Their frequent captivities and dispersions would tend to preserve in part, and in part to revive, the knowledge of the once common and universal faith; for we have instances, that in the worst periods of their history there were among the captive Israelites those who adhered with heroic steadfastness to their own religion. We have the instance of the female captive in the house of Naaman the Syrian, and, at a later period, the sublime example of the three Hebrew youths, and of Daniel in the court of Nebuchadnezzar. The decree of this prince, after the deliverance of Shadrach and his companions, ought not to be slightly passed over. It contained a public proclamation of the supremacy of Jehovah, in opposition to the gods of his country; and that monarch, after his recovery from a singular disease, became himself a worshipper of the true God; both of which are circumstances which could not but excite attention, among a learned and curious people, to the religious tenets of the Jews. We may add to this also, that great numbers of the Jews preserving their Scriptures, and publicly worshipping the true God, never returned from the Babylonish captivity; but remained in various parts of that extensive empire after it was conquered by the Persians. The Chaldean philosophic schools, to which many of the Greek sages resorted for instruction, were therefore never without the means of acquaintance with the theological system of the Jews, however degenerate in process of time their wise men became, by addicting themselves to judicial astrology; and to the same sacred source the conquest of Babylon conducted the Persians.

Cyrus, the celebrated subverter of the Babylonian monarchy, was of the Magian religion, whose votaries worshipped God under the emblem of fire, but held an independent and eternal principle of darkness and evil. He was, however, somewhat prepared by his hostility to idols, to listen to the tenets of the Jews; and his favour to them sufficiently shows, that the influence which Daniel’s character, the remarkable facts which had occurred respecting him at the courts of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and the predictions of his own success by Isaiah, had exerted on his mind, was very
great. In his decree for the rebuilding of the temple, recorded in Ezra, chap. 1. and 2 Chronicles 36:23, he acknowledges “Jehovah to be the God of heaven,” who had given him his kingdom, and had charged him to rebuild the temple. Nor could this testimony in favour of the God of the Jews be without effect upon his subjects; one proof of which, and of the influence of Judaism upon the Persians, is, that in a short time after his reign, a considerable improvement in some particulars, and alteration in others, took place in the Magian religion by an evident admixture with it of the tenets and ceremonies of the Jews. And whatever improvements the theology of the Persians thus received, and they were not few nor unimportant; whatever information they acquired as to the origin of the world, the events of the first ages, and questions of morals and religion, subjects after which the ancient philosophers made keen and eager inquiries; they could not but be known to the learned Greeks, whose intercourse with the Persians was continued for so long a period, and be transmitted also into that part of India into which the Persian monarchs pushed their conquests.

It is indeed unquestionable, that the credit in which the Jews stood, in the Persian empire; the singular events which brought them into notice with the Persian monarchs; the favour they afterward experienced from Alexander the Great and his successors, who reigned in Egypt, while they became so numerous, and so generally spoke the Greek, that a translation of the Scriptures into that language was rendered necessary; and their having in most of the principal cities of the Roman empire, even when most extended, indeed in all the cities which were celebrated for refinement and philosophy, their synagogues and public worship, in Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, at Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, &c, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, and that for a long time before the Christian era, — rendered their tenets very widely known: and as these events took place after their final reformation from idolatry, the opinions by which they were distinguished were those substantially which are taught in the Scriptures. The above statements, to say nothing of the fact, that the character, office, opinions, and writings of Moses were known to many of the ancient philosophers and historians, who mention him by name, and describe the religion of the Jews, are sufficient to account for those opinions and traditions we occasionally meet with in the writings of the Greek and Roman sages which have the greatest correspondence with truth, and agree best with the Holy Scriptures. They flowed in upon them from many
channels, branching out at different times from the fountain of truth; but they were received by them generally as mere traditions or philosophic notions, which they thought themselves at liberty to adopt, reject, modify, or pervert, as the principles of their schools or their own fancy led them.

Let then every question which respects inspiration, miracles, prophecies, be for the present omitted: the following conclusions may properly close these observations: —

1. That as a history of early opinions and events, the Scriptures have at least as much authority as any history of ancient times whatever; nay, the very idea of their sacredness, whether well founded or not, renders their historical details more worthy of credit, because that idea led to their more careful preservation.

2. That their history is often confirmed by ancient pagan traditions and histories; and in no material point, or on any good evidence, contradicted.

3. That those fundamental principles of what is called natural religion, which are held by sober Theists, and by them denominated rational, the discovery of which they attribute to the unassisted understanding of man, are to be found in the earliest of these sacred writings, and are there supposed to have existed in the world previous to the date of those writings themselves.

4. That a religion founded on common notions and common traditions, comprehensive both in doctrines and morals, existed in very early periods of the world; and that from the agreement of almost all mythological systems, in certain doctrines, rites, and traditions, it is reasonable to believe, that this primitive theology passed in some degree into all nations.

5. That it was retained most perfectly among those of the descendants of Abraham who formed the Israelitish state, and subsisted as a nation collaterally with the successive great empires of antiquity for many ages.

6. That the frequent dispersions of great numbers of that people, either by war or from choice, and their residence in or near the seats of ancient learning with their sacred books, and in the habit of observing their public worship, as in Chaldea, Egypt, Persia, and other parts of the ancient world, and the signal notice into which they and their opinions were occasionally brought, could not but make their cosmogony, theology, laws, and history, very extensively known.
7. That the spirit of inquiry in many of the ancient philosophers of different countries, led them to travel for information on these very subjects, and often into those countries where the patriarchal religion had formerly existed in great purity, and where the tenets of the Jews, which tended to revive or restore it, were well known.

8. That there is sufficient evidence that these tenets were in fact known to many of the sages of the greatest name, and to schools of the greatest influence, who, however, regarding them only as traditions or philosophical opinions, interwove such of them as best agreed with their views into their own systems, and rejected or refined upon others, so that no permanent and convincing system of morals and religion was, after all, wrought out among themselves, while they left the populace generally to the gross ignorance and idolatry in which they were involved. \(^\text{f21}\)

9. Finally, that so far from there being any evidence that any of those fundamental truths of religion or morals, which may occasionally appear in their writings, were discovered by their unassisted reason, we can trace them to an earlier age, and can show that they had the means of access to higher sources of information; while on the other hand it may be exhibited as a proof of the weakness of the human mind, and the corruptness of the human heart, that they generally involved in doubt the great principles which they thus received; built upon them fanciful systems destructive of their moral efficacy; and mixed them with errors of the most deteriorating character. \(^\text{f22}\)

The last observation will be more fully illustrated in the ensuing chapter.

NOTE A.

The illustration of the particulars mentioned in the paragraph, from which reference is made to this note, may be given under different heads.

THE FORMATION OF THE WORLD FROM CHAOTIC MATTER. — Some remains of the sentiments of the ancient Chaldeans are preserved in the pages of Syncellus from Berosus and Alexander Polyhistor; and when the tradition is divested of its fabulous dress, we may trace in the account a primordial watery chaos, a separation of the darkness from light, and of earth from heaven, the production of man from the dust of the earth, and an infusion of Divine reason into the man so formed. — The cosmogony of the Phenicians, as detailed by Sanchoniatho, makes the principle of the
universe a dark air, and a turbulent chaos. The ancient Persians taught that God created the world at six different times, in manifest allusion to the six days’ work as described by Moses. In the Institutes of *Menu*, a Hindoo tract, supposed by Sir William Jones to have been composed 1280 years before the Christian era, the universe is represented as involved in darkness, when the sole, self-existing power, himself undiscerned, made the world discernible. With a thought he first created the waters, which are called *Nara*, or the Spirit of God; and since they were his first *ayana*, or place of motion, he is thence named *Narayana*, or moving on the waters.

The order of the creation in the ancient traditions of the Chinese is, — the heavens were first formed; the foundations of the earth were next laid; the atmosphere was then diffused round the habitable globe, and last of all, man was created. The formation of the world from chaos may be discovered in the traditions of our Gothic ancestors. — See the *Edda*, and Faber’s *Horæ Mosaicæ*, vol. i, page 3.

In the ancient Greek philosophy we trace the same tradition, and Plato clearly borrowed the materials of his account of the origin of things, either from Moses, or from traditions which had proceeded from the same source. Moses speaks of God in the plural form, “*In the beginning Gods created the heaven and the earth,*” and Plato has a kind of trinity in his τὸ αγαθὸν, “the good,” νοῦς or “intellect,” who was properly the *demiurgus*, or former of the world, and his *Psyche*, or universal mundane soul, the cause of all the motion which is in the world. He also represents the first matter out of which the universe was formed as a rude chaos. In the Greek and Latin poets we have frequent allusions to the same fact, and in some of them highly poetic descriptions of the chaotic state of the world, and its reduction to order. When America was discovered, traditions, bearing a very remarkable resemblance to the history of Moses on various subjects, were found among the semi-civilized nations of that continent. *Gomara* states in his history, that the Peruvians believed that, at the beginning of the world, there came from the north a being named *Con*, who levelled mountains and raised hills solely by the word of his mouth; that he filled the earth with men and women whom he had created, giving them fruits and bread, and all things necessary for their subsistence; but that, being offended with their transgressions, he deprived them of the blessings which they had originally enjoyed, and afflicted their lands with sterility.

“The number of days employed in the work of creation,” says Mr. Faber “and the Divine rest on the seventh day, produced that peculiar measure of
time, the week, which is purely arbitrary, and which does not spring, like a
day, or a month, or a year, from the natural motions of the heavenly
bodies. Hence the general adoption of the hebdomadal period is itself a proof how widely a knowledge of the true cosmogonical system was
diffused among the posterity of Noah.” Thus, in almost every part of the
globe, from Europe to the shores of India, and anciently among the
Greeks, Romans, and Goths, as well as among the Jews, we find the week
used as a familiar measure of time, and some traces of the Sabbath.

THE FALL OF MAN. — That the human race were once innocent and
happy, is an opinion of high antiquity, and great extent among the Gentile
nations. The passages to this effect in the classical poets are well known. It
is asserted in the Edda, the record of the opinions of our Scythian
forefathers. “There can be little doubt,” says Maurice, in his History of
Hindostan, “but that by the Satya — age, or age of perfection, the
Brachmins obscurely allude to the state of perfection and happiness
enjoyed by man in paradise. Then justice, truth, philanthropy, were
practised among all the orders and classes of mankind.” That man is a
fallen creature, is now the universal belief of this class of pagans; and the
degeneracy of the human soul, its native and hereditary degeneracy, runs
through much of the Greek philosophy. The immediate occasion of the fall,
the frailty of the woman, we find also alluded to equally in classical fable,
in ancient Gothic traditions, and among various barbarous tribes. A curious
passage to this effect occurs in Campbell’s Travels among the Boschuana
Hottentots.

THE SERPENT. — The agency of an evil and malignant spirit is found also
in these widely-extended ancient traditions. Little doubt can be entertained
but that the generally received notion of good and evil demons grounded
itself upon the Scripture account of good and evil angels. Serpent worship
was exceedingly general, especially in Egypt and the east, and this is not to
be accounted for but as it originated from a superstitious fear of the
malignant demon, who, under that animal form, brought death into the
world, and obtained a destructive dominion over men. That in ancient
sculptures and paintings, the serpent symbol is sometimes emblematical of
wisdom, eternity, and other moral ideas, may be allowed; but it often
appears connected with representations which prove that under this form
the evil principle was worshipped, and that human sacrifices were offered
to gratify the cruelty of him who was a “murderer from the beginning.” In
the model of the tomb of Psammiss, made by Mr. Belzoni, and recently
exhibited in London, and in the plates which accompany his work on Egypt, are seen various representations of monstrous serpents with the tribute of human heads which had been offered to them. This is still more strikingly exemplified in a copy of part of the interior of an Egyptian tomb at Biban al Melook in Richardson’s Travels in Egypt. Before an enormous serpent three men are represented on their knees, with their heads just struck off by the executioner, “while the serpent erects his crest to a level with their throats, ready to drink the stream of life as it gurgles from their veins.” This was probably the serpent Typhon, of the ancient Egyptians; the same as the Python of the Greeks; and as observed by Mr. Faber, “the notion that the Python was oracular, may have sprung from a recollection of the vocal responses, which the tempter gave to Eve under the borrowed figure of that reptile.” By consulting Moore’s Hindu Pantheon, it will be seen that the serpent Caliya is represented as the decided enemy of the mediatorial God, Krishna, whom he persecutes, and on whom he inflicts various sufferings, though he is at length vanquished. Krishna, pressed within the folds of the serpent, and then triumphing over him in bruising his head beneath his feet, is the subject of a very ancient Hindoo bas relief, and carries with it its own interpretation.

In the Edda, Fab. 16, “the great serpent is said to be an emanation from Loke, the evil principle; and hela, or hell or death, in a poetical vein of allegory not unworthy of our own Milton, is celebrated as the daughter of that personage, and as the sister of the dragon. Indignant at the pertinacious rebellion of the evil principle, the universal Father despatched certain of the gods to bring those children to him. When they were come, he threw the serpent down to the bottom of the ocean. But there, the monster grew so large, that he wound himself round the whole globe of the earth. Death meanwhile was precipitated into hell, where she possesses vast apartments, strongly built, and fenced with grates of iron. Her hall is grief; her table famine; hunger, her knife; delay, her servant; faintness, her porch; sickness and pain, her bed; and her tent, cursing and howling.”

THE FLOOD OF NOAH. — Josephus, in his first book against Apion, states that Berosus the Chaldean historian relates, in a similar manner to Moses, the history of the flood, and the preservation of Noah in an ark or chest. In Abydemis’s History of Assyria, in passages quoted by Eusebius, mention is made of an ancient prince of the name of Sisithrus, who was forewarned by Saturn of a deluge. In this account, the ship, the sending forth and returning of the birds, the abating of the waters, and the resting of the ship
on a mountain, are all mentioned. (Euseb. Præp. Evang. lib. 9, c. 12. — Grotius on the Christian Religion, lib. 1, sec. 16.) Lucian, in his book concerning the goddess of Syria, mentions the Syrian traditions as to this event. Here Noah is called Deucalion, and that he was the person intended under this name is rendered indubitable by the mention of the wickedness of the antediluvians, the piety of Deucalion, the ark, and the bringing into it of the beasts of the earth by pairs. The ancient Persian traditions, as Dr. Hyde has shown, though mixed with fable, have a substantial agreement with the Mosaic account. In Hindostan, the ancient poem of Bhagavot treats of a flood which destroyed all mankind, except a pious prince, with seven of his attendants and their wives. The Chinese writers in like manner make mention of a universal flood. In the legends of the ancient Egyptians, Goths, and Druids, striking references are made to the same event; (Edda, Fab. 4; Davies’s Mythology of the British Druids, p. 226,) and it was found represented in the historical paintings of the Mexicans, and among the American nations. The natives of Otaheite believed that the world was torn in pieces formerly by the anger of their gods; the inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands have a tradition that the Etooa, who created the world, afterward destroyed it by an inundation; and recollections of the same event are preserved among the New Zealanders, as the author had the opportunity of ascertaining lately in a conversation with two of their chiefs, through an interpreter. For large illustrations of this point, see Bryant’s Heathen Mythology, and Faber’s Horæ Mosaicæ.

SACRIFICE. — The great principle of the three dispensations of religion in the Scriptures, — The Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian, — that without shedding of blood there is no remission, has fixed itself in every pagan religion of ancient and modern times. For though the followers of Budhu are forbidden to offer sanguinary sacrifices to him, they offer them to demons in order to avert various evils; and their presentation of flowers and fruits to Budhu himself shows that one part of the original rite of sacrifice has been retained, though the other, through a philosophic refinement, is given up. Sacrifices are, however, offered in China, where the most ancient form of Budhuism generally prevails; a presumption that the Budhuism of Ceylon, and some parts of India, is a refinement upon a more ancient system. “That the practice of devoting piacular victims has, at one period or another, prevailed in every quarter of the globe; and that it has been alike adopted by the most barbarous and by the most civilized nations, can scarcely be said to need regular and formal proof.”
EXPECTATION OF A DELIVERER. — Amidst the miseries of succeeding ages, the ancient pagan world was always looking forward to the appearance of a great Deliverer and Restorer, and this expectation was so general, that it is impossible to account for it but from “the promises made unto the fathers,” beginning with the promise of conquest to the seed of the woman over the power of the serpent. It is a singular fact, and still worthy of remark, though so often stated, that, a little before our Lord’s advent, an expectation of the speedy appearance of this Deliverer was general among the nations of antiquity. “The fact,” says Bishop Horsley, “is so notorious to all who have any knowledge of antiquity, that if any one would deny it, I would decline all dispute with such an adversary, as too ignorant to receive conviction, or too disingenuous to acknowledge what he must secretly admit.” It is another singular fact, that Virgil, in his Pollio, by an application of the Sybilline verses, which are almost literally in the high and glowing strains in which Isaiah prophesies of Christ, to a child of his friend, one of the Roman consuls, whose birth was just expected, and that out of an extravagant flattery, should call the attention of the world to those singular and mysterious books, so shortly before the birth of him who alone could fulfil the prophecies they contain. For a farther account of the Sybilline verses, the reader is referred to Prideaux’s Connection, to Bishop Lowth’s Dissertations, and to Bishop Horsley’s Dissertation on the Prophecies of the Messiah, dispersed among the heathen. It is enough here to say, that it is a historical fact, that the Sybilline books existed among the Romans from an early period; — that these oracles of the Cumæan Sybil were held in such veneration, that the book which contained them was deposited in a stone chest in the temple of Jupiter, in the capitol, and committed to the care of two persons appointed to that office expressly; — that about a century before our Saviour’s birth, the book was destroyed in the fire which consumed the temple in which it was deposited; — that the Roman Senate knew that similar oracles existed among other nations, for to repair that loss, they sent persons to make a new collection of these oracles, in different parts of Asia, in the islands of the Archipelago, in Africa, and in Sicily, who returned with about a thousand verses, which were deposited in the place of the originals, and kept with the same care; — and that the predictions which Virgil weaves into his fourth Eclogue, of the appearance of a king whose monarchy was to be universal, and who was to bestow upon mankind the blessings he describes, were contained in there. It follows, therefore, that such predictions existed anciently among the Romans, that they were found in many other parts of Europe, and Asia,
and Africa; and that they had so marvellous an agreement with the predictions of the Jewish prophets, that either they were in part copies from them, or predictions of an inspiration equally sacred — the fragments of very ancient prophecy interwoven probably with the fables of later times. “If,” as Bishop Horsley justly observes, “any illiterate persons were to hear Virgil’s poem read, with the omission of a few allusions to the heathen mythology, which would not affect the general sense of it, he would without hesitation pronounce it to be a prophecy of the Messiah.” It might seem indeed that the poet had only in many passages translated Isaiah, did he not expressly attribute the predictions he has introduced into his poem to the Cumæan Sybil; which he would not have done if such passages had not been found in the oracles, because they were then in existence, and their contents were known to many. The subsequent forgeries of these oracles in the first ages of the Church, also, prove at least this, that the true Sybilline verses contained prophetic passages capable of a strong application to the true universal Deliverer, which those pious frauds aimed at making more particular and more convincing. Those who do not read Latin may consult “the Messiah” of Pope, with the principal passages from Virgil in the notes, translated and collated with prophecies from Isaiah, which will put them in possession of the substance of this singular and most interesting production.

Nor is it only on the above points that we perceive the ancient traditions and opinions preserved in their grand outline among different heathen nations, but also in the Scriptural doctrine of the destruction of the present system of material nature. The Pythagoreans, Platonists, Epicureans, Stoics, all had notions of a general conflagration. After the doctrine of the Stoics, Ovid thus speaks, Metam. lib. 50.

“Esse quoque in fatis reminiscitur affore tempus
Quo mare, quo tellus, correptaque regio cæli
Ardeat, et mundi moles operosa laboret.”

Rememb’ring in the fates a time when fire
Should to the battlements of heaven aspire,
When all his blazing worlds above should burn,
And all the inferior globe to cinders turn.

DRYDEN.

Seneca, speaking of the same event, ad Merciam c. ult., says, “Tempus adveniret quo sidera sideribus incurrent, &c. The time will come when the
whole world will be consumed, that it may be again renewed, when the powers of nature will be turned against herself, when stars will rush on stars, and the whole material world, which now appears so resplendent with beauty and harmony, will be destroyed in one general conflagration. In this grand catastrophe of nature, all animated beings, (excepting the universal intelligence,) men, heroes, demons, and gods, shall perish together.”

The same tradition presents itself in different forms in all leading systems of modern paganism.

**NOTE B.**

Of the controversy as to Zoroaster, Zeratusht, or Zertushta, and the sacred books said to have been written by him called Zend, or Zendavesta, which has divided critics so eminent, it would answer no important end to give an abstract. Those who wish for information on the subject are referred to HYDE’S *Religio Veterum Persarum*; PRIDENAU’S *Connection*; WARBURTON’S *Divine Legation*; BRYANT’S *Mythology*; *The Universal History*; SIR W. JONES’S *Works*, vol. 2., p. 115; M. DU PERRON, and RICHARDSON’S *Dissertation* prefixed to his Persian and Arabic Dictionary. But whatever may become of the authority of the whole or part of the Zendavesta, and with whatever fables the History of the Reformer of the Magian religion may be mixed, the learned are generally agreed that such a reformation took place by his instrumentality.

“Zeratusht,” says Sir W. Jones, “reformed the old religion by the addition of genii or angels, of new ceremonies in the veneration shown to fire, of a new work which he pretended to have received from heaven, and, above all, by establishing the actual adoration of the Supreme Being,” and he farther adds, “The reformed religion of Persia continued in force till that country was conquered by the Musselmens; and, without studying the Zend, we have ample information concerning it in the modern Persian writings of several who profess it. *Bahman* always named Zeratusht with reverence; he was in truth a pure Theist, and strongly disclaimed any adoration of the fire or other elements, and he denied that the doctrine of two coeval principles, supremely good, and supremely bad, formed any part of his faith.” “The Zeratusht of Persia, or the Zoroaster of the Greeks,” says Richardson, “was highly celebrated by the most discerning people of ancient times; and his tenets, we are told, were most eagerly and rapidly embraced by the highest in rank, and the wisest men in the Persian
empire.” — Dissertation prefixed to his Persian Dictionary. He distinguished himself by denying that good and evil, represented by light and darkness, were coeval, independent principles, and asserted the supremacy of the true God, and exact conformity with the doctrine contained in a part of that celebrated prophecy of Isaiah, in which CYRUS is mentioned by name. “I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me,” no coeval power. “I form the light, and create darkness, I make peace, or good, and create evil, I the Lord do all these things.”

Fire by Zerdushta appears to have been used emblematically only, and the ceremonies for preserving and transmitting it, introduced by him, were manifestly taken from the Jews, and the sacred fire of their tabernacle and temple.

The old religion of the Persians was corrupted by Sabianism, or the worship of the host of heaven, with its accompanying superstition. The Magian doctrine, whatever it might be at first, had degenerated, and two eternal principles, good and evil, had been introduced. It was therefore necessarily idolatrous also, and, like all other false systems, flattering to the vicious habits of the people. So great an improvement in the moral character and influence of the religion of a whole nation as was effected by Zoroaster, a change which is not certainly paralleled in the history of the religion of mankind, can scarcely therefore be thought possible, except we suppose a Divine interposition, either directly, or by the occurrence of some very impressive events. Now, as there are so many authorities for fixing the time of Zoroaster or Zeratusht not many years subsequent to the death of the great Cyrus, the events to which we have referred in the text are those, and indeed the only ones, which will account for his success in that reformation of religion of which he was the author: for had not the minds of men been prepared for this change by something extraordinary, it is not supposable that they would have adopted a purer faith from him. That he gave them a better doctrine is clear from the admissions of even Dean Prideaux, who has very unjustly branded him as an impostor. Let it then be remembered, that as “the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men,” he often overrules great political events for moral purposes. The Jews were sent into captivity to Babylon to be reformed from their idolatrous propensities, and their reformation commenced with their calamity. A miracle was there wrought in favour of the three Hebrews, confessors of one only God, and that under circumstances to put shame upon a popular idol in the presence of the king, and “all the rulers of the
provinces,” that the issue of this controversy between Jehovah and idolatry might be made known throughout that vast empire. Worship was refused to the idol by a few Hebrew captives, and the idol had no power to punish the public affront: — the servants of Jehovah were cast into a furnace, and he delivered them unhurt; and a royal decree declared “that there was no god who could deliver after this sort.” The proud monarch himself is smitten with a singular disease; — he remains subject to it until he acknowledges the true God; and, upon his recovery, he publicly ascribes to HIM both the justice and the mercy of the punishment. This event takes place also in the accomplishment of a dream which none of the wise men of Babylon could interpret: it was interpreted by Daniel, who made the fulfilment to redound to the honour of the true God, by ascribing to him the perfection of knowing the future, which none of the false gods, appealed to by the Chaldean sages, possessed; as the inability of their servants to interpret the dream sufficiently proved. After these singular events, Cyrus takes Babylon, and he finds there the sage and the statesman, Daniel, the worshipper of the God “who creates both good and evil,” “who makes the light and forms the darkness.” There is moral certainty, that he and the principal Persians throughout the empire would have the prophecy of Isaiah respecting Cyrus, delivered more than a hundred years before he was born, and in which his name stood recorded, along with the predicted circumstances of the capture of Babylon, pointed out to them; as every reason, religious and political, urged the Jews to make the prediction a matter of notoriety: and from Cyrus’s decree in Ezra it is certain that he was acquainted with it, because there is in the decree an obvious reference to the prophecy. This prophecy so strangely fulfilled would give mighty force to the doctrine connected with it, and which it proclaims with me much majesty.

“I am JEHOVAH, and none else, Forming LIGHT, and creating DARKNESS, Making PEACE, and creating EVIL, I JEHOVAH am the author of all these things.”

Lowth’s Translation.

Here the great principle of corrupted Magianism was directly attacked; and in proportion as the fulfilment of the prophecy was felt to be singular and striking, the doctrine blended with it would attract notice. Its force was both felt and acknowledged, as we have seen in the decree of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the temple. In that, CYRUS acknowledged the true God to be
supreme, and thus renounced his former faith; and the example, the public example of a prince so beloved, and whose reign was so extended, could not fail to influence the religious opinions of his people. That the effect did not terminate in Cyrus we know; for from the book of EZRA, it appears that both DARIUS and ARTAXERXES made decrees in favour of the Jews, in which Jehovah has the emphatic appellation repeatedly given to him, “the God of heaven;” the very terms used by Cyrus himself. Nor are we to suppose the impression confined to the court; for the history of the three Hebrew youths; of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, sickness, and reformation from idolatry; of the interpretation of the handwriting on the wall by Daniel, the servant of the living God; of his deliverance from the lions; and the publicity of the prophecy of Isaiah respecting Cyrus, were too recent, too public, and too striking in their nature, not to be often and largely talked of. Beside, in the prophecy respecting Cyrus, the intention of almighty God in recording the name of that monarch in an inspired book, and showing beforehand that he had chosen him to overturn the Babylonian empire, is expressly mentioned as having respect to two great objects, First, The deliverance of Israel, and Second, The making known his supreme Divinity among the nations of the earth. I again quote Lowth’s translation: —

“For the sake of my servant Jacob,
And of Israel my chosen,
I have even called thee by thy name,
I have surnamed thee, though thou knowest me not.
I am Jehovah, and none else,
Beside me there is no God;
I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me,
That they may know, from the rising of the sun,
And from the west, that there is NONE BESIDE ME;” &c.

It was therefore intended by this proceeding on the part of Providence, to teach not only CYRUS, but the people of his vast empire, and surrounding nations, FIRST, That He was Jehovah, the self-subsistant, the eternal God; SECOND, That he was GOD ALONE, there being no Deity beside himself; and THIRD, That good and evil, represented by light and darkness, were neither independent nor eternal subsistences; but his great instruments and under his control.

The Persians, who had so vastly extended their empire by the conquest of the countries formerly held by the monarchs of Babylon, were thus
prepared for such a reformation of their religion as Zoroaster effected. The principles he advocated had been previously adopted by several of the Persian monarchs, and probably by many of the principal persons of that nation. Zoroaster himself thus became acquainted with the great truths contained in this famous prophecy, which attacked the very foundations of every idolatrous and Manichean system. From the other sacred books of the Jews, who mixed with the Persians in every part of the empire, he evidently learned more. This is sufficiently proved from the many points of similarity between his religion and Judaism, though he should not be allowed to speak so much in the style of the Holy Scriptures as some passages in the Zendavesta would indicate. He found the people however “prepared of the Lord” to admit his reformations, and he carried them. I cannot but look upon this as one instance of several merciful dispensations of God to the Gentile world, through his own peculiar people the Jews, by which the idolatries of the heathen were often checked, and the light of truth rekindled among them. In this view the ancient Jews evidently considered the Jewish Church as appointed not to preserve only but to extend true religion. “God be merciful to us and bless us, that thy ways may be known upon earth, thy saving health unto all nations.” This renders pagan nations more evidently “without excuse.” That this dispensation of mercy was afterward neglected among the Persians is certain. How long the effect continued we know not, nor how widely it spread; perhaps longer and wider than may now distinctly appear. If the Magi, who came from the east to see Christ, were Persians, some true worshippers of God would appear to have remained in Persia to that day; and if, as is probable, the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel were retained among them, they might be among those who “waited for redemption,” not at Jerusalem, but in a distant part of the world. The Parsees, who were nearly extirpated by Mohammedan fanaticism, were charged by their oppressors with the idolatry of fire, and this was probably true of the multitude. Some of their writers however warmly defended themselves against the charge. A considerable number of them remain in India to this day, and profess to have the books of Zoroaster.

This note contains a considerable digression, but its connection with the argument in the text is obvious. He who rejects the authority of the Scriptures will not be influenced by what has been said of the prophecies of Isaiah, or the events of the life of Daniel; but still it is not to be denied, that while the Persian empire remained, a Persian moral philosopher who taught
sublime doctrines flourished, and that his opinions had great influence. The
connection of the Jews and Persians is an undeniable matter of historic fact.
The tenets ascribed to Zoroaster bear the marks of Jewish origin, because
they are mingled with some of the peculiar rites and circumstances of the
Jewish temple. From this source the theology of the Persians received
improvements in correct and influential notions of Deity especially, and
was enriched with the history and doctrines of the Mosaic records. The
affairs of the Greeks were so interwoven with those of the Persians, that
the sages of Greece could not be ignorant of the opinions of Zertushta,
known to them by the name of Zoroaster, and from this school some of
their best notions were derived.

NOTE C.

The greatest corruptions of religion are to be traced to superstition, and to
that vain and bewildering habit of philosophizing, which obtained among
the ancients. Superstition was the besetting sin of the ignorant, vain
speculation of the intelligent. Both sprung from the vicious state of the
heart; the expression was different, but the effect the same. The evil
probably arose in Egypt, and was largely improved upon by the
philosophers of Greece and India. Systems, hypotheses, cosmogonies, &c,
are all the work of philosophy; and the most subtle and bewildering errors,
such as the eternity of matter, the metempsychosis, the absorption of the
human soul at death, &c, have sprung from them. — Ancient wisdom, both
religious and moral, was contained in great principles, expressed in
maxims, without affectation of systematic relation and arrangement, and
without any deep research into reasons and causes. The moment
philosophy attempted this, the weakness and waywardness of the human
mind began to display themselves. Theories sprung up in succession; and
confusion and contradiction at length produced skepticism in all, and in
many matured it into total unbelief. The speculative habit affected at once
the opinions of ancient Africa and Asia; and in India, the philosophy of
Egypt and Greece remains to this day, ripened into its full bearing of
deleterious fruit.

The similarity of the Greek and modern Asiatic systems is indeed a very
curious subject; for in the latter is exhibited at this day the *philosophy* of
paganism, while in other places false religion is seen only or chiefly in its
simple form of superstition. The coincidence of the Hindoo and Greek
*mythology* has been traced by Sir W. Jones; and his opinions on this subject
are strongly confirmed by the still more striking coincidence in the doctrines of the Hindoo and Grecian philosophical sects. “The period,” says Mr. Ward, (View of the History of the Hindoos, &c,) “when the most eminent of the Hindoo philosophers flourished, is still involved in much obscurity; but the apparent agreement in many striking particulars between the Hindoo and the Greek systems of philosophy, not only suggests the idea of some union in their origin, but strongly pleads for their belonging to one age, notwithstanding the unfathomable antiquity claimed by the Hindoos; and after the reader shall have compared the two systems, the author is persuaded he will not consider the conjecture as improbable, that Pythagoras and others did really visit India, or that Goutumu and Pythagoras were cotemporaries, or nearly so.” (Vol. 4.)

Many of the subjects discussed among the Hindoos were the very subjects which excited the disputes in the Greek academies, such as the eternity of matter, the first cause; God the soul of the world; the doctrine of atoms; creation; the nature of the gods; the doctrines of fate, transmigration, successive revolutions of worlds, absorption into the Divine Being,” &c. (Ibid. p. 115.)

Mr. Ward enters at large into this coincidence in his introductory remarks to his fourth volume, to which the reader is referred. It shall only be observed, that those speculations, and subtle arguments just mentioned, both in the Greek and Asiatic branches of pagan philosophy, gave birth to absolute Atheism. — Several of the Greek philosophic sects, as is well known, were professedly Atheistic. Cudworth enumerates four forms assumed by this species of unbelief. The same principles which distinguish their sects may be traced in several of those of the Hindoos, and above all the Atheistical system of Budhoo, branched off from the vain philosophy of the Brachminical schools, and has extended farther than Hindooism itself. The reason of all this is truly given by Bishop Warburton, as to the Greeks, and it is equally applicable to the Asiatic philosophy of the present day, which is so clearly one and the same, and also to many errors which have crept into the Church of Christ itself. “The philosophy of the Greeks,” he observes, led to unbelief, “because it was above measure refined and speculative, and used to be determined by metaphysical rather than by moral principles, and to stick to all consequences, how absurd soever, that were seen to arise from such principles.”
CHAPTER 6. — THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION; — STATE OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE AMONG THE HEATHEN.

Several presumptive arguments have been offered in favour of the opinion, that almighty God in his goodness has made an express revelation of his will to mankind. They have been drawn from the fact, that we are moral agents, and therefore under a law or rule of conduct — from the consideration that no law can be binding till made known, or at least rendered cognizable by those whom it is intended to govern — from the inability of the generality of men to collect any adequate information on moral and religious subjects by processes of induction — from the insufficiency of reason, even in the wisest, to make any satisfactory discovery of the first principles of religion and duty — from the want of all authority and influence in such discoveries, upon the majority of mankind, had a few minds of superior order and with more favourable opportunities been capable of making them — from the fact that no such discovery was ever made by the wisest of the ancient sages, inasmuch as the truths they held were in existence before their day, even in the earliest periods of the patriarchal ages — and from the fact, that whatever truths they collected from early tradition, or from the descendants of Abraham, mediately or immediately, they so corrupted under the pretence of improving them, as to destroy their harmony and moral influence, thereby greatly weakening the probability that moral truth was ever an object of the steady and sincere pursuit of men. To these presumptions in favour of an express revelation, written, preserved with care, and appointed to be preached and published under the authority of its author, for the benefit of all, wise or unwise, we may add the powerful presumption which is afforded by the necessity of the case. This necessity of a revelation is to be collected, not only from what has been advanced, but from the state of moral and religious knowledge and practice, in those countries where the records which profess to contain the Mosaic and the Christian revelations have been or are still unknown.

The necessity of immediate Divine instruction was acknowledged by many of the wisest and most inquiring of the heathen, under the conviction of the entire inability of man unassisted by God to discover truth with certainty,
— so greatly had the primitive traditional revelations been obscured by errors before the times of the most ancient of those sages among the heathen, whose writings have in whole or in part been transmitted to us, and so little confidence had they in themselves to separate truth from error, or to say, “This is true and that false.” And as the necessity of an express and authenticated revelation was acknowledged, so it was publicly exhibited, because on the very first principles of religion and morals, there was either entire ignorance, or no settled and consonant opinions, even among the wisest of mankind themselves.  

Some proofs of this have already been adduced, but the importance of the subject requires that they should be enlarged.

Though the belief of one Supreme Being has been found in many parts of the world, yet the notion of subordinate deities, the immediate dispensers of good and evil to men, and the objects of their fear and worship, has almost equally obtained; and this of necessity destroyed or greatly counteracted the moral influence of that just opinion.

“The people generally among the Gentiles,” says Dr. Tenison, “did rise little higher than the objects of sense. They worshipped them each as supreme in their kind, or no otherwise unequal than the sun, and the moon, or the other celestial bodies, by the adoration of which the ancient idolaters, as Job intimateth, denied (or excluded) the God that is above. Porphyry himself, one of the most plausible apologists for the religion of the Gentiles, doth own in some the most gross and blockish idolatry of mean objects. He tells us that it is not a matter of which we should be amazed, if most ignorant men esteemed wood and stones Divine statues; seeing they who are unlearned look upon monuments which have inscriptions upon them as ordinary stones, and regard books as so many bundles of paper.” (Discourse on Idolatry, p. 50.)

The modern idolatry of Hindostan, which in principle differs nothing from that of the ancient world, affords a striking comment upon this point, and indeed is of great importance in enabling us to conceive justly of the true character and practical effects of idolatry in all ages. One Supreme Being is acknowledged by the Hindoos, but they never worship him, nor think that he concerns himself with human affairs at all. “The Hindoos believe in one God, so completely abstracted in his own essence, however, that in this state he is emphatically the unknown, and is consequently neither the object
of hope nor of fear; he is even destitute of intelligence, and remains in a
state of profound repose.” (Ward’s Hindoo Mythology, vol. ii, p. 306.)

“This Being,” says Moore, (Hindoo Pantheon, p. 132,) “is called Brahm,
one eternal mind, the self-existing, incomprehensible Spirit. To him,
however, the Hindoos erect no altars. The objects of their adoration
commence with the triad, — Brahma, Vishnu, and Seva, which represent
the almighty powers of creation, preservation, and destruction.”

The learned among the classic heathen, it is true, occasionally speak nobly
concerning God and his attributes; but at the same time they were led by
their own imaginations and reasonings to conclusions, which neutralize the
effect of their sublimer conceptions and often contradict them. The eternity
of matter, for instance, was held by the Greek and Roman philosophers and
by their preceptors in the oriental schools, who thought it absolutely
impossible that any thing should be produced from nothing, thus destroying
the notion of creation in its proper sense, and of a Supreme Creator. This
opinion, as Bishop Stilligfleet shows, (Origines Sacrae, 1. iii, c. 2,) is
contrary to the omnipotence and independence of God, and is a great
abatement of those correct views which the words of the ancient
philosophers would seem sometimes to express. \(^{25}\)

It had another injurious effect; it destroyed the interesting doctrine of
Divine government as to those natural evils to which men are subject.
These they traced to the unchangeable and eternal nature of matter, which
even the Supreme God could not control. Thus Seneca says, (De Provid.
cap. 5,) “that evil things happen to good men, quia non potest Artifex
mutare matetiam, because God the Artificer could not change matter; and
that a magno Artifice multa formantur prava, many things were made ill
by the great Artificer; not that he wanted art, but through the stubbornness
of matter,” in which they generally agree. This opinion of theirs was
brought from the oriental schools, where it had been long received; nor
was it confined to Egypt and Chaldea. It was one of the dogmas which
Confucius taught in China in the fifth century before Christ, that out of
nothing that which is cannot be produced, and that material bodies must
have existed from all eternity. From this notion it follows, that there is no
calamity to which we are not liable, and that God himself is unable to
protect us from it. Prayer is useless, and trust in him is absurd. The noble
doctrine of the infliction of misery by a wise and gracious Being for our
correction and improvement, so often dwelt upon in Scripture, could have
no place in a system which admitted this tenet; God could neither be “a refuge in trouble,” nor a Father, “correcting us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” What they knew of God was therefore, by such speculations, rendered entirely unprofitable.

But a worse consequence resulted from this opinion. By some of them the necessary obliquity and perverseness of matter was regarded not only as the source of natural, but also of moral evil; by which they either made sin necessary and irresistible, or found in this opinion much to palliate it.

Others refer moral evil to a natural principle of evil, an evil god, “emulous of the good God,” which Plutarch says, \(^{126}\) is a tradition of great antiquity, derived “from the divines ΕΚ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟΝ and lawgivers to the poets and philosophers, whose first author cannot be found.” But whether natural and moral evil be traced to an eternal and uncontrollable matter, or to an eternal and independent anti-god, it is clear that the notion of a Supreme Deity, as contained in the Scriptures, and as conceived of by modern Theists, who have borrowed their light from them, could have no existence in such systems; and that by making moral evil necessary, men were taught to consider it as a misfortune rather than a crime, and were thus in fact encouraged to commit it by regarding it as unavoidable.

In like manner, though occasionally we find many excellent things said of the providence of God, all these were weakened or destroyed by other opinions. The Epicurean sect denied the doctrine, and laid it down as a maxim,” that what was blessed and immortal gave neither any trouble to itself nor to others;” a notion which exactly agrees with the system of the modern Hindoos. “According to the doctrine of Aristotle, God resides in the celestial sphere, and observes nothing, and cares for nothing beyond himself. Residing in the first sphere, he possesses neither immensity nor omnipresence; far removed from the inferior parts of the universe, he is not even a spectator of what is passing among its inhabitants.” (Enfield’s History of Philosophy, lib. ii, cap. 9.) The Stoics contended for a providence, but in their creed it was counteracted by the doctrine of an absolute necessity, or fate, to which God and matter, or the universe, which consists, as they thought, of both, was immutably subject; and where they allow it, they confine the care of the gods to great affairs only.

The Platonists, and the followers of Pythagoras believed that all things happened κατὰ θείαν ὅρονιαν, according to Divine providence; but
this they overthrew by joining fortune with God. “God, fortune, and opportunity,” says Plato, “govern all the affairs of men.” (De Leg. lib. 4.)

To them also there were “Lords many and gods many:” and wherever Polytheism is admitted, it is as destructive of the doctrine of providence as fate, though by a different process. The fatalist makes all things fixed and certain, and thus excludes government; the Polytheist gives up the government of the world to innumerable opposing and contrary wills, and thus makes every thing uncertain. If the favour of one deity be propitiated, the wrath of another, equally or more powerful, may be provoked; or the gods may quarrel among themselves. Such is the only providence which can be discovered in the Iliad of Homer, and the Æneid of Virgil, poems which unquestionably embody the popular belief of the times in which they were written. The same confused and contradictory management of the affairs of men, we see in all modern idolatrous systems, only that with length of duration they appear to have become more oppressive and distracting. Where so many deities are essentially malignant and cruel to men; where demons are supposed to have power to afflict and to destroy at pleasure; and where aspects of the stars, and the screams of birds, and other ominous circumstances, are thought to have an irresistible influence upon the fortunes of life, and the occurrences of every day; and especially where, to crown the whole, there is an utter ignorance of one supreme controlling infinite mind, or his existence is denied; or he who is capable of exercising such a superintendence as might render him the object of hope, is supposed to be totally unconcerned with human affairs; there can be no ground of firm trust, no settled hope, no permanent consolation. Timidity and gloom tenant every bosom, and in many instances render life a burden.

All other great principle of religion is the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments; and though in some form it is recognized in pagan systems, and the traditions of the primitive ages may be traced in their extravagant perversions and fables; its evidence was either greatly diminished, or it was mixed up with notions entirely subversive of the moral effect which it was originally intended to produce.

Of the ancient Chaldean philosophy, not much is known. In its best state it contained many of the principles of the patriarchal religion; but at length, as we find from Scripture, it degenerated into the doctrine of judicial astrology, which is so nearly allied to fatalism, as to subvert the idea of the
present life being a state of probation, and the future a state of just and
gracious rewards and punishments.

Ancient writers differ as to the opinions of the learned of Egypt on the
human soul. Diodorus Siculus says, they believed its immortality, and the
future existence of the just among the gods. Herodotus ascribes to them
the doctrine of transmigration. Both may be reconciled. The former
document was the most ancient, the latter was induced by that progress of
error which we observe among all nations. Another subtle notion grew up
with it, which infected the philosophy of Greece, and, spreading
throughout Asia, has done more to destroy the moral effect of a belief in
the future existence of man, than any other. This was, “that God is the soul
of the world,” from which all human spirits came, and to which they will
return, some immediately, and others through long courses of
transmigration. The doctrine of ancient revelation, of which this was a
subtle and fatal perversion, is obvious. The Scripture account is, that the
human soul was from God by creation; the refinement of pagan philosophy,
that it is from him by emanation, or separation of essence, and still remains
a separate portion of God, seeking its return to him. With respect to the
future, revelation always taught, that the souls of the just return to God at
death, not to lose their individuality, but to be united to him in holy and
delightful communion: the philosophic perversion was, that the parts so
separated from God, and connected for a time with matter, would be
reunited to the great source by refusion, as a drop of water to the ocean.

Thus philosophy refined upon the doctrine of immortality until it converted
it into annihilation itself, for so it is in the most absolute sense as to distinct
consciousness and personality. The prevalence of this notion under
different modifications is indeed very remarkable.

Bishop Warburton proves that this opinion was held not merely by the
Atheistical and skeptical sects among the Greeks, but by what he calls the
Philosophic Quaternion of dogmatic Theists, the four renowned schools,
the PYTHAGORIC, the PLATONIC, the PERIPATETIC, and the STOIC; and on
this ground argues, that though they taught the doctrine of future rewards
and punishments to the populace, as a means of securing their obedience to
the laws, they themselves did not believe what they propagated; and in this
he was doubtless correct. With future reward and punishment, in the
proper and commonly received sense in all ages, this notion was entirely
incompatible. He observes, “And that the reader may not suspect these
kind of phrases, that the soul is part of God, discerpted from him, of his
nature, which perpetually occur in the writings of the ancients, to be only highly figurate expressions, and not to be measured by the severe standard of metaphysical propriety, he is desired to take notice of one consequence drawn from this principle, and universally held by antiquity, which was this, that the soul was eternal a parte ante, as well as a parte post, which the Latins well express by the word sempiternus. But when the ancients are said to hold the pre and post existence of the soul, and therefore to attribute a proper eternity to it, we must not suppose that they understood it to be eternal in its distinct and peculiar existence; but that it was discerpted from the substance of God in time, and would in time be rejoined and resolved into it again; which they explained by a bottle’s being filled with sea water, that swimming there awhile, on the bottle’s breaking, flowed in again, and mingled with the common mass. They only differed about the time of this reunion and resolution, the greater part holding it to be at death; but the Pythagoreans not till after many transmigrations. The Platonists went between these two opinions, and rejoined pure and unpolluted souls, immediately on death, to the universal Spirit. But those which had contracted much defilement, were sent into a succession of other bodies, to purge and purify them before they returned to their parent substance.”

Some learned men have denied the consequence which Warburton wished to establish from these premises, and consider the resorption of these sages as figurative, and consequently compatible with distinct consciousness and individuality. The researches, however, since that time made into the corresponding philosophy of the Hindoos, bear this acute and learned man out to the full length of his conclusion. “God, as separated from matter, the Hindoos contemplate as a being reposing in his own happiness, destitute of ideas; as infinite placidity; as an unruffled sea of bliss; as being perfectly abstracted and void of consciousness. They therefore deem it the height of perfection to be like this being. The person whose very nature, say they, is absorbed in Divine meditation; whose life is like a sweet sleep, unconscious and undisturbed who does not even desire God, and who is changed into the image of the ever blessed, obtains absorption into Brumhu.” (Ward’s View of the Hindoos, 8vo, vol. ii, p. 177-8.) And that this doctrine of absorption is taken literally, is proved, not merely by the terms in which it is expressed, though these are sufficiently unequivocal; but by its being opposed by some of the followers of Vishnoo, and by a few also of their philosophers. Mr. Ward quotes Jumudugnee, as an exception to the
common opinion: he says, “The idea of losing a distinct existence by absorption, as a drop is lost in the ocean, is abhorrent. It is pleasant to feed on sweetmeats, but no one wishes to be the sweetmeat itself.” So satisfactorily is this point made out against the “wisdom of this world;” — by it the world neither knew God nor man.

Another notion equally extensive and equally destructive of the original doctrines of the immortality of the human soul, and a state of future rewards and punishments, which sprung up in the Egyptian schools, and was from thence transmitted into Greece, India, and throughout all Asia, was that of a periodical destruction and renovation of all things. “They conceived,” says Diodorus Siculus, “that the universe undergoes a periodical conflagration, after which all things were to be restored to their primitive form, to pass again through a similar succession of changes.” The primitive tenet, of which this was a corruption, is also evident; and it affords another singular instance of the subtlety and mischief of that spirit of error which operated with so much activity in early times, that the doctrine of the destruction of the world, and the consequent termination of the probationary state of the human race preparatory to the general judgment, an awful and most salutary revelation, should have been so wrought into philosophic theory, and so surrounded with poetic embellishment, as to engage the intellect, and to attract the imagination, only the more effectually to destroy the great moral of a doctrine which was not denied, and covertly to induce an entire unbelief in the eternal future existence of man.

As the Stoics held that all inferior divinities and human souls were portions separated from the soul of the world, and would return into the first celestial fire, so they supposed, that at the same time the whole visible world would be consumed in one general conflagration. “Then,” says Seneca, “after an interval the world will be entirely renewed, every animal will be reproduced, and a race of men free from guilt will repopulate the earth. Degeneracy and corruption are however to creep in again, and the same process is to go on for ever.” (Ep. 9.) This too is the Brahminical notion: “The Hindoos are taught to believe that at the end of every Calpa (creation or formation) all things are absorbed in the Deity, and at a stated time the creative power will again be called into action.” (Moore’s Hindoo Pantheon.) And though the system of the Budhists denies a Creator, it holds the same species of evolution. “They are of opinion that the universe is eternal, at least they neither know it had a beginning, or will have an end;
that it is homogeneous, and composed of an infinite number of similar worlds, each of which is a likeness of the other, and each of which is in a constant state of alteration, — not stationary for a moment, — at the instant of greatest perfection beginning to decline, and at the moment of greatest chaotic ruin beginning to regenerate. They compare such changes to a wheel in motion perpetually going round.” (Dr. Davey’s Account of Ceylon.)

But other instances of darkness and error among even civilized heathens respecting the human soul, and a future state are not wanting; for it is a fact which ought never to be lost sight of in these inquiries, that among pagans, opinions on these subjects have never been either certain or rational; and that error once received has in no instance been exchanged for truth; but has gone on multiplying itself, and assuming an infinite variety of forms.

The doctrine of Aristotle and the Peripatetics gives no countenance to the opinion of the soul’s immortality, or even of its existence after death. Democritus and his followers taught, that the soul is material and mortal; Heraclitus, that when the soul is purified from moist vapours, it returns into the soul of the universe; if not, it perishes: Epicurus and his followers, that “when death is, we are not.” The leading men among the Romans, when philosophy was introduced among them, followed the various Greek sects. We have seen the uncertainty of Cicero. Pliny declares, that “non magis a morte sensus ullus aut animæ aut corpori quam ante natalem, the soul and body have no more sense after death, than before we were born.” (Nat. Hist. lib 7, cap. 55.) Cæsar, “that beyond death there is neque curæ neque gaudio locum, neither place for care or joy.” (Sallust. De Bello Catil. sec. 5.) Seneca in his 102d epistle speaks of a Divine part within us, which joins us to the gods; and tells Lucilius, “that the day which he fears as his last eterni natalis est, is the birth-day of eternity;” but then he says, “he was willing to hope it might be so, on the account of some great men. rem gratissimam promittentium magis quam probantium, who promised what they could not prove;” and on other occasions he speaks out plainly, and says that death makes us incapable of good or evil. The poets, it is true, spoke of a future state of rewards and punishments; they had the joys of Elysium and the tortures of Tartarus; but both philosophers and poets regarded them as vulgar fables. Virgil does not hide this, and numerous quotations of the same import might be given both from him and others of their poets.
“Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas;  
Atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum  
Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari!”
— Georg. 2, 50. 490, &c.

Happy the man, whose vigorous soul can pierce  
Through the formation of this universe,  
Who nobly dares despise, with soul sedate,  
The din of Acheron, and vulgar fears and fate.
— WARTON.

Nor was the skepticism and unbelief of the wise and great long kept from the vulgar, among whom they wished to maintain the old superstitions as instruments by which they might be controlled. Cicero complains, that the common people in his day mostly followed the doctrine of Epicurus.

Since then these erroneous and mischievous views concerning God, providence, and a future state, or the total denial of all of them, are found to have resulted from the rejection or loss of the primitive traditions; and farther as it is clear that such errors are totally subversive of the fundamental principles of morals and religion, and afford inducement to the commission of every species of crime without remorse, or fear of punishment; the necessity of a republication of these great doctrines in an explicit and authentic manner, and of institutions for teaching and enforcing them upon all ranks of men, is evident; and whatever proof may be adduced for the authentication of the Christian revelation, it can never be pretended, that a revelation to restore these great principles was not called for by the actual condition of man; and, in proportion to the necessity of the case, is the strength of the presumption that one has been mercifully afforded.
CHAPTER 7. — THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION: — STATE OF MORALS AMONG THE HEATHEN.

If the necessity of a revelation may be argued from the confused, contradictory, and false notions of heathen nations as to the principal doctrines of religion; no less forcibly may the argument be pursued from the state of their morals both in knowledge and in practice.

This argument is simple and obvious. If the nature, extent, and obligation of moral rules had become involved in great misapprehension and obscurity; if what they knew of right and wrong wanted an enforcement and an authority which it could not receive from their respective systems; and if, for want of efficient, counteracting religious principles, the general practice had become irretrievably vicious; a direct interposition of the Divine Being was required for the republication of moral rules and for their stronger enforcement.

The notions of all civilized heathens on moral subjects, like their knowledge of the first principles of religion, mingled as they were with their superstitions, prove that both were derived from a common source. There was a substantial agreement among them in many questions of right and wrong; but the boundaries which they themselves acknowledged were not kept up, and the rule was gradually lowered to the practice, though not in all cases so as entirely to efface the original communication.

This is an important consideration, inasmuch as it indicates the transmission of both religion and morals from the patriarchal system, and that both the primitive doctrines and their corresponding morals received early sanctions, the force of which was felt through succeeding ages. It shows too, that even the heathen have always been under a moral government. The laws of God have never been quite obliterated, though their practice has ever been below their knowledge, and though the law itself was greatly and wilfully corrupted through the influence of their vicious inclinations.

This subject may perhaps be best illustrated by adverting to some of the precepts of the Second Table, which embodied the morals of the patriarchal ages, under a new sanction. Of the obligation of these, all
heathen nations have been sensible; and yet, in all, the rule was perverted in theory and violated in practice.

**MURDER** has, in all ages and among all civilized and most savage heathen nations also, been regarded as an atrocious crime; and yet the rule was so far accommodated to the violent and ferocious habits of men, as to fill every heathen land with blood guiltiness. The slight regard paid to the life of man, in all heathen countries, cannot have escaped the notice of reflecting minds. They knew the **rule**; but the act, under its grosser and more deliberate forms only, was thought to violate it. Among the Romans, men were murdered in their very pastimes, by being made to fight with wild beasts and with each other and though this was sometimes condemned, as a “**spectaculum crudele et inhumanum**,” yet the passion for blood increased, and no war ever caused so great a slaughter as did the gladiatorial combats. They were at first confined to the funerals of great persons. The first show of this kind exhibited in Rome by the Bruti, on the death of their father, consisted of three couples, but afterward the number greatly increased. Julius Cæsar presented 300 pairs of gladiators; and the Emperor Trajan, 10,000 of them, for the **entertainment** of the people. — Sometimes these horrid exhibitions, in which, as Seneca says, “Homo, sacra res, homo jam per lusum et jocum occiditur,” when the practice had attained its height, deprived Europe of 20,000 lives in one month.  

This is farther illustrated by the treatment of slaves, which composed so large a portion of the population of ancient states. They knew and acknowledged the evil of murder, and had laws for its punishment; but to this despised class of human beings they did not extend the rule; nor was killing them accounted murder, any more than the killing of a beast. The master had absolute power of life, or death, or torture, and their lives were therefore sacrificed in the most wanton manner.

By various sophistries, suggested by their vices, their selfishness, and their cruelty, the destruction of children also, under certain circumstances, ceased to be regarded as a crime. In many heathen nations it was allowed to destroy the foetus in the womb; to strangle, or drown, or expose infants, especially if sickly or deformed, and that which in Christian states, is considered as the most atrocious of crimes, was, by the most celebrated of ancient pagan nations, esteemed a wise and political expedient to rid the state of useless or troublesome members, and was even enjoined by some of their most celebrated sages and legislators. The same practice continues
to this day in a most affecting extent, not only among uncivilized pagans, but among the Hindoos and the Chinese.

This practice of perverting and narrowing the extent of the holy law of God, which had been transmitted to them, was exemplified also in the allowing, or rather commending the practice of suicide.

Doubtless, the primitive law against murder condemned also HATRED and REVENGE. Our Lord restored it to its true meaning among the Jews; and that it was so understood even among the ancient heathens, is clear from a placable and forgiving spirit being sometimes praised, and the contrary censured by their sages, moralists, and poets. Yet not only was the rule violated almost universally in practice; but it was also disputed and denied in many of its applications by the authority of their wise and learned men; so that, as far as the authority of moral teachers went, a full scope was given for the indulgence of hatred, malice, and insatiate revenge. One of the qualities of the good man described by Cicero is, that he hurts no one, except he be injured himself. “Qui nemini nocet, nisi lasssitius injuria;” and he declares as to himself, “sic ulciscar facinora singula quemadmodum a quibusque sum provocatus: I will revenge all injuries, according as I am provoked by any;” and Aristotle speaks of meekness as a defect, because the meek man will not avenge himself, and of revenge, as “ανθρωπικοτερον μαλλον, a more manly thing.” (Moral. 50. 4, c. 11.)

“Thou shalt not commit ADULTERY,” was another great branch of the patriarchal law, existing before the Decalogue, as appears from the sacred history. It forbids uncleanness of every kind, in thought and deed, and specially guards the sanctity of marriage: nor is there any precept more essential to public morals, and to the whole train of personal, social, domestic, and national virtues.

It is not necessary to bring detailed proof of the almost universal gross, and habitual violation of this sacred law in all pagan nations, both ancient and modern, from its first stages down to crimes ὀμορα φυσιν. This is sufficiently notorious to all acquainted with the history of the ancient and modern pagan world; and will not be denied by any. It is only requisite to show that they had the law, and that it was weakened and corrupted, so as to render a republication necessary.

The public laws against adultery in almost all heathen states, and the censures of moralists and satirists, are sufficiently in proof that such a law
was known; and the higher the antiquity of the times, the more respect we see paid to chastity, and the better was the practice. Nor was the act only considered by some of their moralists as sinful; but the thought and desire, as may be observed in passages both in Greek and Roman writers. But as to this vice, too, as well as others, the practice lowered the rule; and the authority of one lawgiver and moralist being neutralized by another, license was given to unbounded offence.

Divorce, formerly permitted only in cases of adultery, became at length a mere matter of caprice, and that both with Jews and Gentiles: and among the latter, adultery was chiefly interpreted as the violation of the marriage covenant by the wife only, or by the man with a married woman, thus leaving the husband a large license of vicious indulgence. To whoredom and similar vices, lawgivers, statesmen, philosophers, and moralists gave the sanction of their opinions and their practice; which foul blot of ancient heathenism continues to this day, to mark the morals of pagan countries. In most civilized states the very existence of society, and the natural selfishness of man, led to the preservation of the ancient laws against THEFT and RAPINE, and to the due execution of the statutes made against them; but in this also we see the same disposition to corrupt the original prohibition. It was not extended to strangers or to foreign countries; nor was it generally interpreted to reach to any thing more than flagrant acts of violence. Usury, extortion, and fraud were rather regarded as laudatory acts, than as injurious to character; and so they continue to be esteemed wherever Christianity has not issued her authoritative laws against injustice in all its degrees. Throughout India, there is said to be scarcely such a thing as common honesty.

Another great branch of morality is TRUTH; but on the obvious obligation to speak it, we find the same laxity both of opinion and practice; and in this, heathenism presents a striking contrast to Christianity, which commands us “to speak the truth one to another,” and denounces damnation against him that “loves or makes a lie.”

They knew that “tollendum est ex rebus contrahendis omne mendacium, (Cic. de Off. 50. iii, n. 81,) no lie was to be used in contracts;” and that an honest man should do and speak nothing in falsehood and with hypocrisy; but they more frequently departed from this rule than enjoined it. The rule of Menander was, “a lie is better than a hurtful truth.” Plato says, “he may lie who knows how to do it in a fit season;” and Maximus Tyrius, “that
there is nothing decorous in truth, but when it is profitable;” and both Plato and the Stoics frame a jesuitical distinction between lying \textit{with the lips} and \textit{in the mind}. Deceit and falsehood have been therefore the character of all pagan nations, and continue so to be to this day. This is the character of the Chinese, as given by the best authorities; and of the Hindoos it is stated by the most respectable Europeans, not merely missionaries, but by those who have long held official, civil, and judicial situations among them, that their disregard of truth is uniform and systematic. When discovered, it causes no surprise in the one party, or humiliation in the other. Even when they have truth to tell, they seldom fail to bolster it up with some appended falsehoods. \textsuperscript{134}

Nor can the force of the argument in favour of the necessity of a direct revelation of the will of God by these facts be weakened by alleging, what is unhappily too true, that where the Christian revelation has been known, great violations of all these rules have been commonly observed; for, not to urge the moral superiority of the worst of Christian states, in all of them the authority and sanction of religion is directed against vice; while among heathens, their religion itself, having been corrupted by the wickedness of man, has become the great instrument of encouraging every species of wickedness. This circumstance so fully demonstrates the necessity of an interposition on the part of God to restore truth to the world, that it deserves a particular consideration.

That the religions which have prevailed among pagan nations have been destructive of morality, cannot be denied.

How far the speculative principles which they embodied had this effect, has already been shown; we proceed to their more direct influence.

The gloomy superstition, which pervaded most of them, fostered ferocious and cruel dispositions.

The horrible practice of offering human sacrifices prevailed throughout every region of the heathen world, to a degree which is almost incredible; and it still prevails in many populous countries where Christianity has not yet been made known. There are incontestable proofs of its having subsisted among the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Persians, the Phenicians, and all the various nations of the east. It was one of the crying sins of the Canaanites. The contagion spread over every part of Asia, Africa, and Europe. The Greeks and Romans, though less involved in this guilt than many other nations, were not altogether untainted with it. On great and extraordinary occasions, they had recourse to what was esteemed the most efficacious and most meritorious sacrifice that could be offered to the gods, the effusion of human blood. But among more barbarous nations, this practice took a firmer root. The Scythians and Thracians, the Gauls and the Germans, were strongly addicted to it; and our own island, under the gloomy and ferocious despotism of the Druids, was polluted with the religious murder of its inhabitants. In the semi-civilized kingdoms on the western side of Africa, as Dahomy, Ashantee, and others, many thousands fall every year victims to superstition. In America, Montezuma offered 20,000 victims yearly to the sun; and modern navigators have found the practice throughout the whole extent of the vast Pacific ocean. As for India, the cries of its abominable and cruel superstitions have been sounded repeatedly in the ears of the British public and its legislature; and including infants and widows, not fewer than 10,000 lives fall a sacrifice to idolatry in our eastern dominions yearly!
The influence of these practices in obdurating the heart, and disposing it to habitual cruelty, need not be pointed out; but the religions of paganism have been as productive of impurity as of blood.

The *Floralia* among the Romans were celebrated for four days together by the most shameless actions; and their *mysteries* in every country, whatever might be their original intent, became horribly corrupt. It was in the temples of many of their deities, and on their religious festivals, that every kind of impurity was most practised; and this continues to the present day throughout all the regions of modern paganism. \(^{37}\)

This immoral tendency of their religion was confirmed and perfected by the very character and actions of their gods, whose names were perpetually in their mouths; and whose murderous or obscene exploits, whose villanies and chicaneries, whose hatreds and strifes, were the subject of their popular legends; which made up in fact the only theology, if so it may be called, of the body of the people. That they could be better than their gods, was not to be expected, and worse they could not be. Deities with such attributes could not but corrupt, and be appealed to, not merely to excuse, but to sanctify the worst practices. \(^{38}\) Let this argument then be summed up.

All the leading doctrines on which religion rests, had either been corrupted by a grovelling and immoral superstition, among heathen nations; or the philosophic speculations of their wisest men had introduced principles destructive of man’s accountability and present and future hope. On morals themselves, the original rules were generally perverted, limited, or rejected; while the religious rites, and the legendary character of the deities worshipped, to the exclusion of the true God, gave direct incitement and encouragement to vice. Thus the grossest ignorance on Divine subjects universally prevailed; the learned were involved in inextricable perplexities; and the unlearned received as truth the most absurd and monstrous fables, all of them, however, favourable to vicious indulgence. The actual state of morals also accorded with the corrupt religious systems, and the lax moral principles which they adopted; so that in every heathen state of ancient times, the description of the Apostle Paul in the first chapter of Romans is supported by the evidence of their own historians and poets. The same may also be affirmed of modern pagan countries, whose moral condition may explain more fully, as they are now so well known through our intercourse with them, the genius and moral tendency of the ancient idolatries, with
which those of India, and other parts of the east especially, so exactly agree.

These are the facts. They affect not a small portion of mankind, but all who have not had the benefits of the doctrines and morals of the Holy Scriptures. There are no exceptions from this of any consequence to, the argument, though some difference in the morals of heathen states may be allowed. Where the Scriptures are unknown, there is not, nor ever has been since the corruption of the primitive religion, a religious system which has contained just views of God and religious truth, the Theists of the present day being judges; — none which has enjoined a correct morality, or even opposed any effectual barrier against the deterioration of public manners. These facts cannot be denied: for the allegations formerly made of the morality of modern pagan nations have been sufficiently refuted by a better acquaintance with them; and the conclusion is irresistible, that an express revelation of the will of God, accompanied with efficient corrective institutions, was become necessary, and is still demanded by the ignorance and vices, the miseries and disorders of every part of the earth into which Christianity has not been introduced.

But we may go another step. This exhibition of the moral condition of those nations who have not had the benefit of the renewal and republication of the truths of the patriarchal religion, not only supports the conclusion that new and direct revelations from God were necessary; but the wants, which that condition so obviously created, will support other presumptions as to the nature and mode of that revelation, in the case of such a gift being bestowed in the exercise of the Divine mercy, for if there is ground to presume that almighty God, in his compassion for his creatures, would not leave them to the unchecked influence of error and vice; nor, upon the corruption of that simple, but comprehensive doctrine, worship and morals, communicated to the progenitors of all those great branches of the family of man which have been spread over the earth, refuse to interpose to renew and to perfect that religious system which existed in an elementary form in the earliest ages, and give to it a form less liable to alteration and decay than when left to be transmitted by tradition alone; there is equal ground to presume, that the revelation, whenever vouchsafed, should be of that nature, and accompanied by such circumstances, as would most effectually accomplish this benevolent purpose.
Presumptions as to the manner in which such a revelation would be made most effectually to accomplish its ends, are indeed to be guarded, lest we should set up ourselves as adequate judges in a case which involves large views and extensive bearings of the Divine government. But without violating this rule, it may, from the obviousness of the case, be presumed, that such a supernatural manifestation of truth should:

1. Contain explicit information on those important subjects on which mankind had most greatly and most fatally erred.

2. That it should accord with the principles of former revelations, given to men in the same state of guilt and moral incapacity as we find them in the present day.

3. That it should have a satisfactory external authentication.

4. That it should contain provisions for its effectual promulgation among all classes of men. All this, allowing the necessity and the probability of a supernatural communication of the will of God, must certainly be expected; and if the Christian revelation bears this character it has certainly these presumptions in its favour, that it meets an obvious case of necessity, and confers the advantages just enumerated.

1. It gives information on those subjects which are most important to man, and which the world had darkened with the greatest errors — the nature and perfections, claims and relations of God — his WILL as the RULE of moral good and evil — the means of obtaining PARDON and of conquering vice — the true MEDIATOR between God and man — Divine PROVIDENCE — the CHIEF GOOD of man, respecting which alone more than three hundred different opinions among the ancient sages have been reckoned up — man’s IMMORTALITY and accountability, and a FUTURE STATE.

2. It is also required that a revelation should accord with the principles of former revelations, should any have been given.

For since it is a first principle that God cannot err himself, nor deceive us, so far as one revelation renews or explains any truth in a preceding one, it must agree with the previous communication; and in what it adds to a preceding revelation, it cannot contradict any thing which it contains, if it be exhibited as a truth of unchangeable character era duty of perpetual obligation.
Now whatever direct proof may be adduced in favour of the Divine authority of the Jewish and Christian revelations, this at least may be confidently urged as evidence in their favour, that they have a substantial agreement and harmony among themselves, and with that ancient traditional system which existed in the earliest ages, and the fragments of which we find scattered among all nations. As to the patriarchal system of religion, to which reference has been so often made, beside the notices of it which are every where scattered in the book of Genesis, we have ample and most satisfactory information in the ancient book of Job, of which sufficient evidence may be given that it was written not later than the time of Moses; and that Job himself lived between the flood of Noah and the call of Abraham. Of the religion of the patriarchs, as it existed just at that period when Sabianism, or the worship of the heavenly luminaries, began to make its appearance, and was restrained by the authority of the “judges,” who were the heads of tribes or families, and as it existed in the preceding ages, as we find from the reference made by Job and his friends to the authority of their “fathers,” this book contains an ample and most satisfactory record; and from this venerable relic a very copious body of doctrinal and practical theology might be collected; but the following particulars will be sufficient for the present argument: —

One Supreme Being alone is recognized throughout, as the object of adoration, worship, hope, trust, and fear; who is represented as of infinite and unsearchable majesty, — eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, and of perfect wisdom, justice, goodness; governing all things, noting and judging individuals, regarding the good, punishing the wicked, placable, listening to the prayers of the penitent. The natural corruption of man’s nature is also stated; and his own inability to cleanse his heart from sin. Man, we are told, cannot be just with God, and therefore needs an intercessor. Sacrifices, as of Divine appointment, and propitiatory in their nature, are also adverted to as commonly practised. Express reference is made to a Divine Redeemer and his future incarnation, as an object of hope. The doctrines of an immortal spirit in man, and of the resurrection of the body, and a future judgment, have all a place in this system. Creation is ascribed to God; and not only the general doctrine of Providence, but that most interesting branch of it, the connection of dispensations of prosperity and affliction with moral ends. Murder, theft, oppression, injustice, adultery, intemperance, are all pointed out as violations of the laws of God; and also wrath, envy, and other evil passions. Purity of heart, kindness,
compassion to the poor, &c, are spoken of as virtues of the highest obligation: and the fear and love of God are enjoined, with a calm and cheerful submission to his will, in humble trust that the darkness of present events will be ultimately cleared up, and shown to be consistent with the wisdom, justice, holiness, and truth of God. The same points of doctrine and morals may also be collected from the book of Genesis.

Such was the comprehensive system of patriarchal theology; and it is not necessary to stop to point out, that these great principles are all recognized and taken up in the successive revelations by Moses and by Christ, — exhibiting three religious systems, varying greatly in circumstances; introduced at widely distant periods, and by agents greatly differing in their condition and circumstances; but exactly harmonizing in every leading doctrinal tenet, and agreeing in their great moral impression upon mankind — PERFECT PURITY OF HEART AND CONDUCT.  

3. That it should be accompanied with an explicit and impressive external authentication, of such a nature as to make its truth obvious to the mass of mankind, and to leave no reasonable doubt of its Divine authority.

The reason of this is evident. A mere impression of truth on the understanding could not by itself be distinguished from a discovery made by the human intellect, and could have no authority, as a declaration of the will of a superior, with the person receiving it; and as to others, it could only pass for the opinion of the individual who might promulge it. (Vide chap. 3.) An authentication of a system of truth, which professes to be the will, the law, of him who having made, has the right to command us, external to the matter of the doctrine itself, is therefore necessary to give it authority, and to create the obligation of obedience. This accords with the opinion of all nations up to the earliest ages, and was so deeply wrought in the common sense of mankind, that all the heathen legislators of antiquity affected a Divine commission, and all false religions have leaned for support upon pretended supernatural sanctions. The proofs of this are so numerous and well known, that It is unnecessary to adduce them.

The authority of the ancient patriarchal religion rested on proof external to itself. We do not now examine the truth of its alleged authentications, — they were admitted; and the force of the revelation depended upon them in the judgment of mankind. We have a most ancient book, which records the opinions of the ante-Mosaic ages. The theology of those ages has been stated; and from the history contained in that book we learn, that the
received opinion was, that the almighty Lawgiver himself conversed with our first parents and with the patriarchs, under celestial appearances; and that his mercies to men, or his judgments, failed not to follow ordinarily the observance or violation of the laws thus delivered, which was in fact an authentication of them renewed from time to time. The course of nature, displaying the eternal power and Godhead, as well as the visitations of Providence, was to them a constant confirmation of several of the leading truths in the theology they had received; and by the deep impress of Divinity which this system received in the earliest ages from the attestations of singular judgments, and especially the flood, it is only rationally to be accounted for, that it was universally transmitted, and waged so long a war against religious corruptions.

But notwithstanding the authentication of the primitive religion, as a matter of Divine revelation, and the effects produced by it in the world for many ages, and indeed still produced by it in its very broken and corrupted state, in condemning many sinful actions, so as to render the crimes of heathens without excuse; that system was traditional, and liable to be altered by transmission. In proportion also as historical events were confounded by the lapse of time, and as the migrations and political convulsions of nations gave rise to fabulous stories, the external authenticating evidence became weak, and thus a merciful interposition on the part of God was, as we have seen, rendered necessary by the general ignorance of mankind. Indeed the primitive revelations supposed future ones, and were not in themselves regarded as complete. But if a republication only of the truth had been necessary, the old external evidence was so greatly weakened by the lapse of ages, which as to most nations had broken the line of historical testimony on which it so greatly rested, that it required a new authentication, in a form adapted to the circumstances of the world; and if an enlarged revelation were vouchsafed, every addition to the declared will of God needed an authentication of the same kind as at first.

If we presume, therefore, that a new revelation was necessary, we must presume, that, when given, it would have an external authentication as coming from God, from which there could be no reasonable appeal; and we therefore conclude, that as the Mosaic and Christian revelations profess both to republish and to enlarge former revelations, the circumstance of their resting their claims on the external evidence of miracles and prophecy, is a presumption in their favour. Whether the evidence which they offer be
decisive or not, is a future question; but in exhibiting such evidence, they accord with the reason of the thing, and with the common sense of all ages.

4. It is farther presumed, that, should a revelation of religious truth and the will of God be made, it would provide means for its effectual communication to all classes of men.

As the revelation supposed must be designed to restore and enlarge the communications of truth, and as, from the increase and dispersion of the human race, tradition had become an imperfect medium of conveying it, it is a fair presumption, that the persons through whom the communication was made should record it in writing. A revelation to every individual could not maintain the force of its original authentication; because as its attestation must be of a supernatural kind, its constant recurrence would divest it of that character, or weaken its force by bringing it among common and ordinary events. A revelation on the contrary to few, properly and publicly attested by supernatural occurrences, needed not repetition; but the most natural and effectual mode of preserving the communication, once made, would be to transmit it by writing. Any corruption of the record would be rendered impracticable by its being publicly taught in the first instance; by a standard copy being preserved with care; or by such a number of copies being dispersed as to defy material alteration. This presumption is realized also in the Jewish and Christian revelations; as will be seen when the subject of the authority of the Holy Scriptures comes to be discussed. They were first publicly taught, then committed to writing, and the copies were multiplied.

Another method of preserving and diffusing the knowledge of a revelation once made, would be, the institution of public commemorative rites, at once preserving the memory of the fact, and of the doctrine connected with it, among great bodies of people, and leading them to such periodical inquiries as might preserve both with the greatest accuracy. These also we find in the institutions of Moses, and of Christ; and their weight in the argument for the truth of the mission of each, will be adduced in its proper place.

Allowing it to be reasonable to presume, that a revelation would be vouchsafed; it is equally so to presume, that it should contain some injunctions favourable to its propagation among men of all ranks. For as the compassion of God to the moral necessities of his creatures, generally, is the ground on which so great a favour rests, we cannot suppose that one
class of men should be allowed to make a monopoly of this advantage; and this would be a great temptation to them to publish their own favourite or interested opinions under a pretended Divine sanction, and tend to counteract the very purpose for which a revelation was given. Such a monopoly was claimed by the priests of ancient pagan nations; and that fatal effect followed. It was claimed for a time by a branch of the Christian priesthood, contrary to the obligations of the institution itself; and the consequences were similar. Among the heathens, the effect of this species of monopoly was, that those who encouraged superstition and ignorance among the people, speedily themselves lost the truth, which, through a wicked policy, they concealed; and the case might have been the same in Christendom, but for the sacred records, and for those witnesses to the truth who prophesied and suffered, more or less, throughout the darkest ages.  f40

This reasonable expectation also is realized in the Mosaic and Christian revelations; — both provided for their general publication — both instituted an order of men, not to conceal, but to read and teach the truth committed to them — both recognized a right in the people to search the record, and by it to judge of the ministration of the priests — both made it obligatory on the people to be taught — and both separated one day in seven to afford leisure for that purpose.

Nothing but such a revelation, and with such accompanying circumstances, appears capable of reaching the actual case of mankind, and of effectually instructing and bringing them under moral control;  f41 and, whether the Bible can be proved to be of Divine authority or not, this at least must be granted, that it presents itself to us under these circumstances, and claims, for this very reason, the most serious and unprejudiced attention.

NOTE A.

DIFFERENT opinions have been held as to the ground of moral obligation. Grotius, Balguy, and Dr. S. Clarke, place it in the eternal and necessary fitness of things. To this there are two objections. The First is, that it leaves the distinction between virtue and vice, in a great measure, arbitrary and indefinite, dependent upon our perception of fitness and unfitness, which, in different individuals, will greatly differ. The Second is, that when a fitness or unfitness is proved, it is no more than the discovery of a natural essential difference or congruity, which alone cannot constitute a moral
obligation to choose what is fit, and to reject what is unfit. When we have
proved a fitness in a certain course of action, we have not proved that it is
obligatory. A second step is necessary before we can reach this conclusion.
Cudworth, Butler, Price, and others, maintain, that virtue carries its own
obligation in itself; that the understanding at once perceives a certain
action to be right, and therefore it ought to be performed. Several
objections lie to this notion.

1. It supposes the understandings of men to determine precisely in the same
manner concerning all virtuous and vicious actions, which is contrary to
fact.

2. It supposes a previous rule, by which the action is determined to be
right; but if the revealed will of God is not to be taken into consideration,
what common rule exists among men? There is evidently no such rule, and
therefore no means of certainly determining what is right.

3. If a common standard were known among men, and if the
understandings of men determined in the same manner as to the
conformity, or otherwise, of an action to that standard; what renders it a
matter of obligation that any one should perform it? The rule must be
proved to be binding, or no ground of obligation is established.

An action is obligatory, say others, because it is agreeable to the moral
sense. This is the theory of Lord Shaftesbury and Dr. Hutchinson. By
moral sense appears to be meant an instinctive approbation of right, and
abhorrence of wrong, prior to all reflection on their nature, or their
consequences. If any thing else were understood by it, then the moral,
sense must be the same with conscience, which we know to vary with the
judgment, and cannot therefore be the basis of moral obligation. If
conscience be not meant, then the moral sense must be considered as
instinctive, a notion, certainly, which is disproved by the whole moral
history of man. It may, indeed, be conceded, that such is the constitution of
the human soul, that when those distinctions between actions, which have
been taught by religious tradition or direct revelation, are known in their
nature, relations, and consequences, the calm and sober judgments of men
will approve of them; and that especially when they are considered
abstractedly, that is, as not affecting and controlling their own interests and
passions immediately, virtue may command complacency, and vice
provoke abhorrence; but that, independent of reflection on their nature or
their consequences, there is an instinctive principle in man which abhors
evil, and loves good, is contradicted by that variety of opinion and feeling on the vices and virtues, which obtains among all uninstructed nations. We applaud the forgiveness of an injury as magnanimous; a savage despises it as mean. We think it a duty to support and cherish aged parents; many nations, on the contrary, abandon them as useless, and throw them to the beasts of the field. Innumerable instances of this contrariety might be adduced, which are all contrary to the notion of instinctive sentiment. Instincts operate uniformly, but this assumed moral sense does not. Beside, if it be mere matter of feeling, independent of judgment, to love virtue, and abhor vice, the **morality** of the exercise of this principle is questionable; for it would be difficult to show, that there is any more morality, properly speaking, in the affections and disgusts of instinct than in those of the palate. If judgment, the knowledge and comparison of things, be included, then this principle supposes a uniform and universal individual revelation, as to the nature of things, to every man, or an intuitive faculty of determining their moral quality; both of which are too absurd to be maintained.

The only satisfactory conclusion on this subject, is that which refers moral obligation to the **will of God**. “Obligation,” says Warburton, “necessarily implies an obliger, and theobliger must be different from, and not one and the same with, the obliged. Moral obligation, that is, the obligation of a free agent, farther implies a law, which enjoins and forbids; but a law is the imposition of an intelligent superior, who hath power to exact conformity thereto.” This lawgiver is God: and whatever may be the reasons which have led him to enjoin this, and to prohibit that, it is plain that the obligation to obey lies not merely in the fitness and propriety of a creature obeying an infinitely wise and good Creator, though such a fitness exists; but in that obedience being enjoined.

Some, allowing this, would push the matter farther, in search of a more remote ground of obligation. They put the question, “Why am I obliged to obey the will of God?” and give us the answer, “Because obedience to the commands of a benevolent God must be productive of the agent’s happiness on the whole.” But this is putting out to sea again; for,

1. It cannot be proved that the consideration of our own happiness is a ground of moral obligation at all, except in some such vague sense as we use the term obligation when we say, “We are obliged to take exercise, if we would preserve our health.”
2. We should be in danger of setting up a standard, by which to judge of the propriety of obeying God, when, indeed, we are but inadequate judges of what is for our happiness, on the whole: or,

3. It would make moral obligation to rest upon our faith, that God can will only our happiness, which is a singular principle on which to build our obedience.

On the contrary, the simple principle that moral obligation rests upon the will of God, by whatever means that will may be known, is unclogged with any of these difficulties. For,

1. It is founded on a clear principle of justice. He who made has an absolute property in us, and may therefore command us; and having actually commanded us, we cannot set up any claim of exemption — we are his.

2. He has connected reward with obedience, and punishment with disobedience, and therefore made it necessary for us to obey, if we would secure our own happiness. Thus we are obliged, both by the force of the abstract principle, and by the motive resulting from a sanctioned command; or, in the language of the schools, we are obliged in reason, and obliged in interest, but each obligation evidently emanates from the will of God. Other considerations, such as the excellence and beauty of virtue, its tendency to individual happiness and universal order, &c, may smooth the path of obedience, and render “his commandments joyous;” but the obligation, strictly speaking, can only rest in the will of the superior and commanding power.

NOTE B

THOUGH some will allow the ignorance of former times, they think that the improved reason of man is now more adequate to the discovery of moral truth.

“They contend, that the world was then in the infancy of knowledge; and argue, as if the illustrious sages of old. (whom they nevertheless sometimes extol, in terms of extravagant panegyric,) were very babes in philosophy, such as the wise ones of later ages regard with a sort of contemptuous commiseration.
“But, may we not be permitted to ask, whence this assumed superiority of modern over ancient philosophers has arisen? and whence the extraordinary influx of light upon these latter times has been derived? Is there any one so infatuated by his admiration of the present age, as seriously to think, that the intellectual powers of man are stronger and more perfect now than they were wont to be, or that the particular talents of himself, or any of his contemporaries, are superior to those which shone forth in the luminaries of the Gentile world? Do the names even of Locke, Cudworth, Cumberland, Clarke, Wilkins, or Wollaston, (men so justly eminent in modern times, and who laboured so indefatigably to perfect the theory of natural religion,) convey to us an idea of greater intellectual ability than those of the consummate masters of the Portico, the Grove, or the Lyceum? How is it, then, that the advocates for the natural perfection, or perfectibility, of human reason, do not perceive, that for all the superiority of the present over former times, with respect to religious knowledge, we must be indebted to some intervenning cause, and not to any actual enlargement of the human faculties? Is it to be believed, that any man of the present age, of whatever natural talents he may be possessed, could have advanced one step beyond the heathen philosophers in his pursuit of Divine truth, had he lived in their times, and enjoyed only the light that was bestowed upon them? Or can it be fairly proved, that, merely by the light of nature, or by reasoning upon such data only as men possess who never heard of revealed religion, any moral or religious truth has been discovered since the days when Athens and Rome affected to give laws to the intellectual, as well as to the political world? That great improvements have since been made, in framing systems of ethics, of metaphysics, and of what is called natural theology, need not be denied. But these improvements may easily be traced to one obvious cause, the widely diffused light of the Gospel, which, having shone, with more or less lustre, on all nations, has imparted, even to the most simple and illiterate of the sons of men, such a degree of knowledge on these subjects, as, without it, would be unattainable by the most learned and profound.” (VAN MILDERT’S Boyle’s Lect.)
CHAPTER 9. — THE EVIDENCES NECESSARY TO AUTHENTICATE A REVELATION. — EXTERNAL EVIDENCE.

The evidence usually offered in proof of the Divine authority of the Scriptures, may be divided into external, internal, and collateral. The external evidence consists of miracles and prophecy, the internal evidence is drawn from the consideration of the doctrines taught, as being consistent with the character of God, and tending to promote the virtue and happiness of man; and the collateral evidence arises from a variety of circumstances, which, less directly than the former, prove the revelation to be of Divine authority, but are yet supposed to be of great weight in the argument. On each of these kinds of evidence we shall offer some general remarks, tending to prepare the way for a demonstration of the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures.

The principal and most appropriate evidences of a revelation from God, must be external to the revelation itself. This has been before stated; but it may require a larger consideration.

A Divine revelation has been well defined to be “a discovery of some proposition to the mind, which came not in by the usual exercise of its faculties, but by some miraculous Divine interposition and attestation, either mediate or immediate.” (DODDRIDGE’S Lectures, part 5, definition 68.) It is not thought necessary to attempt to prove such a revelation possible; for, as our argument is supposed to be with a person who acknowledges, not only that there is a God, but that he is the Creator of men; it would be absurd in such a one to deny, that he who gave us minds capable of knowledge is not able, instantly and immediately, to convey knowledge to us; and that he who has given us the power of communicating ideas to each other, should have no means of communicating with us immediately from himself.

We need not inquire whether external evidence of a revelation is in all cases requisite to him who immediately and at first receives it; for the question is not, whether private revelations have ever been made by God to individuals, and what evidence is required to authenticate them; but what is the kind of evidence which we ought to require of one who professes to
have received a revelation of the will of God, with a command to communicate it to us, and to enjoin it upon our acceptance and submission, as the rule of our opinions and manners.

He may believe that a divine communication has been made to himself; but his belief has no authority to command ours. He may have actually received it; but we have not the means of knowing it without proof.

That proof is not the high and excellent nature of the truths he teaches: in other words, that which is called the internal evidence cannot be that proof. For we cannot tell whether the doctrines he teaches, though they should be capable of a higher degree of rational demonstration than any delivered to the world before, may not be the fruits of his own mental labour. He may be conscious that they are not; but we have no means of knowing that of which he is conscious, except by his own testimony. To us therefore they would have no authority but as the opinions of a man, whose intellectual attainments we might admire, but to whom we could not submit as to an infallible guide; and the less so, if any part of the doctrine taught by him were either mysterious and above our reason, or contrary to our interests, prejudices, and passions.

If therefore any person should profess to have received a revelation of truth from God to teach to mankind, and that he was directed to command their obedience to it on pain of the Divine displeasure, he would be asked for some external authentication of his mission; nor would the reasonableness and excellence of his doctrines be accepted in place of this. The latter might entitle him to attention; but nothing short of the former would be thought a ground sufficiently strong for yielding to him an absolute obedience. Without it he might reason, and be heard with respect; but he could not command. On this very reasonable ground, the Jews, on one occasion, asked our Lord, “By what authority doest thou these things?” and on another, “What sign shewest thou unto us?”

Agreeably to this, the authors both of the Jewish and the Christian revelations profess to have authenticated their mission by the two great external proofs, MIRACLES and PROPHECY; and it remains to be considered whether this kind of authentication be reasonably sufficient to command our faith and obedience.

The question is not, Whether we may not conceive of external proofs of the mission of Moses, and of Christ and his apostles, differing from those
which are assumed to have been given, and more convincing. In whatever way the authentication had been made, we might have conceived of modes of proof differing in kind or more ample in circumstance; so that to ground an objection upon the absence of a particular kind of proof for which we have a preference, would be trifling. But this is the question, Is a mission to teach the will of God to man, under his immediate authority, sufficiently authenticated when miracles are really performed, and prophecies actually and unequivocally accomplished? To this point only the inquiry need now go; for whether real miracles were performed by Moses and Christ, and whether prophecies were actually uttered by them, and received unequivocal accomplishment, will be reserved for a farther stage of the inquiry.

There is a popular a philosophic, and a theological sense of the term miracle.

A miracle, in the popular sense, is a prodigy, or an extraordinary event, which surprises us by its novelty. In a more accurate and philosophic sense, a miracle is an effect which does not follow from any of the regular laws of nature, or which is inconsistent with some known law of it, or contrary to the settled constitution and course of things. Accordingly, all miracles presuppose an established system of nature, within the limits of which they operate, and with the order of which they disagree.

Of a miracle in the theological sense, many definitions have been given. That of Dr. Samuel Clarke is, — “A miracle is a work effected in a manner unusual, or different from the common and regular method of providence, by the interposition of God himself, or of some intelligent agent superior to man, for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the authority of some particular person.”

Mr. Horne defines a miracle to be “an effect or event contrary to the established constitution or course of things, or a sensible suspension or controlment of, or deviation from, the known laws of nature, wrought either by the immediate act, or by the assistance, or by the permission of God.” (Introduction to the Critical Study of the Scriptures, vol. 1, c. 4, sec. 2.) This definition would be more complete in the theological sense, if the last clause in Dr. S. Clarke’s definition were added to it, “for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the authority of some particular person.” With this addition the definition will be
sufficiently satisfactory, as it explains the nature of the phenomenon, and gives the reason or end of its occurrence.

Farmer, in his “Dissertation on Miracles,” denies to any created intelligences, however high, the power of working miracles, when acting from themselves alone. This dispute is only to be settled by a strict definition of terms; but whatever power may be allowed to superior beings to produce miraculous effects, or effects apparently so, by the control they may be supposed to exert over natural objects; yet, as they are all under the government of God, they have certainly no power to interfere with his work, and the order of his providence, at pleasure. Whatever they do, therefore, whether by virtue of natural power, or power specially communicated, they must do it by commission, or at least by license.

The miracles under consideration are such effects as agree with the definition just given, and which are wrought either immediately by God himself, to attest the Divine mission of particular persons, and to authenticate their doctrines; or by superior beings commissioned by him for the same purpose; or by the persons themselves who profess this Divine authority, in order to prove that they have been invested with it by God.

The possibility of miracles wrought by the power of God, can be denied by none but Atheists, or those whose system is substantially Atheistic. Spinosa denies that any power can supersede that of nature; or that any thing can disturb or interrupt the order of things: and accordingly he defines a miracle to be “a rare event happening in consequence of some laws that are unknown to us.” This is a definition of a prodigy, not of a miracle; but if miracles in the proper sense be allowed, that is, if the facts themselves which have been commonly called miraculous be not disputed, this method of accounting for them is obviously most absurd; inasmuch as it is supposed that these unknown laws chanced to come into operation, just when men professing to be endued with miraculous powers wished them, while yet such laws were to them unknown. For instance, when Moses contended with the Egyptian magicians, though these laws were unknown to him, he ventured to depend upon their operation, and by chance they served his purpose.

To one who believes in a Supreme Creator of all things, and the dependence of all things upon his power and will, miraculous interpositions must be allowed possible, nor is there any thing in them repugnant to our ideas of his wisdom and immutability, and the perfection of his works.
They are departures from the ordinary course of God’s operation; but this
does not arise from any natural necessity, to remedy an unforeseen evil, or
to repair imperfections in his work; the reasons for them are moral and not
natural reasons, and the ends they are intended to accomplish are moral
ends. They remind us, when they occur, that there is a power superior to
nature, and that all nature, even to its first and most uniform laws, depends
upon Him. They are among the chief means by which he who is by nature
invisible, makes himself as it were visible to his creatures, who are so prone
to forget him entirely, or to lose sight of him by reason of the interposition
of the veil of material objects.

Granting then the possibility of miraculous interposition on the part of the
great Author of nature, on special occasions, and for great ends, in what
way and under what circumstances does such an interposition authenticate
the Divine mission of those who profess to be sent by him to teach his will
to mankind?

The argument is, that as the known and established course of nature has
been fixed by him who is the Creator and Preserver of all things, it can
never be violated, departed from, or controlled, but either immediately by
himself, or mediately by other beings at his command, and by his assistance
or permission; for if this be not allowed, we must deny either the Divine
omnipotence, or his natural government; and, if these be allowed, the other
follows. Every real miracle is a work of God, done specially by him, by his
permission, or with his concurrence.

In order to distinguish a real miracle, it is necessary that the common
course of nature should be understood; for without some antecedent
knowledge of the operation of physical causes, an event might be deemed
miraculous which was merely strange, and through our ignorance
inexplicable. Should an earthquake happen in a country never before visited
by such a calamity within the memory of man, by the ignorant it might be
considered miraculous; whereas an earthquake is a regular effect of the
present established laws of nature.

But as the course of nature and the operation of physical causes are but
partially understood, and will perhaps never be fully comprehended by the
most inquiring minds, it seems necessary that such miracles as are intended
to authenticate any religious system, promulged for the common benefit of
mankind, should be effects produced upon objects whose properties have
been the subject of common and long observation; that it should be
contrary to some known laws by which the objects in question have been uniformly and long observed to be governed; or that the proximate cause of the effect, should be known to have no adequate power or adaptation to produce it. When these circumstances occur separately, and more especially when combined, a sufficient antecedent acquaintance with the course of nature exists to warrant the conclusion, that the effect is miraculous, or, in other words, that it is produced by the special interposition of God.

Whether the works ascribed to Moses and to Christ, and recorded in Scripture were actually performed by them, will be considered in another place; but here it is proper to observe, that, assuming their actual occurrence, they are of such a nature as to leave no reasonable doubt of their miraculous character; and from them we may borrow a few instances for the sake of illustrating the preceding observations, without prejudging the argument.

The rod cast from the hand of Moses becomes a serpent. Here the subject was well known; it was a rod, a branch separated from a tree, and it was obviously contrary to the known and established course of nature, that it should undergo so signal a transformation. If the fact can be proved, the miracle must therefore follow.

The sea is parted at the stretching out of the rod of Moses. Here is no adaptation of the proximate cause to produce the effect, which was obviously in opposition to the known qualities of water. A recession of the sea from the shores would have taken down the whole mass of water from the head of the gulf; but here the waters divide, and, contrary to their nature, stand up on each side, leaving a passage for the host of Israel.

It is in the nature of clouds to be carried about by the wind; but the cloud which went before the Israelites in the wilderness, rested on their tabernacle, moved when they were commanded to march, and directed their course; rested when they were to pitch their tents, and was a pillar of direction by day; and, by night, when it is the nature of clouds to become dark, the rays of the sun no longer permeating them, this cloud shone with the brightness of fire.

In all these cases, if the facts be established, there can be no doubt as to their miraculous character.
“Were a physician instantly to give sight to a blind man, by anointing his eyes with a chemical preparation, to the nature and qualities of which we were absolute strangers, the cure would to us, undoubtedly, be wonderful; but we could not pronounce it miraculous, because it might be the physical effect of the operation of the unguent upon the eye. But were he to give sight to his patient, merely by commanding him to receive it, or by anointing his eyes with spittle, we should, with the utmost confidence, pronounce the cure to be a miracle; because we know perfectly, that neither the human voice nor human spittle has, by the established constitution of things, any such power over the diseases of the eye. No one is ignorant, that persons, apparently dead, are often restored to their families and friends, by being treated, during suspended animation, in the manner recommended by the Humane Society. To the vulgar, and sometimes even to men of science, these resuscitations appear very wonderful; but as they are known to be effected by physical agency, they cannot be considered as miraculous deviations from the laws of nature. On the other hand, no one could doubt of his having witnessed a real miracle, who had seen a person, that had been four days dead, come alive out of the grave at the call of another, or who had even beheld a person exhibiting all the common evidences of death, instantly resuscitated, merely by being desired to live.” (Gleig’s edition of Stackhouse’s History of the Bible, vol. iii, p. 241.)

In all such instances, the common course of nature is sufficiently known to support the conclusion, that the power which thus interferes with, and controls it, and produces effects to which the visible, natural causes are known not to be adequate, is God. 145

But it is also necessary, in order to prove that even these miraculous events are authentications of a Divine mission, that a direct connection between the power of God, exerted in a miraculous act, and the messenger, and his message, should be established.

The following circumstances would appear sufficiently to establish such a connection: —

1. When the miracles occur at the time when he, who professes to have a Divine mission from God, is engaged in making known the
will of God to mankind, by communicating the revelation he has received, and performing other acts connected with his office.

2. When, though they are works above human power, they are wrought by the messenger himself, or follow his volitions. the force of this argument may be thus exhibited: —

When such unequivocal miracles as those we have pointed out occur only in connection with an actual profession by certain persons, that they have a Divine authority to teach and command mankind, this is a strong presumption, that the works are wrought by God in order to authenticate this pretension; but when they are performed mediately by these persons themselves, by their own will, and for the express purpose of establishing their mission, inasmuch as they are allowed to be real miracles, which no power, but that of God, can effect, it is then clear that God is with them, and that his co-operation is an authenticating and visible seal upon their commission.

It is not necessary, in this stage, to specify the rules by which real and pretended miracles are to be distinguished; nor to inquire, whether the Scriptures allow, that, in some cases, miracles have been wrought in support of falsehood. Both these subjects will be examined when we come to speak of the miracles of Scripture. The ground established is, that miracles are possible; and that, when real miracles occur under the circumstances we have mentioned, they are satisfactory evidences of a Divine mission.

But though this should be allowed, and also that the eye witnesses of such miracles would be bound to admit the proof, it has been made a question, whether their testimony affords sufficient reason to others to admit the fact that such events actually took place, and consequently whether we are bound to acknowledge the authority of that mission, in attestation of which the miracles are said to have been wrought.

If this be admitted, the benefits of a revelation must be confined to those who witnessed its attestation by miracle, or similar attestation, must be afforded to every individual; for, as no revelation can be a benefit unless it possess Divine authority, which alone can infallibly mark the distinction between truth and error, should the authentication be partial, the benefit of the communication of an infallible doctrine must also be partial. We are all so much interested in this, because no religious system can plead the
authentication of perpetual miracle, that it deserves special consideration. Either this principle is unsound, or we must abandon all hope of discovering a religion of Divine authority.

As miracles are facts, they, like other facts, may be reported to others; and, as in the case of the miracles in question, bearing the characters which have been described, the competency of any man of ordinary understanding to determine whether they were actually wrought cannot be doubted; if the witnesses are credible, it is reasonable that their testimony should be admitted: for if the testimony be such as, in matters of the greatest moment to us in the affairs of common life, we should not hesitate to act upon; if it be such, that, in the most important affairs, men do uniformly act upon similar or even weaker testimony; it would be mere perverseness to reject it in the case in question; and would argue rather a disinclination to the doctrine which is thus proved, than any rational doubt of the sufficiency of the proof itself.

The objection is put in its strongest form by Mr. Hume, in his Essays, and the substance of it is, — Experience is the ground of the credit we give to human testimony; but this experience is by no means constant, for we often find men prevaricate and deceive. On the other hand, it is experience, in like manner, which assures us of those laws of nature, in the violation of which the notion of a miracle consists; but this experience is constant and uniform. A miracle is an event which, from its nature, is inconsistent with our experience; but the falsehood of testimony is not inconsistent with experience: it is contrary to experience that miracles should be true, but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false; and, therefore, no human testimony can, in any case, render them credible.

This argument has been met at large by many authors, but the following extracts afford ample refutation: —

“The principle of this objection is, that it is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true; but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false.

“Now there appears a small ambiguity in the term ‘experience,’ and in the phrases ‘contrary to experience,’ or ‘contradicting experience,’ which it may be necessary to remove in the first place. Strictly speaking, the narrative of a fact is then only contrary to experience, when the fact is related to have existed at a time and
place; at which time and place, we, being present, did not perceive it to exist; as if it should be asserted that, in a particular room, and at a particular hour of a certain day, a man was raised from the dead; in which room, and at the time specified, we being present and looking on, perceived no such event to have taken place.

“Here the assertion is contrary to experience, properly so called, and this is a contrariety which no evidence can surmount. It matters nothing whether the fact be of a miraculous nature or not. But although this be the experience and the contrariety, which Archbishop Tillotson alleged in the quotation with which Mr. Hume opens his Essay, it is certainly not that experience, nor that contrariety, which Mr. Hume himself intended to object. And, short of this, I know no intelligible signification which can be affixed to the term ‘contrary to experience,’ but one, viz., that of not having ourselves experienced any thing similar to the thing related, or such things not being generally experienced by others. I say, ‘not generally;’ for to state, concerning the fact in question, that no such thing was ever experienced, or that universal experience is against it, is to assume the subject of the controversy.

“Now the improbability which arises from the want (for this properly is a want, not a contradiction,) of experience, is only equal to the probability there is, that if the thing were true, we should experience things similar to it, or that such things would be generally experienced. Suppose it then to be true, that miracles were wrought upon the first promulgation of Christianity, when nothing but miracles could decide its authority, is it certain that such miracles would be repeated so often, and in so many places, as to become objects of general experience? Is it a probability approaching to certainty? Is it a probability of any great strength or force? Is it such as no evidence can encounter? And yet this probability is the exact converse, and therefore the exact measure of the improbability which arises from the want of experience, and which Mr. Hume represents as invincible by human testimony.

“It is not like alleging a new law of nature, or a new experiment in natural philosophy; because, when these are related, it is expected that, under the same circumstances, the same effect will follow universally; and in proportion as this expectation is justly
entertained, the want of a corresponding experience negatives the history. But to expect concerning a miracle, that it should succeed upon a repetition, is to expect that which would make it cease to be a miracle, which is contrary to its nature as such, and would totally destroy the use and purpose for which it was wrought.

“The force of experience, as an objection to miracles, is founded in the presumption, either that the course of nature is invariable, or that, if it be ever varied, variations will be frequent and general. Has the necessity of this alternative been demonstrated? Permit us to call the course of nature the agency of an intelligent Being; and is there any good reason for judging this state of the case to be probable? Ought we not rather to expect, that such a Being, on occasions of peculiar importance, may interrupt the order which he had appointed, yet, that such occasions should return seldom; that these interruptions, consequently, should be confined to the experience of a few; that the want of it, therefore, in many, should be matter neither of surprise nor objection?

“But as a continuation of the argument from experience, it is said, that when we advance accounts of miracles, we assign effects without causes, or we attribute effects to causes inadequate to the purpose, or to causes, of the operation of which we have no experience. Of what causes, we may ask, and of what effects does the objection speak? If it be answered, that when we ascribe the care of the palsy to a touch, of blindness to the anointing of the eyes with clay, or the raising of the dead to a word, we lay ourselves open to this imputation; we reply, that we ascribe no such effects to such causes. We perceive no virtue or energy in these things more than in other things of the same kind. They are merely signs, to connect the miracle with its end. The effect we ascribe simply to the volition of the Deity; of whose existence and power, not to say of whose presence and agency, we have previous and independent proof. We have, therefore, all we seek for in the works of rational agents — a sufficient power, and an adequate motive. In a word, once believe that there is a God, and miracles are not incredible!

“Mr. Hume states the case of miracles to be, a contest of opposite improbabilities; that is to say, a question whether it be more
improbable that the miracle should be true, or the testimony false; and this I think a fair account of the controversy. But herein I remark a want of argumentative justice, that, in describing the improbability of miracles, he suppresses all those circumstances of extenuation which result from our knowledge of the existence, power, and disposition of the Deity; his concern in the creation; the end answered by the miracle; the importance of that end, and its subserviency to the plan pursued in the works of nature. As Mr. Hume has represented the question, miracles are alike incredible to him who is previously assured of the constant agency of a Divine Being, and to him who believes that no such Being exists in the universe. They are equally incredible, whether related to have been wrought upon occasions the most deserving, and for purposes the most beneficial, or for no assignable end whatever, or for an end confessedly trifling or pernicious. This surely cannot be a correct statement. In adjusting also the other side of the balance, the strength and weight of testimony, this author has provided an answer to every possible accumulation of historical proof, by telling us that we are not obliged to explain how the story or the evidence arose. Now I think that we are obliged; not, perhaps, to show by positive accounts how it did, but by a probable hypothesis how it might so happen. The existence of the testimony is a phenomenon; the truth of the fact solves the phenomenon. If we reject this solution, we ought to have some other to rest in; and none, even by our adversaries, can be admitted, which is not consistent with the principles that regulate human affairs and human conduct at present, or which makes men to have been a different kind of beings from what they are now.

“But the short consideration which, independently of every other convinces me that there is no solid foundation for Mr. Hume’s conclusion, is the following: — When a theorem is proposed to a mathematician, the first thing he does with it is to try it upon a simple case, and if it produce a false result, he is sure that there is some mistake in the demonstration. Now, to proceed in this way with what may be called Mr. Hume’s theorem, — If twelve men, whose probity and good sense I had long known, should seriously and circumstantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impossible that they should be
deceived: if the governor of the country, hearing a rumour of this account, should call these men into his presence, and offer them a short proposal, either to confess the imposture, or submit to be tied up to a gibbet; if they should refuse with one voice to acknowledge that there existed any falsehood or imposture in the case; if this threat were communicated to them separately, yet with no different effect; if it was at last executed; if I myself saw them, one after another, consenting to be racked, burned, or strangled, rather than give up the truth of their account; still, if Mr. Hume’s rule be my guide, I am not to believe them. Now I undertake to say, that there exists not a skeptic in the world who would not believe them, or who would defend such incredulity.” — (Paley’s Evidences, Preparatory Considerations.)

“The essayist,” says the bishop of Llandaff, “who has most elaborately drawn out this argument, perplexes the subject, by attempting to adjust, in a sort of metaphysical balance of his own invention, the degrees of probability resulting from what he is pleased to call opposite experiences; viz. the experience of men’s veracity, on the one hand, and the experience of the firm and unalterable constitution of the laws of nature, on the other. But the fallacy in this mode of reasoning is obvious. For, in the first place, miracles can, at most, only be contrary to the experience of those who never saw them performed: to say therefore, that they are contrary to general experience, (including, as it should seem, the experience even of those who profess to have seen and to have examined them,) is to assume the very point in question. And, in the next place, it is equally fallacious to allege against them the experience of the unalterable constitution of the laws of nature; because, unless the fact be previously investigated, whether those laws have ever been altered or suspended, this is likewise a gratuitous assumption.

“In truth this boasted balance of probabilities could only be employed with effect, in the cause of infidelity, by counterpoising, against the testimony of those who professed to have seen miracles, the testimony of those (if any such were to be found) who, under the circumstances, and with the same opportunities of forming a judgment, professed to have been convinced, that the things which they saw were NOT miracles, but mere impostures and delusions.
Here would be indeed experience against experience: and a skeptic might be well employed in estimating the comparative weight of the testimony on either side; in order to judge of the credibility or incredibility of the things proposed to his belief. But when he weighs only the experience of those, to whom the opportunity of judging of a miracle by personal observation has never been afforded, against the experience of those who declare themselves to be eye witnesses of the fact; instead of opposite experiences, properly so called, he is only balancing total inexperience on the one hand, against positive experience on the other.

“Nor will it avail any thing to say, that this particular inexperience of those who have never seen miracles, is compensated by their general experience of the unalterable course of nature. For, as we have already observed, this is altogether a mere petitio principii. It is arguing, upon a supposition wholly incapable of proof, that the course of nature is indeed so unalterably fixed, that even God himself, by whom its laws were ordained, cannot, when he sees fit, suspend their operation.

“There is therefore a palpable fallacy, (however a subtle metaphysician may attempt to disguise it by ingenious sophistry,) in representing the experience of mankind as being opposite to the testimony on which our belief of miracles is founded. For, the opposite experiences, as they are called, are not contradictory to each other; since ‘there is’ (as has been justly observed) ‘no inconsistency in believing them both.’ A miracle necessarily supposes an established and generally unaltered (though not unalterable) course of things; for, in its interception of such a course lies the very essence of a miracle, as here understood. Our experience, therefore, of the course of nature leads us to expect its continuance, and to act accordingly; but it does not set aside any proofs, from valid testimony, of a deviation from it: neither can our being personally unacquainted with a matter of fact, which took place a thousand years ago, or in a distant part of the world, warrant us in disbelieving the testimony of personal witnesses of the fact. Common sense revolts at the absurdity of considering one man’s ignorance or inexperience as a counterpoise to another man’s knowledge and experience of a matter of fact. Yet on no better foundation does this favourite argument of infidels appear to rest.”
The substance of Dr. Campbell’s answer to Mr. Hume’s argument has been thus given: —

“The evidence arising from human testimony is not solely derived from experience: on the contrary, testimony has a natural influence on belief, antecedent to experience. The early and unlimited assent given to testimony by children, gradually contracts as they advance in life; it is therefore more consonant to truth to say, that our diffidence in testimony is the result of experience, than that our faith in it has this foundation. Beside, the uniformity of experience in favour of any fact is not a proof against its being reversed in a particular instance. The evidence arising from the single testimony of a man of known veracity, will go farther to establish a belief of its being actually reversed. If his testimony be confirmed by a few others of the same character, we cannot withhold our assent to the truth of it. Now, though the operations of nature are governed by uniform laws, and though we have not the testimony of our senses in favour of any violation of them; still, if in particular instances we have the testimony of thousands of our fellow creatures, and those, too, men of strict integrity, swayed by no motives of ambition or interest, and governed by the principles of common sense, that they were actually witnesses of these violations, the constitution of our nature obliges us to believe them.

“Mr. Hume’s reasoning is founded upon too limited a view of the laws and course of nature. If we consider things duly, we shall find that lifeless matter is utterly incapable of obeying any laws, or of being endued with any powers; and, therefore, what is usually called the course of nature, can be nothing else than the arbitrary will and pleasure of God, acting continually upon matter according to certain rules of uniformity, still bearing a relation to contingencies. So that it is as easy for the Supreme Being to alter what men think the course of nature, as to preserve it. Those effects, which are produced on the world regularly and indesinently, and which are usually termed the works of nature, prove the constant providence of the Deity; those, on the contrary, which, upon any extraordinary occasion, are produced in such a manner as it is manifest could not have been either by human power, or by what is called chance, prove undeniably the immediate interposition of the Deity on that especial occasion. God, it must be recollected,
is the Governor of the moral as well as of the physical world; and since the moral well being of the universe is of more consequence than its physical order and regularity, it follows obviously, that the laws, conformably with which the material world seems generally to be regulated, are subservient and may occasionally yield to the laws by which the moral world is governed. Although, therefore, a miracle is contrary to the usual course of nature, (and would indeed lose its beneficial effect if it were not so,) it cannot thence be inferred, that it is ‘a violation of the laws of nature,’ allowing the term to include a regard to moral tendencies. The laws by which a wise and holy God governs the world, cannot (unless he is pleased to reveal them) be learnt in any other way than from testimony; since, on this supposition, nothing but testimony can bring us acquainted with the whole series of his dispensations; and this kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary previously to our correctly inferring those laws. Testimony, therefore, must be admitted as constituting the principal means of discovering the real laws by which the universe has been regulated; that testimony assures us, that the apparent course of nature has often been interrupted to produce important moral effects; and we must not at random disregard such testimony, because in estimating its credibility we ought to look almost infinitely more at the moral than at the physical circumstances connected with any particular event.”

Such evidence as that of miracles, transmitted to distant times by satisfactory testimony, a revelation may then receive. The fitness of this kind of evidence to render that revelation an instant and universal benefit, wherever it comes, is equally apparent; for, as Mr. Locke observes, (Reasonableness of Christianity,) “the bulk of mankind have not leisure nor capacity for demonstration, nor can they carry a train of proofs; but as to the Worker of miracles, all his commands become principles; there needs no other proof of what he says, but that he said it, and there needs no more than to read the inspired books to be instructed.”

Having thus shown, that miracles are possible; that under certain circumstances their reality may be ascertained; that when accompanied by other circumstances which we have also mentioned, they are connected with a definite end, and connect themselves with the Divine mission of those who perform them, and with the truth of their doctrine; that as facts they are the subjects of human testimony, and that credible testimony
respecting them lays a competent foundation for our belief in them, and in those revelations which they are clearly designed to attest, — the way is prepared for the consideration of the miracles recorded in Scripture.

PROPHECY is the other great branch of the external evidence of a revelation; and the nature and force of that kind of evidence may fitly be pointed out before either the miracles or prophecies of the Bible are examined: for by ascertaining the general principles on which this kind of evidence rests, the consideration of particular cases will be rendered more easy and satisfactory.

No argument *a priori* against the possibility of prophecy can be attempted by any one who believes in the existence and infinitely perfect nature of God.

The infidel author of “The Moral Philosopher,” indeed, rather insinuates than attempts fully to establish a dilemma with which to perplex those who regard prophecy as one of the proofs of a Divine revelation. He thinks that either prophecy must respect “events necessary, as depending upon necessary causes, which might be certainly fore-known and predicted;” or that, if human actions are free, and effects contingent, the possibility of prophecy must be given up, as it implies foreknowledge, which, if granted, would render them necessary.

The first part of this objection would be allowed, were there no predictions to be adduced in favour of a professed revelation, except such as related to events which human experience has taught to be dependent upon some cause, the existence and necessary operation of which are within the compass of human knowledge. But to foretell such events would not be to prophesy, any more than to say, that it will be light tomorrow at noon, or that on a certain day and hour next year there will occur an eclipse of the sun or moon, when that event has been previously ascertained by astronomical calculation.

If, however, it were allowed, that all events depended upon a chain of necessary causes, yet, in a variety of instances, the argument from prophecy would not be at all affected; for the foretelling of necessary results in certain circumstances is beyond human intelligence, because they can only be known to Him by whose power those necessary causes on which they depend have been arranged, and who has prescribed the times of their operation. To borrow a case, for the sake of illustration, from the
Scriptures. though the claims of their predictions are not now in question; let us allow that such a prophecy as that of Isaiah respecting the taking of Babylon by Cyrus was uttered, as it purports to be, more than a century before Cyrus was born, and that all the actions of Cyrus and his army, and those of the Babylonian monarch and his people, were necessitated; is it to be maintained that the chain of necessitating causes running through more than a century could be traced by a human mind. so as to describe the precise manner in which that fatality would unfold itself, even to the turning of the river, the drunken carousal of the inhabitants, and the neglect of shutting the gates of the city? This, being by uniform and universal experience known to be above all human apprehension, would therefore prove that the prediction was made in consequence of a communication from a superior and Divine Intelligence. Were events therefore subjected to invincible fate and necessity, there might nevertheless be prophecy.

The other branch of the dilemma is founded on the notion, that if we allow the moral freedom of human actions, prophecy is impossible, because certain foreknowledge is contrary to that freedom, and fixes and renders the event necessary.

To this the reply is, that the objection is founded on a false assumption, the Divine foreknowledge having no more influence in effectuating, or making certain any event, than human foreknowledge in the degree in which it may exist; there being no moral causality at all in knowledge. This lies in the will, which is the determining, acting principle in every agent; or, as Dr. Samuel Clarke has expressed it in answer to another kind of objector, “God’s infallible judgment concerning contingent truths does no more alter the nature of the things and cause them to be necessary, than our judging right at any time concerning a contingent truth, makes it cease to be contingent; or than our science of a present truth is any cause of its being either true or present. Here, therefore, lies the fallacy of our author’s argument. Because from God’s fore-knowing the existence of things depending upon a chain of necessary causes, it follows, that the existence of the things must needs be necessary; therefore from God’s judging infallibly concerning things which depend not on necessary but free causes, he concludes that these things also depend not upon free but necessary causes. Contrary, I say, to the supposition in the argument, for it must not be first supposed, that things are in their own nature necessary; but from the power of judging infallibly concerning free events, it must be proved that things, otherwise supposed free, will thereby unavoidably
become necessary.” The whole question lies in this, Is the simple knowledge of an action a necessitating cause of the action? And the answer must be in the negative, as every man’s consciousness will assure him. If the causality of influence, either immediate, or by the arrangement of compelling events, be mixed up with this, the ground is shifted; and it is no longer a question which respects simple prescience.

This metaphysical objection having no foundation in truth, the force of the evidence arising from predictions of events, distant, and out of the power of human sagacity to anticipate, and uttered as authentications of a Divine commission, is apparent. “Such predictions, whether in the form of declaration, description, or representation of things future,” as Mr. Boyle justly observes, “are supernatural things, and may properly be ranked among miracles.” (BOYLE’S Christian Virtuoso.) For when, for instance, the events are distant many years or ages from the uttering of the prediction itself, depending on causes not so much as existing when the prophecy was spoken and recorded, and likewise upon various circumstances and a long arbitrary series of things, and the fluctuating uncertainties of human volitions, and especially when they depend not at all upon any external circumstances, nor upon any created being, but arise merely from the counsels and appointment of God himself; — such events can be foreknown only by that Being, one of whose attributes is omniscience, and can be foretold by him only to whom the “Father of lights” shall reveal them: so that whoever is manifestly endued with that predictive power, must, in that instance, speak and act by Divine inspiration, and what he pronounces of that kind must be received as the word of God, nothing more being necessary to assure us of this, than credible testimony that such predictions were uttered before the event, or conclusive evidence that the records which contain them are of the antiquity to which they pretend. (Vide CHAPMAN’S Eusebius, p. 158; CUDWORTH’S Intellect. Syst. p. 866; VITRINGA in Isaiah cap. 41.)
CHAPTER 10. — THE EVIDENCES NECESSARY TO AUTHENTICATE A REVELATION.

Internal Evidence. — Collateral Evidence.

THE second kind of evidence, usually considered as necessary for the attestation of a Divine revelation, is called internal evidence.

This kind of evidence has been already described to be that which arises from the consideration of the doctrines taught, as being consistent with the character of God, and tending to promote the virtue and happiness of man, the ends for which a revelation of the will of God was needed, and for which it must have been given, if it be considered as an act of grace and mercy.

This subject, like the two branches of the external evidence, miracles and prophecy, involves important general principles; and it may require to be the more carefully considered, as opinions have run into extremes. By some it has been doubted, whether what is called “the internal evidence,” that is, the excellence of the doctrines and tendency of a revelation, ought to be ranked with the leading evidence of miracles and prophecy, seeing that the proof from miracles and from prophecy is decisive and absolute. For the same reason, however, prophecy might be excluded from the rank of leading evidence, inasmuch as miracles of themselves are, in their evidence, decisive and absolute. If, however, it were contended, that proofs from miracles, prophecy, and internal evidence, are jointly necessary to constitute sufficient proof of the truth of a revelation, there would be reason to dispute the position, understanding by “sufficient evidence” that degree of proof which would render it highly unreasonable, perverse, and culpable, in any one to reject the authority of the revelation. This evidence is afforded by miracles alone; for if there be any force at all in the argument from miracles, it goes to the full length of rational proof of a Divine attestation, and that both to him who personally witnesses the performance of a real miracle, and to whom it is credibly testified; and nothing more is absolutely necessary to enforce a rational conviction. But if it should please the Divine Author of a revelation to superadd the farther evidence of prophecy, and also that of the obvious truth, and beneficial tendency, of many parts of this revelation, circumstances which must necessarily be
often apparent, it ought not to be disregarded in the argument in its favour, nor thought of trifling import; since though it may not be necessary to establish a rational and sufficient proof, it may have a secondary necessity, to arouse attention, to leave objectors more obviously without excuse, and also to accommodate the revelation to that variety which exists in the mental constitutions of men, one mind being excited to attention, and disposed to conviction, more forcibly by one species of proof than by another.

In strict propriety, therefore, miracles may be considered as the *primary* evidence of the truth of a revelation, and every other species of proof as *confirmatory*. Prophecy and the internal evidence are leading evidences, but neither of them stand in the foremost place. The same *abundance* of proof we perceive in nature, for the demonstration of the being and attributes of God. Proofs of the existence of a First Cause, almighty and infinitely wise, more than what is logically sufficient, surround us everywhere; but who can doubt, that if half the instances of infinite power and wisdom which are seen in the material universe were annihilated there would not be *sufficient* evidence to demonstrate both these, as perfections of the Maker of the universe?

On the other hand, the proof drawn from the internal evidence by others has been placed first in order, and the force of the evidence from miracles and prophecy is by them made to depend upon the excellence of the doctrine which they are brought forward to confirm, and which ought first to be ascertained. Nothing, say they, is to be received as a revelation from God which does not contain doctrines worthy of the Divine character, and tending to promote the good of mankind. — “A necessary mark of a religion coming from God is, that the duties it enjoins are all such as are agreeable to our natural notions of God, and perfective of the nature, and conducive to the happiness of man? (Dr. S. CLARKE.)

Now, though it must be instantly granted, that in a revelation from God, there will be nothing contrary to his own character; and that, when it is made in the way of a merciful dispensation, it will contain nothing but what tends to perfect the nature, and promote the happiness of his creatures; it is clear, that to try a professed revelation by our own notions, as to what is worthy of God and beneficial to mankind, is to assume, that, independent of a revelation, we know what God is, or we cannot say what is worthy or unworthy of him; and that we know, too, the character, and relations, and
wants of man so perfectly as to determine what is beneficial to him; in other words, this supposes that we are in circumstances not greatly to need supernatural instruction.

Another objection to the internal evidence being made the primary test of a revelation is, that it renders the external testimony nugatory, or comparatively unimportant. “Surely,” observes a late ingenious writer, “in a system which purports to be a revelation from heaven, and to contain a history of God’s dealings with men, and to develope truths with regard to the moral government of the universe, the knowledge and belief of which will lead to happiness here and hereafter, we may expect to find (if its pretensions are well founded) an evidence for its truth, which shall be independent of all external testimony.” (ERSKINE on the Internal Evidence, &c.) If this be true, the utility of the evidence of miracles is rendered very questionable. It is either unnecessary, or it is subordinate and dependent; neither of which, by Christian divines at least, can be consistently maintained. The non-necessity of miracles cannot be asserted by them, because they believe them to have been actually performed; and that they are subordinate proofs, and dependent upon the sufficiency of the internal evidence, is contradicted by the whole tenor of the Scriptures, which represent them as being in themselves an absolute demonstration of the mission and doctrine of the prophets, at whose instance they were performed, and never direct us to regard their doctrines as a test of the miracles. The miracles of Christ, in particular, were a demonstration, not a partial and conditional, but a complete and absolute demonstration of his mission from God; and “it may be observed, with respect to all the miracles of the New Testament, that their divinity, considered in themselves, is always either expressly asserted, or manifestly implied: and they are accordingly urged as a decisive and absolute proof of the divinity of the doctrine and testimony of those who perform them, without ever taking into consideration the nature of the doctrine, or of the testimony to be confirmed.”

Against this mode of stating the internal evidence, there lies also this logical objection, that it is arguing in a circle; — the miracles are proved by the doctrine, and then the doctrine by the miracles; an objection from which those who have adopted the notion either of the superior or the co-ordinate rank of the internal evidence, have not, with all their ingenuity and effort, fairly escaped.
Miracles must, therefore, be considered as the leading and absolute evidence of a revelation from God; and “what to me,” says a sensible writer, “is, a priori, a strong argument of their being so, is the manifest inconsistency of the other hypotheses with the very condition of that people for whose sake God should raise up at any time his extraordinary messengers, ended with such miraculous powers. For if God ever favours mankind with such a special revelation of his will, and instructions from heaven, in a way supernatural, it is certainly in that unhappy juncture when the principles and practices of mankind are so miserably depraved and corrupted, as to want the light and assistance of revelation extremely, and are (humanly speaking) utterly incorrigible without it. Now, to say that, in these particular circumstances, men are not to depend on any real miracles, but, before they admit them as evidence of the prophet’s Divine mission, they must carefully examine his doctrine, to see if it be perfectly good and true, is either to suppose these people furnished with principles and knowledge requisite for that purpose, contrary, point blank, to the real truth of their case; or else it is to assert, that they who are utterly destitute of principles and knowledge requisite for that work, must, nevertheless, undertake it without them, and judge of the truth of the prophet’s doctrine and authority by their false principles of religion and morality; which, in short, is to fix them immovably where they are already, in old erroneous principles, against any new and true ones that should be offered. Especially with the bulk of mankind, full of darkness and prejudice, this must unavoidably be the consequence; and the more they wanted a reformation in principle, the less capable would they be of receiving it in this method. Thus, for instance: were a teacher sent from heaven, with signs and wonders, to a nation of idolaters, and they previously instructed to regard no miracles of his whatsoever, till they were fully satisfied of the goodness of his doctrine, it is easy to foresee by what rule they would prove his doctrine, and what success he would meet with among them. Add to this, what is likewise exceedingly material, the great delays and perplexities attending this way of proceeding. For if every article of doctrine must be discussed and scanned by every person to whom it is offered, what slow advances would be made by a Divine revelation among such a people! Hundreds would probably be cut off before they came to the end of their queries, and the prophet might grow decrepit with age, before he gained twenty proselytes in a nation.” (CHAPMAN’S Eusebius.)
It is easy to discover the causes which have led to these mistakes, as to the true **office** of the internal evidence of a Divine revelation.

In the first place, a hypothetic case has been assumed, and it has been asked, “If a doctrine, absurd and wicked, should be attested by miracles, is it to be admitted as Divine, upon their authority?” The answer is, that this is a case which cannot in the nature of things occur, and cannot, therefore, be made the basis of an argument. We have seen already, that a real miracle can be wrought by none but God, or by his commission, because the contrary supposition would exclude him from the government of the world which he has made and preserves. Whenever a **real** miracle takes place, therefore, in **attestation** of any doctrine, that doctrine cannot be either unreasonable or impious; and if it should appear so to us, after the reality of the miracle is ascertained, which is not probable ordinarily, our judgment must be erroneous. The miracle proves the doctrine, or the ground on which miracles are allowed to have any force of evidence at all, either supreme or subordinate, absolute or dependent, must be given up; for their evidence consists in this — that they are the **works of God**.

The second cause of the error has been, that the **rational** evidence of the truths contained in a revelation has been confounded with the **authenticating** evidence. When once an exhibition of the character, plans, and laws of God is made, though in their nature totally undiscoverable, by human faculties, they carry to the reason of man, **so far** as they are of a nature to be comprehended by it, the demonstration which accompanies truth of any other kind. For as the eye is formed to receive light, the rational powers of man are formed to receive conviction when the congruity of propositions is made evident. This is **rational**, but it is not **authenticating** evidence. Let us suppose that there is no external testimony of miracles or prophecy vouchsafed to attest that the teacher, through whom we receive those doctrines which appear to us so sublime, so important, so true, received them from God, with a mission to impart them to us. He himself has no means of knowing them to be from God, or of distinguishing them from some happy train of thought, into which his mind has been carried by its own force; nor if he had, have we any means of concluding that they are more than the opinions of a mind, superior in vigor and grasp to our own. They may be true, but they are not **attested** to be Divine. We have no guarantee of their infallible truth, because our own rational powers are not infallible, nor those of the most gifted human mind. Add then the external testimony, and we have the **attestation** required. The
rational evidence of the doctrine is the same in both cases; but the rational evidence, though to us it is as far, and only as far, as we can claim infallibility for our judgment, the proof of the truth of the doctrine is no proof at all that God has revealed it. In the external testimony alone that proof is found: the degree of rational evidence we have of the truth and excellency of the doctrine may be a farther commendation of it to us, but it is no part of its authority.

From this distinction, the relative importance of the external and the internal evidence of a revelation may be farther illustrated. Rational evidence of the doctrines proposed to us, when it can be had, goes to establish their truth, so far as we can depend upon our judgment; but the external testimony, if satisfactory, establishes their Divine authority, and therefore their absolute truth, and leaves us no appeal. Still farther, a revelation, dependent upon internal evidence only, could contain no doctrines, and enjoin no duties, but of which the evidence to our reason should be complete. The least objection grounded on a plausible contrary reason would weaken their force, and the absence of a clear perception of their congruity with some previous principles, admitted as true, would be the absence of all evidence of their truth whatever. On the other hand, a revelation, with rational proof of a Divine attestation, renders our instruction in many doctrines and duties possible, the rational evidence of whose truth is wanting; and as some doctrines may be true, and highly important to us, which are not capable of this kind of proof, that is, which are not so fully known as to be compared with any received propositions, and determined by them, our knowledge is, in this way, greatly enlarged: the benefits of revelation are extended; and the whole becomes obligatory, and therefore efficient to moral purposes, because it bears upon it the seal of an infallible authority.

The firmer ground on which a revelation, founded upon reasonable external proof of authority, rests, is also obvious. The doctrines in which we need to be instructed are, the nature of God; our own relations to that invisible Being; his will concerning us; the means of obtaining or securing his favour; the principles of his government; and a future life. These, and others of a similar kind, involve great difficulties, as the history of moral knowledge among mankind sufficiently proves; and that, not only among those who never had the benefits of the Biblical revelation on these subjects, but among those who, not considering it as an authority, have indulged the philosophers' spirit, and judged of these doctrines merely by
their rational evidence. This, from the nature of things, appearing under different views to different minds, has produced almost as much contrariety of opinion among them, as we find among the sages of pagan antiquity. The mere rational proof of the truth of such doctrines being therefore, from its nature, in many important respects obscure, and liable to diversity of opinion, would lay but a very precarious and shifting foundation for faith in any revelation from God suited to remove the ignorance of man on points so important in doctrine, and so essential to an efficient religion and morality.

On the other hand, the process of obtaining a rational proof of the Divine attestation of a doctrine, by miracles for instance, is of the most simple and decisive kind, and gives to unbelief the character of obvious perverseness and inconsistency. **Perverseness**, because there is a clear opposition of the will rather than of the judgment in the case; **inconsistency**, because a much lower degree of evidence is, by the very objectors, acted upon in their most important concerns in life. For who that saw the dead raised to life, in an appeal to the Lord of life, in confirmation of a doctrine professing to be taught by his authority, but must, unless wilful **perverseness** interposed, acknowledge a Divine testimony; and who that heard the fact reported on the testimony of honest men and competent observers, under circumstances in which no illusion can take place, but must be charged with **inconsistency**, should he treat the report with skepticism, when, upon the same kind and quantum of evidence, he would so credit any report as to his own affairs, as to risk the greatest interests upon it? In difficult doctrines, of a kind to give rise to a variety of opinions, the rational evidence is accompanied with doubt; in such a case as that of the miracle we have supposed, it rests on principles supported by the universal and constant experience of mankind:

1. That the raising of the dead is above human power:

2. That men, unquestionably virtuous in every other respect, are not likely to propagate a deliberate falsehood: and

3. That it contradicts all the known motives to action in human nature, that they should do so, not only without advantage, but at the hazard of reproach, persecution, and death. The evidence of such an attestation is therefore as indubitable as these principles themselves.
The fourth kind of evidence, by which a revelation from God may be confirmed, is the collateral; on which, at present, we need not say more than adduce some instances, merely to illustrate this kind of testimony.

The collateral evidence of a revelation from God may be its agreement in principle with every former revelation, should previous revelations have been vouchsafed — that it was obviously suited to the circumstances of the world at the time of its communication — that it is adapted to effect the great moral ends which it purposes, and has actually effected them — that if it contain a record of facts, as well as of doctrines, those historical facts agree with the credible traditions and histories of the same times — that monuments, either natural or instituted, remain to attest the truth of its history — that adversaries have made concessions in its favour — and that, should it profess to be a universal and ultimate revelation of the will and mercy of God to man, it maintains its adaptation to the case of the human race, and its efficiency, to the present day. These and many other circumstances may be ranked under the head of collateral evidence, and some of them will, in their proper place, be applied to the Holy Scriptures.
CHAPTER 11. — THE USE AND LIMITATION OF REASON IN RELIGION.

HAVING pointed out the kind of evidence by which a revelation from God may be authenticated, and the circumstances under which it ought to produce conviction and enforce obedience, it appears to be a natural order of proceeding to consider the subject of the title of this chapter, inasmuch as evidence of this kind, and for this end, must be addressed to our reason, the only faculty which is capable of receiving it. But as to this office of our reason important limitations and rules must be assigned, it will be requisite to adduce and explain them.

The present argument being supposed to be with one who believes in a God, the Lord and Governor of man, and that he is a Being of infinite perfections, our observations will have the advantage of certain first principles which that belief concedes.

We have already adduced much presumptive evidence, that a revelation of the will of God is essential to his moral government, and that such a revelation has actually been made. We have also farther considered the kind and degree of evidence which is necessary to ratify it. The means by which a conviction of its truth is produced, is the point before us.

The subject to be examined is the truth of a religious and moral system, professing to be from God, though communicated by men, who plead his authority for its promulgation. If there be any force in the preceding observations, we are not, in the first instance, to examine the doctrine, in order to determine from our own opinion of its excellence, whether it be from God, (for to this, if we need a revelation, we are incompetent,) but we are to inquire into the credentials of the messengers, in quest of sufficient proof that God hath spoken to mankind by them. Should a slight consideration of the doctrine, either by its apparent excellence or the contrary, attract us strongly to this examination, it is well: but whatever prejudices, for or against the doctrine, a report, or a hasty opinion of its nature and tendency may inspire, our final judgment can only safely rest upon the proof which may be afforded of its Divine authority. If that be satisfactory, the case is determined, whether the doctrine be pleasing or displeasing to us. If sufficient evidence be not afforded, we are at liberty to
receive or reject the whole or any part of it as it may appear to us to be worthy of our regard; for it then stands on the same ground as any other merely human opinion. We are, however, to beware that this is done upon a very solemn responsibility.

The proof of the Divine authority of a system of doctrine communicated under such circumstances, is addressed to our reason, or in other words it must be *reasonable proof* that in this revelation there has been a direct and special interposition of God.

On the principles therefore already laid down, that though the rational evidence of a doctrine lies in the doctrine itself, the rational proof of the Divine *authority* of a doctrine must be external to that doctrine; and that miracles and prophecy are appropriate and satisfactory attestations of such an authority whenever they occur, the use of human reason in this inquiry is apparent. The alleged *miracles* themselves are to be examined, to determine whether they are real or pretended, allowing them to have been performed; the testimony of witnesses is to be investigated, to determine whether they actually occurred; and if this testimony has been put on record, we have also to determine whether the record was at first faithfully made, and whether it has been carefully and uncorruptedly preserved. With respect to *prophecy* we are also to examine, whether the professed prophecy be a real prediction of future events, or only an ambiguous and equivocal saying, capable of being understood in various ways; whether it relates to events which lie beyond the guess of wise and observing men; whether it was uttered so long before the events predicted, that they could not be anticipated in the usual order of things; whether it was publicly or privately uttered; and whether, if put on record, that record has been faithfully kept. To these points must our consideration be directed, and to ascertain the strength of the proof is the important province of our reason or judgment.

The second use of reason respects the interpretation of the revelation thus authenticated; and here the same rules are to be applied as in the interpretation of any other statement or record; for as our only object, after the authenticity of the revelation is established, is to discover its sense, or in other words to ascertain what is declared unto us therein by God, our reason or judgment is called to precisely the same office as when the meaning of any other document is in question. *The terms of the record are to be taken in their plain and commonly received sense,* — *figures of*
speech are to be interpreted with reference to the local peculiarities of the
country in which the agents who wrote the record resided; — idioms are
to be understood according to the genius of the language employed; — if
any allegorical or mystical discourses occur, the key to them must be
sought in the book itself, and not in our own fancies; — what is obscure
must be interpreted by that which is plain; — the scope and tenor of a
discourse must be regarded, and no conclusion formed on passages
detached from their context, except they are complete in their sense, or
evidently intended as axioms and apopthegms. These and other rules,
which respect the time and place when the record was written; the
circumstances of the writer and of those to whom he immediately
addressed himself; local customs, &c, appear in this, and all other cases, so
just and reasonable as to commend themselves to every sober man: and we
rightly use our reason in the interpretation of a received revelation, when
we conduct our inquiries into its meaning, by those plain common-sense
rules which are adopted by all mankind when the meaning of other writings
is to be ascertained.

It has been added, as a rule of interpretation, that when a revelation is
sufficiently attested, and in consequence of that admitted, nothing is to be
deduced from it which is contrary to reason. As this rule is liable to be
greatly misunderstood, and has sometimes been pushed to injurious
consequences, we shall consider it at some length; and point out the sense
in which it may be safely admitted.

Some persons, who advocate this principle of interpretation, appear to
confound the reason of man, with the reason or nature of things, and the
relations which subsist among them. These however can be known fully to
God alone; and to use the term reason in this sense, is the same as to use it
in the sense of the reason of God, — to an equality with which human
reason cannot aspire. It may be the reverse of Divine reason, or a faint
radiation from it, but never can it be full and perfect as the reason of a
mind of perfect knowledge. It is admitted that nothing can be revealed by
God, as truth, contradictory of his knowledge, and of the nature of things
themselves; but it follows not from this, that nothing should be contained in
that revelation contradictory of the limited and often erring reason of man.

Another distinction necessary to be made in order to the right application
of this rule is, that a doctrine which cannot be proved by our reason, is not
on that account, contrary either to the nature of things, or even to reason itself. This is sometimes lost sight of, and that which has no evidence from our reason is hastily presumed to be against it. Now rational investigation is a process by which we inquire into the truth or falsehood of any thing by comparing it with what we intuitively, or by experience, know to be true, or with that which we have formerly demonstrated to be so. “By reason,” says Cicero, “we are led from things apprehended and understood, to things not apprehended.” Rational proof therefore consists in the agreement or disagreement of that which is compared with truths already supposed to be established. But there may be truths, the evidence of which can only be fully known to the Divine mind, and on which the reasoning or comparing faculty of an inferior nature cannot, from their vastness or obscurity, be employed; and such truths there must be in any revelation which treats of the nature and perfections of God; his will as to us, — and the relations we stand in to him, and to another state of being. As facts and doctrines, they are as much capable of revelation as if the whole reason of things on which they are grounded were put into the revelation also; but they may be revealed as authoritative declarations, of which the process of proof is hidden, either because it transcends our faculties, or for other reasons, and we have therefore no rational evidence of their truth farther than we have rational evidence that they come from God, which is in fact a more powerful demonstration. That a revelation may contain truths of this transcendent nature must be allowed by all who have admitted its necessity, if they would be consistent with themselves; for its necessity rests, in great part, upon the weakness of human reason. If our natural faculties could have reached the truths thus exhibited to us, there had been no need of supernatural instruction; and if it has been vouchsafed, the degree depends upon the Divine will, and he may give a doctrine with its reasons, or without them; for surely the ground of our obligation to believe his word does not rest upon our perception of the rational evidence of the truths he requires us to believe. If doctrines then be given without the reasons on which they rest, that is, without any apparent agreement with what is already known; because the process of proof must, in many cases, be a comparison of that which is too vast to be fully apprehended by us with something else which, because known by us, must be comparatively little, or perhaps in some of its qualities or relations of a different nature, so that no fit comparison of things so dissimilar can be instituted; this circumstance proves the absence of rational evidence to us; but it by no means follows, that the doctrine is incapable of rational proof, though probably no reason
but that of God, or of a more exalted being than man in his present state may be adequate to unfold it.

It has indeed been maintained, that though our reason may be inadequate to the discovery of such truths as the kind of revelation we have supposed to be necessary must contain, yet, when aided by this revelation, it is raised into so perfect a condition, that what appears incongruous to it ought to be concluded contrary to the revelation itself. This to a certain extent, is true. When a doctrine is clearly revealed to us, standing as it does upon an infallible authority, no contrary doctrine can be true, whether found without the record of the revelation, or deduced from it; for this is in fact no more than saying, that human opinions must be tried by Divine authority, and that revelation must be consistent with itself. The test to which in this case, however, we subject a contradictory doctrine, so long as we adhere to the revelation, is formed of principles which our reason did not furnish, but such as were communicated to us by supernatural interposition; and the judge to which we refer is not, properly speaking, reason, but revelation.

But if by this is meant, that our reason, once enlightened by the annunciation of the great truths of revelation, can discover or complete, in all cases, the process of their rational proof, that is, their conformity to the nature and truth of things, and is thus authorized to reject whatever cannot be thus harmonized with our own deductions from the leading truths thus revealed, so great a concession cannot be made to human ability. In many of the rules of morals, and the doctrines of religion too, it may be allowed, that a course of thought is opened which may be pursued to the enlargement of the rational evidence of the doctrines taught, but not as to what concerns many of the attributes of God; his purposes concerning the human race; some of his most important procedures toward us; and the future destiny of man. When once it is revealed that man is a creature, we cannot but perceive the reasonableness of our being governed by the law of our Creator; that this is founded in his right and our duty; and that, when we are concerned with a wise, and gracious, and just Governor, what is our duty must of necessity be promotive of our happiness. But if the revelation should contain any declarations as to the nature of the Creator himself, as that he is eternal and self existent and in every place; and that he knows all things; the thoughts thus suggested, the doctrines thus stated, nakedly and authoritatively, are too mysterious to be distinctly apprehended by us, and we are unable, by comparing them with any thing
else, (for we know nothing with which we can compare them,) to acquire any clear views of the manner in which such a being exists, or why such perfections necessarily flow from his peculiar nature. If, therefore, the revelation itself does not state in addition to the mere facts that he is self existent, omnipresent, omniscient, &c, the manner in which the existence of such attributes harmonizes with the nature and reason of things, we cannot supply the chasm; and should we even catch some view of the rational evidence, which is not denied, we are unable to complete it; our reason is not enlightened up to the full measure of these truths, nor on such subjects are we quite certain that some of our most rational deductions are perfectly sound, and we cannot, therefore, make use of them as standards by which to try any doctrine, beyond the degree in which they are clearly revealed, and authoritatively stated to us. Other examples might be given, but these are sufficient for illustration.

These observations being made, it will be easy to assign definite limits to the rule, “that no doctrine in an admitted revelation is to be understood in a sense contrary to reason.” The only way in which such a rule can be safely received is, that nothing is to be taken as a true interpretation, when, as to the subject in question, we have sufficient knowledge to affirm, that the interpretation is contrary to the nature of things, which, in this case, it is also necessary to be assured that we have been able to ascertain. Of some things we know the nature without a revelation, inasmuch as they lie within the range of our own observation and experience, as that a human body cannot be in two places at the same time. Of other things we know the nature by revelation, and by that our knowledge is enlarged. If, therefore, from some figurative passages of a revelation, any person, as the papists, should affirm, that wine is human blood, or that a human body can be in two places at the same time, it is contrary to our reason, that is, not to mere opinion, but to the nature of something which we know so well, that we are bound to reject the interpretation as an absurdity. If, again, any were to interpret passages which speak of God as having the form of man to mean, that he has merely a local presence, our reason has been taught by revelation, that God is a spirit, and exists every where, that is, so far we have been taught the nature of things as to God, that we reject the interpretation, as contrary to what has been so clearly revealed, and resolve every anthropomorphite expression we may find in the revelation into figurative and accommodated language. In the application of this rule, when even thus limited, care is, however, to be taken, that we distinguish
what is capable of being tried by it. If we compare one thing with another, in order to determine whether it agrees with, or differs from it, it is not enough that we have sufficient knowledge of that with which we compare it, and which we have made the standard of judgment. It is also necessary that the things compared should be of the same nature; and that the comparison should be made in the same respects. We take for illustration the case just given. Of two bodies we can affirm, that they cannot be in the same place at the same time; out we cannot affirm that of a body and a spirit, for we know what relation bodies have to place and to each other, but we do not know what relation spirits have to each other, or to space. This may illustrate the first rule. The second demands, that the comparison be made in the same respect. If we affirm of two bodies, one of a round, and the other of a square figure, that their figure is the same, the comparison determines the case, and at once detects the error; but of these bodies, so different in figure, it may be affirmed without contradiction, that they are of the same specific gravity, for the difference of figure is not that in respect of which the comparison is made. We apply this to the interpretation of a revelation of God and his will. The rule which requires us to reject as a true interpretation of that revelation, whatever is contrary to reason, may be admitted in all cases where we know the real nature of things, and conduct the comparison with the cautions just given; but it would be most delusive, and would counteract the intention of the revelation itself, by unsettling its authority, if it were applied in any other way. For,

1. In all cases where the nature of things is not clearly and satisfactorily known, it cannot be affirmed that a doctrine contradicts them, and is therefore contrary to reason.

2. When that of which we would form a rational judgment is not itself distinctly apprehended, it cannot be satisfactorily compared with those things, the nature of which we adequately know, and therefore cannot be said to be contrary to reason.

Now in such a revelation as we have supposed necessary for man, there are many facts and doctrines which are not capable of being compared with any thing we adequately know, and they therefore lie wholly without the range of the rule in question. We suppose it to declare what God, the infinite First Cause, is. But it is of the nature of such a being to be, in many respects, peculiar to himself, and, as in those respects he cannot admit of
comparison with any other, what may be false, if affirmed of ourselves, because contradictory to what we know of human nature, may be true of him, to whom the nature of things is his own nature, and his own nature alone. The same observation may be made as to many of his natural attributes; they are the attributes of a peculiar nature, and are therefore peculiar to themselves, either in kind or in degree; they admit of no comparison, each being like HIMSELF, *sui generis:* and the nature of things, as to them respectively, is their own nature. The same reasoning may, in part, be applied to the general purposes of God, in making and governing his creatures. They are not, in every respect, capable of being compared to any thing we adequately know, in order to determine their reasonableness. Creatures do not stand to each other in all the relations in which they stand to him, and no reasoning from their mutual relations can assist us in judging of the plans he has formed with respect to the whole, with the extent of which, indeed, we are unacquainted, or often of a part, whose relations to the whole we know not. Were we to subject what he has commanded us to do, or to leave undone, to the test of reasonableness, we should often be at a loss how to commence the inquiry, for it may have a reason arising out of his own nature, which we either know not at all, or only in the partial and authoritative revelations he has made of himself; or out of his general plans, of which we are not judges, for the reasons just given; or its reason may lie in our own nature, which we know but partially, because we find it differently operated upon by circumstances, and cannot know in what circumstances we may at any future time be placed.

With respect to the moral perfections of God, as they are more capable of a complete comparison with what we find in intelligent creatures, the notion of infinity being applicable to them in a different sense to that in which it is applied to his natural attributes, and adequate ideas of justice and mercy and goodness being within our reach, this rule is much more applicable in all cases which would involve interpretations consistent with or opposed to these ideas; and any deduction clearly contrary to them is to be rejected, as grounded not upon the revelation but a false interpretation. This will be the more confirmed, if we find any thing in the revelation itself in the form of an appeal to our own ideas of moral subjects, as for instance of justice and equity, in justification of the Divine proceedings; for then we have the authority of the Giver of the revelation himself for attaching such ideas to his justice and equity as are implied in the same terms in the
language of men. A doctrine which would impugn these attributes, is not therefore to be deduced from such a revelation; but here the rule can only be applied to such cases as we fully comprehend. There may be an apparent injustice in a case, which, if we knew the whole of it, would be found to harmonize with the strictest equity; and what evidence of conformity to the moral attributes of God it now wants may be manifested in a future state, either by superior information then vouchsafed to us, or, when the subject of the proceeding is an immortal being, by the different circumstances of compensation in which he may be placed.

Upon the whole then it will appear, that this rule of interpreting a revelation is necessarily but of limited application, and chiefly respects those parts of the record in which obscure passages and figurative language may occur. In most others, a revelation, if comprehensive, will be found its own interpreter by bringing every doubtful case to be determined by its own unquestionable general principles, and explicit declarations. The use of reason, therefore, in matters of revelation, is to investigate the evidences on which it is founded, and fairly and impartially to interpret it according to the ordinary rules of interpretation in other cases. Its limit is the authority of God. When he has explicitly laid down a doctrine, that doctrine is to be humbly received, whatever degree of rational evidence may be afforded of its truth, or withheld; and no torturing or perverting criticisms can be innocently resorted to, to bring a doctrine into a better accordance with our favourite views and systems, any more than to make a precept bend to the love and practice of our vicious indulgences. A larger scope than this cannot certainly be assigned to human reason in matters of revelation, when it is elevated to the office of a judge — a judge of the evidences on which a professed revelation rests, and a judge of its meaning after the application of the established rules of interpretation in other cases. But if reason be considered as a learner, it may have a much wider range in those fields of intelligence which a genuine revelation from God will open to our view. All truth, even that which to us is most abstruse and mysterious, is capable of rational demonstration, though not to the reason of man, in the present state, and in some cases probably to no reason below that of the Divine nature. Truth is founded in reality, and for that reason is truth.

Some truths therefore, which a revelation only could make known, will often appear to us rational, because consistent with what we already know. Meditation upon them, or experience of their reality in new circumstances in which we may be placed, may enlarge that evidence; and thus our views
of the conformity of many of the doctrines revealed, with the nature and reality of things, may acquire a growing clearness and distinctness. The observations of others also may, by reading and converse, be added to our own, and often serve to carry out our minds into some new and richer vein of thought. Thus it is that reason, instead of being fettered, as some pretend, by being regulated, is enlightened by revelation, and enabled from the first principles, and by the grand landmarks which it furnishes, to pursue its inquiries into many subjects to an extent which enriches and ennobles the human intellect, and administers continual food to the strength of religious principle. This, however, is not the case with all subjects. Many, as we have already seen, are from their very nature wholly incapable of investigation. At the first step we launch into darkness, and find in religion as well as in natural philosophy, beyond certain limits, insurmountable barriers, which bid defiance to human penetration; and even where the rational evidence of a truth but nakedly stated in revelation, or very partially developed, can by human powers be extended, that circumstance gives us no qualification to judge of the truth of another doctrine which is stated on the mere authority of the dispenser of the revelation, and of which there is no evidence at all to our reason. It may belong to subjects of another and a higher class; and if it be found in the Record, is not to be explained away by principles which we may have drawn from other truths, though revealed, for those inferences have no higher an authority than the strength of our own fallible powers, and consequently cannot be put in competition with the declarations of an infallible teacher, ascertained by just rules of grammatical and literary interpretation.

NOTE A.

“IN whatever point of view,” says an able living author, “the subject be placed, the same arguments which show the incapability of man, by the light of nature to discover religious truth, will serve likewise to show, that, when it is revealed to him, he is not warranted in judging of it merely by the notions which he had previously formed. For is it not a solecism to affirm, that man’s natural reason is a fit standard for measuring the wisdom or truth of those things with which it is wholly unacquainted, except so far as they have been supernaturally revealed?”
“But what, then,” (an objector will say,) “is the province of reason? Is it altogether useless? Or are we to be precluded from using it in this most important of all concerns, for our security against error?”

Our answer is, that we do not lessen either the utility or the dignity of human reason, by thus confining the exercise of it within those natural boundaries which the Creator himself hath assigned to it. We admit, with the Deist, that “reason is the foundation of all certitude:” and we admit, therefore, that it is fully competent to judge of the credibility of any thing which is proposed to it as a Divine revelation. But we deny that it has a right to dispute (because we maintain that it has not the ability to disprove) the wisdom or the truth of those things which revelation proposes to its acceptance. Reason is to judge whether those things be indeed so revealed: and this judgment it is to form, from the evidence to that effect. In this respect it is “the foundation of certitude,” because it enables us to ascertain the fact, that God hath spoken to us. But this fact once established, the credibility, nay, the certainty of the things revealed, follows as of necessary consequence; since no deduction of reason can be more indubitable than this, that whatever God reveals must be true. Here, then, the authority of reason ceases. Its judgment is finally determined by the fact of the revelation itself: and it has thenceforth nothing to do, but to believe and to obey.

“But are we to believe every doctrine, however incomprehensible, however mysterious, nay, however seemingly contradictory to sense and reason?”

We answer, that revelation is supposed to treat of subjects with which man’s natural reason is not conversant. It is therefore to be expected, that it should communicate some truths not to be fully comprehended by human understandings. But these we may safely receive, upon the authority which declares them, without danger of violating truth. Real and evident contradictions, no man can, indeed, believe, whose intellects are sound and clear. But such contradictions are no more proposed for our belief, than impossibilities are enjoined for our practice; though things difficult to understand, as well as things hard to perform, may perhaps be required of us, for the trial of our faith and resolution. Seeming contradictions may also occur; but these may seem to be such because they are slightly or superficially considered, or because they are judged of by principles inapplicable to the subject, and without so clear a knowledge of the nature of the things revealed, as may lead us to form an adequate conception of
then. These, however, afford no solid argument against the truth of what is proposed to our belief: since, unless we had really such an insight into the mysterious parts of revelation as might enable us to prove them to be contradictory and false, we have no good ground for rejecting them; and we only betray our own ignorance and perverseness in refusing to take God’s word for the truth of things which pass man’s understanding.

The simple question, indeed, to be considered, is, whether it be reasonable to believe, upon competent authority, things which we can neither discover ourselves, nor, when discovered, fully and clearly comprehend? Now every person of common observation must be aware, that unless he be content to receive solely upon the testimony of others a great variety of information, much of which he may be wholly unable to account for or explain, he could scarcely obtain a competency of knowledge to carry him safely through the common concerns of life. And with respect to scientific truths, the greatest masters in philosophy know full well that many things are reasonably to be believed, nay, must be believed on sure and certain grounds of conviction, though they are absolutely incomprehensible by our understandings, and even so difficult to be reconciled with other truths of equal certainty, as to carry the appearance of being contradictory and impossible. This will serve to show, that it is not contrary to reason to believe, on sufficient authority, some things which cannot be comprehended, and some things which, from the narrow and circumscribed views we are able to take of them, appear to be repugnant to our notions of truth. The ground on which we believe such things, is the strength and certainty of the evidence with which they are accompanied. And this is precisely the ground on which we are required to believe the truths of revealed religion. The evidence that they come from God, is, to reason itself, as incontrovertible a proof that they are true, as in matters of human science would be the evidence of sense, or of mathematical demonstration.
CHAPTER 12. — ANTIQUITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

FROM the preparatory course of argument and observation which has been hitherto pursued, we proceed to the investigation of the question, whether there are sufficient reasons to conclude that such a revelation of truth, as we have seen to be so necessary for the instruction and moral correction of mankind, is to be found in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; a question of the utmost importance, inasmuch as, if not found there, there are the most cogent reasons for concluding, that a revelation was never vouchsafed to man, or that it is irretrievably lost.

No person living in an enlightened country will for a moment contend, that the Koran of Mohammed, or any of the reputed sacred writings of the Chinese, Hindoos, or Budhists, can be put into competition with the Bible; so that it is universally acknowledged among us, that there is but one book in the world which has claims to Divine authority so presumptively substantial as to be worthy of serious examination, — and therefore if the advantage of supernatural and infallibly instruction has been afforded to man, it may be concluded to be found in that alone. This consideration indicates the proper temper of mind with which such an inquiry ought to be approached.

Instead of wishing to discover that the claims of the Scriptures to Divine authority are unfounded, (the case it is to be feared with too many,) every humble and sincere man, who, conscious of his own mental infirmity, and recollecting the perplexities in which the wisest of men have been involved on religious and moral subjects, will wish to find at length an infallible guide, and will examine the evidences of the Bible with an anxious desire that he may find sufficient reason to acknowledge their Divine authority; and he will feel, that, should he be disappointed, he has met with a painful misfortune, and not a matter for triumph. If this temper of mind, which is perfectly consistent with full, and even severe examination of the claims of Scripture, does not exist, the person destitute of it is neither a sincere nor an earnest inquirer after truth.

We may go farther and say, though we have no wish to prejudice the argument, that if the person examining the Holy Scriptures in order to
ascertain the truth of their pretensions to Divine authority, has had the means of only a general acquaintance with their contents, he ought, if a lover of virtue as well as truth, to be predisposed in their favour; and that, if he is not, the moral state of his heart is liable to great suspicion. For that the theological system of the Scriptures is in favour of the highest virtues, cannot be denied. It both prescribes them, and affords the strongest possible motives to their cultivation. Love to God, and to all mankind; meekness, courtesy, charity; the government of the appetites and affections within the rules of temperance; the renunciation of evil imaginations, and sins of the heart; exact justice in all our dealings; — these, and indeed every other virtue, civil, social, domestic, and personal, are clearly taught, and solemnly commanded: and it might be confidently put to every candid person, however skeptical, whether the universal observance of the morality of the Scriptures, by all ranks and nations, would not produce the most beneficial changes in society, and secure universal peace, friendship, and happiness. This he would not deny; this has been acknowledged by some infidel writers themselves, and if so, — if after all the bewildering speculations of the wisest men on religious and moral subjects, and which, as we have seen, led to nothing definite and influential, a book is presented to us which shows what virtue is, and the means of attaining it; which enforces it by sufficient sanctions, and points every individual and every community to a certain remedy for all their vices, disorders, and miseries; — we must renounce all title to be considered lovers of virtue and lovers of our species, if we do not feel ourselves interested in the establishment of its claims to Divine authority; and because we love virtue, we shall wish that the proof of this important point may be found satisfactory, This surely is the temper of mind we ought to bring to such an inquiry; and the rejection of the Scriptures by those who are not under its influence, is rather a presumption in their favour than a consideration which throws upon them the least discredit.

In addition to the proofs which have been given of the necessity of a revelation, both from the reason of things, and the actual circumstances of the world, it has been established, that miracles actually performed, and prophecies really uttered and clearly accomplished, are satisfactory proofs of the authority of a communication of the will of God through the agency of men. We have however stated, that in cases where we are not witnesses of the miracles, and auditors of the predictions, but obtain information respecting them from some record, we must, before we can admit the force
of the argument drawn from them, be assured, that the record was early and faithfully made, and has been uncorruptly kept, with respect to the miracles; and, with respect to the prophecies, that they were also uttered and recorded previously to those events occurring which are alleged to be accomplishments of them. These are points necessary to be ascertained before it is worth the trouble to inquire, whether the alleged miracles have any claim to be considered as miraculous in a proper sense, and the predictions as revelations from an omniscient, and, consequently, a Divine Being.

The first step in this inquiry is, to ascertain the existence, age, and actions, of the leading persons mentioned in Scripture as the instruments by whom it is professed the revelations they contain were made known.

With respect to these PERSONS it is not necessary that our attention should be directed to more than two, MOSES and CHRIST, — one the reputed agent of the Mosaic, the other the author of the Christian revelation; because the evidence which establishes their existence and actions, and the period of both, will also establish all that is stated in the same records as to the subordinate and succeeding agents.

The Biblical record states, that Moses was the leader and legislator of the nation of the Jews near sixteen hundred years before the Christian era, according to the common chronology. This is grounded upon the tradition and national history of the Jews; and it is certain, that so far from there being any reason to doubt the fact, much less to suppose, with an extravagant fancy of some modern infidels, that Moses was a mythological personage, the very same principles of historical evidence which assure us of the truth of any unquestioned fact of profane history, assure us of the truth of this. It cannot be doubted but that the Jews existed very anciently as a nation. It is equally certain, that it has been an uninterrupted and universally received tradition among them in all ages, that Moses led them out of Egypt, and first gave them their system of laws and religion. The history of that event they have in writing, and also the laws attributed to him. There is nothing in the leading events of their history contradicted by remaining authentic historical records of those nations with whom they were geographically and politically related, to support any suspicion of its accuracy; and as their institutions must have been established and enjoined by some political authority, and bear the marks of a systematic arrangement, established at once, and not growing up under the operation
of circumstances at distant periods, to one superior and commanding mind
they are most reasonably to be attributed. The Jews refer them to Moses,
and if this be denied, no proof can be offered in favour of any other person
being entitled to that honour. The history is therefore uncontradicted by
any opposing evidence, and can only be denied on some principle of
skepticism which would equally shake the foundations of all history
whatever.

The same observations may be made as to the existence of the Founder of
the Christian religion. In the records of the New Testament he is called
JESUS CHRIST, because he professed to be the Messias predicted in the
Jewish Scriptures, and was acknowledged as such by his followers; and his
birth is fixed upward of eighteen centuries ago. This also is at least
uncontradicted testimony. The Christian religion exists, and must have had
an author. Like the institutions of Moses, it bears the evidence of being the
work of one mind; and, as a theological system, presents no indications of
a gradual and successive elaboration. There was a time when there was no
such religion as that of Christianity, and when pagan idolatry and Judaism
universally prevailed; it follows, that there once flourished a teacher to
whom it owed its origin, and all tradition and history unite in their
testimony, that that lawgiver was Jesus Christ. No other person has ever
been adduced, living at a later period, as the founder of this form of
religion.

To the existence, and the respective antiquity ascribed in the Scriptures to
the founders of the Jewish and Christian religion, many ancient writers give
ample testimony; who being themselves neither of the Jewish nor Christian
religion, cannot be suspected of having any design to furnish evidence of
the truth of either. MANETHO, CHEREMON, APOLLONIUS, and
LYSIMACHUS, beside some other ancient Egyptians, whose histories are
now lost, are quoted by Josephus, as extant in his days; and passages are
collected from them, in which they agree that Moses was the leader of the
Jews when they departed from Egypt, and the founder of their laws.
STRABO, who flourished in the century before Christ, (Geog. 50. 16,) gives
an account of the law of Moses as forbidding images, and limiting Divine
worship to one invisible and universal Being. JUSTIN, a Roman historian, in
his 36th book devotes a chapter to an account of the origin of the Jews;
represents them as sprung from ten sons of Israel, and speaks of Moses as
the commander of the Jews who went out of Egypt, of the institution of
the Sabbath, and the priesthood of Aaron. PLINY speaks of Moses as
giving rise to a sect of Magicians, probably with reference to his contest with the magicians of Egypt. TACITUS says, “Moses gave a new form of worship to the Jews, and a system of religious ceremonies, the reverse of every thing known to any other age or country.” JUVENAL, in his 14th Satire, mentions Moses as the author of a volume, which was preserved with great care among the Jews, by which the worship of images and eating swine’s flesh were forbidden; and circumcision and the observation of the Sabbath strictly enjoined. LONGINUS cites Moses as the lawgiver of the Jews, and praises the sublimity of his style in the account he gives of the creation. The ORPHIC verses which are very ancient, inculcate the worship of one God, as recommended by that law “which was given by him who was drawn out of the water, and received two tables of stone from the hand of God.” — (Eus. Præp. Ev. 50. 13, c. 12.) DIODORUS SICULUS, in his first book when he treats of those who consider the gods to be the authors of their laws, adds, “Among the Jews was Moses, who called God by the name of Iao, Iao,” meaning Jehovah. JUSTIN MARTYR expressly says, that most of the historians, poets, lawgivers, and philosophers of the Greeks, mention Moses as the leader and prince of the Jewish nation. From all these testimonies, and many more were it necessary might be adduced, it is clear that it was as commonly received among ancient nations, as among the Jews themselves, that Moses was the founder and lawgiver of the Jewish state.

As to CHRIST, it is only necessary to give the testimony of two historians, whose antiquity no one ever thought of disputing. Suetonius mentions him by name, and says, that Claudius expelled from Rome those who adhered to his cause. TACITUS records the progress which the Christian religion had made; the violent death its founder had suffered; that he flourished under the reign of Tiberius; that Pilate was then procurator of Judea; and that the original author of this profession was Christ. Thus, not only the real existence of the founder of Christianity, but the period in which he lived is exactly ascertained from writings, the genuineness of which has never been doubted.

The ANTIQUITY OF THE BOOKS which contain the history, the doctrines, and the laws, of the Jewish and the Christian lawgivers, is next to be considered, and the evidence is not less satisfactory. The importance of this fact in the argument is obvious. If the writings in question were made at, or very near, the time in which the miraculous acts recorded in them were performed, then the evidence of those events having occurred is rendered
the stronger, for they were written at the time when many were still living who might have contradicted the narration if false; and the improbability is also greater, that, in the very age and place when and where those events are said to have been performed, any writer would have dared to run the hazard of prompt, certain, and disgraceful detection. It is equally important in the evidence of prophecy; for if the predictions were recorded long before the events which accomplished them took place, then the only question which remains is, whether the accomplishment is satisfactory; for then the evidence becomes irresistible.

With respect to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the language in which they are written is a strong proof of their antiquity. The Hebrew ceased to be spoken as a living language soon after the Babylonish captivity, and the learned agree that there was no grammar made for the Hebrew till many ages after. The difficulty of a forgery, at any period after the time of that captivity, is therefore apparent. Of these books too there was a Greek translation made about two hundred and eighty-seven years before the Christian era, and laid up in the Alexandrian library.

Josephus gives a catalogue of the sacred books among the Jews, in which he expressly mentions the five books of Moses, thirteen of the Prophets, four of Hymns and Moral Precepts; and if, as many critics maintain, Ruth was added to Judges, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah to his Prophecies, the number agrees with those of the Old Testament as it is received at the present day.

The Samaritans, who separated from the Jews many hundred years before the birth of Christ, have in their language a Pentateuch, in the main exactly agreeing with the Hebrew; and the pagan writers before cited, with many others, speak of Moses not only as a lawgiver and a prince, but as the author of books esteemed sacred by the Jews. If the writings of Moses then are not genuine, the forgery must have taken place at a very early period; but a few considerations will show, that at any time this was impossible.

These books could never have been surreptitiously put forth in the name of Moses, as the argument of Leslie most fully proves: — "It is impossible that those books should have been received as his, it not written by him, because they speak of themselves as delivered by Moses, and kept in the ark from his time: ‘And it came to pass when Moses had made an end of
writing the words of this law in a book until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take the book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee,’ Deuteronomy 31:24-26. A copy of this book was also to be left with the king: ‘And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites; and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life,’ Deuteronomy 18:18. This book of the law thus speaks of itself, not only as a history or relation of what things were done, but as the standing and municipal law and statutes of the nation of the Jews, binding the king as well as the people. Now in whatever age after Moses this book may be supposed to have been forged, it was impossible that it could be received as truth, because it was not then to be found (as it professed to be) either in the ark or with the king, or any where else; for when first invented, every body must know that they had never heard of it before.

“Could any man, now at this day, invent a book of statutes or acts of parliament for England, and make it pass upon the nation as the only book of statutes that ever they had known? As impossible was it for the books of Moses (if they were invented in any age after Moses) to have been received for what they declare themselves to be, viz. the statutes and municipal law of the nation of the Jews: and to have persuaded the Jews, that they had owned and acknowledged these books, all along from the days of Moses, to that day in which they were first invented; that is, that they had owned them before they had ever so much as heard of them. Nay, more, the whole nation must, in an instant, forget their former laws and government, if they could receive these books as being their former laws. And they could not otherwise receive them, because they vouched themselves so to be. Let me ask the Deists but one short question: Was there ever a book of sham laws, which were not the laws of the nation, palmed upon any people, since the world began? If not, with what face can they say this of the book of laws of the Jews? Why will they say that of them which they confess impossible in any nation, or among any people?

“But they must be yet more unreasonable. For the books of Moses have a farther demonstration of their truth than even other law
books have; for they not only contain the laws, but give a historical account of their institution, and the practice of them from that time: as of the passover, in memory of the death of the first born in Egypt, Numbers 8:17, 18: and that the same day, all the first born of Israel, both of man and beast, were, by a perpetual law, dedicated to God: and the Levites taken for all the first born of the children of Israel. That Aaron’s rod, which budded, was kept in the ark, in memory of the rebellion, and wonderful destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and for the confirmation of the priesthood to the tribe of Levi. As likewise the pot of manna, in memory of their having been fed with it forty years in the wilderness. That the brazen serpent was kept (which remained to the days of Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18:4,) in memory of that wonderful deliverance, by only looking upon it, from the biting of the fiery serpents, Numbers 21:9. The feast of pentecost, in memory of the dreadful appearance of God upon Mount Horeb, &c.

“And beside these remembrances of particular actions and occurrences, there were other solemn institutions in memory of their deliverance out of Egypt, in the general, which included all the particulars. As of the Sabbath, Deuteronomy 5:15. Their daily sacrifices and yearly expiation; their new moons, and several feasts and fasts. So that there were yearly, monthly, weekly, daily remembrances and recognitions of these things.

“And not only so, but the books of the same Moses tell us, that a particular tribe (of Levi) was appointed and consecrated by God as his priests; by whose hands, and none other, the sacrifices of the people were to be offered, and these solemn institutions to be celebrated. That it was death for any other to approach the altar. That their high priest wore a glorious mitre, and magnificent robes of God’s own contrivance, with the miraculous Urim and Thummim in his breastplate, whence the Divine responses were given, Num. 27:21. That at his word the king and all the people were to go out, and to come in. That these Levites were likewise the chief judges even in all civil causes, and that it was death to resist their sentence, Deuteronomy 17:8-13; 1 Chronicles 23:4. Now whenever it can be supposed that these books of Moses were forged in some ages after Moses, it is impossible they could
have been received as true, unless the forgers could have made the whole nation believe, that they had received these books from their fathers, had been instructed in them when they were children, and had taught them to their children; moreover, that they had all been circumcised, and did circumcise their children, in pursuance to what was commanded in these books: that they had observed the yearly passover, the weekly Sabbath, the new moons, and all these several feasts, fasts, and ceremonies, commanded in these books: that they had never eaten any swine’s flesh, or other meats prohibited in these books: that they had a magnificent tabernacle, with a visible priesthood to administer in it, which was confined to the tribe of Levi; over whom was placed a glorious high priest, clothed with great and mighty prerogatives, whose death only could deliver those that were fled to the cities of refuge, Numbers 35:25, 28. And that these priests were their ordinary judges, even in civil matters: I say, was it possible to have persuaded a whole nation of men, that they had known and practised all these things if they had not done it? or, secondly, to have received a book for truth, which said they had practised them, and appealed to that practice?

“But now let us descend to the utmost degree of supposition, viz. that these things were practised, before these books of Moses were forged; and that those books did only impose upon the nation, in making them believe that they had kept these observances in memory of such and such things as were inserted in those books.

“Well then, let us proceed upon this supposition, (however groundless,) and now, will not the same impossibilities occur, as in the former case? For, first, this must suppose that the Jews kept all these observances in memory of nothing, or without knowing any thing of their original, or the reason why they kept them. Whereas these very observances did express the ground and reason of their being kept, as the passover, in memory of God’s passing over the children of the Israelites, in that night wherein he slew all the first born of Egypt, and so of the rest.

“But, secondly, let us suppose, contrary both to reason and matter of fact, that the Jews did not know any reason at all why they kept these observances; yet was it possible to put it upon them — that they had kept these observances in memory of what they had never
heard of before that day, whensoever you will suppose that these books of Moses were first forged? For example, suppose I should now forge some romantic story of strange things done a thousand years ago; and, in confirmation of this, should endeavour to persuade the Christian world that they had all along, from that day to this, kept the first day of the week in memory of such a hero, an Apollonius, a Barcosbas, or a Mohammed; and had all been baptized in his name; and swore by his name, and upon that very book (which I had then forged, and which they never saw before,) in their public judicatures; that this book was their Gospel and law, which they had ever since that time, these thousand years past, universally received and owned, and none other. I would ask any Deist, whether he thinks it possible that such a cheat could pass, or such a legend be received as the Gospel of Christians, and that they could be made believe that they never had any other Gospel?

“Let me give one very familiar example more in this case. There is the Stonehenge in Salisbury Plain, every body knows it; and yet none knows the reason why those great stones were set there, or by whom, or in memory of what.

“Now, suppose I should write a book to-morrow, and tell them that these stones were set up by Hercules, Polyphemus, or Garagantua, in memory of such and such of their actions. And for a farther confirmation of this, should say in this book, that it was written at the time when such actions were done, and by the very actors themselves, or eye witnesses. And that this book had been received as truth, and quoted by authors of the greatest reputation in all ages since. Moreover that this book was well known in England, and enjoined by act of parliament to be taught our children, and that we did teach it to our children, and had been taught it ourselves when we were children. I ask any Deist, whether he thinks this could pass upon England? and whether, if I, or any other should insist upon it, we should not, instead of being believed, be sent to Bedlam?

“Now, let us compare this with the Stonehenge, as I may call it, or twelve great stones set up at Gilgal, which is told in the fourth chapter of Joshua. There it is said, verse 6, that the reason why they were set up was, that when their children in after ages, should ask the meaning of it, it should be told them.
“And the thing in memory of which they were set up, was such as could not possibly be imposed upon that nation, at that time when it was said to be done; it was as wonderful and miraculous as their passage through the Red Sea.

“For notice was given to the Israelites the day before, of this great miracle to be done, Joshua 3:5. It was done at noon-day before the whole nation. And when the waters of Jordan were divided, it was not at any low ebb, but at the time when that river overflowed all his banks, verse 15. And it was done, not by winds, or in length of time which winds must take to do it; but all on the sudden, as soon as the ‘feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, then the waters which came down from above, stood and rose up upon a heap, very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan; and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the Salt sea, failed, and were cut off and the people passed over, right against Jericho. The priests stood in the midst of Jordan till all the armies of Israel had passed over. And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests’ feet were lift up upon the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned into their place, and flowed over all his banks as they did before. And the people came out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho, and those twelve stones which they took out of Jordan did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then shall ye let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over: as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over, that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.’ Chap. 4. from verse 18.

“Now, to form our argument, let us suppose that there never was any such thing as that passage over Jordan; that these stones at Gilgal were set up upon some other occasion, in some after age; and then, that some designing man invented this book of Joshua,
and said that it was written by Joshua at that time, and gave this stonage at Gilgal, for a testimony of the truth of it; would not everybody say to him, We know the stonage at Gilgal, but we never heard before of this reason for it, nor of this book of Joshua. Where has it been all this while? And where, and how came you, after so many ages, to find it? Beside, this book tells us, that this passage over Jordan was ordained to be taught our children, from age to age; and, therefore, that they were always to be instructed in the meaning of that stonage at Gilgal, as a memorial of it. But we were never taught it, when we were children; nor did ever teach our children any such thing. And it is not likely that it could have been forgotten, while so remarkable a stonage did continue, which was set up for that and no other end!

“And if, for the reasons before given, no such imposition could be put upon us as to the stonage in Salisbury Plain; how much less could it be to the stonage at Gilgal?

“And if, where we know not the reason of a bare naked monument, such a sham reason cannot be imposed, how much more is it impossible to impose upon us in actions and observances, which we celebrate in memory of particular passages? How impossible to make us forget those passages which we daily commemorate; and persuade us that we had always kept such institutions in memory of what we never heard of before; that is, that we knew it before we knew it!”

This able reasoning has never been refuted, nor can be; and if the books of the law must have been written by Moses, it is as easy to prove that Moses himself could not in the nature of the thing have deceived the people by an imposture, and a pretence of miraculous attestations, in order, like some later lawgivers among the heathens, to bring the people more willingly to submit to his institutions. The very instances of miracle he gives, rendered this impossible. “Suppose,” says the same writer, “any man should pretend, that yesterday he divided the Thames, in presence of all the people of London, and carried the whole city, men, women, and children, over to Southwark, on dry land, the waters standing like walls on both sides: I say, it is morally impossible that he could persuade the people of London, that this was true, when every man, woman, and child, could contradict him,
and say, that this was a notorious falsehood, for that they had not seen the Thames so divided, nor had gone over on dry land.

“As to Moses, I suppose it will be allowed me, that he could not have persuaded 600,000 men, that he had brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea; fed them forty years, without bread, by miraculous manna, and the other matters of fact, recorded in his books, if they had not been true. Because every man’s senses that was then alive must have contradicted it. And therefore he must have imposed upon all their senses, if he could have made them believe it, when it was false and no such things done.

“From the same reason, it was equally impossible for him to have made them receive his five books as truth, and not to have rejected them as a manifest imposture, which told of all these things as done before their eyes, if they had not been so done. See how positively he speaks to them, Deuteronomy 11:2, to verse 8: ‘And know you this day, for I speak not with your children, which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched-out arm, and his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt, unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land, and what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots; how he made the water of the Red Sea to overflow them as they pursued after you; and how the Lord hath destroyed them unto this day: And what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came unto this place; and what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliah, the son of Reuben, how the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel. But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord, which he did,’ &c.

“From hence we must suppose it impossible that these books of Moses (if an imposture) could have been invented and put upon the people who were then alive when all these things were said to be done.”

By these arguments the genuineness and authenticity of the books of Moses are established; and as to those of the prophets, which, with some predictions in the writings of Moses, comprise the prophetic branch of the
evidence of the Divine authority of the revelations they contain, it can be proved both from Jewish tradition, the list of Josephus, the Greek translation, and from their being quoted by ancient writers, that they existed many ages before several of those events occurred, to which we shall refer in the proper place as eminent and unequivocal instances of prophetic accomplishment. This part of the argument will therefore be also sufficiently established: the prophecy will be shown to have been delivered long before the event, and the event will be proved to be a fulfilment of the prophecy. A more minute examination of the date of the prophetic books rather belongs to those who write expressly on the canon of Scripture.

The same author from whom we have already largely quoted, (Leslie) applies his celebrated four rules for determining the truth of matters of fact in general, with equal force to the facts of the Gospel history as to those contained in the Mosaic writings. The rules are,

1. That the matter of fact be such, as that men’s outward senses, their eyes and ears may be judges of it. —

2. That it be done publicly in the face of the world. —

3. That not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions be performed. —

4. That such monuments and such actions and observances be instituted, and do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done.”

We have seen the manner in which these rules are applied to the books of Moses. The author thus applies them to the Gospel: —

“I come now to show, that as in the matters of fact of Moses, so likewise all these four marks do meet in the matters of fact which are recorded in the Gospel of our blessed Saviour. And my work herein will be the shorter, because all that is said before of Moses and his books, is every way as applicable to Christ and his Gospel. His works and his miracles are there said to be done publicly in the face of the world, as he argued to his accusers, ‘I spake openly to the world, and in secret have I said nothing:’ John 18:20. It is told, Acts 2:41, that three thousand at one time, and Acts 4:4, that above five thousand at another time, were converted upon conviction of what themselves had seen, what had been done
publicly before their eyes, wherein it was impossible to have imposed upon them. Therefore here were the two first rules before mentioned.

“Then for the two second: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper were instituted as perpetual memorials of these things; and they were not instituted in after ages, but at the very time when these things were said to be done; and have been observed without interruption, in all ages through the whole Christian world, down all the way from that time to this. And Christ himself did ordain apostles and other ministers of his Gospel, to preach and administer the sacraments; and to govern his Church: and that always, even unto the end of the world, Matthew 18:20. Accordingly, they have continued by regular succession to this day, and no doubt ever shall while the earth shall last. So that the Christian clergy are as notorious a matter of fact, as the tribe of Levi among the Jews. And the Gospel is as much a law to the Christians, as the book of Moses to the Jews: and it being part of the matters of fact related in the Gospel, that such an order of men were appointed by Christ, and to continue to the end of the world consequently, if the Gospel was a fiction, and invented (as it must be) in some ages after Christ; then, at that time when it was first invented, there could be no such order of clergy, as derived themselves from the institution of Christ; which must give the lie to the Gospel, and demonstrate the whole to be false. And the matters of fact of Christ being pressed to be true, not otherwise than as there was at that time, (whenever the Deists will suppose the Gospel to be forged,) not only public sacraments of Christ’s restitution, but an order of clergy, likewise, of his appointment to administer them: and it being impossible there could be any such things before they were invented, it is as impossible that they should be received when invented. And therefore, by what was said above, it was as impossible to have imposed upon mankind in this matter, by inventing of it in after ages, as at the time when those things were said to be done.

“The matters of fact of Mohammed, or what is fabled of the heathen deities, do all want some of the aforesaid four rules, whereby the certainty of matters of fact is demonstrated. First, for Mohammed, he pretended to no miracles, as he tells us in his Alcoran, c. 6, &c; and those which are commonly told of him pass
among the Mohammedans themselves but as legendary fables; and, as such, are rejected by the wise and learned among them: as the legends of their saints are in the Church of Rome. See Dr. Prideaux’s Life of Mohammed, page 34.

“But, in the next place, those which are told of him do all want the two first rules before mentioned. For his pretended converse with the moon; his Mersa, or night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence to heaven, &c, were not performed before any body. We have only his own word for them. And they are as groundless as the delusions of the Fox or Muggleton among ourselves. The same is to be said (in the second place) of the fables of the heathen gods, of Mercury’s stealing sheep, Jupiter’s turning himself into a bull, and the like; beside the folly and unworthiness of such senseless pretended miracles.

“It is true the heathen deities had their priests: they had likewise feasts, games, and other public institutions in memory of them. But all these want the fourth mark, viz. that such priesthood and institutions should commence from the time that such things as they commemorate were said to be done; otherwise they cannot secure after ages from the imposture, by detecting it, at the time when first invented, as hath been argued before. But the Bacchanalia, and other heathen feasts were instituted many ages after what was reported of these gods was said to be done, and therefore can be no proof. And the priests of Bacchus, Apollo, &c, were not ordained by these supposed gods; but were appointed by others, in after ages, only in honour to them. And therefore these orders of priests are no evidence to the matters of fact which are reported of their gods.

“Now to apply what has been said. You may challenge all the Deists in the world to show any action that is fabulous, which has all the four rules or marks before mentioned. No, it is impossible. And (to resume a little what is spoken to before) the histories of Exodus and the Gospel never could have been received, if they had not been true; because the institution of the priesthood of Levi, and of Christ; of the Sabbath, the Passover, of Circumcision, of Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, &c, are there related, as descending all the way down from those times, without
interruption. And it is full as impossible to persuade men that they had been circumcised or baptized, had circumcised or baptized their children, celebrated Passovers, sabbaths, sacraments, &c, under the government and administration of a certain order of priests, if they had done none of these things, as to make them believe that they had gone through seas upon dry land, seen the dead raised, &c. And without believing these, it was impossible that either the Law or the Gospel could have been received.

“And the truth of the matters of fact of Exodus and the Gospel, being no otherwise pressed upon men, than as they have practised such public institutions, it is appealing to the senses of mankind for the truth of them; and makes it impossible for any to have invented such stories in after ages, without a palpable detection of the cheat when first invented; as impossible as to have imposed upon the senses of mankind at the time when such public matters of fact were said to be done.”

But other evidence of the truth of the Gospel history, beside that which arises from this convincing reasoning, may be adduced.

In the first place, the narrative of the evangelists, as to the actions, &c, of Christ, cannot be rejected without renouncing all faith in history, any more than to deny that he really existed.

“We have the same reason to believe that the evangelists have given us a true history of the life and transactions of JESUS, as we have that Xenophon and Plato have given us a faithful and just narrative of the character and doctrines of the excellent Socrates. The sacred writers were, in every respect, qualified for giving a real circumstantial detail of the life and religion of the person whose memoirs they have transmitted down to us. They were the select companions and familiar friends of the hero of their story. They had free and liberal access to him at all times. They attended his public discourses, and in his moments of retirement he unbosomed his whole soul to them without disguise. They were daily witnesses of his sincerity and goodness of heart. They were spectators of the amazing operations he performed and of the silent unostentatious manner in which he performed them. In private he explained to them the doctrines of his religion in the most familiar, endearing converse, and gradually initiated them into the principles of his
Gospel, as their Jewish prejudices admitted. Some of these writers were his inseparable attendants, from the commencement of his public ministry to his death, and could give the world as true and faithful a narrative of his character and instructions, as Xenophon was enabled to publish of the life and philosophy of Socrates. If PLATO hath been in every respect qualified to compose an historical account of the behaviour of his master in his imprisonment; of the philosophic discourses he addressed to his friends before he drank the poisonous bowl; as he constantly attended him in those unhappy scenes; was present at those mournful interviews; — in like manner was the Apostle JOHN fitted for compiling a just and genuine narration of the last consolatory discourses our Lord delivered to his dejected followers, a little before his last sufferings, and of the unhappy exit he made, with its attendant circumstances, of which he was a personal spectator. The foundation of these things cannot be invalidated, without invalidating the faith of history. No writers have enjoyed more propitious, few have ever enjoyed such favourable opportunities for publishing just accounts of persons and things as the evangelists. Most of the Greek and Roman historians lived long after the persons they immortalize, and the events they record. The sacred writers commemorate actions they saw, discourses they heard, persecutions they supported; describe characters with which they were familiarly conversant, and transactions and scenes in which they themselves were intimately interested. The pages of their history are impressed with every feature of credibility: an artless simplicity characterizes all their writings. Nothing can be farther from vain ostentation and popular applause. No studied arts to dress up a cunningly devised fable. No vain declamation after any miracle of our SAVIOUR they relate. They record these astonishing operations with the same dispassionate coolness, as if they had been common transactions, without that ostentatious rhodomontade which enthusiasts and impostors universally employ. They give us a plain, unadorned narration of these amazing feats of supernatural power — saying nothing previously to raise our expectation, or after their performance breaking forth into any exclamation — but leaving the reader to draw the conclusion. The writers of these books are distinguished above all the authors who ever wrote accounts of persons and things for their sincerity and integrity. Enthusiasts and
impostors never proclaim to the world the weakness of their understanding, and the defects of their character. The evangelists honestly acquaint the reader with the lowness of their station, the indigence of their circumstances, the inveteracy of their national prejudices, their dullness of apprehension, their weakness of faith, their ambitious views, and the warm contentions they agitated among themselves. They even tell us how they basely deserted their Master, by a shameful precipitate flight, when he was seized by his enemies; and that after his crucifixion, they had all again returned to their former secular employments — for ever resigning all the hopes they had once fondly cherished, and abandoning the cause in which they had so long been engaged, notwithstanding all the proofs which had been exhibited, and the conviction they had before entertained, that Jesus was the Messiah, and that his religion was from God. A faithful picture this, held up to the reader, for him to contemplate the true features of the writer’s mind. Such men as these were as far from being deceived themselves, as they were incapable of imposing a falsehood upon others. The sacred regard they had for truth appears in every thing they relate. They mention, with many affecting circumstances, the obstinate, unreasonable incredulity of one of their associates — not convinced but by ocular and sensible demonstration. They might have concealed from the world their own faults and follies — or if they had chosen to mention them, might have alleged plausible reasons to soften and extenuate them. But they related, without disguise, events and facts just as they happened, and left them to speak their own language. So that to reject a history thus circumstanced, and impeach the veracity of writers furnished with these qualifications for giving the justest accounts of personal characters and transactions, which they enjoyed the best opportunity for accurately observing and knowing, is an affront offered to the reason and understanding of mankind; a solecism against the laws of truth and history, which would, with equal reason, lead men to disbelieve every thing related in Herodotus, Thucydidès, Diodorus Siculus, Livy, and Tacitus; to confound all history with fable and fiction; truth with falsehood, and veracity with imposture; and not to credit any thing how well soever attested; — that there were such kings as the Stuarts, or such places as Paris and Rome, because we are not indulged with ocular conviction of them. The
truth of the Gospel history [independent of the question of the inspiration of the sacred writers] rests upon the same basis with the truth of other ancient books, and its pretensions are to be impartially examined by the same rules by which we judge of the credibility of all other historical monuments. And if we compare the merit of the sacred writers, as historians, with that of other writers, we shall be convinced, that they are inferior to none who ever wrote, either with regard to knowledge of persons, acquaintance with facts, candour of mind, and reverence for truth.”

(HARWOOD’S Introduction to the New Testament.)

A second source of evidence to the truth of the history of the evangelists, may be brought from the testimonies of adversaries and heathens to the leading facts which they record.

No public contradiction of this history was ever put forth by the Jewish rulers to stop the progress of a hateful religion, though they had every motive to contradict it, both in justification of themselves, who were publicly charged as “murderers” of the “Just One,” and to preserve the people from the infection of the spreading delusion. No such contradiction has been handed down, and none is adverted to or quoted by any ancient writer. This silence is not unimportant evidence, but the direct testimonies to the facts are numerous and important.

We have already quoted the testimonies of Tacitus and Suetonius to the existence of Jesus Christ, the Founder of the Christian religion, and of his crucifixion in the reign of Tiberius, and during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, the time in which the evangelists place that event. Other references to heathen authors, who incidentally allude to Christ, his religion, and followers, might be given; such as Martial, Juvenal, Epictetus, Trajan, the younger Pliny, Adrian, Apuleius, Lucian of Samosata, and others; some of whom also afford testimonies to the destruction of Jerusalem, at the time, and in the circumstances predicted by our Saviour, and to the antiquity and genuineness of the books of the New Testament. But as it is well observed by the learned Lardner, in his “Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies,” (vol. iv, p. 330,) “Among all the testimonies to Christianity which we have met with in the first ages, none are more valuable and important than the testimonies of those learned philosophers who wrote against us; CELSUS, in the second century, PORPHYRY and HEIROCLES in the third, and JULIAN in the fourth.”
Referring to LARDNER for full information on this point, a brief exhibition of the admissions of these adversaries will be satisfactory.

CELSUS wrote against Christianity not much above one hundred and thirty years after our Lord’s ascension, and his books were answered by the celebrated ORIGEN. The following is a summary of the references of this writer to the Gospel history, by Leland. (Answer to Christianity as old as the Creation, vol. ii, c. 5.) The passages at large may be seen in Lardner’s Testimonies.

Celsus, a most bitter enemy of Christianity, who began in the second century, produces many passages out of the Gospels. He represents Jesus to have lived but a few years ago. He mentions his being born of a virgin; the angel’s appearing to Joseph on occasion of Mary’s being with child; the star that appeared at his birth; the wise men that came to worship him when an infant: and Herod’s massacring the children; Joseph’s fleeing with the child into Egypt by the admonition of an angel; the Holy Ghost descending on Jesus like a dove when he was baptized by John, and the voice from heaven declaring him to be the Son of God; his going about with his disciples, his healing the sick and lame, and raising the dead; his foretelling his own sufferings and resurrection; his being betrayed and forsaken by his own disciples; his suffering both of his own accord and in obedience to his heavenly Father; his grief and trouble, and his praying, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! the ignominious treatment he met with; the robe that was put upon him, the crown of thorns, the reed put into his hand; his drinking vinegar and gall, and his being scourged and crucified; his being seen after his resurrection by a fanatical woman, (as he calls her, meaning Mary Magdalene,) and by his own companions and disciples; his showing them his hands that were pierced, the marks of his punishment. He also mentions the angels being seen at his sepulchre, and that some said it was one angel, others, that it was two; by which he hints at the seeming variation in the accounts given of it by the evangelists.

“It is true, he mentions all these things only with a design to ridicule and expose them. But they furnish us with an uncontested proof, that the Gospel was then extant. Accordingly he expressly tells the Christians, These things we have produced out of your own writings, p. 106. And he all along supposeth them to have been written by Christ’s own disciples, that lived and conversed with
him; though he pretends they feigned many things for the honour of their Master, p. 69, 70. And he pretends, that he could tell many other things relative to Jesus, beside those things that were written of him by his own disciples; but that he willingly passed by them, p. 67. We may conclude from his expressions, both that he was sensible that these accounts were written by Christ’s own disciples, (and indeed he never pretends to contest this,) and that he was not able to produce any contrary accounts to invalidate them, as he certainly would have done, if it had been in his power: since no man ever wrote with greater virulence against Christianity than he. And indeed, how was it possible for ten or eleven publicans and boatmen, as he calls Christ’s disciples by way of contempt, (p. 47,) to have imposed such things on the world, if they had not been true, so as to persuade such vast multitudes to embrace a new and despised religion, contrary to all their prejudices and interests, and to believe in one that had been crucified!

“There are several other things, which show that Celsus was acquainted with the Gospel. He produces several of our Saviour’s sayings, there recorded, as that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God; that to him who smites us on one cheek, we must turn the other: that it is not possible to serve two masters; his precept against thoughtfulness for to-morrow, by a comparison drawn from crows and lilies; his foretelling that false prophets should arise and work wonders. He mentions also some passages of the Apostle Paul, such as these: The world is crucified unto me and I unto the world; — the wisdom of man is foolishness with God; — an idol is nothing.

“The use I would make of all this is, that it appears here with an uncontested evidence, by the testimony of one of the most malicious and virulent adversaries the Christian religion ever had, and who was also a man of considerable parts and learning, that the writings of the evangelists were extant in his time, which was the next century to that in which the apostles lived; and that those accounts were written by Christ’s own disciples, and consequently that they were written in the very age in which the facts related were done, and when, therefore, it would have been the easiest
thing in the world to have convicted them of falsehood, if they had not been true."

Porphyry flourished about the year 270, a man of great abilities; and his work against the Christians, in fifteen books, was long esteemed by the Gentiles, and thought worthy of being answered by Eusebius, and others in great repute for learning. He was well acquainted with the books of the Old and New Testaments; and in his writings are plain references to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, John, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistle to the Galatians, and probable references to the other Epistles of St. Paul. About the year 303, Hierocles, a man of learning and a magistrate, wrote against the Christians in two books. He was well acquainted with our Scriptures, and made many objections to them, thereby bearing testimony to their antiquity, and to the great respect which was shown them by the Christians; for he has referred both to the Gospels and to the Epistles. He mentions Peter and Paul by name, and did not deny the truth of our Saviour’s miracles; but, in order to overthrow the argument which the Christians built upon them, he set up the reputed miracles of Apollonius Tyanaeus to rival them. The Emperor Julian, who succeeded Constantius in the year 361, wrote also against the Christians, and in his work has undesignedly borne a valuable testimony to the history and books of the New Testament. He allows that Jesus was born in the reign of Augustus, at the time of a taxing made in Judea by Cyrenius. That the Christian religion had its rise, and began to be propagated, in the times of the Roman emperors Tiberius and Claudius. He bears witness to the genuineness and authenticity of the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the Acts of the Apostles. And he so quotes them as to intimate that these were the only historical books received by Christians, as of authority; and the only authentic memoirs of Jesus Christ, and his apostles, and the doctrines preached by them. He allows the early date of the Gospels, and even argues for them. He quotes, or plainly refers to the Acts of the Apostles, as already said; to St. Paul’s Epistles to the Romans, to the Corinthians, and to the Galatians. He does not deny the miracles of Jesus Christ, but allows him to have healed the blind, and the lame, and demoniacs, and to have rebuked the winds, and to have walked upon the waves of the sea. He endeavours, indeed, to diminish those works, but in vain. He endeavours also to lessen the number of the early believers in Jesus, but acknowledges, that there were multitudes of such men in Greece and Italy before St. John wrote his Gospel. He likewise affects to diminish
the quality of the early believers; and yet acknowledges, that beside men servants and maid-servants, Cornelius, a Roman centurion at Cesarea, and Sergius Paulus, proconsul of Cyprus, were converted to the faith of Jesus before the end of the reign of Claudius. And he often speaks with great indignation of Peter and Paul, those two great apostles of Jesus, and successful preachers of his Gospel, so that, upon the whole, he has undesignedly borne witness to the truth of many things recorded in the books of the New Testament. He aimed to overthrow the Christian religion, but has confirmed it. His arguments against it are perfectly harmless, and insufficient to unsettle the weakest Christian.

The quotations from Porphyry, Hierocles, and Julian, may be consulted in Lardner, who thus sums up his observations on their testimony: —

“They bear a fuller and more valuable testimony to the books of the New Testament, and to the facts of the evangelical history, and to the affairs of Christians, than all our other witnesses beside. They proposed to overthrow the arguments for Christianity. They aimed to bring back to Gentilism those who had forsaken it, and to put a stop to the progress of Christianity, by the farther addition of new converts. But in those designs they had very little success in their own times; and their works, composed and published in the early days of Christianity, are now a testimony in our favour, and will be of use in the defence of Christianity to the latest ages.

“One thing more which may be taken notice of, is this: that the remains of our ancient adversaries confirm the present prevailing sentiments of Christians, concerning those books of the New Testament which we call canonical, and are in the greatest authority with us. For their writings show, that those very books, and not any others now generally called apocryphal, are the books which always were in the highest repute with Christians, and were then the rule of their faith, as they are now of ours.”

To the same effect are the observations of Paley. These testimonies prove that neither Celsus in the second, Porphyry in the third, nor Julian in the fourth century, suspected the authenticity of these books, or even insinuated that Christians were mistaken in the authors to whom they ascribed them. Not one of them expressed an opinion upon this subject different from that which is holden by Christians. And when we consider how much it would have availed them to cast a doubt upon this point if
they could, and how ready they showed themselves to take every advantage in their power, and that they were men of learning and inquiry, their concession, or rather their suffrage upon the subject, is extremely valuable.”

That the facts and statements recorded in the evangelic history were not forgeries of a subsequent period, is made also still more indubitable from the fact, that the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are quoted or alluded to by a series of Christians, beginning with those who were contemporary with the apostles, or who immediately followed, and proceeding in close and regular succession from their time to the present. “The medium of proof stated in this proposition,” observes Dr. Paley, “is of all others the most unquestionable, and is not diminished by the lapse of ages. Bishop Burnet, in the History of his Own Times, inserts various extracts from Lord Clarendon’s History. One such assertion is a proof that Lord Clarendon’s History was extant when Bishop Burnet wrote, that it had been read and received by him as a work of Lord Clarendon’s, and regarded by him as an authentic account of the transactions which it relates; and it will be a proof of these points a thousand years hence. The application of this argument to the Gospel history is obvious. If the different books which are received by Christians as containing this history are quoted by a series of writers, as genuine in respect of their authors, and as authentic in respect to their narrative, up to the age in which the writers of them lived, then it is clear that these books must have had an existence previous to the earliest of those writings in which they are quoted, and that they were then admitted as authentic.” “Their genuineness is made out, as well by the general arguments which evince the genuineness of the most indisputed remains of antiquity, as also by peculiar and specific proofs, by citations from them in writings belonging to a period immediately contiguous to that in which they were published; by the distinguished regard paid by early Christians to the authority of these books; (which regard was manifested by their collecting of them into a volume, appropriating to that volume titles of peculiar respect, translating them into various languages, disposing them into harmonies, writing commentaries upon them, and still more conspicuously by the reading of them in their public assemblies in all parts of the world;) by a universal agreement with respect to these books, while doubts were entertained concerning some others; by contending sects appealing to them; by many formal catalogues of these, as of certain and authoritative writings published in different and
distant parts of the world; lastly, by the absence or defect of the above-
cited topics of evidence, when applied to any other histories of the same
subject.” (*Paley’s Evidences*, cap. 10.)

All the parts of this argument may be seen clearly made out by passages
quoted from the writers of the primitive ages of the Christian Church, in
Dr. Lardner’s “Credibility,” Dr. Paley’s” Evidences,” and many other
writers in defence of Christianity. It is exhibited in great force also in the
first volume of Horne’s “Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures.”

**NOTE A.**

“The documents which claim to have been thus handed down to
posterity are the five books attributed to Moses himself, and usually
denominated the *Pentateuch*. Now, the question before us is,
whether they were, indeed, written synchronically with the Exodus,
or whether they were composed in the name of Moses, at a much
later period.

“That the Jews have acknowledged the authenticity of the
Pentateuch, from the present day to the era of our Lord’s nativity, a
period of more than eighteen centuries, admits not of a possibility
of a doubt. But this era is long posterior to that of Moses himself: it
will be necessary, therefore, in order to establish the point under
discussion, to travel backward, step by step, so far as we can safely
penetrate, according to the established rules of moral evidence.

“About two hundred and seventy-seven years before the Christian
era, in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, the
Pentateuch, with the other books of the Old Testament, was
translated into Greek, for the use of the Alexandrian Jews; and
from the almost universal prevalence of that language, it henceforth
became very widely disseminated, and was thus rendered accessible
to the learned and inquisitive of every country.

“Now, that Greek translation which is still extant, and which is in
the hands of almost every person, demonstrates that the Hebrew
Pentateuch must have existed two hundred and seventy-seven years
before Christ, because there is that correspondency between the
two, which amply proves that the former must have been a version
of the latter. But, if it certainly existed two hundred and seventy-
seven years before Christ, it must have existed in the days of Ezra, at the time of the return from Babylon, in the year before Christ five hundred and thirty-six; because there is no point between those two epochs, to which, with a shadow of probability, we can ascribe its composition. It existed, therefore, in the year five hundred and thirty-six, before the Christian era.

“Thus we have gained one retrogressive step: let us next see whether, with equal certainty, we can gain another.

“As it cannot be rationally denied, that the Pentateuch has been in existence ever since the return of the Jews from Babylon, in the year five hundred and thirty-six, before the Christian era, some have thence been pleased to contend, that it was the work of Ezra; being a digested compilation of the indistinct and fabulous traditions of that people, which, like most nations of antiquity, they possessed in great abundance.

“To such an opinion, when thoroughly sifted, there are insuperable objections, however specious it may appear to a hasty observer.

“In the book of Ezra, the law of Moses, the man of God, is specifically referred to, as a well known written document then actually existing; and, in the succeeding book of Nehemiah, we have an ample account of the mode in which that identical written document was openly read to the people, under the precise name of the Book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. Nor is this all: it was not that Ezra produced a new volume, and called upon the Jews to receive it as the authentic law of Moses; but the people themselves called upon Ezra to bring forth and read that book, as a work with which they had long been familiarly acquainted. The law of Moses, therefore, must have been well known to exist in writing previous to the return from Babylon; and as Ezra could not have produced under that name a mere compilation of oral traditions, so neither could he have suppressed the ancient volume of the law, nor have set forth instead of it, that volume which the Jews have ever since received as the authentic Pentateuch. His own book affords proof positive, that some written law of Moses was known previously to have existed: and the call of the people, that it should be read to them, demonstrates that it could not long have perished; for if the work had been confessedly
lost for many years, the people could not have called for that, which neither they nor their fathers had ever beheld. If, then, it were suppressed by Ezra, in favour of his own spurious composition, he must both have contrived to make himself master of every extant copy of the genuine work, and he must have persuaded a whole people to receive as genuine, what almost every man among them must immediately have perceived to be spurious. For, if the genuine work were in existence down to the very time of Ezra, a point clearly involved in the demand of the people to have it read to them; and if the people had long been accustomed to hear it read to them, a point equally implied in their recorded demand upon Ezra, they must all have been adequately acquainted with its contents; and the higher ranks among them must have repeatedly perused, and must therefore have known the whole of it, just as intimately as Ezra could do himself. But, what was thus universally familiar could be no more set aside by the fiat of an individual in favour of his own spurious composition, than the Pentateuch could now be set aside throughout Christendom, in favour of some newly produced volume which claimed to be the genuine law of Moses. Add to this, that when the foundations of the second temple were laid, many persons were alive who well remembered the first. These consequently must have known whether there was or was not a written law of Moses anterior to the captivity; nor could they be deceived by the production of any novel composition by Ezra.

“Such is the evidence afforded by the very books of Ezra and Nehemiah, to the existence of a written law of Moses prior to the return from Babylon, of a law familiarly known to the whole body of the people. But there is yet another evidence to the same purpose, analogous to that furnished by the Greek translation of the seventy.

“We have now extant two Hebrew copies of the law of Moses: the one received by the Jews, the other acknowledged by the Samaritans: each maintaining that their own is the genuine record. Now, if we examine these two copies, we shall find their coincidence throughout to be such, that we cannot doubt a moment as to their original identity in every word, and in every sentence.
“We read, that after the king of Assyria had deported the ten tribes, and had colonized their territories with a mixed multitude from various parts of his dominions, the new settlers were infested by the incursions of wild beasts. This calamity, agreeably to the prevalent notion of local tutelary gods, they attributed to their not worshipping the god of the land after his own prescribed manner. — To remedy the defect, therefore, one of the deported Levitical priests was sent to them, that he might teach them, as the Assyrian monarch expressed himself, the manner of the god of the land. The priest accordingly came among them, and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear Jehovah; but while they duly received his instructions, they mixed the service of the true God with the service of their native idols. Hence, so far as that particular was concerned, we are informed, that they neither did after their statutes, nor after their ordinances, nor after the law and commandment which Jehovah commanded the children of Jacob.

“Now, it is obvious, that the whole of this account supposes them to have a copy of the Pentateuch; for, if the priest were to instruct them in the law of the Lord, he would, of course, communicate to them a copy of that law; and though their ancient superstitions led them to disregard its prohibitions, still it could not have been properly said of them, that they neither did after their statutes, nor after their ordinances, nor after the law and commandment which Jehovah commanded the children of Jacob, if all the while they were wholly unacquainted with those statutes and those ordinances, and with that law, and with that commandment. It is manifest, therefore, that they must at that time have received the copy of the Pentateuch, which they always afterward religiously preserved. But this copy is the very same as that which the Jews and ourselves still receive. Consequently, as the Samaritans received it some years prior even to the Babylonic captivity of Judah, and as it is the very same code as that which some would fain attribute to Ezra, we may be sure, that that learned scribe could not possibly have been its author, but that he has handed down to us the genuine law of Moses, with the utmost good faith and integrity.”

“Here we cannot but observe the providence of God in raising up so unobjectionable a testimony as that of the Samaritans. They and the Jews cordially hated each other, and they both possessed a copy
of the Pentateuch. Hence, had there been any disposition to tamper with the text, they acted as a mutual check; and the result has been, that perhaps not a wilful alteration can be shown, except the text relative to Gerizim and Ebal.

“The universal admission of the Pentateuch, as the inspired law of Moses, throughout the whole commonwealth of Israel, prior to its disruption into two hostile kingdoms, the magnificent temple of Solomon, and the whole ritual attached to it, plainly depends altogether upon the previously existing Pentateuch; and that code so strictly prohibits more than one practice of Solomon, that even to say nothing of the general objection from novelty, it is incredible either that he should have been its author, or that it should have been written under his sanction and authority.

“As little can we, with any degree of probability, ascribe it to David. His life was occupied with almost incessant troubles and warfare; and it is difficult to conceive, how a book written by that prince could, in the space of a very few years, be universally received as the inspired composition of Moses, when no person had ever previously heard that Moses left any legislative code behind him.

“The Pentateuch might be more plausibly given to Samuel than to either of those two princes; but this supposition will not stand for a moment the test of rational inquiry. We shall still have the same difficulty to contend with as before: we shall still have to point out how it was possible that Samuel should persuade all Israel to adopt, as the inspired and authoritative law of Moses, a mere modern composition of his own, which no person had ever previously heard of.

“We have now ascended to within less than four centuries after the exodus from Egypt, and the alleged promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai; and from Ezra to Samuel, we have found no person to whom the composition of the Pentateuch can, with any show of reason or probability, be assigned. The only remaining question is, whether it can be thought to have been written during the three hundred and fifty-six years which elapsed between the entrance of the Israelites into Palestine, and the appointment of Saul to be king of Israel.
“Now, the whole history which we have of that period utterly forbids such a supposition. The Israelites, though perpetually lapsing into idolatry, are uniformly described as acknowledging the authority of a written law of Moses; and this law, from generation to generation, is stated to be the directory by which the judges governed the people. Thus, Samuel expressly refers to a well known commandment of Jehovah, and to the Divine legation of Moses and Aaron, in a speech which he made to the assembled Israelites. Thus, the man of God, in his prophetic threat to Eli, similarly refers to the familiar circumstance recorded in the Pentateuch, that the house of his ancestor had been chosen to the pontificate out of all the tribes of Israel. Thus, when the nations are enumerated which were left to prove the people, it is said that they were left for this purpose, that it might be known whether the Israelites would hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. Thus, Joshua is declared to have written the book which bears his name, as a supplement to a prior book, which is denominated the book of the law of God. Thus, likewise, he specially asserts, that this book of the law of God is the book of the law of Moses; speaking familiarly of precepts, which are written in that book; represents himself as reading its contents to all the assembled people, so that none of them could be ignorant of its purport; and mentions his writing a copy of it in the presence of the children of Israel. And thus, finally, we hear of the original, whence that copy is professed to have been taken, in the volume of the Pentateuch itself; for we are there told, that Moses with his own hand wrote the words of THIS law in a BOOK; and that he then commanded the Levites to take THIS BOOK of the law and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant, that it might be there for a witness in all succeeding ages against the Israelites, in case they should violate its precepts.”

(Abridged from FABER’S Horae Mosaicæ.)

NOTE B.

“In events so public and so signal, there was no room for mistake or deception. Of all the miracles recorded in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, there is not one of which the evidence is so multiplied as that of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of
pentecost; for it rests not on the testimony of those, whether many or few, who were all with one accord in one place. It is testified by all Jerusalem, and by the natives of regions far distant from Jerusalem; for there were then, says the historian, ‘dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven; and when the inspiration of the disciples was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were all confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these who speak Galileans? and how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.’

“It hath been objected by infidelity to the resurrection of Christ, that he ought to have appeared publicly, wherever he had appeared before his crucifixion: but here is a miracle displayed much farther than the resurrection of Christ could have been by his preaching openly, and working miracles for forty days in the temple and synagogues of Jerusalem, as he had done formerly; and this miracle is so connected with the resurrection, that if the apostles speaking a variety of tongues be admitted, the resurrection of Jesus cannot be denied. — In reply to those (probably the natives of Jerusalem,) who, imagining that the apostles uttered gibberish, charged them with being full of new wine, St. Peter said, ‘Ye men of Judea. and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words; for these men are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and signs, and wonders, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.’
Thus, by the miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of pentecost, were the resurrection and ascension of Christ proved to a variety of nations of Asia, Africa, and Europe, all the quarters of the globe which were then known, as completely as if he had actually appeared among that mixed multitude in Jerusalem, reproved the high priest and council of the Jews for their unbelief and hardness of heart, and then ascended in their presence to heaven. They had such evidence as was incontrovertible, that St. Peter and the other apostles were inspired by the Spirit of God; they could not but know, as every Theist admits, that the Spirit of God never was, nor ever will be, shed abroad to enable any order of men to propagate falsehood with success; one of those who, by this inspiration, were speaking correctly a variety of tongues, assured them, that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had slain, was raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God; and that the same Jesus had, according to his promise, shed abroad on the apostles that which they both saw and heard. The consequence of all this, we are told, was, that three thousand of his audience were instantly converted to the faith, and the same day incorporated into the Church by baptism. “Would any in his senses have written a narrative of such events as these at the very time when they are said to have happened, and in any one of those countries, to the inhabitants of which he appeals as witnesses of their truth, if he had not been aware that their truth could not be called in question? Would any forger of such a book as the Acts of the Apostles, at a period near to that in which he relates that such astonishing events had happened, have needlessly appealed, for the truth of his narrative, to the people of all nations, and thus gone out of his way to furnish his readers with innumerable means of detecting his imposture? At no period, indeed, could forged books, such as the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, have been received as authentic, unless all the events which they record, whether natural or supernatural, had been believed, all the principal doctrines received, and all the rites of religion which they prescribe practised, from the very period at which they represent the Son of God as sojourning on earth, laying the foundation of his Church, dying on a cross, rising from the dead, and ascending into heaven. The argument cannot, perhaps, be employed to prove the authenticity of all the epistles which make so great a part of the New Testament;
but it is certainly as applicable to some of them as it is to the *Gospels*, and the book called the *Acts of the Apostles*.

“The apostles, as Michaelis justly observes, (*Introduction to the New Testament*, chap ii, sect. 1,) ‘frequently allude, in their epistles, to the gift of miracles which they had communicated to the Christian converts by the imposition of hands, in confirmation of the doctrine delivered in their speeches and writings and sometimes to miracles, which they themselves had performed.’ Now if these epistles are really genuine, the miracles referred to must certainly have been wrought, and the doctrines preached must have been Divine; for no man in his senses would have written to large communities, that he had not only performed miracles in their presence, in confirmation of the Divine origin of certain doctrines, but that he had likewise communicated to them the same extraordinary endowments. Or if we can suppose any human being to have possessed sufficient effrontery to write in this manner to any community, it is obvious that, so far from gaining credit to his doctrine by such assertions, if not known to be true, he would have exposed himself to the utmost ridicule and contempt, and have ruined the cause which he attempted to support by such absurd conduct.

“St. Paul’s first Epistle to the Thessalonians is addressed to a Christian Church, which he had lately founded, and to which he had preached the Gospel only three Sabbath days. A sudden persecution obliged him to quit this community before he had given to it its proper degree of consistence; and, what is of consequence in the present instance, he was protected neither by the power of the magistrate nor the favour of the vulgar. A pretended wonder-worker, who has once drawn the populace to his party, may easily perform his exploits, and safely proclaim them. But this very populace, at the instigation of the Jews, had excited the insurrection, which obliged St. Paul to quit the town. He sends therefore to the Thessalonians, who had received the Gospel, but whose faith, he apprehended, might waver through persecution, authorities, and proofs of his Divine mission, of which authorities the first and the chief are *miracles* and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10. Is it possible, now, that St. Paul, without forfeiting all pretensions to common sense, could, when
writing to a Church which he had lately established, have spoken of miracles performed, and gifts of the Holy Ghost communicated, if no member of that Church had seen the one, or received the other; nay, if many members had not witnessed both the performance and the effusions of the Holy Ghost? But it is equally impossible that the epistle, making this appeal to miracles and spiritual gifts, could have been received as authentic, if forged in the name of St. Paul, at any future period, during the existence of a Christian Church at Thessalonica. In the two first chapters it represents its author and two of his companions as having been lately in that city, and appeals to the Church for the manner in which they had conducted themselves while there, and for the zeal and success with which they had preached the Gospel, and it concludes with these awful words: ‘I adjure you ὅρκιζω υμᾶς by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren;' i.e. all the Christians of the community. Had St. Paul, and Timotheus, and Sylvanus, never been in Thessalonica, or had they conducted themselves in any respect differently from what they are said to have done in the two first chapters, these chapters would have convicted the author of this epistle of forgery, at whatever time it had made its first appearance. Had they been actually there and preached, and wrought miracles just as they are said to have done; and had some impostor, knowing this, forged the epistle before us at a considerable distance of time, the adjuration at the end of it must instantly have detected the forgery. Every Thessalonian Christian of common sense would have said, ‘How came we never to heard of this epistle before? Its author represents himself and two of his friends as having converted us to the faith a very short time before it was written and sent to us, and he charges those to whom it was immediately sent in the most solemn manner possible, that they should cause it to be read to every one of us; no Christian in Thessalonica would, in a matter of this kind, have dared to disobey the authority of an apostle, especially when enforced by so awful an adjuration; and yet neither we nor our fathers ever heard of this epistle, till now that Paul, and Sylvanus, and Timotheus are all dead, and therefore incapable of either confirming or refuting its authenticity!’ Such an epistle, if not genuine, could never have been received by any community.
“The same apostle, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, corrects the abuse of certain spiritual gifts, particularly that of speaking divers kinds of tongues, and prescribes rules for the employment of these supernatural talents; he enters into a particular detail of them, as they existed in the Corinthian Church; reasons on their respective worth and excellence; says that they were limited in their duration, that they were no distinguishing mark of Divine favour, nor of so great importance as faith and virtue, the love of God, and charity to our neighbours. Now, if this epistle was really written by St. Paul to the Corinthians, and they had actually received no spiritual gifts, no power, imparted by extraordinary means, of speaking foreign languages, the proper place to be assigned him were not among impostors, but among those who had lost their understanding. A juggler may deceive by the dexterity of his hands, and persuade the ignorant and the credulous that more than human means are requisite for the performance of his extraordinary feats; but he will hardly persuade those whose understandings remain unimpaired, that he has likewise communicated to his spectators the power of working miracles, and of speaking languages which they had never learned, were they conscious of their inability to perform the one, or to speak the other. If the epistle, therefore, was written during the life of St. Paul, and received by the Corinthian Church, it is impossible to doubt but that St. Paul was its author, and that among the Corinthians were prevalent those spiritual gifts of which he labours to correct the abuse. If those gifts were never prevalent among the Corinthian Christians, and this epistle was not seen by them until the next age, it could not have been received by the Corinthian Church as the genuine writing of the apostle, because the members of that Church must have been aware that if those gifts, of which it speaks, had been really possessed, and so generally displayed by their fathers, as it represents them to have been, some of themselves would surely have heard their fathers mention them; and as the epistle treats of some of the most important subjects that ever occupied the mind of man, the introduction of death into the world through Adam, and the resurrection of the dead through Christ, they must have inferred that their fathers would not have secreted from them their children a treatise on topics so interesting to the whole human race.”
(Gleig’s Edition of Stackhouse’s History of the Bible, vol iii, Intro. p. 11, &c.)

* See Hardy’s Greek Testament; Whitby on the Place, with Schleusner and Parkhurst’s Lexicons on the word δυναμί.
CHAPTER 13. — THE UNCORRUPTED PRESERVATION OF THE BOOKS OF SCRIPTURE.

The historical evidence of the antiquity and genuineness of the books ascribed to Moses, and those which contain the history of Christ and the establishment of his religion, being thus complete, the integrity of the copies at present received is the point next in question.

With respect to the Scriptures of the Old Testament; the list of Josephus, the Septuagint translation, and the Samaritan Pentateuch, are sufficient proofs that the books which are received by us as sacred, are the same as those received by the Jews and Samaritans long before the Christian era. For the New Testament; beside the quotations from almost all the books now included in that volume and references to them by name in the earliest Christian writers, catalogues of authentic Scriptures were published at very early periods, which, says Dr. Paley, “though numerous, and made in countries at a wide distance from one another, differ very little, differ in nothing material, and all contain the four Gospels.

“In the writings of Origen which remain, and in some extracts preserved by Eusebius, from works of his which are now lost, there are enumerations of the books of Scripture, in which the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are distinctly and honourably specified, and in which no books appear beside what are now received. (Lard. Cred. vol. iii, p. 234, et seq., vol. viii, p. 196.) The date of Origen’s works is A.D. 230.

“Athanasius, about a century afterward, delivered a catalogue of the books of the New Testament in form, containing our Scriptures and no others; of which he says, ‘In these alone the doctrine of religion is taught; let no man add to them, or take any thing from them.’ (Lard. Cred. vol. viii, p. 223.)

“About twenty years after Athanasius, Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, set forth a catalogue of the books of Scripture publicly read at that time in the Church of Jerusalem, exactly the same as ours, except that the ‘Revelation’ is omitted. (Lard. Cred. vol. viii, p. 270.)
“And, fifteen years after Cyril, the council of Laodicea delivered an authoritative catalogue of canonical Scripture, like Cyril’s, the same as ours with the omission of the ‘Revelation.’

“Catalogues now become frequent. Within thirty years after the last date, that is, from the year 363 to near the conclusion of the fourth century, we have catalogues by Epiphanius, (*Lard. Cred.* vol. viii, p. 368,) by Gregory Nazianzen, (*Lard. Cred.* vol. ix, p. 132,) by Philaster, bishop of Brescia in Italy, (*Lard. Cred.* vol. ix, p. 373,) by Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium, all, as they are sometimes called, *clean* catalogues, (that is, they admit no books into the number beside what we now receive,) and all, for every purpose of historic evidence, the same as ours. 157

“Within the same period, Jerome, the most learned Christian writer of his age, delivered a catalogue of the books of the New Testament, recognizing every book now received, with the intimation of a doubt concerning the Epistle to the Hebrews alone, and taking not the least notice of any book which is not now received. (*Lard. Cred.*, vol. x, p. 77.)

“Contemporary with Jerome, who lived in Palestine, was Saint Augustine, in Africa, who published likewise a catalogue, without joining to the Scriptures, as books of authority, any other ecclesiastical writing whatever, and without omitting one which we at this day acknowledge. (*Lard. Cred.* vol. x, p. 213.)

“And with these concurs another contemporary writer, Rufen, presbyter of Aquileia, whose catalogue, like theirs, is perfect and unmixed, and concludes with these remarkable words: ‘These are the volumes which the fathers have included in the canon, and out of which they would have us prove the doctrine of our faith.’” (*Lard. Cred.* vol. x, page 187.)

This, it is true, only proves that the books are *substantially* the same; but the evidence is abundant, that they have descended to us without any material alteration whatever.

“1. *Before that event,* [the time of Christ,] the regard which was paid to them by the Jews, especially to the law, would render any forgery or material change in their contents impossible. The law having been the deed by which the land of Canaan was divided
among the Israelites, it is improbable that this people who possessed that land, would suffer it to be altered or falsified. The distinction of the twelve tribes, and their separate interests, made it more difficult to alter their law than that of other nations less jealous than the Jews. Farther, at certain stated seasons, the law was publicly read before all the people of Israel, Deuteronomy 31:9-13; Joshua 8:34, 35; Nehemiah 8:1-5; and it was appointed to be kept in the ark, for a constant memorial against those who transgressed it, Deuteronomy 31:26. Their king was required to write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites, and to read therein all the days of his life, Deuteronomy 17:18, 19; their priests also were commanded to teach the children of Israel all the statutes, which the Lord had spoken to them by the hand of Moses, Leviticus 10:11; and parents were charged not only to make it familiar to themselves, but also to teach it diligently to their children, Deuteronomy 17:18, 19; beside which, a severe prohibition was annexed, against either making any addition to, or diminution from the law, Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32. Now such precepts as these could not have been given by an impostor who was adding to it, and who would wish men to forget rather than enjoin them to remember it: for, as all the people were obliged to know and observe the law under severe penalties, they were, in a manner, the trustees and guardians of the law, as well as the priests and Levites. The people, who were to teach their children must have had copies of it; the priests and Levites must have had copies of it; and the magistrates must have had copies of it, as being the law of the land. Farther, after the people were divided into two kingdoms, both the people of Israel and those of Judah still retained the same book of the law: and the rivalry or enmity that subsisted between the two kingdoms, prevented either of them from altering or adding to the law. After the Israelites were carried captive into Assyria, other nations were placed in the cities of Samaria in their stead; and the Samaritans received the Pentateuch, either from the priest who was sent by order of the king of Assyria, to instruct them in the manner of the God of the land, 2 Kings 17:26, or several years afterward from the hands of Manasseh, the son of Joiada the high priest, who was expelled from Jerusalem by Nehemiah, for marrying the daughter of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria; and
who was constituted, by Sanballat, the first high priest of the temple at Samaria. (Nehemiah 8:28; Josephus Ant. Jud. lib. xi, c. 8; Bishop Newton’s Works, vol. i, p. 23.) Now, by one or both of these means, the Samaritans had the Pentateuch as well as the Jews; but with this difference, that the Samaritan Pentateuch was in the old Hebrew or Phenician characters, in which it remains to this day; whereas the Jewish copy was changed into Chaldee characters, (in which it also remains to this day,) which were fairer and clearer than the Hebrew, the Jews having learned the Chaldee language during their seventy years abode in Babylon. The jealousy and hatred which subsisted between the Jews and Samaritans, made it impracticable for either nation to corrupt or alter the text in any thing of consequence without certain discovery; and the general agreement between the Hebrew and Samaritan copies of the Pentateuch, which are now extant, is such, as plainly demonstrates that the copies were originally the same. Nor can any better evidence be desired, that the Jewish Bibles have not been corrupted or interpolated, than this very book of the Samaritans; which, after more than two thousand years discord between the two nations, varies as little from the other as any classic author in less tract of time has disagreed from itself by the unavoidable slips and mistakes of so many transcribers.

“After the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, the books of the law and the prophets were publicly read in their synagogues every Sabbath day, Acts 13:14, 15, 27; Luke 4:17-20; which was an excellent method of securing their purity, as well as of enforcing the observation of the law. The Chaldee paraphrases and the translation of the Old Testament into Greek, which were afterward made, were so many additional securities. To these facts we may add, that the reverence of the Jews for their sacred writings is another guarantee for their integrity: so great, indeed, was that reverence, that, according to the statements of Philo and Josephus, (Philo, apud Euseb. de Præp. Evang. lib. viii, c. 2; Josephus contra Apion. lib. i, sec. 8,) they would suffer any torments, and even death itself, rather than change a single point or iota of the Scriptures. A law was also enacted by them, which denounced him to be guilty of inexpiable sin, who should presume to make the slightest possible alteration in their sacred books. The
Jewish doctors, fearing to add any thing to the law, passed their own notions as traditions or explanations of it; and both Jesus Christ and his apostles accused the Jews of entertaining a prejudiced regard for those traditions, but they never charged them with falsifying or corrupting the Scriptures themselves.

“2. After the birth of Christ. For, since that event, the Old Testament has been held in high esteem both by Jews and Christians. The Jews also frequently suffered martyrdom for their Scriptures, which they would not have done, had they suspected them to have been corrupted or altered. Beside, the Jews and Christians were a mutual guard upon each other, which must have rendered any material corruption impossible, if it had been attempted: for if such an attempt had been made by the Jews, they would have been detected by the Christians. The accomplishment of such a design, indeed, would have been impracticable from the moral impossibility of the Jews (who were dispersed in every country of the then known world) being able to collect all the then existing copies, with the intention of corrupting or falsifying them. On the other hand, if any such attempt had been made by the Christians, it would assuredly have been detected by the Jews: nor could any such attempt have been made by any other man or body of men, without exposure both by Jews and Christians. To these considerations, it may be added, that the admirable agreement of all the ancient paraphrases and versions, and the writings of Josephus, with the Old Testament as it is now extant, together with the quotations which are made from it in the New Testament, and in the writings of all ages to the present time, forbid us to indulge any suspicion of any material corruption in the books of the Old Testament; and give us every possible evidence of which a subject of this kind is capable, that these books are now in our hands genuine and unadulterated.

“3. Lastly, the agreement of all the manuscripts of the Old Testament, (amounting to nearly eleven hundred and fifty,) which are known to be extant, is a clear proof of its uncorrupted preservation. These manuscripts, indeed, are not all entire; some contain one part, and some another. But it is absolutely impossible that every manuscript, whether in the original Hebrew, or in any ancient version or paraphrase, should or could be designedly
altered or falsified in the same passages, without detection either by Jews or Christians. The manuscripts now extant are, confessedly, liable to errors and mistakes from the carelessness, negligence, or inaccuracy of copyists; but they are not all uniformly incorrect throughout, nor in the same words or passages; but what is incorrect in one place is correct in another. Although the various readings, which have been discovered by learned men, who have applied themselves to the collection of every known manuscript of the Hebrew Scriptures, amount to many thousands, yet these differences are of so little real moment, that their laborious collations afford us scarcely any opportunities of correcting the sacred text in important passages. So far, however, are these extensive and profound researches from being either trivial or nugatory, that we have in fact derived from them the greatest advantage which could have been wished for by any real friend of revealed religion; namely, the certain knowledge of the agreement of the copies of the ancient Scriptures, now extant in their original language, with each other, and with our Bibles. (Bishop Tomline’s Elements of Christ, Theol. vol i, p. 31.)

“Equally satisfactory is the evidence for the integrity and uncorruptness of the New Testament in any thing material. The testimonies, adduced in the preceding section in behalf of the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament, are, in a great measure, applicable to show that it has been transmitted to us entire and uncorrupted. But to be more particular, we remark, that the uncorrupted preservation of the books of the New Testament is manifest,

“1. From their contents; for, so early as the two first centuries of the Christian era, we find the very same facts, and the very same doctrines universally received by Christians, which we of the present day believe on the credit of the New Testament.

“2. Because a universal corruption of those writings was impossible, nor can the least vestige of such a corruption be found in history. They could not be corrupted during the life of their authors; and before their death, copies were dispersed among the different communities of Christians, who were scattered throughout the then known world. Within twenty years after the ascension,
Churches were formed in the principal cities of the Roman empire; and in all these Churches the books of the New Testament, especially the four Gospels, were read as a part of their public worship, just as the writings of Moses and the prophets were read in the Jewish synagogues. Nor would the use of them be confined to public worship; for these books were not, like the Sybilline oracles, locked up from the perusal of the public, but were exposed to public investigation. When the books of the New Testament were first published to the world, the Christians would naturally entertain the highest esteem and reverence for writings that delivered an authentic and inspired history of the life and doctrines of Jesus Christ, and would be desirous of possessing such an invaluable treasure. Hence, as we learn from unquestionable authority, copies were multiplied and disseminated as rapidly as the boundaries of the Church increased; and translations were made into as many languages as were spoken by its professors, some of which remain to this day; so that it would very soon be rendered absolutely impossible to corrupt these books in any one important word or phrase. Now, it is not to be supposed, (without violating all probability,) that all Christians should agree in a design of changing or corrupting the original books; and if some only should make the attempt, the uncorrupted copies would still remain to detect them. And supposing there was some error in one translation or copy, or something changed, added, or taken away; yet there were many other copies and other translations, by the help of which the neglect or fraud might be or would be corrected.

“Farther, as these books could not be corrupted during the life of their respective authors, and while a great number of witnesses were alive to attest the facts which they record: so neither could any material alteration take place after their decease, without being detected while the original manuscripts were preserved in the Churches. The Christians who were instructed by the apostles or by their immediate successors, travelled into all parts of the world, carrying with them copies of their writings; from which other copies were multiplied and preserved. Now, as we have already seen, we have an unbroken series of testimonies for the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament, which can be traced backward, from the fourth century of the Christian era to the very
time of the apostles: and these very testimonies are equally applicable to prove its uncorrupted preservation. Moreover, harmonies of the four Gospels were ancienly constructed; commentaries were written upon them, as well as upon the other books of the New Testament, (many of which are still extant,) manuscripts were collated, and editions of the New Testament were put forth. These sacred records, being universally regarded as the supreme standard of truth, were received by every class of Christians with peculiar respect, as being Divine compositions, and possessing an authority belonging to no other books. Whatever controversies, therefore, arose among different sects, (and the Church was very early rent with fierce contentions on doctrinal points,) the Scriptures of the New Testament were received and appealed to by every one of them, as being conclusive in all matters of controversy: consequently it was morally impossible, that any man or body of men should corrupt or falsify them in any fundamental article, should foist into them a single expression to favour their peculiar tenets, or erase a single sentence, without being detected by thousands.

“If any material alteration had been attempted by the orthodox, it would have been detected by the heretics; and, on the other hand, if a heretic had inserted, altered, or falsified any thing, he would have been exposed by the orthodox, or by other heretics. It is well known that a division commenced in the fourth century, between the eastern and western Churches, which, about the middle of the ninth century, became irreconcilable, and subsists to the present day. Now, it would have been impossible to alter all the copies in the eastern empire; and if it had been possible in the east, the copies in the west would have detected the alteration. But, in fact, both the eastern and western copies agree, which could not be expected if either of them was altered or falsified. The uncorrupted preservation of the New Testament is farther evident,

“3. From the agreement of all the manuscripts. The manuscripts of the New Testament, which are extant, are far more numerous than those of any single classic author whomsoever; upward of three hundred and fifty were collected by Griesbach, for his celebrated critical edition. These manuscripts, it is true, are not all entire: most of them contain only the Gospels; others, the Gospels, Acts of the
Apostles, and the Epistles; and a few contain the Apocalypse or Revelation of John. But they were all written in very different and distant parts of the world; several of them are upward of twelve hundred years old, and give us the books of the New Testament, in all essential points, perfectly accordant with each other, as any person may readily ascertain by examining the critical editions published by Mill, Kuster, Bengel, Wetstein, and Griesbach. The thirty thousand various readings which are said to be found in the manuscripts collated by Dr. Mill, and the hundred and fifty thousand which Griesbach’s edition is said to contain, in no degree whatever affect the general credit and integrity of the text. In fact, the more copies are multiplied, and the more numerous the transcripts and translations from the original, the more likely is it, that the genuine text and the true original reading will be investigated and ascertained. The most correct and accurate ancient classics now extant are those of which we have the greatest number of manuscripts; and the most depraved, mutilated, and inaccurate editions of the old writers are those of which we have the fewest manuscripts, and perhaps only a single manuscript extant. Such are Athenæus, Clemens Romanus, Hesychius, and Photius. But of this formidable mass of various readings, which have been collected by the diligence of collators, not one tenth, — nay, not one hundredth part, either makes or can make any perceptible, or at least any material, alteration in the sense in any modern version. They consist almost wholly of palpable errors in transcription, grammatical and verbal differences, such as the insertion or omission of an article, the substitution of a word for its equivalent, and the transposition of a word or two in a sentence. Even the few that do change the sense, affect it only in passages relating to unimportant, historical, and geographical circumstances, or other collateral matters; and the still smaller number that make any alteration in things of consequence, do not on that account place us in any absolute uncertainty. For, either the true reading may be discovered by collating the other manuscripts, versions, and quotations found in the works of the ancients; or, should these fail to give us the requisite information, we are enabled to explain the doctrine in question from other undisputed passages of holy writ.
“4. The last testimony to be adduced for the integrity and uncorruptness of the New Testament, is furnished by the agreement of the ancient versions and quotations from it, which are made in the writings of the Christians of the first three centuries, and in those of the succeeding fathers of the Church.

“The testimony of versions, and the evidence of the ecclesiastical fathers, have already been noticed as a proof of the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament. The quotations from the New Testament in the writings of the fathers are so numerous; that (as it has frequently been observed) the whole body of the Gospels and Epistles might be compiled from the various passages dispersed in their commentaries and other writings. And though these citations were, in many instances, made from memory, yet, being always made with due attention to the sense and meaning, and most commonly with a regard to the words as well as to the order of the words, they correspond with the original records from which they were extracted: — an irrefragable argument this, of the purity and integrity with which the New Testament has been preserved.”

(HORNE’S Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, vol. i, chap. 2, sect. 3.)

The proofs of the existence and actions of Moses and Christ, the founders of the Jewish and Christian religions, having been adduced, with those of the antiquity and uncorrupted preservation of the records which profess to contain the facts of their history, and the doctrines they taught, the only question to be determined before we examine those miracles and prophecies on which the claim of the Divine authority of their mission rests, is, whether these records faithfully record the transactions of which they give us information, and on which the Divinity of both systems, the Jewish and the Christian, is built. To deny this because we object to the doctrines taught, is equally illogical and perverse, as it is assuming the doctrine to be false before we have considered all the evidence which may be adduced in its favour; to deny it because we have already determined to reject the miracles, is equally absurd and impious. It has already been proved, that miracles are possible; and whether the transactions related as such in the Scriptures be really miraculous or not, is a subsequent inquiry to that which respects the faithful recording of them. If the evidence of this is insufficient, the examination of the miracles is unnecessary; if it is strong and convincing, that examination is a subject of very serious import.

We might safely rest the faithfulness of the Scriptural record upon the argument of Leslie, before adduced; but, from the superabundance of evidence which the case furnishes, some amplifications may be added, which we shall confine principally to the authors of the New Testament.

There are four circumstances which never fail to give credibility to a witness, whether he depose to any thing orally or in writing: —

1. That he is a person of virtuous and sober character.
2. That he was in circumstances certainly to know the truth of what he relates.
3. That he has no interest in making good the story.
4. That his account is circumstantial.
In the highest degree these guarantees of faithful and exact testimony meet in the evangelists and apostles.

That they were persons of strict and exemplary virtue, must by all candid persons be acknowledged; so much so, that nothing to the contrary was ever urged against the integrity of their conduct by the most malicious enemies of Christianity. Avarice and interest could not sway them, for they voluntarily abandoned all their temporal connections, and embarked in a cause which the world regarded, to the last degree, as wretched and deplorable. Of their sincerity they gave the utmost proof in the openness of their testimony, never affecting reserve, or shunning inquiry. They delivered their testimony before kings and princes, priests and magistrates, in Jerusalem and Judea, where their Master lived and died, and in the most populous, inquisitive, and learned parts of the world, submitting its evidences to a fair and impartial examination.

“Their minds were so penetrated with a conviction of the truth of the Gospel, that they esteemed it their distinguished honour and privilege to seal their attestation to it by their sufferings, and blessed God that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach and shame for their profession. Passing through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true. Never dejected, never intimidated by any sorrows and sufferings they supported; but when stoned, imprisoned, and persecuted in one city, flying to another, and there preaching the Gospel with intrepid boldness and heaven-inspired zeal. Patient in tribulation, fervent in spirit, rejoicing under persecution, calm and composed under calumny and reproach, praying for their enemies, when in dungeons cheering the silent hours of night with hymns of praise to God. Meeting death itself in the most dreadful forms with which persecuting rage could dress it, with a serenity and exultation the Stoic philosophy never knew. In all these public scenes showing to the world a heart infinitely above what men vulgarly style great and happy, infinitely remote from ambition, the lust of gold, and a passion for popular applause, working with their own hands to raise a scanty subsistence for themselves that they might not be burdensome to the societies they had formed, holding up to all with whom they conversed, in the bright faithful mirror of their own behaviour, the amiableness and excellency of the religion they taught, and in every scene and circumstance of life distinguished for
their devotion to God, their unconquered love for mankind, their sacred regard for truth, their self government, moderation, humanity, sincerity, and every Divine, social, and moral virtue that can adorn and exalt a character. Nor are there any features of *enthusiasm* in the writings they have left us. We meet with no frantic fervours indulged, no monkish abstraction from the world recommended, no maceration of the body countenanced, no unnatural institutions established, no vain flights of fancy cherished, no absurd and irrational doctrines taught, no disobedience to any forms of human government encouraged, but all civil establishments and social connections suffered to remain it, the same state they were before Christianity. So far were the *apostles* from being *enthusiasts*, and instigated by a wild undiscerning religious phrenzy to rush into the jaws of death, when they might have honourably and lawfully escaped it, that we find them, when they could, without wounding their consciences, legally extricate themselves from persecution and death, pleading their privileges as Roman citizens, and appealing to Cesar’s supreme jurisdiction.”

(HARWOOD’S *Introduction to the New Testament.*)

As it was contrary to their character to attempt to deceive others, so they could not be *deceived* themselves. They could not mistake in the case of feeding of the five thousand, and the sudden healing of lepers, and lame and blind persons; they could not but know, whether he with whom they conversed for forty days was the same Jesus, as he with whom they had daily and familiar intercourse long before his crucifixion. They could not mistake as to his ascension into heaven; as to the fact whether they themselves were suddenly endowed with the power of speaking in languages which they had never acquired; and whether they were able to work miracles, and to impart the same power to others.

They were not only *disinterested* in their testimony; but their interests were on the side of concealment. One of the evangelists, Matthew, occupied a lucrative situation when called by Jesus, and was evidently an opulent man; the fishermen of Galilee were at least in circumstances of comfort, and never had any worldly inducement held out to them by their Master; Nicodemus was a ruler among the Jews; Joseph of Arimathea “a rich man;” and St. Paul, both from his education, connections, and talents, had encouraging prospects in life: but of himself, and of his fellow labourers, he speaks, and describes all the earthly rewards they obtained for testifying
both to Jews and Greeks that Jesus was the Christ, — “Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day.” Finally, they sealed their testimony in many instances with their blood, a circumstance of which they had been forewarned by their Master, and in the daily expectation of which they lived. From this the conclusion of Dr. Paley is irresistible, “These men could not be deceivers. By only not bearing testimony they might have avoided all their sufferings, and have lived quietly. Would men in such circumstances pretend to have seen what they never saw; assert facts of which they had no knowledge; go about lying, to teach virtue; and though not only convinced of Christ’s being an impostor, but having seen the success of his imposture in his crucifixion, yet persist in carrying it on, and so persist as to bring upon themselves, for nothing and with a full knowledge of the consequence, enmity and hatred, danger and death?”

To complete the character of their testimony, it is in the highest degree circumstantial. We never find that forged or false accounts of things abound in particularities; and where many particulars are related of time, place, persons, &c, there is always a strong presumption of truth, and on the contrary. Here the evidence is more than presumptive. The history of the evangelists and of the Acts of the Apostles is so full of reference to persons then living, and often persons of consequence, to places in which miracles and other transactions took place publicly and not in secret; and the application of all these facts by the first propagators of the Christian religion to give credit to its Divine authority was so frequent and explicit, and often so reproving to their opposers, that if they had not been true they must have been contradicted: and if contradicted on good evidence, the authors must have been overwhelmed with confusion. This argument is rendered the stronger When it is considered that “these things were not done in a corner,” nor was the age dark and illiterate and prone to admit fables. The Augustan age was the most learned the world ever saw. The love of arts, sciences, and literature, was the universal passion in almost every part of the Roman empire, where Christianity was first taught in its doctrines, and proclaimed in its facts; and in this inquisitive and discerning era, it rose, flourished, and established itself, with much resistance to its doctrines, but without being once questioned as to the truth of its historical facts.
Yet how easily might they have been disproved had they been false — that Herod the Great was not the sovereign of Judea when our Lord was born — that wise men from the east did not come to be informed of the place of his birth — and that Herod did not convene the sanhedrim, to inquire where their expected Messiah was to be born — that the infants in Bethlehem were not massacred — that in the time of Augustus all Judea was not enrolled by an imperial edict — that Simeon did not take the infant in his arms and proclaim him to be the expected salvation of Israel, which is stated to have been done publicly in the temple, before all the people — that the numerous persons, many of whose names are mentioned, and some the relatives of rulers and centurions, were not miraculously healed nor raised from the dead — that the resurrection of Lazarus, stated to have been done publicly, near to Jerusalem, and himself a respectable person, well known, did not occur — that the circumstances of the trial, condemnation, and crucifixion of Christ, did not take place as stated by his disciples; in particular, that Pilate did not wash his hands before them and give his testimony to the character of our Lord; that there was no preternatural darkness from twelve to three in the afternoon on the day of the crucifixion; and that there was no earthquake; facts which if they did not occur could have been contradicted by thousands: finally, that these well-known unlettered men, the apostles, were not heard to speak with tongues by many who were present in the assembly in which this was said to take place. But we might select almost all the circumstances out of the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, and show, that for the most part they were capable of being contradicted at the time when they were first published, and that the immense number of circumstances mentioned would in aftertimes have furnished acute investigators of the history with the means of detecting its falsehood had it not been indubitable, either by comparing the different relations with each other, or with some well authenticated facts of accredited collateral history. On the contrary, the small variations in the story of the evangelists are confirmations of their testimony, being in proof that there was no concert among them to impose upon the world, and they do not affect in the least the facts of the history itself; while as far as collateral, or immediately subsequent history has given its evidence, we have already seen, that it is confirmatory of the exactness and accuracy of the sacred penmen.

For all these reasons, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are to be taken as a faithful and uncorrupted record of the transactions they
exhibit; and nothing now appears to be necessary, but that this record be examined in order to determine its claims to be admitted as the deposit of the standing revelations of the will of God to mankind. The evidence of the genuineness and authenticity of the books of which it is composed, at least such of them as is necessary to the argument, is full and complete; and if certain of the facts which they detail are proved to be really miraculous, and the prophecies they record are in the proper sense predictive, then, according to the principles before established, the conclusion must be, THAT THE DOCTRINES WHICH THEY ATTEST ARE DIVINE. This shall be the next subject examined; minor objections being postponed to be answered in a subsequent chapter.
CHAPTER 15. — THE MIRACLES OF SCRIPTURE.

It has been already proved that miracles are possible, that they are appropriate, necessary, and satisfactory evidences of a revelation from God: and that, like other facts, they are capable of being authenticated by credible testimony. These points having been established, the main questions before us are, whether the facts alleged as miraculous in the Old and New Testaments have a sufficient claim to that character, and whether they were wrought in confirmation of the doctrine and mission of the founders of the Jewish and Christian religions.

That definition of a true miracle which we have adopted, may here be conveniently repeated: —

A miracle is an effect or event contrary to the established constitution or course of things, or a sensible suspension or controlment of, or deviation from, the known laws of nature, wrought either by the immediate act, or by the concurrence, or by the permission of God, for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the authority of some particular person.

The force of the argument from miracles lies in this — that as such works are manifestly above human power, and as no created being can effect them, unless empowered by the Author of nature, when they are wrought for such an end as that mentioned in the definition, they are to be considered as authentications of a Divine mission by a special and sensible interposition of God himself.

To adduce all the extraordinary works wrought by Moses and by Christ would be unnecessary. In those we select for examination, the miraculous character will sufficiently appear to bring them within our definition; and it will be recollected that it has been already established that the books which contain the account of these facts must have been written by their reputed authors, and that had not the facts themselves occurred as there related, it is impossible that the people of the age in which the accounts of them were published could have been brought to believe them. On the basis then of the arguments already adduced to prove these great points, it is concluded that we have in the Scriptures a true relation of the facts themselves. Nothing therefore remains but to establish their claims as miracles.
Out of the numerous miracles wrought by the agency of Moses we select, in addition to those before mentioned in chapter 9, *the plague of darkness*. Two circumstances are to be noted in the relation given of this event, Exodus 10. It continued three days, and it afflicted the Egyptians only, for “*all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.*” The fact here mentioned was of the most public kind: and had it not taken place, every Egyptian and every Israelite could have contradicted the account. The phenomenon was not produced by an eclipse of the sun, for no eclipse of that luminary can endure so long. Some of the Roman writers mention a darkness by day so great that persons were unable to know each other; but we have no historical account of any other darkness so long continued as this, and so intense, that the Egyptians “*rose not up from their places for three days.*” But if any such circumstance had again occurred, and a natural cause could have been assigned for it, yet even then the miraculous character of this event would remain unshaken; for to what but to a supernatural cause could the distinction made between the Israelites and the Egyptians be attributed, when they inhabited a portion of the same country, and when their neighbourhoods were immediately adjoining? Here then are the characters of a true miracle. The established course of natural causes and effects is interrupted by an operation upon that mighty element, the atmosphere. That it was not a chance irregularity in nature, is made apparent from the effect following the volition of a man acting in the name of the Lord of nature, and from its being restrained by that to a certain part of the same country — “*Moses stretched out his hand,*” and the darkness prevailed, every where but in the dwellings of his own people. The *fact* has been established by former arguments, and the fact being allowed, the *miracle* of necessity follows.

The destruction of the *first born* of the Egyptians may be next considered. Here too are several circumstances to be carefully noted. This judgment was threatened in the presence of Pharaoh, *before* any of the other plagues were brought upon him and his people. The Israelites also were forewarned of it. They were directed to slay a lamb, sprinkle the blood upon their door posts, and prepare for their departure that same night. The stroke was inflicted upon the first born of the Egyptians only, and not upon any other part of the family — it occurred in the same hour — the first born of the Israelites escaped without exception — and the festival of “*the passover*” was from that night instituted in remembrance of the event. Such a festival could not in the nature of the thing be established
in any subsequent age, in commemoration of an event which never occurred; and if instituted at the time, the event must have taken place, for by no means could this large body of men have been persuaded that their first born had been saved and those of the Egyptians destroyed, if the facts had not been before their eyes. The history therefore being established, the miracle follows; for the order of nature is sufficiently known to warrant the conclusion, that, if a pestilence were to be assumed as the agent of this calamity, an epidemic disease, however rapid and destructive, comes not upon the threat of a mortal, and makes no such selection as the first born of every family.

The miracle of dividing the waters of the RED SEA has already been mentioned, but merits more particular consideration. In this event we observe, as in the others, circumstances which exclude all possibility of mistake or collusion. The subject of the miracle is the sea; the witnesses of it the host of Israel, who passed through on foot, and the Egyptian nation, who lost their king and his whole army. The miraculous characters of the event are: — The waters are divided, and stand up on each side; — the instrument is a strong east wind, which begins its operation upon the waters at the stretching out of the hand of Moses, and ceases at the same signal, and that at the precise moment when the return of the waters would be most fatal to the Egyptian pursuing army.

It has, indeed, been asked whether there were not some ledges of rocks where the water was shallow, so that an army, at particular times, might pass over; and whether the Etesian winds, which blow strongly all summer from the northwest, might not blow so violently against the sea as to keep it back “on a heap.” But if there were any force in these questions, it is plain that such suppositions would leave the destruction of the Egyptians unaccounted for. To show that there is no weight in them at all, let the place where the passage of the Red Sea was effected be first noted. Some fix it near Suez, at the head of the gulf; but if there were satisfactory evidence of this, it ought also to be taken into the account, that formerly the gulf extended at least twenty-five miles north of Suez, the place where it terminates at present. (Lord Valentia’s Travels, vol. iii, p. 344.) But the names of places as well as tradition, fix the passage about ten hours’ journey lower down, at Clyisma, or the valley of Bedea. The name given by Moses to the place where the Israelites encamped before the sea was divided, was Pihahiroth, which signifies “the mouth of the ridge,” or of that chain of mountains which line the western coast of the Red Sea; and as
there is but one mouth of that chain through which an immense multitude of men, women, and children, could possibly pass when flying before their enemies, there can be no doubt whatever respecting the situation of Pihahiroth; and the modern names of conspicuous places in its neighbourhood prove, that those, by whom such names were given, believed that this was the place at which the Israelites passed the sea in safety, and where Pharaoh was drowned. Thus, we have close by Pihahiroth, on the western side of the gulf, a mountain called Attaka, which signifies deliverance. On the eastern coast opposite is a headland called Ras Musa, or “the Cape of Moses;” somewhat lower, Harnam Faraun, “Pharaoh’s Springs;” while at these places, the general name of the gulf itself is Bahr-al-Kolsum, “the Bay of Submersion,” in which there is a whirlpool called Birket Faraun, “the Pool of Pharaoh.” This, then, was the passage of the Israelites; and the depth of the sea here is stated by Bruce, who may be consulted as to these localities, at about fourteen fathoms, and the breadth at between three and four leagues. But there is no “ledge of rocks,” and as to the “Etesian wind,” the same traveller observes, “If the Etesian wind blowing from the northwest in summer, could keep the sea as a wall, on the right, of fifty feet high, still the difficulty would remain of building the wall to the left, or to the north. If the Etesian winds had done this once, they must have repeated it many a time before or since, from the same causes.” The wind which actually did blow, according to the history, either as an instrument of dividing the waters, or, which is more probable, as the instrument of drying the ground, after the waters were divided by the immediate energy of the Divine power, was not a north wind, but an “east wind;” and as Dr. Hales observes, “seems to be introduced by way of anticipation, to exclude the natural agency which might be afterward resorted to for solving the miracle; for it is remarkable that the monsoon in the Red Sea blows the summer half of the year from the north, and the winter half from the south, neither of which could produce the miracle in question.”

The miraculous character of this event is, therefore, most strongly marked. An expanse of water, and that water a sea, of from nine to twelve miles broad, known to be exceedingly subject to agitations, is divided, and a wall of water is formed on each hand, affording a passage on dry land for the Israelites. The phenomenon occurs too just as the Egyptian host are on the point of overtaking the fugitives, and ceases at the moment when the latter reach the opposite shore in safety, and when their enemies are in the midst
of the passage, in the only position in which the closing of the wall of waters on each side could insure the entire destruction of so large a force!

The falling of the MANNA in the wilderness for forty years, is another unquestionable miracle, and one in which there could be neither mistake on the part of those who were sustained by it, nor fraud on the part of Moses. That this event was not produced by the ordinary course of nature, is rendered certain by the fact, that the same wilderness has been travelled by individuals, and by large bodies of men, from the earliest ages to the present, but no such supply of food was ever met with, except on this occasion; and its miraculous character is farther marked by the following circumstances:

1. That it fell but six days in the week:

2. That it fell in such prodigious quantities as sustained three millions of souls:

3. That there fell a double quantity every Friday, to serve the Israelites for the next day, which was their Sabbath:

4. That what was gathered on the first five days of the week stank and bred worms, if kept above one day; but that which was gathered on Friday kept sweet for two days: and

5. That it continued falling while the Israelites remained in the wilderness, but ceased as soon as they came out of it, and got corn to eat in the land of Canaan. (Universal History, 50. 1, c. 7.)

Let these very extraordinary particulars be considered, and they at once confirm the fact, while they unequivocally establish the miracle. No people could be deceived in these circumstances; no person could persuade them of their truth, if they had not occurred; and the whole was so clearly out of the regular course of nature, as to mark unequivocally the interposition of God. To the majority of the numerous miracles recorded in the Old Testament, the same remarks apply, and upon them the same miraculous characters are as indubitably impressed. If we proceed to those of Christ, the evidence becomes, if possible, more indubitable. They were clearly above the power of either human agency or natural causes: they were public: they were such as could not admit of collusion or deception: they were performed under such circumstances as rendered it impossible for the witnesses and reporters of them to mistake: they were often done in the
presence of malignant, scrutinizing, and intelligent enemies, the Jewish rulers, who acknowledged the facts, but attributed them to an evil, supernatural agency; and there is no interruption in the testimony, from the age in which they were wrought, to this day. It would be trifling with the reader to examine instances so well known in their circumstances, for the slightest recollection of the feeding of the multitudes in the desert; — the healing of the paralytic, who, because of the multitude, was let down from the house top; — the instant cure of the withered hand in the synagogue, near Jerusalem, where the Pharisees were “watching our Lord whether he would heal on the Sabbath day;” — the raising from the dead of the daughter of Jairus, the widow’s son, and Lazarus; and many other instances of miraculous power, — will be sufficient to convince any ingenuous mind, that all the characters of real and adequately attested miracles meet in them. That great miracle, the resurrection of our Lord himself from the dead, so often appealed to by the first teachers of his religion, may, however, be here properly adduced, with its convincing and irrefragable circumstances, as completing this branch of the external evidence.

That it is a miracle in its highest sense for a person actually dead to raise himself again to life, cannot be doubted; and when wrought, as the raising of Christ was, in attestation of a Divine commission, it is evidence of the most irrefragable kind. So it has been regarded by unbelievers, who have bent all their force against it; and so it was regarded by Divine Providence, who rendered its proofs ample and indubitable in proportion to its importance. Let us, then, examine the circumstances as recorded in the history.

In the first place, the reality of Christ’s death is circumstantially and fully stated, though if no circumstantial evidence had been adduced, it is not to be supposed that they, who had sought his death with so much eagerness, would be inattentive to the full execution of the sentence for which they had clamoured. The execution was public; he was crucified with common malefactors, in the usual place of execution; the soldiers brake not his legs, the usual practice when they would hasten the death of the malefactor, observing that he was dead already. His enemies knew that he had predicted his resurrection, and would therefore be careful that he should not be removed from the cross before death had actually taken place; and Pilate refused to deliver the body for burial until he had expressly inquired of the officer on duty, whether he were already dead. Nor was he taken
away to an unknown or distant tomb. Joseph of Arimathea made no secret of the place where he had buried him. It was in his own family tomb, and the Pharisees knew where to direct the watch which was appointed to guard the body against the approach of his disciples. The reality of the death of Christ is therefore established.

2. But by both parties, by the Pharisees on the one part, and by the disciples on the other, it was agreed, that the body was missing, and that, in the state of death, it was never more seen! The sepulchre was made sure, the stone at the mouth being sealed, and a watch of sixty Roman soldiers appointed to guard it, and yet the body was not to be found. Let us see, then, how each party accounts for this fact. The disciples affirm, that two of their company, going early in the morning to the sepulchre to embalm the body, saw an angel descend and roll away the stone, sit upon it, and invite them to see the place where their Lord had lain, informing them that he was risen, and commanding them to tell the other disciples of the fact; — that others went to the sepulchre, and found not the body, though the grave clothes remained; that, at different times, he appeared to them, both separately and when assembled; that they conversed with him.; that he partook of their food; that they touched his body; that he continued to make his appearance among them for nearly six weeks, and then, after many advices, finally led them out as far as Bethany, and, in the presence of them all, ascended into the clouds of heaven. This is the statement of the disciples.

The manner in which the Jewish sanhedrim accounts for the absence of our Lord’s body from the sepulchre is, that the Roman soldiers having slept on their posts, the disciples stole away the corpse. We know of no other account. Neither in their earliest books nor traditions is there any other attempt to explain the alleged resurrection of Jesus. We are warranted therefore in concluding, that the Pharisees had nothing but this to oppose to the positive testimony of the disciples, who also added, and published it to the world, that the Roman soldiers related to the Pharisees “all the things that were done,” the earthquake, the appearance of the angel, &c; but that they were bribed to say, “His disciples came by night and stole him away, while we slept.”

On the statement of the Pharisees we may remark, that though those who were not convinced by our Lord’s former miracles were in a state of mind to resist the impression of his resurrection, yet, in this attempt to destroy
the testimony of the apostles, they fell below their usual subtlety in circulating a story which carried with it its own refutation. This, however, may be accounted for, from the hurry and agitation of the moment, and the necessity under which they were laid to invent something to amuse the populace, who were not indisposed to charge them with the death of Jesus. Of this it is clear that the Pharisees were apprehensive, “fearing the people,” on this as on former occasions. This appears from the manner in which the sanhedrim addressed the apostles, Acts 5:28: “Did we not straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name? and behold you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and INTEND TO BRING THIS MAN’S BLOOD UPON US.” The majority of the people were not enemies of Jesus, though the Pharisees were: and it was a mob of base fellows, and strangers, of which Jerusalem was full at the passover, who had been excited to clamour for his death. The body of the Jewish populace heard him gladly; great numbers or them had been deeply impressed by the raising of Lazarus, in the very neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and had inconsequence accompanied him with public acclamations, as the Messiah, into Jerusalem. These sentiments of the people of Jerusalem toward our Lord were transferred to the apostles; for after Peter and John had healed the man at the gate of the temple, and refused to obey the council in keeping silent as to Christ, when the chief priests had “farther threatened them, they let them go, finding not how they might punish them BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE.”

It was in a state of considerable agitation, therefore, that this absurd and self-exposed rumour was hastily got up, and as hastily published. We may add, also, that it was hastily abandoned; for it is remarkable, that it is never adverted to by the Pharisees in any of those legal processes instituted at Jerusalem against the first preachers of Christ as the risen Messiah, within a few days after the alleged event itself. First, Peter and John are brought before their great council; then the whole body of the apostles twice; on all these occasions they affirm the fact of the resurrection, before the very men who had originated the tale of the stealing away of the body, and in none of these instances did the chief priests oppose this story to the explicit testimony of his disciples having seen, felt, and conversed with Jesus, after his passion. This silence cannot be accounted for but on the supposition that, in the presence of the apostles at least, they would not hazard its exposure. If at any time the Roman guards could have been brought forward effectually to confront the apostles, it was when the whole body of
the latter were in custody, and before the council, where indeed the great question at issue between the parties was, whether Jesus were risen from the dead or not. On the one part, the apostles stand before the rulers affirming the fact, and are ready to go into the detail of their testimony: the only testimony which could be opposed to this is that of the Roman soldiers, but not one of the sixty is brought up, and they do not even advert to the rumour which the rulers had proclaimed. On the contrary, one of them, Gamaliel, advises the council to take no farther proceedings, but to let the matter go on, for this reason, that if it were of men it would come to nought, but if of God, they could not overthrow it, and would be found to fight against God himself. Now it is plain that if the Pharisees themselves believed in the story they had put into the mouths of the Roman soldiers, no doctor of the law, like Gamaliel, would have given such advice, and equally impossible is it that the council should unanimously have agreed to it. With honest proofs of an imposture in their hands, they could never thus have tamely surrendered the public to delusion and their own characters to infamy; nor, if they had, could they have put their non-interference on the ground assumed by Gamaliel. The very principle of his decision supposes, that both sides acknowledged something very extraordinary which might prove a work of God; and that time would make it manifest. It admitted in point of fact, that Jesus might be risen again. The whole council, by adopting Gamaliel’s decision, admitted this possibility, or how could time show the whole work, built entirely upon this fact, to be a work of God, or not? And thus Gamaliel, without intending it, certainly, has afforded evidence in favour of the resurrection of our Lord the more powerful from its being incidental.

The absurdity involved in the only testimony ever brought against the resurrection of our Lord, rendered it indeed impossible to maintain the story. That a Roman guard should be found off their watch, or asleep, a fault which the military law of that people punished with death, was most incredible; that, if they were asleep, the timid disciples of Christ should dare to make the attempt, when the noise of removing the stone and bearing away the body might awaken them, is very improbable; and, above all, as it has been often put, either the soldiers were awake or asleep — if awake, why did they suffer a few unarmed peasants and women to take away the body? and if asleep, how came they to know that the disciples were the persons?
Against the resurrection of Christ, we may then with confidence say, there is no testimony whatever; it stands, like every other fact in the evangelic history, entirely uncontradicted from the earliest ages to the present; and though we grant that it does not follow, that, because we do not admit the account given of the absence of our Lord’s body from the sepulchre by the Jews, we must therefore admit that of the apostles, yet the very inability of those who first objected to the fact of the resurrection to account for the absence of the body, which had been entirely in their own power, affords very strong presumptive evidence in favour of the statement of the disciples. Under such circumstances the loss of the body became itself an extraordinary event. The tomb was carefully closed and sealed by officers appointed for that purpose, a guard was set, and yet the body is missing. The story of the Pharisees does not at all account for the fact; it is too absurd to be for a moment credited; and unless the history of the evangelists be admitted, that singular fact remains still unaccounted for.

But in addition to this presumption, let the circumstances of credibility in the testimony of the disciples be collected, and the evidence becomes indubitable.

The account given by the disciples was not even an improbable one, for allow the miracles wrought by Christ during his life, and the resurrection follows as a natural conclusion; for before that event can be maintained to be in the lowest sense improbable, the whole history of his public life, in opposition not to the evangelists merely, but, as we have seen, to the testimony of Jews and heathens themselves, must be proved to be a fable.

The manner in which this testimony is given, is in its favour. So far from the evangelists having written in concert, they give an account of the transaction so varied as to make it clear that they wrote independently of each other; and yet so agreeing in the leading facts, and so easily capable of reconcilement in those minute circumstances in which some discrepancy at first sight appears, that their evidence in every part carries with it the air of honesty and truth.

Their own account sufficiently proves, that they were incredulous as to the fact when announced, and so not disposed to be imposed upon by an imagination. This indeed was impossible; the appearances of Christ were too numerous, and were continued for too long a time, — forty days. They could not mistake, and it is as impossible that they should deceive; impossible that upward of five hundred persons to whom Christ appeared,
should have been persuaded by the artful few, that they had seen and conversed with Christ, or to agree, not only without reward, but in renunciation of all interests and in hazard of all dangers and of death itself, to continue to assert a falsehood.

Nor did a long period elapse before the fact of the resurrection was proclaimed; nor was a distant place chosen in which to make the first report of it. These would have been suspicious circumstances; but on the contrary the disciples testify the fact from the day of the resurrection itself. One of them in a public speech at the feast of pentecost, addressed to a mixed multitude, affirms it; and the same testimony is given by the whole college of apostles, before the great council twice: this too was done at Jerusalem, the scene of the whole transaction, and in the presence of those most interested in detecting the falsehood. Their evidence was given, not only before private but public persons, before magistrates and tribunals, “before philosophers and rabbies, before courtiers, before lawyers, before people expert in examining and cross-examining witnesses,” and yet what Christian ever impeached his accomplices? or discovered this pretended imposture? or was convicted of prevarication? or was even confronted with others who could contradict him as to this or any other matter of fact relative to his religion? To this testimony of the apostles was added the seal of miracles, wrought as publicly, and being as unequivocal in their nature, as open to public investigation, and as numerous, as those of their Lord himself. The miracle of the gift of tongues was in proof of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ; and the miracles of healing were wrought by the apostles in their Master’s name, and therefore were the proofs both of his resurrection and of their commission. Indeed, of the want of supernatural evidence the Jews, the ancient enemies of Christianity never complained. They allowed the miracles both of Christ and his apostles; but by ascribing them to Satan, and regarding them as diabolical delusions and wonders wrought in order to seduce them from the law, their admissions are at once in proof of the truth of the Gospel history, and enable us to account for their resistance to an evidence so majestic and overwhelming.
CHAPTER 16. — OBJECTIONS TO THE PROOF FROM MIRACLES CONSIDERED.

The first objection to the conclusiveness of the argument in favour of the Mosaic and Christian systems which is drawn from their miracles is grounded upon facts and doctrines supposed to be found in the Scriptures themselves.

It is stated, that the Scriptures assert miraculous acts to have been performed in opposition to the mission and to the doctrine of those who have professed themselves accredited instruments of making known revelations of the will of God to mankind; and that the sacred writers frequently speak of such events as possible, nay as certain future occurrences, even when they have not actually taken place. The question therefore is, how miracles should be conclusive proofs of truth, when they actually have been, or may be wrought, in proof of falsehood.

“Shall a miracle confirm the belief of one, and not confirm the belief of more Gods than one, if wrought for that purpose?” (Bishop Fleetwood on Miracles.) The instances usually adduced are the feats of the Egyptian magi in opposition to Moses, and the raising of Samuel by the witch of Endor. The presumptions that such works are considered possible, are drawn from a passage of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy; a prediction respecting false Christs in St. Matthew’s Gospel; and the prediction of the man of sin, in the writings of St. Paul: all of which caution the reader against being seduced from the truth, by “signs and wonders” performed by false teachers.

With respect to the miracles, or pretended miracles, wrought by the magicians of Pharaoh, some preliminary considerations are to be noted.

1. That whether the persons called magicians were regular priests or a distinct class of men, they were known to be expert in producing singular effects and apparent transformations in natural objects, for after Moses had commenced his marvellous operations, they were sent for by Pharaoh to oppose their power and skill to his.

2. That they succeeded, or appeared to succeed, in three attempts to imitate the works of Moses, and were then controlled, or attempted a work
beyond their power, and were obliged to acknowledge themselves vanquished by “the finger of God.” The rest of the miracles wrought by Moses went on without any attempt at imitation.

3. That these works of whatever kind they might be, were wrought to hold up the idols of Egypt as equal in power to Jehovah, the God of Moses and the Israelites. This is a consideration of importance, and the fact is easily proved. If they were mere jugglers and performed their wonders by sleight of hand, they did not wish the people to know this, or their influence over them could not have been maintained. They therefore used “enchantments,” incongruous and strange ceremonies, rites and offerings, which among all superstitious people have been supposed to have a powerful effect in commanding the influence of supernatural beings in their favour and subjecting them to their will. We have an instance of this use of “enchantments” in the case of Balaam, who lived in the same age; and this example goes very far, we think, to settle the sense in which the magi used “enchantments;” for though the original word used is different, yet its ideal meaning is equally capable of being applied to the rites of incantation, and in this sense it is confirmed by the whole story. Whatever connection therefore may be supposed to exist between the “enchantments” used and the works performed, or if all connection be denied, this species of religious rite was performed, and the people understood, as it was intended they should understand, that the wonders which the magi performed were done under the influence of their deities. The object of Pharaoh and the magicians was to show, that their gods were as powerful as the God who had commissioned Moses, and that they could protect them from his displeasure, though they should refuse at the command of his commissioned servant to let his people go.

But whatever pretence there was of supernatural assistance, it is contended by several writers of great and deserved authority, that no miracles were wrought at all on these occasions; that, by dexterity and previous preparation, serpents were substituted by the magicians for rods; that a colouring matter was infused into a portion of water; and that as frogs, through the previous miracle of Moses, every where abounded in the land of Egypt, a sufficient number might be easily procured to cover some given space; and they farther argue, that when the miracles of Moses became such as to defy the possibility of the most distant imitation, at that point the simulations of the magi ceased.
The obvious objection to this is, that “Moses describes the works of the magicians in the very same language as he does his own, and therefore there is reason to conclude that they were equally miraculous.” To this it is replied, that nothing is more common than to speak of professed jugglers as doing what they pretend or appear to do, and that this language never misleads. But it is also stated, and the observation is of great weight, that the word used by Moses is one of great latitude — “they DID SO,” that is, in like manner, importing that they attempted some imitation of Moses; because it is used when they failed in their attempt — they DID SO to bring forth lice; but they could not.” Farther, Mr. Farmer, Dr. Hales, and others, contend, that the root of the word translated “enchanted” simile expresses any “secret artifices or methods of deception, whereby false appearances are imposed upon the spectators.” For a farther explanation and defence of this hypothesis, an extract from Farmer’s Dissertation on Miracles is given, at the end of the chapter.

Much as these observations deserve attention, it may be very much doubted, whether mere manual dexterity and sleight of hand can sufficiently account for the effects actually produced, if only human agents were engaged; and it does not appear impracticable to meet any difficulty which may arise out of an admission of supernatural evil agency in the imitation of the three first wonders performed by Moses.

It ought however in the first place to be previously stated, that the history before us is not in fairness to be judged of as an insulated statement, independent of the principles and doctrines of the revelation in which it is found. With that revelation it is bound up, and by the light of its doctrine it is to be judged. No infidel, who would find in Scripture an argument against Scripture, has the right to consider any passage separately, or to apply to it the rule of his own theory on religious subjects, unless he has first, by fair and honest argument, disposed of the evidences of the Scriptures themselves. He must disprove the authenticity of the sacred record, and the truth of the facts contained in it, — he must rid himself of every proof of the Divine mission of Moses, and of the evidence of his miracles, before he is entitled to this right; and if he is inadequate to this task, he can only consider the case as a difficulty, standing on the admission of the Scriptures themselves, and to be explained, as far as possible, on the principles of that general system of religion which the Scriptures themselves supply. In this nothing more is asked, than argumentative fairness. The same rule is still more obligatory upon those
interpreters who profess to believe in the Divine authority of the sacred
records; for by the aid of their general principles and unequivocal
doctrines, every difficulty which they profess to extract from them, is
surely to be examined in order to ascertain its real character. What,
however, is the real difficulty in the present case, supposing it to be
allowed that the magicians performed works superior to the power of any
mere human agent, and therefore supernatural? This it is the more
necessary to settle, as the difficulty supposed to arise out of this admission
has been exaggerated.

It seems generally to have been supposed, that these counter performances
were wrought to contradict the Divine mission of Moses, and that by
allowing them to be supernatural, we are brought into the difficulty of
supposing, that God may authenticate the mission of his servants by
miracles, and that miracles may be wrought also to contradict this
attestation, thus leaving us in a state of uncertainty. This view is not
however at all countenanced by the history. No intimation is given that the
magicians performed their wonders to prove that there was no such God as
Jehovah, or that Moses was not commissioned by him. For as they did not
deny the works of Moses to be really performed, they could no more deny
that he did them by the power of his God, than they would deny that they
themselves performed their exploits by the assistance of their gods, — a
point which they doubtless wished to impress upon Pharaoh and the
people, and for which both were prepared by their previous belief in their
idols, and in the effect of incantations. For to suppose that Pharaoh sent for
men to play mere juggling tricks, knowing them to be mere jugglers, seems
too absurd to be for a moment admitted, except indeed, as some have
assumed, that he thought the works of Moses to be sleight-of-hand
deceptions, which he might expose by the imitations of his own jugglers.
But nothing of this is even hinted at in the history, and at least the second
work of Moses was such as entirely to preclude the idea — the water
became blood throughout the whole land of Egypt. It was not intended by
these works of the Egyptian magi, to oppose the existence of Jehovah, for
there was nothing in polytheism which required it to be denied, that every
people had their own local divinities, — nothing indeed which required its
votaries to disallow the existence of even a Supreme Deity, the “Father of
gods and men;” and that Moses was commissioned by this Jehovah, “the
God of the Hebrews,” to command Pharaoh to let his people go, was in
point of fact acknowledged, rather than denied, by allowing his works, and
attempting to imitate them. The argument upon their own principles was certainly as strong for Moses, as for the Egyptian priests. If their extraordinary works proved them the servants of their gods, the works of Moses proved him to be the servant of his God.

Thus in this series of singular transactions was there no evidence from counter miracles, even should it be allowed that real miracles were wrought, to counteract or nullify the mission of Moses, or to deny the existence or even to question any of the attributes of the true Jehovah. All that can be said is, that singular works, which were intended to pass for miraculous ones, were wrought, not to disprove any thing which Moses advanced, but to prove that the Egyptian deities had power equal to the God of the Jews; and in which contest their votaries ultimately failed — that pretension being abundantly refuted by the transcendent nature and number of the works of Moses; and by their being “plagues,” from which the objects of their idolatry could not deliver them, and which, indeed, as the learned Bryant has shown, were intended expressly to humble idolatry itself, and put it to open and bitter shame.

If in this instance we see nothing to contravene the evidence of miracles, as attestations of the Divine commission of Moses, so in no other case recorded in Scripture. The raising of the spirit of Samuel by the witch of Endor, is indeed the only instance of any thing approaching to miraculous agency ascribed to an evil spirit, unless we add the power exercised by Satan over Job, and his bearing our Lord through the air, and placing him upon an exceeding high mountain. But whether these events were properly speaking miraculous, may be more than doubted; and if they were, neither they, nor the raising of Samuel profess to give any evidence in opposition to the mission of any servant of God, or to the doctrines taught by him. On the contrary, so far are the Scriptures from affording any examples of miracles, rather real or simulated, wrought in direct opposition to the mission and theological doctrine of the inspired messengers of God in any age, that in cases where the authority of the messenger was fairly brought into question, the examples are of a quite different kind. Elijah brought the matter to issue, whether Jehovah or Baal were God; and while the priests of Baal heard neither “voice nor sound” in return to all their prayers, the God of Israel answered his own prophet by fire, and by that ratified his servant’s commission and his own Divinity before all Israel. The devils in our Lord’s days confessed him to be the Son of the most high God. The damsel possessed with a spirit of divination at Thyatira, gave testimony to
the mission of the Apostle Paul and his companions. We read of no particular acts performed by Elymas the sorcerer; but, whatever he could perform, when he attempted to turn away Sergius Paulus from the faith he was struck blind. And thus we find that Scripture does nowhere represent miracles to have been actually wrought in contradiction of the authority of any whom God had commissioned to teach his will to mankind.

But that the Scriptures assume this as possible, is argued from Deuteronomy 13:1. &c. — where the people are commanded not to follow a prophet or dreamer of dreams, who would entice them into idolatry, though he should give them “a sign or wonder, and the sign or wonder come to pass.” Here, however, it appears, that not a miracle, but a prophecy of some wonderful event is spoken of: for this sign or wonder was to come to pass. Nor can the prediction be considered as more than some shrewd and accidental guess, either from himself, or by the assistance of some evil supernatural agency, (a subject we shall just now consider,) but in fact, falling short, though in some respects wonderful, of a true prediction; because in the eighteenth chapter of this same book, the fulfilment of the words of a prophet is made the conclusive proof of his Divine commission, nor can we suppose the same writer within the distance of a few sentences to contradict himself.

In Matthew 24:24, it is predicted that false Christs and false prophets shall arise and show “great signs and wonders,” calculated to deceive men, though not “the elect.” And in Thessalonians 2:8 and 9, the coming of the man of sin is said to be “after the working of Satan with all power, and signs, and lying wonders.” The latter prediction refers unquestionably to the papacy, and to works wrought to lead men from the true interpretation of the Gospel, though not to annul in the least the Divine authority of Christ and his apostles; the former supposes works which, as being wrought by false Christs, are opposed to the commission of our Lord, and is indeed the only instance in which a direct contest between the miracles which attest the authority of a Divine messenger, and “great signs and wonders” wrought to attest an opposing and contradictory authority, is spoken of. What these “signs and wonders” may be, it is therefore necessary to ascertain.

In the Thessalonians they are ascribed to the “working of Satan,” and in order to bring the general principles of the revelation of the Scriptures to
bear upon these, its more obscure and difficult parts, a rule to which we are in fairness bound, it must be observed,

1. That the introduction of sin into the world is ascribed to the malice and seductive cunning of a powerful evil spirit, the head and leader of innumerable others,

2. That when a Redeemer was promised to man, that promise, in its very first annunciation, indicated a long and arduous struggle between HIM and these evil supernatural agents.

3. That it is the fact, that a powerful contest has been maintained in the world ever since, between truth and error, idolatry, superstition, and will worship, and the pure and authorized worship of the true God.

4. That the Scriptures uniformly represent the Redeemer and Restorer at the head of one party of men in the struggle, and Satan at the head of the other; each making use of men as their instruments, though consistently with their general free agency.

5. That almighty God carries on his purposes to win man back to obedience to him, by the exhibition of truth, with its proper evidences; by commands, promises, threats, chastisements, and final punishments, and that Satan opposes this design by exhibitions of error, and false religion, gratifying to the corrupt passions and appetites of men; and especially seeks to influence powerful agents among men to seduce others by their example; and to destroy the truth by persecution and force.

6. That the false religions of the heathen, as well as the corruptions of Christianity, took place under this diabolical influence; and that the idols of the heathen were not only the devices of devils, but often devils themselves, made the objects of the worship of men, either for their wickedness or their supposed power to hurt.

Now as the objection which we are considering is professedly taken from Scripture, its doctrine on this subject must be explained by itself, and for this reason the above particulars have been introduced; but the inquiry must go farther. These evil spirits are in a state of hostility to the truth, and oppose it by endeavouring to seduce men to erroneous opinions, and a corrupt worship. All their power may therefore be expected to be put forth
in accomplishment of their designs; but to what does their power extend? This is an important question, and the Scriptures afford us no small degree of assistance in deciding it.

1. They can perform no work of creation; for this throughout Scripture is constantly attributed to God, and is appealed to by him as the proof of his own Divinity in opposition to idols, and to all beings what ever — *To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal, saith the Holy One? Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things.* This claim must of necessity cut off from every other being the power of creating in any degree, that is, of making anything out of nothing; for a being possessing the power to create an atom out of nothing, could not want the ability of making a world. Nay, creation, in its lower sense, is in this passage denied to any but God; that is, the forming goodly and perfect natural objects, such as the heavens and the earth are replenished with, from a pre-existent matter, as he formed all things from matter unorganized and chaotic. No “sign,” therefore, no “wonder” which implies creation, is possible to finite beings; and whatever power any of them may have over matter, it cannot extend to any act of creation.

2. Life and death are out of the power of evil spirits. The dominion of these is so exclusively claimed by God himself in many passages of Scripture which are familiar, that they need not be cited, — *Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death* — *I kill, and I make alive again.* No “signs or wonders,” therefore, which imply dominion over these, — the power to produce a living being, or to give life to the dead, — are within the power of evil spirits; these are works of God.

3. The knowledge of future events, especially of those which depend on free or contingent causes, is not attainable by evil spirits. This is the property of God, who founds upon it the proof of his Deity; and therefore excludes it from all others: *Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods,* Isaiah 40:25, 26; 41:23. They cannot therefore utter a prediction in the strict and proper sense; though from their great knowledge of human affairs, and their long habits of observation, their conjectures may be surprising, and often accomplished, and so if uttered by any of their servants may have in some cases the appearance of prophecies.

4. They do not know certainly the thoughts and characters of men. “That,” as St. Augustine observes, “they have a great facility in discovering what is
in the minds of men by the least external sign they give of it, and such as
the most sagacious men cannot perceive,” and that they may have other
means of access too, to the mind beside these external signs; and that a
constant observation of human character, to which they are led by their
favourite work of temptation, gives them great insight into the character
and tempers and weakness of individuals, may be granted; but that the
absolute, immediate, infallible knowledge of the thoughts and character
belongs alone to God, is clearly the doctrine of Scripture: it is the Lord
“who searcheth the heart,” and “knoweth what is in man;” and in
Jeremiah 7:9, 10, the knowledge of the heart is attributed exclusively to
God alone.

Let all these things then be considered, and we shall be able to ascertain, at
least in part, the limits within which this evil agency is able to operate in
opposing the truth, and in giving currency to falsehood; at least we shall be
able to show, that the Scriptures assign no power to this “working of
Satan” to oppose the truth by such “signs and wonders” as many have
supposed. In no instance can evil spirits oppose the truth, we do not say by
equal, or nearly equal miracles and prophesies, but by real ones — of both,
their works are but simulations. We take the case of miracles. A creature
cannot create; this is the doctrine of Scripture, and it will serve to explain
the wonders of the Egyptian magi. They were, we think, very far above the
sleight of hand of mere men unassisted; and we have seen, that as idolatry
is diabolic, and even is the worship of devils themselves, and the instrument
of their opposition to God, the Scriptures suppose them to be exceedingly
active in its support. It is perfectly accordant with this principle, therefore,
to conclude, that Pharaoh’s priest’s had as much of the assistance of the
demons whose ministers they were, as they were able to exert. But then the
great principles we have just deduced from Scripture, oblige us to limit this
power. It was not a power of working real miracles, but of simulating them
in order to uphold the credit of idolatry. Now the three miracles of Moses
which were simulated, all involved a creating energy. A serpent was
created out of the matter of the rod; the frogs, from their immense
multitude, appear also to have been created; and blood was formed out of
the matter of water. But in the imitations of the magi, there was no
creation: we are forbidden by the doctrine of Scripture to allow this, and
therefore there must have been deception and the substitution of one thing
for another: which, though performed in a manner apparently much above
human adroitness, might be very much within the power of a number of
invisible and active spirits. Serpents, in a country where they abound, might be substituted for rods; frogs, which, after they had been brought upon the land by Moses, were numerous enough, might be suddenly thrown upon a cleared place; and the water, which could only be obtained by digging, for the plague of Moses was upon all the streams and reservoirs, and the quantity being in consequence very limited, might by their invisible activity be easily mixed with blood or a colouring matter. In all this there was something of the imposture of the priests, and much of the assistance of Satan; but in the strict sense no miracle was wrought by either, while the works of Moses were, from their extent, unequivocally miraculous.

For the reasons we have given, no apparent miracles wrought in support of falsehood, can for a moment become rivals of the great miracles by which the revelations of the Scripture are attested. For instance, nothing like that of feeding several thousands of people with a few loaves and fishes can occur, for that supposes creation of the matter and the form of bread and fish; no giving life to the dead, for the “issues from death” belong exclusively to God. Accordingly we find in the “signs and wonders” wrought by the false prophets and Christs predicted in Matthew, whether we suppose them mere impostors, or the immediate agents of Satan also, nothing of this decisive kind to attest their mission. Theudas promised to divide Jordan, and seduced many to follow him; but he was killed by the Roman troops before he could perform his miracle. Another promised that the walls of Jerusalem should fall down; but his followers were also put to the sword by Felix. The false Christ, Barchocheba, raised a large party; but no miracles of his are recorded. Another arose, A.D. 434, and pretended to divide the sea; but hid himself after many of his besotted followers had plunged into it, in faith that it would retire from them, and were drowned. Many other false Christs appeared at different times; but the most noted was Sabbatai Sevi, in 1666. The delusion of the Jews with respect to him was very great. Many of his followers were strangely affected, prophesied of his greatness, and appeared by their contortions to be under some supernatural influence; but the grand seignior having apprehended Sabbatai, gave him the choice of proving his Messiahship, by suffering a body of archers to shoot at him; after which, if he was not wounded, he would acknowledge him to be the Messias; or, if he declined this, that he should be impaled, or turn Turk. He chose the latter, and the delusion was dissipated.
Now whatever “signs or wonders” may be wrought by any of these, it is clear from the absence of all record of any unequivocal miracle, that they were either illusions or impostures.

The same course of remark applies to prophecy. To know the future certainly, is the special prerogative of God. The false prophet anticipated by Moses in Deuteronomy, who was to utter wonderful predictions which should “come to pass,” is not therefore to be supposed to utter predictions strictly and truly, as founded upon an absolute knowledge of the future. A shrewd man may guess happily in some instances, and his conjectures when accomplished may appear to be “a sign and a wonder,” to a people willing to be deceived, because loving the idolatry to which he would lead them. Still farther, the Scripture doctrine does not discountenance the idea of an evil supernatural agency “working” with him; and then the superior sagacity of evil spirits may give to his conjectures, founded upon their own natural foresight of probabilities, a more decided air of prophecy, and thus aid the wicked purpose of seducing men from God’s worship. Real and unequivocal prophecy is however impossible to them, and indeed we have no instance of any approach to it among the false prophets recorded in the Jewish history. The heathen oracles may afford us also a comment on this. They were exceedingly numerous; many of them were highly celebrated; all professed to reveal the future; some wonderful stories are recorded of them; and it is difficult to refer the whole to the imposture of priests, though much of that was ultimately detected. That they kept their credit for two thousand years, and were silenced by the spread of the Gospel, and that, almost entirely, before the time of the establishment of Christianity by Constantine, as acknowledged by heathen authors themselves — that they were in many instances silenced by individual Christians, is openly declared in the apologies of the Christian fathers, so that the Pythonic inspiration could never be renewed — these are all strong presumptions at least, that, in this mockery of the Oracle of Zion, this counterfeit of the standing evidence given by prophecy to truth, there was much of diabolical agency, though greatly mingled with imposture. Nevertheless, the ambiguity and obscurity by which the oracles sported with the credulity of the heathen, and miserably seduced them, often to the most diabolical wickednesses, and yet, in many cases, whatever might happen, preserved the appearance of having told the truth, sufficiently proved the want of a certain and clear knowledge of the future; and, upon the showing of their own writers, nothing was ever uttered by an oracle which, considered as prophecy, can
be for a moment put in comparison with the least remarkable of those Scripture predictions which are brought forward in proof of the truth of the Scriptures. When they are brought into comparison, the most celebrated of them appear contemptible. We may then very confidently conclude, that as Scripture no where represents any “signs or wonders” as actually wrought to contradict the evidence of the Divine commission of Moses, of Christ and his apostles; so in those passages in which it supposes that they may occur, and predicts that they will be wrought in favour of falsehood, and, in the case of the false Christs, in opposition to the true Messiah, they do not give any countenance to the notion, that either real miracles can be wrought, or real predictions uttered, even by the permission of God, in favour of falsehood: for no permission, properly speaking, can be given to any being to do what he has not the natural power to effect; and permission in this case, to mean any thing, must imply that God himself wrought the miracles, and gave the predictions, through the instrumentality of a creature it is true, but in fact that he employed his Divine power in opposition to his own truth, — a dishonourable thought which cannot certainly be maintained. His permission may however extend to a license to evil men, and evil spirits too, to employ, against the truth and for the seduction of men, whatever natural power they possess. This is perfectly consistent with the general doctrine of Scripture; but this permission is granted under rule and limit. Thus the history of Job is highly important, as it shows that evil spirits cannot employ their power against a good man without express permission. An event in the history of Jesus teaches also that they cannot destroy even an animal of the vilest kind, a swine, without the same license. Moral ends too were to be answered in both cases — teaching the doctrine of Providence to future generations by the example of Job; and punishing the Gadarenes in their property for their violation of the law through covetousness. So entirely are these invisible opposers of the truth and plans of Christ under control; and as moral ends are so explicitly marked in these instances, they may be inferred as to every other, where permission to work evil or injury is granted. In the cases indeed before us, such moral purposes do not entirely rest upon inference; but are made evident from the history. The agency of Satan was permitted in support of idolatry in Egypt, only to make the triumph of the true God over idols more illustrious, and to justify his severe judgments upon the Egyptians. The false prophets anticipated in Deuteronomy were permitted, as it is stated, in order “to prove the people.” A new circumstance of trial was introduced, which would lead them to compare the pretended predictions
of the false prophet with the illustrious and well-sustained series of splendid miracles by which the Jewish economy had been established, — a comparison which could not fail to confirm rational and virtuous men in the truth, and to render more inexcusable those light and vain persons who might be seduced. This observation may also be applied to the case of the false Christs. In certain of these cases there is also something "judicial."

When men have yielded themselves so far to vice, as to seek error as its excuse, it seems a principle of the Divine government to make their sin their punishment. The Egyptians were besotted with their idolatries; they had rejected the clearest evidences of the truth, and were left to the delusions of the demons they worshipped. The Israelites, in those parts of their history to which Moses refers, were passionately inclined to idolatry; they wished any pretence or sanction for it, and were ready to follow every seducer. What they sought, they found, — occasions of going astray, which would have had no effect upon them had their hearts been right with God. The Jews rejected a spiritual Messiah, with all the evidences of his mission; but were ready to follow any impostor who promised them victory and dominion; they were disposed therefore to listen to every pretence, and to become the dupes of every illusion. But in no instance was the temptation either "irresistible," or even "strong," except as it was made so by their own violent inclinations to evil, and proneness to find pretences for it. In all the cases here supposed, the temptation to error was never present but in circumstances in which it was confronted with the infinitely higher evidence of truth, and that not merely in the number or greatness of the miracles and predictions, but in the very nature of the "signs" themselves, — one being unquestionably "miraculous," the other being at best "strange" and "surprising," without a decided miraculous or prophetic character. The sudden and unperceived substitution of serpents for the rods of the magicians, might, if the matter had ended there, have neutralized the effect of the real transformation of Aaron’s rod; but then the serpent of Moses swallowed up the others. When frogs were already over all the land of Egypt, the imitation must have been confined to some spot purposely freed from them, and for that reason did not bear an unequivocal character, nor could the turning of water from a well into blood, (no difficult matter to pretend,) rival for an instant the conversion of the waters of the mighty Nile, and the innumerable channels and reservoirs fed by it, into that offensive substance. To these we are to add the miracles which followed, and which obliged even the magicians to confess “the finger of God.” To the people whom the false prophet spoken of in Deuteronomy should
attempt to lead astray from the LAW, all its magnificent evidences were known, the glory of God was then between the cherubim; the Urim and Thummim gave their responses; and the government was a standing miracle. To those who followed false Christs, the evidences of the mission of Jesus were known; his unequivocal miracles, it is singular, were never denied by those very Jews who, ever looking out for deception, cried as to the expected Christ, “Lo, he is here, and lo, he is there!” The “working of Satan,” and the “lying wonders,” mentioned in the Thessalonians, were to take place among a people, who not only had the words of Christ and his apostles, but acknowledged too their Divine authority as established by miracles and prophecies, the unequivocal character of which theirs never even pretended to equal. Thus, in none of the instances adduced in the argument, was there any exposure to inevitable error, by any evidence in favour of falsehood; the evidence of the truth was in all these cases at hand, and presented itself under an obviously distinct and superior character. We conclude therefore that the objection to the conclusive nature of the proof of the truth of the Scriptures from miracles and prophecies grounded upon the supposed admission that miracles may be wrought and prophecies uttered in favour of error, is not only without foundation, but that as far as Scriptural evidence goes on this subject, the demonstrative nature of real miracles and prophecies is, by what it really admits as to “the working of Satan,” abundantly confirmed. It does not admit that real miracles can be wrought, or real prophecies uttered; and it never supposes simulated ones, when opposed to revealed truth, but under circumstances in which they can be detected, or which give them an equivocal character, and in which they may be compared with true miracles and predictions, so that none can be deceived by them but those who are violently bent on error and transgression.

Another objection to the conclusiveness of the proof from miracles, is brought from the pretended heathen miracles of Aristeas, Pythagoras, Alexander of Pontus, Vespasian, and Apollonius Tyranæus, and from accounts of miracles in the Romish Church; but as this objection has been very feebly urged by the, adversaries of Christianity, as though they themselves were ashamed of the argument, our notice of it shall be brief. For a full consideration of the objection we refer to the authors mentioned below.  

With respect to most of these pretended miracles, we may observe, that it was natural to expect that pretences to miraculous powers should be made
under every form of religion, since the opinion of the earliest ages was in favour of the occurrence of such events; and as truth had been thus sanctioned, it is not surprising that error should attempt to counterfeit its authority. But they are all deficient in evidence. Many of them indeed are absurd, and carry the air of fable; and as to others, it is well observed by Dr. Macknight, (Truth of the Gospel History,) that “they are vouched to us by no such testimony as can induce a prudent man to give them credit. They are not reported by any eye witnesses of them, nor by any persons on whom they were wrought. Those who relate them do not even pretend to have received them from eye witnesses; we know them only by vague reports, the original of which no one can exactly trace. The miracles ascribed to Pythagoras were not reported until several hundred years after his death; and those of Apollonius, one hundred years after his death.” Many instances which are given, especially among the papists, may be resolved into imagination; others, both popish and pagan, into the artifice of priests who were of the ruling party, and therefore feared no punishment even upon detection; and in almost all cases, we find that they were performed in favour of the dominant religion, and before persons whose religious prejudices were to be flattered and strengthened by them, and of course, persons very much disposed to become dupes. Bishop Douglas has laid down the following decisive and clear rules in his “Criterion,” for trying miracles. That we may reasonably suspect any accounts of miracles to be false, if they are not published till long after the time when they are said to have been performed — or if they were not first published in the place where they are said to have been wrought — or if they probably were suffered to pass without examination, in the time, and at the place where they look their rise. These are general grounds of suspicion, to which may be added particular ones, arising from any circumstances which plainly indicate imposture and artifice on the one hand, or credulity and imagination on the other.

Before such tests, all pagan, popish, and other pretended miracles without exception, shrink: and they are not for a moment to be brought into comparison with works wrought publicly — in the sight of thousands, and those often opposers of the system to be established by them — works not by any ingenuity whatever to be resolved into artifice on the one part, or into the effects of imagination on the other — works performed before scholars, statesmen, rulers, persecutors; of which the instances are numerous, and the places in which they occurred various — works
published at the time, and on the very spot — works not in favour of a ruling system, but directed against every other religious establishment under heaven; and, for giving their testimony to which, the original witnesses had therefore to expect, and did in succession receive, reproach, stripes, imprisonment, and death.

It is also of importance to observe, that whatever those pretended miracles might be, whether false or exaggerated relations, or artful impostures; or even were we to admit some of them to have been occurrences of an extraordinary and inexplicable kind, they are for the most part, whether pagan or papal, a sort of insulated occurrences, which do not so much as profess to prove any thing of common interest to the world. As they are destitute of convincing marks of credibility, so they have no inherent propriety, nor any perceptible connection with a design of importance to mankind. But “the Scriptures of the Old Testament record a continued succession of wonderful works, connected also in a most remarkable manner with the system carried on from the fall of Adam to the coming of Christ. The very first promise of a Redeemer, who should bruise the serpent’s head, appears to have been accompanied with a signal miracle, by which the nature of the serpent tribe was instantly changed, and reduced to a state of degradation and baseness, expressive of the final overthrow of that evil spirit, through whose deceits man had fallen from his innocence and glory. The mark set upon Cain was probably some miraculous change in his external appearance, transmitted to his posterity, and serving as a memorial of the first apostasy from the true religion. The general deluge was a signal instance of miraculous punishment inflicted upon the whole human race, when they had departed from the living God, and were become utterly irreclaimable. The dispersion of Babel, and the confusion of tongues, indicated the Divine purpose of preventing an intermixture of idolaters and Atheists with the worship of the true God. The wonders wrought in Egypt, by the hand of Moses, were pointedly directed against the senseless and abominable idolatries of that devoted country, and were manifestly designed to expose their absurdity and falsehood, as well as to effect the deliverance of God’s people, Israel. The subsequent miracles in the desert, had an evident tendency to wean the Israelites from an attachment to the false deities of the surrounding nations, and to instruct them by figurative representations in that ‘better covenant, established upon better promises,’ of which the Mosaic institute was designed to be a shadow and a type. The settlement of the Israelites in Canaan under their
leader Joshua, and their continuance in it for a long succession of ages, were accompanied with a series of wonders, all operating to that one purpose of the Almighty, the separation of his people from a wicked and apostate world, and the preservation of a chosen seed, through whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Every miracle wrought under the Jewish theocracy, appears to have been intended, either to correct the superstitions and impieties of the neighbouring nations, and to bring them to a conviction that the Lord Jehovah was the true God, and that beside him there was none other; or to reclaim the Jews, whenever they betrayed a disposition to relapse into heathenish abominations, and to forsake that true religion which the Almighty was pledged to uphold throughout all ages, and for the completion of which he was then, in his infinite wisdom, arranging all human events.

“In the miracles which our Lord performed, he not only evinced his Divine power, but fulfilled many important prophecies relating to him as the Messiah. Thus they afforded a two-fold evidence of his authority. In several of them we perceive likewise a striking reference to the especial object of his mission. Continually did he apply these wonderful works to the purpose of inculcating and establishing doctrines, no less wonderful and interesting to the sons of men.

“The same may likewise be remarked of the miracles recorded of the apostles, after our Lord’s departure from this world, in none of which do we find any thing done for mere ostentation; but an evident attention to the great purpose of the Gospel, that of ‘turning men from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.’

“It seems impossible for any thinking man to take such a view as this of the peculiar design and use of the Scripture miracles, and not to perceive in them the unerring counsels of infinite wisdom, as well as the undoubted exertions of infinite power. When we see the several parts of this stupendous scheme thus harmonizing and co-operating for the attainment of one specific object, of the highest importance to the whole race of mankind; we cannot but be struck with a conviction of the absolute impossibility of imposture or enthusiasm, in any part of the proceeding. We are compelled to acknowledge, that they exhibit proofs of Divine agency, carried on
in one continued series, such as no other system hath ever pretended to: such as not only surpasses all human ingenuity, but seems impossible to have been effected by any combination of created beings.” (VAN MIDERT’S Boyle Lectures.)

On miracles therefore, like those which attest the mission of Moses and of Christ, we may safely rest the proof of the authority of both, and say to each of them, though with a due sense of the superiority of the “SON” to the “SERVANT,” “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except GOD be with him.”

NOTE: A

In reply to the objection that “Moses describes the works of the magicians in the very same language as he does his own, and therefore that there is reason to conclude that they were equally miraculous,” Dr. Farmer remarks, —

“1. That nothing is more common than to speak of professed jugglers, as doing, what they pretend and appear to do, and that this language never misleads, when we reflect what sort of men are spoken of, namely, mere impostors on the sight: why might not Moses then use the common popular language when speaking of the magicians, without any danger of misconstruction, inasmuch as the subject he was treating, all the circumstances of the narrative, and the opinion which the historian was known to entertain of the inefficacy and imposture of magic, did all concur to prevent mistakes?

“2. Moses does not affirm that there was a perfect conformity between his works and those of the magicians; he does not close the respective relations of his own particular miracles, with saying the magicians did that thing, or according to what he did, so did they, a form of speech used on this occasion no less than three times in one chapter, to describe the exact correspondence between the orders of God and the behaviour of his servants; but makes choice of a word of great latitude, such as does not necessarily express any thing more than a general similitude, such as is consistent with a difference in many important respects, they did so or in like manner as he had. — That a perfect imitation could not
be designed by this word, is evident from its being applied to cases in which such an imitation was absolutely impracticable: for, when Aaron had converted all the waters of Egypt into blood, we are told the magicians did so, that is, something in like sort. Nor can it be supposed that they covered the land of Egypt with frogs, this had been done already; they could only appear to bring them over some small space cleared for the purpose. But what is more decisive, the word imports nothing more than their attempting some imitation of Moses, for it is used when they failed in their attempt: They did so to bring forth lice, but they could not.

“3. So far is Moses from ascribing the tricks of the magicians to the invocation and power of demons, or to any superior beings whatever, that he does most expressly refer all they did or attempted in imitation of himself to human artifice and imposture. The original words, which are translated enchantments, are entirely different from that rendered enchantments in other passages of Scripture, and do not carry in them any sort of reference to sorcery or magic, or the interposition of any spiritual agents; they import deception and concealment, and ought to have been rendered secret sleights or jugglings, and are thus translated even by those who adopt the common hypothesis with regard to the magicians. These secret sleights and jugglings are expressly referred to the magicians, not to the devil, who is not so much as mentioned in the history. Should we therefore be asked, How it came to pass, in case the works of the magicians were performed by sleight of hand, that Moses has given no hint hereof? we answer, He has not contented himself with a hint of this kind, but, at the same time that he ascribes his own miracles to Jehovah, he has, in the most direct terms, resolved every thing done in imitation of them entirely to the fraudulent contrivances of his opposers, to legerdemain or sleight of hand, in contradistinction from magical incantations. Moses therefore could not design to represent their works as real miracles, at the very time he was branding them as impostures.

“It remains only to show, that the works performed by the magicians did not exceed the cause to which they are ascribed; or in other words, the magicians proceeded no farther in imitation of Moses, than human artifice might enable them to go, (while the
miracles of Moses were not liable to the same impeachment, and bore upon themselves the plainest signatures of that Divine power to which they are referred.) If this can be proved, the interposition of the devil on this occasion will appear to be an hypothesis invented without any kind of necessity, as it certainly is without any authority from the sacred text.

“1. With regard to the first attempt of the magicians, the *turning rods into serpents*: it cannot be accounted extraordinary that they should seem to succeed in it, when we consider that these men were famous for the art of dazzling and deceiving the sight; and that serpents, being first rendered tractable and harmless, as they easily may, have had a thousand different tricks played with them, to the astonishment of the spectators.

“2. With regard to the next attempt of the magicians to imitate Moses, who had already turned all the running and standing waters of Egypt into blood, there is no difficulty in accounting for their success in the degree in which they succeeded. For it was during the continuance of this judgment, when no water could be procured but by *digging round about the river*, that the magicians attempted by some proper preparations to change the colour of the small quantity that was brought them, (probably endeavouring to persuade Pharaoh that they could as easily have turned a larger quantity into blood.) In a case of this nature imposture might, and, as we learn from history, often did take place. It is related by Valerius Maximus, (*Lib. i, c. 6,* ) that the wine poured into the cup of Xerxes was three times changed into blood. But such trifling feats as these could not at all disparage the miracle of Moses; the vast extent of which raised it above the suspicion of fraud, and stamped upon every heart, that was not steeled against all conviction, the strongest impression of its divinity. For he turned their streams, rivers, ponds, and the water in all their receptacles, into ‘blood. And the fish that was in the river (Nile) died; and the river stank, *Exodus 7:19-21.*

“3. Pharaoh not yielding to this evidence, God proceeded to farther punishments, and covered the whole land of Egypt with frogs. *Exodus 7:19-21.* Before these frogs were removed, the magicians undertook to bring into some place cleared for the purpose a fresh supply; which they
might easily do when there was such plenty every where at hand. Here also the narrow compass of the work exposed it to the suspicion of being effected by human art; to which the miracle of Moses was not liable; the infinite number of frogs which filled the whole kingdom of Egypt, (so that their ovens, beds, and tables, swarmed with them,) being a proof of their immediate miraculous production. Beside, the magicians were unable to procure their removal: which was accomplished by Moses, at the submissive application of Pharaoh, and at the very time that Pharaoh himself chose, the more clearly to convince him that God was the author of these miraculous judgments, and that their infliction or removal did not depend upon the influence of the elements or stars, at set times or in critical junctures, Exodus 8:8.

4. The history of the last attempt of the magicians confirms the account here given of all their former ones. Moses turned all the dust of the land into lice, and this plague, like the two preceding ones, being inflicted at the word of Moses, and extended over the whole kingdom of Egypt, must necessarily have been owing, not to human art, but to a Divine power. Nevertheless, the motives upon which the magicians at first engaged in the contest with Moses, the shame of desisting and some slight appearances of success in their former attempts, prompted them still to carry on the imposture, and to try with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not. With all their skill in magic, and with all their dexterity in deceiving the spectators, they could not even succeed so far as they had done in former instances, by producing a specious counterfeit of this work of Moses. Had they hitherto performed real miracles by the assistance of the devil, how came they to desist now? It cannot be a greater miracle to produce lice, than to turn rods into serpents, water into blood, and to create frogs. It has, indeed, been very often said, that the devil was now laid under a restraint. but hitherto no proof of this assertion has been produced The Scripture is silent, both as to the devil being now restrained from interposing any farther in favour of the magicians, and as to his having afforded them his assistance on the former occasions. But if we agree with Moses in ascribing to the magicians nothing more than the artifice and dexterity which belonged to their profession; we shall find that
their want of success in their last attempt was owing to the different nature and circumstances of their enterprise.”

NOTE B

“But if at any time evil spirits, by their subtlety and experience, and knowledge of affairs in the world, did foretell things which accordingly came to pass, they were things that happened not long after, and commonly such as themselves did excite and prompt men to. Thus, when the conspiracy against Cesar was come just to be put into execution, and the devil had his agents concerned in it, he could foretell the time and place of his death. But it had been foretold to Pompey, Crassus, and Cesar himself before, as Tully informs us from his own knowledge, that they should all die in their beds, and in an honourable old age, who yet all died violent deaths. Wise and observing men have sometimes been able to make strange predictions concerning the state of affairs; and therefore spirits may be much more able to do it. Evil spirits could fortell what they were permitted to inflict or procure: they might have foretold the calamities of Job, or the death of Ahab at Ramoth-gilead.

“The devil could not always foretell what was to come to pass, and therefore his agents had need of their vaults and hollow statues, and other artifices to conceal their ignorance, and help them out when their arts of conjuration failed. But we have no reason to think that the devil, who is so industrious to promote his evil ends, by all possible means, would omit such an opportunity as was given him by the opinion which the heathens had of their oracles; and the trials which Croesus and Trajan made are sufficient to prove that there was something supernatural and diabolical in them. Croesus sent to have many oracles consulted at a set time, and the question to be put to them was, what Croesus himself at that time was doing; and he resolved to be employed about the most improbable thing that could be imagined, for he was boiling a tortoise and a lamb together in a brass pot; and yet the oracle of Delphi discovered to the messengers what the king was then about. Trajan, when he was going into Parthia, sent a blank paper sealed up, to an oracle of Assyria for an answer: the oracle returned him another blank paper, to show that it was not so to be imposed upon.
“But though things of present concernment were discovered both to Croesus and Trajan beyond all human power to know, yet both were imposed upon by ambiguous answers, when they consulted about things future, of which the devil could not attain the knowledge.

“Many of the heathen priests themselves, upon examination, publicly confessed several of their oracles to be impostures, and discovered the whole contrivance and management of the deceit, which was entered upon record. And in the rest, the power of the devil was always so limited and restrained, as to afford sufficient means to undeceive men, though many of his predictions might come to pass.” (JENKINS’S Reasonableness of Christianity.)

“Many of the learned regard all the heathen oracles as the result of the grossest imposture. Some consider them as the work of evil spirits. Others are of opinion, that through these oracles some real prophecies were occasionally vouchsafed to the Gentile world, for their instruction and consolation. But to whichever of these opinions we may incline, it will not be difficult to discover a radical difference between these and the Scripture prophecies.

“In the heathen oracles, we cannot discern any clear and unequivocal tokens of genuine prophecy. They were destitute of dignity and importance, had no connection with each other, tended to no object of general concern, and never looked into times remote from their own. We read only of some few predictions and prognostications, scattered among the writings of poets and philosophers, most of which, beside being very weakly authenticated, appear to have been answers to questions of merely local, personal, and temporary concern, relating to the issue of affairs then actually in hand, and to events speedily to be determined. Far from attempting to form any chain of prophecies, respecting things far distant as to time or place, or matters contrary to human probability, and requiring supernatural agency to effect them, the heathen priests and soothsayers did not even pretend to a systematic and connected plan. They hardly dared, indeed, to assume the prophetic character in its full force, but stood trembling, as it were, on the brink of futurity, conscious of their inability to venture beyond the depths of human conjecture. Hence their
predictions became so fleeting, so futile, so uninteresting, that they were never collected together as worthy of preservation, but soon fell into disrepute and almost total oblivion.

“The Scripture prophecies, on the other hand, constitute a series of predictions, relating principally to one grand object, of universal importance, the work of man’s redemption, and carried on in regular progression through the Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian dispensations, with a harmony and uniformity of design, clearly indicating one and the same Divine Author, who alone could say, ‘Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is none else: I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying; My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.’ The genuine prophets of the Almighty beheld these things with a clear and steadfast eye; they declared them with authority and confidence; and they gave, moreover, signs from heaven for the conviction of others. Accordingly their writings have been handed down from age to age; have been preserved with scrupulous fidelity; and have ever been regarded with reverence, from the many incontestable evidences of their accomplishment, and from their inseparable connection with the religious hopes and expectations of mankind.” (Bishop of Llandaff.)
CHAPTER 17. — PROPHECIES OF SCRIPTURE.

The nature and force of the argument from prophecy have been already stated; (Vide chap. ix;) and it has been proved, that where real predictions are uttered, — not happy conjectures which shrewd and observing men may sometimes make, but predictions which imply foresight of events dependent upon the various contingencies of human affairs, and a knowledge of the characters, dispositions, and actions of persons yet unborn, so as to decide unerringly on the conduct which they will pursue — they can only be uttered by inspired men, and the author of such communications can be no other than the infinite and omniscient God, “showing to his servants the things which shall be hereafter,” in order to authenticate their mission, and to affix the stamp of his own infallible authority upon their doctrine.

The authenticity and the antiquity of the records which contain these predictions, have been already established; and the only subject of inquiry proper to this chapter is, the prophetic character of the predictions said to be contained in the Old and New Testaments. A few general observations may however be previously allowed.

1. The instances to be considered by those who would fully satisfy themselves on this point are not few but many. The believer in the Divine authority of the Old and New Testaments, is ready to offer for examination great numbers of professed prophecies relative to individuals, cities, states, the person and offices of Messiah, and the Christian Church, which he alleges to have been unequivocally fulfilled; independent of predictions which he believes to be now fulfilling; or which are hereafter to be fulfilled in the world.

2. If as to the fulfilment of some particular prophecies, the opinions of men should differ, there is an abundance of others, the accomplishment of which has been so evident as to defy any rational interpretation which will not involve their fulfilment; while unbelievers are challenged to show any clear prediction of Holy Scripture which has been falsified by the event throughout the whole range of those ages which are comprehended by the Bible, from the Pentateuch to the Apocalypse.
3. The predictions in Scripture have already been distinguished in their character from the oracles and divinations of the heathen; (Vide chap. xvi;) and it may here be farther observed, that they are not, generally, separate and insulated predictions of the future, arising out of accidental circumstances, and connecting themselves with merely individual interests and temporary occasions. On the contrary, they chiefly relate to, and arise out of a grand scheme for the moral recovery of the human race from ignorance, vice, and wretchedness. They speak of the agents to be employed in it, and especially of the great agent, the REDEEMER himself; and of those mighty and awful proceedings of Providence as to the nations of the earth, by which judgment and mercy are exercised with reference both to the ordinary principles of moral government, and especially to this restoring economy, to its struggles, its oppositions, and its triumphs. They all meet in CHRIST, as in their proper centre, and in him only, however many of the single lines, when considered apart, may be imagined to have another direction, and though they may pass through intermediate events. “If we look,” says Bishop Hurd, “into the prophetic writings, we find that prophecy is of a prodigious extent; that it commenced from the fall of man, and reaches to the consummation of all things; that for many ages it was delivered darkly, to a few persons, and with large intervals from the date of one prophecy to that of another; but at length became more clear, more frequent, and was uniformly carried on in the line of one people, separated from the rest of the world — among other reasons assigned, for this principally, to be the repository of the Divine Oracles; that, with some intermission, the spirit of prophecy subsisted among that people to the coming of Christ, that he himself, and his apostles, exercised this power in the most conspicuous manner; and left behind them many predictions recorded in the books of the New Testament, which profess to respect very distant events, and even run out to the end of time, or in St. John’s expression, to that period, ‘when the mystery of God shall be perfected.’ Farther, beside the extent of this prophetic scheme, the dignity of the person whom it concerns, deserves our consideration. He is described in terms which excite the most august and magnificent ideas. He is spoken of, indeed, sometimes as being the seed of the woman, and as the Son of man; yet so as being at the same time of more than mortal extraction. He is even represented to us as being superior to men and angels; as far above all principality and power; above all that is accounted great, whether in heaven or in earth; as the Word and Wisdom of God; as the eternal Son of the Father; as the Heir of all things, by whom he made the worlds; as the
brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. We have no words to denote greater ideas than these: the mind of man cannot elevate itself to nobler conceptions. Of such transcendent worth and excellence is that Jesus said to be, to whom all the prophets bear witness!

“Lastly, the declared purpose for which the Messiah, prefigured by so long a train of prophecy, came into the world, corresponds to all the rest of the representation. It was not to deliver an oppressed nation from civil tyranny, or to erect a great civil empire, that is, to achieve one of those acts which history accounts most heroic. No: it was not a mighty state, a victor people —

Non res Romanæ perituraque regna —

that was worthy to enter into the contemplation of this Divine person. It was another, and far sublimer purpose which he came to accomplish; a purpose, in comparison of which all our policies are poor and little, and all the performances of man as nothing. It was to deliver a world from ruin; to abolish sin and death; to purify and immortalize human nature; and thus, in the most exalted sense of the words, to be the Saviour of men and the blessing of all nations. There is no exaggeration in this account. I deliver the undoubted sense, if not always the very words of Scripture. Consider then to what this representation amounts. Let us unite the several parts of it, and bring them to a point. A spirit of prophecy pervading all time — characterizing one person, of the highest dignity — and proclaiming the accomplishment of one purpose, the most beneficent, the most Divine, the imagination itself can project. Such is the Scriptural delineation, whether we will receive it or no, of that economy which we call prophetic.”

4. Prophecy, in this peculiar sense, and on this ample scale, is peculiar to the religious system of the Holy Scriptures. Nothing like it is found anywhere else; and it accords perfectly with that system, that nothing similar should be found elsewhere. “The prophecies of Scripture,” says that accomplished scholar, Sir W. Jones, “bear no resemblance in form or style to any that can be produced from the stores of Grecian, Indian, Persian, or even Arabian learning. The antiquity of those compositions, no man of learning doubts; and the unrestrained application of them to events long subsequent to their publication, is a solid ground of belief that they were genuine predictions, and consequently inspired.” The advantage of this species of evidence belongs then exclusively to our revelation. Heathenism never made any clear and well-founded pretensions to it.
Mohammedanism, though it stands itself as a proof of the truth of Scripture prophecy, is unsupported by a single prediction of its own. “To the Christian only belongs this testimony of his faith; this growing evidence gathering strength by length of time, and affording, from age to age, fresh proofs of its Divine origin. As a majestic river expands itself more and more the farther it removes from its source, so prophecy, issuing from the first promise in paradise as its fountain head, acquired additional strength and fulness as it rolled down successive ages, and will still go on increasing in extent and grandeur, until it shall finally lose itself in the ocean of eternity.”

5. The objection which has been raised to Scripture prophecy from its supposed obscurity, has no solid foundation. There is, it is true, a prophetic language of symbol and emblem; but it is a language which as definite and not equivocal in its meaning, and as easily mastered as the language of poetry, by attentive persons. This, however, is not always used. The style of the prophecies of Scripture very often differs in nothing from the ordinary style of the Hebrew poets; and, in not a few cases, and those too on which the Christian builds most in the argument, it sinks into the plainness of historical narrative. Some degree of obscurity is essential to prophecy: for the end of it was not to gratify human curiosity, by a detail of future events and circumstances; and too great clearness and speciality might have led to many artful attempts to fulfil the predictions, and so far the evidence of their accomplishment would have been weakened. The two great ends of prophecy are, to excite expectation before the event, and then to confirm the truth by a striking and unequivocal fulfilment; and it is a sufficient answer to the allegation of the obscurity of the prophecies of Scripture, that they have abundantly accomplished those objects, among the most intelligent and investigating, as well as among the simple and unlearned in all ages. It cannot be denied, for instance, leaving out particular cases which might be given, that by means of these predictions the expectation of the incarnation and appearance of a Divine Restorer was kept up among the people to whom they were given, and spread even to the neighbouring nations; that as these prophecies multiplied, the hope became more intense; and that at the time of our Lord’s coming, the expectation of the birth of a very extraordinary person prevailed, not only among the Jews, but among other nations. This purpose was then sufficiently answered, and an answer is given to the objection. In like manner prophecy serves as the basis of our hope in things yet to come; the
final triumph of truth and righteousness on earth, the universal establishment of the kingdom of our Lord, and the rewards of eternal life to be bestowed at his second appearing. In these all true Christians agree; and their hope could not have been so uniformly supported in all ages, and under all circumstances, had not the prophecies and predictive promises conveyed with sufficient clearness the general knowledge of the good for which they looked, though many of its particulars be unrevealed. The second end of prophecy is, to confirm the truth by the subsequent event; and here the question of the actual fulfilment of Scripture prophecy is involved, to which we shall immediately advert. We only now observe, that it is no argument against the unequivocal fulfilment of several prophecies, that many have doubted or denied what the believers in revelation have on this subject so strenuously contended for. How few of mankind have read the Scriptures with serious attention, or been at the pains to compare their prophecies with the statements in history! How few, especially of the objectors to the Bible, have read it in this manner! How many of them have confessed, unblushingly, their unacquaintance with its contents, or have proved what they have not confessed by the mistakes and misrepresentations into which they have fallen. As for the Jews, the evident dominion of their prejudices; their general averseness to discussion; and the extravagant principles of interpretation they have adopted for many ages, which set all sober criticism at defiance, render nugatory any authority which might be ascribed to their denial of the fulfilment of certain prophecies in the sense adopted by Christians. We may add to this, that among Christian critics themselves there may be much disagreement. Eccentricities and absurdities are found among the learned in every department of knowledge, and much of this waywardness, and affectation of singularity has infected interpreters of Scripture. But, after all, there is a truth and reason in every subject which the understandings of the generality of men will apprehend and acknowledge, whenever it is fully understood and impartially considered; to this, in all such cases, the appeal can only be made, and here it may be made with confidence.

6. For want of a right apprehension of the meaning of somewhat an unfortunate term which has obtained in theology, the “double sense” of many prophecies, an objection of another kind has been raised, as though no definite meaning could be assigned to the prophecies of Scripture. Nothing can be more unfounded. “The double sense of many prophecies in the Old Testament,” says an able writer, “has been made a pretext by ill-
disposed men, for representing them as of uncertain meaning, and resembling the ambiguity of the pagan oracles. But whoever considers the subject with due attention, will perceive how little ground there is for such an accusation. The equivocations of the heathen oracles manifestly arose from their ignorance of future events, and from their endeavours to conceal that ignorance, by such indefinite expressions, as might be equally applicable to two or more events of a contrary description. But the double sense of the Scripture prophecies, far from originating in any doubt or uncertainty, as to the fulfilment of them in either sense, springs from a foreknowledge of their accomplishment in both; whence the prediction is purposely so framed as to include both events, which, so far from being contrary to each other, are typical the one of the other, and are thus connected together by a mutual dependency or relation. This has often been satisfactorily proved, with respect to those prophecies which referred, in their primary sense, to the events of the Old Testament, and, in their farther and more complex signification, to those of the New: and on this double accomplishment of some prophecies is grounded our firm expectation of the completion of others which remain yet unfulfilled in their secondary sense, but which we justly consider as equally certain in their issue, as those which are already past. So far, then, from any valid objection lying against the credibility of the Scripture prophecies, from these seeming ambiguities of meaning, we may urge them as additional proofs of their coming from God. For, who but the Being, who is infinite in knowledge and in counsel, could so construct predictions as to give them a two-fold application, to events distant from, and (to human foresight) unconnected with, each other? What power less than Divine could so frame them, as to make the accomplishment of them, in one instance, a solemn pledge and assurance of their completion in another instance, of still higher and more universal importance? Where will the scoffer find any thing like this in the artifices of heathen oracles, to conceal their ignorance, and to impose on the credulity of mankind?"

We now proceed to the enumeration of a few out of the great number of predictions contained in the Scriptures, which most unequivocally show a perfect knowledge of future contingent events, and which, therefore, according to our argument, as certainly prove that they who uttered them “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” by the Spirit of the omniscient and infinitely prescient GOD. \[71\]
The very first promise made to man is a prediction which none could have uttered, but He whose eye looks through the depths of future ages, and knows the result as well as the beginning of all things. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." In vain is it attempted to resolve the whole of the transaction with which this prediction stands connected, into allegory. Such criticism, if applied to any other ancient historical book, bearing marks of authentic narration as unequivocal as the book of Genesis, would not be tolerated by the advocates of this absurd conception themselves, whether they are open or disguised infidels. In vain is it alleged, that a mere fact of natural history is stated: for if the words are understood to express no more than the enmity between the human race and serpents, it would require to be proved, in order to establish a special punishment of the serpent, that man has a greater hostility to serpents than to other dangerous animals, which he extirpates whenever he can master them by force or stratagem; and that serpents have a stronger disposition to do injury to men, than to those animals which they make their daily prey, or to others which they never fail to strike when within their reach. As this was obviously false in fact, Moses could not assert it; and, if it had been true in natural history, to have said this and nothing more, to have confined himself to the mere literal fact, a fact of no importance, would have been far below the character of Moses as a writer — a lofty and sublime character, to which the heathens and sometimes infidels themselves have done justice. In no intelligible sense can these celebrated words be understood, but in that in which they are fixed by innumerable references and allusions of other parts of the sacred volume, and which ought, in all good criticism, to determine their meaning. The serpent, and the seed of the woman, are the representatives of two invisible and mighty powers; the one good, the other evil; the one Divine, though incarnate of the woman, the other diabolic; between whom an enmity was placed, which was to express itself in a long and fearful struggle, in the course of which the seed of the woman should sustain a temporary wound and suffering, but which should issue in the bruising of the head, the inflicting a fatal blow upon the power, of his adversary. The scene of this contest was to be our globe, and generally the visible agents of it men, under their respective leaders, the serpent on the one side, and the seed of the woman on the other, practising, and advocating, and endeavouring to render dominant truth or error, virtue or vice, obedience to God or rebellion against his authority. We ask then, has such a contest of principles and powers taken place in the
world, or not? The answer must be in the affirmative; for every age bears witness to it. We see it commencing in Cain and Abel — in the resistance of the antediluvians to the righteousness taught by Noah; — in their punishment; — in the rise of idolatry, and the struggles of the truth in opposition to it; — in the inflictions of singular judgments upon nations, for the punishment and exposure of idolatry, as in the plagues of Egypt, the destruction of the nations of Canaan, &c. We trace the contest throughout the whole history of the Jewish nation down to the coming of our Lord; and occasionally we see it extending into the neighbouring pagan nations, although they were generally, as a part of their punishment, “suffered to walk in their own ways,” and Satan as to them was permitted to “keep his goods in peace,” till the time of gracious visitation should arrive. We see the incarnate Redeemer, for a time suffering, and at length dying. Then was “the hour and power of darkness;” then was his heel bruised: but he died only to revive again, more visibly and powerfully to establish his kingdom and to commence his spiritual conquests. In every direction were the regions, where Satan “had his seat,” penetrated by the heavenly light of the doctrine of Christ; and every where where the most tremendous persecutions were excited against its unarmed and unprotected preachers and their converts. But the gates of hell prevailed not against the Church founded on a rock, and “Satan fell as lightning from heaven,” — from the thrones, and temples, and judgment seats, and schools of the ancient civilized world; the idolatry of ages was renounced; Christ was adored through the vast extent of the Roman empire, and in many of the countries beyond even its ample sweep. Under other forms the enemy revived, and the contest was renewed; but in every age it has been maintained. The principles of pure evangelical truth were never extinguished; and the “children of the kingdom,” were “minished and brought low.” only to render the renewal of the assault by unexpected agents, singularly raised up, more marked and more eminently of God. We need not run over even the heads of the history of the Church: what is the present state of things? The contest still continues, but with increasing zeal on the part of Christians, who are carrying on offensive operations against the most distant parts of the long-undisturbed kingdom of darkness; placing there the principles of truth; commencing war upon idolatry and superstition; and establishing the institutions of the Christian Church with a success which warrants the hope that the time is not far distant, when the “head of the serpent will be bruised” in all idolatrous countries, and the idols of modern heathen states,
like those of old, be displaced, to introduce the worship of the universal Saviour, “GOD over all, blessed for ever.”

May we not ask, whether all this was not infinitely above human foresight? Who could confidently state that a contest of this peculiar nature would continue through successive ages; that men would not all go over to one or other of the opposing parties; nay, who could confidently conjecture in the age of Moses, (when the tendency to idolatry had become so strong, that the chosen seed themselves, under the constant demonstration of miracles, visibly blessed while they remained faithful to the worship of God, and as eminently and visibly punished when they departed from it, could not be preserved from the infection,) that idolatry should one day be abolished throughout the earth? Past experience and all probabilities were opposed to the hope that the cause of the seed of the woman should prevail, and yet it stands recorded, “it [rather HE,] shall bruise thy head.” Infidels may scoff at a Redeemer, and deride the notion of a tempter; but they cannot deny that such a contest between opposite parties and principles as is here foretold has actually taken place, and still continues: that contest, so extended, so continued, and so terminated, human foresight could not foretell; and the fact established, therefore, is an accomplishment of a prophecy, which could originate only in Divine prescience.

The celebrated prediction of Jacob at the close of his life respecting the time of the appearing of “SHILOH,” may next be considered.

The word signifies, “He who is to be sent,” or “The Peace maker.” In either sense, the application to that great Person, to whom all the patriarchs looked forward, and the prophets gave witness, is obvious. Those who doubt this, are bound to give us a better interpretation. — Before a certain event, a certain person was to come, to whom the people should be gathered. The event has certainly arrived, but who is the person? The application of the prophecy to Messiah is not an invention of Christians. The ancient Jews, as appears from their commentators, so understood it: and the modern ones are unable to resist the evidence drawn from it, in favour of the claims of our Lord. That it is a prediction, is proved from its form, and the circumstances under which it was delivered; that it has received a singular accomplishment in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, is also certain; and it is equally certain, that no individual beside can be produced, in whom it has been in any sense whatever accomplished. For the ample illustration of the prophecy the reader is referred to.
commentators, and to Bishop Newton’s well-known work on the prophecies. It is sufficient here to allege, that Judah, as a tribe, remained till after the advent of Jesus Christ, which cannot be said of the long-dispersed ten tribes, and scarcely of Benjamin, which was merged in the tribe of Judah. — CHUBB asks where the supremacy of Judah was when Nebuchadnezzar carried the whole nation captive to Babylon; when Alexander subdued Palestine; and when it was a tributary province to the Roman empire? The prediction, however, does not convey the idea either of independent or supreme power. This no one tribe had when all were united in one state, and each had its sceptre and its princes or chiefs. It is therefore enough to show, that under all its various fortunes, the tribe of Judah retained its ensigns, and its chiefs, and its tribeship, until Shiloh came. It is no uncommon thing for a country to be conquered, and for its ancient princes and government to remain, though as tributary.

With respect to the tribe of Judah during the captivity in Babylon, Cyrus, as we learn from Ezra 1:8, ordered the vessels of the temple to be restored to “the prince of Judah.” This shows that the tribe was kept distinct, and that it had its own internal government and chief. Under the dominion of the Asmonean kings, the Jews had their rulers, their elders, and their council, and so under the Romans. But soon after the death of Christ, all this was abolished, the nation dispersed, and the tribes utterly confounded. Till our Lord came, and had accomplished his work on earth, the tribe of Judah continued. This is matter of unquestionable historic fact. In a short time afterward it was dispersed and mingled with the common mass of Jews of all tribes and countries: this is equally unquestionable. Now again we ask, could either human foresight determine this, or is the application of the event to the prophecy fanciful? The prediction was uttered in the very infancy of the state of Israel, by the father of the fathers of the tribes of that people. Ages passed away; the mightiest empires were annihilated; ten of the chosen tribes themselves were utterly dispersed into unknown countries; another became so insignificant as to lose its designation; one only remained which imposed its very name upon the nation at large, the object of public observation until the Messiah came, and that tribe was Judah, the tribe spoken of in the prediction, and it remained as it were only to make the fulfilment manifest, and was then confounded with the relics of the rest. What prescience of countless contingencies, occurring in the intervening ages, does this imply? — A prescience truly, which can only belong to God.
The predictions respecting the Jewish nation, commencing with those of Moses, and running through all their prophets, are too numerous to be adduced. One of the most instructive and convincing exercises to those who have any doubt of the inspiration of the Scriptures, would be, seriously and candidly to peruse them, and by the aid of those authors who have expressly and largely written on this subject, to compare the prophecies with their alleged fulfilment. Three topics are prominent in the predictions of Moses and the prophets generally, — the frequent and gross departures of the Jews from their own law: their signal punishment in invasions, captivities, dispersions, oppressions, and persecutions; and their final restoration to their own land. All these have taken place. Even the last was accomplished by the return from Babylon, though, in its eminent sense, it is still future. In pursuance of the argument, we shall show, that each of these was above human foresight and conjecture.

The apostacies and idolatries of this people were foretold by Moses before his death. “I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befall you in the latter days,” (Deuteronomy 31:29; and he accordingly prophetically declares their punishment. It is, perhaps, scarcely possible to fix upon a stronger circumstance than this prediction, to prove that Moses was truly commissioned by God, and did not pretend a Divine sanction in order to give weight to his laws and to his personal authority. The rebellious race whom he had first led into the desert, had died there; and the new generation was much more disposed to obey their leader. At the moment he wrote these words, appearances had a favourable aspect on the future obedience of the people. If this had not been the case, the last thought a merely political man would have been disposed to indulge was, that his own favourite institutions should fall into desuetude and contempt; and much less would he finish his public life by openly telling the people that he foresaw that event, even if he feared it. It may, indeed, be said, that he uttered this conviction for the purpose of giving a colour to the threatenings which he pronounces against disobedience to his law, and that the object of those fearful menaces was to deter the people from departing from customs and rules which he was anxious, for the sake of his own fame, that they should observe. To this we answer, that Moses could not expect any weight to be attached by the Israelites to his threat, that the Divine judgments would be inflicted upon them for not obeying his laws, unless their former rebellions had been immediately and signally marked by
such visitations. Without this to support him, he would have appeared in a ridiculous, rather than in an impressive and sublime attitude before the people assembled to hear his last commands. For forty years his institutions had been often disobeyed, and if no inflictions of the Divine displeasure followed, what reason had they to credit the menaces of Moses as to the future? But if such inflictions had resulted from their disobedience, everything is rational and consistent in this part of the conduct of their leader. Let the infidel choose which of these positions he pleases. If he think that Moses aimed to deter them from departing from his institutions by empty threats, he ascribes an incredible absurdity to an unquestionably wise, and, as infidels themselves contend, a very politic man; but if his predictive threats were grounded upon former marked and acknowledged interpositions of Divine Providence, the only circumstance which could give them weight, he was God’s commissioned leader, and, as he professed, an inspired prophet.

It is a circumstance of great weight in the predictions of Moses respecting the punishment of the Jews, that these famines, pestilences, invasions, subjugations to foreign enemies, captivities, &c, are represented solely as the consequences of their vicious departures from God, and from his laws. Now, who could foresee, except an inspired man, that such evils would in no instance take place, — that no famine, no blight, no invasion would occur in Judea, except in obvious punishment of their offences against their law? What was there in the common course of things to prevent a small state, though observant of the precepts of its own religion, from falling under the dominion of more powerful neighbouring nations, except the special protection of God? and what but this could guard them from the plagues and famines to which their neighbours were liable? If the predictions of Moses were not inspired, they assume a principle which mere human wisdom and policy never takes into its calculations, — that of the connection of the national prosperity of a people, inseparably and infallibly, with obedience to their holy writings; and because they assume that singular principle, the conclusion is in favour of their inspiration. For let us turn to the facts of the case. The sacred books of the Jews are historical as well as prophetic. The history too is distinct from the prophecy; it is often written by other authors; and there is no mark at all of any designed accommodation of the one to the other. The singular simplicity of the historic narrative disproves this, as well as the circumstance, that a great part of it as recorded in the Old Testament is a
transcript of their public records. Consult then this history, and in every instance of singular calamity we see a previous departure from the law of Moses; the one following the other, almost with the regularity and certainty of natural effects and causes! In this the predictions of Moses and the prophets are strikingly accomplished; and a more than human foresight is proved.

Let us look farther into the detail of these threatened punishments. Beside the ordinary inflictions of failing harvests, and severe diseases, in their own country, they were, according to the prophecies of Moses, Deuteronomy 28, to be “scattered among all people, from the one end of the earth even to the other;” and where is the trading nation in which they are not, in Asia, Africa, and Europe? Many are even to be found in the West Indies, and in the commercial parts of America. Who could foresee this but God; especially when their singular preservation as a distinct people, a solitary instance in the history of nations, is also implied? They were to find “no ease” among these nations; and the almost constant and long-continued persecutions, robberies, and murder of Jews, not only in ancient nations, but especially among Christian nations of the middle ages, and in the Mohammedan states to this day, are in wonderful accomplishment of this. They were to be “a proverb and a bye-word among all nations,” which has been in every place fulfilled, but was surely above human intelligence to foresee; and “the stranger that is within thee shall get above thee very high, and thou shalt come very low.” For a comment on this, let the conduct of the “stranger,” Turks and others, who inhabit Palestine, toward the Jews who remain there, be recollected, — the one party is indeed “very high,” and the other “very low.” Other parts of this singular chapter present equally striking predictions, uttered more than three thousand years ago, as remarkably accomplished; but there are some passages in it, which refer in terms so particular to a then distant event, the utter subversion of their polity and nation by the Romans, as to demonstrate in the most unequivocal manner the prescience of Him to whom all events, the most contingent, minute, and distant, are known with absolute certainty. That the Romans are intended, in verse 49, by the nation brought from “the end of the earth,” distinguished by their well-known ensign: “the eagle,” and by their fierce and cruel disposition, is exceedingly probable: and it is remarkable, that the account which Moses gives of the horrors of the “siege” of which he speaks, is exactly paralleled by those well known passages in Josephus, in which he describes the siege
of Jerusalem by the Roman army. The last verse of the chapter seems indeed to fix the reference of the foregoing passages to the final destruction of the nation by the Romans, and at the same time contains a prediction, the accomplishment of which cannot possibly be ascribed to accident. “And the Lord shall bring thee. into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you.” On this Dr. Hales remarks, on the authority of their own national historian, Josephus, “Of the captives taken at the siege of Jerusalem, above seventeen years of age, some were sent to Egypt in chains, the greater part were distributed through the provinces to be destroyed in the theatres, by the sword, and by wild beasts, the rest under seventeen were sold for slaves, and that for a trifling sum on account of the numbers to be sold, and the scarcity of buyers: so that at length the prophecy of Moses was fulfilled — ‘and no man shall buy.’ The part that were reserved to grace the triumph of Vespasian were probably transported to Italy in ‘ships’ or by sea, to avoid a prodigious land journey thither through Asia and Greece, — a circumstance which distinguished this invasion and captivity from the preceding by the Assyrians and Babylonians. In the ensuing rebellion, a part of the captives were sent by sea to Egypt, and several of the ships were wrecked on the coast.”

Thus, at a distance of fifteen centuries, were these contingent circumstances accurately recorded by the prophetic spirit of Moses — the taking of innumerable Jews captive — their transport to Egypt — their being sold till the markets for slaves were glutted, and no more buyers were found, and embarked on board vessels, either to grace the triumph of their conqueror, or to find a market in different maritime ports. Is it possible that these numerous and minute circumstances can be referred to either happy conjectures or human foresight?

But Moses and other prophets agree, that, after all their captivities and dispersions, the Jews shall be again restored to their own land. This was, as we have said, in one instance accomplished in their restoration by Cyrus and his successors; after which they again became a considerable state. But who could foretell that, but HE who determines the events of the world by his power and wisdom? Jeremiah fixes the duration of the captivity to seventy years; he did that so unequivocally, that the Jews in Babylon, when the time approached, began to prepare for the event. But there was nothing in the circumstances of the Babylonian empire when the prediction was
uttered, to warrant the hope, much less to support a confident conjecture. Could the subversion of that powerful empire by a then obscure people, the circumstance which broke the bondage of the Jews, have been foreseen by man? or when we consider the event as fulfilling so distinct a prophecy, can it be resolved into imaginative interpretation? A future restoration however awaits this people, and will be to the world a glorious demonstration of the truth of prophecy. This being future, we cannot argue upon it. Three things are however certain: — the Jews themselves expect it; they are preserved by the providence of God a distinct people for their country; and their country, which in fact is possessed by no one, is preserved for them.

Without noticing numerous prophecies respecting ancient nations and cities, the wonderful and exact accomplishment of which has been pointed out by various writers, and which afford numerous eminent instances of the prescience of contingent and improbable events, whose evidence is so overwhelming, that, as in the case of the illustrious prophecies of Daniel, unbelievers have been obliged to resort to the subterfuge of asserting, in opposition to the most direct proofs, that the prophecies were written after the events, we shall close our instances by adverting to the prophecies respecting the Messiah, — the great end and object of the prophetic dispensation. Of these not a solitary instance, or two, of an equivocal kind, and expressed only in figurative or symbolic language, are to be adduced; but upward of one hundred predictions, generally of very clear and explicit meaning, and each referring to some different circumstance connected with the appearing of Christ, his person, history, and his ministry, have been selected by divines, exclusive of typical and allusive predictions, and those which in an ultimate and remote sense are believed to terminate in him. How are all these to be disposed of, if the inspiration of the Scriptures which contain them be denied? That these predictions are in books written many ages before the birth of our Saviour, is certain — the testimony of the Jews who reject Christ, amply proves this. That no interpolations have taken place to accommodate them to him, is proved, by the same predictions being found in the copies which are in the hands of the Jews, and which have descended to them from before the Christian era. On the other hand, the history of Jesus answers to these predictions, and exhibits their exact accomplishment. The Messiah was to be of the seed of David — born in Bethlehem — born of a virgin — an incarnation of Deity, God with us, — an eminent but unsuccessful teacher; — he was to open the eyes of the blind, heal the lame and sick,
and raise the dead — he was to be despised and rejected by his own countrymen; to be arraigned on false charges, denied justice, and condemned to a violent death — he was to rise from the dead, ascend to the right hand of God, and there being invested with power and authority, he was to punish his enemies, and establish his own spiritual kingdom, which shall never end. We do not enter into more minute predictions, for the argument is irresistible when founded on these alone: and we may assert that no man, or number of men, could possibly have made such conjectures. Considered in themselves, this is impossible. What rational man, or number of rational men, could now be found to hazard a conjecture that an incarnation of Deity would occur in any given place and time — that this Divine Person should teach wisdom, work miracles, be unjustly put to death, rise again, and establish his religion? These are thoughts which never enter into the minds of men, because they are suggested by no experience, and by no probability arising out of the usual course of human affairs; and yet if the prophets were not inspired, it would have been as impossible for them to have conceived such expectations, as for us; and indeed much more so, seeing we are now familiar with a religion which asserts that such events have once occurred. If then such events lay beyond not only human foresight, but even human thought, they can only be referred to inspiration. But the case does not close here. How shall we account, in the next place, for these circumstances all having met, strange as they are, in one person, and in one only among all the millions of men who have been born of woman, — and that person Jesus of Nazareth? He was of the house and lineage of David — he was born, and that by a singular event, in Bethlehem — he professed to be “God with us,” and wrought miracles to substantiate his claim. At his word or touch, the “eyes of the blind were opened,” “the lame leaped as a hart,” the dumb spake, the sick were healed, and the dead lived, as the prophets had foretold. Of the wisdom of his teaching, his recorded discourses bear witness. His rejection and unjust death by his countrymen, are matters of historic fact; his resurrection and ascension stand upon the lofty evidences which have been already adduced: the destruction of the Jewish nation, according to his own predictions, followed as the proof of the terror of his offended majesty; and his “kingdom” among men continues to this day. There is no possible means of evading the evidence of the fulfilment of these predictions in the person of our Lord, unless it could be shown that Jesus and his disciples, by some kind of concert, made the events of his life and death to correspond with the prophecies, in order to substantiate his claim.
to the Messiahship. No infidel has ever been so absurd as to hazard this opinion, except Lord Bolinbroke; and his observations may be taken as a most triumphant proof of the force of this evidence from prophecy, when an hypothesis so extravagant was resorted to by an acute mind, in order to evade it. This noble writer asserts, that Jesus Christ brought on his own death by a series of wilful and preconcerted measures, merely to give his disciples the triumph of an appeal to the old prophecies! But this hypothesis does not reach the case; and to have succeeded, he ought to have shown, that our Lord preconcerted his descent from David — his being born of a virgin — his birth at Bethlehem — and his wonderful endowments of eloquence and wisdom: that by some means or other he wilfully made the Jews ungrateful to him who healed their sick and cleansed their lepers; and that he not only contrived his own death, but his resurrection, and his ascension also, and the spread of his religion in opposition to human opinion and human power, in order to give his disciples the triumph of an appeal to the prophecies! These subterfuges of infidels concede the point, and show that the truth cannot be denied but by doing the utmost violence to the understanding.

That wonderful series of particular prophecies respecting our Lord, contained in Isaiah 53, will illustrate the foregoing observations, and may properly close this chapter.

To this prophecy it cannot be objected, that its language is symbolic, or that in more than a few beautiful metaphors, easily understood, it is even figurative: its style is that of narrative; it is also entire in itself, and unmixed with any other subject; and it evidently refers to one single person. So the ancient Jews understood it, and applied it to Messiah; and though the modern Jews, in order to evade its force in the argument with Christians, allege that it describes the sufferings of their nation, and not of an individual, the objection is refuted by the terms of the prophecy itself. The Jewish people cannot be the sufferer, because he was to bear their griefs, to carry their sorrows, and to be wounded for their transgressions. “He hath borne OUR griefs and carried OUR sorrows,” &c; so that the person of the sufferer is clearly distinguished from the Jewish nation. Beside which, his death and burial are spoken of, and his sufferings are represented (verse 12) as voluntary; which in no sense can apply to the Jews. “Of himself, or of some other man,” therefore, as the Ethiopian eunuch rightly conceived, the prophet must have spoken. To some individual it must be applied; to none but to our Lord can it be applied;
and applied to him, the prophecy is converted into history itself. The prophet declares, that his advent and works would be a revealing of “the arm of the Lord,” — a singular display of Divine power and goodness; and yet, that a blind and incredulous people would not believe “the report.” Appearing in a low and humble condition, and not, as they expected their Messiah, in the pomp of eastern monarchy, his want of “comeliness” and “desirableness” in the eyes of his countrymen, and his rejection by them, are explicitly stated — “He was despised, and we esteemed him not.” He is farther described as “a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs;” yet his sufferings were considered by the Jews as judicial, — a legal punishment, as they contend to this day, for his endeavouring to seduce men from the law, and for which they had the warrant of God himself in his commands by Moses, that such seducers should be put to death. With what exactness are these sentiments of the Jews marked in the prophecy! We quote from the translation of Bishop Lowth.

“Yet we thought him JUDICALLY stricken, SMITTEN OF GOD, and afflicted.”

Christ himself and his apostles uniformly represented his death as vicarious and propitiatory; and this is predicted and confirmed, so to speak, by the evidence of this prophecy.

“But he was wounded For our transgressions, He was smitten for our iniquities; The chastisement by which our peace is effected, was laid upon him; And by his bruises we are healed. We all of us like sheep have stray’d; We have turn’d aside, every one to his own way; And Jehovah hath made to light upon him the iniquity of us all. It was exacted and he was made answerable.”

Who can read the next passage without thinking of Jesus before the council of the Jews, and the judgment seat of Pilate?

“As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, And as a sheep before her shearers Is dumb; so he opened not his mouth. By an oppressive judgment he was taken off.”

The very circumstances of his burial are given: —
Yet, though thus laid in the grave, the eye of the prophet beholds his resurrection, “the joy set before him,” and into which he entered; the distribution of spiritual blessings to his people, and his spiritual conquest of the nations of the earth, notwithstanding the opposition of “the mighty;” and he enumerates these particulars with a plainness so wonderful, that, by merely an alteration of the tenses of the verbs, the whole might be converted into an abridged view of what has occurred, and is now occurring under the Christian dispensation, in the furtherance of human salvation: —

If his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice
He shall see a seed, which shall prolong their days,
And the gracious purpose of Jehovah shall prosper in his hands.
Of the travail of his soul he shall see (the fruit) and be satisfied;
By the knowledge of him shall my servant justify many;
For the punishment of their iniquities he shall bear.
Therefore will I distribute to him the many for his portion,
And the mighty people shall he share for his spoil;
Because he pour’d his soul out unto death;
And was number’d with the transgressors:
And he bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors.”

To all these predictions the words of a modern writer are applicable: “Let now the infidel, or the skeptical reader, meditate thoroughly and soberly upon these predictions. The priority of the records to the events admits of no question. The completion is obvious to every competent inquirer. Here then are facts. We are called upon to account for these facts on rational and adequate principles. Is human foresight equal to the task? Enthusiasm? Conjecture? Chance? Political contrivance? If none of these, neither can any other principle that may be devised by man’s sagacity, account for the facts; then true philosophy, as well as true religion, will ascribe them to the inspiration of the Almighty. Every effect must have a cause.” 175
CHAPTER 18. — OBJECTIONS TO THE EVIDENCE FROM PROPHECY CONSIDERED.

BESIDE the objections which have been anticipated and answered in the last chapter, others have been made to the argument from prophecy, which, though exceedingly futile, ought to receive a cursory notice, lest any should think them of greater importance.

It has been objected, as to some of the prophecies, that they were written after the event; as for instance, the prophecy of Isaiah in which the name of Cyrus is found, and the prophecies of Daniel. This allegation, standing as it does upon no evidence whatever, and being indeed in opposition to contrary proof, shows the hopelessness of the cause of infidelity, and affords a lofty triumph to the evidence of prophecy. For the objector does in fact acknowledge, that these predictions are not obscure; that the event exactly corresponded with them; and that they were beyond human conjecture. Without entering into those questions respecting the date of the books of Isaiah and Daniel, which properly belong to works on the canon of Scripture, we may observe, that the authors of this objection assert, but without giving the least proof, that Isaiah wrote his prophecies in order to flatter Cyrus, and that the book of Daniel was composed about the reign of ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES. It is therefore admitted that both were extant, and in their present form, before the time of the Christian era; but if so, what end, we ask, is answered by the objection? The Scriptures, as received by the Jews, were verified by the sentence of our Lord and his apostles; and unless their inspiration can be disproved, the objection in question is a mere cavil. Before it can have any weight, the whole mass of evidence which supports the mission and Divine authority of our Saviour and the apostles, must be overthrown: and not till then can it in strictness of reasoning be maintained. But, not to insist on this, the assertion respecting Isaiah is opposed to positive testimony. The testimony of the prophet himself, who states that he lived “in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah;” and the testimony of an independent witness, the author of the Second Book of Kings, in the twentieth chapter of which book Isaiah is brought forward in connection with a public event of the Jewish history — the dangerous sickness and recovery of the King Hezekiah. The proof is then as decisive as the public records of a kingdom
can make it, that Isaiah wrote more than a hundred years before the birth of Cyrus. 176

The time when Daniel lived and wrote is bound up in like manner with public history, — and that not only of the Jews, but of the Babylonians and Persians; and could not be antedated so as to impose upon the Jews, who received the book which bears his name into their canon, as the production of the same Daniel who had filled exalted stations in the courts of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. In favour of a later date being assigned to the book of Daniel, it has been said, that it has many Greek terms, and that it was not translated by the LXX, the translation now inserted in the Septuagint being by THEODOTIAN. With respect to the Greek terms, they are chiefly found in the names of the musical instruments; and the Greeks acknowledge that they derived their music from the eastern nations. With respect to the second objection, it is unfounded. The authors of the Septuagint did translate the book of Daniel, and their version is cited by CLEMENS ROMANUS, JUSTIN MARTYR, and many of the ancient fathers; it occupied a column of the Hexapla of Origen, and is quoted by JEROME. The present Greek version by Theodotian inserted in the Septuagint, was made in the second century, and preferred as being more conformable to the original. The repudiated version was published some years ago from an ancient MS. discovered at Rome. 177

The opponents of Scripture are fond of the attempt to lower the dignity and authority of the sacred prophecies by comparing them to the heathen oracles. The absolute contrast between them has already been pointed out; (Vide chapter xvi;) but a few additional observations may not be useless.

Of the innumerable oracles which were established and consulted by the ancient heathen, the most celebrated was the Delphic; and we may, therefore, for the purpose of exhibiting the contrast more perfectly between the Pythian oracle and the prophecies of Scripture, confine our remarks to that.

The first great distinction lies in this, that none of the predictions ever uttered by the Delphic oracle went deep into futurity. They relate to events on the eve of taking place, and whose preparatory circumstances were known. There was not even the pretence of foresight to the distance of a few years; though had it been a hundred years, even that were a very limited period to the eye of inspired prophets, who looked through the course of succeeding ages, and gave proof by the very sweep and compass
of their predictions, that they were under the inspirations of Him to whom “a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

A second contrast lies in the ambiguity of the responses. The prophecies of Scripture are sometimes obscure, though this does not apply to the most eminent of those which have been most signally fulfilled, as we have already seen; but they never *equivocate*. For this the Pythian oracle was notorious. Historians relate that CRÆSUS, who had expended large sums upon the agents of this delusion, was tricked by an equivocation; through which, interpreting the response most favourably for himself, he was induced to make an unsuccessful war on Cyrus. In his subsequent captivity he repeatedly reproached the oracle, and charged it with falsehood. The response delivered to PYRRHUS was of the same kind; and was so expressed as to be true, whether Pyrrhus conquered the Romans or the Romans Pyrrhus. Many other instances of the same kind are given; not to mention the trifling, and even bantering and jocose oracles, which were sometimes pronounced. 178

The venality, wealth, and servility of the Delphic oracle, present another contrast to the poverty and disinterestedness of the Jewish prophets, whom no gifts could bribe, and no power awe in the discharge of their duty. Demosthenes, in one of his speeches to the Athenians, publicly charges this oracle with being “gained over to the interests of King Philip;” and the Greek historians give other instances in which it had been corrupted by money, and the prophetess sometimes deposed for bribery, sometimes for lewdness.

Neither threats nor persecutions had any influence with the Jewish prophets; but it would seem that this celebrated oracle of Apollo was not even proof against raillery. At first it gave its answers in verse; but the Epicureans, Cynics, and others laughing so much at the poorness of the versification, it fell at length into prose. “It was surprising,” said these philosophic wits, “that Apollo, the god of poetry, should be a much worse poet than Homer, whom he himself had inspired.” Plutarch considers this as a principal cause of the declension of the oracle of Delphos. Doubtless it had declined much in credit in his day; and the farther spread of Christianity completed its ruin.

Can then the prophecies of Scripture be paralleled with these dark, and venal, and delusive oracles, without impiety? and could any higher honour be wished for the Jewish prophets, than the comparison into which they are
thus brought with the agents of paganism at Delphos and other places?
They had recourse to no smooth speeches, no compliances with the
temper and prejudices of men. They concealed no truth which they were
commissioned to declare, however displeasing to their nation and
hazardous to themselves. They required no caves, or secret places of
temples, from which to utter their messages; and those who consulted them
were not practised upon by the bewildering ceremonies imposed upon
inquirers at Delphos. They prophesied in streets, and courts, and palaces,
and in the midst of large assemblies. Their predictions had a clear,
determinate, and consistent sense; and they described future events with so
many particularities of time and place, as made it scarcely possible that they
should be misunderstood or misapplied.

Pure and elevated as was the character of the Jewish prophets, the
hardihood of infidelity has attempted to asperse their character; because it
appears from Scripture story, that there were false prophets and bad men
who bore that name.

Balaam is instanced, though not a Jewish prophet; but that he was always a
bad man, wants proof. The probability is, that his virtue was overthrown by
the offers of Balak; and the prophetic spirit was not taken away from him,
because there was an evident design on the part of God to make his favour
to Israel more conspicuous, by obliging a reluctant prophet to bless, when
he would have cursed, and that in the very presence of a hostile king.
When that work was done, Balaam was consigned to his proper
punishment.

With respect to the Jewish false prophets, it is a singular proceeding to
condemn the true ones for their sake, and to argue that because bad men
assumed their functions, and imitated their manner, for corrupt purposes,
the universally-received prophets of the nation, — men who, from the
proofs they gave of their inspiration, had their commission acknowledged
even by those who hated them, and their writings received into the Jewish
canon, — were bad men also. Let the characters of Moses, Samuel, Elijah,
Elisha, Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and the authors of the other
prophetic books, be considered; and how true are the words of the
apostle, that they were “HOLY men of old,” as well as that they were
“moved by the Holy Ghost!” That the prophets who prophesied “smooth
things” were never considered as true prophets, except for a time by a few
who wished to have their hopes flattered, is plain from this — none of their
writings were preserved by the Jews. Their predictions would not abound in reproofs and threatenings, like those of Isaiah and Jeremiah; and yet the words of those prophets, who were personally most displeasing to the Jews of the age in which they lived, have been preserved, while every flattering prophecy was suffered to fall into oblivion almost as soon as it was uttered. Can we have a more decisive proof than this, that the false prophets were a perfectly distinct class of men,—the venal imitators of these "holy men of old," but who never gave, even to those most disposed to listen to their delusive prophecies, a satisfactory proof of their prophetic commission?

Attempts have been made to show that a few of the prophecies of Scripture have failed. The following are the principal instances:—

It has been said that a false promise was made to Abraham, when it was promised to him, that his descendants should possess the territory which lies between the Euphrates and the river of Egypt. But this objection is clearly made in ignorance of the Scriptures; for the fact is, that David conquered that territory, and that the dominions of Solomon were thus extended. (Vide 2 Samuel 8; 1 Chronicles 18.)

Voltaire objects, that the prophets made promises to the Jews of the most unbounded riches, dominion, and influence; insomuch that they could only have been accomplished by their conquering or proselyting the entire of the habitable globe. On the contrary, he says, they have lost their possessions instead of obtaining either property or power, and therefore the prophecies are false.

The case is here unfairly stated. The prophets never made such exaggerated promises. They predict many spiritual blessings to be bestowed in the times of Messiah, under figures drawn from worldly opulence and power, the figurative language of which no attentive reader can mistake. They also promise many civil advantages, but only conditionally on the obedience of the nation; and they speak in high terms of the state of the Jewish nation, upon its final restoration, for which objectors must wait before they can determine the predictions to be false. But did not Voltaire know, that the loss of their own country by the Jews, of which he speaks, was predicted in the clearest manner? and would he not have seen, had he not been blinded by his prejudices, that his very objection acknowledges the truth of prophecy? The promises of the prophets have not been falsified in the instance given, but their threats have been signally fulfilled.
Paine, following preceding writers of the same sentiments, asserts the prophecy of Isaiah to Ahaz not to have been verified by the event, and is thus answered by Bishop Watson: (Apology, letter v:) “The prophecy is quoted by you, to prove, and it is the only instance you produce that Isaiah was ‘a lying prophet and impostor.’ Now I maintain, that this very instance proves that he was a true prophet and no impostor. The history of the prophecy, as delivered in the seventh chapter, is this, — Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah king of Israel, made war upon Ahaz king of Judah; not merely, or, perhaps, not at all for the sake of plunder, or the conquest of territory, but with a declared purpose of making an entire revolution in the government of Judah, of destroying the royal house of David, and of placing another family on the throne. Their purpose is thus expressed — ‘Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal.’ Now what did the Lord commission Isaiah to say to Ahaz? Did he commission him to say, The kings shall not vex thee? No. — The kings shall not conquer thee? No. — The kings shall not succeed against thee? No. He commissioned him to say — ‘It (the purpose of the two kings) shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.’ I demand — Did it stand, did it come to pass? Was any revolution effected? Was the royal house of David dethroned and destroyed? Was Tabeal ever made king of Judah? No. The prophecy was perfectly accomplished. You say, ‘Instead of these two kings failing in their attempt against Ahaz, they succeeded: Ahaz was defeated and destroyed.’ I deny the fact: Ahaz was defeated but not destroyed; and even the ‘two hundred thousand women, and sons and daughters,’ whom you represent as carried into captivity, were not carried into captivity: they were made captives, but they were not carried into captivity; for the chief men of Samaria, being admonished by a prophet, would not suffer Pekah to bring the captives into the land, — ‘They rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, (some humanity, you see, among those Israelites, whom you everywhere represent as barbarous brutes, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren,’ <142815> 2 Chronicles 28:15. The kings did fail in their attempt: their attempt was to destroy the house of David, trod to make a revolution: but they made no revolution; they did not destroy the house of David, for Ahaz slept with his fathers; and Hezekiah, his son, of the house of David, reigned in his stead.”
A similar attempt is made by the same writer to fix a charge of false vaticination upon Jeremiah, and is thus answered by the bishop of Llandaff:

"In the thirty-fourth chapter is a prophecy of Jeremiah to Zedekiah, in these words, verse 2, *Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will give this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, and will burn it with fire; and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but thou shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand! and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah, king of Judah: thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not die by the sword, but thou shalt die in peace; and with the burning of thy fathers, the former kings that were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee, and will lament thee, saying, Ah, lord! for I have pronounced the word saith the Lord. — Now, instead of Zedekiah beholding the eyes of the king of Babylon, and speaking with him mouth to mouth, and dying in peace, and with the burning of odours at the funeral of his fathers, (as Jeremiah hath declared the Lord himself had pronounced,) the reverse, according to the fifty-second chapter, was the case: it is there stated, (verse 10,) *That the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.* What can we say of these prophets, but that they are impostors and liars?’ I can say this — that the prophecy you have produced was fulfilled in all its parts; and what then shall be said of those who call Jeremiah a liar and an impostor? Here then we are fairly at issue — you affirm that the prophecy was not fulfilled, and I affirm that it was fulfilled in all its parts. ‘I will give this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire:’ so says the prophet. What says the history? ‘They (the forces of the king of Babylon) burnt the house of God, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire,’ <2Ch 36:19> 2 Chronicles 36:19. — ‘Thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but thou shalt surely be taken and delivered into his hand:’ so says the prophet. What says the history? ‘The men of war fled by night, and the king went the way toward the plain, and the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; and all his army were scattered from him: so they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon, to Riblah’ <2Ki 25:5> 2 Kings 25:5. The prophet goes on, ‘Thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth.’ No pleasant circumstance this to Zedekiah, who had provoked the king of Babylon by revolting from
him. The history says, ‘The king of Babylon gave judgment upon Zedekiah,’ or, as it is more literally rendered from the Hebrew, ‘spake judgments with him at Riblah.’ The prophet concludes this part with, ‘And thou shalt go to Babylon:’ the history says, ‘The king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death, Jeremiah 52:11. — ‘Thou shalt not die by the sword.’ He did not die by the sword, he did not fall in battle. — ‘But thou shalt die in peace.’ He did die in peace, he neither expired on the rack nor on the scaffold; was neither strangled nor poisoned, no unusual fate of captive kings; he died peaceably in his bed, though that bed was in a prison. — ‘And with the burnings of thy fathers shall they burn odours before thee.’ I cannot prove from the history that this part of the prophecy was accomplished, nor can you prove that it was not. The probability is, that it was accomplished; and I have two reasons on which I ground this probability. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to say nothing of other Jews, were men of great authority in the court of the king of Babylon, before and after the commencement of the imprisonment of Zedekiah; and Daniel continued in power till the subversion of the kingdom of Babylon by Cyrus. Now it seems to me to be very probable, that Daniel and the other great men of the Jews, would both have inclination to request, and influence enough with the king of Babylon to obtain permission to bury their deceased prince Zedekiah, after the manner of his fathers. But if there had been no Jews at Babylon of consequence enough to make such a request, still it is probable that the king of Babylon would have ordered the Jews to bury and lament their departed prince, after the manner of their country. Monarchs, like other men, are conscious of the instability of human condition; and when the pomp of war has ceased, when the insolence of conquest is abated, and the fury of resentment is subsided, they seldom fail to revere royalty even in its ruins, and grant, without reluctance, proper obsequies to the remains of captive kings.”

Ezekiel is assaulted in the same manner. “You quote,” says the same writer, “a passage from Ezekiel, in the twenty-ninth chapter, where speaking of Egypt, it is said — ‘No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years:’ this, you say, ‘never came to pass, and consequently it is false, as all the books I have already reviewed are.’ Now that the invasion predicted did come to pass, we have, as Bishop Newton observes, ‘the testimonies of Megasthenes and Berosus, two heathen historians, who lived about 300
years before Christ; one of whom affirms, expressly, that Nebuchadnezzar conquered the greater part of Africa; and the other affirms it in effect, in saying, that when Nebuchadnezzar heard of the death of his father, having settled his affairs in Egypt, and committed the captives whom he took in Egypt to the care of some of his friends to bring them after him, he hasted directly to Babylon. And if we had been possessed of no testimony in support of the prophecy, it would have been a hasty conclusion, that the prophecy never came to pass; the history of Egypt, at so remote a period, being no where accurately and circumstantially related. I admit that no period can be pointed out from the age of Ezekiel to the present, in which there was no foot of man or beast to be seen for forty years in all Egypt; but some think that only a part of Egypt is here spoken of; and surely you do not expect a literal accomplishment of a hyperbolical expression, denoting great desolation; importing that the trade of Egypt which was carried on then, as at present, by caravans, by the foot of man and beast, should be annihilated.”

To this we may add, that the passage respecting the depopulation of Egypt stands in the midst of an extended prophecy, which has received the most marked fulfilment, and illustrates, perhaps as strikingly as any thing which can be adduced, the cavilling spirit of infidelity, and proves that truth could never be the object of discussions thus conducted. Here is a passage which has some obscurity hanging over it. No one however can prove that it was not accomplished, even so fully that the expressions might be used without violent hyperbole; for the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar was one of the same sweeping and devastating character as his invasion and conquest of Judea: and we know that the greater part of the inhabitants of that country were destroyed, or led captive, and that the land generally remained untilled for seventy years, though not absolutely left without inhabitant. In the common language of men, Judea might be said not to be inhabited, so prodigious was the excision of its people; and in such circumstances, from the total cessation of all former intercourse, commercial and otherwise, between the different parts of the kingdom, it might also, without exaggeration, be said, that the foot of man and beast did not “pass THROUGH it;” their going from one part to another on business, or for worship at Jerusalem, being wholly suspended. Now, as we have no reason to suppose the Babylonian monarch to have been more merciful to Egypt than to Judea, the same expressions in a popular sense might be used in respect of that country. Here however infidelity thought a cavil might be raised, and totally — may
we not say *wilfully*? — overlooked a prediction immediately following, which no human sagacity could conjecture, and against which it is in vain to urge, that it was written after the event: for the accomplishment of the prophecy runs on to the present day, and is as palpable and obvious as the past history, and the present political state of that country — "*Egypt shall be the basest of the kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations — there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt.*" (Vide Ezekiel 29 and 30.) It is more than two thousand years since the prophecy was delivered, and Egypt has never recovered its liberties, but is to this day under the yoke of foreigners. It was conquered by the Babylonians; then by the Persians; and in succession passed under the dominion of the Macedonians, Romans, Saracens, Mamelucs, and Turks. No native prince of Egypt has ever restored his country to independence, and ascended the throne of his ancestors; and the descendants of the ancient Egyptians are to this hour in the basest and most oppressed condition. Yet in Egypt the human mind had made some of its earliest and most auspicious efforts. The stupendous monuments of art and power, the ruins of which lie piled upon the banks of the Nile, or still defy the wastes of time, attest the vastness of the designs, and the extent of the power of its princes. Egypt, too, was possessed of great natural advantages. Its situation was singularly calculated to protect it against foreign invasion; while its great fertility promised to secure the country it enriched from poverty, baseness, and subjection. Yet after a long course of grandeur, and in contradiction to its natural advantages, Ezekiel pronounced that the kingdom should be "*the basest of all kingdoms,*” and that there should be "*no more a prince of the land of Egypt.*” So the event has been and so it remains; and that this wonderful prophecy should be passed over by infidels in silence, while they select from it a passage which promised to give some colour to objection, is deeply characteristic of the state of their minds. It is not from deficiency of evidence that the word of God is rejected by them. The evil is not the want of light, but the love of darkness.

Much ridicule has been cast upon the prophets for those significant actions by which they illustrated their predictions; as when Jeremiah hides his linen girdle in a hole of the rock, and breaks a potter’s vessel in the sight of the people; when Ezekiel weighs the hair of his head and beard in balances, with many other instances familiar to those who read the Scriptures. But this ridicule can only proceed from ignorance. In the early ages of the world, the deficiency of language was often supplied by signs; and when
language was improved, “the practice remained,” says Bishop Warburton, “after the necessity was over,” especially among the easterns, whose natural temperament inclined them to this mode of conversation. The charges then of absurdity and fanaticism brought against the prophets, vanish of themselves. The *absurdity* of an action consists in its being extravagant and insignificant; but use and a fixed application made the actions in question both sober and pertinent. The *fanaticism* of an action consists in fondness for such actions as are unusual, and for foreign modes of speech; but those of the prophets were idiomatic and familiar.” We may add, that several of these actions were performed in vision; and that, considering the genius of the people who were addressed, they were calculated strongly to excite their attention, the end for which they were adopted.

Such are the principal objections which have been made to Scripture prophecy, as the proof of Scripture truth. That they are so few and so feeble, when enemies so prying and capable have employed themselves with so much misplaced zeal to discover any vulnerable part, is the triumph of truth. Their futility has been pointed out; and the whole weight of the preceding evidence in favour of the truth of the Old and New Testaments, remains unmoved. We have, indeed, but glanced at a few of these extraordinary revelations of the future, for the sake, not of exhibiting the evidence of prophecy, which would require a distinct volume, but of explaining its nature and pointing out its force. To the prophecies of the Old Testament, the attentive inquirer will add those of our Lord and his apostles, which will appear not less extraordinary in themselves, nor less illustrious in their fulfilment, so far as they have received their accomplishment. Many prophecies both of the Old and New Testament evidently point to future times, and this kind of evidence will consequently accumulate with the lapse of ages, and may be among the means by which Jews, Mohammedans, and pagans shall be turned to the Christian faith. At all events, prophecy even unfulfilled now answers an important end. It opens our prospect into the future, and if the detail is obscure, yet, notwithstanding the mighty contest which is still going on between opposing powers and principles, we see how the struggle will terminate, and know, to use a prophetic phrase, that “*at eventime it shall be light.*”
CHAPTER 19. — INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE — COLLATERAL EVIDENCE.

The internal evidence of a revelation from God has been stated to be that which arises from the apparent excellence and beneficial tendency of the doctrine. (Vide chap. 9.) This at least is its chief characteristic, though other particulars may also be included in this species of proof, and shall be adduced.

The reader will recollect the distinction made in the chapter just referred to, between rational and authenticating evidence. It has been observed, that there are some truths made known to us through the medium of a revelation from God, which, though in their nature undiscoverable by the unassisted faculties of man, yet, when once revealed, carry to our reason, so far as they are of a nature to be comprehended by it, the demonstration which accompanies truth of any other kind. (Vide chap. 9.) But it is only within the limit just mentioned that this position holds good; for such truths only must be understood as are accompanied with reasons or rational proofs in the revelation itself, or which, when once suggested to the mind, directs its thoughts and observations to surrounding facts and circumstances, or to established truths to which they are capable of being compared, and by which they are confirmed. The internal evidence of the Holy Scriptures, therefore, as far as doctrine is concerned, is restrained to truths of this class. Of other truths revealed to us in the Bible, and those in many instances fundamental to the system of Christianity, we have no proof of this kind; but they stand on the firm basis of Divine attestation, and suffer no diminution of their authority because the reasons of them are either hidden from us for purposes of moral discipline, or because they transcend our faculties. If we had the reasons of them before us, they would not be more authentic, though to the understanding they would be more obvious. Such are the doctrines of a trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead; of the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ; of his Divine and eternal Sonship, &c. Such are many facts in the Divine government — as the permission of evil, and the long apparent abandonment of heathen nations — the unequal religious advantages afforded to individuals as well as nations — and many of the circumstances
of our individual moral trial upon earth. Of the truth of these doctrines, and the fitness of these and many other facts, we have no internal evidence whatever; but a very large class of truths which are found in the revelations of Scripture, afford more or less of this kind of proof, and make their appeal to our reason as well as to our faith; — in other words, their reasonableness is such, that though the great demonstration does not rest upon that, it affords an additional argument why they should be thankfully received, and heartily credited.

The first and fundamental doctrine of Scripture is, the existence of God; the great and the sole First Cause of all things; eternal, self-existent, present in all places, knowing all things; infinite in power and wisdom; and perfect in goodness, justice, holiness, and truth. That this view of the Divine Being, for which we are indebted to the Scriptures alone, presents itself with powerful rational demonstration to the mind of man, is illustriously shown by that astonishing change of opinion on this great subject which took place in pagan nations upon the promulgation of Christianity, and which in Europe continues to this day substantially unaltered. Not only those gross notions which prevailed among the vulgar, but the dark, uncertain, and contradictory researches of the philosophers of different schools have passed away; and the truth respecting God, stated in the majesty and simplicity of the Scriptures, has been, with few exceptions, universally received, and that among enlightened Deists themselves. These discoveries of revelation have satisfied the human mind on this great and primary doctrine; and have given it a resting place which it never before found, and from which, if it ever departs, it finds no demonstration until it returns to the “marvellous light” into which revealed religion has introduced us. A class of ideas, the most elevated and sublime, and which the most profound minds in former times sought without success, have thus become familiar to the very peasants in Christian nations. Nothing can be a more striking proof of the appeal which the Scripture character of God makes to the unsophisticated reason of mankind.

Of the state and condition of MAN as it is represented in our holy writings, the evidence from fact, and from the consciousness of our own bosoms, is very copious. What man is, in his relations to God his maker and governor, we had never discovered without revelation; but now this is made known, confirmatory fact crowds in on every side, and affords its evidence of the truth of the doctrine.
The Old and New Testaments agree in representing the human race as actually vicious, and capable, without moral check and control, of the greatest enormities; so that not only individual happiness, but social also, is constantly obstructed or endangered. To this the history of all ages bears witness, and present experience gives its testimony. — All the states of antiquity crumbled down, or were suddenly overwhelmed, by their own vices, and the general character and conduct of the people which composed them may be read in the works of their historians, poets, and satirists, which have been transmitted to our times. These, as to the Greeks and Romans, fully bear out the darkest colouring of their moral condition to be found in the well known first chapter of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Church at Rome, and other passages in his various epistles. To this day, the same representation depicts the condition of almost all pagan countries, and, in many respects too, some parts of Christendom, where the word of God has been hidden from the people, and its moral influence, consequently, has not been suffered to develope itself. In those countries also where that corrective has been most carefully applied, though exalted beyond comparison in just, honourable, benevolent, and sober principles and habits, along with the frequent occurrence of numerous and gross actual crimes, the same appetites and passions may be seen in constant contest with the laws of the state; with the example of the virtuous; and the controlling influence of the word of God, preached by faithful ministers, taught as a part of the process of education, and spread through society by the multiplication of its copies since the invention of printing. The Holy Scriptures therefore characterize man only as he is actually found in all ages, and in all places to the utmost bounds of those geographical discoveries which have been made through the adventurous spirit of modern navigators.

But they not only assume men to be actually vicious, but vicious in consequence of a moral taint in their nature, — originally and inevitably so, but for those provisions of grace and means of sanctity of which they speak; and as this assumption is the basis of the whole scheme of moral restoration, through the once promised seed of the woman, and the now actually given JESUS, the SAVIOUR, so they constantly remind him that he is “born in sin, and shapen in iniquity,” and that, being born of the flesh, “he cannot please God.” What is thus represented as doctrine appeals to our reason through the evidence of unquestionable fact. The strong tendency of man to crime cannot be denied. Civil penal laws are enacted
for no other purpose than to repress it; they are multiplied in the most civilized states to shut out the evil in all those new directions toward which the multiplied relations of man, and his increased power, arising from increased intelligence, have given it its impulse. Every legal deed, with its seals and witnesses bears testimony to that opinion as to human nature which the experience of man has impressed on man; and history itself is a record chiefly of human guilt, because examples of crime have every where and at all times been much more frequent than examples of virtue. This tendency to evil, the Scriptures tell us, arises from “the heart,” — the nature and disposition of man; and it is not otherwise to be accounted for. — Some indeed have represented the corruption of the race, as the result of association and example; but if men were naturally inclined to good, and averse to evil, how is it that not a few individuals only, but the whole race have become evil by mutual association? This would be to make the weaker cause the more efficient, which is manifestly absurd. It is contrary too to the reason of the case, that the example and association of persons naturally well disposed, should produce any other effect than that of confirming and maturing their good dispositions; as it is the effect of example and association, among persons of similar tastes and of similar pursuits, to confirm and improve the habit which gives rise to them. As little plausibility is there in the opinion which would account for this general corruption from bad education. — How, if man in all ages had been rightly affected in his moral inclinations, did a course of deleterious education commence? How, if commenced, came it, that what must have been so abhorrent to a virtuously disposed community was not arrested, and a better system of instruction introduced? But the fact itself may be denied, as the worst education inculcates a virtue above the general practice, and no course of education was ever adopted purposely to encourage immorality. In the Scriptures alone we find a cause assigned which accounts for the phenomenon, and we are bound therefore by the rules of philosophy itself to admit it. It is this, that man is by nature prone to evil; and as it would be highly unreasonable to suppose, that this disposition was implanted in him by his benevolent and holy Maker, we are equally bound in reason to admit the Scripture solution of the FALL of the human race from a higher and better state.

A third view of the condition of man contained in the Scriptures, is, that he is not only under the Divine authority, but that the government of heaven as to him is of a mixed character; that he is treated with severity and with
kindness also; that considered both as corrupt in his nature and tendencies, and as in innumerable instances actually offending, he is placed under a rigidly restraining discipline, to meet his case in the first respect, and under correction and penal dispensation with relation to the latter. On the other hand, as he is an object beloved by the God he has offended; a being for whose pardon and recovery Divine mercy has made provision; moral ends are connected with these severities, and nature and providence as well as revelation are crowned with instances of Divine benevolence to the sinning race. The proof of these different relations of man to God, surrounds us in that admixture of good and evil, of indulgence and restraint, of felicity and misery, to which he is so manifestly subject. Life is felt in all ordinary circumstances to be a blessing; but it is short and uncertain, subject to diseases and accidents. Many enjoyments fall to the lot of men; yet with the majority they are attained by means of great and exhausting labours of the body or of the mind, through which the risks to health and life are greatly multiplied; or they are accompanied with so many disappointments, fears, and cares, that their number and their quality are greatly lessened. The globe itself, the residence of man, and upon whose fertility, seasons, exterior surface, and interior stratification so much of the external felicity of man depends, bears marks of a mingled kind of just and merciful government suited to such a being as man in the state described in the Scriptures, and to none else. It cannot be supposed, that if inhabited by a race of beings perfectly holy and in the full enjoyment of the Divine favour, this earth would be subject to destructive earthquakes, volcanoes, and inundations; to blights and dearths, the harbingers of famine; to those changes in the atmosphere which induce wide-wasting epidemic disorders; to that general sterility of soil which renders labour necessary to such a degree, as fully to occupy the time of the majority of mankind, prevent them from engaging in pursuits worthy an intellectual nature, and wear down their spirits; nor that the metals so necessary for man in civilized life, and, in many countries, the material of the fire by which cold must be repelled, food prepared, and the most important arts executed, should be hidden deep in the bowels of the earth, so that a great body of men must be doomed to the dangerous and humbling labour of raising them! These and many other instances show a course of discipline very incongruous with the most enlightened views of the Divine character, if man be considered as an innocent being. On the contrary, that he is under an unmixed penal administration is contradicted by the facts, that the earth yet yields her increase ordinarily to industry; that the destructive convulsions of nature
are but occasional; and that, generally, the health of the human race predominates over sickness, and their animal enjoyments over positive misery. To those diverse relations of man to God, as stated in the Bible, the contrarieties of nature and providence bear an exact adaptation. Assume man to be any thing else than what is represented in Scripture, they would be discordant and inexplicable; in this view they harmonize. Man is neither innocent nor finally condemned — he is fallen and guilty, but not excluded from the compassion and care and benignity of his God.

The next leading doctrine of Christianity is the restoration of man to the Divine favour, through the merits of THE VICARIOUS AND SACRIFICIAL DEATH OF CHRIST, the incarnate Son of God. To this many objections have been offered; but, on the other hand, many important reasons for such a procedure have been overlooked. The rational evidence of this doctrine, we grant, is partial and limited; but it will be recollected, that it has been already proved, that the authority and truth of a doctrine are not thereby affected. It is indeed not unreasonable to suppose, that the evidence of the fitness and necessity of such a doctrine should be to us obscure. “The reason of the thing,” says Bishop Butler, “and the whole analogy of nature should teach us, not to expect to have the like information concerning the Divine conduct, as concerning our own duty.” On whatever terms God had been pleased to offer forgiveness to his creatures, if any other had been morally possible, it is not to be supposed that all the reasons of his conduct, which must of course respect the very principles of his government in general, extending not only to man, but to other beings, could have been explained; and certain it is, that those to whom the benefit was offered would have had no right to require it.

The Christian doctrine of atonement as a necessary merciful interposition, is grounded upon the liability of man to punishment in another life, for sins committed against the law of God in this; and against this view of the future prospects of mankind there can lie no objection of weight. Men are capable of committing sin, and sin is productive of misery and disorder. These positions cannot be denied. That to violate the laws of God and to despise his authority are not light crimes, is clear from considering them in their general effect upon society, and upon the world. Remove from the human race all the effects produced by vice, direct and indirect; all the inward and outward miseries and calamities which are entirely evitable by mankind, and which they wilfully bring upon themselves and others, and scarcely a sigh would be heaved, or a groan heard, except those extorted
by natural evils, (small comparatively in number) throughout the whole
earth. The great sum of human misery is the effect of actual offence; and as
it is a principle in the wisest and most perfect human legislation to estimate
the guilt of individual acts by their general tendency, and to proportion the
punishment to them under that consideration, the same reason of the case
is in favour of this principle, as found in Scripture; and thus considered, the
demerit of the sins of an individual against God becomes incalculable. Nor
is there any foundation to suppose, that the punishment assigned to sin by
the judicial appointment of the Supreme Governor, is confined to the
present life; for before we can determine that, we must be able to estimate
the demerit of an act of wilful transgression in its principle, habits, and
influence, which, as parties implicated, we are not in a state of feeling or
judgment to attempt, were the subject more within our grasp. But the
obvious reason of the case is in favour of the doctrine of future
punishment; for not only is there an unequal administration of punishments
in the present life, so that many eminent offenders pass through the present
state without any visible manifestation of the Divine displeasure against
their conduct, but there are strong and convincing proofs that we are
placed in a state of trial, which continues throughout life, and the result of
which can only be known, and consequently we ourselves can only become
subjects of final reward or punishment, after existence in this world
terminates. From the circumstances we have just enumerated to indicate
the kind of government which is exercised over the human race, we must
conclude, that, allowing the Supreme Governor to be wise and just,
benevolent and holy, men are neither treated as innocent nor as
incorrigibly, corrupt. Now, what reason can possibly be given for this
mixed kind of administration, but that the moral improvement of man is the
object intended by it? The severity discountenances and restrains vice, the
annexation of inward felicity in all cases, (and outward in all those
instances in which the result depends upon the conduct of the individual,) to holy habits and acts, recommends and sanctions them, and allures to the
use of those means which God has provided for enabling us to form and
practise them. No other final causes, it would appear, can be assigned for
the peculiar manner in which we are governed in the present life; and if the
deterring and correcting severity on the one hand, and the alluring and
instructive kindness on the other, which mark the Divine administration,
continue throughout life; if, in every period of his life here, man is capable,
by the use of the prescribed means, of forming new habits and renouncing
old ones, and thus of accomplishing the purposes of the moral discipline
under which he is placed, then is he in a state of trial throughout life, and if
so, he is accountable for the whole course of his life; and his ultimate
reward or punishment must be in a state subsequent to the present.

It is also the doctrine of Scripture, that this future punishment of the
incorrigible shall be *final* and *unlimited*; another consideration of great
importance in considering the doctrine of *atonement*. This is a monitory
doctrine which a revelation only could unfold; but being made, it has no
inconsiderable degree of rational evidence. It supposes, it is true, that no
future trial shall be allowed to man, the present having been neglected and
abused; and to this there is much analogy in the constant procedures of the
Divine government in the present life. When many checks and admonitions
from the instructions of the wise and the examples of the froward, have
been disregarded, poverty and sickness, infamy and death, ensue, in a
thousand cases which the observation of every man will furnish; the trial of
an individual, which is to issue in his present happiness or misery, is
terminated; and so far from its being renewed frequently, in the hope of his
finally profiting by a bitter experience, advantages, and opportunities, once
thrown away, can never be recalled. There is nothing therefore contrary to
the obvious principles of the Divine government as manifested in this life,
in the doctrine which confines the space of man’s highest and most solemn
probation within certain limits, and beyond them cutting off all his hope.
But let this subject be considered by the light thrown upon it by the
circumstance, that the nature of man is *immortal*. With those who deny this
to be the prerogative of the thinking principle in man, it would be trifling to
hold this argument; but with those who do not, the consideration of the
subject under this view is important.

The existence of man is never to cease. It follows then from this, that either
the future trials to be allowed to those who in the present life have been
incorrigible, are to be limited in number, or, should they successively fail,
are to be repeated for ever. If the latter, there can be no ultimate judgment,
no punishment or reward; and consequently the Divine government as
implying these, (and this we know it does, from what takes place in the
present life,) must be *annihilated*. If this cannot be maintained, is there
sufficient reason to conclude, that all to whom trial after trial is supposed
to be afforded in new and varied circumstances, in order to multiply the
probabilities, so to speak, of their final recovery from rebellion, will be at
length reclaimed? Before this can be answered, it must be recollected, that
a state of suffering which would compel obedience, if we should suppose
mere suffering capable of producing this effect, or an exertion of influence upon the understanding and will which shall necessitate a definite choice, is neither of them to be assumed as entering into the circumstances of any new state of trial. Every such future trial, to be probationary at all, that is, in order to bring out the existence of a new moral principle, and by voluntary acts to prove it, must substantially be like the present, though its circumstances may vary. Vice must have its allurements; virtue must rise from self-denial, and be led into the arena to struggle with difficulty; many present interests and pleasures must be seen in connection with vice; the rewards of obedience must, as now, be not only more refined than mere sense can be gratified with, but also distant: the mind must be capable of error in its moral estimate of things, through the influence of the senses and passions; and so circumstanced, that those erroneous views shall only be prevented or corrected by watchfulness, and a diligent application to meditation, prayer, and the use of those means of information on moral subjects which almighty God may have put within their reach. We have no right in this argument to imagine to ourselves a future condition where the influence of every circumstance will be directed to render vice most difficult to commit, and virtue most difficult to avoid; for this would not be a state of trial: and if in this present life, men have obstinately resisted all admonitions from heaven; obdurated themselves against all the affecting displays of the Divine kindness, and the deterring manifestations of the Divine majesty; it is most reasonable to conclude, that a part of them at least would abuse successive trials, and frustrate their intention, by attachment to present and sensual gratification. What then is to become of them? If we admit a moral government of rational creatures at all, their probation cannot be eternal, for that leads to no result; if probation be appointed, if implies accountability, a judicial decision, and that judicial decision, in the case of the incorrigible, punishment. Whenever then the trial, or the series of trials, terminates as to these immortal beings, the subsequent punishment, of what kind soever it may be, must be eternal. This doctrine of Scripture rests therefore upon others, of which the rational evidence is abundant and convincing; — that almighty God exercises a moral government over his creatures; that the present life is a state of moral discipline and trial; and that man is immortal. If these are allowed, the eternal duration of future punishments, as to the obstinately wicked, must follow; and its accordance with the principles just mentioned, is its rational evidence.
That atonement for the sins of men which was made by the death of Christ, is represented in the Christian system as the means by which mankind may be delivered from this awful catastrophe — from judicial inflictions of the displeasure of a Governor, whose authority has been contemned, and whose will has been resisted, which shall know no mitigation in their degree, nor bound to their duration; and if an end, supremely great and benevolent, can commend any procedure to us. the Scriptural doctrine of atonement commends this kind of appeal to our attention. This end it professes to accomplish, by means which, with respect to the Supreme Governor himself, preserve his character from mistake, and maintain the authority of his government; and with respect to man, give him the strongest possible reason for hope, and render more favourable the circumstances of his earthly probation. These are considerations which so manifestly show, from its own internal constitution, the superlative importance and excellence of Christianity, that it would be exceedingly criminal to overlook them.

How sin may be forgiven without leading to such misconceptions of the Divine character as would encourage disobedience, and thereby weaken the influence of the Divine government, must be considered as a problem of very difficult solution. A government which admitted no forgiveness, would sink the guilty to despair; a government which never punishes offence, is a contradiction — it cannot exist. Not to punish, is to dissolve authority; to punish without mercy, is to destroy, and, where all are guilty, to make the destruction universal. That we cannot sin with impunity, is a matter determined. The Ruler of the world is not careless of the conduct of his creatures; for that penal consequences are attached to offence, is not a subject of argument, but is made evident from daily observation of the events and circumstances of the present life. It is a principle, therefore, already laid down, that the authority of God must be preserved; and it ought to be observed, that in that kind of administration which restrains evil by penalty, and encourages obedience by favour and hope, we and all moral creatures are the interested parties, and not the Divine Governor himself, whom, because of his independent and efficient nature, our transgressions cannot injure. The reasons therefore which compel him to maintain his authority, do not terminate in himself. If he becomes a party against offenders, it is for our sake, and for the sake of the moral order of the universe, to which sin, if encouraged by a negligent administration, and by entire or frequent impunity, would be the source of endless disorder and
misery: and if the granting of pardon to offence be strongly and even severely guarded, we are to refer it to the moral necessity of the case as arising out of the general welfare of accountable creatures, liable to the deep evil of sin, and not to any reluctance on the part of our Maker to forgive, much less to any thing vindictive in his nature, — charges which have been most inconsiderately and unfairly brought against the Christian doctrine of Christ’s vicarious sufferings. If it then be true, that the relief of offending man from future punishment, and his restoration to the Divine favour, ought for the interests of mankind themselves, and for the instruction and caution of other beings, to be so bestowed, that no license shall be given to offence; that God himself, while he manifests his compassion, should not appear less just, less holy, than the maintenance of an efficient and even awful authority demands; that his commands shall be felt to be as compelling, and that disobedience shall as truly, though not so unconditionally, subject us to the deserved penalty, as though no hope of forgiveness had been exhibited, we ask, on what scheme, save that which is developed in the New Testament, these necessary conditions are provided for? Necessary they are, unless we contend for a license and an impunity which shall annul the efficient control of the universe, a point which no reasonable man will contend for; and if not, then he must allow an internal evidence of the truth of the doctrine of Scripture, which makes the offer of pardon consequent only upon the securities we have before mentioned. If it be said, that sin may be pardoned in the exercise of the Divine prerogative, the reply is, that if this prerogative were exercised toward a part of mankind only, the passing by of the others would be with difficulty reconciled to the Divine character; and if the benefit were extended to all, government would be at an end. This scheme of bringing men within the exercise of mercy, does not therefore meet the obvious difficulty of the case; nor is it improved by confining the act of grace only to repentant criminals. For in the immediate view of danger, what offender, surrounded with the wreck of former enjoyments, feeling the vanity of guilty pleasures, now past for ever, and beholding the approach of the delayed, but threatened, penal visitation, but would repent? Were this principle to regulate human governments, every criminal would escape, and judicial forms would become a subject for ridicule. Nor is it the principle which the Divine Being in his conduct to men in the present state acts upon, though in this world punishments are not final and absolute. Repentance does not restore health injured by intemperance, property wasted by profusion, or character once stained by dishonourable practices. If repentance alone can
secure pardon, then all must be pardoned, and government dissolved, as in the case of forgiveness by the exercise of mere prerogative; if a selection be made, then different and discordant principles of government are introduced into the Divine administration, which is a derogatory supposition.

To avoid the force of these obvious difficulties, some have added reformation to repentance, and would restrain forgiveness to those only, who to their penitence add a course of future obedience to the Divine law. In this opinion a concession of importance is made in favour of the doctrine of atonement as stated in the Scriptures. For we ask, why an act of grace should be thus restricted? Is not the only reason this, that every one sees, that to pardon offence either on mere prerogative, or on the condition of repentance, would annul every penalty, and consequently encourage vice? The principle assumed then is, that vice ought not to be encouraged by an unguarded exercise of the Divine mercy; that the authority of government ought to be upheld; that almighty God ought not to appear indifferent to human actions, nor otherwise than as a God “hating iniquity,” and “loving righteousness.” Now precisely on these principles does the Christian doctrine of atonement rest. It carries them higher; it teaches that other means have been adopted to secure the object; but the ends proposed are the same; and thus to the principle on which that great doctrine rests, the objector can take no exception — that point he has surrendered, and must confine himself to a comparison of the efficiency of the respective modes, by which the purposes of moral government may be answered in the exercise of mercy to the guilty in his own system, and in that of Christianity. We shall not, in order to prove “the wisdom” as well as the grace of the doctrine of the Bible on this subject, press our opponent with the fact, important as it is, that in the light vouchsafed unto us into the rules of the government of God over men with reference to the present state merely, we see no reason to conclude anything with certainty as to the efficacy of reformation. A change of conduct does not, any more than repentance, repair the mischiefs of former misconduct. Even the sobriety of the reformed man does not always restore health; and the industry and economy of the formerly negligent and wasteful, repair not the losses of extravagance. Nor is it necessary to dwell upon the consideration which this theory involves as to all the principles of government established among men, which in flagrant cases never suspend punishment in anticipation of a change of conduct; but which in the infliction of penalty
look steadily to the crime actually committed, and to the necessity of vindicating the violated majesty of the laws. The argument might indeed be left here; but we go farther and show, that the reformation anticipated is ideal, because it is impracticable.

To make this clear it must be recollected, that they who oppose this theory of human reconciliation to God, to that of the Scriptures, leave out of it not only the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, but other important doctrines; and especially that agency of the Holy Spirit which awakens the thoughtless to consideration, and prompts and assists their efforts to attain a higher character, and to commence a new course of conduct. Man is therefore left, unassisted, and uninfluenced, to his own endeavours, and in the peculiar, unalleviated circumstances of his actual moral state. What that state is, we have already seen. It has been argued that nothing can account for the practical corruption of mankind, but a moral taint in our hearts, a propensity of nature to evil and not to good; and that every other mode of accounting for the moral phenomena which the history of man and daily experience present, is inconclusive and contradictory. How then is this supposed reformation to commence? We do not say, the exchange of one vice for another, that specious kind of reformation by which many are deceived, for the objector ought to have the credit of intending a reformation which implies love to the purity of the Divine commands; cordial respect for the authority of our Maker; and not partial, but universal obedience. But if the natural, unchecked disposition of the mind is to evil, and supernatural assistance be disallowed, “who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” To natural propension, we are also to add in this case, as reformation is the matter in question, the power of habit, proverbiably difficult to break, though man is not in fact in the unassisted condition which the error now opposed supposes. The whole of this theory assumes human nature to be what it is not; and a delusive conclusion must, therefore, necessarily result. If man be totally corrupt, the only principles from which reformation can proceed do not exist in his nature; and if we allow no more than that the propensity to evil in him is stronger than the propensity to good, it is absurd to suppose, that in opposing propensities the weakest should resist the most powerful, — that the stream of the rivulet should force its way against the tides of the ocean. The reformation, therefore, which is to atone for his vices, is impracticable.

The question proposed abstractedly, How may mercy be extended to offending creatures, the subjects of the Divine government, without
encouraging vice, by lowering the righteous and holy character of God, and the authority of his government, in the maintenance of which the whole universe of beings are interested? is therefore at once one of the most important and one of the most difficult which can employ the human mind. None of the theories which have been opposed to Christianity, afford a satisfactory solution of the problem. They assume principles either destructive to moral government, or which cannot, in the circumstances of man, be acted upon. The only answer is found in the Holy Scriptures. They alone show, and indeed they alone profess to show, how God may be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Other schemes show how he may be merciful; but the difficulty does not lie there. This meets it, by declaring “the righteousness of God,” at the same time that it proclaims his mercy. The voluntary sufferings of an incarnate, Divine person, “for us,” in our room and stead, magnify the justice of God; display his hatred to sin; proclaim “the exceeding sinfulness” of transgression, by the deep and painful sufferings of the substitute, warn the persevering offender of the terribleness as well as the certainty of his punishment; and open the gates of salvation to every penitent. It is a part of the same Divine plan to engage the influence of the Holy Spirit, to awaken that penitence, and to lead the wandering soul back to himself; to renew the fallen nature of man in righteousness, at the moment he is justified through faith, and to place him in circumstances in which he may henceforth “walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” All the ends of government are here answered. No license is given to offence; the moral law is unrepealed; the day of judgment is still appointed; future and eternal punishments still display their awful sanctions; a new and singular display of the awful purity of the Divine character is afforded; yet pardon is offered to all who seek it; and the whole world may be saved!

With such evidence of suitableness to the case of mankind; under such lofty views of connection with the principles and ends of moral government, does the doctrine of THE ATONEMENT present itself. But other important considerations are not wanting, to mark the united wisdom and goodness of that method of extending mercy to the guilty, which Christianity teaches us to have been actually and exclusively adopted. It is rendered indeed “worthy of all acceptation,” by the circumstance of its meeting the difficulties we have just dwelt upon, — difficulties which could not otherwise have failed to make a gloomy impression upon every offender awakened to a sense of his spiritual danger; but it must be very
inattentively considered, if it does not farther commend itself to us, by not only removing the apprehensions we might feel as to the justice of the Divine Lawgiver, but as exalting him in our esteem as “the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness,” who surrendered his beloved Son to suffering and death, that the influence of moral goodness might not be weakened in the hearts of his creatures — as a God of love, affording in this instance a view of the tenderness and benignity of his nature infinitely more impressive and affecting than any abstract description could convey, or than any act of creating and providential power and grace could furnish, and therefore most suitable to subdue that enmity which had unnaturally grown up in the hearts of his creatures, and which, when corrupt, they so easily transfer from a law which restrains their inclination to the Lawgiver himself. If it be important to us to know the extent and reality of our danger, by the death of Christ it is displayed not in description, but in the most impressive action; if it be important that we should have assurance of the Divine placability toward us, it here received a demonstration incapable of greater certainty: if gratitude is the most powerful motive of future obedience, and one which renders command on the one part, and active service on the other, “not grievous but joyous,” the recollection of such obligations as the “love of Christ” has laid us under, is a perpetual spring to this energetic affection, and will be the means of raising it to higher and more delightful activity for ever. All that can most powerfully illustrate the united tenderness and awful majesty of God, and the odiousness of sin; all that can win back the heart of man to his Maker and Lord, and render future obedience a matter of affection and delight as well as duty; all that can extinguish the angry and malignant passions of man to man; all that can inspire a mutual benevolence; and dispose to a self-denying charity for the benefit of others; all that can arouse by hope or tranquillize by faith, is to be found in the vicarious death of Christ, and the principles and purposes for which it was endured.

“Ancient history tells us of a certain king who made a law against adultery, in which it was enacted that the offender should be punished by the loss of both eyes. The very first offender was his own son. The case was most distressing; for the king was an affectionate father, as well as a just magistrate. After much deliberation and inward struggle, he finally commanded one of his own eyes to be pulled out and one of his son’s. It is easier to conceive than to describe what must have been the feelings of the
son in these most affecting circumstances. His offence would appear to him in a new light; it would appear to him, not simply as connected with painful consequences to himself, but as the cause of a father’s sufferings, and as an injury to a father’s love. If the king had passed over the law altogether, in his son’s favour, he would have exhibited no regard for justice, and he would have given a very inferior proof of affection.

“If we suppose that the happiness of the young man’s life depended on the eradication of this criminal propensity, it is not easy to imagine how the king could more wisely or more effectually have promoted this benevolent object. The action was not simply a correct representation of the king’s character, — it also contained in itself an appeal most correctly adapted to the feelings of the criminal. It justified the king in the exercise of clemency; it tranquillized the son’s mind, as being a pledge of the reality and sincerity of his father’s gracious purposes toward him; and it identified the object of his esteem with the object of his gratitude. Mere gratitude, unattracted by an object of moral worth, could never have stamped an impression of moral worth on his character; which was his father’s ultimate design. We might suppose the existence of this same character without its producing such an action; we might suppose a conflict of contending feelings to be carried on in the mind without evidencing, in the conduct flowing from it, the full vehemence of the conflict, or defining the adjustment of the contending feelings; but we cannot suppose any mode of conduct so admirably fitted to impress the stamp of the father’s character on the mind of the son, or to associate the love of right and the abhorrence of wrong with the most powerful instincts of the heart. The old man not only wished to act in perfect consistency with his own views of duty, but also to produce a salutary effect on the mind of his son: and it is the full and effectual union of these two objects which forms the most beautiful and striking part of this remarkable history.

“There is a singular resemblance between this moral exhibition, and the communication which God has been pleased to make of himself in the Gospel. We cannot but love and admire the character of this excellent prince, although we ourselves have no direct interest in it; and shall we refuse our love and admiration to the King and Father
of the human race, who, with a kindness and condescension unutterable, has, in calling his wandering children to return to duty and to happiness, presented to each of us a like aspect of tenderness and purity, and made use of an argument which makes the most direct and irresistible appeal to the most familiar, and at the same time the most powerful principles in the heart of man?

“A pardon without a sacrifice, could have made but a weak and obscure appeal to the understanding or the heart. It could not have demonstrated the evil of sin; it could not have demonstrated the graciousness of God; and therefore it could not have led man either to hate sin or to love God. If the punishment as well as the criminality of sin consists in an opposition to the character of God, the fullest pardon must be perfectly useless, while this opposition remains in the heart; and the substantial usefulness of the pardon will depend upon its being connected with such circumstances as may have a natural and powerful tendency to remove this opposition, and create a resemblance. The pardon of the Gospel is connected with such circumstances; for the sacrifice of Christ has associated sin with the blood of a benefactor, as well as with our own personal sufferings, — and obedience with the dying entreaty of a friend breathing out a tortured life for us, as well as with our own unending glory in his blessed society. This act, like that in the preceding illustration, justifies God as a lawgiver in dispensing mercy to the guilty; it gives a pledge of the sincerity and reality of that mercy; and, by associating principle with mercy, it identifies the object of gratitude with the object of esteem, in the heart of the sinner.”

Inseparably connected with the great doctrine of atonement, and adapted to the new circumstances of trial in which the human race was placed in consequence of the lapse of our first parents, is the doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit; and this, though supposed by many to be farthest removed from rational evidence, can neither be opposed by any satisfactory argument, nor is without an obvious reasonableness.

The Scriptures represent man in the present state as subject not only to various sensible excitements to transgression; and as influenced to resist temptation by the knowledge of the law of God and its sanctions, by his own sense of right and duty, and by the examples of the evils of offence
which surround him; but also as solicited to obedience by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and to persevering rebellion by the seductions of evil spirits.

This is the doctrine of revelation, and if the evidences of that revelation can be disproved, it may be rejected; if not, it must be admitted, whether any argumentative proof can be offered in its favour or not. That it is not unreasonable, may be first established.

That God, who made us, and who is a pure Spirit, cannot have immediate access to our thoughts, our affections, and our will, it would certainly be much more unreasonable to deny than to admit; and if the great and universal Spirit possesses this power, every physical objection at least to the doctrine in question is removed, and finite unbodied spirits may have the same kind of access to the mind of man, though not in so perfect and intimate a degree. Before any natural impossibility can be urged against this intercourse of spirit with spirit, we must know what no philosopher, however deep his researches into the causes of the phenomena of the mind, has ever professed to know — the laws of perception, memory, and association. We can suggest thoughts and reasons to each other, and thus mutually influence our wills and affections. We employ for this purpose the media of signs and words; but to contend, that these are the only media through which thought can be conveyed to thought, or that spiritual beings cannot produce the same effects immediately, is to found an objection wholly upon our ignorance. All the reason which the case, considered in itself, affords, is certainly in favour of this opinion. We have access to each other’s minds; we can suggest thoughts, raise affections, influence the wills of others; and analogy therefore favours the conclusion, that, though by different and latent means, unbodied spirits have the same access to each other, and to us.

If no physical impossibility lies against this representation of the circumstances of our probation, no moral reason certainly can be urged against the principle itself, which makes us liable to the contrary solicitations of other beings. That God our heavenly Father should be solicitous for our welfare, is surely to be admitted; and that there may be invisible beings who are anxious, from various motives, some of which may be conceived, and others are unknown, to entice us to evil, is made probable by this, that among men, every vicious character seeks a fellowship in his vices, and employs various arts of seduction, even when
he has no interest in success, that he may not be left to sin alone. In point of fact, we see this principle of moral trial in constant operation with respect to our fellow creatures. Who is not counselled, and warned, and entreated by the good? Who is not invited to offence by the wicked? What are all the instructive, enlightening, and influential institutions which good and benevolent men establish and conduct, but means by which others may be drawn and influenced to what is right and what are all the establishments and devices to multiply the gratifications and pleasures of mankind, but means employed by others to encourage religious trifling, and indifference to things devout and spiritual, and often to seduce to vice in its grossest forms? The principle is therefore in manifest operation, and he who would except to this doctrine of Scripture, must also except to the Divine government, as it is manifested in the facts of experience, and which clearly makes it a circumstance of our probation in this world, that our opinions, affections, and wills should be subject to the influence of others, both for good and evil.

By reference to this fact, we may also show the futility of the objection to the doctrine of supernatural influence, which is drawn from the free agency of man. The Scriptures do not teach that supernatural influence, either good or bad, destroys our freedom and accountability. How then, it is asked, is the one to be reconciled with the other? The answer is, that we are sure they are not incompatible, because, though we may be strongly influenced and solicited to good or evil conduct by virtuous or vicious persons; though they may enforce their respective wishes by arguments, or persuasions, or hopes, or fears: though they may carefully lead us into circumstances which may be most calculated to undermine or to corroborate virtuous resolutions; we are yet conscious that we are at liberty either to yield or to resist; and on this consciousness, equally common to all, is founded that common judgment of the conduct of those, who, though carefully well advised, or assiduously seduced, are always treated as free agents in public opinion, and praised or censured accordingly. The case is the same where the influence is supernatural, only the manner in which it is applied is different. In one it operates upon the springs which most powerfully move the will and affections from without, in the other it is more immediately from within; but in neither case is it to be supposed that any other beings can will or choose for us. The modus operandi in both cases may be inexplicable; but while the power of
influencing our choice may belong to others, the power of choosing is exclusively and necessarily our own.

Since therefore no reason physical or moral can be urged against the doctrine of Divine influence; since the principle on which it is founded, as a circumstance in our trial on earth, is found to accord entirely with the actual arrangements of the Divine government in other cases, every thing is removed which might obstruct our view of the excellence of this encouraging tenet of Divine revelation. The moral helplessness of man has been universally felt, and universally acknowledged. To see the good and to follow the evil, has been the complaint of all; and precisely to such a state is the doctrine of Divine influence adapted. As the atonement of Christ stoops to the judicial destitution of man, the promise of the Holy Spirit meets the case of his moral destitution. One finds him without any means of satisfying the claims of justice, so as to exempt him from punishment; the other, without the inclination or the strength to avail himself even of proclaimed clemency, and offered pardon, and becomes the means of awakening his judgment, and exciting, and assisting, and crowning his efforts to obtain that boon, and its consequent blessings. The one relieves him from the penalty, the other from the disease of sin; the former restores to man the favour of God, the other renews him in his image.

To this eminent adaptation of the doctrine to the condition of man, we may add the affecting view which it unfolds of the Divine character. That tenderness and compassion of God to his offending creatures; that reluctance that they should perish; that Divine and sympathizing anxiety, so to speak, to accomplish their salvation, which were displayed by “the cross of Christ,” are here in continued and active manifestation. A Divine Agent is seen “seeking,” in order that he may save, “that which is lost;” following the “lost sheep into the wilderness,” that he may “bring it home rejoicing;” delighting to testify of Christ, because of the salvation he has procured; to accompany with his influence the written revelation, because that alone contains “words by which men may be saved;” affording special assistance to ministers, because they are the messengers of God proclaiming peace; and, in a word, knocking at the door of human hearts; arousing the conscience; calling forth spiritual desires; opening the eyes of the mind more clearly to discern the meaning and application of the revealed word; and mollifying the heart to receive its effectual impression: — doing this too without respect of persons, and making it his special
office and work to convince the mistaken; to awaken the indifferent; to comfort the penitent and humble; to plant and foster and bring to maturity in the hearts of the obedient every grace and virtue. These are views of God which we could not have had but for this doctrine; and the obvious tendency of them is, to fill the heart with gratitude for a condescension so wonderful and a solicitude so tender; to impress us with a deep conviction of the value of renewed habits, since God himself stoops to work them in us; and to admonish us of the infinite importance of a personal experience of the benefits of Christ’s death, since the means of our pardon and sanctification unapplied can avail us nothing.

We may add, (and it is no feeble argument in favour of the excellence of this branch of Christian doctrine,) that we are thereby encouraged to aspire after a loftier character of moral purity, and a more perfect state of virtue; as well as to engage in more difficult duties. Were we left wholly to our own resources, we should despair; and perhaps it is exactly in proportion to the degree in which this promise of the Holy Spirit is apprehended by those who truly receive Christianity, that they advance the standard of possible moral attainment. That God should “work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure,” is a reason why we should “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;” for as our freedom is not destroyed, as even the Spirit may be “grieved” and “quenched,” our fall would be unspeakably aggravated by our advantages. But the operation of God within us is also a motive to the working our salvation “out,” — to the perfecting of our sanctification even to eternal life. None can despair of conquering any evil habit, who steadily look to this great doctrine, and cordially embrace it; none can despair of being fully renewed again in the image of God, when they know that it is one of the offices of the Holy Spirit to effect this renovation; and none who habitually rest upon the promise of God for all that assistance which the written word warrants them to expect in difficult and painful duties, and in those generous enterprises for the benefit of others which a hallowed zeal may lead them to engage in, will be discouraged in either. “In the name of God,” such persons have in all ages “lifted up their banners,” and have thus been elevated into a decision, a boldness, an enterprise, a perseverance, which no other consideration or trust could inspire. Such are the practical effects of this doctrine. It prompts to attainments in inward sanctity and outward virtue, which would have been chimerical to consider possible, but for the aid of a Divine influence; and it leads to exertion for the benefit of others,
the success of which would otherwise be too doubtful to encourage the undertaking.

It would be easy to adduce many other doctrines of our religion, which, from their obvious excellency and correspondence with the experience and circumstances of mankind, furnish much interesting internal evidence in favour of its Divinity; but as this would greatly exceed the limits of a chapter, and as those doctrines have been considered against which the most strenuous objections from pretended rational principles have been urged; the moral state and condition of man; the atonement made by the death of Christ for the sins of the world; and the influences of the Holy Spirit, — it may have been sufficient for the argument to have shown that even such doctrines are accompanied with important and interesting reasons; and that they powerfully commend Christianity to universal acceptance. What has been said is to be considered only as a specimen of the rational proof which accompanies many of the doctrines of revelation, and which a considerate mind may with ease enlarge by numerous other instances drawn from its precepts, its promises, and those future and ennobling hopes which it sets before us. The wonderful agreement in doctrine among the writers of the numerous books of which the Bible is composed, who lived in ages very distant from each other, and wrote under circumstances as varied as can well be conceived, may properly close this part of the internal evidence. “In all the bearings, parts, and designs of the book of God, we shall find a most striking harmony, fitness, and adaptation of its component parts to one beautiful, stupendous, and united whole; and that all its parts unite and terminate in a most magnificent exhibition of the glory of God, the lustre of his attributes, the strict and true perfection of his moral government, the magnitude and extent of his grace and love, especially as manifested in the salvation and happiness of man, in his recovery from moral pravity, and restoration to a capacity of acquiring happiness eternal.” (LLOYD’S Hora Theologica.) This argument is so justly and forcibly expressed in the following quotation, as to need no farther elucidation: —

“The sacred volume is composed by a vast variety of writers, men of every different rank and condition, of every diversity of character and turn of mind; the monarch and the plebeian, the illiterate and learned, the foremost in talent and the moderately gifted in natural advantages, the historian and the legislator, the orator and the poet, — each has his peculiar province; ‘some prophets, some apostles,
some evangelists,’ living in ages remote from each other, under different modes of civil government, under different dispensations of the Divine economy, filling a period of time which reached from the first dawn of heavenly light to its meridian radiance. The Old Testament and the New, the law and the Gospel; the prophets predicting events, and the evangelists recording them; the doctrinal yet didactic epistolary writers, and he who closed the sacred canon in the Apocalyptic vision; — all these furnished their respective portions, and yet all tally with a dove-tailed correspondence; all the different materials are joined with a completeness the most satisfactory, with an agreement the most incontrovertible.

“This instance of uniformity without design, of agreement without contrivance; this consistency maintained through a long series of ages, without a possibility of the ordinary methods for conducting such a plan; these unparalleled congruities, these unexampled coincidences, form altogether a species of evidence, of which there is no other instance in the history of all the other books in the world.

“All these variously gifted writers here enumerated, concur in this grand peculiarity — that all have the same end in view, all are pointing to the same object; all, without any projected collusion, are advancing the same scheme; each brings in his several contingent without any apparent consideration how it may unite with the portions brought by other contributors, without any spirit of accommodation, without any visible intention to make out a case, without indeed any actual resemblance, more than that every separate portion being derived from the same spring, each must be governed by one common principle, and that principle being truth itself; must naturally and consentaneously produce assimilation, conformity, agreement. What can we conclude from all this, but what is indeed the inevitable conclusion, — a conclusion which forces itself on the mind, and compels the submission of the understanding; — that all this, under differences of administration, is the work of one and the same great omniscient and eternal Spirit!” (Mrs. MORE’S Character of St. Paul.)
The second branch of the internal evidence of the Scriptures consists of their moral tendency; and here, as in doctrine, the believer may take the highest and most commanding ground.

If, as to the truths revealed in them, the before “unknown God,” unknown even to the philosophers of Athens, has been “declared” unto us; if the true moral condition, dangers, and hopes of man have been revealed; if the “kindness and good will of God our Saviour unto man” has appeared; if the true propitiation has been disclosed, and the gates of salvation opened; if, through the promised influences of the Holy Spirit, the renewal of our natures in the image of God originally borne by man, the image of his holiness, is made possible to all who seek it; if we have, in the consentaneous system of doctrine which we find in the Scriptures, every moral direction which can safely guide, every promise which can convey a blessing suitable to our condition, and every hope which can at once support under suffering, and animate us to go through our course of trial, and aspire to the high rewards of another life; the moral influence of such a system is as powerful as its revelations of doctrine are lofty and important.

One of the most flagrant instances of that malignity of heart with which some infidel writers have assailed the Scriptures, and which, more than any thing, shows that it is not the want of evidence, but a hostility arising from a less creditable source, which leads them, in the spirit of enmity and malice, wilfully to libel what they ought to adore, — is, that they have boldly asserted the Bible to have an immoral tendency. For this, the chief proof which they pretend to offer is, that it records the failings and the vices of some of the leading characters in the Old and New Testaments.

The fact is not denied: but they suppress what is equally true, that these vices are never mentioned with approbation; that the characters stained with them are not, in those respects, held up to our imitation and that their frailties are recorded for admonition. They dwell upon the crimes of David, and sneer at his being called “a man after God’s own heart:” but they suppress the fact, that he was so called long before the commission of those crimes; and that he was not at any time declared to be acceptable to God with reference to his private conduct as a man, but in respect of his public conduct as a king. Nor do they state, that these crimes are, in the same Scriptures, represented as being tremendously visited by the displeasure of the Almighty, both in the life of David, and in the future condition of his family. From such objectors the Bible can suffer nothing,
because the injustice of their attacks implies a constrained homage to the force of truth. Even this very objection furnishes so strong an argument in favour of the sincerity and honesty of the sacred writers, that it confirms their credibility in that which unbelievers deny, as well as in those relations which they are glad, for a hostile purpose, to admit. Had the Scriptures been written by cunning impostors, such acknowledgments of crimes and frailties in their most distinguished characters, and in some of the writers themselves, would not have been made.

“The evangelists all agree in this most unequivocal character of veracity, that of criminating themselves. They record their own errors and offences with the same simplicity with which they relate the miracles and sufferings of their Lord. Indeed their dulness, mistakes, and failings, are so intimately blended with his history by their continual demands upon his patience and forbearance, as to make no inconsiderable or unimportant part of it. This fidelity is equally admirable both in the composition and in the preservation of the Old Testament, a book which every where testifies against those whose history it contains, and not seldom against the relators themselves. The author of the Pentateuch proclaims, in the most pointed terms, the ingratitude of those chosen people toward God. He prophesies that they will go on filling up the measure of their offences, calls heaven and earth to witness against them that he has delivered his own soul, and declares that as they have worshipped gods which were no gods, GOD will punish them by calling a people who were no people. Yet this book, so disgraceful to their national character, this register of their own offences, they would rather die than lose. ‘This,’ says the admirable Pascal, ‘is an instance of integrity which has no example in the world, no root in nature.’ In the Pentateuch and the Gospels, therefore, these parallel, these unequalled instances of sincerity, are incontrovertible proofs of the truth of both.” (Mrs. MORE’S Character of St. Paul.)

It is but just to say, that the malignant absurdity and wickedness of charging the Scriptures with an immoral tendency, have not been incurred by all who have even zealously endeavoured to undermine their Divine authority. Many of them make important concessions on this point. They show in their own characters the effect of their unbelief, and probably the chief cause of it: Blount committed suicide, because he was prevented from an incestuous marriage; Tyndal was notoriously infamous; Hobbes changed
his principles with his interests; Morgan continued to profess Christianity while he wrote against it. The moral character of Voltaire was mean and detestable; Bolinbroke was a rake and a flagitious politician. Collins and Shaftesbury qualified themselves for civil offices by receiving the sacrament, while they were endeavouring to prove the religion of which it is a solemn expression of belief, a mere imposture; Hume was revengeful, disgustingly vain, and an advocate of adultery and self-murder; Paine was the slave of low and degrading habits; and Rousseau an abandoned sensualist, and guilty of the basest actions, which he scruples not to state and palliate. Yet even some of these have admitted the superior purity of the morals of the Christian revelation. The eloquent eulogium of Rousseau on the Gospel and its Author, is well known; it is a singular passage, and shows, that it is the state of the heart, and not the judgment, which leads to the rejection of the testimony of God. f84

Nor is it surprising that a truth so obvious should, even from adversaries, extort concession. No where but in the Scriptures have we a perfect system of morals; and the deficiencies of pagan morality only exalt the purity, the comprehensiveness, the practicability of ours. The character of the Being acknowledged as Supreme must always impress itself upon moral feeling and practice; the obligation of which rests upon his will. We have seen the views entertained by pagans on this all-important point, and their effects. The God of the Bible is “holy” without spot; “just” without intermission or partiality; “good,” — boundlessly benevolent and beneficent; and his law is the image of himself, “holy, just, and good.” These great moral qualities are not as with them, so far as they were apprehended, merely abstract, and therefore comparatively feeble in their influence. In the person of Christ, our God incarnate, they are seen exemplified in action, displaying themselves amidst human relations, and the actual circumstances of human life. With them, the authority of moral rules was either the opinion of the wise, or the tradition of the ancient, confirmed it is true, in some degree, by observation and experience; but to us, they are given as commands immediately from the supreme Governor, and ratified as HIS by the most solemn and explicit attestations. With them, many great moral principles, being indistinctly apprehended, were matters of doubt and debate; to us, the explicit manner in which they are given excludes both: for it cannot be questioned, whether we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves; to do to others as we would they should do to us, a precept which comprehends almost all relative morality in one plain
principle; to forgive our enemies; to love all mankind; to live “righteously” and “soberly,” as well as “godly;” that magistrates must be a terror only to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well; that subjects are to render honour to whom honour, and tribute to whom tribute is due; that masters are to be just and merciful, and servants faithful and obedient. These and many other familiar precepts are too explicit to be mistaken, and too authoritative to be disputed; two of the most powerful means of rendering law effectual. Those who never enjoyed the benefit of revelation, never conceived justly and comprehensively of that moral state of the heart from which right and beneficent conduct alone can flow, and therefore when they speak of the same virtues as those enjoined by Christianity, they are to be understood as attaching to them a lower idea. In this the infinite superiority of Christianity displays itself. The principle of obedience is not only a sense of duty to God, and the fear of his displeasure; but a tender love, excited by his infinite compassions to us in the gift of his Son, which shrinks from offending. To this influential motive as a reason of obedience, is added another, drawn from its end: one not less influential; but which heathen moralists never knew, — the testimony that we please God, manifested in the acceptance of our prayers, and in spiritual and felicitous communion with him. By Christianity, impurity of thought and desire is restrained in an equal degree as their overt acts in the lips and conduct. Humanity, meekness, gentleness, placability, disinterestedness, and charity, are all as clearly and solemnly enjoined as the grosser vices are prohibited; and on the unruly tongue itself is impressed “the law of kindness.” Nor are the injunctions feeble; they are strictly law, and not mere advice and recommendations. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;” and thus our entrance into heaven, and our escape from perdition, are made to depend upon this preparation of mind. To all this is added possibility, nay certainty of attainment, if we use the appointed means. A pagan could draw, though not with lines so perfect, a beau ideal of virtue, which he never thought attainable; but the “full assurance of hope” is given by the religion of Christ to all who are seeking the moral renovation of their nature; because “it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

When such is the moral tendency of Christianity, how obvious is its beneficial tendency both as to the individual and to society! From every passion which wastes, and burns, and frets, and enfeebles the spirit, the individual is set free, and his inward peace renders his obedience cheerful.
and voluntary; and we might appeal to infidels themselves, whether, if the moral principles of the Gospel were wrought into the hearts, and embodied in the conduct of all men, the world would not be happy; — whether, if governments ruled, and subjects obeyed by the laws of Christ; — whether, if the rules of strict justice which are enjoined upon us regulated all the transactions of men, and all that mercy to the distressed which we are taught to feel and to practise came into operation; — and whether, if the precepts which delineate and enforce the duties of husbands, wives, masters, servants, parents, children, fully and generally governed all these relations, a better age than that called golden by the poets, would not be realized, and Virgil’s

*Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna,*

be far too weak to express the mighty change? Such is the tendency of Christianity. On immense numbers of individuals it has superinduced these moral changes; all nations, where it has been fully and faithfully exhibited, bear, amidst their remaining vices, the impress of its hallowing and benevolent influence: it is now in active exertion, in many of the darkest and worst parts of the earth, to convey the same blessings; and he who would arrest its progress, were he able, would quench the only hope which remains to our world, and prove himself an enemy, not only to himself, but to all mankind. What then, we ask, does all this prove, but that the Scriptures are worthy of God, and propose the very ends which rendered a revelation necessary? Of the whole system of practical religion which it contains we may say, as of that which is embodied in our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, in the words of one who, in a course of sermons on that Divine composition, has entered most deeply into its spirit, and presented a most instructive delineation of the character which it was intended to form: “Behold Christianity in its native form, as delivered by its great Author. See a picture of God, as far as he is imitable by man, drawn by God’s own hand. — What beauty appears in the whole! How just a symmetry! What exact proportion in every part! How desirable is the happiness here described! How venerable, how lovely is the holiness!” (WESLEY’S *Sermons.*) “If,” says Bishop Taylor, “wisdom, and mercy, and justice, and simplicity, and holiness, and purity, and meekness, and contentedness, and charity, be images of God, and rays of Divinity, then that doctrine, in which all these shine so gloriously, and in which nothing else is ingredient, must needs be from God. If the holy Jesus had come into the world with less splendour of power and mighty demonstrations, yet the excellency of what
he taught makes him alone fit to be the Master of the World.” (Moral Demonstration of the Truth of the Christian Religion.)

Internal evidence of the truth of the Scriptures may also be collected from their style. It is various, and thus accords with the profession, that the whole is a collection of books by different individuals; each has his own peculiarity so strongly marked, and so equally sustained throughout the book or books ascribed to him, as to be a forcible proof of genuineness. The style of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, the evangelists, and St. Paul, are all strikingly different. The writers of the New Testament employ Hebrew idioms, words, and phrases. The Greek in which they wrote, is not classical Greek; but, as it is observed by Bishop Marsh, “is such a dialect as would be used by persons educated in a country where Chaldee or Syriac was spoken as the vernacular tongue; but who also acquired a knowledge of Greek by frequent intercourse with strangers.” This therefore affords an argument from internal evidence, that the books were written by the persons whose names they bear; and it has been shown by the same prelate, that as this particular style was changed after the destruction of Jerusalem, the same compound language could not be written in any other age than the first century, and proof is obtained from this source: also in favour of the antiquity of the Scriptures of the New Testament. An argument to the same point of antiquity is drawn by Michaelis from the accordancy of the evangelic history and the apostolical epistles with the history and manners of the age to which they refer. “A Greek or Roman Christian,” he observes, “who lived in the second or third century, though as well versed in the writings of the ancients as Eustathius or Asconius, would still have been wanting in Jewish literature; and a Jewish convert in those ages, even the most learned rabbi, would have been equally deficient in the knowledge of Greece and Rome. If then the New Testament, thus exposed to detection, (had it been an imposture,) is found, after the severest researches, to harmonize with the history, the manners, and the opinions of the first century, and since the more minutely we inquire, the more perfect we find the coincidence, we must conclude that it was beyond the reach of human abilities to effectuate so wonderful a deception.”

The manner of the sacred writers is also in proof, that they were conscious of the truth of what they relate. The whole narrative is simple and natural. Even in the accounts given of the creation, the flood, the exodus from Egypt, and the events of the life and death of Christ, where designing men
would have felt most inclined to endeavour to heighten the impression by glowing and elaborate description, the same chastened simplicity is preserved. “These sober recorders of events the most astonishing, are never carried away, by the circumstances they relate, into any pomp of diction, into any use of superlatives. There is not, perhaps, in the whole Gospel a single interjection not an exclamation, nor any artifice to call the reader’s attention to the marvels of which the relatours were the witnesses. Absorbed in their holy task, no alien idea presents itself to their mind: the object before them fills it. They never digress; are never called away by the solicitations of vanity, or the suggestions of curiosity. No image starts up to divert their attention. There is, indeed, in the Gospels much imagery, much allusion, much allegory, but they proceed from their Lord, and are recorded as his. The writers never fill up the intervals between events. They leave circumstances to make their own impression, instead of helping out the reader by any reflections of their own. They always feel the holy ‘ground on which they stand. They preserve the gravity of history and the severity of truth, without enlarging the outline or swelling the expression.’”

(Mrs. More’s Character of St. Paul.)

Another source of INTERNAL EVIDENCE, arising from incidental coincidences, which, from “their latency and minuteness,” must be supposed to have their foundation in truth, is opened, and ably illustrated by Dr. Paley, in his “Horæ Paulinæ,” a work which will well repay the perusal.

Much of the COLLATERAL EVIDENCE of the truth of the Scriptures generally, and of Christianity in particular, has been anticipated in the course of this discussion, and need not again be resumed. The agreement of the final revelation of the will of God, by the ministry of Christ and his apostles, with former authenticated revelations, has been pointed out: so that the whole constitutes one body of harmonious doctrines, gradually introduced, and at length fully unfolded and confirmed. The suitableness of the Christian revelation to the state of the world, at the time of its communication, follows from the view we have given of the necessity, not only of a revelation generally, but of such a revelation as the mercy of God has vouchsafed to the world through his Son. It has also been shown, that its historical facts accord with the credible histories and traditions of the same time; that monuments remain to attest its truth, in the institutions of the Christian Church; and that adversaries have made concessions in its favour. 185 Our farther remarks on this subject, though many other
interesting particulars might be embraced, must be confined to two particulars, but each of a very convincing character. The first is, the marvellous diffusion of Christianity in the three first centuries; the second is, the actual beneficial effect produced, and which is still producing, by Christianity upon mankind.

With respect to the first, the fact to be accounted for is, that the first preachers of the Gospel, though unsupported by human power, and uncommended by philosophic wisdom, and even in opposition to both, succeeded in effecting a revolution in the opinions and manners of a great portion of the civilized world, to which there is no parallel in the history of mankind. “Though aspersed by the slander of the malicious, and exposed to the sword of the powerful, in a short period of time they induced multitudes of various nations, who were equally distinguished by the peculiarity of their manners, and the diversity of their language, to forsake the religion of their ancestors. The converts whom they made deserted ceremonies and institutions, which were defended by vigorous authority, sanctified by remote age, and associated with the most alluring gratification of the passions.” (Kett’s Sermons at the Bampton Lecture.)

After their death the same doctrines were taught, and the same effects followed, though successive and grievous persecutions were waged against all who professed their faith in Christ, by successive emperors and inferior magistrates. Tacitus, about A.D. 62, speaking of Christianity says, “This pernicious superstition, though checked for a while, broke out again, and spread not only over Judea, but reached the city of Rome also. At first they only were apprehended who confessed themselves to be of that sect; afterward a vast multitude were discovered, and cruelly punished.” Pliny, the governor of Pontus and Bithynia, near eighty years after the death of Christ, in his well-known letter to Trajan, observes, “The contagion of this superstition has not only invaded cities, but the smaller towns also, and the whole country.” He speaks too of the idol temples having been “almost forsaken.” To the same effect the Christian fathers speak. About A.D. 140, Justin Martyr writes, “There is not a nation, Greek or Barbarian, or of any other name, even of those who wander in tribes, and live in tents, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the universe in the name of the crucified Jesus.” In A.D. 190, Tertullian, in his Apology, appeals to the Roman governors — “We were but of yesterday, and we have filled your cities and towns; the camp, the senate, and the forum.” In A.D. 220, Origen says, “By the good providence of
God, the Christian religion has so flourished and increased, that it is now preached freely, and without molestation.” These representations, Gibbon contends, are exaggerations on both sides, produced by the fears of Pliny, and the zeal of the Christian fathers. But even granting some degree of exaggeration arising not designedly from warm feelings, an unquestionable occurrence proves the futility of the exceptions taken to these statements by the elegant but infidel historian. The great fact is, that in the year A.D. 300, Christianity became the established religion of the Roman empire, and paganism was abolished: and it follows from this event, that the religion which thus became triumphant after unparalleled trials and sufferings must have established itself, previously to its receiving the sanction of the state, in the belief of a great majority of the one hundred and twenty millions of people supposed to be contained in the empire, or no emperor would have been insane enough to make the attempt to change the religion of so vast a state, nor, had he made it, could he have succeeded.

The success of Christianity in the three centuries preceding Constantine, has justly been considered as in no unimportant sense miraculous, and as such, an illustrious proof of its Divinity. “The obstacles which opposed the first reception of Christianity were so numerous and formidable, and the human instruments employed for its diffusion so apparently weak and insufficient, that a comparison between them will not only show that the passions and opposition of man, far from impeding the Divine designs, may ultimately become the means of their perfect accomplishment, but will fully demonstrate the Divine origin of Christianity by displaying the powerful assistance which the Almighty supplied for its establishment.” (KETT’S Sermons.) The astonishing success of Christianity under such circumstances, and at so early a period, affords a strong confirmation to the truth of miracles, because it implies them, as no other means can be conceived by which an attention so general should have been excited to a religion which was not only without the sanction of authority and rank, but opposed by both; the scene of whose facts lay in a province the people of which were despised; and whose doctrines held out nothing but spiritual attainments. By the effect of miracles during the lives of the first preachers, public curiosity was excited, and they obtained an audience which they could not otherwise have commanded. This power of working miracles was transmitted to their successors, and continued until the purposes of Infinite Wisdom were accomplished. They decreased in number in the
second century, and left but a few traces at the close of the third. The increase of Christians implied even more than miracles; such was the holy character of the majority, during the continuance of the reproach and persecutions which followed the Christian name; such the patience with which they suffered, and the fortitude with which they died; that the influence of God upon their hearts is as manifest in the new and hallowed character which distinguished them, and the meek, forgiving, and passive virtues which they exhibited, to the astonishment of the heathen, as his power in the miracles by which their attention was first drawn to examine that truth which they afterward believed and held fast to death.

The actual effect produced by this new religion upon society, and which it is still producing, is another point in the collateral evidence: for Christianity has not only an adaptation for improving the condition of society; its excellence is not only to be argued from its effects stated on hypothetical circumstances; but it has actually won its moral victories, and in all ages has exhibited its trophies. In every pagan country where it has prevailed, it has abolished idolatry with its sanguinary and polluted rites. It also effected this mighty revolution, that the sanctions of religion should no longer be in favour of the worst passions and practices, but be directed against them. It has raised the standard of morality and by that means, even where its full effects have not been suffered to display themselves, has insensibly improved the manners of every Christian state: what heathen nations are, in point of morals, is now well known; and the information on this subject which for several years past has been increasing, has put it out of the power of infidels to urge the superior manners of either China or Hindostan. It has abolished infanticide and human sacrifices, so prevalent among ancient and modern heathens; put an end to polygamy and divorce; and, by the institution of marriage in an indissoluble bond, has given birth to a felicity and sanctity in the domestic circle which it never before knew. It has exalted the condition and character of woman, and by that means has humanized man; given refinement and delicacy to society; and created a new and important affection in the human breast — the love of woman founded on esteem; an affection generally unknown to heathens the most refined. It abolished domestic slavery in ancient Europe; and from its principles the struggle which is now maintained with African slavery draws its energy, and promises a triumph as complete. It has given a milder character to war, and taught modern nations to treat their prisoners with humanity, and to restore them by exchange to their respective countries. It
has laid the basis of a jurisprudence more just and equal; given civil rights to subjects, and placed restraints on absolute power; and crowned its achievements by its charity. Hospitals, schools, and many other institutions for the aid of the aged and the poor, are almost exclusively its own creations, and they abound most where its influence is most powerful. The same effects to this day are resulting from its influence in those heathen countries into which the Gospel has been carried by missionaries sent out from this and other Christian states. In some of them idolatry has been renounced; infants, and widows, and aged persons who would have been immolated to their gods or abandoned by their cruelty, have been preserved, and are now “the living to praise its Divine Author, as they do at this day.” In other instances the light is prevailing against the darkness; and those systems of dark and sanguinary superstition which have stood for ages only to pollute and oppress, without any symptom of decay, now betray the shocks they have sustained by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ and nod to their final fall.
CHAPTER 20. — MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

The system of revealed religion contained in the Old and New Testaments, being opposed to the natural corrupt inclinations, and often to the actual practice of men; laying them under rules to which they are averse; threatening them with a result which they dread; holding out to them no pleasures but such as they distaste, and no advantages but those which they would gladly exchange for a perpetual life of sinful indulgence on earth; will be regarded by many of the most reflecting among them as a system of restraint; and must therefore often excite either direct hostility, or a disposition to encourage and admit suggestions tending to weaken its authority. It may be added that, as the Scriptures cannot be known without careful examination, which implies a serious habit not to be found in the majority, objections have been often raised by ingenious men in great ignorance of the volume itself against which they are directed; and being sometimes urged on the ground of some popular view of a fact or doctrine, they have been received as carelessly as they were uttered. Philosophers too have sometimes constructed hasty theories on various subjects, which have either contradicted or been thought to contradict some parts of the Scriptures; and the array of science, and the fascination of novelty, have equally deceived and misled the theorist himself and his disciples. Since the revival of letters, and in countries where freedom of discussion has been allowed, objectors have arisen, and numerous attempts have been made to shake the faith of mankind. That specious kind of infidelity known by the name of “Deism,” made its appearance in Italy and France about the middle of the sixteenth century, and in England early in the seventeenth. Under this appellation, and that of “The Religion of Nature,” each adopted to deceive the unwary, the attack upon Christianity was at first cautious, and accompanied with many professions of regard for its manifold excellencies. Lord Herbert of Cherbury was the first who in this country advocated this system. He lays down five primary articles of religion, as containing every thing necessary to be believed; and as he contends they are all discoverable by our natural faculties, they supersede, he informs us, the necessity of a revelation. They are — that there is a supreme God — that he is chiefly to be worshipped — that piety and virtue are the principal part of his worship — that repentance expiates offence — and that there is
a state of future rewards and punishments. The history of infidelity from this time is a striking comment upon the words of St. Paul, “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived;” for, in the progress of this deadly error, all Lord Herbert’s five articles of natural religion have been questioned or given up by those who followed him in his fundamental principle, “that nothing can be admitted which is not discoverable by our natural faculties.” Hobbes, who succeeded next in this warfare against the Bible, if he acknowledges that there is a God, represents him as corporeal, and our duty to him as a chimera, the civil magistrate being supreme in all things both civil and sacred. Shaftesbury insists that the doctrine of rewards and punishments is degrading to the understanding and detrimental to moral virtue. Hume denies the relation between cause and effect, and thus attempts to overthrow the argument for the existence of God from the frame of the universe. By others the worship of God, which Lord Herbert advocates, has been rejected as unreasonable, because he needs not our praises, and is not to be turned from his purposes by our prayers. As all law, of Divine authority, is on this system renounced, so “piety and virtue” must be understood to be what every man chooses to consider them, which amounts to their annihilation; and as for future reward and punishment, philosophy, since Lord Herbert’s days, has discovered that the soul of man is material; or rather, being a mere result of the organization of the body, that it dies with it. The great principle of the English proto-infidel, “the sufficiency of our natural faculties to form a religion for ourselves, and to decide upon the merits of revealed truth,” is, however, the principle of all; and this being once conceded, the instances just given are sufficiently in proof that the cable is slipped, and that every one is left to take his course wherever the winds and the currents may impel his unpiloted, uncharted, and uncompasssed bark. This grand principle of error, between which and absolute Atheism there are but a few steps, has been largely refuted in the foregoing pages, and the claims of the Holy Scriptures to be considered as a revelation from God, established by arguments, the force of which in all other cases is felt, and acknowledged, and acted upon even by unbelievers themselves. If this has been done satisfactorily, the objections which remain are of little weight, were they even less capable of being repelled; and if no answer can be found to some of the difficulties which may be urged, this circumstance is much more in accordance with the truth of a revelation, than it would be with its falsehood. “We do not deny,” says an excellent writer on the evidences of Christianity, (Dr. Olinthus Gregory,) “that the scheme of revelation has
its difficulties; for if the things of nature are often difficult to comprehend, it would be strange indeed if supernatural matters were so simple, and obvious, and suited to finite capacities, as never to startle and puzzle us at all. He who denies the Bible to have come from God because of these difficulties, may for exactly the same reason deny that the world was formed by him.”

The mere cavils of infidel writers may be hastily dismissed; the most plausible objections shall be considered more at large. As to the former few of them could have been urged if those who have adduced them had consulted the works of commentators, and Biblical critics, writings with which it is evident they have little acquaintance; and thus they have shown how ill disposed they have been to become fully acquainted with the subjects which they have subjected to their criticism. To this may be added their ignorance of the idiom of the Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament; their inattention to the ancient manners and customs of the countries where the sacred writers lived, to occasional errors in the transcription of numerous copies which may be rectified by collation, and to the different readings, which, to a candid criticism, would generally furnish the solution of the difficulty.

The Bible has been vehemently assaulted, because it represents God as giving command to the Israelites to exterminate the nations of Canaan; but a few remarks will be sufficient to prove how little weight there is in the charges which, on this account, have been made against the author of the Pentateuch. The objection cannot be argued upon the mere ground that it is contrary to the Divine justice or mercy to cut off a people indiscriminately, from the eldest to the youngest, since this is done in earthquakes, pestilences, &c. The cholera morbus, which has been for four years past wasting various parts of Asia, has probably destroyed half a million of persons of all ages. The character of the God of nature is not therefore contradicted by that ascribed to the God of the Bible. The whole objection resolves itself into this question: Was it consistent with the character of God to employ human agents in this work of destruction? Who can prove that it was not? No one; and yet here lies the whole stress of the objection. The Jews were not rendered more cruel by their being so commissioned; for we find them much more merciful in their institutions than other ancient nations; — nor can this instance be pleaded in favour of exterminating wars, for there was in the case a special commission for a special purpose, and by that it was limited. Other considerations are also to
be included. The sins of the Canaanites were of so gross a nature, that it was necessary to mark them with signal punishments for the benefit of surrounding nations; the employing of the Israelites, as instruments under a special and publicly proclaimed commission, connected the punishment more visibly with the offence, than if it had been inflicted by the array of warring elements, while the Israelites themselves would be more deeply impressed with the guilt of idolatry, and its ever accompanying polluted and sanguinary rites; and finally the Canaanites had been long spared, and in the meantime both warned by partial judgments, and reproved by the remaining adherents of the patriarchal religion who resided among them.

Thus the objection rests upon no foundation. The destruction of infants, so often dwelt upon, takes place in nature and providence; the objection to the employment of human agents, arising from habits of inhumanity being thereby induced, assumes what is false in fact; for this effect upon the Jews was prevented by the circumstance of their knowing that they acted as ministers of the Divine displeasure, and under his commission; and some important reasons may be discovered for executing the judgment by men, and especially this, that it might exhibit the evil of a sanguinary and obscene idolatry.

That law in Deuteronomy, which authorizes parents, the father and the mother, to bring “a stubborn and rebellious son,” who was also “a glutton and a drunkard,” before the elders of the city, that, if guilty, he might be stoned, has been called inhuman and brutal. In point of fact, it was, however, a merciful regulation. In almost all ancient nations, parents had the power of taking away the lives of their children. This was a branch of the old patriarchal authority which did not all at once merge into the kingly governments which were afterward established. There is reason therefore to believe that it was possessed by the heads of families among the Israelites, and that this was the first attempt to control it, by obliging the crimes alleged against their children to be proved before regular magistrates, and thus preventing the effects of unbridled passions.

The intentional offering of Isaac by Abraham has also had its share of censure. The answer is,

1. That Abraham, who was in the habit of sensible communication with God, could have no doubt of the Divine command, and of the right of God to take away the life he had given.
2. That he proceeded to execute the command of God, in faith, as the Apostle Paul has stated, that God would raise his son from the dead. The whole transaction was extraordinary, and cannot therefore be judged by common rules; and it could only be fairly objected to, if it had been so stated as to encourage human sacrifices. Here, however, are sufficient guards; an indubitable Divine command was given; the sacrifice was prevented by the same authority; and the history stands in a book which represents human sacrifices as an abomination to God. Indelicacy and immodesty have been charged upon some parts of the Scriptures. This objection has something in it which indicates malignity, rather than an honest and principled exception, for in no instance are any statements made in order to incite impurity; and nothing, throughout the whole Scripture, is represented as more offensive to God, or as more certainly excluding persons from the kingdom of heaven, than the unlawful gratification of the senses. It is also to be noted, that many of the passages objected to are in the laws and prohibitions of both Testaments, and as well might the statute and common law of this country be the subject of reprehension, and be held up as tending to encourage vices of various kinds, because they must, with more or less of circumstantiality, describe them. We are farther to take into account the simplicity of manners and language in early times. We observe, even among the peasantry of modern states, a language; on the subjects referred to, which is more direct, and what refined society would call gross; but greater real indelicacy does not necessarily follow. Countries and classes of people might be pointed out, where the language which expresses sensual indulgence has more of caution and of periphrasis, while the known facts show that their morals are exceedingly polluted.

Several objections which have been raised against characters and transactions in the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, are dissipated by the single consideration, that where they are obviously immoral or unjustifiable they are never approved; and are merely stated as facts of history. The conduct of Ehud, of Samson, and of Jephthah, may be given as instances.

The advice of David, when on his death bed, respecting Joab and Shimei, has been attributed to his private resentment. This is not the fact. He spoke in his character of king and magistrate, and gave his advice on public grounds, as committing the kingdom to his son.
The conduct of David also toward the Ammonites, in putting them "under saws and harrows of iron," has been the subject of severe animadversion. But the expression means no more than that he employed them in laborious works, as sawing, making iron harrows, hewing wood, and making bricks, the Hebrew prefix signifying to as well as under. "He put them to saws and harrows of iron (some render it iron mines,) and to axes of iron, and made them to pass through the brick kiln."

With respect to the imprecations found in many parts of Scripture and which have been represented as expressions of revenge and malice, it has been often and satisfactorily observed, that they are predictions and not anathemas, the imperative mood being put for the future tense, according to the Hebrew idiom.

These have been adduced as specimens of the objections urged by infidel writers against the Scriptures, and of the ease with which they may be met. For others of a similar kind, and for answers to objections founded upon supposed contradictions between different passages of Scripture, reference must be made to commentators. With respect to all of them, it has been well observed, "that a little skill in the original languages of the Scriptures, their idioms and properties, and in the times, occasions, and scope of the several books, as well as in the antiquities and customs of those countries which were the scenes of the transactions recorded, will always clear the main difficulties."

To some other objections of a philosophical kind, as being of a more imposing aspect, the answers may be more extended.

Between natural philosophy and revelation — the book of nature and the book of God — it has been a favourite practice with unbelievers to institute a contrast, and to set the plainness and uncontradictory character of the one against the mysteries and difficulties of the other. The common ground on which all such objections rest, is an unwillingness to admit as truth, and to receive as established and authorized doctrine, what is incomprehensible. They contend, that if a revelation has been made, there can be no mystery in it, for that is a contradiction; and that if mysteries, that is, things incomprehensible, are held to be a part of it, this is fatal to its claims as a revelation. The sophism is easily answered. Many doctrines, many duties, are comprehensible enough; no mystery at all is involved in them; and as to incomprehensible subjects, nothing is more undoubted, as we have already shown, than that a fact may be the subject of revelation, as
that God is eternal and omnipresent, and still remain mysterious and incomprehensible. The fact itself is not hidden, or expressed in language or symbol so equivocal as to throw the meaning into difficulty, the only sense in which the argument could be valid. As a fact, it is clearly revealed that these are attributes of the Divine Nature; but both, notwithstanding that clear and indubitable revelation, are still incomprehensible. It is not revealed HOW God is eternal and omnipresent, nor is such a revelation pretended; but it is revealed \textit{that He is so} — not \textit{how} a trinity of persons exists in unity of essence; but \textit{that such is} the mode of the Divine existence. If however men hesitate to admit incomprehensible subjects as matters of faith, they cannot be permitted to fly for relief from revelation to philosophy, and much less to set up its superior claims, as to clearness of manifestation, to the Holy Scriptures. There too it will be seen, that mystery and revelation go inseparably together; that he who will not admit the mystery cannot have the benefit of the revelation; and that he who takes the revelation of facts, embraces at the same time the mystery of their \textit{causes}. The facts, for instance, of the attraction of gravitation, of cohesion, of electricity, of magnetism, of congelation, of thawing, of evaporation, are all admitted. The experimental and inductive philosophy of modern times, has made many revelations of the \textit{relations} and in some instances of the \textit{proximate} causes of these phenomena; but the real causes are all confessedly hidden. With respect to mechanics, says a writer who has devoted his life to philosophical studies, (Dr. GREGORY’s \textit{Letters on the Christian Religion},) “this science is conversant about \textit{force, matter, time, motion, space}; each of these has occasioned the most elaborate disquisitions, and the most violent disputes. Let it be asked, What is \textit{force}? If the answerer be candid, his reply will be, ‘I cannot tell so as to satisfy every inquirer, or so as to enter into the essence of the thing.’ Again, What is \textit{matter}? ‘I cannot tell.’ What is \textit{motion}? ‘I cannot tell;’” and so of the rest. “The fact of the communication of motion from one body to another, is as inexplicable as the communication of Divine influences. How, then, can the former be admitted with any face, while the latter is denied solely on the ground of its incomprehensibility?

“But perhaps I may be told, that although things which are incomprehensible occur in our physical and mixed inquiries, they have no place in ‘pure mathematics, where all is not only demonstrable, but intelligible.’ This, again, is an assertion which I cannot admit; and for the denial of which I shall beg leave to
produce my reasons, as this will, I apprehend, make still more it, favour of my general argument. Now, here it is known, geometricians can demonstrate that there are curves which approach continually to some fixed right line, without the possibility of ever meeting it. Such, for example, are hyperbolas, which continually approach toward their asymptotes, but cannot possibly meet them, unless an assignable finite space can become equal to nothing. Such, again, are conchoids, which continually approach to their directrices, yet can never meet them, unless a certain point can be both beyond and in contact with a given line at the same moment. Mathematicians can also demonstrate that a space infinite in one sense, may, by its rotation, generate a solid of finite capacity; as is the case with the solid formed by the rotation of a logarithmic curve of infinite length upon its axis, or that formed by the rotation of an Apollonian hyperbola upon its asymptote. They can also show in numerous instances, that a variable space shall be continually augmenting, and yet never become equal to a certain finite quantity; and they frequently make transformations with great facility and neatness, by means of expressions to which no definite ideas can be attached. Can we, for example, obtain any clear comprehension, or indeed any notion at all, of the value of a power whose exponent is an acknowledged imaginary quantity, as \(x^{1/2}\)? Can we, in like manner, obtain any distinct idea of a series constituted of an infinite number of terms? In each case the answer, I am convinced, must be in the negative. Yet the science, in which these and numerous other incomprehensibles occur, is called Mathesis, THE DISCIPLINE, because of its incomparable superiority to other studies in evidence and certainty, and, therefore, its singular adaptation to discipline the mind. How does it happen, now, that when the investigation is bent toward objects which cannot be comprehended, the mind arrives at that in which it acquiesces as certainty, and rests satisfied? It is not, manifestly, because we have a distinct perception of the nature of the objects of the inquiry; (for that is precluded by the supposition, and, indeed, by the preceding statement,) but because we have such a distinct perception of the relation which those objects bear one toward another, and can assign positively, without danger of error, the exact relation, as to identity or diversity, of the quantities before us, at every step of the process.”
Modern astronomy has displayed the immense extent of the universe and by analogical reasoning has made it probable, at least, that the planets of our and of other systems may be inhabited by rational and moral beings like ourselves; and from these premises infidel philosophy has argued with apparent humility for the insignificance of the human race, and the improbability of supposing that a Divine person should have been sent into this world for its instruction and salvation, when, in comparison with the solar system, it is but a point, and that system itself, in comparison of the universe, may be nothing more.

Plausible as this may appear, nothing can have less weight, even if only the philosophy and not the theology of the case be taken into consideration. The intention with which man is thus compared with the universe is to prove his insignificance; and the comparison must be made either between man and the vastness of planetary and stellar matter, or between the number of mankind, and the number of supposed planetary inhabitants. If the former, we may reply with Dr. Beattie, “Great extent is a thing so striking to our imagination, that sometimes, in the moment of forgetfulness, we are apt to think nothing can be important but what is of vast corporeal magnitude. And yet, even to our apprehension, when we are willing to be rational, how much more sublime and more interesting an object is a mind like that of Newton, than the unwieldy force and brutal stupidity of such a monster as the poets describe Polyphemus? Who, that had it in his power, would scruple to destroy a whale in order to save a child? Nay, when compared with the happiness of one immortal mind, the greatest imaginable accumulation of inanimate substance must appear an insignificant thing. ‘If we consider.’ says Bentley, ‘the dignity of an intelligent being, and put that in the scale against brute and inanimate matter, we may affirm, without overvaluing human nature, that the soul of one virtuous man is of greater worth and excellency, than the sun and his planets, and all the stars in the world.’ Let us not then make bulk the standard of value; or judge of the importance of man from the weight of his body, or from the size or situation of the planet that is now his place of abode.”

To the same effect an ingenious and acute writer remarks upon a passage in Saussure, (Voyages dans les Alpes,) who speaks of men in the phrase of the modern philosophy, as “the little beings which crawl upon the surface of the earth,” and as shrinking into nothing both as to “space and time,” in comparison with the vast mountains and “the great epochas of nature. “If,”
says Mr. Granville Penn, (Comparative Estimate of the Mineral and Mosaic Geologies,) “there is any sense or virtue in this reflection, it must consist in duly estimating the relative importance of the two magnitudes and durations, and in concluding logically, the comparative insignificancy of the smaller. And it will then necessarily follow, that the insignificancy of the smaller would lessen, in the same proportion in which it might increase in bulk. If the little beings therefore were to be magnified in the proportions of 2, 3, 4, &c, their insignificancy, relatively to the great features of the globe, would necessarily diminish in the same ratio. The smaller the disproportion between the man and the mountain, the less would be the relative insignificance of the former; and although the increase of magnitude in the smaller object be ever so inconsiderable, yet if it is positive and real, its dignity must be proportionately increased in the true nature of things: the bigger the being that crawls upon the surface of this globe, the less absurd would be the supposition that he is the final object of this terrestrial creation. The Irish giant, therefore, whose altitude exceeded the measure of eight feet, would exceed in relative dignity, by the same proportion, BACON and NEWTON, whose height did not attain to six feet. If this is nonsense, then must that also be nonsense from which it is the genuine conclusion: viz. that the material magnitudes of the little beings, or their duration upon the earth on which they ‘crawl,’ determines, in any manner, their importance, in the creation, relatively to the primordial mountains which arise above it, or to the extent of the regions which may be surveyed from their summits. For if the same physically small beings possess another magnitude, which can be brought to another and a different scale of computation from that of physical or material magnitude; a scale infinitely surpassing in importance the greatest measures of that magnitude; then there will be nothing astonishing or irrational in the supposition, that the highest mountains, and the widest regions, and the entire system to which they pertain, may be subservient to the ends of those beings, and to that other system to which they pertain; which latter will thus be found superior in importance to the former. Such a scale is that, by which the intelligent, moral, and immortal nature of MAN is to be measured, and which the sacred historian calls, a formation ‘after the image and likeness of GOD;’ a scale so little taken into the contemplation of the science of mere physics. As soon, however, as that moral scale of magnitude once supersedes the physical scale in the apprehension of the mind; as soon as the mind perceives, that the duration of that intelligent moral nature infinitely exceeds the vastest ‘epocha of nature’ which the
imagination of the mineral geology can represent to itself, and that, though
the physical nature of man is limited to a very small measure of time, yet
his moral nature is unlimited in time, and will outlast all the mountains of
the globe; it then perceives, at the same moment, the counterfeit quality of
the reflection, which at first appeared so sublime and so humble, so
profound and so devout. The sublimity and humility betray themselves to
be the disparagement and degradation of our nature; the profundity is
found to be mere surface, and the devotion to be a retrocession from the
light of revelation.”

If the comparison of man with mere material magnitude will not then
support this effort to effect his degradation, and to shame him out of his
trust in the loving kindness of his God; if the comparison be made between
things which have no relations in common, and is therefore absurd; as little
will it serve this unnatural attempt to prostrate man to an insect rank, and
to inspire him with reptile feelings, to conclude his insignificance from the
number of other beings. For it is plain that their number alters not his real
character; he is still immortal, though myriads beside him are immortal, and
still he has his deep capacity of pleasure and of pain. Unless, therefore, it
could be proved that the care of God for each must be diminished as the
number of his creatures is increased; there is, as Mr. Penn has stated it,
nor “sense nor virtue” in such reflections upon the littleness of man; and
they imply, indeed, a base and an unworthy reflection upon the supreme
Creator himself, as though he could not bestow upon all the beings he has
made a care and a love adequate to their circumstances. What man is with
respect to God, can only be collected from the Divine procedures toward
him; and these are sufficient to excite the devout exclamations of the
psalmist, “What is man that THOU art MINDFUL of him? or the son of man
that THOU VISITEST him?” That he has not only been made by God, but
that he is governed by his providence, none but Atheists will deny; but any
argument drawn from such premises as the above would conclude as
forcibly against providence, as it can be made to conclude against
redemption. “Our Saviour,” says Dr. Beattie, “as if to obviate objections of
this nature, expresses most emphatically the superintending care of
Providence, when he teaches that it is God who adorns the grass of the
field, that without him a sparrow falls not on the ground, and that even the
hairs of our head are numbered. Yet this is no exaggeration; but must, if
God is omniscient and almighty, be literally true. By a stupendous
exuberance of animal, vegetable, and mineral production, and by an
apparatus still more stupendous (if that were possible) for the distribution of light and heat, he supplies the means of life and comfort to the short-lived inhabitants of this globe. Can it then appear incredible; nay, does not this consideration render it in the highest degree probable, that he has also prepared the means of eternal happiness for beings, whom he has formed for eternal duration, whom he has endowed with faculties so noble as those of the human soul, and for whose accommodation chiefly, during their present state of trial, he has provided all the magnificence of this sublunary world?"

There is, however, another consideration, which gives a sublime and overwhelming grandeur to the Scripture view of the redemption of the race of man, and of which, for the want of acquaintance with our sacred writings, infidel philosophers appear never to have entertained the least conception. It is the moral connection of this world with the whole universe of intelligent creatures; and the “intention” there was in the Divine mind to convey to other beings, by the history and great results of his moral government over one branch of his universal family, a view of his own perfections; of the duties and dangers of created and finite beings; of transgression and holiness, in their principles and in their effects; by a course of action so much more influential than abstract truth. Intimations of this great and impressive view are found in various passages of the New Testament, and it opens a scene of inconceivable moral magnificence — “To the intent, that to the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.”

It has been objected to the Mosaic chronology, that it fixes the era of creation only about four thousand years earlier than the Christian era; and against this, evidence has been brought from two sources — the chronology of certain ancient nations, and the structure of the earth.

The objections drawn from the former of these sources have of late rapidly weakened, and are in fact given up by many whose deference to the authority of Scripture is very slight, though but a few years ago nothing was more confidently urged by skeptical writers than the refutation of Moses by the Chinese, Hindoo, and Egyptian chronologies, founded, as it was then stated, on very ancient astronomical observations preserved to the present day. It is however now clearly proved, that the astronomical tables, from which it has been attempted to assign a prodigious antiquity to the Hindoos, have been calculated backward; (CUVIER’S Theory of the
Earth;) and among the Chinese the earliest astronomical observation that appears to rest upon good grounds, is now found to be one made not more than two thousand nine hundred years ago. (CUVIER’S Theory of the Earth.) As for the conclusion drawn from the supposed zodiacs in the temples of Esneh and Dendara in Egypt, it is now strongly doubted whether the figures represented upon them are astronomical or mythological, that is, whether they are zodiacs at all. Their astronomical character is strongly denied by Dr. Richardson, a late traveller, who examined them with great care; and who gives large reasons for his opinion. Even if the astronomical character of these assumed zodiacs be allowed, they are found to prove nothing. M. Biot, an eminent French mathematician, has recently fixed the date of the oldest of them at only seven hundred and sixteen years before Christ.

Against the excessive antiquity assigned to some ancient states, or claimed by them, the science of geology has at length entered its protest; and though, as we shall presently see, it has originated chronological objections to the Mosaic date of the creation, on the origin of nations it has made a full concession to the history of the Scriptures. Cuvier observes — “By a careful investigation of what has taken place on the surface of the globe since it has been laid dry for the last time, and its continents have assumed their present form, at least in such parts as are somewhat elevated above the level of the ocean, it may be clearly seen that this revolution, and consequently the establishment of our existing societies, could not have been very ancient.” (Theory of the Earth.) D’Aubuisson remarks, “that the soils of all the plains were deposited in the bosom of a tranquil water; that their actual order is only to be dated from the retreat of that water; and that the date of that period is not very ancient.” (Traité de Gégnosie.) “Dolomieu, Saussure, De Luc, and the most distinguished naturalists of the age, have coincided in this conclusion, to which they have been led by the evidence of various monuments and natural chronometers which the earth exhibits; and which remain perpetual vouchers for the veracity of the Mosaic chronology, with respect to the epocha of the revolution which the Mosaical history relates.”

From the absence of all counter evidence in the records of ancient nations, as well as from these philosophical conclusions, which are to be considered in the light of concessions made to the chronology of the Pentateuch, we may therefore conclude, that, as to the origin of nations and the period of the general deluge, the testimony of Scripture remains unshaken.
Geology has, however, objected to the Mosaic date of the creation of the earth, which it is said affords a period too limited to account for various phenomena which modern researches have brought under consideration. To the last general inundation of the earth, it is allowed, that no higher a date can be assigned than that which Moses ascribes to the flood of Noah; but several revolutions, each of which has changed the surface of the earth, are contended for, separated from each other by long intervals of time; and, above all, it is assumed, that the elements of the primitive earths were contained in an “original chaotic fluid,” and that, in obeying the laws of the affinity of composition, they coalesced and grouped themselves together in different manners, and settled themselves into order, according to certain laws of matter after an unassignable series of ages. These are the views of Cuvier, D’Aubuisson, De Luc, and other eminent writers on this subject; and whatever they themselves might intend, they have been made use of by infidels to discredit the authority of the sacred historian. It has been replied, that the Bible not being intended to teach philosophy, it is not fair to try it by a philosophical standard. This however cannot be maintained in the case before us, though the observation is pertinent in others, as when the sun is said to have stood still, popular language being adopted to render the Scriptures intelligible. If Moses professes by Divine inspiration to give an account of the manner in which the world was framed, he must describe the facts as they occurred; and if he has assigned a date to its creation out of nothing, that date, if given by an infallible authority, cannot be contradicted by true philosophy.

To allow time sufficient for the gradual processes of “precipitation and crystallization,” by which the first formations of the solid earth are said to have been effected, others have conceded to the geologists of this class, that an antiquity of the earth much higher than that which appears on the face of the Mosaic account may be allowed without contradicting it, and be even deduced from it. They therefore interpret the “days” mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis as successive periods of ages, and the evening and morning of those days are made the beginnings and ends of those imagined periods. \(^93\) This interpretation is, however, too forced to be admitted in the case of so simple a narrative as that of Moses; and there would be as good a reason for thus extending the duration of the term “day” whenever it occurs in his writings to an indefinite period, to the destruction of all chronological accuracy and of all sobriety of writing. No true friend of revelation will wish to see Moses defended against the assaults of
philosophy in a manner which, by obliging us to find a meaning in his writings far remote from the view of general readers, would render them inapplicable to the purpose of ordinary instruction. Beside, if we are to understand the first day to have been of indefinite length, a hundred, or a thousand, or a million of years, for instance, why not the seventh, the Sabbath also? This opinion cannot therefore be consistently maintained, and we must conclude with Rosenmuller, “Dies intelligendi sunt naturales, quorum unusquisque ab unâ vesperâ incipiens, alterâ terminatur; quo modo Judæi, et multi alii antiquissimi populi, dies numerârunt — that we are to understand natural days; each of which commencing from one evening is terminated by the next; in which manner the Jews, and many others of the most ancient nations, reckoned days.”

By other believers in revelation who have allowed the two principles laid down by geologists to go unquestioned, viz. the original liquidity of the earth, holding the elements of all the subsequent formations in a state of solution; and the necessity of a long course of ages to complete those processes by which the earth should be brought into a fit state, so to speak, for the work of the six days, which in that case must be confined to mere arrangement; another, and certainly a less objectionable interpretation of Moses than that which makes his natural days and nights terms for indefinite periods of time, has been adopted. “Does Moses ever say, that when God created the heavens and the earth, he did more at the time alluded to than transform them out of previously existing materials? Or does he ever say, that there was not an interval of many ages between the first act of creation, described in the first verse of the book of Genesis, and said to have been performed at the beginning; and those more detailed operations the account of which commences at the second verse, and which are described to us as having been performed in so many days? Or, finally, does he ever make us to understand that the genealogies of man went any farther than to fix the antiquity of the species, and, of consequence, that they left the antiquity of the globe a free subject for the speculations of philosophers? We do not pledge ourselves for the truth of one or all of these suppositions, nor is it necessary we should. It is enough that any of them is infinitely more rational, than the rejection of Christianity in the face of its historical evidence.” (CHALMERS’S Évidences of the Christian Revelation.) “As to the period when this mass was made, Moses only says that it was; ‘in the beginning,’ — a period this, which might have
To all these suppositions, though not unsupported by the authority of some great critics, there are considerable objections; and if the difficulty of reconciling geological phenomena with the Mosaic chronology were greater than it appears, none of them ought hastily to be admired. That creation, in the first verse of Genesis, signifies production out of nothing, and not out or pre-existent matter, though the original word may be used in both senses, is made a matter of faith by the Apostle Paul, who tells us, “that the things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear;” μη ἐκ φαίνομενων τα βλέπομενα γεγονέναι; which is sufficient to settle that point. By the same important passage it is also determined, that “the worlds were produced in their form, as well as substance, instantly out of nothing; or it would not be true, that they were not made of things which do appear.” “The apostle states that these things were not made out of a pre-existent matter; for, if they were, that matter, however extended or modified, must appear in that thing into which it is compounded and modified; therefore it could not be said, that the things which are seen, are not made of things that appear: and he shows us also, by these words, that the present mundane fabric was not formed or re-formed from one anterior, as some suppose.” (Dr. A. CLARKE in loc.) No interval of time is allowed in the account of the creation by Moses, between the creating and the framing of the worlds, (that is, the heavens and the earth simply,) so created and framed at once by the word of God. The natural sense too of the phrase “in the beginning,” is also thus preserved. Thrown back, so to speak, into eternity without reference to time it has no meaning, or at best a very obscure one; but connected with time, the commencement of our mundane chronology, it has a definite and obvious sense. Moses begins his reckoning from the first creative act; — from the creation of the “heavens and the earth,” which was therefore a part of the work of the first natural day. “In the first of these natural days, the whole mineral fabric of this globe was formed at once, of such size and figure, with such properties, in such proportions to space, and with such arrangement of its materials, as most conduced to the ends for which God created it.”

It will now be observed, that if such interpretations of the Mosaic account cannot be allowed, the decisions of Scripture and some of the modern speculations in geology, must be left directly to oppose each other, and
that their hostility on this point cannot be softened by the advocates of accommodation. On this account no alarm need be felt by the believer, “for there is no counsel against the Lord;” and the progress of true philosophy will ever, in the result, add evidence to the truth of revelation. On the antiquity of the human race geology has been compelled already to give its testimony to the accuracy of Moses, and the time is probably not far distant when a similar testimony will be educed from it, as to the antiquity of the globe.

In what it now opposes that authority, it may serve to rebuke the dogmatism with which it has disputed the Scriptures, to observe, that, strictly speaking, the science itself is not yet half a century old, and is conversant, not with the surface of the earth only, but with its interior strata, which have been as yet but partially examined. It is therefore too early to theorize with so much confidence; and the eager manner in which its hasty speculations have been taken up against the Mosaic account, can only remind thinking men of the equally eager manner in which the chronologies of China and Hindostan, and the supposed zodiacs of Egyptian temples were once caught at, for the same reason, and we may justly fear from the same motives. It will, indeed, be time enough to enter into a formal defence of Moses, when geologists agree among themselves on leading principles. Cuvier gives rather an amusing account of the odd and contradictory speculations of his scientific brethren; (Theory, by JAMIESON, page 41 — 47;) all of which he of course condemns, and fancies himself, as they all fancied themselves before him, a successful theorist. The vehemence with which the two great rival geological sects, the Neptunian and Plutonian, have disputed, to a degree almost unprecedented in the modern age of philosophy, adds but little authority to the decisions of either, inasmuch as the contest is grounded upon an assumed knowledge of facts, and therefore shows that the facts themselves are but indistinctly apprehended in their relations to each other, and that the collection of phenomena on both sides still need to be arranged and systematized, under the guidance of some calm, and modest, and master mind. 

In all these speculations it is observable, that it is assumed at once that philosophy and the Mosaic account are incompatible, and generally without any pains having been taken to understand that account itself. Yet as that account professes to be from one who was both the author and the witness of the phenomena in question, it might have been supposed that the aid of
testimony would have been gladly brought to induction. An able work has been recently published on this subject by Mr. Granville Penn, who has at once reproved the bold philosophy which excludes the operation of God, and employs itself only among second causes; and has unfolded the Mosaic account of two great revolutions of the earth, one of which took place when “the waters were gathered into one place,” and the other at the deluge, “when the fountains of the great deep were broken up,” and has applied them to account for those phenomena which have been made to require a theory not to be reconciled with the sacred historian.

Voltaire objected to the philosophy of the Mosaic account, that it has represented a solid firmament to have been formed, in which the stars are fixed as in a wall of adamant. This objection was made in ignorance of the import of the original word rendered firmamentum by the Vulgate, and which signifies an expanse, referring evidently to the atmosphere. The Septuagint seems to have rendered שָׁפָם, by στερεωμα, which signifies a firm support, with reference to the office of the atmosphere, to keep up, as effectually as by some solid support, the waters contained in the clouds. The account of Moses is philosophically true, the expanded or diffused atmosphere “divides the waters from the waters,” the waters in the clouds from the waters of the earth and sea; and the objection only shows ignorance of the original language, or inattention to it.

It is more difficult to explain that part of the Mosaic relation which represents light as created on the first day, and the sun not until the fourth; it would be wearisome to give the various solutions which have been offered. One of the most recent, that which supposes the creation of latent heat and light to be spoken of, cannot certainly be maintained; for the light which on the first day obeyed the sublime fiat, was not latent, but in a state of excitement, and collected itself into a body sufficient to produce the distinction between day and night, which, had it been either in a latent state, or everywhere diffused in an excited form, could not have been effected. The difficulty, however, so far from discrediting the Mosaic account, affords it a striking confirmation. Had it been compiled under popular notions, it never could have entered the mind of man, drawing all his philosophy from the optical appearances of nature only, that light, sufficient to form the distinction between day and night, should have been created independent of the sun; and the conclusion therefore is, that the account was received either from inspiration, or from a tradition pure from
its original fountain, and which had flowed on to the time of Moses, unmixed with popular corruptions.

“Sir William Herschel,” says Mr. Granville Penn, “has discovered that the body of the sun is an opaque substance; and that the splendid matter which dispenses to the world light and heat, is a luminous atmosphere, (Philippians Trans. for 1795, p. 46; and for 1801, p. 265,) attached to its surface, figuratively, though not physically, as flame is attached to the wick of a lamp or a torch. So that the creation of the sun, as a part of ‘the host of heaven,’ does not necessarily imply the creation of light; and, conversely, the creation of light does not necessarily imply the creation of the body of the sun. In the first creation of ‘the heaven and the earth,’ therefore, not the planetary orbs only, but the solar orb itself, was created in darkness; awaiting the light, which, by one simple Divine operation, was to be communicated at once to all. When then the almighty Word, in commanding light, commanded the first illumination of the solar atmosphere, its new light was immediately caught, and reflected throughout space, by all the members of the planetary system. And well may we imagine, that, in that first, sudden, and magnificent illumination of the universe, ‘the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy,’” Job 38:7.

But if the discovery of Herschel be real, the passage just quoted supposes the solar orb to have been invested with its luminous atmosphere on the first day, and the difficulty in question still remains untouched, though it admirably explains how “the heavens,” that is, our solar system, should be created by one act, and yet that it should require a second fiat to invest them with light. Another way of meeting the difficulty is, that the lights which are said to have been made on the fourth day, were not on that day actually created, but determined to certain uses. Thus Rosenmuller: “If any one who is conversant with the genius of the Hebrew, and free from any previous bias of his judgment, will read the words of this article in their natural connection, he will immediately perceive that they import the direction or determination of the heavenly bodies to certain uses which they were to supply to the earth. The words tram yhy are not to be separated from the rest, or to be rendered fiant luminaria, — let there be lights; that is, let lights be made; but rather, let lights be, that is, serve in the expanse of heaven — inserviant in expanso caelorum — for
distinguishing between day and night; and let them be, or serve, for signs, &c. For we are to observe, that the verb *hyh* to be, in construction with the prefix *l*, for, is generally employed to express the *direction* or *determination of a thing to an end*; and not the *production of the thing*: e.g. Numbers 10:31; Zechariah 8:19, and in many other places.”

To this there is an obvious objection, that it does not assign any work properly speaking, to the fourth day; and how, when neither *being* was on that day given to them, nor any change effected in their qualities or relations, the lights could be determined to certain uses except by giving information of their uses to men, cannot be conceived; and as yet man was not created. Mr. Penn indeed supposes that the heavenly bodies had been hid from the earth till the fourth day by vapours; that then they were for the first time dispelled; and, as he eloquently says, “the amazing calendar of the heavens, ordained to serve for the notation of time in all human concerns, civil and religious, so long as time and man should continue, was therefore to be now first unfolded to the earth, with all the visible *indices of time* by which its measures were thereafter to be marked, distinguished, and computed; and the splendid *cause*, which had hitherto issued its effect of light through an interposed *medium*, was to dispense that light to the earth immediately, in the full manifestation of its effulgence.”

The notion, that the earth was from the first to the fourth day enveloped with vapour, so that, as in a fog, the distinction of day and night was manifest, though the celestial orbs were not visible, is however assumed, and does not appear quite philosophical; and though the dispersion of these vapour’s from the atmosphere assigns a *work* to the fourth day, it scarcely appears to be of sufficient importance to accord with the language of the history. It would be better to suppose with others, that on the fourth day the annual motion of the earth commenced, which till then merely turned upon its axis, and with it the annual motion of the moon and planets in their orbits, — that wonderfully rapid and yet regular flight of the heavenly bodies which so awfully displays the power of the great Artificer in communicating, and constantly feeding, the mighty impulse, and which is so essential to the measurement of time, that without it the “lights” could not *be*, or *serve*, “for signs and for seasons,” and “for” solemn “days,” religious festivals, and the commemoration of important events, and “for years.” A sublime work is thus assigned to the fourth day, and the difficulty seems mainly to be removed: but whether some violence is not done to the
letter of the account, may still be doubted; and the difficulty which proves, as we have seen, if admitted in its full force, more for the Mosaic relation than against it, had better be retained than one iota of the strict grammatical and contextual meaning of Scripture be suffered to pass away.

Several objections have been made at different times to the Mosaic account of the deluge. The fact however is not only preserved in the traditions of all nations, as we have already seen; but after all the philosophical arguments which were formerly urged against it, philosophy has at length acknowledged that the present surface of the earth must have been submerged under water. “Not only,” says Kirwan, “in every region of Europe, but also of both the old and new continents, immense quantities of marine shells, either dispersed or collected, have been discovered.” This and several other facts seem to prove, that at least a great part of the present earth was, before the last general convulsion to which it has been subjected, the bed of an ocean which, at that time, was withdrawn from it. Other facts seem also to prove with sufficient evidence, that this was not a gradual retirement of the waters which once covered the parts now inhabited by men; but a violent one, such as may be supposed from the brief, but emphatic relation of Moses. The violent action of water has left its traces in various undisputed phenomena. “Stratified mountains of various heights exist in different parts of Europe, and of both continents, in and between whose strata various substances of marine, and some vegetables of terrestrial origin repose either in their natural state, or petrified.” (KIRWAN’S Geological Essays.) “To overspread the plains of the arctic circle with the shells of Indian seas, and with the bodies of elephants and rhinoceri, surrounded by masses of submarine vegetation; to accumulate on a single spot, as at La Bolca, in promiscuous confusion, the marine productions of the four quarters of the globe; what conceivable instrument would be efficacious but the rush of mighty waters?” (GISBORN’S “Testimony of Natural Theology,” &c.) These facts, about which there is no dispute, and which are acknowledged by the advocates of each of the prevailing geological theories, give a sufficient attestation to the deluge of Noah, in which “the fountains of the great deep were broken up,” and from which precisely such phenomena might be expected to follow. To this may be added, though less decisive in proof, yet certainly strong as presumptive evidence, that the very aspect of the earth’s surface exhibits interesting marks both of the violent action, and the rapid subsidence of waters; as well as affords a most interesting instance of the
Divine goodness in converting what was ruin itself, into utility, and beauty. The great frame work of the varied surface of the habitable earth was probably laid by a more powerful agency than that of water; either when on the third day the waters under the heavens were gathered into one place, and the crust of the primitive earth was broken down to receive them, so that “the dry land might appear;” or by those mighty convulsions which appear to have accompanied the general deluge; but the rounding, so to speak, of what was rugged, where the substance was yielding, and the graceful undulations of hill and dale which so frequently present themselves, were probably effected by the retiring waters. The flood has passed away; but the soils which it deposited remain; and the valleys through which its last streams were drawn off to the ocean, with many an eddy and sinuous course, still exist, exhibiting visible proofs of its agency, and impressed with forms so adapted to the benefit of man, and often so gratifying to the finest taste, that when the flood “turned,” it may be said to have “left a blessing behind it.”

Thus the objections once made to the fact of a general deluge have been greatly weakened by the progress of philosophical knowledge; and may indeed be regarded as nearly given up, like the former notion of the high antiquity of the race of men, founded on the Chinese and Egyptian chronologies and pretended histories. Philosophy has even at last found out that there is sufficient water in the ocean, if called forth, to overflow the highest mountains to the height given by Moses, a conclusion which it once stoutly denied. Keill formerly computed that twenty-eight oceans would be necessary for that purpose, but we are now informed “that a farther progress in mathematical and physical knowledge has shown the different seas and oceans to contain at least forty-eight times more water than they were then supposed to do; and that the mere raising of the temperature of the whole body of the ocean to a degree no greater than marine animals live in, in the shallow seas between the tropics, would so expand it as more than to produce the height above the mountains stated in the Mosaic account.” As to the deluge of Noah, therefore, infidelity has almost entirely lost the aid of philosophy in framing objections to the Scriptures.

The dimensions of the ark, and the preservation of the animals contained in it, are however still the subject of occasional ridicule, though with little foundation. Dr. Hales proves the ark to have been of the burthen of 42,413 tons, and asks, “Can we doubt of its being sufficient to contain eight persons, and about two hundred, or two hundred and fifty pair of four-
footed animals, (a number to which, according to M. Buffon, all the various distinct species may be reduced,) together with all the subsistence necessary for a twelvemonth, with the fowls of the air, and such reptiles and insects as cannot live under water? All these various animals were controlled by the power of God, whose special agency is supposed in the whole transaction, and ‘the lion was made to lie down with the kid.’”

Whether Noah was commanded to bring with him, into the ark, a pair of all living creatures, zoologically and numerically considered, has been doubted; and as during the long period between the creation and the flood, animals must have spread themselves over a great part of the antediluvian earth, and certain animals would, as now, probably become indigenous to certain climates, the pairs saved must in such cases have travelled from immense distances. Of such marches no intimation is given in the history; and this seems to render it probable that the animals which Noah was “to bring with him” into the ark, were the animals, clean and unclean, of the country in which he dwelt, and which, from the evident capacity of the ark, must have been in great variety and number. The terms used, it is true, are universal; and it is satisfactory to know that if the largest sense of them be taken, there was ample accommodation in the ark. Nevertheless, universal terms in Scripture are not always to be taken mathematically; and in the vision of Peter, the phrase ωάντα τα τετραποδα της γης — “all the four-footed beasts of the earth,” must be understood of “varii generis quadrupedes,” as Schleusner paraphrases it. In this case we may easily account for the exuviae of animals, whose species no longer exist, and which have been discovered in various places. The number of such extinct species has probably been greatly overrated by Cuvier; but of the fact to a considerable extent, there can be no doubt. It is also to be remarked, that we are not obliged to go to the limited interpretation of the command to Noah respecting the animals to be preserved in the ark, in order to account for this fact; for without adopting the totally unscriptural theory of a former world; or of more general revolutions of the earth than the Scriptures state, (partial ones affecting large districts may have taken place,) we know of no principle in the word of God which should lead us to conclude, that all the animals which God at first created should he preserved to the end of time. In many countries whole species of wild animals have perished by the progress of cultivation, a process which must ultimately produce the utter extinction of the same species every where. The offices which many other creatures were designed to fulfil in the
economy of nature, may have terminated with the new circumstances in which the parts they have chiefly inhabited are placed. So it might be before the flood, and in many places since. Thus then the exuviae of extinct species may be expected to present themselves. But in addition to this, if we suppose that during the antediluvian period, animals of various kinds had located themselves in different portions of the ocean, and in different climates of the primitive earth; and that, of the terrestrial animals become indigenous to parts of the earth distant from Noah and the inhabited world, some species were not received into the ark, their remains will also occasionally be discovered, and present the proof of modes of animated existence not now to be paralleled. Among fossil remains it has been made a matter of surprise that no human skeletons, or but few, and those in recent formations, have been found. The reason however is not difficult to furnish. If we admit that the present continents were the bottom of the antediluvian ocean, and that the ocean has changed its place; then the former habitations of men are submerged, and their remains are beyond human reach. If any part of the antediluvian earth still remains, it is probably that region to which Noah and his family were restored from the ark; and in those countries, geology has not commenced its interior researches, and such fossil remains may there exist. There is this difference between the human race and the inferior animals, that while the latter for near two thousand years were roaming over the wide earth, the former confined themselves to one region; for those extravagant calculations as to the population of the earth at the time of the flood, which some have made, cannot be maintained on the authority of Scripture, on which they professedly rest; since it is certain that they represent Noah as a preacher of righteousness to the whole existing “world” of men, during the time the ark was preparing, one hundred and twenty years. The human race must therefore have lived, however populous, in the same region, and been either in personal communication with him, or within reach of the distinct report of his doctrines, and of that great and public act of his faith, the preparing of the ark, “by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Even Cuvier gives it as a reason why human skeletons are not found in a fossil state, “that the place which men then inhabited may have sunk into the abyss, and that the bones of that destroyed race may yet remain buried under the bottom of some actual seas.”
Such are the leading evidences of the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and of the religious system which they unfold, from the first promise made to the first fallen man, to its perfected exhibition in the New Testament. The Christian will review these solid and immovable foundations of his faith with unutterable joy. They leave none of his moral interests unprovided for in time; they set before him a certain and a felicitous immortality. The skeptic and the infidel may be entreated, by every compassionate feeling, to a more serious consideration of the evidences of this Divine system, and the difficulties and hopelessness of their own; and they ought to be reminded, in the words of a modern writer, “If Christianity be true, it is tremendously true.” Let them turn to an insulted, but yet a merciful Saviour, who even now prays for his blasphemers, in the words he once addressed to Heaven in behalf of his murderers, FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO!

NOTE A.

FROM the work referred to in the text, the following extracts will be read with interest.

Mr. Penn first controverts the notion of those geologists who think that the earth was originally a fluid mass; and as they plead the authority of Sir I. Newton, who is said to have concluded from its figure, (an obtuse spheroid,) that it was originally a yielding mass, Mr. Penn shows that this was only put hypothetically by him; and that he has laid it down expressly as his belief, not that there was first a chaotic ocean, and then a gradual process of first formations, but that “God at the beginning formed all material things of such figures and properties as most conduced to the end for which he formed them;” and that he judged it to be unphilosophical to ascribe them to any mediate or secondary cause, such as laws of nature operating in a chaos. Mr. Penn then proceeds to show, that, though what geologists call first formations may have the appearance of having been produced by a process, say of crystalization, or any other, that is no proof that they were not formed by the immediate act of God, as we are taught in the Scriptures; and he confirms this by examples from the first formations in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and contends that the first formations of the mineral kingdom must come under the same rule.

“If a bone of the first created man now remained, and were mingled with other bones pertaining to a generated race; and if it
were to be submitted to the inspection and examination of an anatomist, what opinion and judgment would its sensible phenomena suggest, respecting the mode of its first formation, and what would be his conclusion? If he were unapprized of its true origin, his mind would see nothing in its sensible phenomena but the laws of ossification; just as the mineral geology ‘sees nothing in the details of the formation of minerals, but precipitations, crystalizations, and dissolutions.’ (D’Aubuisson, i, pp. 326-7.) He would therefore naturally pronounce of this bone, as of all the other bones, that its ‘fibres were originally soft until, in the shelter of the maternal womb, it acquired ‘the hardness of a cartilage, and then of bone,’ that this effect ‘was not produced at once, or in a very short time,’ but ‘by degrees;’ that, after birth, it increased in hardness ‘by the continual addition of ossifying matter, until it ceased to grow at all.’

“Physically true as this reasoning would appear, it would nevertheless be morally and really false. Why would it be false? Because it concluded, from mere sensible phenomena, to the certainty of a fact which could not be established by the evidence of sensible phenomena alone; namely, the mode of the first formation of the substance of created bone.

“Let us proceed from animal to vegetable matter; and let us consider the first created tree, under which the created man first reposed, and from which he gathered his first fruit. That tree must have had a stem, or trunk, through which the juices were conveyed from the root to the fruit, and by which it was able to sustain the branches upon which the fruit grew.

“If a portion of this created tree now remained, and if a section of its wood were to be mingled with other sections of propagated trees, and submitted to the inspection and examination of a naturalist; what opinion and judgment would its sensible phenomena suggest to him, respecting the mode of its first formation; and what would be his conclusion? If he were unapprized of its true origin, his mind would see nothing in its sensible phenomena, but the laws of lignification; just as the mineral geologist ‘sees nothing in the details of the formations of primitive rock, but precipitations, crystalizations, and
dissolutions.’ He would therefore naturally pronounce of it as of all the other sections of wood: that its ‘fibres,’ when they first issued from the seed, ‘were soft and herbaceous;’ that they ‘did not suddenly pass to the hardness of perfect wood,’ but, ‘after many years;’ that the hardness of their folds, ‘which indicate the growth of each year,’ was therefore effected only ‘by degrees;’ and that, ‘since nature does nothing but by a progressive course, it is not surprising that its substance acquired its hardness only by little and little.’

‘Physically true as the naturalist would here appear to reason; yet his reasoning, like that of the anatomist, would be morally and really false. And why would it be false? For the same reason; because he concluded from mere sensible phenomena, to the certainty of a fact which could not be established by the evidence of sensible phenomena alone; namely, the mode of the first formation of the substance of created wood.

‘There only now remains to be considered, the third, or mineral kingdom of this terrestrial system; and it appears probable, to reason and philosophy, by prima facie evidence, that the principle determining the mode of first formations, in two parts of this three-fold division of matter, must have equal authority in this third part. And indeed, after the closest investigation of the subject, we can discover no ground whatever for supposing that this third part is exempted from the authority of that common principle; or that physics are a whit more competent to dogmatize concerning the mode of first formations, from the evidence of phenomena alone, in the mineral kingdom, than they have been found to be in the animal or vegetable; or to affirm, from the indications of the former, that the mode of its first formations was more gradual and tardy than those of the other two.

‘Let us try this point, by proceeding with our comparison; and let us consider the first created rock, as we have considered the first created bone and wood; and let us ask, what is rock, in its nature and composition?

‘To this question, mineralogy replies: ‘By the word rock, we mean every mineral mass of such bulk as to be regarded an essential part of the structure of the globe. (D’Aubuisson, i, p. 272.) We
understand by the word *mineral*, a natural body, inorganic, solid, homogeneous, that is, composed of integrant molecules of the same substance. (*D'Aubuisson*, i, p. 271.) We may, perhaps, pronounce that a mass is *essential*, when its displacement would occasion the *downfall* of other masses which are placed upon it. (*D'Aubuisson*, i, p. 272.) Such are those lofty and ancient mountains, *the first and most solid bones*, as it were, of this *globe*, — *les premiers, les plus solides ossemens*, — which have merited the name of *primitive*, because, scorning all support and all foreign mixture, they repose always upon bases similar to themselves, and, comprise within their substance no matter but of the same nature. (*Saussure, Voyages des Alps, Disc. Prél.* pp. 6, 7) These are the primordial mountains; which traverse our continents in various directions, rising above the clouds, separating the basins of rivers one from another; serving, by means of their eternal snows, as reservoirs for feeding the springs, and forming in some measure the *skeleton*, or, as it were, the *rough frame work* of the earth. (*Cuvier*, sec. 7, p. 39.) These primitive masses are stamped with the character of a formation altogether crystalline, as if they were really the product of a tranquil precipitation.’ (*D'Aubuisson*, ii, p. 5.)

“Had the mineral geology contented itself with this simple mineralogical statement, we should have thus argued concerning the crystalline phenomena of the first mineral formations; conformably to the principles which we have recognized. As the bone of the first man, and the wood of the first tree, whose solidity was essential for ‘giving shape, firmness, and support,’ to their respective systems, were not, and could not have been, formed by the gradual processes of *ossification* and *lignification*, of which they nevertheless must have exhibited the sensible phenomena, or apparent indications; so, reason directs us to conclude, that *primitive rock*, whose *solidity* was equally essential for giving shape, firmness, and support to the mineral system of this globe, was not, and could not have been, formed by the gradual process of *precipitation* and *crystalization*, notwithstanding any sensible phenomena, apparently indicative of those processes, which it may exhibit; but that in the mineral kingdom, as in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, the creating agent *anticipated* in his formations, by an immediate act, *effects*, whose sensible
phomena could not determine the mode of their formation; because the real mode was in direct contradiction to the apparent indications of the phenomena.

“But the mineral geology has not contented itself with that simple mineralogical statement; nor drawn the conclusion which we have drawn, in conformity with the principles, and in observance of the rules, of Newton’s philosophy. It affirms, ‘that the characters by which geology is written in the book of nature in which it is to be studied, are minerals;’ (D’Aubuisson, Disc. Prél. p. 29;) and it ‘sees nothing’ in that book of nature but ‘precipitations, crystalizations, and dissolutions;’ and therefore, because it sees nothing else, it concludes without hesitation, from crystalline phenomena to actual crystalization. Thus, by attempting the impossibility of deducing a universal principle, viz. the mode of first formations, from the analysis of a single individual, viz. mineral matter, separate from co-ordinate animal and vegetable matter; and concluding from that defective analysis, to the general law of first formations; it set out with inadequate light, and it is no wonder that it ended in absolute darkness; for such is its elemental chaos, and its chemical precipitation of this globe: a doctrine so nearly resembling the exploded atomic philosophy of the Epicurean school, that it requires a very close and laborious inspection to discover a single feature, by which they may be distinguished from each other.”

This argument is largely supported and illustrated in the work; and thus by referring first formations of every kind to an immediate act of God, those immense periods of time which geology demands for its chemical processes, are rendered unnecessary. From first formations, Mr. Penn proceeds to oppose the notion that the earth has undergone many general revolutions, and thinks that all geological phenomena may be better explained by the Mosaic record, which confines those general revolutions to two. Mr. Penn’s course of observation will be seen by the following recapitulation of the second and third parts of his work: —

“That this globe, so constructed at its origin, has undergone two, and only two, general changes or revolutions of its substance; each of which was caused by the immediate will, intelligence, and power
of GOD, exercised upon the work which he had formed, and
directing the laws or agencies which he had ordained within it.

“That, by the FIRST change or revolution, [that of gathering the
waters into one place, and making the dry land appear,] one portion
or division of the surface of the globe was suddenly and violently
fractured and depressed, in order to form, in the first instance, a
receptacle or bed for the waters universally diffused over that
surface, and to expose the other portion, that it might become a
dwelling for animal life; but yet, with an ulterior design, that the
receptacle of the waters should eventually become the chief theatre
of animal existence, by the portion first exposed experiencing a
similar fracture and depression, and thus becoming in its turn, the
receptacle of the same waters; which should then be transfused into
it, leaving their former receptacle void and dry.

“That this FIRST revolution took place before the existence, that is,
before the creation of any organized beings.

“That the sea, collected into this vast fractured cavity of the globe’s
surface, continued to occupy it during 1656 years [from the
creation to the deluge;] during which long period of time, its waters
acted in various modes, chemical and mechanical, upon the several
soils and fragments which formed its bed; and marine organic
matter, animal and vegetable, was generated and accumulated in
vast abundance.

“That, after the expiration of those 1656 years, it pleased God, in a
SECOND revolution, to execute his ulterior design, by repeating the
amazing operation by which he had exposed the first earth; and by
the disruption and depression of that first earth below the level of
the bed of the first sea, to produce a new bed, into which the
waters descended from their former bed, leaving it to become the
theatre of the future generations of mankind.

“That THIS PRESENT EARTH was THAT FORMER BED.

“That it must, therefore, necessarily exhibit manifest and universal
evidences of the vicissitudes which it has undergone; viz. of the
vast apparent ruin occasioned by its first violent disruption and
depression; of the presence and operation of the marine fluid during
the long interval which succeeded; and, of the action and effects of that fluid in its ultimate retreat.

“Within the limits of this general scheme, all speculations must be confined which would aspire to the quality of sound geology; yet vast and sublime is the field which it lays open, to exercise the intelligence and experience of sober and philosophical mineralogy and chemistry. Upon this legitimate ground, those many valuable writers, who have unwarily lent their science to uphold and propagate the vicious doctrine of a chaotic geogony, may geologize with full security; and may there concur to promote that true advancement of natural philosophy, which Newton holds to be inseparable from a proportionate advancement of the moral. They must thus at length succeed in perfecting a true philosophical geology; which never can exist, unless the principle of Newton form the foundation, and the relation of Moses the working plan.”
“As the manifold appearances of design and of final causes, in the constitution of the world, prove it to be the work of an intelligent mind; so the particular final causes of pleasure and pain, distributed among his creatures, prove that they are under his government — what may be called his natural government of creatures endued with sense and reason. This, however, implies somewhat more than seems usually attended to when we speak of God’s natural government of the world. It implies government of the very same kind with that which a master exercises over his servants, or a civil magistrate over his subjects.” — (Bishop Butler.)

Christianity as Old as the Creation, p. 233. — “By employing our reason to collect the will of God from the fund of our nature, physical and moral, we may acquire not only a particular knowledge of those laws which are deducible from them, but a general knowledge of the manner in which God is pleased to exercise his supreme powers in this system.” (Bolingbroke’s Works, vol. v, p. 100.)

So in his Tusc. Quest. 1, he says, “Expone igitur, nisi molestum est, primum animos, si potes, remanere post mortem; tum si minus id obtinebis (est enim arduum,) docebis carere omni malo mortem. Show me first, if you can, and if it be not too troublesome, that souls remain after death; or if you cannot prove that (for it is difficult,) declare how there is no evil in death.”

“Some men seem to think the only character of the Author of nature to be that of simple absolute benevolence. There may possibly be in the creation, beings, to whom he manifests himself under this most amiable of all characters, for it is the most amiable, supposing it not, as perhaps it is not, incompatible with justice; but he manifests himself to us as a righteous Governor. He may consistently with this be simply and absolutely benevolent; but he is, for he has given us a proof in the constitution and conduct of the world that he is, a Governor over servants, as he rewards and punishes us for our actions.” (Butler’s Analogy.)

“If philosophy had gone farther than it did, and from undeniable principles given us ethics in a science, like mathematics, in every part
demonstrable, this yet would not have been so effectual to man in this imperfect state, nor proper for the cure. The greatest part of mankind want leisure or capacity for demonstration, nor can carry a train of proofs, which in that way they must always depend upon for conviction, and cannot be required to assent to till they see the demonstration. Wherever they stick, the teachers are always put upon proof, and must clear the doubt by a thread of coherent deductions from the first principle, how long or how intricate soever that be. And you may as soon hope to have all the day labourers and tradesmen, the spinsters and dairy maids, perfect mathematicians, as to have them perfect in ethics this way: having plain commands is the sure and only course to bring them to obedience and practice the greatest part cannot know, and therefore they must believe. And I ask whether one coming from heaven in the power of God, in full and clear evidence and demonstration of miracles, giving plain and direct rules of morality and obedience, be not likelier to enlighten the bulk of mankind, and set them right in their duties, and bring them to do them, than by reasoning with them from general notions and principles of human reason?”

(Locke’s Reasonableness of Christianity.)

“Let it be granted, (though not true,) that all the moral precepts of the Gospel were known by somebody or other, among mankind before. But where, or how or of what use, is not considered. Suppose they may be picked up here and there; some from Solon, and Bias, in Greece; others from Tully, in Italy, and, to complete the work, let Confucius as far as China be consulted, and Anacharsis the Scythian contribute his share. What will all this do to give the world a complete morality, that may be to mankind the unquestionable rule of life and manners? What would this amount to toward being a steady rule, a certain transcript of a law that we are under? Did the saying of Aristippus or Confucius give it an authority? Was Zeno a lawgiver to mankind? If not, what he or any other philosopher delivered was but a saying of his. Mankind might hearken to it, or reject it, as they pleased, or as it suited their interest, passions, principles, or humours: — they were under no obligation; the opinion of this or that philosopher was of no authority.” (Locke’s Reasonableness, &c.)

“The truths which the philosophers proved by speculative reason, were destitute of some more sensible authority to back them; and the precepts which they laid down, how reasonable soever in themselves,
seemed still to want weight, and so be no more than PRECEPTS OF MEN.” (DR. SAM. CLARKE.)

Sed hæc eadem num censes apud eos ipsos valere, nisi admodum paucos, a quibus inventa, disputata, conscripta sunt? Quotus enim quisque philosophorum invenitur, qui sit ita moratus, ita animo ac vita constitutus, ut ratio postulat? &c. (Tusc. Quest. 2.)

The term natural religion is often used equivocally. “Some understand by it every thing in religion, with regard to truth and duty, which, when once discovered, may be clearly shown to have a real foundation in the nature and relations of things, and which unprejudiced reason will approve, when fairly proposed and set in a proper light; and accordingly very fair and goodly schemes of natural religion have been drawn up by Christian philosophers and divines, in which they have comprehended a considerable part of what is contained in the Scripture revelation. In this view natural religion is not so called because it was originally discovered by natural reason, but because when once known it is what the reason of mankind duly exercised approves, as founded in truth and nature. Others take natural religion to signify that religion which men discover in the sole exercise of their natural faculties, without higher assistance.”

“When truths are once known to us, though by tradition, we are apt to be favorable to our own parts, and ascribe to our own understanding the discovery of what, in reality, we borrowed from others; or, at least, finding we can prove what at first we learnt from others, we are forward to conclude it an obvious truth, which, if we had sought, we could not have missed. Nothing seems hard to our understandings that is once known; and because what we see, we see with our own eyes, we are apt to overlook or forget the help we had from others who showed it us, and first made us see it, as if we were not at all beholden to them for those truths they opened the way to, and led us into; for, knowledge being only of truths that are perceived to be so, we are favorable enough to our own faculties to conclude that they, of their own strength, would have attained those discoveries without any foreign assistance, and that we know those truths by the strength and native light of our own minds, as they did from whom they received them by theirs, — only they had the luck to be before us. Thus the whole stock of human knowledge is claimed by every one as his private possession, as soon as he (profiting by others’ discoveries) has got it
into his own mind: and so it is; but not properly by his own single
industry, nor of his own acquisition. He studies, it is true, and takes
pains to make a progress in what others have delivered; but their pains
were of another sort who first brought those truths to light which he
afterward derives from them. He that travels the roads now, applauds
his own strength and legs, that have carried him so far in such a
scantling of time, and ascribes all to his own vigour; little considering
how much he owes to their pains who cleared the woods, drained the
bogs, built the bridges, and made the ways passable, without which he
might have toiled much with little progress. A great many things which
we have been bred up in the belief of from our cradles and are now
grown familiar, (and, as it were, natural to us under the Gospel,) we
take for unquestionable obvious truths, and easily demonstrable,
without considering how long we might have been in doubt or
ignorance of them had revelation been silent. And many others are
beholden to revelation who do not acknowledge it. It is no diminishing
to revelation, that reason gives its suffrage too to the truths revelation
has discovered; but it is our mistake to think, that because reason
confirms them to us, we had the first certain knowledge of them from
thence, and in that clear evidence we now possess them.” (LOCKE.)


10 “The religion of Budhu,” says Dr. Davy, “is more widely extended than
any other religion. It appears to be the religion of the whole of Tartary,
of China, of Japan, and their dependencies, and of all the countries
between China and the Burrampooter.

“The Budhists do not believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, self-
existent and eternal, the creator and preserver of the universe: indeed,
it is doubtful if they believe in the existence and operation of any cause
beside fate and necessity, to which they seem to refer all changes in the
moral and physical world. They appear to be Materialists in the strictest
sense of the term, and to have no notion of pure spirit or mind. Prane
and hitta, life and intelligence, the most learned of them appear to
consider identical: — seated in the heart, radiating from thence to
different parts of the body, like heat from a fire; — uncreated, without
beginning, at least that they know of; — capable of being modified by a
variety of circumstances, like the breath in different musical
instruments; — and like a vapour, capable of passing from one body to
another; — and like a flame, liable to be extinguished and totally
annihilated. Gods, demons, men, reptiles, even the minutest and most
imperfect animalcules, they consider as similar beings, formed of the four elements — heat, air, water, and that which is tangible, and animated by *prane* and *hitta*. They believe that a man may become a god or a demon; or that a god may become a man or an animalcule; that ordinary death is merely a change of form; and that this change is almost infinite, and bounded only by annihilation, which they esteem the acme of happiness!” (*Account of Ceylon.*)

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**Footnote 1**

Xen. Mem. lib. 4, cap. 4, sect. 19, 20. — To the same effect is that noble passage of Cicero cited by Lactantius out of his work *De Republica.*

“Est quidem vera lex, recta ratio, naturae congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna, quæ vocet ad officium jubendo, vetando, a fraude deterreat; quæ tamen neque probes frustra jubet, aut vetat; nec improbos jubendo aut vetando movet. Huic legi nec abrogari fas est; nec derogari ex hac aliquid licet; neque tota abrogari potest. Nec vero aut per senatum, aut per populum solvi hac lege possumus; neque est quærendus explanator, aut interpres ejus ulius. Nec enim alia lex Romeæ, alia Athenis, alia nunc, alia posthac; sed et omnes gentes, et omni tempore, una lex et sempiterna et immutabilis continebit; unusque erit communis quasi magister et imperator omnium Deus, ille legis hujus inventor, discipulator, lator; cui qui non parebit, ipse se fugiet, ac naturam hominis aspernabitur; atque hoc ipso luet maximas pœnas, etiamsi cætera supplicia, quæ putantur, effugerit;” — from which it is clear that Cicero acknowledged a law antecedent to all human civil institutions, and independent of them, binding upon all, constant and perpetual, the same in all times and places, not one thing at Rome, and another at Athens; of an authority so high, that no human power had the right to alter or annul it; having God for its author, in his character of universal Master and Sovereign; taking hold of the very consciences of men, and following them with its animadversions, though they should escape the hand of man, and the penalties of human codes.

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**Footnote 2**

“The east was the source of knowledge from whence it was communicated to the western parts of the world. There the most precious remains of ancient tradition were found. Thither the most celebrated Greek philosophers travelled in quest of science, or the knowledge of things Divine and human, and thither the lawgivers had recourse in order to their being instructed in laws and civil policy.” (LELAND.)
The speculations of infidels as to the gradual progress of the original men from the savage life, and the invention of language, arts, laws, &c, have been too much countenanced by philosophers bearing the name of Christ; some of them even holding the office of teachers of his religion. The writings of Moses sufficiently show that there never was a period in which the original tribes of men were in a savage state; and the gradual process of the developement of a higher condition is a chimera. To those who profess to believe the Scriptures, their testimony ought to be sufficient: to those who do not, they are at least as good history as any other.

See note A at the end of this chapter.

See DELANEY’S Revelation Examined with Candour, Dissertations 1 and 2.

“It is very probable,” says Puffendorf, “that God taught the first men the chief heads of natural law.”

Whatever may be thought respecting the circumstances of the flood as mentioned by Moses, there is nothing in that event, considered as the punishment of a guilty race, and as giving an attestation of God’s approbation of right principles and a right conduct, to which a consistent Theist can object. For if the will of God is to be collected from observing the course of nature and providence, such signal and remarkable events in his government as the deluge, whether universal or only co-extensive with the existing race of men, may be expected to occur; and especially when an almost universal punishment, as connected with an almost universal wickedness, so strikingly indicated an observant and a righteous government.

See Bishop HORSLEY’S Dissertations before referred to; and LELAND’S View of the Necessity of Revelation, part i, chap. 2.

The princes of Abyssinia claim descent from Menilek, the son of Solomon by the queen of Sheba. The Abyssinians say she was converted to the Jewish religion. The succession is hereditary in the line of Solomon, and the device of their kings is a lion passant, proper upon a field gules, and their motto, “The Lion of the race of Solomon and tribe of Judah hath overcome.” The Abyssinian eunuch who was met by Philip was not properly a Jewish proselyte, but an Abyssinian believer in Moses and the prophets. Christianity spread in this country at an early period; but many of the inhabitants to this day are of the Jewish
religion. Tyre also must have derived an accession of religious
information from its intercourse with the Israelites in the time of
Solomon, and we find Hiram the king blessing the Lord God of Israel
“as the Maker of heaven and earth.”

See note B at the end of this chapter.

The readiness of the philosophers of antiquity to seize upon every
notion which could aid them in their speculations, is manifest by the use
which those of them who lived when Christianity began to be known,
and to acquire credit, made of its discoveries to give greater splendour
to their own systems. The thirst of knowledge carried the ancient sages
to the most distant persons and places in search of wisdom, nor did the
later philosophers any more than modern infidels neglect the superior
light of Christianity, when brought to their own doors, but they were
equally backward to acknowledge the obligation. “As the ancients,”
says Justin Martyr, “had borrowed from the prophets, so did the
moderns from the Gospel.” Tertullian observes in his Apology, “Which
of your poets, which of your sophists, have not drunk from the
fountains of the prophets? It is from these sacred sources likewise that
your philosophers have refreshed their thirsty spirits; and if they
found any thing in the Holy Scriptures to please their fancy, or to
serve their hypotheses, they turned it to their own purpose, and made
it serve their curiosity; not considering these writings to be sacred and
unalterable, nor understanding their sense; every one taking or
leaving, adopting or remodelling, as his imagination led him. Nor do I
wonder that the philosophers played such foul tricks with the Old
Testament, when I find some of the same generation among ourselves
who have made as bold with the New, and composed a deadly mixture
of Gospel and opinion, led by a philosophizing vanity.”

It was from conversing with a Christian that Epictetus learned to
reform the doctrine, and abase the pride of the Stoics; nor is it to be
imagined that Marcus Antoninus, Maximus Tyrius, and others, were
ignorant of the Christian doctrine.

Rousseau admits, that the modern philosopher derives his better
notions on many subjects from those very Scriptures, which he reviles;
from the early impressions of education; from living and conversing in a
Christian country, where those doctrines are publicly taught, and
where, in spite of himself, he imbibes some portion of that religious
knowledge which the sacred writings have every where diffused. (Works, vol. ix, p. 71; 1764.)

See note C at the end of this chapter.

Plato, in his Epinominis, acknowledges that the Greeks learned many things from the barbarians, though he asserts, that they *improved* what they thus borrowed, and made it better, especially in what related to the *worship of the gods.* (Plat. Oper. p. 703. Edit. Ficin. Lugd. 1590.)

Plato, beginning his discourse of the gods and the generation of the world, cautions his disciples "*not to expect any thing beyond a likely conjecture concerning these things.*" Cicero, referring to the same subject, says, "*Latent ista omnia crassis occulta et circumfusa tenebris,* all these things are involved in deep obscurity.”

The following passage from the same author may be recommended to the consideration of modern exalters of the power of unassisted reason. The treasures of the philosophy of past ages were poured at his feet, and he had studied every branch of human wisdom, with astonishing industry and acuteness, yet he observes, ‘Quod si tales nos natura genuisset, ut eam ipsam intueri, et perspicere, eademque optima duce cursum vitae conficere possemus; haud erat sane quod quisquani rationem, ac doctrinam requireret. Nunc parvulos nobis dedit igniculos, quos celeriter malis moribus, opinionibusque depravati sic restinguimus, ut nusquam naturæ lumen appareat. If we had come into the world in such circumstances, as that we could clearly and distinctly have discerned nature herself and have been able in the course of our lives to follow her true and uncorrupted directions, this alone might have been sufficient, and there would have been little need of teaching and instruction: but now nature has given us only some small sparks of right reason, which we so quickly extinguish with corrupt opinions and evil practices, that the true light of nature nowhere appears.” (*Tusc. Quest.* 3.)

The same author, (*Tusc. Quest.* 1,) having reckoned up the opinions of philosophers as to the soul’s immortality, concludes thus, “Harum sententiarum quæ vera est Deus aliquis viderit, quæ verisimillima est, magna quaæstio est. Which of these opinions is true, some god must tell us; which is most like truth, is a great question.” Jamblicus, speaking of the principles of Divine worship, saith: “It is manifest that those things are to be done which are pleasing to God; but what they are, it is not
easy to know, except a man were taught them by God himself, or by some person who had received them from God, or obtained the knowledge of them by some Divine means.” (Jamb. in Vit. Pythag. c. 28.)

When we meet with passages in the writings of heathens which recommend moral virtues, and speak in a fit and becoming manner of God, we are apt from our more elevated knowledge of these subjects to attach more correct and precise ideas to the terms used, than the original writers themselves, and to give them credit for better views than they entertained. It is one proof, that though some of them speak, for instance, of God seeing and knowing all things, they did not conceive of the omniscience of God in the manner in which that attribute is explained by those who have learned what God is from his own words; that some of the pagan philosophers who lived after the Christian era, complain that the Christians had introduced a very troublesome and busy God, who did “in omnium mores, actus, omnium verba denique, et occultas cogitationes diligenter inquirere, diligently inquire into the manners, actions, words, and secret thoughts of all men.” Cicero, too, denies the foreknowledge of God, and for the same reason which has been urged against it in modern times by some who, for the time at least, have closed their eyes upon the testimony of the Scriptures on this point, and been willing, in order to serve a favourite theory, to go back to the obscurity of paganism. The difficulty with him is, that prescience is inconsistent with contingency. Mihi ne in Deum cadere videatur ut sciat quid casu et fortuito futurum sit; si enim scit, certe illud eveniet; si certe eveniet, nulla fortuna est; est autem fortuna, rerum ergo fortuitarum nulla præsensio est. (De Fate. n. 12, 13.)

De Isid. et Osir. — Dr. Cudworth thinks that Plutarch has indulged in an overstrained assertion: but the confidence with which the philosopher speaks is at least a proof of the great extent of this opinion.

The testimony of missionaries, who see the actual effects of paganism in the different countries where they labour, is particularly valuable. On the point mentioned in the text, the Wesleyan missionaries thus speak of the state of the Cingalese — “We feel ourselves incapable of giving you a full view of the deplorable state of a people, who believe that all things are governed by chance; who find malignant gods, or devils, in every planet, whose influence over mankind they consider to be

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exceeding great, and the agents who inflict all the evil that men suffer
in the world. A people so circumstanced need no addition to their
miseries, but are objects toward which Christian pity will extend itself,
as far as the voice of their case can reach. They are literally, through
fear of death, or malignant demons, all their lifetime subject to
bondage.”

“Interim tamen vix ulli fucre (quæ humanæ mentis caligo, atque imbecil-
litas est,) qui non inciderint in errorem ilium de refusione in Animam
mundi. Nimirum, sicut existimarunt singulorum animus particulæs esse
animæ mundanæ quarum quælibet suo corpore, ut aqua vase, effluere,
ac animæ mundi, e qua deducta fuerit, iterum uniri.” (GASSENDI
Animadv. in Lib. 10, Diog. Laertii p. 550)

From the philosophical works of Cicero it may be difficult to collect his
own opinions, as he chiefly occupies himself in explaining those of
others; but in his epistles to his friends, when, as Warburton observes,
we see the man divested of the politician, and the sophist, he professes
his disbelief of a future state in the frankest manner. Thus in lib. 6, epis.
3, to Torquatus, written in order to console him in the unfortunate state
of the affairs of their party, he observes: “Sed hæc consolatio levis est;
illa gravior, qua te uti spero; ego certe utor. Nec enim dum ero, angar
ulla re, cum omni vacem culpa; et si non ero, sensu omnino carebo. But
there is another and a far higher consolation, which I hope is your
support, as it certainly is mine. For so long as I shall preserve my
innocence, I will never while I exist be anxiously disturbed at any event
that may happen; and if I shall cease to exist, all sensibility must cease
with me.”

Similar expressions are found in his letters to Toranius, to Lucius
Mescinius, and others, which those who wish to prove him a believer in
the soul’s immortality, endeavour to account for by supposing that he
accommodated his sentiments to the principles of his friends. A singular
solution, and one which scarcely can be seriously adopted, since in the
above cited passage he so strongly expresses what is his own opinion,
and hopes that his friend takes refuge in the same consolation. It may
be allowed that Cicero alternated between unbelief and doubt; but
never I think between doubt and certainty. The last was a point to
which he never seems to have reached.

Though Cicero, Seneca, and others, condemned these barbarities, it was
in so incidental and indifferent a manner as to produce no effect. They
were abolished soon after the establishment of Christianity, and this affords an illustration of the admission of Rousseau himself. “La philosophie ne peut faire aucun bien, que la Religion ne le fasse encore mieux: et la Religion en fait beaucoup que la philosophie ne sauroit faire.”

In the 110th Olympiad, there were at Athens only 21,000 citizens and 40,000 slaves. It was common for a private citizen of Rome to have 10 or 20,000. (TAYLOR’S Civil Law.)

The youth of Sparta made it their pastime frequently to lie in ambush by night for the slaves, and sally out with daggers upon every Helot who came near them, and murder him in cold blood. The EPHORI, as soon as they entered upon their office, declared war against them in form, that there might be an appearance of destroying them legally. It was the custom for Vedius Pollio, when his slaves had committed a fault, sometimes a very trifling one, to order them to be thrown into his fishponds, to feed his lampreys. It was the constant custom, as we learn from Tacitus, Annal. 14:43, when a master was murdered in his own house, to put all the slaves to death indiscriminately. For a just and affecting account of the condition of slaves in ancient states, see PORTEUS’S Beneficial Effects of Christianity.

Terence says of simple fornication, “Non est scelus, adolescentulum scortari flagitium est.” The Spartans, through a principle in the institutions of Lycurgus, which controlled their ancient opinions on this subject, in certain prescribed cases, allowed adultery in the wife; and Plutarch, in his Life of Lycurgus. mentioning these laws, commends them as being made “φυσικῶς καὶ πολιτικῶς, according to nature and polity.” Callicratides, the Pythagorean, tells the wife that she must bear with her husband’s irregularities, since the law allows this to the man and not to the woman. Plutarch speaks to the same purpose in several places of his writings. On the other hand, some of the philosophers condemned adultery; and in many places, it was punished in the woman with death, in the man with infamy. Still, however, the same vacillation of judgment, and the same limitations, of what they sometimes confess to be the ancient rule and custom, may be observed throughout; but as far as the authority of philosophers went, it was chiefly on the side of vicious practice.

“It is the business of all,” says Sir John Shore, “from the Ryot to the Dewan, to conceal and deceive. The simplest matters of fact are
designedly covered with a veil, which no human understanding can penetrate.” The prevalence of perjury is so universal, as to involve the judges in extreme perplexity “The honest men,” says Mr. Strachey, “as well as the rogues, are perjured. Even where the real facts are sufficient to convict the offender, the witnesses against him must add others, often notoriously false, or utterly incredible, such as in Europe would wholly invalidate their testimony.”

Plutarch in the Lives of Themistocles, Marcellus, and Aristides. (Livy 50. 22, c. 57; Fiorus 50. 1, c. 13; Virg. Æn. 10:518, 11:81.)

See Maurice’s Indian Antiquities; the writings of Dr. Claudius Buchanan Ward on the Hindoos. Dubois on Hindoo Manners, &c; Robertson’s History on America; Bowditch’s Account of Ashantee; Moore’s Hindoo Pantheon; and Porteus and Ryan on the Effects of Christianity.

See Leland and Whitby, on the Necessity of a Revelation; and the writers on the customs of India, — Ward, Dubois, Buchanan, and Moore, before referred to.

Hence Chærea, in Terence, pertinently enough asks, Quod fecit is qui templæ cæli summa sonitu concutit, ego homuncio non facerem? Eunuch. Act. 3, sec. 5. He only imitated Jupiter. And says Sextus Empyricus, “That cannot be unjust which is done by the god Mercury, the prince of thieves, for how can a god be wicked?” (Apud. Euseb. Præp. lib. 6, cap. 10.)

See note A at the end of the chapter.

Bishop Warburton endeavours to prove, by an elaborate argument in his “Divine Legation,” that in the Greater Mysteries, the Divine Unity and the errors of Polytheism were constantly taught. This, however, is most satisfactorily disproved by Dr. Leland, in his “Advantage and Necessity of a Divine Revelation;” to both of which works the reader is referred for information as to those angular institutions — the heathen mysteries.

See note B at the end of the chapter.

“We know not beforehand what degree or kind of natural information it were to be expected God would afford men, each by his own reason and experience, nor how far he would enable and effectually dispose them to communicate it, whatever it should be, to each other; nor whether the evidence of it would be certain, highly probable, or doubtful; nor whether it would be given with equal clearness and
conviction to all. Nor could we guess, upon any good ground. I mean, whether natural knowledge, or even the faculty itself, by which we are capable of attaining it, reason, would be given us at once, or gradually. In like manner we are wholly ignorant what degree of new knowledge, it were to be expected, God would give mankind, by revelation, upon supposition of his affording one; or how far, or in what way, he would interpose miraculously to qualify them, to whom he should originally make the revelation, for communicating the knowledge given by it, and to secure their doing it to the age in which they should live, and to secure its being transmitted to posterity. We are equally ignorant whether the evidence of it would be certain, or highly probable, or doubtful; or whether all who should have any degree of instruction from it, and any degree of evidence of its truth, would have the same; or whether the scheme would be revealed at once, or unfolded gradually. Nay, we are not, in any sort, able to judge whether it were to have been expected, that the revelation should have been committed to writing, or left to be handed down, and consequently corrupted, by verbal tradition, and, at length, sunk under it, if mankind so pleased and during such time as they are permitted, in the degree they evidently are, do act as they will.

“Now, since it has been shown that we have no principles of reason upon which to judge beforehand, how it were to be expected revelation should have been left, or what was most suitable to the Divine plan of government in any of the forementioned respects; it must be quite frivolous to object afterward as to any of them, against its being left one way rather than another; for this would be to object against things, upon account of their being different from our expectations, which has been shown to be without reason. And thus we see that the only question concerning the truth of Christianity is, whether it be a real revelation; not whether it be attended with every circumstance which we should have looked for; and concerning the authority of Scripture, whether it be what it claims to be; not whether it be a book of such sort, and so promulged as weak men are apt to fancy a book containing a Divine revelation should be. And, therefore, neither obscurity, nor seeming inaccuracy of style, nor various readings, nor early disputes about the authors of particular parts, nor any other things of the like kind, though they had been much more considerable in degree than they are, could overthrow the authority of the Scripture, unless the prophets, apostles, or our Lord, had promised, that the book,
containing the Divine revelation, should be secure from those things.”

(BUTLER’S Analogy.)

The reader may see several of them enumerated and examined in
Doddridge’s Lectures, part 5.

Bishop Butler has satisfactorily shown, in his Analogy, (part it, c. 11,) that there can be no such presumption against miracles as to render
them, in any wise, incredible, but what would conclude against such
uncommon appearances as comets, and against there being any such
powers in nature as magnetism and electricity, so contrary to the
properties of other bodies not endued with these powers. But he
observes, “Take in the consideration of religion, or the moral system of
the world, and then we see distinct, particular reasons for miracles, to
afford mankind instruction, additional to that of nature, and to attest
the truth of it; and our being able to discern reasons for them, gives a
positive credibility to the history of them, in cases where those reasons
hold.”

“It is impossible,” says an oracle among modern unbelievers,
(Voltaire,) “that a Being, infinitely wise, should make laws in order to
violate them. He would not derange the machine of his own
construction, unless it were for its improvement. But as a God, he hath,
without doubt, made it as perfect as possible; or, if he had foreseen any
imperfection likely to result from it, he would surely have provided
against it from the beginning, and not be under a necessity of changing
it afterward. He is both unchangeable and omnipotent, and therefore
can neither have any desire to alter the course of nature, nor have any
need to do so.”

“This argument,” says Dr. Van Mildert, “is grounded on a
misconception or a misrepresentation of the design of miracles, which
is not the remedy of any physical defect, not to rectify any original or
accidental imperfections in the laws of nature, but to manifest to the
world the interposition of the Almighty, for especial purposes of a
moral kind. It is simply to make known to mankind, that it is he who
addresses them, and that whatever is accompanied with this species of
evidence, comes from him, and claims their implicit belief and
obedience. The perfection, therefore, or imperfection, of the laws of
nature has nothing to do with the question. All nature is subservient to
the will of God; and as his existence and attributes are manifest in the
ordinary course of nature, so, in the extraordinary work of miracles,
his will is manifested by the display of his absolute sovereignty over the
course of nature. Thus, in both instances, the Creator is glorified in his
works; and it is made to appear, that ‘by him all things consist,’ and
that, ‘for his pleasure they are, and were created.’ This seems a
sufficient answer to any reasoning, a priori, against miracles, from their
supposed inconsistency with the Divine perfections.”

It is observable, that no miracles appear to have been wrought by human
agency before the time of Moses and Aaron, in whose days, not only
had the world long existed, but consequently the course of nature had
been observed for a long period: and farther, these first miracles were
wrought among a refined and observant people, who had their
philosophers, to whom the course of nature and the operation of
physical causes, were subjects of keen investigation.

See Campbell’s Dissertation on Miracles; Price’s Four Dissertations,
Diss. 4; Paley’s Evidences; Adam’s Essay on Miracles; Bishop
Douglass’s Criterion; Dwight’s Theology, vol. ii; Dr. Hey’s

It would be singular, did we not know the inconsistencies of error, that
Mr. Hume himself, as Dr. Campbell shows, gives up his own argument.
“I own,” these are his words, “there may possibly be miracles, or
violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit a
proof from human testimony, though perhaps [in this he is modest
enough, he avers nothing; perhaps] it will be impossible to find any
such in all the records of history.” To this declaration he subjoins the
following supposition: — “Suppose all authors, in all languages, agree
that from the first of January, 1600, there was a total darkness over the
whole earth for eight days; suppose that the tradition of this
extraordinary event is still strong and lively among the people; that all
travellers who return from foreign countries, bring us accounts of the
same traditions, without the least variation or contradiction: it is
evident that our present philosophers, instead of doubting of that fact,
ought to receive it for certain, and ought to search for the causes
whence it might be derived.” Could one imagine that the person who
had made the above acknowledgment, a person too who is justly
allowed by all who are acquainted with his writings, to possess
uncommon penetration and philosophical abilities, that this were the
same individual who had so short a while before affirmed, that “a
miracle,” or a violation of the course of nature, “supported by any
human testimony, is more properly a subject of derision than of argument.”

The objection “that successive testimony diminishes, and that so rapidly as to command no assent after a few centuries at most,” deserves not so full a refutation, since it is evident, that “testimony continues credible so long as it is transmitted with all those circumstances and conditions which first procured it a certain degree of merit among men. Who complains of a decay of evidence in relation to the actions of Alexander, Hannibal, Pompey, or Cæsar? We never hear persons wishing they had lived ages earlier, that they might have had better proof that Cyrus was the conqueror of Babylon; that Darius was beaten in several battles by Alexander,” &c. (See Dr. O. GREGORY’s Letters on the Christian Revelation, vol. i, p. 196.)

“...It is the error of those who contend that all necessary truth is discoverable or demonstrable by reason, that they affirm of human reason in particular, what is only true of reason in general, or of reason in the abstract. To say, that whatever is true, must be either discoverable or demonstrable by reason, can only be affirmed of an all-perfect reason; and is therefore predicated of none but the Divine intellect. So that, unless it can be shown that human reason is the same, in degree, as well as in kind, with Divine reason; i.e. commensurate with it as to its powers, and equally incapable of error: the inference from reason in the abstract, to human reason, is manifestly inconclusive. Nothing more is necessary to show the fallacy of this mode of arguing, than to urge the indisputable truth, that God is wiser than man, and has endued man with only a portion of that faculty which he himself, and none other beside him, possesses in absolute perfection.” (VAN MILDERt’s Sermons at Boyle’s Lecture.)

Thus in the Scriptures we find numerous appeals of this kind: “Judge between me and my vineyard.” “Are not my ways equal? “Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?” All of which passages suppose that equity and justice in God accord with the ideas attached to the same terms among men.

See note A at the end of this chapter, in which two common objections are answered.

Judæos impulsore Christo assidue tumultuantes Româ expulit. (SUET, Edit. Var. p. 544.)
Auctor nominis ejus Christus, qui Tiberio imperitante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat. (Annal. 50. 5.)

See note A at the end of this chapter, for a larger proof of the above particulars.

The reasoning of Leslie, so incontrovertible as to the four last books of the Pentateuch, does not so fully apply to the book of Genesis. Few, however, will dispute the genuineness of this, if that of the other books of Moses be conceded. That the book of Genesis must have been written prior to the other books of the Pentateuch is, however, certain, for Exodus constantly refers to events nowhere recorded but in the book of Genesis; and without the book of Genesis, the abrupt commencement of Exodus would have been as unintelligible to the Jews as it would be to us. The Pentateuch must therefore be considered as one book, under five divisions, having a mutual coherence and dependence.

See Note B at the end of this chapter, in which the same kind of argument is illustrated by the miraculous gift of tongues.

Quid dicam de Socrate, (says Cicero,) cujus morti illachrymari soleo, Platonem legens. — De Natura Deorum, p. 329, Edit. Davies, 1723. — See also PLATO'S Phædo, passim, particularly pages 311, 312. — Edit Forster, Oxon 1741.

Epiphanius omits the Acts of the Apostles. This must have been an accidental mistake, either in him or in some copyist of his work; for he elsewhere expressly refers to this book, and ascribes it to Luke.

Dr. BENTLEY’S Remarks on Freethinking, part i, remark 27, (vol. 5. p. 144, of Bp. RANDOLPH’S Enchiridion Theologicum, 8vo. Oxford, 1792.)

Dr. LARDNER has collected numerous instances in the second part of his Credibility of the Gospel History; references to which may be seen in the general index to his works, article Scriptures. See particularly the testimonies of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, and Augustine.

The evidences of our Lord’s resurrection are fully exhibited in WEST on the Resurrection, SHERLOCK’S Trial of the Witnesses, and Dr. COOK’S Illustration of the Evidence of Christ’s Resurrection.

“They also did in like manner with their enchantments. The word μυχλ, lahatim, comes from χλ, lahat, to burn, to set on fire; and
probably signifies such incantations as required *lustral fires, sacrifices, fumigations, burning of incense, aromatic, and odoriferous drugs, &c*, as the means of evoking departed spirits, or assistant demons, by whose ministry, it is probable, the magicians in question wrought some of their deceptive miracles: for as the term *miracle* properly signifies something which exceeds the power of nature or art to produce, (see verse 9;) hence there could be no miracle in this case, but those wrought through the power of God, by the ministry of Moses and Aaron.” (Dr. ADAM CLARKE *in loc.*).

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*f62* See note A at the end of the chapter.

*f63* Some of the *demons* worshipped by heathens had a benevolent reputation, and these were no doubt suggested by the tradition of good angels; others were malignant, and were none other than the evil angels, devils, handed down by the same tradition. Thus Plutarch says, “It has been a very ancient opinion, that there are malevolent demons, who envy good men, and oppose them in their actions,” &c.

*f64* The *passion* of Satan to be worshipped appears strongly marked in our Lord’s temptation: “All these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” In all ages evil and sanguinary beings have been deified. It was so in the time of Moses, and remains so to this day in India and Africa, where devil worship is openly professed. In Ceylon nothing is more common; and in many parts of Africa every village has its devil house.

*f65* This subject is acutely and learnedly *discussed* in “An Answer to M. de Fontenelle’s History of Oracles, translated from the French by a Priest of the Church of England.”

*f66* See note B at the end of the chapter.

*f67* MACKNIGHT’S Truth of the Gospel History; DOUGLAS’S Criterion; CAMPBELL on Miracles; and PALEY’S Evidences.

*f68* The original word used, Exodus 8:11, is *Belahatehem*; and that which occurs, Exodus 7:22, and Exodus 8:7, 18, is *Belatebem*; the former is probably derived from *Lahat*, which signifies to *burn*, and the substantive a *flame* or *shining sword-blade*, and is applied to the flaming sword which guarded the tree of life, Genesis 3:24. Those who formerly used legerdemain, dazzled and deceived the sight of spectators by the art of brandishing their swords, and sometimes seemed to eat them, and to thrust them into their bodies; and the
expression seems to intimate, that the magicians appearing to turn their rods into serpents, was owing to their eluding the eyes of the spectators by a dexterous management of their swords. In the preceding instances they made use of some different contrivance, for the latter word, belatehem, comes from Lat, to cover or hide. (which some think the former word also does,) and therefore fitly expresses any secret artifices or methods of deception, whereby false appearances are imposed upon the spectators.

As we are by Dr. Macknight, in his Truth of the Gospel History, p. 372.

Exodus 8:6-8. Nor, indeed can it be imagined, that after this or the former plague had been removed. Pharaoh would order his magicians to renew either.

The correspondences of types and antitypes, though they are not proper proofs of the truth of a doctrine, yet may be very reasonable confirmations of the foreknowledge of God; of the uniform view of Providence under different dispensations; of the analogy, harmony, and agreement, between the Old Testament and the New. The words of the law concerning one particular kind of death, He that is hanged is accursed of God, can hardly be conceived to have been put in on any other account, than with a view and foresight to the application made of it by St. Paul. The analogies between the paschal lamb and the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world; between the Egyptian bondage and the tyranny of sin; between the baptism of the Israelites in the sea and in the cloud, and the baptism of Christians; between the passage through the wilderness, and through the present world; between Joshua bringing the people into the promised land, and Jesus Christ being the Captain of salvation to believers; between the Sabbath of rest promised to the people of God in the earthly Canaan, and the eternal rest promised to the people of God in the heavenly Canaan; between the liberty granted them from the time of the death of the high priest, to him that had fled into a city of refuge, and the redemption purchased by the death of Christ; between the high priest entering into the holy place every year with the blood of others, and Christ’s once entering with his own blood into heaven itself; to appear in the shadows of things to come, of good things to come, the shadows of heavenly things, the presence of God for us. These, I say and innumerable other analogies, between the figures for the time then present, patterns of things in the heavens, and the heavenly things
themsevles, cannot without the force of strong prejudice be conceived to have happened by mere chance, without any foresight or design. There are no such analogies, much less such series of analogies, found in the books of more enthusiastic writers living in such remote ages from each other. It is much more credible and reasonable to suppose, what St. Paul affirms, that these things were our examples; and that in that uniform course of God’s government of the world, all things happened unto them of old for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. And hence arises that aptness of similitude, in the application of several legal performances to the morality of the Gospel, that it can very hardy be supposed not to have been originally intended.” (DR. S. CLARKE, Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 263.)

“...They have been dispersed among all countries. They have no common tie of locality or government to keep them together. All the ordinary principles of assimilation, which make law, and religion, and manners, so much a matter of geography, are in their instance, suspended. And in exception to every thing which history has recorded of the revolutions of the species, we see in this wonderful race a vigorous principle of identity, which has remained in undiminished force for nearly two thousand years, and still pervades every shred and fragment of their widely scattered population” (CHALMERS’S Evidences.)

No work has exhibited in so pleasing and comprehensive a manner the fulfilment of the leading prophecies of Scripture, and especially of the Old Testament, as Bishop Newton’s Dissertations on the Prophecies; and the perusal of it may be earnestly recommended, especially to the young. His illustrations of the prophecies respecting ancient Babylon are exceedingly interesting and satisfactory, and still farther proofs of the wonderfully exact accomplishment of those prophecies may be seen in a highly interesting Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon, by Claudius J. Rich, published in 1815. Immense ruins were visited by him near the supposed site of ancient Babylon, which probably are, though the matter cannot be certainly ascertained, the remains of that astonishing city, now indeed “swept with the besom of destruction.” He tells us too, that the neighbourhood is to the present a habitation only for birds and beasts of prey; that the dens of lions, with their slaughtered victims, are to be seen in many places; and that most of the cavities are occupied with bats and owls. It is therefore impossible to reflect
without awe upon the passage of Isaiah, written during the prosperity of Babylon, wherein he says, “The wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.” The present ruins of that city also demonstrate, that the course of the Euphrates has been changed, probably in consequence of the channel formed by Cyrus; and the yielding nature of the soil demonstrates that such an operation could have been performed by a large army with great facility and despatch.

The ruins examined by Mr. Rich bear testimony to the immense extent of the city as described by ancient authors. Vast masses of masonry, of both burnt and unburnt brick and bitumen, were observed in various excavations in these huge mountains of ruins, which are separated from each other by several miles. One is called by the Arabs, *Birs Nimrond*; another the *Kasr*, or Palace; and a third, which some have thought to be the ruins of the tower of Belus, is called by the natives *Mugelib*, OVERTURNED, which expressive term is also sometimes applied to the mounds of the Kasr.

See note, p. 181.

**SIMPSON’S Key to the Prophecies.** See also a large collection of prophecies with their fulfilment in the Appendix to vol. i, of HORNE’S *Introduction to the Scriptures.*

“But if you will persevere in believing that the prophecy concerning Cyrus was written after the event, peruse the burden of Babylon: was that also written after the event? Were the Medes then stirred up against Babylon. Was Babylon, the glory of the kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees, then overthrown, and become as Sodom and Gomorrah? Was it then uninhabited? Was it then neither fit for the Arabian’s tent nor the shepherd’s fold? Did the wild beasts of the desert then lie there? Did the wild beasts of the islands then cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant places? Were Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, the son and the grandson then cut off? Was Babylon then become a possession of the bittern and pools of water? Was it then swept with the besom of destruction, so swept that the world knows not now where to find it?” (Bishop WATSON’S *Apology.*)

**PORPHYRY,** in his books against the Christian religion, was the first to attack the prophecies of Daniel: and in modern times, COLLINS, in his...
“Scheme of Literal Prophecy,” bent all his force against a book so pregnant with proofs of the truth of Christianity, and the inspiration of ancient prophecy. By two learned opponents his eleven objections were most satisfactorily refuted, and shown to be mere cavils — by Bishop CHANDLER in his “Vindication” of his “Defence of Christianity,” and by Dr. SAM. CHANDLER in his “Vindication of Daniel’s Prophecies.”

Eusebius has preserved some fragments of a philosopher called Œnomaus, who, out of resentment for his having been so often fooled by the oracles, wrote an ample confutation of all their impertinences: “When we come to consult thee,” says he to Apollo, “if thou seest what is in futurity, why dost thou use expressions that will not be understood? If thou dost, thou takest pleasure in abusing us, if thou dost not, be informed of us, and learn to speak more clearly. I tell thee, that if thou intendest an equivocation, the Greek word whereby thou affirmedst that Crœsus should overthrow a great empire, was ill chosen; and that it could signify nothing but Crœsus’s conquering Cyrus. If things must necessarily come to pass, why dost thou amuse us with thy ambiguities? What dost thou, wretch as thou art, at Delphi; employed in muttering idle prophecies?”

A weak attempt has been made by some infidel writers to fasten a charge of falsehood on Jeremiah, in the case of his confidential interview with King Zedekiah. A satisfactory refutation is given by Bishop WATSON in his answer to Paine, letter 6.

The opinion of the bishop, that not the whole of what is now called Egypt was intended in the prophecy, seems to derive confirmation from the following passages in Richardson’s Travels in Egypt in 1817: — “The Delta, according to the tradition of the Jonians, is the only part that is, strictly speaking, entitled to be called Egypt, which is hieroglyphically represented by the figure of a heart, no unapt similitude.” — “The principal places mentioned in our sacred writings, Zoan, Noph, and Tophanes, are all referable to the Delta. Probably little of them remains.”

The Scripture character of the Divine Being is thus strikingly drawn out by Dr. A. Clarke in his note on Genesis 1:1: — “The eternal, independent, and self-existent Being. The Being whose purposes and actions spring from himself, without foreign motive or influence: he who is absolute in dominion; the most pure, most simple,
and most spiritual of all essences: infinitely benevolent, beneficent, true, and holy: the cause of all being, the upholder of all things; infinitely happy, because infinitely good; and eternally self-sufficient, needing nothing that he has made. Illimitable in his immensity, inconceivable in his mode of existence, and indescribable in his essence: known fully only to himself, because an infinite mind can only be comprehended by itself. In a word, a Being who, from his infinite wisdom, cannot err or be deceived; and who, from his infinite goodness, can do nothing but what is eternally just, right, and kind.”

See the argument largely and ingeniously exhibited in Gisborne’s Testimony of Nat. Theol. &c.

“Remarks on the Internal Evidence of the Truth of Revealed Religion; by Thomas Erskine, Esq.” — This popular and interesting volume contains many very striking, just, and eloquent remarks in illustration of the internal evidence of several doctrines of the New Testament, and especially of that of the atonement. It is to be regretted, however, that it sets out from a false principle, and builds so much truth upon the sand. “The sense of moral obligation is the standard to which reason instructs man to adjust his system of natural religion,” and this is “the test by which he is to try all pretensions to religion” The principle of the book therefore is to show the excellence of Christianity from its embodying the abstract principles of natural religion in intelligible and palpable action — a gratuitous and unsubstantial foundation.

“I will confess to you that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction: how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage, whose history it contains, should be himself a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the tone of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manners! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live, and so die, without weakness, and without ostentation? When Plato described his imaginary good man with all the shame of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he described
exactly the character of Jesus Christ: the resemblance was so striking that all the Christian fathers perceived it.

“What prepossession, what blindness must it be, to compare the son of Sophronicus [Socrates] to the Son of Mary! What an infinite disproportion is there between them! Socrates dying without pain or ignominy, easily supported his character to the last: and if his death, however easy, had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wisdom, was any thing more than a vain sophist. He invented, it is said, the theory of morals. Others, however, had before put them in practice; he had only to say, therefore, what they had done, and to reduce their examples to precept. But where could Jesus learn among his competitors, that pure and sublime morality, of which he only has given us both precept and example? The death of Socrates, peaceably philosophizing with his friends, appears the most agreeable that could be wished for; that of Jesus, expiring in the midst of agonizing pains, abused, insulted, and accused by a whole nation, is the most horrible that could be feared. Socrates, in receiving the cup of poison, blessed the weeping executioner who administered it; but Jesus, in the midst of excruciating tortures, prayed for his merciless tormentors. Yes! if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God. Shall we suppose the evangelic history a mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of fiction; on the contrary, the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ. Such a supposition, in fact, only shifts the difficulty, without obviating it; it is more inconceivable, that a number of persons should agree to write such a history, than that one only should furnish the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality contained in the Gospel, the marks of whose truth are so striking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing man than the hero.”

The collateral testimony to certain facts mentioned in Scripture, from coins, medals, and ancient marbles, may be seen well applied in Horne’s *Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures*, vol. i, p. 238.

The success of Mohammed, though sometimes pushed forward as a parallel, is, in fact, both as to the means employed and the effect produced, a perfect contrast. The *means* were conquest and compulsion; the *effect* was to legalize and sanctify, so to speak, the
natural passions of men for plunder and sensual gratification; and it surely argues either a very frail judgment, or a criminal disposition, to object, that a contrast so marked should ever have been exhibited as a correspondence. Men were persuaded, when they were not forced, to join the ranks of the Arabian impostor by the hope of plunder, and a present and future life of brutal gratification. Men were persuaded to join the apostles by the evidence of truth, and by the hope of future spiritual blessings, but with the certainty of present disgrace and suffering.

Attempts have been made to deny the existence of miraculous powers in the ages immediately succeeding that of the apostles, but it stands on the unanimous and successive testimony of the fathers. Gibbon, on this subject, has borrowed his objections from “The Free Inquiry” of Dr. Middleton, whose belief in Christianity is very suspicious. This book received many able answers; but none more so than one by the Rev. John Wesley. It is a triumph to truth to state, that Dr. Middleton felt himself obliged to give up his ground by shifting the question.

Among the Greeks, the education of women was chiefly confined to courtesans.

For an ample illustration of the actual effects of Christianity upon society, see Bishop PORTEUR’S Beneficial Effects of Christianity and RYAN’S History of the Effects of Religion on Mankind.

See also a copious collection of these supposed contradictions, with judicious explanations, in the Appendix to vol. 1. of HORNE’S Introduction. &c.

“In this our first period of existence, our eye cannot penetrate beyond the present scene, and the human race appears one great and separate community; but with other worlds, and other communities, we probably may, and every argument for the truth of our religion gives us reason to think that we shall, be connected hereafter. And if by our behaviour we may, even while here, as our Lord positively affirms, heighten in some degree the felicity of angels, our salvation may hereafter be a matter of importance, not to us only, but to many other orders of immortal beings. They, it is true, will not suffer for our guilt, nor be rewarded for our obedience. But it is not absurd to imagine, that our fall and recovery may be useful to them as an example; and that the Divine grace manifested in our redemption may raise their adoration
and gratitude into higher raptures, and quicken their ardour to inquire with ever new delight, into the dispensations of infinite wisdom. This is not mere conjecture. It derives plausibility from many analogies in nature, as well as from Holy Writ, which represents the mystery of our redemption as an object of curiosity to superior beings, and our repentance as an occasion of their joy.” (DR. BEATTIE’S Evidences of the Christian Religion. See also DR. CHALMERS’S Discourses on the Modern Astronomy.)

Professor Jamieson, in his Mineralogical Illustrations of Cuvier’s Theory, observes, “The front of Salisbury Craigs near Edinburgh, affords a fine example of the natural clock, described in the text. The acclivity is covered with loose masses that have fallen from the hill itself; and the quantity of debris is in proportion to the time which has elapsed since the waters of the ocean formerly covered the neighbouring country. If a vast period of time had elapsed since the surface of the earth had assumed its present aspect, it is evident that long ere now the whole of this hill would have been enveloped in its own debris. We have here then a proof of the comparatively short period since the waters left the surface of the globe, — a period not extending a few thousand years.”

“Most readers have presumed, that every night and day mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis must be strictly confined to the term of twenty-four hours, though there can be no doubt but that Moses never intended any such thing; for how could Moses intend to limit the duration of the day to its present length, before, according to his own showing, the sun had begun to divide the day from the night?” (MANTELL’S Geology of Sussex.)

This view is totally inconsistent with the favourite notion of certain modern geologists of a primitive chaotic ocean, containing like that of the heathen poets, the elements of all things; a notion which those who wish to reconcile the account of Genesis with the modern geology have been willing to concede to them, on the ground that Moses has said that the earth was “without form and void.” But they have not considered that it was “the earth,” not a liquid mass, which is thus characterized; circumfused with water, it is true, but not mingled with it. The LXX render the phrase ὄρατος, and εἰκόνα ἀκατασκευαζόμενος, invisible and unfurnished, — invisible both because of the darkness, and the water which covered it, and unfurnished,
because destitute as yet of vegetables and animals. “It is wonderful,” says Rosenmuller, “how so many interpreters could imagine that a chaos was described in the words \textit{whbw whwt}, \textit{tohu vabohu}. This notion unquestionably took its origin from the fictions of the Greek and Latin poets, which were transferred, by those interpreters, to Moses.” Those fictions ground themselves, we may add, upon traditions received from the earliest times; but the \textit{additions} of poetic fancy are not to be applied to interpret the Scriptures.

\textsuperscript{195} Mons. L. A. Necker de Saussure, \textit{(Voyage en Ecosse,)} speaking of the disputes between the Wernerians and Huttonians, says, “The former availed themselves of the ascendancy which a more minute study of minerals afforded, to depreciate the observations of their adversaries. They denied the existence of \textit{facts} which the latter had discovered, or they tried to sink their importance. Hence it happened that phenomena, important to the natural history of the earth, have never been made known and appreciated as they ought to have been, by geologists most capable of estimating their consequences.”

\textsuperscript{196} See note A at the end of the chapter.

\textsuperscript{197} A scientific journal of great reputation, edited at the Royal Institution, has made an honourable disclaimer of those theories which contradict the Scriptures, and speaks in commendation of the work of Mr. Penn: “We are not inclined, even if we had time, to enter into the comparative merits of the fire and water fancies, miscalled theories; but we have certain old-fashioned prejudices, which in these \textit{enlightened} days of \textit{skepticism} and \textit{infidelity}, will no doubt be set down as mightily ridiculous, but which, nevertheless, induce us to pause before we acquiesce either in the one or the other. There \textit{is} another mode of accounting for the present state of the earth’s structure, on principles at least as rational, in a philosophical light, as either the Plutonian or Neptunian; and inasmuch as it is more consistent with, and founded on, sacred history, incomparably superior. (See Mr. Granville Penn’s \textit{Comparative Estimate of the Mineral and Mosaical Geologies}.)”