

PART II.—EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

BOOK II.—DIRECT EVIDENCE—EXTERNAL.

CHAPTER IX.

MIRACLES—DEFINITION CONSIDERED.

THE discussions in our preceding chapters have all been *preparatory* to the main question ; that is, they only pave the way to the more *direct* evidences by which the truth of Christianity is established. In examining *these*—which we may style the evidences *proper*, in contradistinction from such as are only *preparatory*—we find that our various eminent authors have adopted different plans of classification.

Stackhouse makes *four* divisions of the evidences of Christianity :

1. The *character and behavior* of the person professing to deliver a revelation from God.
2. The *nature and tendency* of his doctrine.
3. The *signs and tokens* he gives of his divine commission.
4. The *success and effects* of his doctrine.

Richard Watson, following in the wake of Dr. Hill, divides the evidences of Christianity into three classes :

1. The *External*, including *miracles and prophecy*.
2. The *Internal*, derived from the consideration of the *doctrine* taught.
3. The *Collateral*, arising from a variety of circumstances which, less directly than the former, prove the revelation to be of divine authority.

The definition this author gives of *collateral* evidence is too *indistinct* to be of practical use, in a subject of this kind. According to his definitions, it will often be difficult to distinguish his *collateral* from his *external* or *internal* evidence ; but it will be quite plain that his *collateral* may always be included under his definition of *external* or *internal* evi

dence Hence we dismiss the *collateral* division, as tending more to perplex than to assist.

It must not, however, be inferred, because our authors adopt different *divisions* on this subject, that they differ from each other as to the evidences themselves. It is true that they vary as to their mode of presenting the subject; and some attach most importance to one class of evidence, and others to another class; but there is little or no difference as to the evidences set forth in the various systems, and especially is there no contrariety or opposition.

In our classification of the evidences of Christianity we pursue that plan which has been the most generally adopted by our eminent authors, because we consider it the most natural and convenient; hence we will embrace these evidences in two grand divisions, viz.:

The *EXTERNAL* and the *INTERNAL*.

But even when we adopt this division, which we deem the most unexceptionable, there is danger of allowing the two classes to interlock or run into each other. To guard against perplexity which might arise from this source, we should be as clear and explicit in our definitions as possible, and then be careful to adhere to them in our investigations as strictly as the subject will admit.

We thus define our classes:

1. *External Evidence*.—By this we mean all that evidence which is derived, not from the character of the revelation itself, but from outward facts and circumstances, which, though many of them may be recorded in Scripture, yet they make not an essential part of its doctrinal system, and are susceptible of proof, in part, from profane history and collateral testimony. Under this division we embrace the evidence from *miracles*, *prophecy*, and the *success* of Christianity.

2. *Internal Evidence*.—By this we mean all that evidence which is derived from the nature of the doctrines, the consistency of the writers, and effects of Christianity. Or more at large, under this division we embrace the evidence derived from the *consistency* of the different parts of the Bible—the *excellency* of its doctrines, their accordance with human nature, their transforming influence upon the heart and life, and the internal assurance of their truth, which they, through the Spirit, impart to all who believe and obey them.

We are now prepared to enter upon the consideration of the *external* evidences of Christianity. We begin with the subject of *miracles*.

Among the arguments relied on for the truth of Christianity, none has been more prominently urged, or deemed more satisfactory and conclusive, than that which is founded on *miracles*. Fully conscious of

the potency of this argument, the enemies of Christianity have taxed, to the utmost extent, their ingenuity and skill to set aside or ward off its force; but with how little success, a careful, though brief, examination will enable us to judge. That we may see the evidence from this source in its true light, there are three points necessary to be closely considered and clearly presented.

The *first* point is the *definition*—we must have a clear conception of the character of a *real miracle*.

Secondly, we propose to show that such miracles are *susceptible of clear and satisfactory proof*.

In the *third* place, we propose to show that such miracles *were performed, by divine interposition, in attestation of the truth of the Jewish and Christian revelations*.

I. We inquire, *first, what is a miracle?* A clear and accurate conception of the definition will prevent confusion and perplexity in the investigation.

The first import of the word *miracle*, from the Latin *miraculum*, is a *wonder*, or *wonderful thing*. Webster defines a miracle thus: "In theology (a miracle is) an event or effect contrary to the established constitution and course of things, or a deviation from the known laws of nature; a supernatural event." The "New American Cyclopedia" defines a miracle to be "a work of divine power, interrupting (or violating) the ordinary course of nature, and directly designed to attest the divine commission of him who works the miracle."

Chrysostom says: "A miracle is a demonstration of the divine dignity." Augustin argues that a miracle is not against nature in its highest aspect; for "how is that against nature which comes from the will of God, since the will of such a great Creator is what makes the nature of every thing?" He adds: "In miracles, God does nothing against nature; what is unaccustomed may appear to us to be against nature, but not so to God, who constituted nature."

Aquinas says: "Miracles are all things done by divine power, beside the order commonly preserved in the course of affairs."

Lord Bacon asserts: "There never was a miracle wrought by God to convert an atheist, because the light of nature might have led him to confess a God; but miracles are designed to convert idolaters and the superstitious, who have acknowledged a Deity, but erred in his adoration, because no light of nature extends to declare the will and worship of God."

Spinoza says: "A miracle signifies any work, the natural cause of which we cannot explain after the example of any thing else to which

we are accustomed; or, at least, he who writes about or relates the miracle cannot explain it."

Miracles have been defined, "from their *cause*, as a work of direct divine energy; from their *characteristics*, as compared with natural events, as superseding or violating the ordinary laws of nature; from their immediate *effects*, as producing wonder, and an impression of the divine presence; and from their *final cause*, as designed, according to some, to evoke faith, and, according to others, to accredit the miracle-worker."

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."

Dr. Samuel Clarke defines thus: "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."

From the authorities above presented, it will appear that the writers upon this subject have deemed a correct conception of the import of the term *miracle* a matter of importance in the discussion. The definitions given vary but little in substance, except that some are more extended than others. The definition given by Dr. Samuel Clarke is, perhaps, more extended than any of the preceding, and is in perfect accordance with the acceptation of the term, as used by theologians generally; but his definition, as also most of those we have cited, seems to embrace more than the term itself necessarily implies.

If we attempt to analyze the term, it is clear that the first element in the import of miracle is, that it is a work of the *divine power*, and which nothing but the divine power can effect. For illustration, creation is a work which nothing but the divine power can effect; hence every manifestation of creative power embraces this element of the miraculous. But there is another element in the definition of a miracle, and that is, that this divine power be exerted, in a way, contravening the ordinary process of nature, or in opposition to the regularly-established order of things. Now it is clear that many things are done by the power of God, and which nothing but the divine power can effect, that are not miraculous. The planets are wheeled in their orbits; the influence of the seasons is kept up, and the forest and the field are clothed with verdure and plenty; and all this by the power of God,

which alone is adequate to the performance of these wonders; and yet there is no miracle in these wonderful displays of divine energy, simply because the power is exerted according to an ordinary established plan, which we style the order or laws of nature. To raise a dead Lazarus at a word is no more an exertion of the divine power than to cause the sun to rise in the east; yet the one is a miracle and the other is not, because the one is effected by an immediate exertion of power, in an extraordinary way, and the other by the exertion of the same power in the ordinary course of nature.

Again, although it may be true that all the miracles of Scripture were performed (according to Dr. S. Clarke's definition) "for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the authority of some particular person," yet it does not appear to us that these circumstances are essential to the nature of a miracle. We here beg leave to ask, How can we certainly know that God might not perform a miracle for some other purpose, of which we have no conception? And would not the same divine act, performed out of the ordinary plan, or in contravention of the regular course of nature, be equally miraculous for whatever purpose it may have been performed? We think, at the outset of this discussion, the term miracle should be divested of all extraneous encumbrances, and taken according to its own essential elements.

According, then, to our views of the import of the term, we define it thus: *A miracle is a work of God, which nothing but divine power can effect, performed in contravention of the ordinary course, or the laws of nature.*

With this definition of a *miracle* before us, we cannot question the validity and force of miraculous testimony. A miracle is, in effect, the testimony of God. It is the voice of God speaking through his mighty deeds. Just as we read the existence and attributes of Deity through the works of nature, so we may see "the finger of God" in the miracles he performs. As none but God can perform miracles, according to our definition, and as it is absurd to suppose that God should contradict, or work in opposition to himself, so it necessarily follows that he can neither perform himself, nor permit any other being to perform a miracle in attestation of any thing but what he approves; and what he approves must be not only true, but right and proper. Hence we conclude that, if Christianity has been confirmed by real miracles, in the sense of our definition, it is established by evidence as satisfactory and convincing as the nature of the subject admits, or as any rational mind should demand.

We are persuaded that no intelligent deist *can* either doubt that God is able, should he please to do so, to reveal his will to man, or that he can confirm that revelation by the performance of miracles. Nor, so far as known to us, has any one questioned the validity of the evidence of miracles, when performed in our presence, and attested by our own senses.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER IX.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. Have the various authors differed in the classification of the evidences of Christianity?</p> <p>2 What is the plan preferred?</p> <p>3 How are the two classes of evidence defined?</p> <p>4 What is the first department of <i>external</i> evidence?</p> <p>5 What are the three points to be considered in reference to miracles?</p> | <p>6. How has miracle been defined by different authors?</p> <p>7. What is the correct definition?</p> <p>8. Can any but God, or one empowered by him, perform a real miracle?</p> <p>9. Is the evidence of miracles conclusive and satisfactory?</p> <p>10. Is this evidence, when witnessed by our own senses, generally admitted to be conclusive?</p> |
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CHAPTER X.

MIRACLES—HUME'S ARGUMENT.

ABOUT a hundred years ago, that shrewd and renowned Scotch metaphysician and champion of infidelity, David Hume, aiming a blow that would sap the foundation of Christianity, boldly advanced the theory that "no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle and make a just foundation for any system of religion;" and, although the rottenness of this position and the sophistry by which it was advocated have been fully exposed again and again by masterly hands, yet it still lives in the world, and once in awhile is unblushingly paraded by the advocates of modern infidelity.

Such has been the fame of Hume's argument against miracles, that scarce a treatise has appeared on the evidences of Christianity, since the first enunciation of that gilded sophism, in which it has not been brought upon the arena for discussion. We here call attention to it, not so much from any conviction of its intrinsic force as from the fact that it has occupied so conspicuous a place in this controversy that no treatise on the question can ignore it entirely without being viewed by many as incomplete.

We briefly state the substance of Mr. Hume's argument in his own words, thus: "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined; and if so, it is an undeniable consequence that it cannot be surmounted by any proof whatever from testimony. A miracle, therefore, however attested, can never be rendered credible, even in the lowest degree."

In considering the argument here set forth against miracles, our first observation is this: It is in contradiction to the dictates of common sense. It implies that we ought not to believe a miracle, though confirmed by the most indubitable testimony of our own senses. His argument is this:

"A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, and as a firm and

unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined; and if so, it cannot be surmounted by any proof whatever from testimony."

Omitting for the present several points in which the fallacy of this argument is manifest, is it not clear that it bears with equal force against testimony for miracles, whether it be the deposition of those who have witnessed them, or the direct testimony of our own senses to the fact? If, as Hume asserts, a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, and these laws are so firmly established that no argument from experience can possibly surmount the evidence we have of their stability, does it not follow, not only that a miracle is incredible on any testimony of others, but also on the testimony of our own senses? If the laws of nature are so firmly proved not to be susceptible of suspension, change, or violation, that no evidence from experience can possibly surmount that proof, it is undeniable that the personal experience of our own senses is as fully excluded as the testimony of others. According to this argument, nothing *can* prove a miracle. It does not appear that Mr. Hume carried out his argument so as to assert that we ought not to credit our own senses, though we might, again and again, and under every variety of circumstances, witness with our own eyes, and ears, and hands, the performance of the most notable miracles; but it does appear, unquestionably, that his argument proves this, if it proves any thing at all. Indeed, this consequence is so undeniable that we think it could not have been repudiated by the author of the argument himself.

Hence we conclude that, as this argument necessarily leads us to discredit the evidence of our own senses, even when we have the most satisfactory reasons to believe that those senses can be under no illusive or deceptive influence, and as we can gain no knowledge of any kind, or from any source, in reference to which we have a firmer conviction that we are not deceived, than what we derive from the testimony of our senses, our own common sense teaches us that this argument, which would require us to discredit this knowledge altogether in application to miracles, must be fallacious.

In the next place, the argument in question, if conclusive against the proof of miracles, must be equally so against every thing new, coming under the head of the *marvelous*.

Miracles are incredible, says the argument, because they are against the testimony of experience. The word *experience*, as used by Mr. Hume, must mean, either our own *individual* experience, the experience

of *the whole world*, or the experience of *the world generally*. It could not have referred to the first named, for then we ought to admit nothing whatever on the testimony of others—it could not mean the experience of *the whole world*, for there are no means of ascertaining what that has been; the meaning, then, must be, that miracles are contrary to the experience of *the world generally*.

Now, is it not clear that if I am bound to discredit all human testimony for a miracle, because no such thing has been witnessed by the world generally, I am under obligation to reject every thing new and marvelous? Let this mode of reasoning be adopted, and what must be the fate of ever new discovery in science—in astronomy, geology, philosophy, or the arts? When any of these are for the first time brought forth, might not every tyro in knowledge sit in judgment upon them, and condemn them “without farther examination?” Might he not exclaim: “These are contrary to experience—who ever heard of them before?—and they are not in accordance with the known laws of nature; hence we must reject them.”

Thus, according to this reasoning, all extraordinary phenomena in nature—all uncommon efforts of memory or of genius—all the wonders of magnetism, galvanism, and electricity—the newly developed mysteries of the telegraph—the reported descent of meteoric stones—all these things we must reject, if, according to this argument, our faith is to be circumscribed by the general experience of the world.

If what has never been experienced is never to be believed, what must have been the situation of man at the beginning of the world? and how suddenly would the wheels of progress now cease to revolve, were we to admit the maxim, that every thing unknown to the experience of the past ought to be rejected as not worthy to be believed by men of sense!

We can see no good reason why miracles should not be susceptible of proof, as well as every other class of facts. That God is able to perform them, none will dispute. And what, we ask, is there in the character of God rendering it improbable that he should, on suitable occasions, thus display his power? If it be reasonable—as proved in a former chapter—that God should reveal his will to man, what evidence could be selected so direct and satisfactory, in confirmation of that revelation, as the utterances of God in a miracle?

Mr. Hume's argument seems to suppose that the “laws of nature,” as he terms them, possess an abstract existence, and are so unbending in their character that, if even the divine power were capable of suspending or changing them, no evidence could be given that would jus

tify man in believing the fact. But surely this learned metaphysician knew that the "laws of nature" are no abstract essence. All we mean by the phrase is, the method by which God usually governs his creation. These laws are the creature of the divine will, and why may not that will suspend or modify them at pleasure? It is no more difficult for God to work a miracle than to cause the grass to grow. It is as easy for Him who rules over all to speak to the raging storm, "Peace, be still!" and it shall instantly be calmed, as to fan the face with the gentle breeze. Miracles are only improbable, as they are unusual; but because they are not every-day occurrences, that is no reason why we should not accredit them when they do occur, and are sufficiently attested. Miracles are not contrary to the "laws of nature," in the real and full sense of the word, but are only over and above those laws, as they appear to us. They are not so with the Deity—they are not so in such sense as to imply that an effect is produced without an adequate cause. The difference between an ordinary event and a miracle is, that in the former a natural cause operates, which we may perceive, and, to some extent, comprehend; but in the latter a supernatural cause, whose operations we have not witnessed before in that way, and, though its presence may be known by its effects, yet the manner of its causative connection with the physical effect is concealed from our view.

That miracles may be proved by human testimony, in opposition to Hume's argument, we might safely leave to the verdict of common sense, before any jury of intelligent, unprejudiced persons. We will present the case, as given by Mr. Paley in his answer to Hume's *theorism*, thus: "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 rumor 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, burnt, 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."

But wherein, it may be asked, consists the flaw in Mr. Hume's argu-

ment? We reply, that his argument is mainly defective in two particulars:

First. In pretending to balance between two experiences, measuring that by which the laws of nature are established, and that by which men's veracity is established, against each other; whereas he is only in reality balancing *total inexperience* on the one hand, against *positive experience* on the other.

Secondly. The fallacy of the argument, as we judge, mainly consists in his blending together in the same category all kinds of testimony, both good and bad.

We conclude our notice of his argument by a brief exhibit of these fallacies.

First. We call attention to his balancing between two experiences, thus: He argues that we cannot prove a miracle, because it implies a violation of the laws of nature, and these are established by the unalterable experience of the world. This he would balance against our experience of the character of human testimony; and finding, from the experience in reference to the laws of nature, that they never fail or vary, but, from our experience in reference to human testimony, that it has often failed and deceived us, he concludes against the possibility of proving a miracle by human testimony.

To show clearly that while he thus speaks of two opposite experiences, which he would balance against each other, he is really only balancing *experience* against *inexperience*, we will illustrate the subject by a supposed case of fact. Now, admit that A is charged with having murdered B in the senate-chamber of the United States, at a certain hour of a certain day in a specified year. Twelve men depose that they were present at the time and place specified, and witnessed the act as charged. Now, we have the certified experience of these twelve men, convicting A of the crime of murder. But the counsel for A propose that they will neutralize the evidence against their client by arraying an equal amount of experience acquitting him of the crime. Now, we ask, will it do for them to bring forward the testimony of twelve men who were not present at the time and place specified, but who are ready to depose that they never witnessed the crime charged against A? Of what avail would ten thousand such testimonies be against the depositions of those who were present and witnessed the act? Is that balancing experience against experience? Surely this negative testimony amounts to nothing against affirmative evidence! This is *experience* on the one hand, against *inexperience* on the other.

But is it not the same kind of balance we have in the argument

against miracles? Let us examine. Twelve men depose that they saw, at a certain time and place, a dead man raised to life at the word of another. Now, if we propose to neutralize the testimony of these twelve witnesses, must we not do it by arraying against them twelve others who were present at the time and place, and saw no such thing? The evidence of ten thousand persons who were not present at the time and place, can be of no avail. Their testimony can only amount to this, that they have never witnessed any thing of the kind. As to the fact alleged, all their *experience* amounts to a *total inexperience*. It may be true that neither they nor any one else had ever witnessed any thing of the kind, and yet the testimony of the twelve men affirming to the fact, may also be true: there is no contrariety in the evidence. The inexperience of millions, who never witnessed a given fact, cannot neutralize the evidence of such as depose that they did witness it. It is the same principle, so far as the balancing of testimony is concerned, whether the fact in question be miraculous or merely natural. The testimony must stand or fall on its own merits. To assume that a miracle is against universal experience, is merely to beg the question; for that is the precise point in controversy. To set up general experience, which can only testify that men generally have never witnessed such things, may answer a purpose as far as it goes; but it cannot affect the question at issue, since it is not contended that miracles have been common in the world, for then they would have ceased to be such. The point in controversy is this: Was a certain miracle performed at a given time and place? The testimony in favor of miracles, when clear, explicit, ample, and conclusive, cannot be set aside by mere negative proof, whatever may be its amount or character. To proceed upon that principle, would be to ignore, on religious questions, all the principles of evidence and the rules of reasoning on all other subjects.

We now call attention to the last point proposed—the manner in which Mr. Hume's argument blends together testimony of all sorts, placing *good* and *bad* in the same category. Here, we think, is to be found the greatest defect in this noted argument. As a miracle implies, according to the argument, that either the laws of nature have been violated, or human testimony has proved false, Mr. Hume proves, by the testimony of experience, that no miracle has been wrought. Now, he argues that our experience in the truth of testimony is not so uniform as our experience in the constancy of nature. Here he contemplates all kinds of testimony in the gross; and finding that testimony has often been deceptive, he infers that the testimony deposing to the miracle in

question is not to be relied on, because we have often experienced the falsehood of testimony, but have never experienced a violation of the laws of nature. Hence, as he argues, a miracle never can be established by human testimony. Now, we ask, is not this making all testimony, however good and reliable, responsible for the defects of all other testimony, however false or deceptive? The argument is substantially this: *One kind* of testimony has often proved false; therefore *another kind* of testimony, which has never proved false, is not to be relied on—that is, a *rogue* has often deceived me; hence I ought not to trust an *honest man*, who has never deceived me. If two things are essentially different in their nature, to prove a defect in the one will not necessarily involve the other in the same defect; but this is the character of the reasoning before us.

The argument of Mr. Hume against the character of testimony, is precisely the same as if he had grouped all animals together, and condemned and punished the innocent and harmless for the mischief perpetrated by the vicious and ferocious. For illustration: The wolf, the tiger, the panther, and the hawk, according to the general experience of the world, have often been found injurious, ferocious, and destructive to the welfare, peace, and happiness of man; therefore the calf, the lamb, the domestic fowl, and the turtle-dove, must be condemned and exterminated, notwithstanding their admitted proverbial innocence and harmlessness, for the crimes of those ferocious and vicious animals in whose company they have been classed! You must never trust your child to play with the gentle lamb, to caress his beautiful bantam, or to place the innocent dove in his bosom, for the wolf, the tiger, the panther, and the hawk, have often been known to prey upon innocent and unprotected children—to pick out their eyes, or to tear their tender flesh to pieces! It is true, the calf, the lamb, the chicken, and the dove, are essentially different in their nature from the wolf, the tiger, the panther, and the hawk; but what of that? They are all *animals*—they are all grouped together in the same category; and as we have often experienced that *animals* are vicious and ferocious, therefore *animals* are not to be trusted. Because we have often experienced that a *certain kind* of animals has injured us, therefore we ought not to trust a *certain other kind* that was never known to do us harm!

This is precisely the logic of Mr. Hume. We have changed the term *testimony*, and substituted for it the term *animals*, in order to exhibit more clearly the fallacy of the argument, but the logic is identical in both cases. Mr. Hume groups together *good* and *bad* testimony—that kind which is honest, full, conclusive, and satisfactory, having every

mark of truth, and which we have never experienced to be false, with that other kind which is deceptive, incomplete, indecisive, and unsatisfactory, having every characteristic of falsehood, and which we have never experienced to be true! Now, we undertake to affirm that the diversity in the characteristics of the different kinds of animals which we have classed together is no more essential and striking than that between the different kinds of testimony in the argument under review. Stripped of its sophistical garb, we here see the real fallacious character of that far-famed argument by which it was boasted that the world was to be redeemed from superstition, and men of sense taught to turn away from all proof of miracles, "without examination, as more properly a subject of derision than of argument."

Did Mr. Hume perceive this flaw in his argument, or did he not? If he did not, it argues but little for his perspicacity; if he did, and designedly slurred it over, it argues more for the malignity of his heart than for the honesty of his purpose. We allow Mr. Hume to assert, as confidently as he pleases, that "we have never experienced a violation of the laws of nature;" but we affirm, with an equal degree of confidence, that we—yea, the world—have never experienced the falseness of that kind of testimony by which the miracles of Scripture have been proved; nor can we perceive it possible how such testimony could be false; but we can very readily perceive it possible, and even probable, that God, the author of nature and of nature's laws, should suspend or hold in check his own laws, by the intervention of a higher law, for the glorious purpose of attesting the revelation of his will to his dependent, accountable creatures.

Having said what we deemed expedient in regard to Mr. Hume's argument, considered in reference to its intrinsic merits, we close the subject by calling attention to his inconsistency. In a note appended to his *Essay on Miracles*, he has recorded the following words:

"Suppose all authors in all languages agree, that from the first of January, 1600, there was a total darkness all over the earth for eight days—suppose that the tradition of this event is still strong and lively among the people—that all travelers bring us accounts of the same tradition, etc.—*it is evident that our philosophers ought to receive it for certain.*" Now mark! these words are a part of the same *Essay* in which it is recorded: "A miracle, supported by any human testimony, is more properly a subject of derision than of argument." "No kind of testimony, for any kind of miracle, can possibly amount to a probability much less to a proof!"

Here we have a clear and explicit condemnation of his own argument

against miracles; but, stranger still, he immediately proceeds to condemn his own concession:

"But should this miracle be ascribed to any new system of religion, men in all ages have been so imposed upon by ridiculous stories of that kind, that this very circumstance would be full proof of a cheat, and sufficient with all men of sense, not only to make them reject the fact, but even reject it without farther examination."

It now appears that this celebrated essayist against the miracles of the Bible exhibits himself in several antagonistic attitudes.

He *first* informs us that miracles *cannot* be proved by any kind of human testimony whatever. He next affirms that miracles *can be proved*; and he gives an instance in which even philosophers would be bound to receive the proof as *certain*. He lastly asserts that this same testimony, by which a miracle is proved to be *certain*, in the judgment of *philosophers, if applied to the subject of religion*, should be "rejected as a cheat by all men of sense, without examination." That so acute and penetrating a metaphysician as Hume should so palpably contradict himself in so short a space, is really marvelous, and can only be accounted for by the admission of the fact, that his malignity against Christianity had supplanted his reason by prejudice. What but prejudice could lead him to affirm that a fact, though proved by such testimony that even philosophers are obliged to admit its certainty, *if applied to the support of religion*, that moment ceases to be true, and should 'be rejected as a cheat'? How can the use to which a fact is applied either change the character of the fact or of the testimony by which it has been established? For this tergiversation of Hume we can find no parallel, unless it be in that inconsistency of the Jesuits, by which they asserted that "what is *true* in philosophy may be *false* in theology." But what plea does Mr. Hume set up as an apology for such contradiction and absurdity? Simply this: that "men in all ages have been so imposed upon by ridiculous stories of that kind, that this very circumstance would be full proof of a cheat." Wonderful logic! The world has long been imposed upon by *falsehoods*; therefore nothing should be received as *true*, however it may be demonstrated! The community has long been humbugged by empiricism and quackery in medicine; therefore every principle of the science should be rejected, without examination! The country has been long flooded with counterfeit currency; therefore no coin should be received as genuine, however indubitable the evidence! The world has long been "imposed upon by ridiculous stories" of *false* miracles, destitute of real proof; therefore men of sense should "reject, without examination," all accounts of

genuine miracles, however well authenticated by the most *indubitable evidence*! Had Newton or Locke, Bacon or Boyle, Samuel Clarke or Richard Watson, or any of the renowned defenders of Christianity, perpetrated so glaring an outrage upon sound reasoning as *this*, they never could have gained the reputation they have secured as sound philosophers and able logicians; but this champion of infidelity may blunder on with a volume of sophistry, and coolly enunciate the most palpable absurdities and contradictions, yet, since he has boasted that he has set forth an argument that "will be useful to overthrow miracles as long as the world endures," his modern satellites unblushingly laud him to the skies as a paragon of perfection, both as to the acuteness of his perception, and the soundness of his logic!

Have these wiseacres of the present day—who flaunt themselves as disciples of Hume—discernment to appreciate the logic and consistency of their renowned master? If they *have*, they will blush with shame and abandon the cause of infidelity, or seek some other leader; if they *have not*, they should be left to "glory in their shame"! To combine so much sophistry in so brief an argument as that of Hume against miracles, required an ingenuity for which it is difficult to find a parallel, except in the degree of assurance with which the renowned sophism has been paraded.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER X.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. What is the substance of Hume's argument against miracles?</p> <p>2. What is the first-named objection to his argument?</p> <p>3. Does his argument bear equally against miracles, whether witnessed by our own senses, or confirmed by testimony?</p> <p>4. What is the next objection to his argument?</p> <p>5. How may it be shown that his argument⁺ would disprove every thing new and marvelous?</p> <p>6. Wherein consists the <i>ambiguity</i> of the term <i>experience</i>, as used by Hume?</p> <p>7. How are the laws of nature properly defined?</p> | <p>8. In what sense are miracles contrary to the laws of nature?</p> <p>9. What is the verdict of common sense as to the character of the evidence of miracles?</p> <p>10. What are the two capital flaws in Hume's argument?</p> <p>11. How may it be shown that his argument balances <i>experience</i> against <i>inexperience</i>?</p> <p>12. How is it shown that Mr. Hume absurdly blends together <i>good</i> and <i>bad</i> testimony?</p> <p>13. If Mr. Hume perceived this flaw in his argument, what must we infer? What, if he did not?</p> <p>14. Wherein was Hume glaringly inconsistent with himself?</p> |
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CHAPTER XI.

MIRACLES—THE CHARACTER OF THEIR TESTIMONY.

IN the preceding chapter we so far advanced in the discussion of the subject of miracles as to show that they are susceptible of proof from human testimony, whether that testimony be derived through the medium of our own senses or the affirmations of others who profess to have witnessed them. We now proceed to examine the connection between the *truth* of a real miracle and the *truth* of that system or doctrine in whose support it has been performed.

In reference to the question now proposed, there are three distinct theories which have each been advocated by some of our ablest theologians.

The *first* is: That real miracles, when certainly performed, are an absolute and indubitable evidence of the truth of the doctrines and testimony of those who perform them, without taking into consideration the nature of the doctrine or of the testimony to be confirmed.

The *second* theory is: That miracles are only conclusive evidence when the doctrines of whose truth they are given as tests do not inculcate as virtues, cruelty, deceit, or licentiousness, or what we know to be wrong; or proclaim as truths that which we certainly know to be historical or mathematical falsehoods; but, on the other hand, are characterized throughout by a pure and unchanging morality and a sacred regard for truth.

A *third* theory, claiming Dr. Chalmers as its patron, occupies a middle ground between the two already stated. It takes the position, that a miracle is not in all cases the seal of an attestation from God, but it only so when the doctrines it is used to confirm are free from all immorality and falsehood. This view differs from the second theory given only by requiring in the doctrines to be confirmed no *affirmative* moral characteristics whatever in order to give validity to their proof by miracles. The second theory not only requires the doctrines in question to be freed from immorality and falsehood, but also to present an *affirmative* exhibition of pure morality.

Dr. Chalmers has been the principal defender of the third scheme. He contends that all that is indispensable is, that the positive defects of immorality and falsehood be removed, and then, but *not till then*, miracles are a valid proof of the truth of the doctrines. His own words are: "We cannot, on the one hand, defer to the claims of a professed revelation, even though offered on the sanction of miracles, to have God for its author, if malignity and falsehood be graven upon its pages; and why? Because all our preconceptions of the Deity are on the side of his benignity and his faithfulness. We, on the other hand, could most readily surrender to it our faith and our obedience, if after having witnessed or been convinced of its miracles, we saw that through all its passages it was instinct with the purest morality; and why? Because if the discordancy between its characteristics and our previous notions of the character of God led us to reject the first, even in spite of the miracles that accompanied it, so the accordancy between its characteristics and these previous notions of the divine character lifts, as it were, the burden of this deduction off from the miracles, and leaves to them all that force and authority which properly belong to them. A revelation might be imagined which offered to our notice no moral characteristics whatever—which touched not at all on an ethical subject or principle of any kind—which confined itself to the bare announcement, we shall suppose, of facts relative to the existence of things that lay without the sphere of our own previous observation or knowledge, but without having miracles to which it could appeal as the vouchers for its authenticity. Would miracles alone, it might be asked, having neither an evil morality in their message to overcast their authority nor a good morality to confirm it—would these alone substantiate the claims of a professed revelation? We hold that they would." Again he adds: "We would reject a professed revelation charged either with obvious immorality or falsehood, even though in the face of undoubted miracles. Let the doctrine have immorality or obvious falsehood attached to it, and then it is insusceptible of being proved by miraculous evidence to have come from God. We require the immorality and falsehood to be removed from the doctrine—not to prove it, but to give it the susceptibility of being proved."

The only part of this view of Dr. Chalmers from which we are compelled to dissent is this, that we should reject the testimony of miracles unless we first satisfy ourselves that the doctrines it is used to confirm do not embody immorality or falsehood. In the brief extracts we have made from his writings, this idea, with slight change of phraseology, is several times expressed. We can see very little difference

between the theory of Dr. Chalmers and the second one, as given just previously. They both require an investigation of the doctrines which miracles are to test before we can determine whether they are susceptible of proof by miracles or not. It is true that the examination required by the position of Dr. Chalmers seems not so extended as that demanded by the second theory. The doctrines, according to Dr. Chalmers, are only to be examined *negatively* to see that they teach no immorality or falsehoods. According to the other theory, they must be scrutinized both *negatively* and *affirmatively* to see that they are not only free from the *defects* specified but that they are characterized by *positive* excellences worthy of the perfections of God.

Now, it seems to us that the same investigation which would enable us to find out whether or not the revelation were encumbered by the "disturbing force" of the defects would also evince whether or not it contained the requisite excellences. If the one scheme proves the miracles by the doctrines and the doctrines by the miracles, so does the other. In each case the argument runs in the same "circle," and this objection to it cannot be evaded. The objections to both these theories are substantially the same. In order to render miracles a proof of revelation, they require man to possess more exalted powers than belong to his nature. He must know, according to these theories, what a divine revelation ought to be before he can decide from any evidence of miracles that it has been given. He must first examine it, not in part only, or in gross, but in whole and in *minutia*; for if it contains "immorality or falsehood," it is "not susceptible of proof from miracles." Should this revelation contain ten thousand chapters, and we carefully examine ninety-nine hundred and ninety-nine, and leave but one chapter unexamined, we cannot admit the proof of miracles; for though in our whole examination we may not have been able to detect a single "immorality or falsehood," yet how can we know what may be in that single chapter which we have not examined? A single defect may lurk therein which, when once discovered, will completely nullify all that miraculous testimony on which we had confidently relied. And farther yet, though we had examined every chapter of the revelation, finding none of the specified defects, still we could not be sure that we ought to admit the proof of miracles; for in a second examination we might discover what would then strike us as very obvious defects, such as it is urged would be "barriers" to the testimony of miracles, but which, in the first examination, had escaped our notice. And farther still, if these theories be true, after we have gone through several examinations with our utmost care, detecting no "immorality

or falsehood," we must still be left in doubt—for we are not infallible, we are weak and ignorant, poorly capable, independent of revelation, of deciding what morality or truth is. What will appear to one man as all right and true, often appears to another to bear the marks of "obvious immorality or falsehood."

Apply this principle of testing the force of miraculous testimony by the character of the doctrines it is intended to confirm to some of the Scripture miracles, and it may easily be seen how it divests all those "mighty works" of Christ and his apostles, and of those "holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," of all their native dignity and power. The sea is divided by the stretching forth of a rod; the flinty rock is smitten in the parched desert, and the waters gushed forth; Elijah prays, and fire from heaven falls upon his sacrifice; Daniel bows in supplication to God, and the lions' mouths are stopped; the Saviour speaks the word, and a dead Lazarus comes forth from the tomb; the apostles pray at Pentecost, and the Holy Ghost descends in his miraculous gifts. Now all these obvious miracles were calculated to arrest the attention and to strike instant conviction to the minds of all who witnessed them that they were wrought by the "finger of God." But, according to Dr. Chalmers, these miracles are no proofs of the manifestation of the divine power, unless the doctrines taught by those who perform them are free from "the disturbing force of obvious immorality and falsehood." Then, after having witnessed the wonderful miracles of Moses with our own eyes, we must suspend our faith till we examine his doctrines, in all their minute details, before we can accredit his miraculous doings as tests of his divine commission; we must attend carefully to the matter of Elijah's bold reproofs and startling appeals before we can distinguish the works of "Elijah's God" from those of an evil spirit; we must study and learn the character of Daniel's predictions ere we can tell whether he was delivered from the lions by an evil spirit or by the interposition of the "Lord God whom he served;" we must first sit in judgment on the Saviour's teachings, from first to last, before we can know whether it was through the "Father who sent him" or through Beelzebub that he controlled the powers of nature; and we must acquaint ourselves with all the apostles' doctrine before we can know whether their commission was from above or from beneath.

It need not be argued that these revolting consequences do not follow from the theories we are here opposing. We know they did not in the minds of the advocates of these schemes, and would not be admitted by them as legitimate consequences; yet we contend that their position

necessarily involves them. Miracles are either direct, immediate, and infallible proofs of the divine interposition, or they are not. If they *are*, then, so soon as we are certainly assured of their reality, their testimony is complete, and we are bound to receive as divine revelation all those things in confirmation of which they were performed; but if they *are not*, then the validity of miracles as a proof is suspended in doubt until the doctrines which they were given to confirm are understood. Unless these doctrines are understood, how can it be known whether the testimony of miracles is *neutralized* by the "disturbing force" of "obvious immorality or falsehood," or *canonized* by the absence of any such "barriers"? The system of Dr. Chalmers, as expressed in his own words, "instead of holding all religion as suspended on the miraculous evidence," represents "this evidence itself standing at the bar of an anterior principle, and there waiting for its authentication."

We are convinced of the truth of the position given in the first theory cited, "That real miracles, when certainly performed, are an absolute and indubitable evidence of the truth of the doctrines and testimony of those who perform them, without taking into consideration the nature of the doctrine or the testimony to be confirmed." If we be asked, But what if those doctrines teach palpable immoralities or falsehood? We reply, That is utterly impossible! In Dr. Chalmers's own words: "It is enough to cut short this perplexity, that God cannot lie, and that we should not waste our intellects on the impossibilities of an airy and hypothetical region." Let real miracles, in all cases, when once we are satisfied that they have actually been performed, be regarded as the distinct utterances of God exhibited in the omnipotent doings of his manifested hand, and we will fully accredit their testimony at once, having no more apprehension that they may be used in testimony of "immorality or falsehood" than that the voice of God himself, addressing us from out a burning bush, or direct from the opening heavens, should assert what is false, or command what is wrong.

It yet remains to bring the question we have been here discussing to the *test of the Scriptures*. Those who depreciate the testimony of miracles, considering it in the abstract, not absolute and unequivocal, generally endeavor to strengthen their position by appealing to the Bible record concerning the Egyptian magicians in the days of Moses, the demoniacal possessions of the New Testament, the raising of Samuel by the Witch of Endor, and one or two other texts from which it is inferred that other agencies beside that of God may sometimes perform miracles

As to the Egyptian magicians who attempted to imitate the miracles of Moses, it is sufficiently clear that they wrought no *real* miracles. Whether their feats were performed by mere sleight of hand, accompanied by magical incantation, or by satanic agency, or by a combination of both, is not important for us to determine. The terms used in describing their efforts do not imply, as some suppose they do, that the magicians *did the thing* which Moses did, but merely that they *did so*; that is, something of like *sort*, or *resembling* what Moses had done. This will be more evident when we remember that the same expression is used when the failure of their attempted imitation is described: "They *did so* to bring forth lice, but they could not." That all the performances of the magicians were but deceptive imitations, is farther evident from the fact that they were so soon baffled in their attempts, and constrained to confess "the finger of God." If they could perform one miracle, why not another? or why desist their effort so suddenly, and confess their defeat? The solution is, that Moses had performed a miracle which their arts of deception were unable to counterfeit. Had they been *real* miracle-workers, surely it was no greater miracle to produce the *lice* than to produce the *frogs* or the *blood*, but their deceptive arts could not so well practice with the one as with the other.

As to the raising of the spirit of Samuel by the Witch of Endor, we must admit that a notable miracle was here performed. But by whom? Not by the Witch of Endor, but by the Lord Jehovah. The witch was alarmed when Samuel appeared. God saw proper just at that juncture to perform a miracle to the overwhelming of the enchantress with confusion, and for the purpose of reproving the wickedness of King Saul.

In the case of Job, and of the demoniacal possessions of the New Testament, we see no evidence whatever that miracles were performed, or even attempted, by any of these evil spirits. Satan was allowed, it is true, grievously to afflict Job, but it was by special permit from Heaven. He possessed not even *that* power of himself. He could only go the length of his chain.

The evil spirits spoken of in the New Testament, of whom numbers in that day were said to be possessed, like Satan in the case of Job, were allowed greatly to torment the bodies of their unhappy victims. They could cause them to foam at the mouth, and tear their clothes and their flesh through madness. But there is nothing miraculous in such things as these. They perform no startling wonders. They never healed the sick or raised the dead. Indeed, they had no power to enter a human body except as given them by the Almighty, nor could

they so much as enter the Gadarene swine without express and formal permission.

Again, some have thought that from the prediction of our Saviour in reference to the coming of "false Christs and false prophets," they may legitimately infer that these wicked impostors would wield miracle-working power; but this is a most unwarrantable inference. The language of the Saviour is: "For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect." Now, we venture to affirm that the only miracle that can be established on this subject is that performed by the Saviour in uttering the prediction. What are these "signs and wonders" which "false Christs and false prophets" are to exhibit? Are they *real* miracles? If so, what were they? *where* and *when* were they performed? and show us the evidences of their authentication. One of them promised to divide the Jordan, but was slain by the Roman soldiers ere he had performed the task. Another promised that the walls of Jerusalem should fall down, but his followers were soon put to the sword by the Roman Governor. Another promised to divide the sea, and, having led many of his deluded followers to death, hid himself through shame and fear. And these are the "wonders" quoted to prove that miracles are not absolute tests of the divine power. Their "signs and wonders" were not miracles, but, as described by St. Paul, "they were after the working of Satan with all power, and signs, and *lying* wonders."

Finally, that miracles are a direct and absolute proof of the doctrines and testimony in behalf of which they are performed, we will now show from the Scriptures themselves. It may readily be seen, from both the Old and New Testaments, that the inspired writers, so far from considering miraculous evidence a secondary and dependent kind of testimony, "standing at the bar of an anterior principle, and there waiting for its authentication," ever appealed to miracles as the most direct and indubitable proof of the truth of any doctrine, or of the divine mission of any person in whose behalf they have been performed.

To give but one example from the Old Testament, look at the contest of Elijah with the false prophets of Baal, an account of which is recorded in the eighteenth chapter of the first book of Kings. In the days of Ahab—that wicked king of Israel who, with a profanity hitherto unparalleled in the history of Israel, had "dugged down the altars of the true God" and set up the idolatrous worship of Baal—Elijah the Tishbite was divinely commissioned to stem the prevailing

tide of corruption. In answer to his prayer, the heavens became as brass, and for more than three years a withering drought prevailed. Ahab and the priests of Baal charged upon Elijah and Elijah's God the dreadful calamities of the times. Elijah challenged them to a fair contest upon the question. The plan was agreed upon. The multitudes of Israel were summoned to the Mount of Carmel to witness the decisive conflict between truth and idolatry. There sat the royal monarch in his robes of state. Around were gathered the eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and of the groves. And there, in his rough mountain garb, the commissioned prophet of the Lord, standing up as the fearless advocate of the true religion, proclaimed to the multitudes: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. . . . I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken." Here the issue was a plain one. It was the authentication of Baal and his prophets on the one hand, or of Jehovah and his Prophet Elijah on the other hand; but how was it mutually agreed that the matter should be decided? It was by the direct and simple testimony of a *miracle*: "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." The prophets of Baal proceeded with their offering first. "But there was no voice nor any that answered." No *miracle* testified in their favor. After every precaution had been taken by Elijah to furnish indubitable proof of a *real* miracle, he proceeded with his offering. He called upon his God, saying, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, The Lord, he is the God! The Lord, he is the God!"

Now, we ask, can any thing be more pointed than the truth here set forth, that *miracle*, and *miracle alone*, was recognized as the direct

and infallible authentication of the mission of him in whose behalf it was performed? In his prayer, Elijah asks God for the *miracle* as a divine attestation of the fact, both that Jehovah was "God in Israel," and that the doings and teachings of his prophet were divinely sanctioned. And when the miracle appeared, there was immediate and unqualified acquiescence in its testimony as final and conclusive. There was no holding of it in abeyance till the character of the teachings of Jehovah by his accredited prophet could be scanned. It was enough that an unquestionable miracle had been witnessed. They had heard the divine utterance in that palpable form, and that was the *finale* on the question.

But let us hear the claims which our Saviour founds upon the testimony of his miracles. His language is: "If I had not done among them the *works* which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." "If I do not the *works* of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the *works*." To this direct, miraculous testimony he constantly appeals. "The *works* which the Father hath given me to do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." What these works are, he informs us in the answer he sent to John by those disciples whom John had deputed to ask the Saviour, "Art thou he that should come?" "Go," said Jesus, "and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

Thus it appears that our Saviour placed the strongest possible reliance upon the simple, abstract testimony of miracles. Did he wish to impress the people with the divinity of his claims as a Teacher sent from heaven, or to show them their own responsibility for neglecting his precepts, he never paused to argue out the consistency of his doctrines with the principles of natural religion, or with the "supremacy of conscience within them." However weighty corroborative evidence of this kind may be justly estimated, he never deemed it an essential prerequisite to the testimony of miracles; but ever "taught as one having authority," founding his claims to that authority on the witness of his miracles alone. Had it been otherwise—had it been necessary for the people first to examine all his teachings to see if they embodied any thing whatever "obviously inconsistent with morality, or with historical or mathematical truth"—what would have been the condition of the illiterate masses? How poorly qualified were they for such an investigation, and how little inclined to such an exercise!

But relying, as he did, solely upon his miracles, he could point the blind beggar, the unlettered cottager, the vine-dresser, the shepherd, the publican, the fisherman, the poor, the maimed, the halt, and all the multitudes of common people, to the wonders he performed—to the water blushing to wine, to the man born blind seeing plainly, to the lame man throwing aside his crutches and leaping as the hart, to the howling tempest hushed to silence, and to the dead coming to life at his bidding—and say to all, “Believe me for the *very works*’ sake.”

Let the proud and insolent cohorts of infidelity come on in bold array, and hurl against God’s holy Son their poisoned shafts of deadly hate; let Jew and pagan both unite to snatch from off the head of Zion’s King the crown imperial he so justly claimed; let them demand of him where his credentials are, by which to prove his mission is from heaven. He stands erect in presence of opposing foes, and bids the wheels of nature pause; he speaks the word, and all the universe stands ready to attest the claims of his Messiahship. Does infidelity demand his credentials, he brings not his demonstrations nor his logic from the Academy, the Lyceum, or the Portico, but all the hidden forces of omnipotence that slumber concealed in the deep recesses of the material universe instantly become vocal in attestation of his divinity. At his bidding, the liquid element becomes a pavement of adamant beneath his tread, and the finny tenant of the deep becomes his tax-payer. With the same power that once said, “Let there be light,” he speaks the word, and visual luster flashes from the sightless ball. The signature of his mission is engraven, not with pen upon parchment, nor with chisel upon marble, but with the finger of Omnipotence upon the dome of nature. He whose behest all natures and all beings obeyed, fixed upon the throne of his own unoriginated divinity, could exclaim in majestic triumph: “The works that I do, they bear witness of me.”

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XI.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. In reference to the connection between the truth of a miracle and the truth of the system in behalf of which it has been performed, what three distinct theories have been advocated?</p> <p>2. Who was a prominent patron of the third theory?</p> <p>3. What is the objectionable part of his statement?</p> <p>4. Wherein does his view differ from the second theory?</p> | <p>5. How may its absurdity be shown?</p> <p>6. How may its inconsistency with Scripture be shown?</p> <p>7. Explain the first or true theory.</p> <p>8. What Scripture testimony has been appealed to by those who depreciate the evidence of miracles?</p> <p>9. How may those objections be set aside?</p> <p>10. How may it be shown that the first theory is confirmed by the general testimony of the Bible?</p> |
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CHAPTER XII.

MIRACLES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

HAVING proved, in our preceding chapters, the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures, it necessarily follows that the accounts of the miracles therein recorded must be received as a faithful history of facts as they transpired; and having farther shown that miracles are susceptible of satisfactory proof from human testimony, and that, when thus proved, they are direct and conclusive evidence of the divine mission of him who performs them, and of the truth of the doctrines for the confirmation of which they are wrought, it yet remains (to render the argument from this source complete) that we examine the miracles of Scripture to see if they sustain the character of *real, unquestionable miracles*, and if the *testimony* by which the actual performance of them is proved is satisfactory and conclusive.

The two points, then, to be specially noted, in regard to what we deem miraculous in Scripture, are, the *character* of the works themselves, and the *evidence* by which their actual occurrence is established. If it appear that those things in Scripture termed miraculous are not real and genuine miracles, but merely extraordinary and marvelous events which might have been produced by mere natural causes, without any immediate divine interposition, or that there is a radical defect in the evidence sustaining the facts themselves, in either case the Christian argument founded on miracles cannot be reliable and satisfactory; but, on the other hand, should it be manifest that the events in question are real and indisputable miracles, and that the evidence confirming them is clear, ample, and conclusive, then it follows that our argument from miracles rests on a firm and sure basis.

We call attention, first, to the miracles of the Old Testament. It is only important that we advert to some of the more conspicuous of these, nor will it be requisite to go into any minute investigation of them. We think that the real miraculous character of these events, and the fullness and irresistibility of the testimony in favor of their truth, stand forth so palpably upon the face of the record, that it is

scarcely possible for an unprejudiced mind to admit the history and dispute the miracle.

Let us glance, then, in the first place, at the "ten plagues" brought upon Egypt by the hand of Moses. At the bidding of Jehovah, Aaron, under the direction of Moses, stretched forth the consecrated rod upon the waters of Egypt—upon the streams, the rivers, the ponds, and pools of water, throughout all the land—and instantly they crimsoned into blood. Again the rod was stretched forth, and the whole land was covered with frogs—they teemed in the rivers, crowded into the houses, clambered upon the beds, and even the kneading-troughs and ovens were polluted by their presence. Again the rod was stretched out, and the very dust of the earth was transformed into "lice," and both man and beast throughout all the land were tormented with this hateful vermin. Again, the land was cursed with the swarms of flies or hornets—they crowded upon Pharaoh, and upon his servants, and upon all the Egyptians, filling their houses, and covering the very earth. Again, the murrain is sent upon the cattle, upon the oxen, upon the horses, upon the asses, and upon the sheep of the Egyptians, smiting them with death, on a specific day and hour. Again, at the sprinkling of the ashes of the furnace toward heaven by the hand of Moses, in the sight of Pharaoh, they became small dust, settling everywhere upon man and beast among the Egyptians, and breaking forth into boils and blains. Again Moses, at the command of God, stretched forth the rod, and a storm of mingled hail and fire ran along the ground, rending the trees, smiting the herbs, and spreading destruction to both man and beast that were found in the field among the Egyptians. And next came the plague of locusts, darkening the land, destroying the fruit, and every herb and green thing left by the hail; then the three days of "darkness that might be felt;" and last of all came the destruction of the first-born of man and beast among the Egyptians, by the destroying angel.

Now, we ask, can there be a doubt that a *real* miracle was manifest in each of these plagues? They came by previous announcement—no visible natural cause, except the stretching forth of the rod, was present in connection with them—they appeared *instantly*, and at a preannounced time—they fell upon all the Egyptians, while every Israelite with all that he possessed was preserved and escaped. These wonders were so palpable, that they could not have escaped the notice of any, or been misunderstood in their character. They were witnessed by the whole nation of Egypt, and by all the people of Israel. The Passover was instituted at the time, to commemorate the deliverance of the Israelites; and it is as clear as any thing can be, that had the Mosaic

account of these things not been true, the Israelites never could have been induced to accredit the Mosaic record as a revelation from Heaven. Two nations—the Egyptians and the Israelites—were witnesses of all these mighty wonders. Had the record of facts, as given by Moses, not been true, these whole nations of Egyptians and Israelites must have known that the account given by Moses was a cheat, and their testimony would have been recorded against it; but the books of Moses were received from the very first as a revelation from God, by that very people who must have known whether these things which they recorded were true or false. Hence we conclude that the Mosaic miracles were *real*; and they fully establish the divine legation of Moses, and the truth of his writings.

Again, look at the dividing of the Red Sea at the stretching forth of the rod of Moses, and the water standing like walls on each side while the Israelites passed over, and again flowing together just in time to overwhelm with death the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh! See the wonderful interpositions of God in behalf of his people in the wilderness—the miraculous supply of manna, falling in sufficient quantity for use on each day of the week, except the Sabbath, and a double portion on Friday for the supply of that day and the Sabbath also, and then the ceasing of the manna the day when it was no longer needed, and the fact that it was never known before or since! Look at the flinty rock smitten by the rod of Moses, sending forth an abundant stream of water in the face of all Israel! See the brazen-serpent elevated upon the pole, in view of all the tents of the multitude, and each one that had been bitten by the fiery-flying serpent, upon looking upon the serpent of brass, instantly healed of the poison! See the dividing of the waters of the Jordan, and all the people passing over on dry ground! Look at all these things, and say, Were they not *real* miracles? They occurred in the face of the whole nation—they were events that admitted of no deception with those who witnessed them, nor could the lapse of a few years render the remembrance of them indistinct. Now, we ask, could the Jewish people have been made to believe these things, either in that or any succeeding age, had they not been *true*? and, *not* believing them, could they have been induced to receive, as a revelation from Heaven, the books containing what they knew to be a tissue of palpable falsehoods? The events to which we have referred were evidently *real* miracles. No power but that which can control all nature, and suspend or supersede its laws at pleasure, can cover a whole country for three days together with the thickest darkness, and, at the same time, favor all of a specified class in the same region with

"light in their dwellings." Nor could a whole people who had witnessed such an event be misled as to the facts. Equally impossible it would be to persuade them that they *had* witnessed them when they *had not*, or that they *had not* witnessed them when they *had*. These miracles are all palpable and unmistakable in their character: they clearly and satisfactorily prove the truth of that which they were performed to establish; and such is the character of the testimony by which they have been confirmed, that we can only reject it by surrendering ourselves to the reign of almost universal skepticism. If we reject the accounts of the Mosaic miracles, we must, to be consistent with ourselves, reject all authentic history.

As to the grand design or object of these miracles in Egypt, it seems to have been threefold: *first*, to condemn the idolatrous worship of Egypt; *secondly*, to impart to the Egyptians a knowledge of the true God; *thirdly*, to show that Moses was acting under a divine commission.

How, then, do we find these plagues to pour contempt upon the principal objects of Egyptian adoration! The Nile was the most popular divinity of the Egyptians, and, as if to present a striking contrast between its imbecility and the mighty power of Jehovah, the first judgment is poured upon its sacred waters. The frog was one of their sacred animals, and it too, under the divine edict, was turned against them, and made an instrument of their punishment. In the plague of "flies" we see another manifestation of the contempt here poured upon the system of Egyptian idolatry. This insect was also an object of Egyptian idolatrous worship, and the popular idol, Baal-zebub, was styled "lord of the gad-fly." The murrain upon the cattle was also well calculated to teach them how insignificant was their god Apis (the ox) in the hands of Jehovah. In the terrible plague of "hail and fire," the principal divinities of the Egyptians—water, air, and fire—in the hand of Jehovah, are made to combine their influence to terrify and punish those who so stupidly worshiped and trusted in them for protection. In the plague of "darkness," the Egyptians were taught that another of their chief divinities—the sun—could render them no assistance or comfort when Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, saw proper to shroud his beams in a mantle of darkness. These miracles were all performed through the instrumentality of Moses, but by the avowed authority of Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews. Hence we may see how admirably they were adapted to their intended purpose—to consign to contempt the Egyptian idolatry, to promote the knowledge of the true God, and to furnish the divine credentials of Moses.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XII.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. What are the two points to be specially noted in regard to the miracles of Scripture?</p> <p>2. What miracles of the Old Testament are first noticed?</p> <p>3. How does it appear that these plagues were <i>real</i> miracles?</p> | <p>4. What two facts are thereby established?</p> <p>5. What was the grand design of the Egyptian miracles?</p> <p>6. In what way was this design accomplished?</p> |
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CHAPTER XIII.

MIRACLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

WE now proceed to notice the miracles of the *New Testament*. It has already been stated, in another connection, that our Saviour ever appealed with the utmost confidence to the works he performed as bearing witness to the divinity of his mission. At present we propose only a brief reference to a few of the most remarkable of those works, to show that they were truly *miraculous* in their character, and were *sufficiently* attested by satisfactory evidence.

We consider it unnecessary either to cite a great number of our Saviour's miracles, or to be very minute in their examination. What, we inquire, are some of the principal of his marvelous works? He changed the water to wine—he healed a man sick of the palsy by simply uttering the words, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"—he opened the eyes of a man "blind from his birth" by anointing them with clay, and directing him "to wash in the pool of Siloam"—he calmed the raging of the tempest by saying, "Peace, be still!"—twice he fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, and in three several instances he raised the dead to life. When called on by Jairus, a Jewish ruler, in reference to his daughter who was dead, he raised her to life by taking her by the hand and saying, "Damsel, arise?" Passing—in company with his disciples and a multitude of people—into the city of Nain, he met a funeral-procession bearing a dead young man, the son of a widow, to his grave. "He touched the bier, and they that bare him stood still; and he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise; and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." But the raising of Lazarus to life again, is the most remarkable miracle of this kind performed by our Saviour. Here was a man who had been dead for four days: surrounded by multitudes of people who were present, Jesus—having ordered the stone to be rolled away from the door of the sepulcher—spoke the word, saying, "Lazarus, come forth!" and the dead man instantly arose to life.

Now, we think it cannot be disputed that these works are truly mirac

ulous. They involved, at a single word, the instantaneous change of one material substance to another—the water to wine. They embraced the healing of the most inveterate diseases, and even the cure of blindness from the birth, without the employment of any adequate natural agencies. Many of them were performed in the presence of great multitudes of persons: all classes, friends and foes, disciples and persecutors, witnessed them; and they were of the most obvious and palpable character. They were open to the inspection of the external senses of all; and such were their nature, and the circumstances attending them, that imposition or collusion was impossible. The cures, though instantaneous in the production and with no adequate natural agency for their cause, were permanent in their duration, presenting favorable opportunity for numerous and deliberate inspections. Hence, if they had not been *real* miracles, there was every opportunity for the detection and exposure of the cheat; and, surrounded as the Saviour was by the wily Sadducees and Pharisees, and by the adroit scribes and doctors of the law, who were ever on the alert to entangle him in his words and to bring his doctrines into disrepute, we may be well assured that, had it been possible, he would have been convicted of deception. But the *fact* of his miracles—in the day and among the community in which they were performed—was never disputed. The *facts* were admitted, but they were attributed to infernal agency. Hence we infer that the mighty works of the Saviour were *real* miracles, and that they indubitably attest the claims of his Messiahship, and the truth of his religion.

In conclusion, on the subject of miracles, we call attention to the *resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, the greatest of all the Scripture miracles.

That there lived in the land of Judea, in the days of Augustus and Tiberius Cesar, a remarkable person called Jesus of Nazareth; that he taught a pure and sublime system of morality, and led an exemplary and self-denying life; that he was a devoted friend to the poor and the afflicted, and performed many astonishing miracles; that he was persecuted by the Jews, and accused of blasphemy and sedition; that he was condemned by the Roman governor, and crucified at Jerusalem; that his body was taken down from the cross, interred in Joseph's tomb, and a band of Roman soldiers set to guard it till the third day should be passed—*these* are facts which Christianity has always asserted, and which infidelity, neither in that age nor for centuries afterward, ever denied. Celsus, of the second century, Porphyry, of the third century and Hierocles and Julian the Apostate, of the fourth century, never

dared to dispute them; but they attributed the miracles of Jesus either to magic or infernal agency.

But did Jesus Christ rise again from the dead? or did he not? Here Christianity and infidelity join issue. Christianity affirms—infidelity denies. That the whole controversy turns upon this question cannot be denied. If Jesus Christ arose from the dead, then is he the Messiah—the Saviour of the world—and his religion is *true*; but if he did not arise from the dead, then he is an impostor, his gospel a delusion, and the hope of his followers a dream! Upon this point the inspired apostles rested their cause, when they first issued the proclamation of salvation in the name of Him who had been crucified. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was a prominent point in that sermon of St. Peter at Pentecost, delivered in Jerusalem only a few weeks after his crucifixion, when three thousand were converted in a day. Indeed, the burden of apostolic preaching was “Jesus and the resurrection.”

If, then, the great Christian controversy—whether with Jews, pagans, or whatever class of unbelievers—turns upon the question of *fact* as to the resurrection of Christ from the dead, how important that the evidences bearing upon *that fact* be carefully examined and correctly understood! Contemplating, then, the resurrection of Christ in the light of an *historic fact*, we propose to examine it by the same laws of evidence by which any other *fact* of history should be judged. If *this fact* can be sustained by such evidence as would be satisfactory and convincing to a rational mind in regard to any other fact of history, then must we either admit that this fact is *true*, and that Christianity also is *true*, or renounce our reason itself. On the other hand, if this fact *cannot* be thus sustained, then “is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” Let us therefore look at the testimony.

We must begin by assuming *as true* what is admitted on both sides—that is, the *general facts* above stated, concerning the life, crucifixion, and burial of Jesus. The only point in controversy is the simple question of fact: *Did Jesus rise again from the dead? or did he not?* If, as admitted on both sides, he was crucified, and his dead body buried and guarded as we have stated, then it is undeniable that, after the third day, his enemies, if he had not arisen from the dead, would have been able to produce that dead body, or to furnish some satisfactory account for their inability to produce it. *Did they do either?* For eighteen centuries infidelity has denied that Jesus arose from the dead, and yet infidels have never pretended to produce the dead body of him who was crucified between the two thieves! This fact *alone stands forth* as a presumptive argument, of almost irresistible power, in favor

of the resurrection of Jesus. Did not his enemies *know* that the whole controversy, as to his character and the truth of his religion, depended upon the fact of his *rising* or *not rising* again on the third day? Did they not *know* that he had foretold that he would thus rise? Was it not to prevent imposition on the part of his disciples in regard to this very thing that a guard of sixty armed soldiers was placed around his dead body? Were they not bound to produce his dead body after the third day, both to justify themselves in putting him to death and to save the world from the delusions of imposture! Would they not have produced that body, had it been in their power to do so? Can a reasonable mind doubt that, if it had been in their power, his enemies would have produced that dead body, after the third day, most promptly and triumphantly? *Did they do it?* Did they *pretend* or *attempt to do it?* And if they did nothing of the kind, what is the rational inference but that *they did not, because they could not?* And if they *could not*, unless he has arisen from the dead, they *can* furnish—they are *bound* to furnish—a reasonable and satisfactory account for that inability. *Have they furnished this account?* Can a reasonable mind *doubt* that they would have furnished the world with *the most satisfactory account* for their inability to produce the dead body of Jesus after the third day, had it been in their power?

But let us look at the only apology an infidel world has ever presented for this inability to produce the dead body of Jesus. It is *this*: "His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept." These are the words put into the mouth of the guard, and currently reported in that day among the Jews. Irrational and absurd as we may be led to consider this story, yet, as it is the only attempt the opponents of Christianity have ever made to account for the absence of the dead body of Jesus, after the third day, it demands a serious consideration. We think it will appear that this story bears upon its face such an array of improbability, that no rational mind *can believe it to be true*. Allow us briefly to enumerate some of the most obvious of these improbabilities:

1. Is it reasonable to believe that the disciples would have attempted such a theft under the circumstances? Twelve obscure peasants—without learning—without power, title, or influence—alarmed, discouraged, and scattered like sheep without a shepherd, when their Master was arrested—would they rally and risk their lives in so hopeless a task as to go, unarmed as they were, to wrest the dead body of Jesus from the custody of sixty armed soldiers?

2. But granting—what is exceedingly improbable—that they might

have made the attempt, is it probable they would have found the guard all asleep on their post at the same time? When it is known that it was death by the Roman law for a soldier to sleep at his post, would the whole band have fallen into profound sleep at the same time? Can a reasonable mind believe this to be possible?

3. But, admitting that they had all fallen asleep at the same time, is it reasonable to suppose that they would have selected, as an appropriate time for slumber, the dawn of "the third day"?—the *first hour* of the *very day* on which he had said he would rise! Would they have selected *that* time—when it was all-important for them to be vigilant—as the time for inattention and sleep? *Who can believe it?*

4. But admit *this* to have been the case, improbable as it is, is it to be believed that the disciples could have entered by stealth within the inclosure of this armed guard, broken the seal from the sepulcher, rolled the great stone away from its door, and borne away the dead body to a place of concealment—and all this in so noiseless a manner as not to have awakened one of the guard?

5. But admitting *this* improbability to have taken place also, is it to be presumed that these sixty armed soldiers, finding that their dead prisoner had been taken from them while they were asleep, would have fled immediately to the city and reported themselves guilty of a crime whose penalty was death, without making a single effort to save their own lives by searching for and endeavoring to recover the stolen body?

6. But if the soldiers were all "asleep," how could *they know* that *the disciples stole the body*? Some *other persons* may have done it, or he may have *arisen from the dead*, for aught *they* could know, if they were all "asleep"!

7. But admitting, for the sake of argument, all these improbabilities to have occurred (which no sane person *can* believe), is it probable that a Roman guard, commissioned with so important a trust, would have been permitted all to sleep at their post, and thus allow their dead charge to escape from their custody, and no arrest or trial of these soldiers be attempted, or the least inquiry made concerning so gross a neglect of so important a duty?

8. But, admitting *all this* to have occurred, who *can* believe, even if the soldiers had been allowed to escape, that the enemies of Christ would have treated these *disciples* with such lenity? Had it been believed by the Jews and the Romans, the chief priests and the elders—the enemies of Jesus—that "the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus," would not these disciples have been arrested and tried, and made to confront *these dignitaries* of the law and their sleeping witnesses, and compelled to

deliver up the stolen body or to suffer for their crime? But we hear *not one word of all this*—nothing of the arrest of the soldiers or of the disciples—no searching for the escaped corpse—no arraignment of the guilty parties through whose *neglect* or *theft* it had been abstracted! He who can believe *any one of these improbabilities to have occurred*, without evidence—yea, contrary to all reason and all testimony—is poorly fitted to charge the Christian with credulity; and yet, absurd as they all appear, we are compelled to subscribe to *every one of them* if we deny that *Jesus rose from the dead*! Is it possible, we ask, that one intelligent man of all these soldiers, chief priests, and elders, could have believed that the disciples stole the dead body of Jesus? The position is too unreasonable and absurd. They did not believe it themselves—they *knew* better!

Had they believed this story, how can we account for the fact that they never argued it afterward, when it would have been so natural for them to have done so, and when it would so admirably have suited their purpose? Indeed, the absurd story put into the mouth of the guard was conjured up amid so much hurry, confusion, and trepidation, that it did not exhibit the usual sagacity of its authors. They seem ever after to have been ashamed of it themselves. Ready enough are these Jewish rulers and members of the Sanhedrim to persecute and arraign the apostles for preaching that Jesus was arisen from the dead; but why did they never charge home upon them the theft they had committed? Only a few days after these events occurred, first Peter and John, and next the whole college of the apostles, are arrested and brought before the Sanhedrim! Here the apostles, in the very face of the great council and of the inventors of the story of the stealing of the body, boldly assert the resurrection of Jesus, and affirm that they have seen, felt, and conversed with him, after his resurrection. How passing strange, that in no one of these instances was the crime of having stolen the dead body of Jesus brought against the apostles! Why were they not formally accused of this theft? Why were not Joseph of Arimathea and the whole Roman guard instantly summoned and made to confront them? The great question is, the resurrection of Jesus, which the apostles affirm; but not one of the guard is called to confront them. The stealing of the body is not named! And why? Because the Sanhedrim *did not believe the story*!

Having considered—and, as we humbly conceive, demonstrated—the unreasonable and unsatisfactory character of the only plea an infidel world has ever presented to account for the inability of the enemies of Jesus to produce his dead body, after the third day, we now call

attention to the *positive* testimony in favor of the resurrection of Christ.

Look at the *number* of the witnesses. It is written: "At the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." This was not only a maxim in the Jewish law, but it has been incorporated in the codes and recognized in the judicial proceedings of all civilized lands. "*Two or three witnesses*" of good understanding and character, unimpeached and uncontradicted in their testimony, will establish any legally-contested fact before any enlightened civil tribunal under heaven! In the light of this maxim, examine the witnesses in favor of the resurrection of Christ.

1. The guard of *sixty soldiers* fled to the city, and told the chief priests the whole story of the resurrection of Jesus, and never disguised the *fact* till bribed by large sums of money to give currency to the absurd story which we have considered. Let their testimony therefore, free from bribery and corruption, be recorded in favor of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

2. Early on the third morning, as we learn by collating the accounts of the several evangelists, a company of women (as many as *five or more*), coming to the sepulcher with spices and incense, ointment and perfumes, for the purpose of embalming the dead body, met their risen Lord, conversed with him, and, going immediately to the city, were the first among his friends to depose their testimony that he had risen from the dead.

3. On the same day, two disciples (*not of the twelve*, as it appears), as journeying to the village of Emmaus, met the risen Jesus on the way, who was "known of them in breaking of bread." Returning to Jerusalem the next morning, they manfully testified that "the Lord was risen indeed."

4. For the space of forty days after his resurrection, Jesus appeared on various occasions to the eleven apostles, giving "many infallible proofs" that he "was alive after his passion," and speaking to them "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

5. St. Paul, in summing up to the Corinthians the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, adds to those already enumerated as many as "five hundred brethren," of whom he was "seen at once;" and "last of all," he says, "he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." Now, add together all these witnesses—the sixty soldiers, the five women, the two travelers to Emmaus, the eleven apostles, and St. Paul himself—and you have the number of at least five hundred and seventy-nine persons who saw the risen Jesus, and bore their testi-

mony to the *fact* in question. Surely, there is no paucity as to the number of witnesses!

We now look at the *character* of these witnesses, and the *facts connected with their testimony*.

Who were these apostles? Though not men of learning or position—though taken from the humble walks of life—yet they were all, so far as we can judge, men of strong common sense and unimpeached integrity. Their history and their writings are ample proof of this. And this much being conceded, we think it will also be admitted that if Jesus Christ *did not* rise from the dead, then the apostles were either *deceived themselves* in asserting that he had arisen, believing the assertion to be *true when it was not*, or they *knowingly deceived others*, asserting for *truth what they knew* to be *falsehood*. If neither of these positions can be accredited, then it irresistibly follows that Jesus Christ did arise from the dead. But, we ask, is it possible that the apostles and all their co-witnesses could have been deceived in this matter? If they had stolen the body of Jesus and burnt it to ashes, or hidden it away, *did they not know the fact?* Had they not been familiarly acquainted with their Master for years, and did they not affirm that they had been with him again and again after his resurrection, under a variety of circumstances, for “forty days”? Could they have been deceived as to his identity? Admitting that one or two might have been deluded on one or two occasions, could ~~so~~ many have been deluded on so many occasions? Slow of heart to believe as they were, they could not have been deceived in this matter! If Jesus had not arisen, his dead body was somewhere—either his friends or his enemies had made away with it, or they yet had it in keeping. His enemies *had not*, or they would have produced it, or accounted for its absence; and if his friends had his body, or had disposed of it, they knew he had not risen from the dead. Hence it seems impossible that the apostles could have been deceived themselves in this matter. If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, *they knew it*.

But, *lastly*, can we suppose that the apostles willfully and knowingly imposed upon the world, by preaching the resurrection of Christ, when they knew the doctrine to be false? If he had not arisen from the dead, they knew him to be an impostor: he had deceived them, and *they knew it*. Will rational men still cleave to an impostor, knowing him to be such, and sacrifice their lives to sustain the posthumous honor of one who has done them the deepest injury!

But we ask, where, among all the considerations that can influence the rational mind, can we find the motive that could have induced the apostles to proclaim, as they did, the resurrection of Jesus, knowing it

to be false? Was it for the sake of popularity, or ease, or pleasure, or riches? What prospect had they of any of these? Toil and reproach, persecution and tribulation, bonds and imprisonment, suffering and death, were all they received, and all for which they could hope on earth! Is this the reward that can stimulate the rational mind voluntarily to persist in asserting a known pernicious falsehood? No! The apostles were honest and sincere men. They proclaimed what they believed—they testified what they had seen! They *knew* their Master had arisen from the dead! Without titles, without wealth, without emolument, they challenged both Jews and Gentiles to the conflict, preached Jesus and the resurrection in the face of an opposing world, healed the sick and raised the dead in the name of the risen One, and sealed the truth of their doctrine by the sacrifice of their lives.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XIII.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. What are some of the principal of our Saviour's miraculous works?</p> <p>2. How may it be shown that they were <i>real</i> miracles, and were actually performed?</p> <p>3. What is considered the greatest of the Saviour's miracles?</p> <p>4. What facts connected with it were admitted by unbelievers?</p> <p>5. How should this question of fact be examined?</p> <p>3. How did the Jews account for the absence of the dead body of Christ?</p> | <p>7. What considerations are specified showing the absurdity of this account?</p> <p>8. Has infidelity ever accounted for the absence of Christ's dead body in any other way?</p> <p>9. What witnesses are enumerated as testifying to the resurrection of Christ?</p> <p>10. What are the circumstances named rendering their testimony so satisfactory and conclusive?</p> |
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CHAPTER XIV.

THE PROPHECIES OF SCRIPTURE IN RELATION TO THE JEWS.

THE second great division of the *external evidences* of Christianity is that founded on PROPHECY. To this we now call attention. *Prophecy*, taken in connection with its fulfillment, is no less *miraculous* than are *miracles* technically so called. Miracles *proper* are miracles of *power*; but prophecies are miracles of *knowledge*. As the one implies an exercise of divine *power*, suspending or controlling the laws of nature beyond the ability of uncreated beings to exert, so the other implies an exhibition of divine *knowledge*, penetrating the distant future, and predicting events yet to come in a manner surpassing the skill of all created intelligences. The one can only be performed by Omnipotence; the other, by Omniscience. Hence, as these attributes belong to God alone, it necessarily follows that whatever is performed or sanctioned by them is stamped with the divine signature, and must be *true*. We, therefore, adopt the principle, that *real* miracle and *real* prophecy are both absolute and indubitable evidence of the truth of that which they are used to confirm.

That this kind of testimony is of the highest possible order, and should command our immediate and most unreserved confidence, results from the very constitution of our nature. Common sense teaches us to accredit the testimony of our own external senses when satisfied that they are under no deceptive illusion, and also to rely implicitly upon the evidence of our own experience when fully assured that there can be no mistake as to its teachings. And the knowledge we derive from these sources is as deeply stamped with *certainty* as any other kind of knowledge we can possibly acquire. Indeed, we cannot travel behind the record here furnished us either for the correction of the lessons of our own senses or personal experience, or with the hope of finding any thing more certain on which to rely. Common sense teaches us that if we are not certain that the lessons here taught us are true, we can be certain of nothing. It is not by argumentative disquisition that we become satisfied that none but God can perform a miracle *either* in

power or of knowledge, but we are taught this lesson by the dictates of common sense itself. Our knowledge derived from this source can neither be rendered *more* nor *less* certain by discussion. In this department, the plain, unlettered peasant is on a level with the erudite philosopher. The one, independent of all investigation, is just as well satisfied as the other *can* be, that God only, and he to whom he imparts the power, can perform miracles. And as prophecy is nothing but a *miracle of knowledge*, every man knows by the simple exercise of his common sense that *real* prophecy must flow from the divine omniscience. Hence it is a sure testimony of the divine legation of him who utters it.

In judging concerning the testimony of professed prophecy, there are two points to be particularly examined: First, the *character* of the prediction; secondly, the *fact* of the fulfillment. If the pretended prediction be a *real* prophecy—that is, a preannouncement of a future event, either so distant or so improbable or complicated as obviously to be beyond the power of finite minds, by any exercise of skill or sagacity, to be able to acquire a knowledge of the things it announces—and if it be ascertained that the facts correspond fully with the prediction, then we may conclude that we have in the case the elements of *real* prophecy. But, on the other hand, should it appear that the pretended prediction is only what might have been foreseen by human sagacity as likely to occur, or what might be no more than a shrewd or fortunate guess—or if it be found that the facts in the case do not show the fulfillment of the pretended prediction, in either event—we fail to find the elements of a *real* prophecy.

To decide the question whether a given prophecy be *real* or *surreptitious*, we know of no safer or more reliable principle by which to be governed than the dictates of *common sense*. When possessed of the necessary information as to the facts in the case, the judgment of any impartial man of common sense will enable him with little difficulty to distinguish between a real and a spurious prophecy.

There are a few very simple rules which every reflecting mind will be led to observe in judging the force of prophetic testimony. *First*, testimony of this kind increases generally in convincing power in proportion as the fulfillment is *remote in the future* from the announcement of the prophecy; *secondly*, it also increases in proportion as the specifications in the prediction are *increased in number*; *thirdly*, this testimony increases in force in proportion as the events predicted are in themselves *improbable*.

To examine the predictions of Scripture generally, would requir

volumes, instead of a brief, concise treatise. All we propose is, a presentation of a few of the more conspicuous and important from both the Old and the New Testaments. We begin with the Old Testament:

I. PROPHECIES RELATING TO THE JEWISH NATION.

We will first present some of the Scriptures, predicting calamities that were to befall the Jews:

"When ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you, and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight; and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied. . . . And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters. . . . And I will bring the land into desolation, and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen; . . . and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. . . . And ye shall perish among the heathen. . . . And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands. . . . When they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly." Lev. xxvi.

"Thou shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. . . . Thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore. . . . Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee. . . . The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. . . . He shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail. . . . The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young. . . . And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down. . . . And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee. . . . The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil . . . toward her children which she shall bear; for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates. . . . And ye shall be left few in number. . . . And ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth

even unto the other. . . . And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest. . . . And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships; . . . and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you." Deut. xxviii.

In these prophecies there are no less than eighteen distinct, minute, and striking specifications. They descend, in description, to small and circumstantial incidents, and embrace items totally distinct from each other, having no mutual connection or dependence; such, for instance, as these: The language of their conquerors was "not to be understood" by the Jews; they were to be taken captive "to Egypt in ships;" women were to "eat the flesh of their offspring," etc. Nor was the language dark and obscure, or shrouded in mysterious emblem. It was mostly simple narrative, recording events of an obvious and striking nature. The besieging of cities, the slaughter of vast multitudes, the dispersion of the nation, etc.; concerning such facts as these, there could be no misapprehension. They were obvious to the senses of all.

Observe the time and circumstances under which these predictions were uttered. The Israelites were yet amid their wilderness journeyings, they were yet strangers and pilgrims, they had not yet crossed the Jordan, or reached the promised land. The Canaanites were yet to be rooted out, the land distributed among the tribes, and the people organized and established as a nation. In this unsettled and precarious state of affairs, how could Moses, unless inspired from above, certainly and minutely foretell the fortunes of this people for centuries to come? And yet it has been demonstrated that all these wonderful prophecies had been delivered by Moses in the hearing of all Israel, and recorded in the book of the law to be laid up "by the side of the ark," while as yet this people had but an embryo nationality.

But let us more particularly glance at some of these plain predictions, and their striking fulfillment.

Unless divinely inspired, how could Moses so graphically preannounce the "famine and pestilence" that were to come upon this people? And yet how literally was it fulfilled! If it be supposed that he might merely have conjectured the facts, and that the fulfillment was *accidental*, we demand, How could he have foreseen the peculiar *extremities* in the case? In the siege of Samaria, "an ass's head was sold for four-score pieces of silver." In the siege of Jerusalem, by Nebuchadnezzar, "the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land." And who can read Josephus and not be overwhelmed

with the view of the sufferings of the people from the raging famine during the siege by the Romans? But it was foretold that they should "eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters," and that even "tender and delicate women" should eat the flesh of their own children. At three different times, according to authentic history, was this remarkable prediction fulfilled. Once at the siege of Samaria by the Syrians, six hundred years after the announcement of the prophecy, when "two women gave up their children to be eaten." 2 Kings vi. 28, 29. Again it was fulfilled, nine hundred years after the prediction, in the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, when it was declared, "The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children." Lam. iv. 10. Again, after the lapse of fifteen hundred years from the prediction, it was verified in the dreadful siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, when a noble woman, pressed to madness by the famine, killed and ate her own sucking child. (Josephus.)

How could mere human sagacity foresee that the Jews would become a numerous and prosperous people, and yet their land be reduced to "desolation;" and the people be "minished," and become "few in number." And yet it is declared: "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! . . . Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude; she dwelleth among the heathen, she indeth no rest." Lam. i. 1, 3. Josephus testifies that there fell, during the siege, by the hands of the Romans, and by their own faction, one million one hundred thousand Jews; and *ninety-seven thousand* Jews were carried into captivity by the Romans.

Moses had foretold, many centuries before, that the Lord would "root them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation" (Deut. xxix. 28); and Josephus and the Roman historians have recorded the fulfillment.

But the Jews were to be borne "in ships," and sold into Egypt as slaves till the market should be so glutted that "no man would buy them." Josephus testifies that the captives taken by the Romans, "who were above seventeen years of age," were sent to Egypt; and it cannot well be doubted that, as they were "in bonds," they were conveyed "in ships"—for the Romans then had a fleet in the Mediterranean. And it is said, the market was so overstocked that they were sold for the merest trifle—so that the words of Moses were verified "No man shall buy you."

But it was farther predicted that the Jews should be dispersed among all nations—"plucked from off" their own land, and "scattered among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other." Look at

the fulfillment. First, the ten tribes are carried captive by the Assyrians; next, the two other tribes by Nebuchadnezzar; finally, the Romans completed the dispersion by taking away "their place and nation."

For a long time after this, the poor "wandering Jews" were not allowed to set foot in Jerusalem, and at one time they were forbidden to press with their feet the soil of Palestine. Still they survive—not "destroyed utterly," but exiles from their own land, and disconsolate "strangers and sojourners" in all lands. "What a marvelous thing is this," says Bishop Newton, "that after so many wars, battles, and sieges—after so many rebellions, massacres, and persecutions—after so many years of captivity, slavery, and misery—they are not destroyed utterly; and, though scattered among all people, yet subsist a distinct people by themselves. Where is any thing like this to be found in all the histories and in all the nations under the sun?"

They were to be restless—finding no ease; neither were "the soles of their feet" to "have rest." And to what land or clime have they not wandered or been driven? They have trodden the burning deserts of the South, and waded the drifting snows of the North, but a permanent resting-place they have found nowhere.

Again, how could Moses know centuries beforehand that the nation by whom they should be conquered, and subjugated, and dispersed from their own land, throughout all the earth, should come "from far, from the end of the earth, swift as the *eagle* flieth, whose tongue" they should "not understand," and should be "a nation of fierce countenance"? The *remoteness* of the Romans from the land of Judea, the *warlike* character of their nation, the *rapidity* of their conquests, the fact that their military ensign was the "*eagle*," and that the Jews knew nothing of their "*language*;" these notorious facts most exactly and specifically verify the fulfillment of the prophecy.

Once more, they were to become "an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations." How literally has this been fulfilled! Pagans, Mohammedans, and Christians, however much they may differ from each other, have all agreed in meting out to that people, who had "despised and rejected" the Holy One, the same kind of treatment which the wicked Jews had awarded to their Messiah. In all lands, this cast-off and down-trodden people have been despised, persecuted, and abused. In all the ages of their banishment, and in all countries, they have ever been under the ban—like the unclean spirit, "seeking rest, and finding none." If in a few places temporary respite has been allowed them, this has been the exception; the general conduct of the

nations of the earth toward the Jews has been a virtual fulfillment of the prophetic imprecation of that deluded people, who, eighteen centuries ago, exclaimed: "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" Yet for all this, like "the burning bush" seen by Moses, they are "not consumed." The hand of God is still over them; and, though dispersed among all nations, they are kept from being identified with or absorbed by any. They have everywhere remained a distinct and peculiar people, awaiting the fulfillment of another prophecy by their conversion and restoration. "What nation hath subsisted," says Bishop Newton, "as a distinct people in their own country so long as these have done in their dispersion into all countries? And what a standing miracle is this exhibited to the view and observation of the whole world! Here are instances of prophecies delivered above three thousand years ago, and yet, as we see, fulfilling in the world at this very time; and what stronger proof can we desire of the divine legation of Moses? How these instances may affect others, I know not; but, for myself, I must acknowledge they not only convince but amaze and astonish me beyond expression." Could human sagacity have uttered these prophecies? If not, then were they given by inspiration of Heaven; and if so, as Keith has observed, then "the Bible is true—infidelity is founded forever, and we may address its patrons in the language of St. Paul: 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!'"

Before we close our notice of the fulfillment of prophecy in relation to the Jews, we call attention to that remarkable prediction concerning their restoration from the Babylonian captivity, effected through the instrumentality of Cyrus, the Persian king.

In the forty-fourth and forty-fifth chapters of Isaiah, that prophet utters on this subject the following prediction:

"Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, . . . that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof; that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers; that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right-hand I have holden to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut. . . . I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places."

The first thing to be noted in relation to this astonishing prediction

is, that it was uttered by Isaiah, according to all chronology, more than a century before Cyrus was born, and more than two centuries before its fulfillment in the taking of Babylon.

Josephus records that Cyrus, after he had entered Babylon, was shown a copy of the prophecy of Isaiah, in which the name of the Persian monarch was mentioned as the instrument through whom the Jewish people should be restored to their own land. He adds, also, that this restoration under Cyrus occurred just *seventy years* after the Jews had been carried into captivity; thereby fulfilling the prediction of Jeremiah, uttered before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, that after they had served the King of Babylon and his posterity *seventy years* they should be restored to the land of their fathers. Josephus also testifies that the prediction of Isaiah concerning Cyrus had been given "one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished." So that there can be no doubt that this prediction, in which the Persian king is named and his taking of the city of Babylon so graphically described, had been published among the Jews, and that its inspired author was dead long before the event took place. Were there no other specification in the prophecy, but simply the naming of Cyrus as the instrument through whom the Jews should be delivered from their captivity, this would be one of the most remarkable, and, to my mind, one of the most convincing, prophecies of the Bible. But look at the number and striking character of the specifications; and then the wonderful exactitude of the fulfillment.

Cyrus is not only God's "shepherd" and his "anointed" to "perform his pleasure" in the deliverance of his people, but through his instrumentality Jerusalem is to be inhabited, the rivers are to be dried up, the cities to be rebuilt, Jerusalem to be rebuilt, the foundation of the temple to be relaid, the loins of kings to be loosed, the gates of brass opened, the bars of iron broken, and the treasures of darkness given to Cyrus! Here are ten distinct specifications, all plain and obvious to the senses of every beholder, so that misapprehension is an impossibility. But next, behold the fulfillment! Every single specification, according to the most authentic and uncontradicted testimony of all ancient history, is most fully and most clearly fulfilled. Who can doubt that the cities of Judea were rebuilt after the return of the Jews? that Jerusalem, their dilapidated capital, was again reared up? that the Jews returned, and again dwelt in their city? that the channel of the Euphrates was dried up, and its waters turned in another direction? that the temple was again erected under the superintendence of Ezra and Nehemiah? that the gates of brass and the bars of iron, placed at

the passage of the river, gave way for the entrance of Cyrus and his army? that the "loins" of Belshazzar were "loosed," and that his knees were smiting together, and that he was quaking with alarm from the "handwriting upon the wall," at the very moment when Cyrus was entering with his hosts by the "two-leaved gates" that had been left open? and that Cyrus soon possessed himself, amid the darkness of the night, of the immense "treasures" of that wealthy metropolis? Thus all the specifications were met. The prediction and fulfillment embraced each other. The evangelical prophet was seen to be a faithful chronicler of posthumous history. His mission was honored with the seal of Heaven's authority; and an evidence from prophecy in favor of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures was here exhibited for the confirmation of the Church, too overwhelmingly conclusive to be demolished by the assaults of infidelity.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XIV.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. What is the second grand division of <i>external</i> evidence?</p> <p>2. In what sense is the evidence from prophecy <i>miraculous</i>?</p> <p>3. Is the evidence from prophecy absolutely conclusive?</p> <p>4. What is the character of the evidence based on our own senses or experience?</p> <p>5. In judging of the evidence from prophecy, what two points are specially important?</p> <p>6. What are the <i>elements</i> of a real prophecy?</p> | <p>7. What three rules are given for judging of the force of prophetic testimony?</p> <p>8. What predictions concerning the Jews are given, and can their fulfillment be shown?</p> <p>9. What was the prediction concerning their restoration from the Babylonian captivity, and how was it fulfilled?</p> <p>10. What number of specifications are found in the prediction here given?</p> <p>11. Can it be shown how each was fulfilled?</p> |
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CHAPTER XV.

PROPHECIES IN RELATION TO NINEVEH, BABYLON, AND TYRE.

BESIDES the prophecies concerning the Jewish nation, some of which we have briefly noticed, the Old Testament records many striking predictions in relation to several of the neighboring nations and cities, which have been fulfilled in a very exact and impressive manner. Our limits will not allow us to enter into a particular discussion of these prophecies, but we would refer those who wish to examine them particularly to the writings of Bishop Newton and the Rev. Alexander Keith.

We will, however, make a few remarks in reference to *Nineveh*, *Babylon*, and *Tyre*.

Nineveh was the ancient capital of Assyria, and was at one time "an exceeding great city, three days' journey" in circuit, and numbering more than six hundred thousand souls (Jonah iii. 3). It was in a prosperous condition up to the period at which it comes under the notice of prophecy. Nahum is the prophet who utters the prediction concerning this city, and Diodorus Siculus is the principal historian who records the fulfillment.

The prophet, while yet the hum of business and the noise of revelry and dissipation were heard in the streets and halls of this wicked and voluptuous metropolis, lifted up his voice and pronounced its coming doom. He declared that, suddenly and unexpectedly, the city should be overtaken with a complete and final overthrow. Amid the drunkenness and debauchery of the king, his courtiers, and his soldiers, they were to be defeated and despoiled of their wealth. With flood and flame, their proud capital was to be *totally* and *irretrievably* ruined. The prophet's words are: "The Lord will make an utter end of the place. Affliction shall not rise up the second time; she is empty, void, and waste: the Lord will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. How is she become a desolation—a place for beasts to lie down in!"

In a little over one century from the announcement of the approach

ing ruin by the inspired prophet, all that he had spoken came to pass—that is, the calamities threatened were realized—the judgment came as it had been foretold. But it had also been foretold that this judgment should never be removed; and there, upon that devoted spot, it rests to this day! In the second century, Lucian searched for the spot where Nineveh once stood, but he found no vestige of it remaining, and declared that “none could tell where it was once situated.” And till recently none could point to the ground pressed by the footsteps of Jonah, as he preached repentance to the Ninevites. Let the proud skeptic, before he scoffs at the prophecies of the Bible, account for the standing miracle we here behold! When that rich metropolis of the first great empire of earth was yet standing in all its greatness and glory, who but Omniscience *could* have foreseen that so soon *it* would perish and be blotted out forever? How *true* are the predictions of Heaven! Where God has made a record by the pen of prophecy, neither the mutations of earth nor the ravages of time can efface the changeless impress!

Babylon, the renowned metropolis of Chaldea, figures largely in prophetic scripture. Mr. Richard Watson remarks that “the reasons why prophecies, so numerous and particular, were recorded concerning Babylon, appear to have been: 1. That Babylon was the great oppressor of the Jews. 2. That it was the type of all the powerful persecuting enemies of the Church of God, especially of Rome, and in its fate they may read their own. 3. That the accomplishment of prophecy, in the destruction of so eminent an empire, might give a solemn testimony to the truth of the Scriptures to the whole earth, and to all ages.”

To transcribe all the prophetic scriptures relating to Babylon, would require more space than our plan will allow for the whole subject. All we propose is, a glance at the nature of the Christian evidence derived from this source. The most numerous and important predictions under this head are furnished us by the Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. The words of the former, so far as the taking of Babylon by Cyrus and the releasing of the Jews from captivity are concerned, have already been noticed.

We now call attention to the predictions concerning the complete destruction of Babylon, and the utter desolation by which the place it once occupied with so much pride and pomp was to be cursed. In the words of Jeremiah, it was foretold, at a time when Babylon was in all its pride and greatness, that Babylon should “be desolate forever. . . . Every purpose of the Lord shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant. . . .

Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment and a hissing, without an inhabitant. . . . Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby. . . . The wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein; and it shall be no more inhabited forever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbor cities thereof, saith the Lord, so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein."

Jer. l., li.

The Prophet Isaiah speaks as follows: "Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. . . It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces." Isa. xiii.

The fact is unquestionable that these predictions were uttered, and recorded in the sacred writings of the Jews, while Babylon was yet in its greatest strength and prosperity. According to the chronology of Horne, Isaiah commenced his prophetic career more than *eight hundred years* before Christ; Jeremiah more than *six hundred years* before Christ; and Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar and the Jews carried captive *six hundred and six years* before Christ—while Jeremiah was exercising the prophetic office. But the Jews had been *seventy years* in their captivity before they were delivered by Cyrus; hence it is evident that Isaiah must have delivered his predictions concerning the downfall of Babylon at least two centuries before these calamities commenced; and Jeremiah must have delivered his predictions on the subject about a century before the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, for he died, as is supposed, in Egypt, in a year or two after the commencement of the captivity, having exercised his prophetic office more than forty years.

The evidence, then, is complete, that while Babylon was yet the most wealthy and prosperous city the world had ever seen, and all the surrounding country unparalleled in fertility, and while the powerful and haughty monarch, peacefully occupying his throne of grandeur, was boastfully exclaiming, "Is not this great Babylon which *I* have built by the might of *my* power, and for the honor of *my* majesty?"—while

this scene was transpiring in that "wonder of the world," the metropolis of this great empire—it was even *then* recorded upon the prophetic page of Isaiah: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen!"

That the fulfillment of these prophecies is wonderfully exact and striking, cannot be denied. Historians and travelers who have described the fate of Babylon, and portrayed the astounding desolation and ruin which for ages past have reigned throughout all that once prosperous country, have been unable to perform this task in more truthful or graphic language than that furnished by the inspired prophets *three thousand years* ago, when the Euphrates flowed through the most fertile plains upon earth, and that majestic city—the mistress of the nations—sat upon her banks. What philosopher or politician, gazing then upon Babylon—with her sixty miles of circumference, inclosed by a wall eighty-seven feet thick and three hundred and fifty feet high—with her Temple of Belus, the most magnificent structure the world ever saw—with her wonderful hanging-gardens, and her two hundred and fifty imposing towers, some of them looking down upon the city from an altitude of more than six hundred feet, and casting their shade far upon the surrounding plain—what philosopher, politician, or "wise man of the East," under such circumstances, by any human foresight or sagacity, could have predicted the ruin and desolation which have long brooded over that ill-fated region?

In describing the district where Babylon once stood, Mignan says: "Our path lay through the great mass of ruined heaps on the site of 'shrunk Babylon;' and I am perfectly incapable of conveying an adequate idea of the dreary, lonely nakedness that appeared before us." Porter testifies that "a silence profound as the grave reigns throughout the ruins. Babylon is now a silent scene—a sublime solitude." Raewolf, in the sixteenth century, says: "The eye wanders over a barren desert, in which the ruins are nearly the only indication that it ever has been inhabited." Keppel remarks: "It is impossible to behold the scene and not be reminded how exactly the predictions of Isaiah and Jeremiah have been fulfilled." The place is also full of "doleful creatures." The lion has his lair among the ruins and caverns; the hyena, the jackal, the owl, and the bat, are there in great numbers. Mignan adds: "Venomous reptiles are very numerous throughout the ruins. . . . On pacing over the loose stones and fragments of brick-work which lay scattered through the immense fabric, and surveying the sublimity of the ruins, I naturally recurred to the time when these walls stood proudly in their original splendor; when the halls were the scenes of festive magnificence, and when they resounded to the voices of those whom

death has long since swept from the earth. This very pile was once the seat of luxury and vice, now abandoned to decay, and exhibiting a melancholy instance of the retribution of Heaven. It stands alone. The solitary habitation of the goat-herd marks not the forsaken site." Frederick, speaking of the ruins of Babylon, says: "Neither of the wall nor of the ditch has been seen the least vestige by any modern traveler. Within twenty-one miles distance along the Euphrates, and twelve miles across it in breadth, I was unable to perceive any thing that could admit of my imagining that either a wall or ditch had existed within this extensive area." Keppel adds: "The divine predictions against Babylon have been so totally fulfilled in the appearance of the ruins, that I am disposed to give the fullest signification to the words of Jeremiah: '*The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken.*'"

Porter describes his emotions, on looking upon the scene, in the following language: "The whole view was particularly solemn. The majestic stream of the Euphrates, wandering in solitude like a pilgrim monarch through the silent ruins of his devastated kingdom, still appeared a noble river, under all the disadvantages of its desert-tracked course. Its banks were hoary with reeds, and the gray osier willows were yet there on which the captives of Israel hung up their harps, and, while Jerusalem was not, refused to be comforted. But how is the rest of the scene changed since then! At that time those broken hills were palaces—those long, undulating mounds, streets—this vast solitude, filled with the busy subjects of the proud daughter of the East; now, wasted with misery, her habitations are not to be found, and, for herself, the worm is spread over her."

We will conclude our remarks, in reference to Babylon, by a quotation from the Rev. Alexander Keith: "Has not every purpose of the Lord been performed against Babylon? What mortal shall give a negative answer to the questions subjoined by the author of these very prophecies?—'Who hath declared this from ancient time? Who hath told it from that time? Have not I, the Lord? And there is no God beside 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 records of the human race, it has been said with truth, do not present a contrast more striking than that between the primeval magnificence of Babylon and its long desolation. How few spots are there on earth of which we have so clear and faithful a picture as prophecy gave of fallen Babylon, when no spot on earth resembled it less than its present desolate, solitary site! Or could any prophecies respecting any single place be more precise, or wonder

ful, or numerous, or true, or more gradually accomplished through many generations?"

Tyre was another ancient city, once famed for its wealth and commercial importance. During its days of prosperity it was no less remarkable for its luxury, pride, and wickedness, of almost every description, than for its opulence and commercial advantages. As a just punishment for the abominations of its inhabitants, the prophets had predicted its overthrow. In these predictions there are several remarkable specifications which have been fulfilled with great exactness. To some of these we will call attention.

First. It was foretold that *Tyre* should be destroyed by "Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon." And we have the testimony of Josephus, that this Chaldean king, with his armies, besieged *Tyre* for thirteen years. He demolished the strong walls of the city, put to the sword the inhabitants who failed to escape in their vessels, plundered the city of its immense treasure, and left it a desolate ruin.

Secondly. It was foretold that, after an interval of *seventy years*, the city should be restored, and the inhabitants should return to their merchandise and their gain; and again, that it should be destroyed the *second* time, and that after this the people would turn away from their idolatry to the worship of the true God. Again, it was foretold that the city should be at length so *totally destroyed* as to become "like the top of a rock—a place to spread nets upon;" and that it should "be built no more."

After the destruction of *Tyre* by Nebuchadnezzar, it was rebuilt on an island a short distance from the site of the old city. It was predicted that this second city should be *consumed by fire*. This overthrow of the *second* or *insular Tyre* was the work of Alexander the Great. It required him a seven months' siege and immense labor to take the city. Using the rubbish and the dilapidated materials of the old city, he built a causeway from the main land to the island, so that his forces could pass over and bring their engines of war to play upon the walls of the city. Alexander exercised great cruelty toward such as fell into his hands in the taking of *Tyre*. Eight thousand he put to the sword, two thousand he crucified, and thirty thousand he sold for slaves.

The taking of the city by Nebuchadnezzar is foretold by Ezekiel. Ezek. xxvi. 7-12.

The *seventy years* of desolation that were to intervene before the restoration of the city were foretold by Isaiah and Jeremiah. Isa. xxiii. 15-18; Jer. xxv. 11, 12.

The taking of the insular city by Alexander was predicted by

Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. Isa. xxiii. 6; Ezek. xxvii. 32; Zech. ix. 3, 4.

That all these prophecies were fulfilled with great exactitude, is testified by the histories of Josephus, Diodorus Siculus, and Quintus Curtius.

But the point which we wish more particularly to note is, the prediction that Tyre should be finally destroyed, and so utterly blotted out as to become "like the top of a rock," and "should be built no more."

Ezekiel says: "And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea." Ezek. xxvi. 4, 5. Again, in the fourteenth verse, he repeats: "And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more." Again: "I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more." Verse 21.

In reference to these prophecies, there is a seeming discrepancy—Tyre is to "be no more," and yet it is still to be "like the top of a rock—a place to spread nets upon." But how exactly is this explained by the event of the fulfillment! for the old part of the city has never been rebuilt—"thou shalt be built no more;" but where the insular city stood there are a few miserable inhabitants who subsist mainly by fishing, and "spread their nets" to dry "upon the rock."

Who can fail to notice the exact accomplishment of the distinct items in these prophecies? Alexander, in the taking of Tyre, formed a "mound from the continent to the island, and the ruins of old Tyre afforded ready materials for the purpose. The soil and rubbish were gathered and heaped; and the mighty conqueror, who afterward failed in raising again any of the ruins of Babylon, cast those of Tyre into the sea, and *scraped* her very *dust* from her. Volney said, in his "Ruins," that "the whole village of Tyre contains only fifty or sixty poor families, who live obscurely on the produce of their little ground and a *trifling fishery*." With this description agrees that of travelers generally. Bruce says: "Tyre is a rock whereon fishers dry their nets."

Cotovicus visited Syria in 1598. He testifies that "Tyre appears to be utterly ruined, so that it has ceased to be any longer a city, and only some inconsiderable vestiges of her former ruins are now visible. If you except a few arches and baths, and some ruined walls and collapsed towers, and mere rubbish, there is now nothing of Tyre to be discerned."

Maundrell says: "On the north side it has an old, ungarrisoned Turkish castle, besides which you see nothing but a mere Babel of broken walls, pillars, vaults, etc., there being not so much as one entire house left; its present inhabitants only a few poor wretches, harboring themselves in the vaults, and subsisting chiefly on *fishing*, who seem to be preserved in this place by Divine Providence, as a visible argument how God has fulfilled his word concerning Tyre, that it should be 'as the top of a rock—a place for fishers to dry their nets on.'"

That we may see the conclusive force of the argument from prophecy, so far as the fate of Tyre, Babylon, Nineveh, and other ancient cities, is concerned, it is only necessary for us to reflect **that** the predictions concerning any one city can be applied *to it alone*. If the prophets were not divinely inspired, but announced their predictions by mere human sagacity or guess, how happens it that they were never in error, that their guess was never wrong, and their sagacity never at fault? Why is it that the predictions concerning Babylon were not met in the case of Tyre, and those relating to Tyre in the case of Babylon? As Dr. Nelson has sensibly remarked: "Suppose it had been said of some other city besides Babylon, that it should become *pools of water*, and *never more inhabited*; may not our curiosity be somewhat excited when we notice that, of the thousand proud and wicked cities around, the prophet did not happen to write these things of any, Babylon excepted? And had they been written of any other one city, town, or village, that **was** or has been upon the face of the earth, we know of none where their truth could be seen. These, and the other particulars we have noticed, came to pass many centuries after these books of prophecy were written. May we not inquire, with some degree of wonder: Suppose some writer of the Old Testament had happened to conjecture and write concerning Damascus, Sidon, Jerusalem, Jericho, Nineveh, or any city, town, or village, except Tyre, that the soil on which it stood should be scraped away, and fishermen's nets rest upon its nakedness, who could point to its accomplishment? On the broad surface of the earth, or along the protracted shores of the ocean, the prophet was surely fortunate to hit upon the only spot where these things did happen. Long and dreadful calamities were threatened to Jerusalem; but suppose it had been said that owls and tigers should inhabit pleasant palaces there, how many thousands now would clap their hands, rejoicing that such a conjecture was ever made! Suppose some one, two thousand years ago, had ventured to guess that the time would come when a shepherd would be afraid to drive his flock where Palmyra of the desert then stood, or through Athens, Ephesus, or Rome

—name any spot you please, but one—and where would his reputation stand?”

Another thing to be considered in regard to these predictions concerning particular cities is, that the events foretold are often the most improbable that, according to human reason and foresight, could well be imagined. How strangely improbable was it that the great Nineveh should be so wiped from existence that none could tell where once she stood! How astonishing that the mighty Babylon should be doomed the fee-simple and uncontested heritage of “doleful creatures,” ravenous beasts, and poisonous reptiles; and that those rich and fertile plains should be consigned to remediless and perpetual sterility! And how marvelous that the wealthy and magnificent Tyre, at that time the mistress of the ocean and the greatest commercial emporium of the world, and so favorably situated for a perpetual career of wealth, prosperity, and importance, should so soon become a desolation, and the very “dust be scraped” from where she stood and cast into the sea! Though more than two thousand years have passed since the prophetic word was uttered, yet to this day the curious traveler, as he looks upon the spot where ancient Tyre once rose in so much magnificence and grandeur, may behold in the “fishermens’ nets” whitening “upon the top of the rock” the “finger of God” pointing to the verification of prophecy, as a demonstration to the world, through its successive ages, that *the Bible is true*. The mightiest achievements of human genius and power, the admiration of nations, and the “wonder of the world,” are made tributary to the divine behests; and whether in smoldering ruins or in dreary wastes they yet exist, or whether they have passed from earth away, leaving no trace behind—in either case, those *ruins* and those *wastes*, or the fact that *none such exist*, shall stand before the world as Heaven’s visible and abiding witness, that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XV.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. What prophecy concerning Nineveh is quoted?</p> <p>2. How is its fulfillment shown?</p> <p>3. How long before the event had the overthrow of that city been predicted?</p> <p>4. What reasons may be assigned for the fact that Babylon figures so largely in prophecy?</p> <p>5. What prophets furnish the most of these predictions?</p> <p>6. Enumerate some of the most striking, and show how they were fulfilled.</p> | <p>7. What travelers have described the ruins of Babylon, as foretold by prophecy?</p> <p>8. For what was Tyre once remarkable?</p> <p>9. What predictions are quoted concerning this city?</p> <p>10. How is a seeming discrepancy in the prophecy explained?</p> <p>11. What travelers are quoted concerning Tyre?</p> <p>12. How were the predictions fulfilled, and what is the proof?</p> <p>13. What remarkable characteristic had all these predictions?</p> |
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CHAPTER XVI.

PROPHECIES IN RELATION TO MESSIAH.

IN considering the prophecies respecting Messiah, we can but briefly glance at a few of the most important. Although the genuineness and authenticity of the Old Testament, containing these prophecies, have been sufficiently established in a preceding chapter; yet it may be proper here to remark that, in reference to the subject now before us, we have a pledge against the possibility of corruption or interpolation that does not apply so forcibly to any other portion of the Old Testament. This is furnished us by the fact that the Jews, the original and special guardians of these Scriptures, have still in their possession the same Old Testament which they profess to have received from the beginning; and this Jewish copy perfectly corresponds with that now in use among Christians. And as the Jews are known to have ever been the bitterest enemies of Christianity, we may be certain that they never would have changed any of those predictions concerning Messiah so as to favor the Christian cause. Could they have been tempted to undertake such a fraud, they unquestionably would have aimed at such alterations as would have made *against* instead of *for* Christianity. But while the facts just stated secure us against the possibility of any corruption of the record since the coming of Christ, the existence of the Septuagint version, and of the Samaritan copy of the Pentateuch, and various other considerations set forth in a former chapter, demonstrate that there could have been no fraudulent alterations made in these writings for centuries before.

We have every evidence, then, that the nature of the subject admits to satisfy us that all those predictions in the Old Testament, upon which Christians rely as pointing to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, were written many ages before the coming of our Saviour.

The evidence of Christianity derived from this source may be viewed in its application, either against the *Jew* or against the *infidel*. In the former case, if we can show that these predictions are fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and never have been or can be fulfilled in any other per-

son, the Jew will necessarily be compelled to admit the truth of Christianity; but in the controversy with infidelity more will be requisite. We must not only show that the prophecies are clearly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, but that they are such as could have proceeded from none but God. If these two points be established, then the truth of Christianity will be demonstrated. That the Jewish nation had for many centuries been looking forward to the advent of an illustrious Deliverer, or Messiah, and that this fact was known to the surrounding nations, cannot be disputed; but the question before us is, Was that Messiah clearly predicted? and were those predictions verified in the person and history of Jesus?

The predictions of the Old Testament relating to Messiah are exceedingly numerous. Beside types, many of which are remarkably plain and striking, and remote allusions, and figurative expressions, which evidently refer to Christ, though with a degree of indirectness, there are as many as *a hundred* passages making a plain and direct reference to him; any one of which, in its fulfillment, furnishes proof that it could only have proceeded from Omniscience. What, then, must be the weight of the testimony when all these evidences are combined?

The first intimation of a coming Messiah is found in a laconic sentence delivered almost immediately after the fall. It was there announced that the "seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent." In this prediction is clearly foretold that unmitigated warfare between good and evil, light and darkness, holiness and sin—the kingdom of God on the one hand, and the kingdom of Satan on the other—which then commenced, and which in every age and in every part of the world has been perpetuated to the present day. We witness it in the crime of Cain and in the faith of Abel, in the preaching of Enoch and Noah and in the wickedness of the antediluvians, in the patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian dispensations, and in every age and everywhere, in the efforts of the bad to corrupt the good, and of the good to reform the bad. Now, we ask, who but Omniscience could, in the world's infancy, have pictured so truthfully its history for all time to come?

This promise was afterward given in an enlarged form to Abraham: "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Gen. xxii. 17, 18. Here we see not only the numerous posterity of Abraham foretold, but also the fact that Messiah was to descend from him, and that all nations were to share the blessings of his reign.

We will now call attention to some of those prophecies of Messiah more specific in their character.

1. The TIME at which he was to appear was distinctly noted in prophecy: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." Gen. xlix. 10. In this passage one particular is fixed as to the *time* of Messiah's advent. He was to come before the *scepter* had departed from Judah. Dr. Clarke thinks the true reading of this passage requires the word *tribe* instead *scepter*. If this be correct, then the meaning is, that Shiloh must appear before Judah shall cease to exist as a *distinct tribe*. And so he did—for this distinction of the tribes was not confounded and lost till the nationality of the Jews was destroyed by the Romans a short time after Christ. But let the word be taken as we have it in our version, "scepter," and it may apply either to the political or ecclesiastical "scepter." It is well known that the Romans at the time of our Saviour, though they had conquered and brought the Jews under tribute, did not interfere at all with their religious institutions; and as religion and politics in the Jewish economy were one united system, the Jews were still allowed, to a great extent, to govern themselves; so that when Jesus appeared, the "scepter" had not yet "departed from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet." The Jewish kings were of the family of David, of the tribe of Judah, up to the time of the captivity; and afterward their governors, whether under the Persians, Greeks, or Romans, were continued in the same line. Indeed, when the ten tribes revolted, the tribe of Benjamin was blended with that of Judah; by it the authority of the nation was ever wielded—from it the nation took its name.

The principal members of their Sanhedrim and their chief rulers, though their dominion was sometimes interrupted by foreign interference, always belonged to the tribe of Judah. Thus we see that up to the coming of Jesus the "scepter," in an important sense, was retained by "Judah," and a "lawgiver from between his feet," was recognized. But very soon after that period that "scepter" and "lawgiver" departed; and, in the necessity of the case, must have departed *forever*—for their tribes have been confounded, and their nationality destroyed for many centuries. The "scepter" *has* "departed from Judah," and "Shiloh" *has* "come." Let the wandering and commingled tribes read this prophecy, and believe in Jesus.

Again, the Prophet Daniel, about six hundred years before Christ foretold the very year in which he should suffer death. His words are: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy

holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." Dan. ix. 24.

Agreeably to the unanimous opinion of the learned in Scripture prophecy, *weeks* are to be computed according to the Jewish mode of reckoning *Sabbatic years*, counting each *week* as a *week of years*. Hence, the "seventy weeks" of Daniel amount to just *four hundred and ninety years*.

Dr. Clarke remarks that "most learned men agree that the death of Christ happened at the Passover, in the month *Nisan*, in the *four thousand seven hundred and forty-sixth* year of the Julian period. *Four hundred and ninety* years, reckoned back from the above year, leads us directly to the month *Nisan* in the *four thousand two hundred and fifty-sixth* year of the same period—the very month and year in which Ezra had his commission from Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia (see Ezra vii. 9), to restore and rebuild Jerusalem."

Again, the PLACE in which the Messiah should be born had been named in prophecy. "But thou *Bethlehem* Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel." Micah v. 2.

Isaiah predicted the *miraculous works* of Messiah. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." Read the history of Jesus in the writings of the evangelists, and see how literal the fulfillment.

Once more, in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah there are found so many minute facts in reference to the character, life, and death, of Messiah, which are all so literally fulfilled in the history of Jesus that it is quite impossible to account for the wonderful coincidences, except upon the supposition that the prophecy was written after the crucifixion of Jesus, or that it was dictated by divine inspiration. That the former supposition *cannot be true*, we have already shown beyond the possibility of a reasonable doubt; and that the latter *must be true*, we are compelled to believe, or discard the dictates of common sense.

But let us look at some of these minutely descriptive items. Messiah was to be manifested in a *low and humble condition*: "He hath no form nor comeliness, and no beauty that we should desire him." He was to be treated with *contempt*: "He was despised and rejected of men . . . we esteemed him not." He was to be a man of great *grief* and *sorrow*: "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid, as it were, our

faces from him." He was to *suffer for others*: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." He was to be *meek* and *submissive* amid his sufferings: "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." He was to be *harmless* and *blameless* in his life: "He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." He was to be put to death under circumstances of *ignominy*: "He was numbered with the transgressors." He was to be honored in his *burial*: He was "with the rich in his death." He was to *intercede* for others: "He made intercession for the transgressors."

It is impossible for any one to read this life-like picture of the Messiah, and compare it with the history of Jesus as portrayed by the evangelists, without being impressed with the conviction that the one is the exact similitude of the other. No painter ever drew a picture more like the original than is this description of Isaiah like the reality we behold in the life and death of Jesus. As we read the prophet's simple and pathetic statements, we can almost see the blessed Saviour as looking down upon Jerusalem he "wept over it," or as standing at the tomb of Lazarus he mingled his tears with those of Martha and Mary, or when he came near the final tragedy as he stood first before Caiaphas, then before Pilate, next before Herod, then again before Pilate, and lastly on the Mount of Crucifixion. In all the scenes here exhibited we see the exact pencilings of the prophet, only that the lines are more distinct and the colors more vivid. Who can contemplate these glowing prophecies, and mark the exact accomplishment in every particular, and fail to recognize the hand of God? Isaiah wrote nearly six hundred years before Jesus was born, yet he describes his character as though every scene in his history were then before his eyes. Is this the result of mere human foresight? Can it be the achievement of chance? And how can we account for the fact, that of all the thousands of the descendants of Abraham these predictions are all fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and in him alone? Surely *he is the Messiah, and the Bible is true!*

Numerous other minute circumstances concerning Messiah were predicted in the Old Testament, a few of which we here mention. He was to be *born of a virgin* (Isa. vii. 14). He was to come in *the spirit and power of Elijah* (Malachi iii. 1, 4, 5). He was to be a *prophet* (Deut. xvii. 15-18). He was to enter Jerusalem *riding upon an ass* (Zech. ix. 9). He was to be betrayed and sold for *thirty pieces*

of silver (Zech. xi. 12). With his price *the potter's field was to be bought* (Zech. xi. 13). That *vinegar and gall* should be given him in his thirst, and *lots cast for his vesture* (Ps. xxii. 18). That *not a bone of him should be broken* (Ps. xxxiv. 20). That his side *should be pierced* (Zech. xii. 10). That he should teach *in parables* (Ps. lxxviii. 2).

How remarkably and exactly all these predictions were fulfilled in Jesus, we need not show: the New Testament reader is familiar with the facts. How shall we account for these minute predictions, and their exact fulfillment? "There is no possible means of evading the evidence of the fulfillment 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 Bolingbroke; 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 willful 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 willfully 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." (Watson's Institutes.)

We close our remarks on the prophecies of the Old Testament in the language of Bishop Hurd:

"1. 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 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 prop-

ecy 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* (Rev. x. 7).

"2. Farther, besides 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 world—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.

"3. 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 counts 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 all 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, that imagination itself can project. Such is the scriptural delineation, whether we will receive it or no, of that economy which we call prophetic."

A brief reference to some of the predictions of our Saviour will close this chapter, and all we intend to present on the evidence of prophecy.

Our blessed Saviour several times foretold to his disciples *his own death*, with several of the accompanying circumstances: that it should occur *at Jerusalem*—that the *chief priests and scribes* should arrest and arraign him, but deliver him over to *the Gentiles* to be mocked, scourged, and crucified—that Judas should *betray* him, *Peter* deny him, and *all the disciples* forsake him.

Again, he very emphatically predicted his *resurrection on the third day*.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, which was so abundantly established in a preceding chapter, is a very important fact in connection with the evidences of Christianity. It is a double testimony, either division of which, taken by itself, would be irresistibly conclusive on the question, but when both are taken together, assurance is rendered doubly sure. In the first place, the resurrection of Christ from the dead, had he never foretold it at all, furnishes the most indubitable evidence of the truth of his religion; in the second place, the fact that his resurrection had been plainly predicted by himself, and that it took place at the time and as he had predicted, demonstrates the divinity of his mission on the ground of the fulfillment of prophecy. Hence it is obvious that, in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, the truth of his religion is proved both by the *fact* of his resurrection, which is a miracle of *power*, and by the *fulfillment* of his prediction, which is a miracle of *knowledge*.

He also predicted the *descent of the Holy Spirit* on the apostles in *miraculous powers and gifts*, and specified *Jerusalem* as the *place* at which this promise should be fulfilled. He farther specified the *effects* that should follow their possession of the miraculous powers thus conferred—that they should cast out devils, speak with new tongues, take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it should not hurt them. The Acts of the Apostles furnishes abundant testimony of the complete accomplishment of all these predictions.

Finally, Jesus Christ, in a very formal, solemn, and specific manner, foretold the destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem. He specified that so complete should be this destruction, that “not one stone should be left upon another;” and that Jerusalem should be trodden under foot by the Gentiles, till the time of the Gentiles should be fulfilled; and that this overthrow of the temple and city should take place before that generation should pass away. About forty years after *this* prediction was uttered the city was taken by the Romans, and the

temple razed to the ground. It has never been rebuilt. The apostate Emperor Julian collected the Jews from all countries, and, under the conduct of his favorite Alypius, sent them to rebuild their temple. Thus aided and assisted by all the powerful appliances this mighty potentate could command, when stirred to energy by his malice against Christianity, they went forth resolved to rebuild the temple, and thus confront and defeat the predictions of Jesus; but, while inflated with the prospect of immediate success, they were suddenly seized with a panic, and driven in confusion from the place of their operations. It is testified by several historians—and, among them, by Ammianus Marcellinus, a pagan philosopher, and an intimate friend of Julian—that “horrible balls of fire, breaking out near the foundation with frequent and reiterated attacks, rendered the place from time to time inaccessible to the scorched and blasted workmen; and that the victorious element continuing in this manner, obstinately bent, as it were, to repel their attempts, the enterprise was abandoned.”

Now we ask, What probability was there, at the time this destruction of Jerusalem was foretold, that any thing of the kind would so soon occur? The Jews were then a very feeble people, and it would seem exceedingly unreasonable to expect that they would soon attempt a conflict with so mighty a power as the Empire of Rome. The Gospels recording these predictions were published in the land of Judea—that of St. Matthew at least twenty or thirty years before the events in question transpired, and the others a very few years afterward; and all of them several years before the destruction of Jerusalem. Antiquity testifies that all the apostles, except John, were dead before the Romans, under Titus, invaded Judea; and it so happens that he is the only one of the evangelical authors who makes no mention of these events.

These events were to be preceded by *signs*. False Christs were to arise; seditions, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and wonderful appearances in the heavens; persecutions and apostasies of the disciples, and wickedness of the people—*these* were to be precursors of the judgment on Jerusalem. The city and temple were not only to be totally destroyed, but many were to perish by the sword, and great numbers be carried into captivity, and the tribulation was to surpass any thing that had ever before been witnessed in the world; the Jewish Commonwealth was to be entirely overthrown, and the Jews themselves dispersed among all the nations of the earth; the Christians, being warned by Christ to flee to the mountains, were thus to escape.

It is a remarkable fact, that the principal historian who records the

series of events which embody the fulfillment of these predictions, is Josephus, a learned Jew of the sacerdotal order. That *he* should designedly have shaped his history to favor the Christian cause, is a supposition too absurd to be entertained. But his testimony is corroborated by that of Philo, another Jewish historian, as also by the writings of Suetonius, Tacitus, and Seneca.

The language of Josephus, in describing the calamities of these events, is the same in substance with that of the prediction. Christ says: "There shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be." Josephus says: "The calamities of all people from the creation of the world, if they be compared with those suffered by the Jews, will be found to be far surpassed by them." Titus, the Roman General, who, after seven months' siege, took the city, after a survey of its immense fortifications, exclaims: "By the help of God we have brought this war to a conclusion. It was God who drew out the Jews from these fortifications; for what could the hands or military engines of men avail against such towers as these?"

That all these predictions of Christ concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, with its accompanying circumstances and the events that were to follow, have been most specifically and certainly fulfilled up to the present period, cannot be questioned, unless we discredit the concurrent testimony of the most reputable Jewish and pagan historians of those times.

Having thus concluded our glance at the evidence of Christianity from prophecy, omitting entirely many predictions which might have been cited, and taking a much more cursory view of most of those we have noticed than the subjects might seem to demand, yet we are fully persuaded that the evidence we have presented is sufficient to carry the conviction to every candid mind, that *the Bible is in truth the word of God.*

Few, if any, of the *objections* of infidels to the evidence from prophecy are at all applicable to those predictions which we have had under review. If this statement be correct—which, we think, will be generally admitted—then it will follow that, admitting the validity of those objections (which we are far from doing) in reference to those prophecies to which they may be thought to be applicable, yet they cannot weaken the force of the evidence derived from the passages we have adduced. It cannot be claimed, in reference to any of *these* predictions, that they were written *after the events*; it cannot be alleged that, like the heathen oracles, they were delivered in *general, vague, or am-*

vigorous terms; it cannot be maintained that any of them have *failed in the fulfillment*; nor can it be said that any of them are *frivolous* or *fanatical* in their nature. On the contrary, it is as clear as evidence can render any truth of the kind, that they were all written *before* (and many of them *thousands of years before*) the events; that they were expressed in language *minute, definite, and perspicuous*; that they have been fulfilled with *remarkable exactitude*; and that they refer to events of the most *serious* and *important* nature—in a word, they are predictions, in their character and circumstances, worthy of God, from whom they emanated, and most clearly demonstrative of the divine legation of those who delivered them, and of the truth and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Let the sinner examine and weigh them well, and receive, believe, and obey the truth, and gain eternal life; or reject, deride, and rebel, and perish everlastingly!

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XVI.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. What evidence do the Jews furnish that the prophecies concerning Messiah have not been interpolated since his advent?</p> <p>2. By what evidence is it proved that they could not have been corrupted for centuries before?</p> <p>3. How may the evidence from prophecy be viewed in its application?</p> <p>4. What number of plain predictions concerning Messiah are found in the Old Testament?</p> <p>5. What are some of these predictions, of a <i>specific</i> character?</p> | <p>6. What is the proof from the prophecy of Daniel's "seventy weeks"?</p> <p>7. What prophet foretold the place of Christ's birth?</p> <p>8. What prophet foretold his miracles and sufferings?</p> <p>9. What other minute circumstances were foretold concerning him?</p> <p>10. In what sense were his predictions of his death a <i>double</i> miracle?</p> <p>11. How is it proved that his prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem was fulfilled?</p> |
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CHAPTER XVII.

THE SUCCESS OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE argument in favor of revelation founded on the *success* of Christianity, by some authors, has been embraced under the general division of *external* evidences; and by others, under what they term, *collateral* evidences. But as, in our arrangement, the *collateral* division is entirely omitted, and the whole included within the two general divisions of *external* and *internal*, we think the evidence founded on the success of Christianity more naturally falls under the head of the *external* evidences. We think this kind of testimony is as properly embraced under the division to which we have assigned it as is that arising from miracles or prophecy. Indeed, the evidence from the success of the gospel is so closely allied to both that which is founded upon miracles and that which is founded upon prophecy, that some authors have considered it under the one head, and some under the other. But this will be more manifest as we proceed to analyze the argument now to be discussed.

The truth of Christianity may be established, from the great success which attended the first promulgation of the gospel, in two ways: *First*, this success had been abundantly predicted not only by the Old Testament prophets, but also by our Saviour himself; hence the fulfillment of this prediction amounts to a *prophetic* argument in favor of Christianity, independent of any divine interposition by which that success may have been produced. *Secondly*, the means by which this success was effected were entirely inadequate to produce it, without divine interposition; hence the realization of the success, under the circumstances, is evidence that it was effected by divine interposition, and, consequently, this amounts to *miraculous* testimony in favor of Christianity. It follows, therefore, that if the several parts of this argument, as just presented, be satisfactorily sustained, it will afford us a moral demonstration, both prophetic and miraculous, that Christianity is true.

The first elementary part of the argument, as just stated, requires us to show that this great success of Christianity had been *foretold* by

prophecy. That such was the fact, no reader of the Bible can dispute. In the predictions of those prophets and righteous men, who spoke of the coming Messiah, they dealt extensively, and with rapture, upon the victorious conquests and prosperity of his kingdom. They portrayed his triumphs in the following strain: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." "Behold, I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers." "For the Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." "The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh."

That these predictions refer to Messiah's reign, even the bigoted Jew cannot deny. And what language could depict in colors more vivid the conquests of his kingdom?

Our Saviour's own predictions on the subject are equally explicit. He said to his apostles: "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." And again: "This gospel of the kingdom shall first be preached to all the world for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come."

From all these Scriptures, it is very manifest that the great success of Christianity had been foretold in prophecy; and thus the first element of our argument is sustained.

The next question before us is this: Did Christianity, in the first ages of its promulgation, meet with a remarkable degree of success? On this question, our first authority is the Acts of the Apostles. Here we learn that at the opening of the gospel dispensation at Pentecost *three thousand* souls, in one day, were converted and added to the Church; and, a few days afterward, about *two thousand* were converted in one day. And the book of the apostolic Acts is but one continuous record of the labors, the persecutions, and abundant successes of the apostles. It appears from this sacred record alone that in a few years many thou-

sands, and some from all classes of society, were converted through the labors of the apostles—not only in Jerusalem and throughout Judea, but at Rome, Ephesus, Corinth, Galatia, Thessalonica, and almost all parts of the Roman Empire.

Our next testimony as to the great success of the gospel, in that early period of its history, is derived from the Christian writers of that day.

Justin Martyr, a learned divine of the second century, published, about the year 146, a work called "A Dialogue with Trypho the Jew," in which he uses these words: "There is no nation, whether of barbarians or Greeks, whether they live in wagons or tents, amongst whom prayers are not made to the Father and Creator of all through the name of the crucified Jesus."

Tertullian, who flourished about the close of the second century, writes thus: "In whom but the Christ now come have all nations believed? for in whom do all other nations (but yours, the Jews) confide? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Cappadocia, and the inhabitants of Pontus, Asia, and Pamphylia, the dwellers in Egypt, and the inhabitants of Africa beyond Cyrene, Romans and strangers, and in Jerusalem, both Jews and proselytes; so that the various tribes of the Getuli and the numerous hordes of the Mauri, all the Spanish clans and different nations of Gauls, and the provinces of the Britons (inaccessible to the Romans, but subdued by Christ), and of the Samaritans, and Dacians, and Germans, and Scythians, and many unexplored nations, and countries, and islands unknown to us, and which we cannot enumerate—in all which places the name of the CHRIST who has come now reigns, for who could reign over all these but Christ the Son of God?"

The same author, in a letter to the Proconsul of Africa, in which province Tertullian himself also resided, speaks as follows: "If we Christians were disposed to array ourselves as open or secret enemies of our opposers, a sufficient force of numbers is not wanting to us. Many of the Moors and Marcomanni, as well as other tribes more remote, even to the very ends of the earth and throughout the world, are with us. We are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled all your places—your cities, your islands, your castles, your towns, your council-houses, your very camps, your tribes, your palace, your senate, your forum. We have left you nothing but your temples. If we should break away from you, and should remove into some other country, the mere loss of so many citizens would overwhelm your government; and would itself be an effectual punishment. Doubtless you would be

frightened at your own solitude. The silence and stupor which you would witness would cause the world over which you reign to appear as dead. Your enemies would then be more than your citizens who should remain."

Undoubted as this testimony of the early Christian Fathers must be considered, since their apologies were public papers addressed to the emperors and magistrates of the Roman Government; yet, as the mere fact that they were Christians may excite suspicion against the truthfulness of their statements, we will now adduce the testimony of pagan historians to the same effect.

The celebrated Roman historian, Tacitus, lived contemporary with the apostles, in the first century, and none have questioned his integrity as a chronicler of the events of his day. In giving an account of the great fire which reduced to ashes the city of Rome, he says: "But neither by human aid nor by the costly largesses by which he attempted to propitiate the gods was the prince able to remove from himself the infamy which had attached to him in the opinion of all for having ordered the conflagration. To suppress this rumor, therefore, Nero caused others to be accused, on whom he inflicted exquisite torments, who were already hated by the people for their crimes, and were vulgarly denominated CHRISTIANS. This name they derived from CHRIST, their leader, who, in the reign of Tiberias, was put to death as a criminal while Pontius Pilate was procurator. This destructive superstition, repressed for a while, again broke out, and spread not only through Judea, where it originated, but reached this city also, into which flow all things that are vile and abominable, and where they are encouraged. At first they only were seized who confessed that they belonged to this sect, and afterward a vast multitude by the information of those who were condemned not so much for the crime of burning the city as for hatred of the human race. These, clothed in the skins of wild beasts, were exposed to derision, and were either torn to pieces by dogs or were affixed to crosses; or, when the daylight was passed, were set on fire that they might serve instead of lamps for the night."

The reputation of Suetonius, another Roman historian, is also well established. He speaks as follows: "He (Claudius) banished the Jews from Rome, who were continually raising disturbances, Christ (Chrestus) being their leader." In the Life of Nero, the same author says, "The Christians were punished, a sort of men of a new and magical religion."

Pliny the younger was also a Roman writer, renowned for his intelligence and veracity. This learned philosopher, in the beginning of

the second century, wrote a letter to the Emperor Trajan, containing the most satisfactory testimony to the point in hand. He speaks as follows: "Pliny to the Emperor Trajan wisheth health," etc. "It is my custom, sir, to refer all things to you of which I entertain any doubt; for who can better direct me in my hesitation or instruct my ignorance? I was never before present at any of the trials of the Christians, so that I am ignorant both of the matter to be inquired into and of the nature of the punishment which should be inflicted, and to what length the investigation is to be extended. I have, moreover, been in great uncertainty whether any difference ought to be made on account of age, between the young and tender and the robust; and, also, whether any place should be allowed for repentance and pardon, or whether those who have once been Christians should be punished, although they have now ceased to be such, and whether punishment should be inflicted merely on account of the name where no crimes are charged, or whether crimes connected with the name are the proper objects of punishment. This, however, is the method which I have pursued in regard to those who were brought before me as Christians. I interrogated them whether they were Christians; and, upon their confessing that they were, I put the question to them a second and a third time, threatening them with capital punishment; and when they persisted in their confession, I ordered them to be led away to execution—for, whatever might be the nature of their crime, I could not doubt that perverseness and inflexible obstinacy deserve to be punished. There were others, addicted to the same insanity, whom, because they were Roman citizens, I have noted down to be sent to the city. In a short space, the crime diffusing itself, as is common, a great variety of cases have fallen under my cognizance. An anonymous libel was exhibited to me, containing the names of many persons who denied that they were Christians or ever had been, and, as an evidence of their sincerity, they joined me in an address to the gods, and to your image which I had ordered to be brought along with the images of the gods for this very purpose. Moreover, they sacrificed with wine and frankincense, and blasphemed the name of Christ, none of which things can those who are really Christians be constrained to do; therefore, I judged it proper to dismiss them. Others, named by the informer, at first confessed themselves to be Christians, and afterward denied it; and some asserted that, although they had been Christians, they had ceased to be such for more than three years, and some as much as twenty years. All these worshiped your image and the statues of the gods, and exalted Christ. But they affirmed that this was the sum of their fault

or error: that they were accustomed, on a stated day, to meet together before day, to sing a hymn to Christ in concert, as to a god, and to bind themselves by a solemn oath not to commit any wickedness, but, on the contrary, to abstain from theft, robbery, and adultery; also, never to violate their promise nor deny a pledge committed to them. These things being performed, it was their custom to separate, and to meet again at a promiscuous, innocent meal, which, however, they had omitted from the time of the publication of my edict, by which, according to your orders, I forbade assemblies of this sort. On receiving this account, I judged it to be more necessary to examine by torture two females who were called deaconesses; but I discovered nothing except a depraved and immoderate superstition. Whereupon, suspending farther judicial proceedings, I have recourse to you for advice; for it has appeared to me that the subject is highly deserving of consideration, especially on account of the great number of persons whose lives are put into jeopardy. Many persons of all ages, sexes, and conditions are accused, and many more will be in the same situation; for the contagion of this superstition has not merely pervaded the cities, but also all villages and country places, yet it seems to me that it might be restrained and corrected. It is a matter of fact, that the temples which were almost deserted begin again to be frequented, and the sacred solemnities which had been long intermitted are again attended; and victims for the altars are now readily sold, which awhile ago were almost without purchasers. Whence it is easy to conjecture what a multitude of men might be reclaimed, if only the door to repentance was left open."

The Emperor's reply to this letter was as follows: "Trajan to Pliny: Health and happiness. You have taken the right method, my Pliny, in dealing with those who have been brought before you as Christians; for it is impossible to establish any universal rule which will apply to all cases. They should not be sought after; but, when they are brought before you and convicted, they must be punished. Nevertheless, if any one deny that he is a Christian, and confirm his assertion by his conduct—that is, by worshiping our gods—although he may be suspected of having been one in time past, let him obtain pardon on repentance. But in no case permit a libel against any one to be received, unless it be signed by the person who presents it, for that would be a dangerous precedent, and in nowise suitable to the present age."

Much additional testimony to the same import, both from Christian and pagan writers, might be adduced; but we deem it superfluous to add any thing farther, except to refer to the well-known and important

fact that such had been the extent to which the Christian religion had spread and triumphed, that as early as the commencement of the fourth century, which was little over two hundred years from the death of the last of the apostles, it became the established religion of the vast Roman Empire. This mighty revolution was effected by Constantine the Great on his ascending the imperial throne. Whether he had become a *real* convert to Christianity, or whether he merely adopted it as the religion of the empire through political motives, matters nothing so far as the question before us is concerned. If he was a *real* convert, it shows the position and influence to which Christianity must have attained to arrest the attention and gain the approval of so illustrious a personage; and, moreover, to induce him to proclaim it as the religion of the state. But if he was influenced in the case solely by considerations of statesmanship, then we have the best of proof that Christianity at that early period of its history had gained the ascendancy over paganism, and become the most influential religion of the empire. From what has been presented, it cannot be denied that the success of Christianity, from its first promulgation till it had overspread the Roman Empire, was astonishingly great, furnishing in the fact an evident fulfillment of the predictions of the prophets and of Christ on the subject.

According to the statement of our argument, the next question to be considered is this: Were the means used in producing this success adequate to effect it without the aid of divine interposition? In order to a proper understanding of this subject, there are two points to be particularly considered: *First*, the *feebleness* of the human instrumentalities to be employed in the work; *secondly*, the *magnitude* of the difficulties in the way of its accomplishment.

If it appears that the means are not so feeble, nor the interposing difficulties so great, but that Christianity might have secured the success with which it was crowned without the aid of divine interposition, then our argument, so far as grounded upon the fact that a miracle of *power* was performed in effecting this success, must be set aside; but that would not weaken the argument, so far as it is based on the fulfillment of prophecy, or on the performance of a miracle of *knowledge*. On the contrary, should it appear that the means or instrumentalities admitted in the case are inadequate to the contemplated success without divine interposition, then it will follow that our argument is sustained in both its branches, and these branches will mutually strengthen each other.

But we now proceed to contemplate the human instrumentalities set apart and employed for the establishment and spread of the gospel.

What were these? We see no conclave of far-seeing politicians or wise philosophers uniting their councils to mature and digest a plan to uproot all the deepest prejudices of nations, and to revolutionize the religion of the world—no array of eloquent orators going forth from the schools to entrance and overwhelm, with the “wisdom of words,” all the nations of the earth, and win them to a new religion—no mighty armies and navies waiting the bidding of an ambitious potentate to go forth in battle to overthrow the kingdoms and empires of the world! None of *these* instrumentalities were employed by Him who said: “My kingdom is not of this world.”

But what *do* we behold? According to the showing of infidelity, only a few obscure, illiterate, humble peasants—fishermen, tent-makers, or tax-gatherers—without science or eloquence, without wealth or power, without popularity or influence, or armies or navies, or sword or scrip, going forth to battle against prejudice, and power, and eloquence, and learning—against kings and priests—against philosophy and superstition—against the bigotry of the Jew and the idolatry of the pagan—against the deadly hate and malice of all. And for what? Let infidelity answer, and it will tell you, to uphold and promote the cause of an impostor—an impostor who had deceived and deluded them for years, and who at last had been executed in disgrace; and, to crown all, according to infidelity, one whom they knew to be such! Now we ask, according to all the laws by which men and minds are governed—according to the philosophy of human nature—Is it not morally impossible, unless upon the hypothesis that the apostles were insane, that they should ever have *attempted* the promulgation of the gospel in the name of Jesus, much less that they should have gained *signal* success in the enterprise, unless they had been assured, not only of his divinity and resurrection, but also of his miraculous assistance in their work?

But, admitting that they were sufficiently demented to have made the attempt, would they have selected Jerusalem as the theater of their commencement—that very city in which their Master, only a few weeks previously, had been crucified as a malefactor—in the midst of that very community who were so familiar with all his deceptions, if such they were—who had it in their power to expose all the false statements of his disciples concerning his resurrection, if he had not arisen; and, above all, who were so deeply enraged against him and his followers—under all these circumstances, would they have selected Jerusalem as the place of their first operations? And *how* can we account for *their* instant and abundant success?

Admit the truth of Christianity, and all is plain—*deny* it, and all is inexplicable. They were assured of the divinity and resurrection of Jesus; they confided in his promise, that they should be “endued with power from on high,” and waited for its fulfillment. The Holy Ghost came: they spake with tongues they had never learned, and were able to say to all who doubted the divinity of their mission or the resurrection of their Master, “Bring forth your deaf, your blind, your lame, your sick, and, in the name of Jesus, we will heal them; bring forth your dead, and, in *his* name, we will raise them to life again!” But for the “power from on high” with which the apostles were endued, they never could have established a Church in Jerusalem, or anywhere else—but for *this*, they never could have encountered the powerful opposition, both from Jews and pagans, by which they were withstood, or, having encountered it, according to all human calculation they would have been instantly overwhelmed and crushed beneath its weight. They “preached Jesus and the resurrection” with success, because *he* who had said, “Lo, I am with you alway,” ever accompanied them, “bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.”

The circumstances of the *age* and *countries* in which Christianity was first presented, rendered success in the enterprise, by means and instrumentalities so feeble and insignificant, a moral impossibility, except upon the supposition that the apostles received “help from God.” Had Christianity originated during the *dark ages*, when learning and science were almost forgotten or unknown, and the whole world was shrouded in ignorance, it might be pleaded that designing men had practiced deception upon the benighted multitudes, and led them blindly to embrace a delusion; but, as if it were designed by Providence that this plea of infidelity should be forever forestalled, Christianity arose and established its claims in the most enlightened period of the world’s history. Jesus Christ appeared in the Augustan age, so justly celebrated for the general diffusion of intelligence and the prosperous condition of philosophy, science, and learning. The world had never before been so well prepared for the critical examination of the claims of a new religion, or the ready detection of the false pretensions and cunningly-devised frauds of an impostor.

Another circumstance rendering that age a peculiarly favorable juncture, either for the establishment of the claims of a true religion or for the detection and exposure of an imposture, is the fact that the Roman Empire had then gained the height of its greatness, and had overspread by its influence the enlightened world, rendering tributary to its domin-

ion nearly every civilized nation upon the globe. This circumstance, added to the fact that it was a time of universal peace, rendered *that* the period of all others the most *auspicious* for the promulgation and success of a *true religion*, but the most *inauspicious* for the success of a *fraud*. Philosophers and men of learning abounded almost everywhere in the cities and large towns; their means of mutual communication and intercourse were easy and abundant; they had leisure for study and patient examination; and there was no great political revolution or exciting war in progress to distract the mind or interrupt the process of investigation. At such a time, and under such circumstances, are those poor fishermen of Galilee capable of palming a gross deception upon the world, and, in a few years, revolutionizing its religion?

But let us look at the *places* selected for their operations. They did not wander to some remote and obscure corner of the empire—distant from Jerusalem, the scene of the ministry and miracles of Jesus and the center of Jewish learning and influence, and far away from Rome, the seat of empire and power—but they lifted the standard right at *Jerusalem*, where, in a few months, they had many thousands of converts. At Rome, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Damascus, Antioch, Philippi, and throughout all the towns and cities in their reach, they stood forth preaching the gospel with great success. Wherever Jewish prejudice was the most inveterate, or Jewish malice the most vindictive, *there* they hastened to unfurl the banner of the cross, and *there* they founded flourishing Churches; wherever among the pagans was found the center of philosophy or the stronghold of idolatry, *there* they proceeded at once, boldly proclaiming salvation in the name of the crucified One, and calling upon all to abandon the worship of “dumb idols.”

But who were their *opponents* in this conflict? All parties, and sects, and orders, among the Jews. The Essenes, the Herodians, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes and the priests, the rulers and the elders, the members of the Sanhedrim, and the doctors of the law, all stood up as the bitter enemies and persecutors of the despicable “sect of the Nazarenes;” but among all these the apostles gained converts, and founded Churches in their midst.

Among the Gentiles they were met and opposed by emperors, kings, proconsuls, governors, magistrates, and all in authority; by Platonists, Peripatetics, Epicureans, and all the philosophical sects; by the rulers of state, and the priests of religion—in a word, by the learning and eloquence, power and prejudice, pride and malice, of the whole world.

Christians were ridiculed, slandered, reviled, hated, persecuted, imprisoned, scourged, beheaded, drowned, thrown to wild beasts, crucified, burned, and "killed all the day long;" yet the Church spread and prospered more and more, and thus "mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

The *inducements* held forth by Jesus and his apostles to enlist disciples, were not such as were calculated to promote success upon mere natural principles. Neither riches, nor honors, nor pleasures, were promised his followers, but toil and poverty, tribulation and ignominy, persecution and death—*these* were the earthly rewards of Him who said, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Are such terms of discipleship as *these* the marks of imposture? Did human wisdom ever suggest a scheme like *this* to win the support of men? What *could* induce a designing deceiver to propose such terms? In the absence of heroic daring, resulting from a firm conviction of the truth and an abiding confidence in the divine aid, how *could* sane men have hoped for success when exhibiting such terms as *these*? Supernatural interposition apart, what could be imagined better calculated to *prevent* success than this initiating maxim of Jesus: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me?"

Look also at the general tenor of the *precepts* and *promises* of Christianity. In this religion, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," must be forsaken, the sinful propensities of unsanctified humanity renounced, and a life of holiness pursued. Is this the device of an impostor? To win adherents to his cause, would he prescribe sacrifices at the very threshold which only *can* be made by the exercise of the loftiest species of moral heroism of which our nature is capable? To pluck out the right eye, to cut off the right hand—*these* are precepts which no impostor *could* have invented or *would* have enjoined. They fully attest the divinity of the gospel, and clearly demonstrate the impossibility of its success, except through the influence of a principle of heavenly origin, conferred by divine interposition, changing the current of the heart and transforming the texture of the life.

And what were the *promises* of this religion in connection with the life to come? Were they calculated to win the approval and secure the devotion of man's corrupt and sensual nature? Taking the moral nature of man as we know from experience and observation that it *really is*, its whole current is in direct antagonism to the purity and holiness of the gospel, as enjoined in *this* life, and to its unearthly and spiritual rewards, as promised in the life to come. It tells of no fountain

of worldly honors, or riches, or pleasures, in reference to *this* world, and gives no promise of Elysian fields of sensual delight in reference to the world to come. We conclude, therefore, that the terms of discipleship and the moral precepts and heavenly promises of the gospel are all of such a nature as to preclude the possibility of success but upon the supposition that divine interposition is afforded.

Infidelity, staggering under the weight of the argument for the truth of Christianity derived from its success, has attempted to account for this success on natural principles alone. The author of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" has exhibited, as adequate to this purpose, the following "secondary causes": 1. "The inflexible and intolerant zeal of the Christians, derived, it is true, from the Jewish religion, but purified from the narrow and unsocial spirit which, instead of inviting, had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the law of Moses." 2. "The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficiency to that important truth." 3. "The miraculous powers of the primitive Church." 4. "The virtues of the primitive Christians." 5. "The union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman Empire."

Referring those who wish to see a full and complete answer to Mr. Gibbon's chapter on this subject to the treatises by Bishop Watson and Lord Hailes in reply to Gibbon, we here append a remark or two in reference to each of these five "secondary causes:"

1. As to the "*zeal* of the Christians," so far as it was a pure and holy principle consistent with the genius of Christianity, it is acknowledged to have been a very powerful cause in securing the success of Christianity. But then it was not "derived from the Jewish religion," but from a firm conviction of the truth and importance of Christianity, resulting from the most satisfactory evidence of the divine interposition in its establishment. But if a *bigoted intolerance*, inconsistent with the mild precepts of the gospel, be charged upon the Christians, *that* would have been more likely to prevent than to promote success.

In reference to the *second cause*—"the doctrine of a future life"—*this*, it is true, was an element of apostolic success; but then it was founded on the attested fact of the resurrection of Jesus and the repeated miraculous assurances of the Holy Spirit, and, of course, cannot be considered a mere *natural* or *secondary* cause.

As to Mr. Gibbon's *third cause*—"the miraculous powers of the primitive Church"—these miracles must have been either *real* or *spurious*. If *real*, they were a mighty engine of success; but then the

divine interposition is confessed, and the point in dispute given up. But if these miracles were mere *pretensions* and *frauds*, then they could not have promoted success, but would have resulted in detection, exposure, and defeat.

Mr. Gibbon's *fourth* cause—"the virtues of the primitive Christians"—the whole world must admit to have been very efficacious in effecting the great success of Christianity; but it is truly astonishing that a mind like that of Mr. Gibbon could conceive of those divinely-imparted virtues as a mere natural or secondary cause! Those sublime virtues could only have resulted from the truth, excellency, and divine authentication of the doctrines of Christianity.

The *fifth* cause is, "The union and discipline of the Christian republic." Here we see an exhibition of the fact that great minds are often shorn of their strength when they assault the claims of divine revelation. Mr. Gibbon is to account for the *rapid growth* of the Christian Church during the first and second centuries, and he does so by attributing it to that "union and discipline" which, according to his own showing, were for three centuries *gradually* forming the Church into a state! How can that "formation," which was *gradually* completed in the third century, produce the success of Christianity in the first and second centuries?

In conclusion, it may be proper for us to refer to the fact, that infidelity has attempted to neutralize the force of the Christian argument, founded on the *success* of the gospel, by appealing to the fact that Mohammed had great success in the establishment of a *false* religion; hence it is argued that the success of Christianity can be no evidence of its truth. The truth of Christianity is argued from its success, on the ground that there were certain *circumstances* connected with its origin and establishment which would have rendered its success a moral impossibility unless it had been true. Now it is clear that the *success* of Mohammedanism can only bear against the Christian argument here predicated, provided it was accompanied by *similar circumstances*. It is very plain that the circumstances connected with the establishment of the two religions were quite dissimilar in character. Mohammed claimed to perform no miracles—Jesus Christ performed *many*, of the most *obvious* character, and in the most *public* manner. Had Mohammed undertaken *as many* of the *same* character, under circumstances of *similar publicity*, it is impossible that he could have succeeded, even with the ignorant Arabs; but Jesus Christ confounded the combined wisdom of Jews and Gentiles. Mohammed accommodated his precepts to the wicked and sensual propensities of an ungodly

world, both as regards this life and the next; the teachings of Jesus Christ proclaimed a deadly warfare against all manner of sinful luxury, sensuality, lust, uncleanness, and abomination, promising no reward of sensual indulgence in the future. Mohammed made but trifling progress till he seized the sword as his instrument of propagandism, and mustered a large army of fierce warriors, presenting to his conquered foes the alternative of conversion or death; Jesus Christ announced to his disciples: "My kingdom is not of this world." "Provide neither sword nor scrip." "They that take the sword, shall perish with the sword."

The simple proclamation of the facts and doctrines of the gospel, in the spirit of meekness and love, was the means selected by the Saviour for the propagation of his religion. We might notice several other important points of contrast between the circumstances connected with the establishment of these two religions, but more would be superfluous. The causes of the success of the religion of the false prophet can only be *contrasted*—not *compared*—with those which produced the success of Christianity. The causes in the one case were "earthly, sensual, and devilish;" in the other case they were "pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, and full of mercy and good fruits." While Mohammed's success proves his religion to be of this earth, that of Christianity demonstrates the divinity of its origin.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XVII.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. In what two ways may the truth of Christianity be proved from its success?</p> <p>2. What scriptures show that this success had been predicted?</p> <p>3. What is our first source of argument to prove this success?</p> <p>4. What is the next testimony on the subject?</p> <p>5. What quotations are made from Christian writers?</p> <p>6. What from profane writers?</p> <p>7. When did Christianity become the religion of the Roman Empire?</p> <p>8. What two points are to be considered to show that this success could not have been secured but by divine</p> | <p>aid, and what evidence bears satisfactorily upon the subject?</p> <p>9. How is the strength of the opposition to Christianity shown?</p> <p>10. What were the inducements held forth by Jesus and his apostles to enlist disciples?</p> <p>11. What the character of the precepts and promises of Christianity?</p> <p>12. How does Gibbon attempt to account for the success of Christianity on natural principles?</p> <p>13. How is the fallacy of his argument shown?</p> <p>14. How is the success of Christianity contrasted with that of Mohammedanism?</p> |
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PART II.—EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

BOOK III.—DIRECT EVIDENCE—INTERNAL.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HARMONY OF THE DISPENSATIONS—GENERAL CONSISTENCY OF THE BIBLE—ITS ANALOGY WITH NATURE.

UNDER the division of *Internal* Evidences of Christianity, according to our definitions, we include "all that evidence which is derived from *the nature of the doctrines, the consistency and character of the writers, and the effects of Christianity*. Or more at large—under this division, we embrace the evidence derived from the *consistency* of the different parts of the Bible, the *excellency of its doctrines*; their *accordance with human nature*, their *transforming influence upon the heart and life*; and the *internal assurance of their truth*, which they, through the Spirit, impart to all who believe and obey them."

In strictness of speech, none of the evidences of Christianity are either wholly *external* or wholly *internal*; for whether we speak of *miracles* which are always classed with the *external* evidences, or of *doctrines* which are always considered internal evidences, we are compelled to bring the materials of our argument partly from within and partly from *without* the Scriptures. Thus we find the *miracles* recorded *within* the Bible, and the evidence substantiating them, is derived partly from the Bible and partly from other sources; but as miracles do not properly enter into the *subject-matter* of the revelation, but merely serve as outside testimony, confirming what is revealed, they are considered *external* evidences; and although we find the *doctrines* of revelation recorded in the Scriptures, yet, to exhibit our argument deduced from them, we are compelled to appeal to various facts and *data*, derived

from consciousness, experience, observation, and various other *ex-scriptural* sources; but as the argument is grounded upon the doctrines revealed in the *Scriptures*, this argument is considered *internal*.

The standard Christian authors differ greatly as to the relative importance of the *external* and *internal* evidences of Christianity. Dr. S. Clarke, Erskine, Soame Jenyns, and others, give to the *internal* evidences the *first* importance, and would make the *external* evidence stand in abeyance till the *internal* has been examined, and has cleared the way for the *external*. Other authors of equal eminence and ability place the *external* evidence foremost, both in order and importance. In this class of writers we find Chapman, Richard Watson, Alexander, and many others. On this question, Chapman speaks as follows:

“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 doctrines, it is easy to foresee by what rule they would prove his doctrine, and what success he would meet with amongst 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.”

Dr. Chalmers seems evidently to have changed his ground upon this question. At one time he spoke of the *internal* evidence as “not capable of being so treated as to produce conviction in the minds of philosophical infidels, and as opening a door to their most specious objections to Christianity.”

At a subsequent period, this same able author, writing on this subject, after having admitted that he had experienced a modification of his former views, expresses himself thus: “Instead of holding all religion as suspended on the miraculous evidence, we see this evidence itself standing at the bar of an anterior principle, and there waiting for its authentication. There is a previous natural religion on whose aid we call for a determination of this matter.”

It is a little strange that a mind so well stored and capacious should be found, in the brief space of a few years, occupying opposing extreme positions on this question—*first* deeming the *internal* evidence as *unsatisfactory*, and its employment, at least, of questionable propriety; and *next* exalting it to a position *anterior* and *superior* to that

of the *external* evidence—but it is often true that the most noble and lofty geniuses, impelled by their native extraordinary momentum, fail to poise upon the golden medium-point of sober truth. We consider both external and internal evidence important and satisfactory, each in its respective sphere. The external evidence is the pioneer, clearing the way and leading the inquirer to the contemplation of the strong foundations of the Christian edifice, or it constitutes the outward “towers and bulwarks” of its defense; the internal evidence is the settled occupant of the structure, who conducts us to the interior halls and magnificent apartments, or it answers to the connecting timbers and cementing walls, holding together as one grand united building all the essential parts, exhibiting the inner strength, utility, and beauty, and binding the whole with immovable stability upon its solid foundations, within its impregnable bulwarks. In the primal authentication of Christianity, the external evidence was essential to arrest the attention and carry instant conviction to the minds of both the philosophical skeptics and the common people, and it is still essential to command the homage and convince the judgment of the learned, as well as to confirm the faith of all; but the internal evidence, while it is less adapted to the awakening of the attention and to the convincing of the more philosophical and skeptical, gains a more direct and easy access to the conscience and heart of the uneducated masses, exercising over them a more general and powerful influence. Indeed, this evidence, when brought to its consummation in the matured experience of the enlightened Christian, though he may not be able to present it so forcibly to the conviction of others, yet to his own mind it furnishes the highest and most convincing order of testimony in favor of the truth and reality of religion, for it is the direct inspoken witness of God to the soul. Hence we conclude that, while both external and internal evidence are important, each in its peculiar sphere, they both are alike deserving of our careful consideration; and we should not concern ourselves as to which shall be assigned the superiority.

The internal evidence of Christianity opens for exploration a field of almost boundless extent. It presents to our view the entire volume of revelation, scarce a single paragraph of which can be selected that does not furnish evidence more or less direct of the divinity of its origin. And this class of evidence is scarcely less limited in diversity than in extent. Whatever is found within the lids of the Bible bearing the impress of God, whether it relates to the harmony and consistency of its parts, the character and importance of its facts, the excellency and sublimity of its doctrines, the reasonableness and purity of its precepts

or the style and honesty of its writers, furnishes ground for an argument under the head of *internal* evidence of Christianity.

Over an area so vast and varied, it is not to be expected or required that any two authors should travel in precisely the same path. While some will be impressed with one particular class of these evidences, others will be more attracted by the beauty and force of another class; and thus each separate author, following the bent of his own mind, will bring forward something hitherto unnoticed to swell the amount of this ever-accumulating store of internal evidence.

I. The first particular ground of argument in this department to which we invite attention is, *the mutual connection and dependency binding together as one united whole the Old and the New Testaments and the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations.*

We think it a position almost incontrovertible, that the two Testaments and two dispensations stand or fall together. They hang in connection as essential kindred parts of an indivisible whole, and, as one has said, "like the two cherubs, look steadfastly toward each other, and toward the mercy-seat which they encompass." As the wonderful adaptation of the different parts to each other pervading the works of nature so attests the skill and wisdom of their Author as to demonstrate his unity and divinity, even so the harmony pervading the parts of the two Testaments and two dispensations, and the perfect adaptation of the parts of the one to those of the other, exhibit the clearest evidence that the same Being is the Author of both, and that he must be possessed of the attributes of divinity. The glove is not more evidently adapted to the hand, nor the eye to the rays of the light, nor the veins and arteries to the conveyance of the blood, nor the lungs to the process of breathing, than are the teachings of the New Testament and the different parts of the gospel of Christ to those of the Old Testament and the Mosaic law. We view it as indubitable, that no unbiased, intelligent person, can carefully peruse the Old and the New Testaments, and not rise up from that perusal thoroughly convinced that *both are true, or both are false.*

Having established, in former chapters, the genuineness and authenticity of these Scriptures, we will not here repeat the arguments there set forth, but proceed upon the admission that the facts of the Bible are faithfully given as they transpired. What, then, we ask, can be plainer than that the two Testaments and the two dispensations mutually prove each other?

The testimony of Christ to the truth and authority of the Old Testament is direct and unequivocal. His language is: "Search the *Scriptures*

tures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." John v. 39. "Did ye never read in the *Scriptures*, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner." Matt. xxi. 42. "Ye do err, not knowing the *Scriptures*." Matt. xxii. 29. "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the *Scriptures*." Luke xxiv. 45.

In these passages our Saviour gives his most unqualified testimony to the divine authority of the *Scriptures* of the Old Testament; hence, if the divinity of his mission and of the New Testament be admitted, that of the Old Testament necessarily follows.

Equally conclusive is his testimony to the divine legation of Moses: "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me." John v. 46. "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me." Luke xxiv. 44. Again, it is written: "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in *all the Scriptures* the things concerning himself." Luke xxiv. 25-27. "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the *Scriptures*." Luke xxiv. 32. To Peter, in the garden of Gethsemane, he said: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the *Scriptures* be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Matt. xxvi. 53, 54. In his dispute with the Jews, the Saviour spoke as follows: "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the *Scripture cannot be broken*," etc. John x. 34, 35.

With this testimony of the Saviour that of his apostles perfectly corresponds. They are constantly quoting the *Scriptures* of the Old Testament, always referring to them as the infallible word of God. Paul to Timothy uses the following language: "From a child thou hast known the *holy Scriptures*, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All *Scripture* is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16. Peter speaks of the writings of St. Paul, connecting them with the *Scriptures* of the Old Testament, thus: "Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the *other Scriptures*, unto their own de-

struction." 2 Peter iii. 16. Again, the same apostle declares: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter i. 21. The same apostle again says: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." 1 Peter i. 10, 11. In the Epistle to the Hebrews are recorded these words: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

From all these scriptures it is manifest that Christ and his apostles, in the most direct and emphatic manner, recognized as of divine authority the Old Testament Scriptures and the legation of Moses. Hence it is here fully proved, that if the New Testament is the word of God, so is the Old; and if the mission of Christ was divine, so was that of Moses.

The next point is, to show in what manner the Old Testament sanctions and receives its fulfillment in the New. The entire Mosaic economy was evidently designed as a temporary institution. Moses himself, and all the Jewish prophets after him, spoke of a "Prophet whom God should raise up, like unto Moses"—of a Deliverer, Shiloh, Messiah, or King, who was to sit on the throne of David, and reign prosperously over both Jews and Gentiles. Pointing to this Ruler and his kingdom were innumerable types, ceremonials, and services, which, considered in themselves alone, were unmeaning, useless, and burdensome, but, viewed as receiving their fulfillment in Christ, were remarkably significant, sublimely illustrative of a most beneficent and enduring institution, and graciously communicative of richest blessings.

This Mosaic economy was a complete and homogeneous system, the various parts of which had a manifest connection with and dependence upon each other. It was no senseless aggregation of disjointed and incongruous elements—of rites and ceremonies, of altars and sacrifices of priests and services, of laws and formulas—without affinity or mutual assimilation, but every thing bore the signature of being part and parcel of the same great connected whole. Could a system thus harmoniously arranged and symmetrically connected, and, moreover, so typically adumbrative of a new dispensation by which, after a lapse of centuries, it was to be superseded, be a fictitious, human contrivance?

How can we account for the origin of the sacrificial institution, and the constant and appropriate reference thereby kept up and running through the entire Mosaic economy to the sinful character of man, and the great doctrine of vicarious atonement, and especially for the complete conformity of the whole to the gospel plan of redemption by the death of Christ, except upon the supposition that God was the author of both systems? Could human skill and foresight have devised such an extended system of types and shadows extending throughout centuries, and brought about so exact and marvelous a fulfillment in every particular? The supposition is utterly incredible! The Mosaic institution, considered in itself—in the wisdom of its precepts, the sublimity of its doctrines, the simplicity, purity, and grandeur of its ritual, and its harmonious consistency throughout—so far transcends all pagan religions and the proudest efforts of human genius in all ages, as to impress every impartial examiner with the fact, that it was not “of men,” but “from heaven.” But when we look at its exact and wonderful fulfillment in the gospel, the evidence of its divine origin is overwhelming!

If the typical and ceremonial institution of Moses was the invention of men, it was an exhibition of madness and folly, combined with system and skill, perfectly irreconcilable with each other—of madness and folly, that a religious ceremonial so expensive and onerous should be voluntarily assumed or imposed upon any people, for no assignable reason whatever; of system and skill, that an institution so extensive and varied in its range and application should yet be so harmoniously cemented as one connected system, and so perfectly fitted in type and shadow to “better things to come.” The only rational conclusion on the subject is, that God was the author of both the law and the gospel, and that the one was the substance of which the other was the shadow.

In all the numerous types and shadows connected with the Old Dispensation, and pointing to the “good things to come,” there is not one that does not find its antitype, substance, or accomplishment, in the gospel of Jesus. We look upon the paschal lamb, whose blood availed to the deliverance of the Israelites from the destroying angel, and we think of “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” We look upon the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness by the hand of Moses for the healing of the bitten Israelites, and we think of the Son of God hanging on the cross, that all the world may look to him and live. We read of the Jewish temple, with its outer and inner courts, its altars and its sacrifices, with its “golden censer, and the ark

of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant, and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat"—we look upon the priests, with their vestments, their robes, and their incense—in a word, we look upon all the services of that extended ritual, and we ask for the explanation of the whole system; but this explanation is to be found in the gospel of Christ, and nowhere else. Can it be that this wonderful harmony and mutual adaptation to each other of these two systems is the result of mere chance? Has it been produced by human contrivance? The supposition involves a moral impossibility. Between the two Testaments and the two dispensations there is an all-pervading and ever-present unity of design, extending through all the centuries of their history, impressing upon both the same signature, and assigning to each the same divine origin.

II. We look next at *the perfect consistency of all the parts of the Bible with each other*, as an evidence of the divinity of its origin. This volume is not the production of one individual author, nor of one particular age of the world; but it was written by as many as thirty or forty different authors, living in distant periods of time, extending through a space of sixteen hundred years. That so many writers thus distantly severed from each other, precluding the possibility of consultation or collusion, should write even a small treatise upon any one subject, and yet preserve a perfect consistency in all their statements and views, would be a phenomenon in itself truly marvelous, and such as has never been exhibited in all the human productions of the world. But how must this marvel be increased in reference to the Bible, when we reflect on the extent of the volume, the wide range and great diversity of subjects embraced, the variety exhibited by these authors—in character, in education, in customs, in country, in taste, in talent, in pursuit, and in condition in life!

In this volume is embraced, with a greater or less degree of prominence, a vast range of topics—history, biography, agriculture, manufactures, government, politics, trade, commerce, architecture, navigation, letters, music, poetry, travels, geography, philosophy, morals, religion. *These* topics are all either particularly treated of in the Bible, or incidentally alluded to, with more or less distinctness.

We find, also, great diversity in the character and circumstances of the sacred writers. They were taken from nearly all the walks of life, from the highest to the lowest. Kings, priests, prophets, statesmen, judges, physicians, shepherds, husbandmen, herdsmen, mechanics, fishermen, and gatherers of sycamore-fruit—some from all these depart

ments have contributed, each his portion, to the composition of the Bible. When, therefore, we look at the wide range and great diversity of subjects embraced, and the number and variety of character, pursuit, taste, and condition of the writers—when we take all these facts into the account, we demand if the perfect agreement and consistency so manifestly preserved throughout the volume, is not satisfactory evidence that it is the product of no merely human effort?

Human productions, on whatever subject, are ever changing and passing away. One authority rises and flourishes to-day; to-morrow it is superseded by another, and sinks into oblivion. The text-books of one age are not those of the next. In the progress of knowledge, it has been discovered that they contain important errors; hence they are thrown aside and more approved standards are adopted, only, in their turn, to share a similar fate. No two merely human authors, unless they were mere copyists, have ever written books upon the same subject without contradicting each other, and few have written *much* without contradicting themselves. What two authors on grammar, geography, rhetoric, mathematics, history of the same country and period, agriculture, politics, ethics, or religion, have not disagreed—and most of them, again and again, come in direct conflict with each other? We may challenge the infidel world to name them. Indeed, unless, as already stated, they be mere copyists, or be in collusion, such an occurrence is, in the nature of things, impossible. But within the lids of the Bible, though infidelity has exerted her utmost ingenuity and strength for thousands of years, she has never been able to identify the first real contradiction! Objections without reason, and cavils without sense, she has brought forth by the legion. She has even shouted over a *seeming* contradiction, as though she had discovered a panacea for “all the ills that flesh is heir to;” but this exultation has ever been shown to have been premature. A few beams of sound criticism have soon dispelled the clouds of ignorance on which the supposed contradiction was dependent for its existence; and clearly demonstrated that the contradiction existed in the ignorance of man, and not in the word of God!

In all the references to history, whether of the Jews or of pagan nations; in all the numerous statements bearing upon the geography of countries, or the manners and customs of nations; in all the reference to the political *status* of empires, kingdoms, and provinces; in all the incidental allusions to agriculture, science, philosophy, or the arts; in all the representations of the character, morals, and religion of numerous nations in different ages—in every and all of these things, as

embraced in the Bible, that wonderful volume stands forth unimpeachable, defying an infidel world to convict its pages of the first real contradiction or error! Can such a book be of human origin? Is it a property of human productions to be thus perfect? Let honest reason decide the question.

III. Another ground of argument on this subject is, *the consistency of the administration of God, as revealed in the Scriptures, with what we learn of his ways, as exhibited in his works.*

Nothing is more common with infidels, than to aver that the administration of God, as revealed in the Bible, is inconsistent with what we learn of him from his works around us. Thus they endeavor to set the God of nature and the God of revelation at variance; and assuming (which none can dispute) that nature must be *true*, they proceed to infer that revelation must be *false*. Christianity, on the other hand, strenuously contends that such is the perfect harmony and consistency of the ways of God, as revealed in the Bible, with what we know of his administration, as seen in the works of nature and of providence, that it follows, as a necessary inference, that the God of nature and of providence must also be the God of revelation.

For the illustration of the Christian argument derived from this source, we will select only a few of the obvious points of analogy between nature and revelation; but they shall be those points which infidelity has seemed most delighted to use in her favor.

First, *the principle of progression* developed in divine revelation has been made a ground of complaint by the infidel. Why is it, we are asked, that, if the Bible be of God a complete revelation of Christianity, the perfected dispensation of religion was not given to the world at once, and not the circuitous route adopted of keeping mankind for four thousand years under the comparative darkness and bondage of the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations? And why is it, that when God constitutes a person a Christian, he must be first a babe and then a young man ere he can attain to maturity in Christian character? Is this consistent, it is urged, with the character we learn of God from his works? If God is infinite in goodness and power, can he adopt unnecessary delay in bestowing upon his creatures the blessings he sees they so much need?

In reply to these objections, we confidently appeal to the analogy between nature and revelation. We think this will not only be sufficient to silence the cavil of the skeptic, but that it will furnish a very powerful internal evidence of the truth of revelation.

We ask, then, Is not this same principle of *progression* abundantly

exemplified in nature? We see it in vegetation: There is "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." We see it in our own species: We pass through the several stages of infancy, childhood, and youth, up to manhood and old age. We witness it in all educational developments: The child just inducted into school does not enter at once upon the study of the higher branches, but he begins with the alphabet, and gradually advances from one stage to the next in the ascending scale. Now, the infidel will not deny that God, had he seen proper so to order it, could just as easily have dispensed with this progressive order in nature. But such was not his plan. God formed the laws of nature after the counsel of infinite wisdom. Had he spoken the word he could with equal facility have so ordered it that the seed sown by the husbandman should mature into a ripe crop in a few hours, so that he might sow in the morning and reap in the afternoon of the same day. Let the skeptic first go and settle his quarrel with the God of nature, and then his cavils at revelation will be less inconsistent!

This progressive principle in revelation only shows that the God of nature and the God of the Bible work by the same rule; in other words, it evinces that revelation is confirmed by nature. When the world was in its infancy, God imparted to it, in the patriarchal dispensation, the alphabet of religion. When that was sufficiently matured, the Mosaic economy was unfolded; and when "the fulness of time was come," and all things in the best possible state of preparation for it, the full development of the gospel was made. In this succession of dispensations, and in their harmonious adaptation to each other, and to the condition of the world, there is a manifestation of wisdom and foresight transcending the utmost powers of mere humanity, and demonstrating the divine origin of the whole scheme.

Between the great foundation principles of nature and revelation, there is manifest a perfect analogy and harmony, from which may be deduced a very forcible argument in favor of the truth of revelation. The points of the analogy in question are very numerous, and have furnished material for that inimitable volume, Butler's Analogy. But we propose to call attention only to one or two leading positions:

1. First, *in both nature and revelation, the great foundation principles are too profoundly mysterious for the comprehension of human wisdom.*

The mysteries of revelation have a thousand times been paraded, magnified, and ridiculed by skeptics. And although it has been as often shown that similar objections might with equal propriety be urged against nature, yet infidelity seems determined never to remember the

fact. The mysteries of the Bible have furnished the theme for many a sneering sarcasm; and perhaps will still continue to do so, so long as ridicule, instead of reason, shall continue to be the favorite weapon of infidelity. But we proceed to the consideration of the basis of our argument as stated above.

We first call attention to some of the leading foundation principles connected with revelation, and will show that they are profoundly mysterious, and, to finite minds, truly incomprehensible. In turning our attention to the great subject-matter of revelation, the first leading important doctrine presenting itself to our view, and challenging our faith, is the *being and perfections of God*. Here, at the very threshold of the great temple of revealed truth, we are called to the contemplation of a theme which is probably as overwhelmingly mysterious to angelic as it certainly is to human intellects. For what finite mind can comprehend the infinite God? Our utmost capacity can only grasp with a feeble hand something of what he has been pleased to reveal concerning his attributes; but of the essential nature of that high and lofty One, we can know nothing. His essence is deeply enshrined in mystery, beyond the reach of finite minds.

Another great foundation-truth of revelation is the *divinity of Christ*. No doctrine of the Bible is more clearly revealed, or occupies a more important position in the system of divinity, than this. That Christ is *God* and that he is *man*, the Bible declares most explicitly; and our faith must bow submissively, and embrace the revealed fact. But what mind can comprehend this stupendous mystery? The *atonement*, the *influence of the Spirit*, the *regeneration* and *sanctification* of the soul—all these are also great essential doctrines of revelation; yet in each one of them, what a world of impenetrable mystery is embraced! The fact, then, is freely admitted, that revelation contains profound and inexplicable mysteries. It is quite probable that, pertaining to the glorious doctrines revealed in the Bible, there are depths, and heights, and lengths, and breadths of sublime mysteries never yet explored by men or angels. And while the endless cycles of eternity shall endure, these may furnish richest themes of contemplation for the multitudes who stand before the throne. But for these mysteries of revelation, one of the important evidences that God is its author would be lacking—for surely a revelation which finite minds can thoroughly comprehend would be destitute of one important mark of its having emanated from the great and incomprehensible One.

But when we turn our thoughts to the great foundation principles in connection with the science of nature, we find a most striking *analogy*

to the mysteries of revelation. To maintain consistency with himself, the infidel should reject and refuse to believe in nature, until he can penetrate the profoundest depths of all her wonderful mysteries. But will he do so? What can he thoroughly comprehend of the *essence* of all material things? He cannot master the essence of an atom in matter, and yet he would spurn revelation from his faith on account of her mysteries.

To begin at the foundation principles in nature, what can the wisest philosopher tell us of the *essence* of matter? can he thoroughly analyze and define it? He may lecture upon its *properties*, but he can no more comprehend its *essence* than he can create a world.

Again, look at the great principle in nature called *attraction*, or the *law of gravitation*. What is it? Who can comprehend or define it? We witness the constant evidence of the *fact*. We see the sun from his throne, in the center of his system, as philosophy and astronomy tell us, grasping the planets with his golden chain of attraction, and whirling them in their orbits with such marvelous exactitude that they shall not deviate from their prescribed pathway the breadth of a hair in a million of ages. But we pause and inquire; What is this attraction? Can philosophy answer? Can the wisdom of the schools solve the problem? All they can tell us is, that it is a *power*, an *influence*, a *something*, they know not what; and, for want of a better name, they call it *attraction*. But to comprehend what this attraction is, is beyond the capacity of Sir Isaac Newton and all his disciples. They are as ignorant on this point as the most unlettered peasant. They know it is the power of Him who placed the sun in the firmament, and hung the earth upon nothing, but proud reason can go no farther. Here then is mystery in nature, profound and overwhelming. Let boasting infidelity explain this stupendous mystery in nature—till *then*, let her not scoff at the mysteries of revelation.

Another great foundation-stone in the temple of nature is the principle of *life*. The fact that this principle exists is obvious to our senses. We are familiar with its phenomena in both the vegetable and animal kingdoms. The germinating seed, the growing grass, the bursting bud, and the unfolding leaf, no less than the blush of health in the face and the power of action in the body of man, testify to the fact that the principle of life exists. But what is it? Who can penetrate its essence? Physiology may discourse of the germinating principle in vegetation, of the warming sun and the refreshing rain, and of the fructifying properties of soils; but what are they without the living principle in the seed? And this living principle none can analyze, define, or com

prehend. And who has ever explained the principle of life in man? There is something within us that opens the senses to the wonders of the world about us, that paints the cheek and kindles the eye, that touches the muscle and moves the limb; but what is that something? The profoundest philosopher is as ignorant as the child. We may read that "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul," but we can go no farther. Beyond this Bible revelation natural science is dumb. The *essence* of life is still an inscrutable mystery.

Look also at the mystery connected with the *circulation of the blood*. Since its discovery by Mr. Harvey, the fact has been obvious to all. But although we have had many learned lectures on the subject, this mystery in nature has never been explained. We have been told that it is the contraction and dilatation of the heart which propels the blood in one continuous current through the arteries to all parts of the body, whence it is taken up by the absorbents, and returned through the veins to the heart. But still the mystery in the process is unexplained. What causes the heart to contract and dilate? Here, at the very commencement, all the skill of philosophy is baffled—for the contraction and dilatation of the heart, on mere natural principles, must ever remain an inexplicable mystery. It is the power of God that, sitting at the seat of life, prevents the golden bowl from being broken, or the pitcher from being broken at the fountain. But *how* this is effected no one can tell. The *fact* is plain, the *manner* of the fact involves the mystery. Volumes might be written in pointing out the great mysteries of nature, at none of which does the faith of the infidel ever stagger, but at Bible mysteries he is ever ready to scoff.

But that the mysteries in Scripture are so frequently urged by skeptics as objections to Christianity, we would have said less than we have upon the subject. We, however, present one farther example of the mysteries of nature. We refer to the wonders of *instinct* as seen in the department of irrational creation. Not to speak of the elephant, the dog, the fox, and others of the class, we notice this marvelous power in that small but useful insect, the honey-bee. With a skill surpassing that of all the chemists in the world, it collects its luscious store from every appropriate flower of the fields and the woods; and with a mathematical exactitude and mechanical ingenuity which no human ability can equal, it collects its materials and constructs its cells. Now, we ask, who can explain this phenomenon? This little chemist and mechanist never studied science, never was at school; and yet, by mere *instinct*, it exhibits a skill and ingenuity not susceptible of improvement.

And, to add to the marvel, this wonderful little chemist and mechanist has made no advancement through the lapse of centuries; but, precisely as we witness now, it collected its sweets and constructed its store-houses amid the bowers of Eden. Is not this a mystery in nature?

Thus we see that in both nature and revelation the great foundation principles embody incomprehensible mysteries, exhibiting in this the most perfect analogy. From this fact, the necessary conclusion should be that, if we embrace in our faith, without reserve, the entire system of nature, notwithstanding the mysteries it involves, we cannot without manifest inconsistency reject from our faith the system of revelation, because of the mysteries it may embrace. In reference to both systems, the mysteries lie not in the *facts* but in the *manner* of the facts. We may believe the *facts* though the *manner* of those facts be beyond our comprehension. Had revelation come to us free from all mystery, the same captious infidelity that now sneers at the sublime mysteries of the Bible would, doubtless, still deride and reject Christianity on the ground that it was destitute of sublime mysteries such as are recorded in the volume of nature. But the Christian philosopher, as he peruses these two great volumes, and marks the striking analogy between them, seeing upon both the same signature, may exult in the evidence thus derived that the same God who made the world is the author of his Bible.

2. In both nature and revelation, though we find much that is mysterious, yet we need not be experimentally or practically much the losers on that account—for those mysteries do not pertain to such things as are essential to our happiness either here or hereafter. They are what may be studied or let alone, as we choose, without any serious detriment.

It is a very impressive point of analogy between the two systems, and strongly demonstrative of the truth of revelation, that, *both in reference to the temporal things of this life and the spiritual things of the next, both in nature and revelation, all that is most valuable or essential to our welfare is easy to be understood, and is readily accessible to all classes.*

A few illustrations will render this point of analogy clear and evident. First, look at the temporal blessings of life connected with nature. What is more essential to the welfare of all sentient living things than the surrounding atmosphere? Without it, man would immediately perish from the earth; without it, beast and bird, and tree and plant, would droop and die. Yet, in this department, how abundant the provisions of a merciful Providence! The globe is encircled, *forty miles high*, with a volume of this life-preserving fluid.

How essential to our welfare is the great staple article of *water*, and how abundant the supply! The oceans, the rivers, the creeks, the little branches, the springs, and even the floating clouds, are all employed as ministering servants to furnish and convey to man, and beast, and bird, and tree, and shrub, and plant, and to all that has life, an abundant supply of this invaluable commodity.

But if we look at revelation we find its pages stamped with this same impressive evidence of having proceeded from God. What are the mysterious matters and things "hard to be understood" in the Bible? Are *they* the great doctrines and precepts connected directly with the salvation of the soul? *These* are all so plain that "the way-faring man, though a fool, need not err therein." In order to our salvation, we need not puzzle over the import of mysterious and yet unfulfilled prophecies, or the abstruse and knotty questions in theology. Repentance and faith, which can be understood as easily by the uneducated as by the learned, are the only absolute conditions on which salvation is proffered. With these terms all may comply. And thus the provision of saving mercy in the gospel is rendered as free, as full, and as abundant as the air we breathe, or the water we drink from the provisions of nature; and so this great point of analogy is fully carried out between nature and revelation, giving strong reason for believing that the two systems have emanated from the same divine Source.

IV. We conclude this chapter by noticing the analogy between revelation and some remarkable dispensations of *Divine Providence*.

It has been argued that the Bible cannot be a revelation from God, because it represents God as authorizing the extermination of the Canaanites, which would have been a cruelty, inconsistent with the divine character.

In reply to this, it is enough to state that the destruction of the Canaanites, as commanded in Scripture, is perfectly consistent with those dispensations of Providence by which many thousands are sometimes destroyed by an earthquake or volcano. • In both cases, the responsibility of the destruction is with God. If the God of providence, consistently with his attributes, could destroy by *the agency of a volcano* the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the God of the Bible, with equal consistency, may destroy the Canaanites by *the agency of the Israelites*. The *agency* or *instrumentality* by which the work is performed cannot change its moral character. The infidel admits that God, by his providence, destroys multitudes by *earthquakes and volcanoes*, but, inconsistently with himself, denies that he may do the same thing *through the agency of a nation*.

The Canaanites were judicially cut off for their sins, because "the cup of their iniquity was full." The Judge of all had the right thus to execute upon them the sentence, which, by their long-continued wickedness, they deserved. And if God may punish them thus severely for their sins, he may select the *agency* for the execution of the sentence. In this case, we see the harmony between revelation and providence, tending to evince that the God of providence is also the God of the Bible. We see farther that Christianity is perfectly consistent with nature and with providence, while infidelity is inconsistent with both the one and the other, and equally so with herself. Let her first go and be reconciled with nature and with providence, and then her quarrel with revelation will be ended.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XVIII.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. What is included under the head of <i>internal</i> evidence?</p> <p>2. Do our standard authors agree as to the relative importance of <i>external</i> and <i>internal</i> evidence?</p> <p>3. What is the position of Dr. Chalmers on the subject?</p> <p>4. What relation do these classes of evidence sustain to each other?</p> <p>5. Which is the more convincing of the two to the Christians?</p> <p>6. Is the range of internal evidence limited, or extended?</p> <p>7. What is the first evidence of this kind noticed?</p> <p>8. What testimony did the Saviour give to the truth of the Old Testament?</p> <p>9. What was the testimony of the apostles on the subject?</p> | <p>10. How may it be shown that the Old Testament sanctions the New, and receives therein its fulfillment?</p> <p>11. How is an argument founded on the consistency of the different parts of the Bible with each other?</p> <p>12. Does the Bible contain any <i>real</i> contradictions?</p> <p>13. How is it shown that the God of the Bible is consistent with the God of nature?</p> <p>14. To what points of analogy is the appeal made?</p> <p>15. What departments in both nature and revelation are mysterious, and what are plain?</p> <p>16. What objections have been urged founded upon the dispensations of Divine Providence, and how have they been answered?</p> |
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CHAPTER XIX.

ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE — LIFE OF CHRIST — STYLE OF THE SACRED WRITERS — ADAPTION OF DOCTRINES TO THE CHARACTER AND CONDITION OF MAN.

I. As those skilled and practiced in such things can judge of the qualifications of a mechanist or of an artist by examining his production, whether it be a machine that he has constructed or a piece of statuary or of painting that he has executed, so we form a judgment of the character of an author from the perusal of a book he has written; and although this judgment is not in strictness the result of mathematical demonstration, yet it often conveys quite as satisfactory conviction to the mind. For example, who can read the Iliad of Homer, the Principia of Newton, or the Orations of Demosthenes, and not be convinced that the first was a poet, the second a philosopher, and the third an orator? It is on a precisely similar principle that we conduct the internal argument for Christianity. The book called the Bible has found its way into our world. Men have differed in their judgment as to its origin, character, and importance; and one mode of determining this question is, by examining the volume itself. The evidence derived from this source is called *internal*, and, to the candid and unsophisticated mind, is often of the most convincing character; though skeptics are seldom disposed to give it an impartial hearing.

There are but *three* different classes of men from whom the Bible could have emanated: it was either written by *good, inspired* men, by *good, uninspired* men, or by *bad* men.

The examination of the volume itself may easily satisfy the impartial as to which of these classes of men were its authors. Bad men *could* not if they *would*, and *would* not if they *could*, have written such a book. As well might "the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots," as for *wicked, unholy, bad* men, to write such a volume as the Bible! It is a moral impossibility. A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet water, nor can an evil tree bring forth good fruit. Had a set of bad men, in any given age, combined for the express purpose,

their groveling, polluted intellects never could have conceived the pure and lofty sentiments which everywhere breathe through the Scriptures, much less could they have maintained the same unearthly and holy characteristics throughout so extended and diversified a production. How, then, can we conceive it possible that thirty or forty base and atrociously wicked men, living in different ages and parts of the world, extending through a period of sixteen hundred years, and having no knowledge of each other, or possible chance of collusion, could have thus combined for such a deception, and maintained throughout so marvellous a consistency? He who *can* believe *this*, exhibits a larger capacity of belief than if he were to subscribe to every miracle of the Bible at which infidelity has ever scoffed! When a set of deceitful hypocrites and perjured wretches—as the authors of the Bible must have been, *if they were bad men at all*—can produce such a volume under the circumstances, then a mere child or idiot may have written the Elements of Euclid, or the Principia of Newton! If bad men wrote the Bible, then it is a tissue of profanity and lies from beginning to end; for they profess everywhere to be God-fearing men, speaking with authority from Heaven. And, moreover, they record in deepest colors their own shame, and utter the severest denunciations against themselves! Can *this* be reconciled with the principles of human nature? Infidelity can point to nothing like it in all the history of our race. From what source soever the Bible originated, it is morally certain that it never was conceived or brought forth by *bad* men.

But could it have been the production of a set of *good* but *uninspired* men? This hypothesis is equally absurd and impossible. The writers of the Bible do not profess to speak on their own authority, or in their own name, but claimed to have received their commission from God; and, in confirmation of that claim, they performed many notable and public miracles. Now, we demand, can *good* men go before the world with a lie in their mouths? Can they preface their communication with "Thus saith the Lord," when the Lord has not spoken? Can they profess to be "moved by the Holy Ghost," when they are only moved by themselves? And would God sanction the impious falsehood and deception by empowering them to work miracles in its confirmation? That the Bible was produced by *good* but *uninspired* men is an absurdity—an utter impossibility! Hence, as neither *bad* men nor *good uninspired* men could have produced it, there is but one other source for its origin left—it must have been produced—if ever produced at all—by *good inspired* men. If infidelity admits this conclusion, she yields the whole question, and subscribes to divine revelation; if she denies it,

she may with equal reason deny that the Bible exists, and set her sophistry at work to show that the millions of mankind, through all these long centuries, while they imagined they were reading the book called the Bible, were all the while in a dream! Infidelity may sneer at the conclusion presented, but she cannot escape from it, except by proving that the Bible was either the production of *bad* men, or of *good* but *uninspired* men; and when she shall have accomplished *this*, to prove that there never was a Bible in the world, or that light and darkness are the same, will be but an easy task for her masterly logic!

II. A very powerful internal evidence of the truth of Christianity may be derived from the *character of Christ*, as portrayed in the evangelical history. We do not here include his miracles and predictions—which have been considered under the head of external evidence—but refer merely to the personal history of the man Christ Jesus. In this there is abundant testimony to satisfy every candid mind that he was no impostor, but, as he claimed to be, “a Teacher come from God.”

1. First, look at the *purity of his life*. What impostor ever exhibited a deportment so blameless—a life so free from pride, ostentation, vanity, selfishness, or worldly-mindedness? Throughout his whole life goodness marks his intercourse with mankind. He engages in nothing to afflict or distress—nothing to produce discord in social circles, or insurrections in civil communities; he appears among men as the “Prince of Peace.” It was the business of his life to go about doing good. Were any blind, he gave them sight; were any deaf, he restored their hearing; were any dumb, he loosed their tongues; were any lame, he said, “Arise, take up thy bed, and walk;” were any sick, he said, “Wilt thou be made whole?” were any possessed of devils, he “rebuked the foul spirit,” and relieved the possessed; and “to the poor he preached the gospel.” So abundant were his acts of benevolence, that multitudes of the afflicted followed him up in his travels, or cried after him as he passed, thronged him as he entered the house of a friend, pressing through the crowd to “touch the hem of his garment;” and, of all that ever came to him in distress, not one did he turn empty away. And though he was poor, not having “where to lay his head,” he never received a reward for any of his acts of mercy; but, a homeless wanderer, he went about doing good to others. Can it be that a life so blameless, so devoted to doing good, so self-sacrificing, was that of an impostor?

2. But look at his *patience*, amid all his persecutions, and his kindness toward his enemies. He bears insult and injury, mockery and derision, with calm composure and meek submission. His character was aspersed, and all manner of evil spoken of him falsely. His best

acts were attributed to the worst of motives, and his virtues were converted into crimes. He was pursued from city to city with the tongue of slander, and with the venom of demons his enemies clamored for his blood; but he bore it all, without recrimination or the slightest effort to take revenge. He wept in sympathy over the devoted city of Jerusalem, and, with his dying lips, prayed for his murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Are these the characteristics of an impostor? Could he who thus lived and thus died be a cunning deceiver, practicing a fraud upon the world? The very supposition is monstrous!

3. Next we view the character of Christ as a *Teacher*. And, first, we notice his Sermon on the Mount. Here, within the limits of three chapters, is comprised the most luminous presentation of moral and religious truth contained in any language. As he opened his mouth and taught, a shower of rich beatitudes came down upon his waiting hearers like clusters of ripe fruit from the tree of life! We cannot pause to analyze this inimitable sermon, but it contains every conceivable excellence—it is simple and comprehensive, majestic and sublime, tender and impressive, earnest and pathetic—it teaches the purest morality and the loftiest devotion, in the clearest and most forcible style. No unprejudiced mind can peruse it and fail to coincide with the multitudes who "were astonished at his doctrine," and testified that "he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

Again, we look at the instructions of Christ in his *parables*. Here the divinity of his character as a *teacher* conspicuously shines forth. Never before nor since did this method of teaching appear with so much beauty and force. With the profoundest skill, by the use of the parable, he riveted attention, removed difficulties, disarmed prejudice, shed light upon the understanding, convinced the conscience, and, transforming the bigot into an impartial judge, led him by gentle and imperceptible degrees to pronounce upon himself the sentence of condemnation. Do we wish to see the richness and fullness of gospel grace, the earnest importunity of the gospel call, and the fallacious pleas and senseless excuses by which sinners evade this call—do we wish to see all these things forcibly set forth?—we should read the parable of the Great Supper. Would we have a view of the sincere and benevolent intention with which the gospel should be proclaimed to all classes, and of the various kinds of hearers who listen to the word, and the reasons why so small a portion of them profit thereby?—we may read it in all its transcendent beauty and force in the parable of the Sower. Would we behold in more than nature's deepest colors, the folly and drudgery of sin, the

all-surpassing yearnings of the bowels of Infinite Love for the salvation of the wandering rebel, and the thrill of joy and gladness with which all heaven will celebrate the return to God of every penitent—would we witness a description of all this, wrought up to the loftiest degree of pathos and power that language can reach?—we have it in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

4. But we look also at the circumstances connected with the condemnation and death of Jesus, and witness *there* the evidence that he was more than man. Behold him before Pilate! Did ever a criminal display such serene composure under such circumstances? Did ever a judge pronounce such a eulogy upon him whom, with the next breath, he ordered to execution? “I find no fault in him,” said Pilate; and added: “Take ye him and crucify him!” Can this be a wicked deceiver? But look upon the scene of his death—upon the robe of derision and the crown of thorns—upon the cross, the nails, and the hammer—upon the rending of the vail and the going out of the sun—upon his pierced side, and hands, and feet, and upon his streaming blood—listen to his dying groans, and to his last prayer for his enemies, and say, Was not “this the Son of God”? Could an impostor have lived such a life of purity and self-sacrifice? Could *he* have exhibited such calm serenity of soul amid such “contradiction of sinners,” labored so perseveringly for the world that hated him, and died such a death of God-like composure, exhibiting to the last such compassion for his murderers? Sober reason affirms that Jesus was a good man, and not an impostor; and if so, then he was the Son of God, and his religion is *true*.

5. Even some of the bitter opponents of Christianity, in an hour of more sober reflection than usual, have uttered some noble and eloquent sentiments concerning Christ and his teachings. Rousseau says: “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 rhome 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 Sophroniscus (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 example 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."

In the *apostolic writings* we find also very conclusive marks of truthfulness and candor. These disciples never pause to eulogize the transcendent virtues of their Master, or to express their admiration of his wonderful doings; they everywhere simply narrate facts as they transpired, in the plainest and most natural style, yet preserving a tone of solemn dignity suitable to the important events they record. Hannah More well says, "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 Gospels a single interjection, not an exclamation, nor any artifice to call the reader's attention to the marvels of which the relaters 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."

III. An argument, also, from internal evidence may be founded upon the *style* of the sacred writers. How marked is the diversity in the style of Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos, and of all the Old Testament writers! And no one can read the New Testament and not be struck with the peculiar characteristics of style in the several authors. In the writings of Paul, what massive strength and force of logic; what ardor of devotion; what firmness of purpose; what dauntless courage! In the writings of John, what sympathetic tenderness; what sweetness and amiability! And in Peter, and James, and all the rest, there is apparent in each a style of his own. It cannot but be observed how fully the peculiar style of each author is sustained throughout all his writings. Could such consistency have been preserved by an impostor?

IV. The next source of internal evidence to which we call attention is the *doctrines* of revelation. If these be such as are worthy of God, and adapted to the *character*, the *condition*, the *necessities*, and the *hopes* of man, and such as could not have been discovered by human reason, then it will follow that they have been revealed from heaven.

We need not pause to show how vastly superior are the writings of the Scriptures, both on moral and religious subjects, to all the wisdom of the schools of pagan philosophy. The ancient Jews were less learned than the Greeks and the Romans. How, then, could the former so excel the latter, unless they were divinely assisted? Infidelity may boast of the system of natural religion; but, we demand, to what does it all amount without revelation? But for what modern infidels have purloined from the New Testament, they would have been as ignorant of the unity of God and of the divine attributes, of the duty of man and of the doctrine of immortality, as were the pagan philosophers

Were the philosophers of Greece and Rome, in the Augustan age, inferior in learning to the infidels of the present day? If not, then why were their notions on these subjects so vague and indefinite, and blended with so much uncertainty, so inferior to those of the infidels of our day? Simply because our modern infidels have borrowed from the gospel. From the divine philosophy of Jesus and the sublime ethics of his apostles they have stolen their wisdom, but refuse to acknowledge the source to which they are so much indebted. "After grazing," as one expresses it, "in the pastures of revelation, they boast of growing fat by nature." Those glorious presentations of the divine attributes, the inimitable golden rule of the Saviour, and the confident announcements of immortality, which so enrich the pages of revelation, never could have been discovered by human reason; but they are every way worthy of God, from whom they have been derived, and, when revealed, reason can attest their truth and excellence.

Were it necessary, it could easily be shown that an *internal* evidence of the truth of revelation might be deduced from every single doctrine and precept of the Bible. But we can only present a few of the prominent doctrines, and exhibit the argument founded on them as a sample of the rest.

1. The doctrine of *human depravity*, or the moral corruption of man's nature, is very clearly revealed in Scripture. It runs through both Testaments with a prominence which cannot be overlooked. It is seen in the law and in the gospel—in the writings of Moses and the prophets, and of Christ and his apostles. It need not be insisted how perfectly accordant is this doctrine with the internal consciousness and experience of every accountable man; nor how abundantly it is confirmed by the universal history of the world. In our present argument we take these matters for granted, referring for their proof to the appropriate place in the systems of divinity. But, we inquire, how can we account for the appearance of so clear and satisfactory a presentation of this doctrine in the Bible, and nowhere else? While the pagan nations, although they could not be ignorant of the fact of the general corruption of man, had very vague and indefinite notions as to the nature of this moral disease, and knew nothing of its origin and remedy, the Bible sheds abundant illumination upon the whole subject. While philosophy had been essaying in vain to determine whence this moral malady arose, and setting forth numerous fallacious and fruitless schemes for its control or eradication, revelation conducts us to the origin of our race, records the history of the fall of man, and proclaims and satisfactorily accounts for the moral corruption of the entire species. Now, we

demand, does not the fact that this great doctrine, whose truth is recorded upon the tablet of every conscience, and upon every page of the world's history, is thus fully revealed, both as to its nature and origin, in the Bible, and nowhere else, demonstrate that revelation is not of men, but from God?

2. But the Bible not only thus describes, in its true character, the moral state of man, but it sets forth the only true *remedy*. The doctrine of the *atonement*, running through all the law and the gospel, presents the only rational ground of pardon and salvation for the sinner of which the world has ever heard. Philosophy, falsely so called, and pseudo-theology, have prated much and long about the *mere mercy* of God, his *prerogative*, *repentance alone*, etc., as being rational and practicable grounds of pardon and salvation; but all these schemes have been clearly shown to be futile and inadequate. Besides, without revelation, what do we know of the abstract mercy and prerogative of God? If his mercy admits the sinner to suffer for his sins *here*, for a limited period, what assurance can we have, without revelation, that the same mercy will not consign him to endless sufferings *hereafter*? Indeed, without revelation we may realize that we are guilty, polluted, and miserable, but we can find no remedy. We are left to the uncertainty of conjecture, or the darkness of despair. Atonement, as exhibited in the Bible and nowhere else, furnishes the only remedy in the case. It alone shows how "God can be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

3. Again, man is not only guilty, and needs pardon, but he is *polluted*, and needs *cleansing*. The gospel also furnishes the *divine influence* upon the soul, to "creanse it from all unrighteousness." "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 favor of God, the other renews him in his image." (Watson's Institutes.)

Can that system be the contrivance of wicked impostors which alone furnishes information the most desirable, the most important, the most beneficial to man, which could possibly be conceived—which unfolds his true character, portrays his helpless condition, and points to his only

remedy? Can that revelation be an imposture which finds man in darkness and gives him light, in weakness and gives him strength, in guilt and gives him pardon, and in pollution and gives him sanctification? Can a system of doctrines so pregnant with truth, so adapted to our nature and necessities, and which so "commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God," be of earthly origin and device? Reason testifies, No; it cannot be! This great and sublime system which teaches the depravity and guilt of man through the fall, and his redemption and salvation through the atonement of Christ and the sanctification of the Spirit, is no plant of earthly production. It grew not in nature's soil. It is a seed which *could* only have originated and been warmed into life in the bosom of infinite Wisdom and Goodness.

4. Once more, the Scriptures alone bring fully to light the doctrine of *immortality*.

On this question pagan philosophy, in its most enlightened and virtuous phase, has ever trembled between hope and despair; but Christianity has exultantly "brought life and immortality to light." We need not say how necessary is a belief in this doctrine to our welfare and happiness in this life. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ," said an apostle, "we are of all men most miserable." Bereft of that hope of a future state of being and enjoyment, how cheerless and dreary would be the present! What of earth could be found worthy the attention and concern of our exalted powers? But to the Bible, and especially to the revealments of the New Testament, we are indebted for all the assurance we can gain of future reward for the privations, toils, and sufferings of the present state.

Upon this subject how driveling and unsatisfying are the dreamy conjectures of pagan philosophy! How infinitely superior to all *these* the solid and glowing hopes with which revelation inspires her votaries! David exclaims: "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness. . . . My flesh also shall rest in hope. . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. . . . I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

The apostles of Christ were equally exultant in their expressions upon this subject. St. Paul exclaims: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. . . . For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And St. Peter speaks of "an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." St.

John says: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Can that revelation be an imposture which furnishes the only solid foundation for these glorious hopes? Surely a system of doctrine so well adapted to the nature, the necessities, and the hopes of man, must have God for its author! •

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XIX

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| <p>QUESTION 1. By what method do we prove the divinity of the Bible from its contents?</p> <p>2. What three different class of men are those from whom the Bible <i>must</i> have emanated?</p> <p>3. How is it shown that <i>bad</i> men <i>would</i> not and <i>could</i> not have written it?</p> <p>4. How is it shown that <i>good, uninspired</i> men could not have written it?</p> <p>5. By what class, then, must it have been written?</p> <p>6. What is the argument founded on the character of Christ as portrayed in the New Testament?</p> | <p>7. What argument is drawn from the circumstances connected with the condemnation and death of Jesus?</p> <p>8. What is the substance of Rousseau's admission on the subject?</p> <p>9. What particular marks of genuineness do we find in the apostolic writings?</p> <p>10. What is the argument from the style of the sacred writers?</p> <p>11. How may an argument be founded on the doctrines of revelation?</p> <p>12. To what particular doctrines is reference made?</p> |
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CHAPTER XX.

EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE, CONSIDERED IN REFERENCE TO MEN IN GENERAL AND TO CHRISTIANS IN PARTICULAR.

"By their fruits ye shall know them," is one of the maxims of Jesus, which is not entirely dependent upon revelation for its sanction. Its truth and excellence are manifested and confirmed by the every-day transactions of life, and commend themselves to the common sense of every intelligent person. Philosophy teaches us to judge of the cause by the effect, in like manner as it is the dictate of practical common sense to judge of the tree by its fruit. To no subject does this principle apply with more propriety and force than to religion. After all the learned discussion of the evidences of Christianity, and the formidable array of arguments from miracles and prophecy, sustained and illustrated by appeals to history, philosophy, analogy, and reason; after all that may be so forcibly presented of the internal evidence founded on the consistency of the different parts of revelation, the character of the sacred writers, and the excellence of the doctrines revealed, there is still another species of internal evidence more forcible and convincing to the mass of common people than any we have yet named; we mean that evidence which results from *experience*.

I. We will contemplate this subject, *first*, in reference to the effects of Christianity, in *transforming the moral character of individuals*.

The system of truth is symmetrical and cohering. All its elements hang together, like links in a chain, as consistent parts of an harmonious whole. We assume it as a maxim that one truth can neither be inconsistent with another in its nature nor productive of evil in its tendency. According to this principle, therefore, it will be easy to subject the question, as to the truth or falsehood of Christianity, to an experimental test.

The great Founder of Christianity never required the people to believe in him without evidence. He embodied one of his maxims, by which all men might test the truth of his doctrines, in this interrogatory: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" And God says

to rebellious Israel: "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Revelation boldly challenges to be tested. If there is aught within the whole range of science which can bear being tried upon the Baconian plan of *founding theory upon experiment*, it is Christianity. All that she demands is, that her doctrines may be fairly brought to this test. She has nothing to fear from the result. If Christianity be an imposture, a mere fabricated cheat, her tendency cannot but be evil; the stream must partake of the nature of the fountain. On the other hand, if the effect of Christianity is ascertained to be invariably *good*, then it will follow that it must be a system of truth.

1. Let us inquire then: What is the influence of Christianity upon the *moral character of individuals*? If we examine the testimony of the apostles themselves, we find them very explicit in regard to the moral change effected by Christianity. According to their teaching, Christianity produces a change in moral character from the love of sin and wickedness to the love of God and holiness. The believer has been "created anew in Christ Jesus." With him, in an important sense, "old things are passed away, and all things are become new." A new principle—a principle of life and holiness—is implanted within his soul. He lives, breathes, and moves within a new atmosphere. He sees God now, not as an angry, frowning Judge, but as a loving, a compassionate Father. His heart, which was "enmity against God, not subject to the law of God," now "cries out for the living God" in holy rapture, exclaiming: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." He has lost his desire to frequent the haunts of sin, and now he delights in the service of the sanctuary—the worship of God and the ways of righteousness and peace. He looks upon the people and the service of God, not with aversion, but with delight. Once he delighted in "the works of the flesh." "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like"—these were once the tyrants of his soul, but now, in his heart and life, he exhibits "the fruit of the Spirit." "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"—these are the graces that fill his heart and adorn his life.

2. Any one, by examining the writings of the early *Christian apologists*, when defending the character of the persecuted Christians, will see that their testimony on this subject accords with that of the apostles. Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Origen Lactantius, and

others, are very explicit in their accounts of the holy and self-sacrificing lives of the Christians. These direct testimonies of the Christian apologists were not disputed by their learned pagan opponents, which is sufficient evidence that their truth could not be safely denied. Indeed, some of them, as may be seen from the famous letter of Pliny to Trajan, already quoted, fully admitted the good moral character of Christians.

And we may confidently appeal to the observation of any candid person in Christian lands to testify to the reforming moral influence of Christianity. It is "known and read of all men" that thousands, in nearly all parts of Christendom, have been found by the gospel wicked, profane, profligate, malicious, lewd, drunken, or abandoned sinners, and been suddenly transformed into quiet, peaceable, sober, industrious, upright, and respectable citizens. Now, we ask, is there no argument in these facts? Are we to be told that a base, unprincipled impostor invented a religion more powerful in reforming the hearts and lives of the vicious than all the deep-studied theories, and learned lectures, and volumes of philosophers and sages? Are we to be required to believe that a system more influential in converting mankind from the practice of vice to the practice of virtue than all other schemes ever known to the world is a vile imposture, a record of profanity and lies? This absurd position must be occupied by the infidel, while he persists in rejecting Christianity; and we must allow him to choose his own position, however unreasonable, absurd, or inconsistent it may be in its character or ruinous in its consequences.

II. We next look at the *influence of Christianity upon the moral condition of NATIONS AND COMMUNITIES.*

It is only necessary for any intelligent eye to glance over the principal nations of the world to see the striking contrast in intelligence, morals, refinement, and all that can ennoble or render a people prosperous and happy between Christian nations and all others, whether pagan or Mohammedan. In Christian countries the light of civilization shines conspicuously, while throughout pagan and Mohammedan States the clouds of ignorance and superstition, to an appalling degree, rest upon the people. Liberty, equality, intelligence, science, good order, industry, refinement, benevolence, and virtue, are peculiar characteristics of Christian lands; but, on the other hand, where the Christian religion is unknown, barbarism, despotism, superstition, vileness, wretchedness, misery, and degradation, generally prevail.

Among numerous other instances that might be cited, look at the wonderful change effected by the gospel, in the course of only a few

years, in the condition of the lately benighted inhabitants of Greenland and of the Southern Pacific islands. But we need not dwell upon these facts; they stand publicly authenticated before the world, and appeal to every skeptic to look upon the *effects* of Christianity, and read in these facts the deep impress of the divinity of its origin.

III. Hitherto we have only spoken of the effects of Christianity, as they are outwardly visible, serving as evidence of the reality and excellence of religion, founded on what we witness in others. But we now call attention to another species of evidence which is *internal* in two senses of the word—as the schoolmen would say, both *objectively* and *subjectively*; that is, both in reference to the source or influence whence the evidence is derived and to the recipient by whom it is recognized. By this we mean that INTERNAL CONVICTION *produced in the mind, conscience, or heart of the individual, resulting from the gospel through the influence of the Holy Spirit.*

This evidence is referred to in the Scriptures as existing in two distinct stages or degrees. *First*, as connected with *conviction* in the heart or conscience of the sinner. This is implied in these words of St. Paul: “But by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” Here the gospel, as presented by the apostles, is seen to carry to the conscience, even of the sinner, a degree of conviction that it is true.

The *second* division of this kind of evidence is what is termed the *witness of the Spirit*, which it is the privilege of every Christian to possess. This is spoken of by St. Paul in these words: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” It is also promised by our Saviour in these words: “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” That is, on the condition of obeying the gospel, we are promised the knowledge of its truth.

1. We first notice that division of this species of evidence connected with *conviction*.

Within the great deep of our internal, spiritual nature, there lives a principle or faculty—call it conscience, the moral sense, God within us, or what we please—by which we can perceive a distinction between right and wrong, and gain an impression of the truth or falsehood of things set before the mind. That God, who made us, and who is the author of all our powers, can shine upon the *penetralia* of our internal nature, and cause us to apprehend truths addressed to our conscience as easily as he can send us the light of the sun to reveal to us through the eye the truths of nature about us, is a position too obvious to be doubted.

Let any one discourse to us of the laws and operations of mind, or of the internal emotions by which we have been often influenced, and we may frequently feel as firm a conviction of the truth of the things thus communicated as it is possible for us to have of any fact we ever witnessed. And this conviction may not be the result of any process of ratiocination performed by the mind at the time, but may rise as spontaneously as the emotion of pleasure when we unexpectedly meet a much-loved friend. We may not be able fully to explain, or even to comprehend, the philosophy of this phenomenon, but of the truth of the fact we can have no doubt. We know that within the *arcana* of our inner nature there exists a something that receives, appropriates, approves, and confirms certain truths the moment they enter the mind. There is a light within us which often possesses such affinity for the light received from without, that no sooner do the rays of the two lights come to a focus on the same object than their perfect accordance is seen by the mind; and the testimony of the one is confirmed by that of the other. The voice from without is echoed in unison by the voice from within; in other words, the truth of revelation, entering the *penetralia* within us, finds its attestation in the bosom of the recipient. Thus it is that the divine word, sounding in the ear of the sinner, becomes a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," and so probes the conscience, and lays bare the hitherto hidden anatomy of the soul, that the sinner is made to feel and to know that he has been listening to the voice of truth from on high. As the tribute-paying Jew, when he saw upon the coin the image and superscription of Cesar, knew to whom he owed political allegiance, even so the sinner, when he reads or hears the word of revelation, often perceives upon that word the signature of God so intelligibly impressed that he cannot doubt the divine source from whence it came.

This evidence of the truth of Christianity, connected with conviction for sin, is what every sinner throughout Christian lands, to a greater or less extent, has received. He may deny the fact of this conviction, and spurn the word, and resist the Spirit that produced it; but yet it is true that he has heard the voice of God speaking to his inner nature, and the voice of conscience echoed the words back to his soul, assuring him that the voice which had spoken came from heaven. Here, then, is an evidence of the truth of Christianity, resulting from the experience of every man who has ever heard the gospel, and been convinced by the testimony of his own conscience, that the message was from God. But this kind of evidence is only of force with him who receives it. He cannot impart it to others so as to render it intelligible and efficacious.

cious in regard to them. At the moment when this evidence is manifested to his heart, it is vivid and impressive, often causing the sinner to tremble; but if he trifles with the voice that addresses him, saying, "Go thy way for this time," the insulted Spirit may leave him to harden and perish in his sins; and the traces of this evidence may become so dim as almost entirely to fade from his memory.

We now inquire: Can that gospel be a human invention which finds a confirming witness of its truth in every soul of man? Can that voice be a deceptive illusion which finds an echo in the conscience of every sinner? Has the God of nature placed in the bosom of all his accountable creatures a fallacious witness only to deceive and mislead them? Can that system which is a profane and wicked imposture "commend itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God"? There is in the Bible a tone of divine authority, an awful solemnity, a sacred and heavenly unction, which to every conscience, not entirely obdured by sin, attests the divinity of its origin. Yet infidelity may laugh it to scorn. The incorrigible sinner may so inure himself to the impious crime of deriding this word, which his own conscience once bore him witness was the word of God, that he shall never again be impressed with its sacredness or truth till before the judgment-seat of Christ its unfolded pages shall flash conviction upon his soul. Nevertheless it is true, that as reason bears witness to all who impartially peruse the pages of nature, that all material things were created by the infinitely wise and beneficent God, even so does the conscience within the breast of all who, in a docile spirit and with a candid mind, read or hear the gospel of Christ bear witness that it is in truth the voice of God speaking to us from heaven by his Son.

But this voice of God, speaking, whether to saint or sinner, by his Son through the influence of the Spirit, is not to be understood as revealing any new truths not embraced in the Bible. The Spirit shines upon the sinner's heart, and "opens his understanding," but it is "that he may understand the Scriptures." The Spirit rends the vail and opens his eyes, but it is that he may "behold wondrous things out of the divine law."

2. There is one more division of the *experimental* evidence to which we now call attention: the *indwelling witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the Christian*.

It would be entirely aside from our purpose here, and irrelevant to our present argument, to enter upon the mooted question as to the manner in which the influence of the Spirit is imparted. All with which we are at present concerned is the fact that the Spirit is prom-

ised to the Christian, not only to certify his adoption as a child of God, but also to assure him of the truth of the Christian doctrine. Both these points are abundantly established in the Scriptures we have quoted. Other texts to the same effect might be adduced, but we deem it unnecessary to delay farther to prove a position which we think will not be disputed.

The argument here proposed is this: Christ has promised that all who do his will shall *know* of the truth of his doctrine, and the apostle teaches that the Spirit testifies to every Christian the *fact* of his adoption; hence it follows, as Christ cannot fail in his promise, and as the apostle has taught the truth, that every Christian has the most indubitable evidence that Christianity is true. This evidence has the advantage over both the external evidence and every other species of the internal evidence. Like the best wine kept for the last of the feast, this is the last, the crowning evidence which God imparts of the truth of his religion. Other evidence is abundant and satisfactory, sufficient to remove all reasonable doubt, but this is absolutely infallible. Other evidence is dependent on the capacity, integrity, and depositions, of fallible men, and the deductions of our fallible reason; but here is evidence, passing through no fallible channel, having no fallible prop for its support, dependent on no fallible reasoning for its validity. Indeed, so direct, all-conclusive, and infallibly certain, is this evidence, that it can suffer no diminution of its strength and efficacy from the ignorance, the weakness, the blunders, or the fallibility, of him to whom it is given. It depends entirely upon an infallible source, not only as a guarantee that it shall be properly set forth in all its appropriate and convincing efficacy, but that it shall be correctly understood, duly apprehended, and fully relied upon, by all to whom it is given. All this is pledged by Him who is infallible, and whose every promise, his attributes assure us, he certainly will fulfill. Furthermore, this evidence, unlike every other species of evidence, is alike conclusive and satisfactory to all to whom it is given, to whatever class they may belong. To the rich and the poor, to the high and the low, to the ignorant and the learned, to the patrician and the plebeian, to the sage and the savage, to *all*, it is alike intelligible and satisfactory. It removes from all the last vestige of doubt, and settles and confirms them in the full assurance that their faith rests not "in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

This evidence, it is true, is not vouchsafed to all men indiscriminately. It is the property of the Christian alone; and, in the nature of things, none else can possess it. It results from an experience which none can realize without becoming a Christian. To impart such ev-

dence as *this* to the sinner might infringe upon his free agency, and make him a Christian without consulting his will, contrary to the gospel-plan. But while this evidence is restricted to the Christian alone, and cannot be so imparted by him to others as to enable them to realize its convincing power, it is yet, to his own mind, more convincing and satisfactory than all other evidence taken together. And to vast numbers of the masses of the common, uneducated people, the experimental evidence, in its two branches, as pertaining to the sinner and the Christian, is all that they possess, or are capable of comprehending.

That the Christian religion is thus adapted to the circumstances of all classes of the human family, is another evidence that it originated in the infinite wisdom and goodness of God. He who made us, and who perfectly understands all our imbecilities, as he delights to do his needy creatures good, could not bestow upon us a religion that all might not be capable of receiving and enjoying. And as the larger portion of the human family are uneducated, and quite incapable of examining the historical and philosophical arguments founded on miracles and prophecy, how destitute would be their condition if they were left without any evidence of the truth of religion which their capacity and circumstances could reach! Without the experimental evidence, the Christian religion would lack one essential element of being adapted to "the poor;" and our Saviour specifies, as one proof of his Messiahship, the fact that "the poor have the gospel preached unto them." Bearing along with it the sanction of its own divinity, the gospel can visit the hovels of the poor and indigent, the unlettered outcasts from society, and even the untaught savages of the wilderness, and all it asks is the means of access to their inner nature, an interpreter who can convey its truths to their understanding, and can speak to them in a voice that will convince them that its credentials are from God. Thus, it can become unto all, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether Greeks or barbarians, "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Again, this experimental evidence most decidedly deprives the skeptic of every rational ground of objection to religion. It calls upon him to settle his every doubt by experimental demonstration. "Prove me, . . . saith the Lord of hosts, . . . and I will pour you out a blessing." "If any man will do his will," saith Jesus, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

It was unreasonable in the Syrian captain to hesitate about washing in the waters of Jordan to be healed of his leprosy; and had the blind man, whom our Saviour directed to "wash in the pool of Siloam,"

refused to comply with this command, he would have deserved to grope in darkness all his days. What, then, shall be thought of the proud and haughty skeptic who persists in urging his senseless cavils and oft-refuted arguments against Christianity, but will not consent to test the question by our Saviour's experimental criterion? "Do my will," saith Jesus, "and you shall know of the doctrine." That is, submit to the requirements of the gospel, obey my commandments, and you shall have evidence to convince you, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that my religion is divine. The yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden is light; and it is no hard condition for the sinner to be required to do the will of Christ that he may test the truth of his doctrines. Let infidelity cease to deride that Saviour whom she has never attempted to follow or obey, let her no longer scoff at that religion she has never proved, but let her meet the issue fairly, upon the arena of the experimental test, as Christianity proposes, or let her cease her ridicule and vituperation forever.

3. Once more, we ask the attention to the argument for the truth of Christianity founded upon the *testimony of Christians concerning their experience*. As a man born blind, though he cannot realize from experience the distinction of colors, may, nevertheless, be satisfied on the testimony of others that such distinction exists; even so, though the Christian can never convey to the understanding of the sinner an adequate conception of the experimental evidence as realized in his own soul, yet he may exhibit such testimony concerning it as ought to "convince the gainsayers" that he "has not followed a cunningly-devised fable." St. Paul, when permitted to speak for himself, related the history of his conversion; and the publication of that remarkable occurrence has doubtless been the means of convincing thousands of the truth of Christianity. The language of St. John is: "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you." It cannot be questioned that the sincerity and earnestness which have been exhibited by Christians in every age, in testifying "how great things the Lord has done for them," have wielded a powerful influence in the conversion of unbelievers to the faith. What a wonderful array of evidence of this description has the Church, in every age, set before the world! Multiplied thousands, under the most trying circumstances, have sealed the truth of their profession with their blood. A "noble army of martyrs" have shouted the praise of God amid the flames. Now, we demand: Is the testimony of all these Christians, as to the power and consolations of that religion which they experienced, of no avail?

Let infidelity cease her cavils and quibbles, let her pause in her

career of ridicule and abuse, and come at once and prove, if she can, the falsehood of Christianity by the test of experience! Multitudes have realized by experience its saving power, and, were it possible for all other arguments on the subject to be forgotten, thousands would cling to Christian experience as the richest heritage of fallen humanity, imparting the greatest consolation in this life, and inspiring the brightest hopes in reference to the next.

Although this experimental evidence is unquestionably the most overwhelmingly convincing of any that can be obtained in this life, yet it has ever been repulsive to the feelings of the unrenewed soul. In unsanctified human nature there is a principle of instinctive rebellion against the spirituality of religion. Perhaps the ground of this is to be found mainly in the fact that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." To an unlettered peasant, who had never heard any thing of the science of astronomy, the fact that an eclipse of the sun can be calculated for centuries before it occurs, and the precise time of the phenomenon predicted, would perhaps be as mysterious and as repugnant to his faith as are the spiritual things of religion to the unbelieving heart. But let that peasant be regularly instructed in the principles of mathematical and astronomical science, leading him, step by step, from the foundation-axioms up to the abstruse calculations of astronomy, and the mystery will be dispelled, and he will see that it all must be true, and cannot be otherwise. Even so in religion there is a commencement, a progression, and a maturity. We can see no good reason why those who are strangers to the experimental evidence of Christianity should reject that evidence upon the testimony of Christians, while they rely confidently on the testimony of philosophers and astronomers, in reference to experiments and calculations as mysterious and incomprehensible to them as can be the things of religion. If all good astronomers agree in testifying that eclipses can be calculated with accuracy, even so all good Christians agree in affirming that "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

If it be said that we have much collateral testimony to satisfy us that the statements of philosophers and astronomers, in reference to their experiments and calculations, are true; even so, we demand, is there not abundant evidence, beside the mere affirmation of Christians, confirming the truth of their testimony in relation to their Christian experience? Is there not all the evidence of this kind that the nature of the subject admits? Would not similar testimony, derived from the

same witnesses, convince any rational mind of the truth of any facts in reference to the things of this world? And if so, why should we adopt a new mode of reasoning whenever we pass from questions of philosophy or experimental facts pertaining to temporal affairs, to the *religious experience* of the same persons? Is skepticism so pressed and crippled in her crusade against experimental religion that, whenever *that* subject is brought upon the arena, she is driven, in order to keep her principles in countenance, to ignore all her ordinary rules of logic, and resort to a new method of argumentation, and one never admitted or thought of except when the object is to discredit the claims of experimental religion? Were not this the case, there is not a rational mind beneath the sun that could for a moment resist the sweeping tide of testimony by which the reality of experimental Christianity has been confirmed.

Passing by the millions of sincere Christians who, in every age of the gospel dispensation, in the humble walks of life, have professed to have experienced the power of this religion in their hearts, and have exultantly proclaimed the reality of its consolations and hopes—this experimental religion has numbered among its advocates many of the brightest luminaries in the galaxy of learning and science. Men of the loftiest genius and talent, and of the most inestimable probity and moral worth; for example, Lord Chief-Justice Hale, Pascal, Newton, Boyle, Locke, Addison, Boerhaave, Lord Littleton, Baron Haller, Sir William Jones, and James Beattie—all men of giant intellect and of world-renowned literary fame; these have all professed with their lips this experimental Christianity, and exhibited its fruits in their lives. In reference to any statement of historic fact which they had witnessed, or any scientific experiment they had tried, their testimony would be undoubted before any court of law or college of philosophy on earth. Why, then, should their statements as to their experience of Christianity, and the inspoken witness of God to their hearts that the doctrine of Christ is of God, be not only discredited but stigmatized and ridiculed as a fanatical delusion?

Can infidelity boast of such a host of worthies among her adherents to palliate, if possible, her inconsistency in rejecting such testimony? What has been the moral standing of *her* most illustrious apostles? As observed by Watson: "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, Bolingbroke was a rake and a flagitious politician; Collins and Shaftesbury qualified themselves for civil offices by receiving the sacrament, whilst they were endeavoring 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; Rousseau an abandoned sensualist, and guilty of the basest actions, which he scruples not to state and palliate." Are we to be called upon to enroll ourselves as disciples of these men, who have added to the sophistry and inconsistency of their reasoning, as a comment on the tendency of their principles, the flagitiousness of their lives? No, we will cling to the Bible as our light and our salvation, as our only solid ground of comfort and hope in a world of sorrow and affliction. We will enroll our names with the extended list of saints and martyrs who, "in all time of their affliction," have derived solace and comfort from the inspired pages of the word of life. Let infidelity oppose and deride, ridicule and scoff—let all the ingenuity and malice of skeptics and demons combine to condemn or stigmatize, to disprove or destroy—the revelation of God to man, their counsel shall be frustrated, their efforts shall prove fruitless, and their labor shall perish; but the Bible, more indestructible than monuments of marble, more enduring than the hills, shall still remain! It is the word of God, "which liveth and abideth forever." "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book!"

"Were all the sea one chrysolite,
And all this earth one golden ball,
And diamonds all the stars of night,
This precious book were worth them all."

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XX.

- QUESTION 1 What species of evidence is the most convincing to the mass of common people?
2. In what three divisions has the argument from *experience* been presented?
- What is the argument founded upon the transforming influence of Christianity upon the moral character of individuals?
4. What is the influence of Christianity upon the moral condition of nations and communities, and how is its divinity thereby shown?
5. What evidence is that referred to which is *internal* in two senses?
- 5 In what two stages is this evidence spoken of in Scripture?
7. What is the nature of this evidence as connected with conviction?
8. What is the last division of experimental evidence referred to?
9. For what double purpose is the Spirit promised to the Christian?
10. Wherein consists the superiority of this to every other class of testimony?
11. What class of persons can realize the force of this evidence?
12. How may it be shown that this experimental evidence deprives the skeptic of every rational ground of objection to religion?
13. How can we account for the general prejudice of unbelievers against the experimental evidence of religion?

PART III.—THE MORALS OF CHRISTIANITY.

BOOK I.—INTRODUCTORY PRINCIPLES.

CHAPTER I.

CONNECTION BETWEEN MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND DIVINE REVELATION — THE MANNER IN WHICH MORALS ARE TAUGHT IN THE SCRIPTURES.

I. REVELATION THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN MORALS.

Not only in pagan countries, but even in Christian lands, systems of morals have been devised and published with little or no reference to the teachings of the Bible upon that subject. That Socrates, Plato, Seneca, and others, in the most enlightened age of Grecian and Roman learning, should plod their way amid the abstruse intricacies of ethical science as best they could, guided only by the light of nature and the dim reflections of tradition, is all that could be expected of benighted heathens. But that men of science, upon whose minds the beams of revelation have shone, should exhibit to the world systems upon this subject derived mainly from the light of nature, referring to the sacred Scriptures only as a source of confirmatory evidence, is marvelous in the extreme. With those who admit the truth of revelation, the Bible is the great source of information upon this as well as upon all other questions encompassed by its teachings. Since God has furnished in his word a revelation of "the whole duty of man," we may with as much propriety attempt to work out from the quarry of nature the plan of salvation as a system of morals. Revelation is as truly the standard upon the one subject as the other, and we cannot directly or indirectly ignore the fact, without dishonoring the Christian name. But while the Bible is the highest authority upon this subject—indeed, the only infal-

ible guide—the teachings of nature, so far as they extend or can be understood by us, may be useful as tending to confirm and illustrate the word of revelation. So far as human reason can penetrate into the rationale of moral precept, it ought to be unhesitatingly employed, and may contribute to our more enlightened perception of the excellency and value of revealed truth; yet it should not be forgotten that while, in reference to some duties, no reason of their propriety can be seen except the divine command, in all these reasons are but imperfectly understood, and, at best, do not furnish the *ground of obligation*—this rests solely on the divine command.

In regard to the pagan philosophers of antiquity, although their views concerning God and the principles of morals were exceedingly erroneous and degrading, yet it must be admitted that some of them at times uttered some sublime and noble sentiments upon these topics. But that their most consistent and elevated thoughts upon these themes resulted from the efforts of their own unassisted reason, we have no evidence for believing; on the contrary, we have very satisfactory proof that for all their most valuable teachings, both in reference to the one supreme God and the nature of moral rectitude, they were indebted to the light of revelation, either reflected from tradition or from the Jewish Scriptures, whose influence, direct or indirect, was, to some extent, diffused among them. Hence we conclude that human reason, unaided by revelation, so far as evinced by the efforts of ancient pagan philosophy, was not only unable, “by searching to find out God,” but was too feeble to discover the foundation principles, much less to shape a correct system, of moral philosophy.

To all who are acquainted with the literature of pagan philosophers and deistical writers, it is notorious that they have greatly improved since the commencement of the Christian era. They have not only enlarged the circle of matters embraced in their philosophy, but they have more enlightened views concerning the principles of virtue and vice, much clearer and less erroneous conceptions of the distinctions between right and wrong, than are found in the writings of the more ancient pagan or deistical authors. Whence this superior light possessed by modern rejecters of revelation, when compared with more ancient pagan philosophers, has originated, is no difficult problem to solve. It has not resulted either from superior intellect, greater industry, or higher attainments in general literature, on the part of the moderns, but from the fact that they have lived in an age subsequent to the birth of Jesus, and been enlightened by the beams of his gospel.

That unbelievers in revelation should write upon moral philosophy, enriching their pages with many sublime thoughts and noble sentiments pilfered from revelation, and which could have been derived from no other source, making no acknowledgment of their indebtedness to revelation, is a disingenuousness not inconsistent with the general characteristics of skepticism; but that professed believers in Christianity, and even eminent divines, should have persisted so long in "seeking for the living among the dead," attempting to rear the temple of moral philosophy, using only the tools furnished by the cabinet of nature and the materials derived from her magazines, is a fact marvelously unaccountable and much to be lamented.

What good apology can be offered, or what reasonable palliation can be pleaded, for this real though unintentional disrespect for revelation on the part of many of our able and learned divines? How can they justify themselves for endeavoring to walk by the twilight of nature when they had access to the meridian sunlight of the gospel, by which they might have guided their every step? Because nature may serve as a useful handmaid to revelation, contributing her feebleness as confirmatory evidence of truths more luminously set forth by the pages of revelation, are we therefore justifiable in exalting her to the foremost position as the presiding genius in the erection of the temple of moral philosophy?

Let us inquire what nature or unassisted human reason *can* do, and what she *cannot* do, in connection with moral philosophy.

Natural religion, or human reason, alone may impart an imperfect idea of the distinction between right and wrong, but she can draw no fixed and intelligible line between them, nor exhibit any authoritative ground of obligation to *do* what is right and to *refrain from doing* what is wrong. It is evident that the code of morals clearly discoverable by human reason is exceedingly limited and imperfect; and even in that limited extent to which it may conduct us, its principles would ever be left resting on a basis of uncertainty. Being the result of human reason, they would be differently understood by different minds; and if they were understood and interpreted alike by all, they would even then lack that sanction of *authority* which is necessary to give them the character of law, and render them an obligatory rule of life.

Some of the principles of morality, as taught in revelation, come under the head of *positive* precepts—that is, they contain nothing in themselves, discoverable by human reason, rendering what they enjoin right or proper, except the command of God. Other principles of Bible morality come under the head of *moral* precepts (as they are

called, for the sake of distinction), or such as enjoin duties the propriety or reason of which may, to some extent, be discovered by human reason. For illustration, the interdiction of the fruit of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" is styled a *positive* precept, because we can see no propriety in the requirement except what results from the fact that it has been commanded: yet, when once a duty under this head has been commanded, it is, in strictness of speech, as really a *moral* duty as any other, and we are under equal obligations to obey it. Our obligations to obey God result not from the fact that we perceive the propriety of the duty in question, but *solely* from the right of God to command, and the fact that the command has been issued.

In regard, then, to duties embraced under the head of *positive* precepts, according to the above definitions, the light of nature can render us no aid, and human reason is utterly powerless. But in reference to those duties embraced under the head of *moral* precepts, when once they have been revealed and enjoined, the reason and propriety of some of them may be partially discovered by the light of nature; but even in those cases we can have no evidence that we comprehend fully all the reasons existing in the Divine Mind on which those duties are founded. For when we admit, as we are bound to do, that God has commanded some duties, no reason for which can be perceived by us beyond the fact of the command, yet, as God can do nothing without a wise and sufficient reason, we are compelled to believe that, even in all such cases, there exist in the Divine Mind adequate reasons for his commands; but they are beyond the reach of our capacity.

Hence, upon the same principle of reasoning, when God issues a command, some of the reasons of which we may perceive, we know not what farther reasons may still lie beyond our reach. If, in some cases, we know that reasons exist when we can perceive none, the fact that in other cases we perceive some reasons, can be no evidence against the existence of others yet hidden from our view.

It appears clear to us that, with the Christian philosopher, the light of nature has no part in furnishing the basis or the criterion of morals, or in setting forth the ground of our obligation. It is utterly beyond her province to devise and frame a system of moral philosophy for a man who holds in his hand a Bible which he believes "contains all things necessary for life and godliness," and may "thoroughly furnish him unto every good word and work."

All that nature or mere human reason *can* do, is this: 1. She may aid us in the interpretation of Scripture, that we may rightly understand our duty as set forth in revelation. 2. She may render her con-

roborative testimony, so far as her light can penetrate, in regard to the reasonableness and propriety of duties as portrayed in the revealed will of God. In this way she may be a useful handmaid of revelation, accompanying the Christian while he is studying his system of morals as taught in the Bible, and, in all cases in which she is capable, superadding to the divine revealments of Heaven the confirmatory evidence of her feebler voice; thus increasing the confidence and rendering more pleasing the duties of the Christian.

Nature alone can no more furnish for the Christian his system of *morals* than his system of *doctrines*. It is certainly very strangely inconsistent for us to appeal to the Bible as our standard and guide, while on the subject of doctrines, and then, as soon as we approach the question of morals, to forget that Moses and the prophets, and Christ and his apostles, have ever spoken upon the subject; and appeal *first* to nature and reason, and pretend to educe from them, as materials of their own furnishing, principles which they never knew except as they learned them from the Bible, and thus mold and shape a system of morals, giving the credit for its formation to nature and reason, when it does not, in truth, embrace a single important principle that has not been derived from revelation.

Learned pagans, independent of revelation, never knew the distinction between virtue and vice—between right and wrong. Infidels may be allowed to embody the ethics of St. John and the divine philosophy of Jesus in their treatises, and call all their stolen materials the philosophy of nature; but let not Christian moralists “worship and serve the creature more than the Creator”! Let *them* not vie with infidelity, however unintentionally, in crowning the goddess of reason with the glory belonging to the God of the Bible! Let them cease all pretention to the formation of a system of morals from the teachings of nature! Let them start with the Bible, be guided by the Bible, and only employ the lesser light of nature as subsidiary and tributary to the more luminous beams of the great Sun of revelation!

If we thus restrict the province of natural religion to its legitimate sphere, it may serve a valuable purpose in connection with moral philosophy. It may furnish us additional confirmation of our faith in the principles of morality, as developed in the Bible, as well as useful illustrations of the superior excellence—yea, the sublime perfection—of that divinely-revealed system of Christian morals. But if we persist in going to nature’s garden in quest of fruit which can only be found in the fields of divine revelation, we thereby must, to some extent, however remote it may be from our design, bring discredit upon that glo-

rious system of morality unfolded in the teachings of Christ and his apostles. If the gospel of Christ had failed to embody "the whole duty of man," either in specific precepts or general principles, the absurdity of Christian divines pretending to found systems of moral philosophy mainly on natural religion would not be so glaring. But, we demand, What duty is not comprised in the New Testament, either specifically or in a general principle? and where, in all the treatises of mere human philosophy, can be found principles so pure, so heavenly, so free from error, so absolutely perfect, and set forth in language so unambiguous, so simple, so comprehensive, so sublime? Then "to the law and to the testimony" we should make our appeal.

Having shown that divine revelation is the only proper and adequate source from which the Christian must derive his system of morals, we now proceed to inquire concerning—

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH MORALS ARE TAUGHT IN THE SCRIPTURES.

1. The first question to be here considered is this: Are the morals of Christianity to be deduced solely from the New Testament, or should the Old Testament writings also be consulted, as possessing to any extent divine authority on the subject?

It requires but a cursory examination of the question to perceive that large portions of the Old Testament are far less essential to the Christian than the teachings of the New Testament, whether doctrines or duties be the matter of inquiry. Yet this admission will by no means justify the position taken by some claiming the Christian name—that the Old Testament, under the Christian dispensation, is mainly an antiquated volume, useful as an instructive history of the past, but that its precepts of morality possess no divine authority, except so far as they have been formally reënacted in the New Testament.

Our first objection to this position is, that it is entirely gratuitous, having no authority from the teachings of Christ and his apostles. They never intimated that the Jewish Scriptures had been superseded or annulled by the gospel, but everywhere spoke of them with the deepest reverence as the authoritative word of God.

Next, this position seems inconsistent with the principles of reason, as applicable to the question. It is an admitted principle in jurisprudence, that a law is only binding when enacted by a power possessing authority in the premises, but that, when thus enacted without any limiting clause showing that at a given period, or under certain circumstances, it shall cease to be a law, it must remain in force till the same power that enacted it, or another power of equal authority, shall for

ally repeal it. Now, as the Old Testament is the acknowledged word of God, given by "holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," without any intimation that its authority was ever to cease or be diminished, it necessarily follows that it is still in force except so far as it may be clearly shown from the teachings of Christ and his apostles that it has been superseded, has received its complete fulfillment, or is inapplicable.

The extent to which the precepts of the Old Testament are applicable to Christians under the gospel, is rendered very clear by the teachings of Christ and his apostles. To say that no portion of the Mosaic law is binding upon Christians, except what has been formally reenacted, would not only be incorrect, according to our reasoning as above, but it would be contrary to the teachings of the New Testament. Our Saviour and his apostles always referred to the Jewish Scriptures as of binding authority, except such portions as have received their complete fulfillment under the gospel, as being types or shadows of better things to come, and such as were merely ceremonial or political, and only applicable to the Mosaic economy and Jewish polity while they continued. Therefore the correct rule on the subject is, that the Old Testament teachings, embracing the writings of Moses and the prophets, are still in force, so far as they can apply to Christians under the gospel, except so far as they have been repealed or plainly set aside by the teachings and example of Christ and his apostles.

It is very plain, therefore, that the types and shadows under the law have been superseded by the coming of the great Antitype, and the introduction of the substance, or "better things," under the gospel. But as to the moral law of Moses, the substance of which was comprehensively embraced in the Decalogue, so far from it being superseded by the gospel, it has been abundantly referred to by the Saviour and his apostles—not as being abrogated by the gospel, nor yet as having been formally reenacted, but as still existing, and of binding authority, without any reenactment. In his Sermon on the Mount, in direct reference to the law of Moses, our Saviour says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v. 17-19. That this passage had reference to the whole Mosaic law, embracing its sacrificial, ceremonial

and moral divisions, is very manifest. Even the types, the sacrifices, and the ceremonies, he came not to destroy—not to overturn or frustrate their design or import—not to pervert their significancy or destroy their intended connection with the great spiritual things in the gospel, of which they were the shadows—but “to fulfill.” And it is this ceremonial law, doubtless, to which he refers, when he says: “One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” But it is equally evident that, when he pronounces condemnation on him who “shall break one of these least commandments,” and expresses his approval of him who “shall do and teach them,” he refers to the Decalogue. The plain inference therefore is, that this great moral code is in force under the gospel. As no part of the law was to pass till it should be fulfilled, and as the moral law is still as susceptible of being fulfilled under the gospel as it was in the days of Moses, it still must remain alike applicable to all ages, all countries, and all dispensations.

Again, in his conversation with the rich young nobleman who inquired what he must “do to inherit eternal life,” our Saviour fully recognizes the authority of the moral law of Moses. He does not intimate that that law was abrogated, but directs the young man to “the commandments;” and, on being asked “which,” the Saviour proceeded to quote several of them, as recorded in the Decalogue, giving evidence that he referred to the Ten Commandments written by “the finger of God” upon the tables of stone.

So likewise St. Paul, after having set forth the doctrine of “justification by faith,” lest any should suppose he undervalued the moral law of Moses, exclaims: “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we *establish* the law.”

Farther, there is not a single precept of the Decalogue which is not either expressly quoted by Christ or his apostles as of binding authority or its substance explicitly enjoined. And when our Saviour was interrogated by a lawyer, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” he did not reply that he had come to abrogate those commandments, but proceeded to give them his most unqualified sanction, by embodying the substance of the two tables in two great commandments. “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” It is impossible to conceive of a more full and thorough indorsement of the entire moral code of the Old Testament

than is furnished in these words of our Saviour. He does not quote the exact language of the Old Testament precepts, but he does what is better—he professedly gives the substance of “all the law and the prophets,” and that, too, in language more comprehensive and of a deeper and more spiritual import. This gives to the Decalogue a higher sanction than if he had formally reënacted each one of the Ten Commandments. It not only substantially reënacts them, recognizing their binding authority, but it enlarges their application, extending them not only to the actions of the life, but to the thoughts and emotions of the heart. That our Saviour professedly embodied “all the law and the prophets” in these two great commandments cannot be disputed without flatly contradicting his own words; hence there is no escape from the conclusion, that he either failed to do what he professed to do, or he most expressly and fully sanctioned with his authority the entire moral law as taught by Moses and the prophets. Thus we conclude that the morals of Christianity as legitimately comprise the great moral precepts of Moses and the prophets recorded in the Old Testament, as they do the discourses of Christ and the teachings of his inspired apostles.

The fact that morals are not exhibited in Scripture in the shape of a *regular code*, can be no valid ground of objection. Moral principles in the Bible, are often unfolded incidentally in connection with facts out of which they naturally grow; and this very circumstance, by connecting in the same view both the principle and its practical illustration, is calculated; not only to impart to the understanding a clearer perception of the principle itself, but to impress it more vividly upon the memory.

Again, it can be no real objection to the Bible, as the source of moral philosophy, that some Christian duties are not specifically named therein, and formally enjoined. Had a regular code of morals been set forth in Scripture minutely specifying every Christian duty that might arise under every variety of circumstance in life, throughout all countries and all ages, the volume must necessarily have been increased in size beyond all reasonable dimensions, so that “even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” The inconvenience that might seem to result from the fact that a large portion of the morals of Christianity is comprised in Scripture under general principles, is more than counterbalanced by the character of these general principles and the manner in which they are exhibited. As to the principles themselves, we have the firmest possible assurance that they contain *truth* without any mixture of error—truth that will remain

the same in all ages and in all places. And these important principles are presented in language not only sublime and comprehensive, but remarkably plain—level to the comprehension of every accountable being.

A peculiar beauty and force in our Saviour's teachings were seen and felt in his use of the parable. By this method of instruction he often imparted, in a manner the most easy and captivating, the clearest conception of duties the most important.

Another peculiar excellence of the teaching of morals, as exhibited in the Scriptures, is, the sanctions by which they are ever enforced. These heaven-taught duties are not urged by considerations of a worldly nature. Things of earth are comparatively forgotten or despised, and man is addressed as an accountable candidate for the retributions of eternity. He is admonished to "look not at the things which are seen, that are temporal; but at the things which are not seen, that are eternal." And thus, with the promise of eternal life to encourage our hope, and the threatening of eternal death to alarm our fear, we are commanded to pursue "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report."

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER I.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. With Christians, what is the great source of information on the subject of morals?</p> <p>2. How has this fact been treated by many Christian writers on the subject?</p> <p>3. To what extent may the teachings of nature be here useful?</p> <p>4. What were the attainments of pagan philosophers upon this subject?</p> <p>5. How did <i>they</i> derive their most valuable knowledge on the subject of morals?</p> <p>6. Since the commencement of the Christian era, what change is manifest in the views of pagan and deistical writers, and how is this to be accounted for?</p> <p>7. In what way have many able Christian writers exhibited apparent disrespect for the Bible?</p> <p>8. What <i>may</i> natural religion teach on this subject?</p> | <p>9. Do Christian morals come under the head of <i>positive</i> or <i>moral</i> precepts?</p> <p>10. What aid can nature render us in reference to <i>positive</i> precepts?</p> <p>11. What in reference to <i>moral</i> precepts?</p> <p>12. May we suppose that a real reason exists for all God's commands?</p> <p>13. What are two things here named that human reason can do?</p> <p>14. Does the Bible unfold <i>completely</i> the duty of man?</p> <p>15. On this subject, is all our information to be taken from the New Testament?</p> <p>16. How are we to know what portion of the Old Testament <i>is</i> and what <i>is not</i> now binding?</p> <p>17. How can it be shown that the Decalogue is now binding?</p> <p>18. Are morals taught in the Bible in the form of a regular code?</p> <p>19. Are all moral duties <i>specifically</i> named in Scripture?</p> |
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CHAPTER II.

PHILOSOPHICAL THESES EXHIBITED—THE NATURE OF RECTITUDE—
THE GROUND OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

LOCKE's philosophy, called *Sensationalism*, and the more modern opposing system called *Transcendentalism*, err on opposite extremes.

I. THE FOLLOWING THESES SEEM TO EMBODY THE TRUE MEDIUM GROUNDS, EXHIBITING THE CONNECTION OF PHILOSOPHY WITH MORALS:

1. Man is naturally endued with both *intellectual* and *moral* faculties.
2. These faculties, in their strictly native state, do not imply the possession of either *knowledge* or *moral principle*, but a susceptibility for the reception and acquirement of both.
3. In an intellectual sense, the native powers or faculties are aroused from their slumber and set to work, in the acquirement of knowledge, by the entrance of light through the medium of *external sensation*.
4. In a moral sense, our native powers or faculties are aroused from their slumber, and set to work, in the discernment between *right* and *wrong* by the illuminations of divine grace. John i. 9; James i. 17. Dr. Clarke says (see Rom. ii. 16): "I know of no light in nature that is not kindled there by the grace of God. But I have no objection to this sense: 'When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by the influence of God upon their heart the things contained in the law, they are a law unto themselves;' that light and influence serving instead of a divine revelation."
5. The erroneous extreme of Locke's system of sensationalism seems to be this—that it denies to the mind the power of acquiring any knowledge, the materials of which have not been originally derived through the medium of external sensation, ignoring the fact that man is possessed, in his native state, of a "moral sense" or an internal faculty of conscience, which, when aroused and enlightened by divine grace, enables him through the medium of internal consciousness to learn the distinction between *right* and *wrong*, so that all men are "without excuse." Rom. i. 20. The extreme of this system leads to **materialism**.

6. The erroneous extreme of modern transcendentalism seems to be this: that it attributes entirely to *nature* the power of the "moral sense" to teach the distinction between right and wrong, giving to that *native power* the same ability, without supernatural aid, to learn the distinction between right and wrong that the intellect possesses to learn the distinction between black and white, sweet and bitter, straight and crooked, or two and four; thus ignoring the divine illuminations imparted to all men through the atonement of Christ and the influence of the Spirit. The extreme of this system leads to Pelagianism and rationalism.

7. The elements of knowledge are derived through external sensation and internal consciousness.

8. Right and wrong are eternal and unchangeable principles, inherently and essentially different in their nature.

9. Our knowledge of the existence of right and wrong, and of the distinction between them, is derived, primarily, either from instruction, tradition, direct revelation, or the testimony of internal consciousness (the voice of conscience), when the moral sense has been aroused and illumined by divine grace.

10. Our *obligation* to do right is founded on the *will* of our Creator.

11. The will of God is nothing essentially distinct or different from God, but is only a transcript of the divine nature, or a manifestation of the divine attributes.

12. We are bound to obey the will of God, because he made us what we are, and, by his continued power, preserves us in being as we are.

13. The will of God, so far as known to us, is to us the *rule* of right and wrong, whether we perceive the reasons of that will or not.

14. Hence it follows, as the will of God is to us the rule of moral duty, even when the reasons of that will are not perceived, therefore the ground of obligation cannot be found, primarily and principally, in the eternal distinctions between right and wrong, but in the manifested will of God. If the ground of obligation is in the divine reason (as distinguished from the divine *will*), then the obligation could only *be felt* as the divine reason *is perceived*. But it must be admitted by all that, in many cases, obligation *exists* and *is felt* when the *reason* of the duty *is not perceived*, and there is nothing for the obligation to rest upon but the divine *will*; therefore, in all such cases, the obligation must rest on the divine will as its *basis*, and we must also be governed by that will as the *rule* of duty. It may be objected that, "in all cases, where obligation exists, and the reasons of it are not perceived, and it seems to rest solely on the divine command, the fact of the command

presupposes the existence of the reasons; for the command of God can no more transcend the divine reason than one of his attributes can fight against another." To this position, we reply: First, if the divine reason must necessarily always correspond with the divine command, then, so far as this question is concerned, the divine reason and the divine command are identical—they go hand in hand, and, in the case before us, are but two words for the same thing; only there is this perceptible difference, the divine command is plainer and more within our grasp than the divine reason, therefore safer and more accessible as the *ground* and *rule* of obligation. The truth is this: the divine reason, in all cases, whether we perceive it or not, must be considered the rule according to which God acts in issuing his commands, but cannot be to us (except so far as we may perceive it to correspond with the divine command) either the *ground* of our obligation or the *rule* of our duty.

Look at the havoc in the system of morals which would result from making the divine *reason* instead of the divine *will* the *ground* of obligation. How can the puny reason of finite creatures grasp the infinite reasons that control the mind of God! In many cases, the reasons of his commands are hidden from our view; and where a glimpse of these reasons may be gained, who can estimate the vast expanse of this boundless ocean that lies quite unexplored and beyond our reach? And what controversy, what wrangling discussion, what uncertainty, what clouds and darkness, would at once be introduced, and thrown around the whole subject of morals, if, in order to reach the *ground* of our obligations, we be taught to go beyond the plain command of God, and vainly essay to fathom the depths of the Infinite Mind!

To illustrate the inconvenience and confusion that would result from making the *divine reason* the ground of obligation, we quote the following: "In the divine reason must be found the *ground of all moral obligation*. And as the human reason is the outbirth and image of the divine, so its affirmations are the highest authority to man. *The voice of conscience is the voice of God!* There can be no higher authority in morals. It speaks more immediately and directly to the human heart than the voice of any prophet or seer. The necessary affirmations of the moral faculty are assumed as the reason of obligation. When the particular relation, in view of which a particular duty is affirmed, is apprehended, all the reason that can be assigned has been given why that duty is binding upon us. *We have then discovered the only real and ultimate foundation of all obligation.*" Methodist Quarterly Review, Jan., 1864, p. 28.

In the above extract are found some things "hard to be understood,"

concerning which we offer the following remarks: According to the extract given, as there are many duties the *divine reasons* of which are utterly beyond our reach in such cases, how can we gain a knowledge of the *ground of obligation*? And *not knowing* the ground of the obligation, how can we know that *the obligation exists*? And *not knowing* that it exists, how can we *feel its weight*? And not feeling its weight, how can we *be expected to comply with it*? What was the ground of Adam's obligation to obey the command, not to eat of the fruit of "the tree of knowledge"? Did *he* know the "divine reasons" why the fruit of that particular tree was interdicted? If so, how did he gain that knowledge? Did God explain to him the reason, or did the "moral sense" teach it. It will not do to say that the annexed penalty was the reason on which the command was grounded; for that would imply that God desired to inflict the penalty, and only issued the command as a pretext for carrying out this primary desire. Besides, the penalty was annexed, not to explain "*divine reasons*" for the command, but to *enforce obedience to it*. If Adam ever gained a knowledge of the *ground* of his obligations to obey that command, except the fact that God had given the command, we have never read of it. And if any of his sons after him have traveled back into the secret counsels of God, so as to ascertain what were "the divine reasons" that dictated to the Divine Mind the special interdiction of the fruit of that particular tree, we hope they will come forth and enlighten us. If the first great test-command was not given under circumstances calculated to teach that the manifested will of God is *the ground, and the sufficient ground, of moral obligation*, then we cannot comprehend the subject.

Again, the writer under review says: "The affirmations of human reason are the highest authority to man." Surely not the affirmations of *fallen, benighted, erring* human reason! If this poor *fallible* reason is *higher* "authority to man" than the *infallible* word of God, then why denounce the infidelity of France for dragging *the Bible* through the streets of Paris at the tail of an ass, and exalting *reason* to divine honors?

But the author says: "*The voice of conscience is the voice of God!*" Here is eloquence, but is it truth? Surely, it cannot be that the voice of a depraved, perverted, uninformed, "evil," or "scared" conscience, "*is the voice of God*"! Nor can it be that the "voice of conscience," *generally*, "is the voice of God;" for men's consciences *generally* are evil. Was the voice of Saul's conscience "the voice of God," while he was persecuting the Church and yet living "in all good conscience before God"? Acts xxiii. 1.

15. While "the voice of conscience" is admitted to be *fallible*, and

the revealed will of God *infallible*, it cannot in truth be asserted that "there can be no higher authority in morals" than "the voice of conscience." While it is true that we cannot violate conscience without contracting guilt, it is not true that because we do not violate conscience we are therefore necessarily innocent.

Moral philosophy, as defined by Dr. Paley, is "the science which teaches men their duty, and the reasons for it." It is more briefly defined in the "New American Cyclopaedia" as "the science of duty."

II. Our first inquiry on the subject is this: *Is RECTITUDE an essential, inherent quality in actions, or is it the creature of adventitious circumstances?* In other words, on what does the distinction between *right* and *wrong* depend? Whence does it originate? Those who have not deemed it necessary to found their theories concerning morals on the Bible have diverged greatly from each other in their speculations upon this question.

1. Among the various theories concerning rectitude advocated by such as did not concern themselves about the teachings of revelation, the first we shall notice is this: that *any thing is right or wrong only as it happens to be sanctioned or condemned by the customs or laws of any particular country or community in any particular age or part of the world.*

As will be readily perceived, this theory assumes that rectitude possesses in itself no real, inherent, essential attributes, but depends entirely upon extraneous, adventitious circumstances, not only for its characteristics, but also for its existence—that is, it is nothing in and of itself; but if you choose to decree its existence, then it shall be; and whatever attributes you choose to confer upon it, those it shall possess.

Perhaps the most prominent advocate of this theory among modern philosophers was Hobbes. And, like most of the principles of skeptical philosophy, it need only to be tried at the tribunal of common sense to render its absurdity manifest. The first question here involved has nothing to do with the foundation of moral rectitude. It does not inquire *why* one thing is *right* and another *wrong*. It does not ask for the origin, ground, or cause of this distinction; but merely asks: Does it exist? Is rectitude an essential, substantive quality in itself? Are *right* and *wrong* things possessing essential, absolute existence, or are they merely idealities which may or may not be conjured up, and induced with any imaginary shape or qualities which fancy or prejudice may see fit to dictate? However consonant this theory which denies the essential existence of rectitude, and consequently all real distinction between virtue and vice, or moral good and evil, may be with that in

fidel philosophy in whose necessitarian nest it has been hatched, or with certain schools of theology by whose dogmas it has been nurtured, yet it is easy to show that it is repugnant to the dictates of common sense.

Rectitude is no more dependent on conventional arrangement for its existence than are any of those qualities that may pertain to physical substances. It is true that some things are in themselves indifferent, and become right or wrong only as they may be enjoined or prohibited by law. Thus it is right to pay a certain amount of tax at a stipulated time, and wrong to omit it, because the law of the land has enjoined it. It was wrong for our first parents to "eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil," because God had forbidden it. These are *positive* precepts, relating to things indifferent in themselves, which only become right or wrong as they may be commanded or prohibited by the power having authority to act in the premises. But it is equally clear, from the dictates of common sense, that there are other things, right or wrong in themselves, independent of all positive enactment or conventional arrangement of any kind whatever.

It would be as unphilosophical to say that nothing can be straight or crooked until measured by a rule, or sweet or sour until tasted, as that nothing can be right or wrong until so rendered by custom, law, or conventional agreement. As sweet and sour, straight and crooked, denote abstract qualities, having a real existence, independent of the physical substances to which they may be attached; so right and wrong, good and bad, denote abstract principles, having a real existence in themselves, independent of all internal emotion or external action to which they may be applied; hence we conclude that rectitude is an abstract principle, eternal and immutable as the attributes of God. Indeed, it is a principle inhering in, and essentially pertaining to, the divine nature.

If, then, rectitude be an essential quality, eternally existing, it cannot derive its being solely from the command or will of God. Were this the case, then what is now right would be wrong, and what is now wrong would be right, had God so commanded. Common sense revolts at such consequences, and utters her voice against the truth of any system from which they result. It is true, what God wills or commands must be *right*, and to suppose that he should command what is wrong is to suppose an absolute impossibility. God can no more command what is wrong than he can change his nature, or cease to be God. But the theory, which teaches that rectitude results solely from the command of God, assumes that theft, murder, and vice, are only worse than honesty, benevolence, and virtue, because God has commanded

the latter and forbidden the former; in a word, it destroys the essential distinction between virtue and vice. Surely a system fraught with consequences so revolting and absurd never can gain the sanction of common sense.

Nor is it any better to say that rectitude depends upon *the arbitrary constitution of the human mind*. Whether *this* refers to what is styled the "*moral sense*," or to the sense of *approbation* or *disapprobation* arising from the contemplation of actions, or to an internal *emotion of sympathy*, it matters not. It is clear that this constitution of the mind has been conferred upon us, as it is, by the Creator; and if so, it might have been different from what it is, and that which is now virtue might have been vice, and that which is now vice might have been virtue. Thus this theory of founding rectitude upon any thing pertaining to the constitution of the mind destroys the essential distinction between right and wrong, virtue and vice.

It matters not whether, with Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, we found rectitude upon the "*moral sense*," or, with Adam Smith, upon *sympathy*, or, with Dr. Brown, upon the *emotion of approbation or disapprobation*—it is clear that this theory, in either of the three phases specified, denies that rectitude possesses any essential quality, or that there is any real, essential, or original difference between virtue and vice. Indeed, these theories all, in this particular, harmonize with that of Hobbes, already considered. The only difference is this—while Hobbes founds rectitude, and all distinction between virtue and vice, upon custom or law, as they may exist in different countries; Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, Adam Smith and Dr. Brown, found them upon the constitution of the human mind.

These theories not only deny that rectitude denotes any actual quality in actions, or that there is any real distinction between right and wrong, but they all alike fail even to furnish any definite *criterion* of rectitude. According to Hobbes, theft, infanticide, and parricide, are right or wrong according as they are sanctioned or condemned by the *customs* and *laws* of different countries. According to Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, things are right or wrong according as they may be pronounced upon by the *moral sense* of each individual. According to Adam Smith, things are right or wrong according as they may excite, or fail to excite, the sympathies of those who contemplate them. But, agreeably to Dr. Brown's theory, things are right and wrong according as they excite in him who contemplates them the emotion of *approbation* or *disapprobation*. Where, we ask, can be found in any of these theories a fixed criterion of rectitude? As the customs or

laws of the country may make theft a virtue in Sparta and a crime in England or the United States, so the moral sense—the sympathies, or the emotions of approbation or disapprobation, as they may be manifested in different minds—may vary; and thus, what is virtue with one may be vice with another. So it is plain that we have in these systems, not only no foundation, but no fixed criterion for rectitude, or for the distinction between right and wrong. Can any rational mind believe that the principles lying at the foundation of all morals are thus fitful and uncertain? Can it be that there are no principles of rectitude the same at all times and in all places? Is it not one of the plainest dictates of common sense that right and wrong are principles eternal and immutable as the attributes of God himself?

III. Having therefore settled it in our minds that *rectitude* denotes an inherent, actual quality of actions, or that *right* and *wrong* possess an absolute existence, and are not the mere creatures of circumstances; the next inquiry naturally presenting itself on this subject is this: WHAT IS THE GROUND OR FOUNDATION OF MORAL OBLIGATION?

We have already shown that some things are essentially right and other things essentially wrong, but a knowledge of this fact will avail us but little in morals, unless it be shown that we are under obligations to do those things which are right, and to abstain from doing those things which are wrong. It no more follows, necessarily, that because an action is right I am on that account alone bound to perform it, than that because an apple is sweet I am under obligations to eat it. There must be some ground of the obligation beyond the mere quality of the action obliging me to perform it. Admitting that one thing is right and another thing wrong, *why* may I not do wrong instead of right, just as I may fancy or choose, without incurring guilt? We do not now inquire for any *rule* or *standard* of right and wrong, but merely for the *obligation* binding us to do the one and refrain from the other.

On this question various theories have been advocated, some of the most prominent of which we will briefly notice.

On this question much abstract and useless speculation has been employed. For instance, the systems here adopted have been ranged in two classes: the *subjective* embracing those theories that found moral obligation on something *within* our own nature, whether it be styled the moral sense, conscience, or the constitution of the human mind; the *objective* implying those theories that found moral obligation on things *external* to us. Under this head are comprised those theories that found moral obligation: 1. On the authority of the State. 2. On something

in the inherent nature of things. 3. On the greatest happiness, or the benefits resulting from things. 4. On the revealed will of God.

Ignoring any farther reference to the *subjective* and *objective* classification as a useless parade of scholastic terms, we here remark that the theory we believe to be true, and the only one consistent with Christianity, is that which founds moral obligation on *the revealed will of God*. It may be proper, however, here to make a few observations concerning some of the other systems above named.

Hobbes not only founded rectitude itself upon custom or law, but, as a necessary consequence, he founded moral obligation upon the same thing. The absurdity of his theory has already been shown.

Dr. Samuel Clarke, following Grotius, considered moral obligation as founded on *the fitness of things*. This theory has two capital objections: First, it fails to furnish, what is most of all material in the case, the reason *why* we are under obligation to act according to the fitness of things; but, secondly, admitting the existence of the obligation, it leaves the rule or criterion of duty perfectly unsettled. For, as every man is left to be his own judge as to the fitness of things, it is clear that there would be about the same variety of judgment upon this subject that exists in the features of the human countenance; and thus every man would be left quite out at sea as to any fixed rule of right and wrong.

To found moral obligation, with Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, upon the moral sense, is liable to the same objections with the scheme of Grotius and Dr. Samuel Clarke. It sets forth no satisfactory reason, showing *why* we are under obligation to follow the dictates of the moral sense, and, even if this could be shown, it is plain that this moral sense, or inward perception of right and wrong, in regard to many things, is very much the creature of education and of circumstances. It is about as variant in different countries and among different people as the climate and soil pertaining to their respective localities. What this moral sense may accredit as the highest virtue with the Hindoo widow, may be viewed with the deepest abhorrence throughout Christian lands.

Besides, this whole scheme is palpably contradictory to the teachings of St. Paul. This apostle, in defending himself before the Jewish high-priest, Ananias, declares, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." It is plain, then, that he had not come in conflict with the moral sense within him while he was persecuting the Christians. And in his defense before Agrippa, the apostle says, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Was Saul of

Tarsus doing *right*, we ask, while he was persecuting the Church of God? He styles himself "the chief of sinners," and says that he had been a "blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious;" and he adds, "but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Now, we ask, how could he have needed mercy, unless he had violated his obligations? And if, while living "in all good conscience before God," or according to the teachings of the moral sense within him, he had violated his obligations, how could that moral sense be either the ground or the criterion of his obligations?

The plain truth is this: that Saul was sinning, or violating his obligations, while he was persecuting the Church; but his sin consisted not in the fact that he was acting according to his conscience at the time, but that he had previously, through prejudice and passion, neglected to inform his conscience. But still, as he violated his obligations, while he did not violate his conscience or the moral sense, it necessarily follows that the moral sense cannot be the ground of moral obligation. Although we ought in no case to violate our consciences, yet, as we are often culpable for not correcting our consciences when they are wrong, these consciences cannot be the primary ground of obligation. We must look for something anterior and superior to the moral sense, and more authoritative, as the ground of moral obligation.

If, with Wollaston, we attempt to found moral obligation on "the truth of things;" with Wayland, on "the relations of things;" or with President Edwards, on "the love of being in general;" all these theories are liable to the same objections with those we have considered. They must vary, as do the judgments and tastes of individuals, and of course can furnish no fixed *criterion* of obligation; and, being destitute of *authority*, they can furnish no *ground* of obligation.

Take the theory of Paley, that "virtue is the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, for the sake of everlasting happiness," and it is plain that he makes "everlasting happiness" the motive of virtue. One of the very serious objections to this theory is, that it founds obligation on a principle of selfishness, excluding from virtuous actions all deeds of benevolence. But were it freed from this objection, still it furnishes no reason *why* we are *obliged* to seek after "everlasting happiness."

Bentham founded moral obligation on "utility, or the greatest good of the greatest number." But it is irksome, as it is useless, to perplex our minds with the theories and speculations of the many reputable authors who have written on this subject. Were these authors only pagan philosophers, feeling their way in the dark in their search for truth, the

matter would not be surprising; but that learned divines should delight so much to bewilder themselves amid the speculations of mere natural reason, when the superior, the infallible, light of revelation was shining around them, is unaccountably strange.

When once we are ready to forget these theoretic speculations on the subject in hand, and pass directly to the inspired word, how forcibly does the truth flash upon the mind, that "*moral obligation is founded on the revealed will of God*"!

Were there no other proof upon this subject than the preface to the Decalogue, in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, that were enough. "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Here, as the ground on which this law is issued and obedience to its precepts enjoined, we have directly specified the relation God sustains to his creatures. First, he is "the Lord" (or Jehovah)—this implies that he is the supreme Ruler of the universe; and next, "thy God"—this implies that he is the Creator of man, the Author and Preserver of his being. "Which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage"—this specifies the blessings of his special providence. No one can fail to perceive how expressly the relation God sustains to us is here set forth as the *ground* of our obligation to obedience.

And it must be obvious to every Bible-reader that this accords with the general tenor of Scripture. Samuel said to the people of Israel, "Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you." 1 Sam. xxii. 24.

That, according to the gospel scheme of morals, obligation grows out of our relation to God, is explicitly taught by St. Paul. He says: "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; *therefore* glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." The conclusion from these passages from the prophet and from the apostle is, that as God "hath done great things for us"—that is, in our creation, preservation, and redemption—and as we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, *therefore* we are under obligations to "serve him in truth, with all our heart," and to "glorify him in our body and in our spirit, which are God's." Hence, moral obligation grows out of our relation to God; and as this relation to God can only be understood by us from his revealed will, we must rely upon that will as furnishing both the *ground* and the *criterion* of our obligations. In other words, the revelation of God teaches us "our duty, and the reasons for it."

If we be asked *why* we are under obligations to perform any particu-

ular moral duty, our reply is, that it is according to *the revealed will of God*. But if we be farther interrogated *why* we are bound to act according to the revealed will of God, our reply is, because of *our relation to God*—that is, he is our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. We are dependent upon him for our being and all our blessings; and nothing can be plainer or more natural and reasonable than his right to command us, and our obligations to render obedience are a necessary sequence.

Whether we trace our obligations to the *revealed will of God* or to *our relations to God* is perfectly immaterial—they both amount substantially to the same thing. These obligations rest immediately on God's revealed will. Whatever he commands, we are at once bound to obey. And if it be demanded *why* we are bound to obey God's revealed will; the reply is, because of our relation to God. It is our relation to God, as his dependent creatures, that *obliges* us to regard his revealed will as our authoritative law.

That the Scriptures themselves abundantly set forth the revealed will of God, both as the *ground* of obligation and the *criterion* of rectitude, cannot be disputed. The passages we have already adduced, we think, ought to be sufficient to satisfy every candid mind on the question. If more were necessary, they might be brought from almost any portion of either the Old or the New Testament. When God called Adam to account for his first sin—the partaking of the forbidden fruit—and was about to pronounce sentence upon him for his offense, on what *ground* did he place his guilt? Did he charge him with having disregarded “the fitness of things,” with having acted contrary to “the truth of things,” with having neglected to act according to “the utility of things,” with having failed to consult the “moral sense” or the “sympathies” of his nature, or “the greatest good of the greatest number”? The very mention of any such puerilities would have been degrading to so serious an occasion. God, who understood the *ground* of moral obligation far better than any of the Christian moralists of our day, simply said to Adam: “Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I *commanded* thee that thou shouldst not eat?” Here was the plain ground of his offense. He had violated his *obligation* to obey *God's revealed will*.

Take an illustration from the patriarchal dispensation. When God so signally blessed Abraham, after the trial of his faith in the offering up of Isaac, what was specified as the *ground* on which that blessing was conferred? God said to Abraham: “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, *because thou hast obeyed my voice*.” Here

as obedience to God's revealed will, was the ground of the reward, even so that revealed will must have been the ground of the obligation.

As one illustration among thousands that might be adduced under the Mosaic dispensation, we refer to the words of the Prophet Samuel (1 Sam. xv. 22): "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in *obeying the voice of the Lord*? Behold, *to obey is better than sacrifice*." If obedience be thus the crowning virtue, it must be because our obligations are thereby met; and if so, those obligations must be founded on the command.

Let a single text from the New Testament suffice on this subject. Jesus said: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth the will* of my Father which is in heaven." Here the doing of the will of God (of course, the revealed will) is presented as the condition of the heavenly reward; consequently, that *will* must not only be the *criterion of duty*, but *the ground of obligation*.

How plain is this question when once we are ready to leave the philosophical speculations and interminable quibbles and disputations of the schools and study "our duty, and the reasons for it," from the teachings of inspired wisdom! Here, as we approach the word of revelation, the great source of illumination on all spiritual and moral subjects, the fine-spun theories, metaphysical distinctions, and endless disputations, of philosophers, are forgotten. They melt away and fade from our vision, like mist before the rising morn; and, under the effulgent beams of revelation, we can read "the whole duty of man," and "the reasons for it," in language so plain that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." Let Christian divines bring their systems of morals, not from the Academy, the Lyceum, or the Portico, but from divine revelation!

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER II.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. What is the definition of moral philosophy?</p> <p>2. What erroneous theory of <i>rectitude</i> was advocated by Hobbes?</p> <p>3. At what tribunal, and how may its absurdity be shown?</p> <p>4. How is it shown that <i>rectitude</i> is an abstract and eternal principle?</p> <p>5. What absurd consequences are involved in the position that rectitude results <i>solely</i> from the command of God?</p> <p>6. What consequences are involved in the position that rectitude is founded on the constitution of the human mind?</p> <p>7. What theories on this subject were advocated by Shaftesbury and Hutch-</p> | <p>eson? By Adam Smith? By Dr. Brown?</p> <p>8. Do they all harmonize with the theory of Hobbes? Wherein?</p> <p>9. What two essential things do all these theories fail to furnish?</p> <p>10. Because an action is <i>right</i>, does it follow from that consideration alone that we are <i>bound</i> to perform it?</p> <p>11. What theories are presented in reference to the <i>ground of moral obligation</i>?</p> <p>12. What is given as the <i>true theory</i>?</p> <p>13. How is the absurdity of these <i>false</i> theories shown?</p> <p>14. By what proofs is the <i>true theory</i> sustained?</p> |
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PART III.—THE MORALS OF CHRISTIANITY.

BOOK II.—OUR DUTY TO GOD.

CHAPTER III.

LOVE—THE FEAR OF GOD.

HAVING shown that the Bible must be our standard and guide on the subject of morals, we are now prepared to inquire for the outline of our duty as set forth in that volume. On this subject writers on morals have differed in their plans, but they have generally contemplated "the whole duty of man" as embraced in three grand divisions: 1. Our duty to *God*. 2. Our duty to *ourselves*. 3. Our duty to *one another*. The particular classification we may adopt is not important, provided all our duties be embraced, and each be presented in its true light. In the largest acceptation of the terms, our duty to God would cover the entire circle of our obligations; for all our duties *to ourselves* and *to our fellow-creatures* are founded upon the revealed will of God; and, by neglecting any of them, we are rebelling against the divine authority and treating God's commandment with disrespect, and, of course, coming short of "our duty to God." Therefore it is clear that he who performs his whole duty to God, in this broad sense of the word, must also perform his duty to himself and to all other persons.

Nevertheless, as there are some duties which pertain more directly to God alone than others, it may be useful, as a matter of convenience in discussion, to adopt some classification on the subject. And we can conceive of no division of duty which commends itself to us so forcibly as that adopted by our Lord when he enunciated the two great commandments of *love to God* and *love to man* as comprising the entire law:

"On these two commandments," said he, "hang all the law and the prophets." In presenting this grand epitome of the Decalogue, our Saviour was only carrying out and affixing his own sanction to that more ancient division upon the subject which had been so clearly intimated in the original communication of the law at Mount Sinai. The two tables of stone—the first comprising our duty to God, and the second our duty to man—exhibited in a tangible form, more durable than marble, this grand classification of morals. Doubtless the mind of our Saviour adverted to this fact, as he adopted the same division while substantially reissuing the Mosaic Decalogue in that beautiful and more comprehensive edition set forth in the two great commandments to which we have referred. Therefore we conclude that the entire system of Christian morals is embraced under the grand divisions of—

1. LOVE TO GOD.

2. LOVE TO MAN.

Or the same thing is more largely expressed thus:

1. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

2. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

We need not stop to show how complete, and yet how plain, is this classification! It is too obvious to be controverted, that he who fulfills these two commandments must necessarily not only perform his duty to himself, but he must fully discharge every conceivable obligation of every kind whatever.

We now proceed to consider more particularly—

OUR DUTY TO GOD.

I. The first duty we owe to God is LOVE. Indeed, in the full sense, love comprises all duties; but there is a specific sense in which love may be viewed as separated from other duties. Contemplated in this acceptance, love to God implies—

1. *A due appreciation of the divine perfections.*

That is, we must love him for *what he is in himself*. Having a just conception of the purity and excellence of the divine essence—the harmonious unity of all the divine attributes and their beautiful exhibition of every conceivable phase of goodness—the affections of the soul flow toward God in emotions of approval, admiration, and delight. Thus, the "heart and the flesh crieth out for the living God," saying, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

2. As we contemplate the divine goodness, whether exhibited in the

works, the providence, or the redeeming mercy of God, this love assumes the form of *gratitude*.

Our duty of loving God, in the sense of gratitude, is far more than a mere sentimental admiration of the disinterested benevolence of Heaven, as seen in all his works and ways. It implies an inwrought spiritual apprehension of his redeeming, regenerating, adopting, sanctifying, and saving goodness. It is in this profoundly deep and spiritual sense of the phrase that the Psalmist exclaims: "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications;" and St. Paul says: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead;" and St. John declares: "We love him, because he first loved us."

3. Love to God implies unreserved and filial *submission to his authority, and obedience to his commandments*.

The Psalmist uses the term in this sense, when he says: "Great peace have they which love thy law." In the same sense our Saviour uses the term, when he says: "Ye are *my friends*, if ye do whatsoever I command you." And again: "He that hath my commandments, and *keepeth them*, he it is that *loveth me*." And St. John says: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we *love God and keep his commandments*. For this is the *love of God*, that we *keep his commandments*." And St. Paul declares: "*Love is the fulfilling of the law*."

From this clear and scriptural view of the duty of the love of God, as an internal principle of grace imparted by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and absorbing the affections and molding the life, being essential to the "keeping of the law of God," how meager and defective must be the teachings of nature, as a standard of morals; and how important must it appear that we adhere, on this subject, closely to the teachings of the divine word!

II. The second duty, under this head, which we shall notice, is **THE FEAR OF GOD**. This implies a reverential awe of the Divine Majesty, and a dread of displeasing a Being of so holy and excellent a character; and is entirely distinct from that servile, tormenting emotion, which the guilty, unrenewed heart may feel, resulting from the apprehension of punishment for sins committed. It is a filial, tender, and respectful emotion, fitly illustrated by that lovely regard which an affectionate, dutiful child may feel for a worthy parent, causing it to be ever watchful lest it should displease that parent—not from any punishment to itself apprehended as the result, but from a sense of the wickedness of the act of offending one so much admired and loved, and on whom it is so greatly dependent.

This duty is inculcated in the following scriptures. "The *fear* of the Lord is to hate evil." Prov. viii. 13. "The *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Ps. cxi. 10. "*Fear* God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." Eccl. 12. 13. "His mercy is on them that *fear* him." Luke i. 50. "Then they that *feared* the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that *feared* the Lord, and that thought upon his name." Malachi iii 16. "*Fear* God, and give glory to him." Rev. xiv. 7.

There are various other duties to God pertaining to the internal disposition and emotions of the heart, such as *fidelity, trust, faith*, etc.; but as these have been considered in connection with the *doctrines* of Christianity, we will not here bring up the same topics again. There are yet, however, some duties, under the general head we are now investigating, of a more *external* character, to which we will call attention in the following chapters.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER III.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. In what divisions have writers generally embraced our whole duty?</p> <p>2 What is important in reference to these divisions?</p> <p>3 What is the classification on this subject adopted?</p> | <p>4. What is our <i>first</i> duty to God?</p> <p>5. What is its <i>first</i> element, and what does it imply? What are its <i>second</i> and <i>third</i>, and what do they imply?</p> <p>6. What is implied in the "fear of God," and what scriptures enjoin it?</p> |
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CHAPTER IV.

PRAYER—ITS NATURE AND PROPRIETY.

THIS duty, though generally classed as *external*, in contradistinction from others more wholly *internal*, is really both *external* and *internal*. As, on the one hand, it is an outward form or external act, so, on the other hand, it is an internal emotion or exercise of the soul. Prayer has been well defined as the "offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will, in the name or through the mediation of Jesus Christ, by the help of the Holy Spirit, with a confession of our sins, and a thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."

The leading thought in this definition has been beautifully expressed by the poet, in the following lines:

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh—
The falling of a tear—
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near."

Prayer, when offered vocally, or in the form of words, is styled an *external* duty; but even then, unless the proper emotion of the heart accompany the utterance of the language, the most essential element of prayer will be wanting.

I. Before we proceed to the scriptural presentation of this subject, in its different phases, we call attention to **THE REASON AND PROPRIETY OF THIS DUTY.**

The first, and, with the believer in revelation, the great and all-sufficient reason for this duty is, that *God has commanded it*. Were we unable to perceive a single ground of propriety in it beyond the mere command of God, that fact alone, with all who acknowledge the truth of revelation, would place the obligation of this duty on as firm a basis

as that of any other duty whatever; yet, to skeptical minds, it may be useful, so far as our reason can penetrate, to offer some remarks concerning the propriety of prayer, as intimated by the light of nature.

1. In the first place, it tends to preserve vividly in the mind a recollection of the attributes and general superintendency of God. He who seriously offers prayer to God, must necessarily remember, not only that there is a God, but that he possesses omnipresence, enabling him to hear prayer at all times and places, and omniscience, omnipotence, and infinite goodness, so that he has the wisdom, the power, and the disposition, to answer prayer.

2. The tendency of habitual prayer must be, to divest the mind of that pernicious and infidel notion of confiding alone in secondary causes. It not only contributes to impress us with a sense of our wants and necessities, and our native imbecility and utter inability to help ourselves, but it ever reminds us that He who made the world has not withdrawn his constant care and attention from the production of his creative hand, but that his sustaining and controlling influence is diffused abroad throughout all parts of his creation.

3. Some have attempted to ground the reason and propriety of prayer upon the moral preparation and fitness it is supposed to produce for the reception of the blessings we ask. If by this it be understood that prayer is either the effective instrument or the active agent in producing in the heart that sincere penitence and faith which prepare us for the reception of divine grace in justification, regeneration, and sanctification, or in that salvation which the gospel proposes—if *this* be the sense of the position, it is not only unscriptural, but involves several absurdities.

It is *unscriptural*, because repentance, faith, and salvation, are everywhere in Scripture represented, not as being produced by prayer, or any other act of the creature, but by the agency of the Divine Spirit—"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." According to the whole tenor and scope of Scripture, the entire work of salvation, from beginning to end, embracing conviction, conversion, justification, remission of sins, adoption, and sanctification, is of God, and not of ourselves; and all this is effected through the efficient agency of the Holy Spirit, and on the ground of the atoning merits of Christ. Hence, to attribute this influence to prayer, or to the performance of any other Christian duty, however important that duty may be, is to subvert the entire gospel scheme as so fully set forth in the Scripture.

Prayer is a *condition* enjoined upon us in Scripture, upon the performance of which God has promised to confer upon us certain bless-

ings; but it is not, in the proper sense, either the instrument through which, or the agent by which, those blessings are conferred. Neither the blessing of salvation, in its several stages of conviction, regeneration, etc., nor that humility, penitence, and faith, in which a *preparation* for the reception of those blessings consists, is conferred by the instrumentality or efficient agency of prayer.

To attribute the blessings in question to the efficacy of prayer, is not only contrary to Scripture, as we have shown, but the theory involves *absurdity* in itself.

First, it must be admitted that prayer—in order to be acceptable to God, and to render it what it must be, as a condition, on the performance of which God has promised the blessings of salvation—must be offered in penitence and faith. Now, to suppose that this penitence and faith—an essential element of acceptable prayer—result from the act of praying, is absurd. This would imply that we must first possess penitence and faith before we can use the instrument through whose efficacy we gain that possession—which is a palpable contradiction.

But if it be absurd to suppose that we gain a *preparation* for salvation by the efficacy of prayer, it must be doubly absurd to suppose that we gain salvation itself by that efficacy. Indeed, the theory we here oppose is inconsistent with the very nature of prayer. What is prayer but the offering up by the heart of a petition to God for blessings which we feel that we need, and which we desire him to confer upon us? And *how*, we demand, can we ask God to bestow upon us those blessings which we expect efficaciously to result from the mere act of asking? If the act of asking works out the blessing, then the idea that the blessing is conferred in answer to the petition is an absurdity, for, according to the theory, the *act* of praying effectually works out its own answer; and, so far as we can see, this result, according to the theory in question, would be just as effectually reached on the supposition that God did not hear the petition at all. Surely a position so repugnant to Scripture, and so fraught with absurdity, is not to be sanctioned.

We have been the more particular in noticing this theory, because of the manifest favor it has received in certain quarters, and of our conviction of its pernicious tendency. It saps the foundation of all experimental, spiritual influence. Its tendency is to deny the direct agency of the Spirit, and put God out of the world; under the pretense of exalting the duty of prayer to a position of superior importance and influence, it, in reality, renders it an absurdity, and deprives it of all its efficacy.

When we contemplate prayer as a mere *condition* enjoined by the

appointment of God, upon the performing of which he has promised to confer his blessings, its importance and advantages result, not from the fact that it is supposed to possess inherent virtue or direct efficacy conferring, by the mere act of praying, the blessings desired, but from the fact that it looks to a higher Power for assistance, and complies with a condition in connection with the performance of which that assistance has been promised. While prayer, in itself, possesses no inherent virtue or efficacy, yet, by the divine appointment, it is a condition which connects with itself the efficient agency of the Holy Spirit. Thus it is that the prayer of faith can "move the hand that moves the world."

On the other hand, if, in accordance with the position we have been opposing, the influence of prayer is only to be found in its operation upon the internal principles and emotions of the suppliant, then it follows that, as we rely on this inherent efficacy resulting from the act of praying for the conferring of the blessings desired, of course, we cannot look to God for the impartation of those blessings by the direct agency of his Holy Spirit. Thus, according to this view, the suppliant is working a practical deception upon himself. While, *in words*, asking God to give him a new heart—to give him faith, hope, charity, humility, peace, joy, etc.—(as though he supposed that God was listening to his voice, and would exert a direct agency in answering his petitions), he is *really* only looking for that new heart, faith, hope, charity, humility, peace, joy, etc., to spring up within him while praying—not as the result of any direct agency of the Holy Spirit, but as the natural effect of the mere exercise of prayer itself.

A man on his knees before God, with these views of the efficacy of prayer, resembles one out upon the water in a boat, with one end of a cable in his hand and the other fastened to the shore. While pulling the cable, he may fancy he is causing the distant shore to approach *him*, but, in reality, *he* is approaching the shore, while *it* remains stationary. Just so, agreeably to this theory, the suppliant, while beseeching God to draw near by his Spirit and bless him as he needs, may imagine that God is hearing and directly answering his prayer; but it is only an illusion: *he* is drawing nearer to God; and, by the mere act of praying for these blessings, they naturally spring up in his soul. If this view does not render prayer a senseless and solemn mockery, it divests it of its scriptural vitality and power.

The absurdity of the theory under review appears, farther, from the fact that we may pray for many blessings which, from their nature, cannot result from the mere internal efficacy of prayer itself. Thus, we ask for the pardon of sin, which is an act of God which he alone

can perform. We ask for our daily food and raiment, for deliverance from danger and affliction, and for a thousand things which the mere act of praying cannot confer. It is true, the act of praying must exert a beneficial influence on the heart; but that *this* constitutes the ground on which the propriety of this duty rests, or that it is thus alone that answer to prayer is to be expected, is a position manifestly unscriptural, absurd, and injurious.

II. We now notice some of the OBJECTIONS to prayer.

1. An objection to this duty has been founded upon the doctrine of *predestination*.

It is alleged that, "if all things have been predestinated and fore-ordained from all eternity, in so absolute and unconditional a sense that nothing can take place differently from what it does, then there can be no propriety in prayer, since nothing can be effected thereby." We have never seen a consistent answer to this objection without a denial of the doctrine on which it is based; nor do we think it possible, in any other way, to meet it with a satisfactory answer. But, as the doctrine of predestination has been amply considered in our discussion of the "Doctrines of Christianity," we deem it unnecessary to add any thing farther on the subject in this place. As the Calvinistic view of predestination has been abundantly refuted, the objection in hand of course falls with it.

2. Another objection to prayer is founded on the fact that "God is infinitely wise and good." It is argued that, "therefore, he will bestow upon us every thing proper for us to possess, without prayer; and that what is not proper for us to possess, he will not give in answer to prayer."

To this it may be replied, that, because God is infinitely wise and good, he may therefore see that it would be proper for him to bestow upon us certain things, in answer to prayer, that it would not be proper for him to bestow, without prayer. Infinite Wisdom and Goodness must take into account all the circumstances bearing upon the case in hand, in order to determine what is fit and proper; and as the character of the individual is a very essential circumstance bearing upon the question as to what is proper to be conferred upon him, and as the fact of his praying or not praying, since God has commanded that duty, may be a very appropriate test of character, it follows that our praying or not praying may properly determine the divine procedure in bestowing or withholding certain blessings.

The principle here involved is beautifully illustrated in the parable of the Talents. The lord of the servants gave to each of the three "according to his several ability." To one he gave five talents, to

another two, and to another one. Now, as the lord of these servants distributed to each "according to his several ability," it is plain that it would have been improper for him to have given *two* talents to the servant to whom he gave *one*, or *five* to him to whom he gave *two*. And why? Because that would have been bestowing upon them more than they were capable of managing; and, consequently, would have involved a waste which the dictates of wisdom would have avoided. And if the fact of one being able to manage more than another renders it proper to bestow more upon one than upon another, for the same reason it will be proper to vary the amount bestowed upon the same servant, according as his circumstances may change, so as to render him capable of managing more at one time, or under one state of circumstances, than at another time, or under a different state of circumstances. The only question, therefore, to be here considered is this: is the fact of one praying, and another not praying, calculated so to change or vary the circumstances of the two, as to render it proper, according to the dictates of wisdom, to bestow upon one what is withheld from the other?

When it is remembered that God has enjoined the duty of prayer, it must be evident that a refusal to perform that duty implies a spirit of direct rebellion against the divine authority. And since God has connected with the performance of this duty the promise of many desirable blessings, and has connected with its neglect the withholding of those blessings, as well as exposure to many evils, it necessarily follows that a refusal or neglect to perform the duty of prayer evinces a "wicked heart of unbelief." Now, is it not plain that the dictates of wisdom would require a different administration toward a rebellious, unbelieving servant, from what would be proper in reference to a submissive and confiding one? Our Saviour said: "Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine." To bestow upon a rebellious, wicked, unbelieving sinner, such blessings as would be appropriate for a docile, obedient, and confiding Christian, would be as incongruous and as repugnant to the dictates of wisdom and goodness as to "cast pearls before swine." From all these considerations, it appears that it may be exceedingly proper and consistent with the divine attributes, for God to bestow, in answer to prayer, what he would otherwise withhold.

The form of this objection is sometimes varied thus: "God," it is said, "will do whatever is *best*, whether we pray or not; therefore our praying or not praying cannot affect his administration toward us." When the objection is presented in this form, we cheerfully admit the

premises. To admit that God will do what is *best*, is only to admit that "the Judge of all the earth will do right;" or, in other words, that "God is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind." But what has this admission to do with the conclusion in the objection? This conclusion assumes that it never can be *best* for God to bestow any thing, in answer to prayer, which he would otherwise withhold. It assumes, that what is *best* under one state of circumstances must be *best* under all circumstances. The conclusion, in the objection, is as palpable a *non sequitur* as can be imagined—it does not follow from the premises. The conclusion assumed, in this objection, is what never has been and never can be proved. From the simple position that "God will always do what is *best*," it no more follows that, therefore, he will *not* bestow, in answer to prayer, what he would otherwise withhold, than that he *will*, in answer to prayer, bestow what he would otherwise withhold. Before any conclusion can logically be drawn on either side, it must be shown *when is best* under the circumstances. *That* is the very point in dispute; and *is* the point which the objection begs in its own favor, but does not attempt to prove. That it may often be *best* for God to bestow, in answer to prayer, what it would be *best* for him, in the absence of prayer, to withhold, must be obvious, from the considerations offered, in answer to the objection in the form previously given. Indeed, the objection, in the two forms just considered, is substantially identical. The only difference is, that, in the latter form, the word *best* is substituted for the word *proper*, in the former.

In reference to all these objections offered to the duty of prayer, and all others that the ingenuity and wickedness of man can invent, the best answer that can be given is, that *the Bible is true*. They all grow out of the principles of skepticism. Admit that an infinitely holy, wise, and merciful God, has given us a revelation of his will, and that in that revelation the duty of prayer is enjoined, and these frivolous objections are at once scattered to the winds. It is enough that an almighty and all-sufficient, all-merciful and righteous Creator, has commanded his poor, dependent, and helpless creatures, saying, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." That God has commanded the duty, and promised the blessing, is an answer which, with every sincere believer, shall silence every cavil and remove every doubt; and, with the most unshaken confidence, relying on the truth of God's word, his language will be: "Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice; have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, **Thy face, Lord, will I seek.**"

All difficulty which may arise in the mind in relation to the propriety of prayer, should at once give way when it is remembered that this duty originates in the *appointment* of God. It will be admitted that the grace or favor of God, whether it relates to the spiritual blessings of salvation or the temporal mercies of this life, is all free and unmerited. It is not conferred upon us on account of our own deservings, but on the ground of Christ's atoning merits; hence, as God is free to "have mercy on whom he will have mercy," it is also his prerogative to suspend the conferring of that mercy on any condition his own wisdom may select. And as he has appointed the duty of prayer as one of those conditions, this fact alone should not only suppress every murmuring thought against the plans of God, but it should stir every heart with gratitude that the conditions of mercy are rendered so easy, and the burden of Christ so light. What is more natural than for the heart, when burdened with a sense of want, of danger, or of affliction, to cry for help? And how grateful should we be for the assurance that the Lord "heareth the prayer of the righteous"!

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER IV.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. What general definition of prayer is given?</p> <p>2. On what is this duty primarily founded?</p> <p>3. Does the light of nature intimate the propriety of prayer?</p> <p>4. What beneficial tendencies of prayer does reason indicate?</p> <p>5. Does prayer, by its direct efficacy,</p> | <p>produce the blessings for which we pray?</p> <p>6. In what manner does prayer secure the divine blessing?</p> <p>7. What objections have been offered to prayer?</p> <p>8. How may they be answered?</p> <p>9. What is the best answer to all objections on the subject?</p> |
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CHAPTER V.

PRAYER—SCRIPTURE-VIEW—DIFFERENT KINDS OF PRAYER.

No Christian duty is more explicitly and more fully enjoined in Scripture than that of prayer. On this subject, we here present a few passages from both the Old and the New Testaments.

In the patriarchal age, it is recorded that "Abraham prayed unto God" (Gen. xx. 17), and his prayer was heard. The Prophet Samuel said: "Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will *pray* for you unto the Lord." "And Samuel *cried unto the Lord* for Israel, and the Lord heard him." 1 Sam. vii. 5, 9. Solomon "kneeled down upon his knees," and called upon God in prayer, when he dedicated the temple. "And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy *prayer*, and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice." 2 Chron. vii. 12.

Elijah *prayed*, and God answered his prayer by fire from heaven. Ezra "fell upon his knees" in prayer before God; and Nehemiah also prayed; and their prayers were answered. David says: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I *pray*, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice." Ps. lv. 17. Daniel "went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God." Dan. vi. 10.

That this duty is expressly enjoined in the New Testament appears from the following passages: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." Matt. vii. 7. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always." Luke xxi. 36. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Phil. iv. 6. "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thess. v. 17. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Luke xviii. 1. St. Paul says: "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." 1 Tim. ii. 8.

Prayer is a part of sacred worship common to all dispensations, and

which was not only hallowed by the example of "prophets and righteous men," but also by that of Christ and his apostles.

In farther discussion of this subject, we will consider, first, the *nature* of prayer; secondly, the *different kinds* of prayer.

I. THE NATURE OF PRAYER.

According to Webster, "prayer," in a general sense, is the act of asking for a favor, and particularly with earnestness. But "in worship," he defines it "as a solemn address to the Supreme Being, consisting of *adoration*, or an expression of our sense of God's glorious perfections, *confession* of our sins, *supplication* for mercy and forgiveness, *intercession* for blessings on others, and *thanksgiving*, or an expression of gratitude, to God for his mercies and benefits."

With this general definition before us, which we deem accurate and explicit, we proceed to inquire for the *elements* of acceptable prayer according to the Scriptures.

1. Prayer should be offered in *humility*. This is an essential branch of Christian virtue, which was so foreign from the minds of heathen philosophers that they had no word which to their minds expressed the idea. The word we use for this virtue, to their minds, implied *mean-ness* and baseness of mind.

But the Bible is very full upon this subject. It is written: "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." Prov. xvi. 5. God saith: "Him that hath a *high look* and a *proud heart* will not I suffer." Ps. ci. 5. St. Peter says: "Be clothed with *humility*; for God resisteth the *proud*, and giveth grace to the *humble*." 1 Pet. v. 5. Our Saviour furnished a beautiful illustration of the grace of humility, when he set a little child in the midst of his disciples, saying: "Who-soever, therefore, shall *humble* himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Again, we have another illustration of this subject in the commendation of the prayer of the publican, who "smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you," said Jesus, "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that *humbleth* himself shall be exalted."

From all these scriptures, it appears that an humble spirit is essential to acceptable prayer. And as prayer is the language of dependence and helplessness, crying for mercy in the midst of destitution, want, affliction, or danger, how incongruous must be a proud or haughty spirit in connection with this duty, and how appropriate the feeling of deepest humility!

2. Another element of acceptable prayer is *submission*, or resignation

to the divine will, and a cheerful acquiescence in God's plan of imparting his blessings.

In all our prayers, it is either expressed or implied that we ask for things according to the will of God, otherwise our petitions will not be regarded. A beggar at the feet of his sovereign should not assume the attitude of a dictator. In regard to the spiritual blessings of salvation, the provisions and promises of the gospel are unrestricted and universal. "All men everywhere" may pray for "all spiritual benediction and grace." And, in this sense, we may intercede "for all men."

St. Paul has very forcibly portrayed this fullness of spiritual grace. "For this cause," he says, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." What stronger language can be used to express the largest possible communication of heavenly grace! But lest something beyond what is here expressed might be attainable, and to show that there should be no limit to the aspiration of the Christian for spiritual blessings, the apostle adds: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end." Here, to the extent of the grace for which the apostle prays, there is no limit, not even the power of words to express, nor of thought to conceive, can bound his capacious desire. And if the apostle would pray for these unutterable blessings upon his brethren, it is plainly inferable that they should pray for the same things in their own behalf.

Of similar import are our Saviour's encouraging words to his disciples: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." John xvi. 23, 24.

Other scriptures, to the same effect, might be adduced, but these are sufficient to show that there should be no limit to the extent of our petitions for spiritual blessings. Yet we should ever remember that we are to ask for all these things only in consistency with God's prescribed method of bestowing them—that is, we may not ask God to change his

plan, devised in infinite wisdom and goodness, for our individual accommodation. And he has promised these blessings only to him who seeks them aright.

The case is different when we pray for *temporal mercies*. Here God has made no unrestricted promise to grant us whatever we may think we need. And we have authority for praying for such blessings only in submission to the divine will. It is true, God has promised that "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," and the apostle assures us that "all things work together for good to them that love God." But it must not be forgotten that the divine will, and not our own short-sighted wisdom, is to be the judge in the case. God only (and not we ourselves) knows what is really "good" for us. We may ask for riches, health, prosperity, and peace, but God may see that poverty, affliction, adversity, and persecution, would be really better for us. Therefore, in all our petitions for temporal benefits, our prayers should be conditioned and circumscribed by calm and implicit submission to the will of God.

3. *Faith* is an important element of acceptable prayer. St. Paul has declared: "Whatsoever is not of *faith* is sin." Rom. xiv. 23. Our Saviour has promised, saying: "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matt. xxi. 22. St. James says: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." James i. 5, 6. Again, St. Paul says: "But without *faith* it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must *believe* that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. xi. 6. These scriptures abundantly establish the position that *faith* is an essential element of acceptable prayer. Indeed, this is a point so fully set forth in the word of God that no man, acknowledging the truth of revelation, can for a moment dispute it. To exhibit all the proof upon the subject would be to transcribe a large portion of the Bible.

It may be necessary, however, that we examine more particularly the *elements* of that faith which is thus essential to acceptable prayer. What *kind* and what *degree* of faith does acceptable prayer require?

(1) It must be, to a certain extent, *orthodox in theory*.

This does not imply that our views concerning God and religious doctrine must be correct in every *minutia*. We may embrace many errors in our system of religious belief, and yet hold the essential truths: yet there are some truths radical in their nature, without a belief in

which we cannot consistently pray for either temporal or spiritual mercies either for ourselves or in the behalf of others.

Among the most important of this class of truths is the doctrine of *divine influence*. If *this* be either discarded or explained away, there can be no more sense or propriety in offering prayer to God than if no such being existed. A semi-infidel doctrine has long had place in the world, the tendency of which is to put God, as it were, out of the world which his hand has created, and leave it to its own government and control. Like a vessel on the ocean, cut loose from her moorings, and without a master, "driven by the winds and tossed," so some would persuade us that God created the world, and cast it forth from his hand upon the ocean of time to govern and control itself solely by the agency of *secondary causes*. This pernicious theory has infused its poison into some of our schools of divinity as well as philosophy.

The position to which we refer is this: that God, when he created the material universe, impressed matter with certain properties and powers called "the laws of nature;" and that these laws, operating as secondary causes, govern the material world without any direct or immediate power of the Almighty being exerted or required. This is the *philosophical* phase of the system. When it enters the arena of *theology*, it takes the following shape: It assumes that God miraculously inspired the sacred penmen to write the Scriptures; but that, since the apostolic age, there is no direct or immediate influence of the Holy Spirit on the hearts and minds of men, but that the conversion of men, if effected at all, must be accomplished by the written word, the Spirit of God exercising no agency in the matter whatever, except what arises solely from the fact that the Spirit originally dictated that written word. Thus it is that this system, or rather these twin sisters of semi-infidel philosophy and pseudo-Christianity, would join hands in putting God both out of the natural and of the moral and religious world, leaving the government of the natural world to secondary causes through the laws of nature, and the government of the moral or spiritual world to secondary causes through the written word.

According to the theory just explained, we can conceive no propriety whatever in prayer. The sole utility of prayer arises from the fact that God is supposed to hear and answer our petitions by exerting an influence in bestowing blessings upon us, which he would not bestow without prayer. Deny that he exerts any such influence, admit that all things, both material and immaterial—that is, that the natural things pertaining to this world, and the spiritual things pertaining to religion—are controlled solely by secondary causes, and in what shape can

we look for an answer to our prayers? If God exercises no direct influence over the affairs of this world, either natural or spiritual, how can we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," with any more confidence that we shall obtain that bread than if we were not to pray at all? And if nothing can be gained by prayer, wherein consists its propriety? We can only ask God for temporal mercies on the supposition that he exercises a particular providence over the affairs of this world. Deny *this*, and there would still be reason in our using diligence and industry to secure those blessings, but there could be no reason in our *praying* for them.

Deny that God by his Holy Spirit operates upon our hearts, except indirectly through the word, and how can we pray to him for any spiritual blessing whatever? If there is no direct influence of the Spirit on the heart, how can we pray to God for the *fruit* of the Spirit? We pray to God to impart unto us, or to increase within us, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance." Now these graces, St. Paul tells us, are "the fruit of the Spirit;" but if the Spirit only operates through the written word, how do we expect it to impart or increase the graces in question? *Can* there be given, upon this hypothesis, any sensible meaning to our prayer? Do we expect the Spirit miraculously to multiply Bibles? Even that, according to the theory, it could only do by causing one Bible to produce another. If it be said that these fruits of the Spirit are only produced by the reading and studying of the Bible, then, we demand, in what way does prayer facilitate this process? We pray to God in language as though God were listening, and we expected him to answer our prayers by a direct influence; but if no such influence is to be realized, then the exercise of prayer is worse than silly—it is solemn mockery!

But we demand: What sober-minded man can open his Bible, and read the history of the many prayers of God's people, and the direct answers to them therein recorded, and reconcile the theory we here oppose with the Scripture presentation of the subject? Take but one illustration among hundreds that might be adduced. Our Saviour, in answer to his disciples, who had requested him, saying, "Lord, teach us to pray," among other things, said: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 11-13. Now, we undertake to say that if our blessed Lord did not intend to teach his

disciples that their heavenly Father would as really hear, and as directly answer, their prayer, as they would the request of their child asking for bread, then he intentionally deceived them. The language is too pointed and unambiguous to admit of any but one construction. Let it be distinctly noted that the Holy Spirit is not here promised to those who shall read, believe, and obey the Scriptures, however important these duties are admitted to be, but "to them that ask him"—that is, the Holy Spirit is here promised as a gift in direct answer to prayer. To construe the passage otherwise, is not to *interpret*, but to *pervert* the inspired word. And to reconcile with this plain construction of our Saviour's teachings, the doctrine which denies the direct influence of the Spirit of God upon the human heart, is simply an impossibility; hence we conclude that acceptable prayer must be so far orthodox in theory as to recognize *the direct influence of the Holy Spirit on the human heart*.

(2) This faith also implies a *firm trust and reliance upon God*, that through the mediation of Christ he will, according to his promises, bestow upon us the blessings for which we pray. This is implied in the passages already presented; and is so abundantly taught in all those scriptures which exhibit faith as the condition of justification, and of salvation in all its stages, that we deem it useless to dwell upon this point, except to present two or three Scripture-testimonies. When the two blind men came to Jesus, crying, "Thou Son of David have mercy on us," he "touched their eyes, saying, According to your *faith* be it unto you." Matt. ix. 29. Again, Jesus said to one who brought unto him his son who had a dumb spirit: "If thou *canst believe*, all things are possible to him that *believeth*." Mark ix. 23. These passages plainly teach that the answer to prayer is suspended upon the condition of implicit faith. When the Ethiopian eunuch demanded baptism of Philip, the apostle replied: "If thou *believest with all thy heart*, thou mayest." Acts viii. 37. And St. Paul says: "*With the heart* man believeth unto righteousness." Rom. x. 10. Thus it appears that the faith which justifies and saves the soul, and which is necessary to render our prayer acceptable to God, implies the *full trust and confidence of the heart*.

II. We now call attention to the DIFFERENT KINDS OF PRAYER.

The most common division of prayer is into *ejaculatory*, *private*, *family*, and *public*. We propose a few remarks upon each separately.

1. *Ejaculatory Prayer*.—This is the impromptu aspiration of the heart, whether silent or expressed, rising to God in emotions of *grateful* acknowledgment for mercies received, or petitions for blessings.

needed. In other words, it denotes that fixed devotional frame by which a constant spirit of prayer is maintained, and an abiding sense of the divine presence and protection preserved. This kind of prayer is clearly enjoined by the apostle in his exhortation to "pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks."

As this abiding spirit of prayer is evidence of genuine piety in the heart, so it conduces largely to the enjoyment of those who maintain it. By habitually staying the soul upon God, it produces a fixed sense of his ever-abiding presence and all-sustaining grace; and thus a calm composure of spirit and a comfortable assurance of the divine protection are secured, and the heart is kept in "perfect peace," being "stayed on the Lord."

2. *Private or Secret Prayer.*—This duty is not only sanctioned by the example of prophets and apostles, and the most pious in all ages, and of Christ himself, but by express precept. Our Lord says, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Matt. vi. 6.

Perhaps there is no Christian duty the strict and habitual performance of which is a surer test of genuine and sincere piety than this. Other religious exercises, even family and public prayer, may be attended to through motives of policy, for the sake of respectability, or to promote the comfort of those about us; but he who habitually bows his knees in secret devotion before God *must* be sincere. And how sublime the spectacle of a poor dependent worm of earth, shut out from the view of every eye but that of God, kneeling in humble pleadings for mercy before the great I Am! Upon such a scene angels must gaze with delight, and God himself looks down from heaven well pleased.

3. *Family Prayer.*—An *objection* has been made to this duty, simply on the ground that it is not expressly enjoined in Scripture. But every honest-minded Christian must admit that what is clearly implied in a great Bible-principle, necessarily growing out of it, is possessed of equal authority with that which is embodied in express precept. To deny this position would introduce fearful confusion and havoc into the system of Christian morals.

Where is the express precept commanding you to clothe your children, to give them as good educational advantages as you can, or to qualify them for some special calling or profession? If it be replied that nature, reason, and the general obligation to "provide for our own household," imply all these duties, may we not, with even more propri-

ety, affirm that nature, reason, and the general obligation to "rule our own house well," and "bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," require us to set before them the example, and favor them with the advantages of family worship?

It is certain that several of the patriarchs, and probable that all of them, adopted household worship. Abraham, Jacob, and Job, offered sacrificial worship in their families; and this is one of the most sacred forms of ancient worship, deriving its obligation doubtless from the appointment of God. Moreover, this duty necessarily grows out of the general injunction on parents to attend strictly to the religious instruction of their children. If a thorough religious instruction necessarily embraces the duty of prayer, which all must admit, if example be an important element of successful instruction, and if precept accompanied by example be more efficient than precept alone, then it follows that the obligation of family prayer is a plain, necessary inference.

That the careful religious training of children was strictly enjoined under both the Mosaic and Christian dispensations, is a position not to be doubted. This is manifest from the divine commendation expressed of Abraham's character in this particular. "I know him," said God, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." Gen. xviii. 19. It was explicitly enjoined on the people of Israel by Moses that they should instruct their children in the precepts of religion. "These words," said he, "which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Deut. vi. 6, 7.

The duty of family prayer not only arises as a necessary inference from the general precepts enjoining the religious instruction of children, but it is clearly inferable from the *character* of the Christian and the *constitution* of the family. As a Christian, and as the head of a household, every man is under obligations to do good to the utmost extent of his ability; hence, that we may feel the force of this obligation, it is only necessary that we consider its beneficial tendency. It cannot be denied that family worship tends not only to preserve in the hearts of parents a sense of their obligation to God, and to keep alive the flame of devotion, but it contributes greatly to imbue the minds and hearts of children with religious knowledge and a reverence for holy things. Besides, this constant acknowledgment of God, and our obligations to serve him, secures by promise his gracious regard and pe

culiar favor: "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Again, the general promise that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," will apply with peculiar fitness to family devotion. From all these considerations, we conclude that family prayer, though not directly enjoined by express precept, is yet a duty so manifest from the *general principles* of the gospel, the *character* of the Christian, the *constitution* of the family, the *benefits* it imparts, and the *general promises* of God, that it must be of binding obligation on every Christian who is the head of a household.

4. We now call attention to the subject of *public prayer*.

(1) This duty is founded on express precept. Its scriptural obligation is most ample and complete. Our Saviour taught "that men ought always to pray." St. Paul says: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." 1 Tim. ii. 1. That the apostle was here speaking of the public services in the Church the context clearly evinces. He adds: "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." 1 Tim. ii. 8. He proceeds immediately to give instruction concerning the behavior and privileges of women in the Church, which abundantly shows that *public*, and not *private*, devotion was the subject of discourse.

(2) This duty is taught by *plain and necessary inference*. St. Paul says: "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoreth her head," etc. 1 Cor. xi. 4, 5. Now, the context makes it manifest that the apostle was here speaking of "praying and prophesying" as a public religious exercise; hence it follows, as a necessary inference, that this duty is obligatory on Christians of both sexes, for the apostle gives directions as to the proper manner of its performance.

(3) Again, this duty is plainly manifest from the Scripture *examples* on the subject. Public prayer was a part of the Jewish service, under the Mosaic economy. That it was regularly performed in the synagogues, at least from the time of Ezra, is unquestionable. And it was sanctioned by our Saviour and his apostles by their frequent attendance upon the synagogue, and participation in the services. And it is undeniable that an important part of this service consisted in public prayer.

(4) The gracious *design* and *benefits* of public worship are obvious and important. It calls the people together, and engages the mind and

heart so as to free them from many snares and temptations to evil to which they would otherwise be exposed. It tends to cultivate a more intimate acquaintance with each other among the members of any given community, and greatly promotes the social virtues. It brings before the mind the contemplation of the sublime themes of pure religion, and elevates the thoughts above the perishing things of earth. It promotes throughout society good order and morality, refinement and virtue.

This public religious worship adapts its benefits to every conceivable case of each individual. It is calculated to impart strength to the weak, light to those who are in darkness, consolation to all who are in distress, and encouragement to those who are dejected; in a word, it preserves a sense of our dependence upon God, and a grateful remembrance of our constant indebtedness to his goodness.

It tends greatly to promote that kindly emotion and fraternal fellowship which are characteristic fruits of the gospel. Here, in the assembly for public prayer, the rich and the poor, the learned and the uncultivated, all classes in society and all conditions in life, may meet together and share the common blessing; here united supplications are offered up to the God and Father of all for national and individual benefits, and many hearts may unite in the undivided strain of thanksgiving and praise to their common Parent and Benefactor; here the Holy Spirit descends, not now "as a rushing, mighty wind," in his miraculous powers, but as the reprover of sin, carrying conviction to the heart of the unbeliever, and as the promised Paraclete, comforting the mourner and causing the saints to rejoice "with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" and here, in an emphatic sense, "the Lord commands the blessing, even life forevermore." From the commencement of the gospel till now, the truly pious have never forgotten the good "word of exhortation," not to "forsake the assembling of themselves together;" and in these assemblies the divine benediction has fallen upon them "as the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion."

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER V.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. What scriptures enjoin the duty of prayer?</p> <p>2. What is the nature of prayer?</p> <p>3. What is the first element of acceptable prayer, and by what scriptures is this proved?</p> <p>4. The second element, and by what scriptures is it proved?</p> <p>5. What peculiarity should characterize our petitions when we pray for temporal mercies?</p> <p>6. What scriptures prove that faith is essential to acceptable prayer?</p> <p>7. In what sense must this faith be orthodox in theory?</p> <p>8. What scriptures exhibit direct answers to prayer?</p> <p>9. What scriptures contain promises of direct answers to prayer?</p> | <p>10. What farther element is embraced in evangelical faith?</p> <p>11. What different <i>kinds</i> of prayer are specified?</p> <p>12. What is implied in <i>ejaculatory</i> prayer, and by what scripture is it enjoined?</p> <p>13. By whose example, and by what scriptures, is <i>private</i> prayer enjoined?</p> <p>14. What objection has been offered to <i>family</i> prayer, and how is it answered?</p> <p>15. How may the propriety of family prayer be proved from Scripture?</p> <p>16. What scriptures enjoin the duty of <i>public</i> prayer?</p> |
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CHAPTER VI.

PRAYER—FORM OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

At least ever since the Lutheran Reformation, there has been much controversy in the Church, *pro* and *con*, as to the propriety of the use of *liturgies* in public worship. Seldom have any written upon this theme without being carried to a partisan extreme, on one side or the other. It is true that the advocates of *liturgical* worship have generally admitted the propriety of extemporaneous prayer, to a limited extent, under certain circumstances—and those opposed to liturgies, as the general rule, have admitted the propriety of using them, to a limited extent, on some special occasions; but still it must be manifest to the impartial observer, if any such can be found, that the disputants on both sides, after having made their admissions, have, as they advanced in the discussion, diverged farther and farther from them—the one party seeming to perceive nothing but evil in the use of liturgies, and the other party seeing only evil resulting from the general plan of extemporaneous prayers. A spirit of bigotry and intolerance has been exhibited on both sides. We are persuaded there is a medium ground on the subject, more consistent with Scripture and with the genius of Christianity than that which has been occupied by either class of the controversialists.

In the first place, it is neither consistent with Scripture, reason, nor Christian charity, to denounce all *liturgical* public worship as necessarily tending to dead formality and the destruction of vital piety in the Church; in the second place, it is neither consistent with Scripture, reason, nor Christian charity, to denounce the regular practice of *extemporaneous* prayer as necessarily tending to produce irreverence, disorder, insubordination, instability, heresy, and enthusiasm, in the Church. Some of these evils may be more likely to spring up in connection with the one plan of worship than the other, but neither plan will secure exemption from any of the evils in question; nor will it, necessarily, produce any of those evils. Whether the question be examined in the light of Scripture, antiquity, reason, common sense, or Christian charity.

it will appear that both methods of worship are *right* and *proper*; that the one is preferable on some accounts, and the other on other accounts; and that a judicious blending of the two is better than the exclusive use of either.

I. We examine THE OLD TESTAMENT on this subject.

Here we perceive that the public worship of the Jews was neither wholly *liturgical* nor wholly *extemporaneous*—the two modes were blended.

1. In favor of a *prescribed form* of worship, it may be said that—

(1) Immediately after the passage of the Israelites over the Red Sea, they celebrated their wonderful deliverance in song, which must have been composed for the occasion, and set to music. Moses and the people sang together, and Miriam and her companions responded with the timbrel and the dance, using the chorus: "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

(2) With the Jewish people, much of their public religious service was very minutely prescribed. The acts they were to perform, and the words they were to use, in various instances, were prearranged and definitely appointed. In the sixth chapter of Numbers, Aaron and his sons were informed what words they were to use in pronouncing a blessing upon the people: "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, . . . On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." At the expiation for uncertain murder, the elders were taught to say over the slain heifer a set form of words, thus: "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people," etc. Deut. xxi. 7, 8.

(3) At the offering of the first-fruits, the Israelites were taught to return thanks to God in a set form of words, as prescribed in the twenty-sixth chapter of Deuteronomy.

(4) Just before his death, Moses taught the Israelites a song commemorative of God's mercies, requiring them, and their seed after them, to use the same for religious service.

(5) The Jewish rabbis testify that their regular temple service consisted of three parts—viz., sacrifices, liturgical compositions, and psalms. The book of Psalms itself bears internal evidence that it consists, in part, of forms of prayer, of thanksgiving, and praise, for the public worship of God; and that certain Psalms were to be used on specific days, their very titles testify. In the twenty-ninth chapter of Second

Chronicles, Hezekiah the king "commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord, with the words of David and of Asaph the seer; and they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped."

(6) Maimonides, a learned rabbi, says: "Ezra composed eighteen forms of prayer, which were enjoined by the great council, that every man might have them in his mouth and be perfect in them, and that thereby the prayers of the rude and ignorant might be as complete as those of a more eloquent tongue." These prayers have all been translated by Dr. Prideaux, and are to be found in his "Connection of Scripture History."

(7) That the synagogue-worship of the Jews was to a great extent liturgical, consisting mainly of forms of prayer and praise, reading the Scriptures and commenting upon the text, is a matter which, we believe, is not disputed. We therefore conclude that *forms* of prayer, to some extent, were divinely authorized in the public worship which God prescribed for the Jewish people.

2. *Extemporaneous Worship.*

(1) Where can we find the evidence that God interdicted, under the Old Testament economy, the use of *extemporaneous* prayer? Although that was peculiarly a dispensation of forms and ceremonies, types and symbols, as compared with the more spiritual worship of the new dispensation, yet, even then, where are prescribed the restrictive statutes? where are the pains and penalties, the disabilities, censures, or excommunications, to be incurred by all who dared to deviate from a prescribed rubric in the public service, either by introducing a psalm not specially designated, or praying extemporaneously (as Justin Martyr says the early Christians did) "according to their ability"?

(2) Again, have we not the most indubitable evidence that prophets and holy men of God, in those olden times, often prayed extemporaneously, both in their private and public services? When Elijah bowed in prayer to God, in the face of all Israel assembled to witness the contest between the true prophet of Jehovah and the false prophet of Baal, he offered up a public prayer that had never been heard before. When Solomon "kneeled down upon his knees," and prayed in presence of the whole nation at the dedication of the temple, he offered up a prayer unknown to any prescribed liturgy. Our conclusion, therefore, from the Old Testament authority, is, that while a liturgical service was evidently sanctioned and to some extent adopted in the Jewish Church, yet there is no evidence that extemporaneous prayers were not allowed. On the contrary, there is clear proof that such

prayers were frequently offered, not only in private, but in public assemblies.

ii. We now pass to the examination of THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHINGS ON THIS SUBJECT.

Many have supposed that there is no authority for *forms* of prayer in the New Testament; but this is certainly a wrong conclusion.

1. Were there no other allusion to this subject, it is evident that forms of prayer are right and proper, as appears from the following passage: One of the disciples said unto Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Here we see that John, the greatest of all the prophets, taught *his* disciples a *form* of prayer. Had this mode of worship been improper, under the gospel dispensation, this was the time and place for our Saviour to communicate that important fact! But did he do it? He did the very opposite. His words are: "When ye pray, *say*, Our Father who art in heaven," etc.—prescribing an explicit *form*—teaching them the very words to be used.

Because, according to one of the evangelists, our Saviour said, "After this *manner* therefore pray ye," some have supposed that Christ did not intend to furnish a *form*, but merely an outline *model* of prayer. But this is interpreting Scripture, not according to its plain, unsophisticated import, but merely to uphold a theory. The truth is, he here furnished his disciples a *form*, according to the language of one evangelist, and a *model*, according to another. Both evangelists were right; for he gave both a *form* and a *model*. Hence, as he gave them a *form*, liturgical worship is *right*; and, as he gave a *model*, extemporaneous worship is *right*; so that we here have divine authority for *both* modes of worship, and consequently neither should be interdicted, but every worshiper should be left by the Church in all ages in the enjoyment of all that liberty in the possession of which he was left by our Lord himself.

Again, we have not only *divine precept* for forms of prayer, as just shown, but we have satisfactory evidence that this mode of worship was sanctioned by the *example* of our Lord and his apostles.

That the worship conducted in the Jewish temple and synagogues, at the time of Christ and his apostles, was mainly liturgical, will not be disputed. It is most evident that Christ and his apostles frequently participated in that service. Now, if they had considered that mode of worship improper, would they not have expressed their disapprobation? But He who drove out from the temple "the money-changers," and so frequently and so pointedly reproved the scribes and Pharisees, and rulers of the Jews, for their hypocrisies and various perversions of the Mosaic law, never uttered the first word of censure in reference to

the liturgy of the temple or the synagogues; nor is there to be found in the writings of the apostles any thing expressing disapprobation of that mode of worship.

Add to this the fact that our Saviour was a regular attendant on the Jewish services, that on all the great festival occasions he repaired to Jerusalem to worship, that Sabbath after Sabbath he filled his place in the synagogues, and that his watchful enemies, ever eager to find ground of accusation against him, never charged him with disrespect to the public services of religion. Now, if he had spoken against them, or refused to participate in them, on the ground that portions of those services were liturgical, would they have passed it by in silence? And if he regularly participated in them, without a single expression of disapprobation, did he not affix to that form of worship the seal of his approval? The hymn he sang at the institution of the Holy Supper, and his solemn exclamation on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" were both precomposed forms taken from the Psalms.

The apostles were all brought up in the services of the Jewish religion; and, even after they had established the Christian Church, we find them, as well as many of the first Christians, continuing "daily with one accord in the temple." Acts ii. 46. St. Paul, after his conversion, "prayed in the temple," as he had been accustomed to do; and, a quarter of a century after the crucifixion of our Lord, we find the same apostle going "up to Jerusalem to worship." From all which we conclude that *forms of prayer are authorized by the teachings and example of Christ and his apostles.*

2. But we next inquire, What can be said, from the New Testament testimony, in favor of *extemporaneous* worship? Having seen from the example of Christ and his apostles, as also from the fact that our Saviour taught his disciples a *form* of prayer, that worship performed in a precomposed liturgy is acceptable to God, are we therefore to conclude that *extemporaneous* worship, whether public or private, is either unauthorized or improper? Is there such contrariety between the two modes, that, if the one be authorized and proper, the other must necessarily be without authority and improper? Such has been the hasty conclusion and partisan position of too many. But is it scriptural? Suppose our Saviour did teach his disciples a *form* of prayer, does it thence follow that they are to be restricted to that, or any other, prearranged form?

Are there not numerous examples of acceptable prayer recorded in the New Testament, when no set form was used? Look at the poor publican, smiting upon his breast, and crying, "God be merciful to me

a sinner." Was *he* only repeating what he had memorized from a prayer-book? Look at Peter, crying, "Lord, save me." Look at the two blind men, crying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David." Were all these, and numerous other such examples that might be given precomposed prayers? Were they not rather the impromptu effusion of the heart? Our Saviour promised that the Father would "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him;" but did he give them a prescribed form of words in which to offer the prayer?

Again, in that longest of our Lord's prayers upon record (John xvii.), from what prearranged liturgy did he derive the form? In that prayer-meeting, held by a hundred and twenty disciples in an upper chamber at Jerusalem, they prayed without a prearranged form (Acts i. 14-24). When Paul instructed Timothy concerning the various classes of persons for whom prayers should be made, though manifestly referring to public worship in the Church, he never hinted that a set form of words should be used (1 Tim. ii.); and in all his remarks concerning the praying of men and women, with their heads *covered* or *uncovered*, he gives no intimation concerning a set formula of words. The whole context shows, not only that these prayers were *public—in the Church*—but that they were *extemporaneous*. Again, in his affecting farewell interview with the Ephesian elders, when Paul "kneeled down and prayed with them all," no rational mind can believe that his prayer was taken from a liturgy.

Now, we demand, Is it not undeniable, from the Scripture-view we have exhibited, that both liturgical and extemporaneous forms of worship are divinely authorized, and *that*, not only in reference to private devotion, but public service? And if so, what is the necessary inference—what is the conclusion, in view of Scripture, reason, expediency, Christian charity, common sense, and every consideration by which the Christian mind should be swayed—but that both modes are right and proper? A judicious combination of the two is better than the exclusive use of either.

But a more important inference from the whole subject is, that as the Scriptures have sanctioned, both by precept and example, both plans of worship, without enjoining either to the exclusion of the other, leaving every Christian in the possession of perfect liberty on the subject, so no Church-authority, whether it be council, convention, conference, synod, or presbytery, may rightfully deprive Christians of that "liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free."

There are attractions in the admirable liturgy of the Church of England which it were an offense against refined taste and genuine piety not

to admit. And "our hearts should burn within us, and our kindling faith and swelling joy take wings on high, as, joining in the prayers and praises, the chants and songs, of the Church, we remember that we now worship God in many of the same words that once rung through the carved temple from the fired tongues of David and Isaiah, of Paul and John—in the same strains that were poured forth by the goodly fellowship of the prophets, by the glorious company of the apostles, by the noble army of martyrs, and by the holy apostolic Church throughout all the world."

But much as that or any other liturgy may be admired, and great as may be its excellences, still it is not divinely enjoined; and for any merely human and uninspired body of men, by canon or edict, to render it binding upon the Church to conform to its rubrics, in all their *minutia* and to all the extent of that extended service, and that, too, to the exclusion of extemporaneous prayer, must be considered a usurpation of prerogative. It is separating extemporaneous worship from liturgical, which God hath joined together—it is "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"—it raises an insurmountable obstacle in the way of general Christian union. No Christian organization has the right, especially when claiming to be emphatically **THE Church**, and urging that all Christians ought to unite in their organization, to require, as an indispensable condition of the proposed fellowship, conformity to a canon which excludes from the general public worship of God either *liturgical* or *extemporaneous* prayer. To do so is, while pleading for union, to adopt most effectual measures to prevent it.

How excellent a grace is charity! and how indispensable its largest exercise to the promotion of that Christian unity for which the Saviour so devoutly prayed! But in no part of religion is charity more essential than in connection with public worship. Here all classes—the clergy and the laity, the learned and the ignorant—should meet on a common level; hence, in this department especially, nothing should be made authoritatively binding in the Church except what is clearly placed on a similar footing in the Scriptures.

In matters depending on mere expediency, the Church may be allowed, in her ecclesiastical regulations, to enjoin many things for the sake of uniformity; but she has no proper authority to require, as an indispensable term of communion, what God has not required. This general principle may be violated, either by requiring more than God has required, or by prohibiting what God has allowed. Thus, for the Church to require, as a term of communion, that we offer our devotions in Latin, would be a usurpation, because it would be requiring more than God

nas required; but for the Church, as a term of communion, to prohibit prayer being offered in English, would be a usurpation, because it would be prohibiting what God has allowed. On the same principle of reasoning, for the Church, as a term of communion, to require that we regularly worship God in the public congregation in the liturgical form only, or exclusively in the extemporaneous form, would be a usurpation, because it would be requiring more than God has required; but for the Church to prohibit, as a term of communion, public worship in the liturgical form, or to prohibit it in the extemporaneous form, would be a usurpation, because it would be prohibiting what God has allowed.

If it be said, in reply to this reasoning, that the Church may require, as a condition of membership in connection with its own denominational organization, more than it would have a right to require as a term of Christian communion—to this we reply, that, by so doing, she admits that she is constituted on principles essentially different from those on which the original Church of Christ was founded, and that, in that respect, her constitution is unscriptural. Farther, whenever we admit that we require, as a condition of membership in our denominational organization, what we could not of right require as a term of Christian communion, we thereby effectually repudiate all claim to be THE Church of Christ, with whose denominational connection it is the duty of all Christians in the land to unite.

It matters not whether it be a particular mode of baptism or a particular form of public service which we require as an essential condition of full membership in our ecclesiastical organization—if it be more than we dare claim as an absolute term of Christian communion, the admission of this fact overturns all the proud claims we might urge as being THE Church with which it is the duty of all to unite. This admission demonstrates that we do not occupy a platform from which we may consistently call upon all others to rally to our standard. It proves that, however illustrious the line through which we may trace our descent, nevertheless we now occupy a *sectarian* basis.

The plain truth on the subject is, that the Scriptures abundantly authorize both the liturgical and the extemporaneous modes of public worship. Both methods have their advantages and their disadvantages. A judicious blending of the two is more in accordance with Scripture, antiquity, and reason, than a rigid adherence to either, to the exclusion of the other. Hence we conclude that, as God has sanctioned both, and left all at liberty to use them at discretion, this liberty cannot be restricted or destroyed without violating the great principles of Christian charity and laying the foundation for schism.

It is to be lamented that some, who are the loudest in their pleadings for that great and glorious unity of "all who profess and call themselves Christians," for which our Saviour so earnestly prayed, are the greatest sticklers for mere modes and forms, and the first to erect effectual barriers in the way of that unity they profess so much to desire. Let these unscriptural principles and practices tending directly to sectarian exclusiveness, whether connected with the *mode* of worship, of baptism, of ordination, or of whatever else, which have so long kept asunder those whom God originally joined together, be at once and forever abandoned, and soon "there shall be one fold and one Shepherd."

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER VI.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. What has characterized the controversy as to the form of prayer?</p> <p>2. What has been generally admitted on both sides of the question?</p> <p>3. Which do the Scriptures sanction, <i>liturgical</i> or <i>extemporaneous</i> worship?</p> <p>4. Which of these modes of worship did the Jews practice?</p> <p>5. Which of these modes of worship is sanctioned by the New Testament?</p> <p>6. Do both Testaments sanction both modes of worship?</p> | <p>7. Can we require as a condition of membership, what the Scriptures do not authorize as a term of communion, without encouraging schism?</p> <p>8. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of <i>liturgical</i> worship?</p> <p>9. What of <i>extemporaneous</i> worship?</p> <p>10. What would be preferable to the practice of either mode, to the exclusion of the other?</p> <p>11. What great barrier to Christian union has been erected in connection with this subject?</p> |
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CHAPTER VII.

THE SABBATH—ITS ORIGIN AND PERPETUITY.

IN considering our duty to God, we next call attention to the institution of the SABBATH, or, as styled under the Christian economy, the *Lord's-day*.

Theologians have differed greatly in their views concerning the Sabbath. Some have considered it only a *positive* duty, others a *moral* duty, and others still a *mixed* duty—both *positive* and *moral*. These diversities of sentiment will be considered in our examination of the subject.

I. ORIGIN AND PERPETUITY OF THE SABBATH.

Before we inquire directly concerning the *origin* of the Sabbath, we deem it proper to call attention to the distinction between a *moral* and a *positive* precept. We do this in the language of Bishop Butler, thus: "*Moral* precepts are those, the reasons of which we see; *positive* precepts are those, the reasons of which we do not see. *Moral* duties arise out of the nature of the case itself, prior to external command; *positive* duties do not arise out of the nature of the case, but from external command; nor would they be duties at all, were it not for such command received from Him whose creatures and subjects we are."

1. We maintain the *perpetual obligation* of the Sabbath from the fact that it is properly a *moral*, instead of a *positive* duty. We know that some have contended that this duty depends entirely upon *positive* precepts for its existence, and that therefore, as there is no express precept to that effect, the obligation to observe it cannot be perpetual.

Others have considered the obligations of the Sabbath of a *mixed* nature, depending partly on *moral*, and partly on *positive* precepts; but, notwithstanding the great names that have been enrolled in favor of both these positions, we must consider them erroneous. We think they have been taken in haste, and have led to very pernicious results. Had not the admission first been made that the obligation is not *wholly moral*, but of a *mixed* nature—partly *moral* and partly *positive*—it is hardly probable that the *perpetuity* of this obligation would ever have

been questioned by such men as Dr. Paley. It is much to be regretted that a work so ably written as this author's "Moral and Political Philosophy," and one so admirably adapted, in many respects, to fill the place it has so generally occupied as a text book in our colleges, is so exceedingly heterodox on the important subject of the Sabbath. We think the two positions, that the obligation of the Sabbath is *not wholly moral*, and that it is *not perpetual*, are connatural, and that Dr. Paley never would have adopted the *latter* but for the general admission of the *former*.

We freely admit that, when the Sabbath became connected with the Mosaic ceremonial law, numerous minute appendages, by specific enactment, were connected with it; but these appendages were merely adventitious—they did not constitute its essence. The Sabbath derived not its being from them—it existed anterior to and independent of them. Of course, as it did not derive its existence from them, it cannot be dependent upon their continuance for its perpetuity. These appendages are *positive* and not *moral* duties; but the Sabbath itself, whose essential nature lies deeper than adventitious circumstances, and whose origin dates anterior to all such appendages, is a *moral* duty. It is true that, in the absence of external precept, we might not have been able either to discover or comprehend the nature of this duty; but the same may be said of other commandments of the Decalogue. That a duty may be properly embraced under the head of *moral*, in contradistinction from *positive*, precept, it is not necessary that it be actually *discoverable* by human reason; all that is requisite to this is, that, when revealed and explained, we may be able to perceive, in the nature and fitness of things, to some extent, the reasonableness and propriety of the duty in question.

Now, that the observance of the Sabbath is a duty which, when prescribed and understood, commends itself to the understanding of every right-minded person as reasonable and proper, must be admitted. What position can be plainer than this, that a portion of time is necessary to man as a periodical cessation from toil? And is it not equally obvious that this sacred rest-day is necessary to man, as furnishing *one* day for levotional exercises after *six* days of labor? How admirably is this hallowed institution calculated, not only to preserve in the heart of man a grateful remembrance of the wonderful creative acts of God, but also to secure to him the benefits resulting from a periodical consecration of a due proportion of time to devotional exercises!

If it be true then, that, in the very nature and fitness of things, the proportion of one day out of seven is needful for man as a respite from

labor, and also for the performance of that religious service we owe to God, and which is necessary that we may maintain that communion with God so essential to our religious welfare and happiness, then it follows that this institution is grounded on a great moral reason, and consequently is as really a *moral* duty as that enjoined in any one of the Ten Commandments; and, being a moral duty, the perpetuity of its obligation results as a necessary sequence.

2. Again, the *perpetuity* of the Sabbath is clearly inferable from the *history of its origin*. On this subject we read as follows: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Gen. ii. 2, 3.

The plain, natural construction of the language here employed, implies that the *seventh* day on which God rested was a literal day, such as each of the *six* preceding days had been; and that it was the next day to the *sixth* in immediate succession. And as God *then* rested upon the seventh day, and as the fact of his thus resting is given as a reason why he "blessed and sanctified" that day, the plain inference is, that the consecration of the day commenced simultaneously with the reason upon which it was founded. As it was the first seventh day, coming next after the six days of his creative work, on which he rested, so it was that seventh day which he consecrated, and at *that* time he performed the act of consecration.

The reason given, as well as the plain narrative style in which the facts are recorded, forbid the supposition that the inspired writer only intended to convey the idea that God, some centuries afterward, would set apart some other seventh day in commemoration of the rest which then took place. If the *day* was then spoken of as being "sanctified" by way of *prolepsis*, though not *then* actually set apart, why may we not affirm also that the *prolepsis* applies equally to the fact of God's resting, and conclude that *this* did not really begin till the lapse of centuries, when the day was actually sanctified? There is as much reason to suppose a *prolepsis* in reference to the one as the other. The truth is, there is not the slightest ground for such an hypothesis in either case. We are compelled to view this *proleptical* construction as a groundless, unwarranted, and gratuitous subterfuge, invented to sustain the theory which denies the perpetuity of the Sabbath; but a construction so unnatural and far-fetched can never be rendered plausible, even by the sanction of such authority as that of Dr. Paley. The plain truth is, the *six days* of work connect immediately with the *seventh*

day of rest, and that day of rest connects as closely with its consecration, as such, as the cause with the effect.

If then, as we are bound to conclude, the Sabbath originated at the birth of creation, when as yet none but the then happy pair existed—and if it be farther remembered that, as our Saviour says, “The Sabbath was made for *man*, and not man for the Sabbath”—are we not driven to the conclusion that it is a duty of permanent and universal obligation? It was given to him who was the great federal head and representative of his race. In him were then included his entire progeny. Not a single reason then existed, rendering this institution appropriate and beneficial to him, that does not exist as fully in reference to the entire race, in all ages and in all dispensations. If it be commemorative of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, shown in the works of his hand, in what part, or in what age, of the world can a human being be found not equally bound with Adam to adore and “praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men”? If it be needed as a period of respite from the toils of life, what nation or people, at any period in the world’s history, has not needed this day of rest as much as the original dresser of the garden of Eden? If it be considered a day sacred to the performance of religious devotion, is it not alike appropriate to all mankind at all times and places?

Again, if the observance of the Sabbath be not of universal and perpetual obligation, with what propriety could our Saviour have said, “The Sabbath was made for *man*”? He did not say it was made for the patriarch, nor for the Jew, nor for the Greek, but “for *MAN*”—that is, for the entire race.

3. *Its recognition in the wilderness* furnishes additional evidence of its prior existence and of its perpetuity. The account is thus recorded “And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade; and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the

seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day." Ex. xvi. 22-30.

Some who favor the theory that the observance of the Sabbath is not a duty of universal and perpetual obligation, in order to neutralize the force of the argument against their view of the subject, arising from the fact that the Sabbath originated at the birth of creation, contend that the passage just quoted is a record of the origin of the institution. This is the ground taken by Dr. Paley, and, we believe, by all who view the Sabbath as a local and temporary institution; but we think their theory most obviously untenable.

(1) It is inconsistent with the record of the origin of the Sabbath as detailed in the second chapter of Genesis. This has already been shown; and no *proleptical* construction can relieve the theory of its antagonism to the Mosaic history of creation.

(2) It is irreconcilable with the most natural interpretation of the language just cited, as used by Moses in the wilderness. Observe, Moses does not here speak of the Sabbath as of a new arrangement unheard of till that hour. He does not say, "Behold, I have *now* authority from God to *ordain* and *establish* the Sabbath;" but he refers to it as a matter with which they were familiar. His language is: "This is that which the Lord *hath said*, To-morrow *is* the rest of the holy Sabbath." He does not say, "This accords with what the Lord *now says*;" but his words are, "hath said," as of something *past*, to which he was calling their attention by way of remembrance. He does not say, "To-morrow *shall be* the Sabbath," as if he was issuing a new order; but, "To-morrow *is* the Sabbath," as though speaking of an institution already existing.

Again he repeats, "On the seventh day, which *is* (not *shall be*) the Sabbath." But again, the Lord reproves the people, through Moses, for having *long* neglected to keep his commandments, and gives their neglect of the *Sabbath* as an illustration. How can the supposition, that the law of the Sabbath was then for the first time enjoined, be reconciled with this charge of *long neglect*? The language of God to Moses was: "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath," etc.

The position taken by Dr. Paley and others, that the Sabbath was not instituted at the creation, is not only encumbered by all the difficul-

ties to which we have referred, but it has no solid basis for its support. It is true Dr. Paley asserts that in the passage just quoted from the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, there is no "intimation that the Sabbath, when appointed to be observed, was only the revival of an ancient institution which had been neglected, forgotten, or suspended." In reply to this, we remark, that it is not admitted that the "ancient institution" had been either "forgotten or suspended;" but is it not plain that there is an express charge here preferred against the people, as we have already shown, of *long neglect* of God's commandments respecting the Sabbath? We think the passage in question, notwithstanding the assertion of Dr. Paley, does contain very clear evidence that the transaction in the wilderness referred to, was not the setting up of a *new*, but the recognition of an *old*, institution, which had been partially neglected.

Dr. Paley farther urges his plea against the origin of the Sabbath at the creation, from the fact that there is no express mention of the Sabbath during the patriarchal age. Admit his premises, and his conclusion will not follow. Is it a necessary consequence, that, because the Sabbath was not expressly named during the patriarchal age, therefore it did not exist? Surely not. The Sabbath is not named in the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the two books of Samuel, or the first book of Kings; yet no one doubts its existence during all the period embraced in these histories. No one doubts that circumcision was regularly practiced by the Jews from Abraham to Christ; and yet there is not an instance of it on record, from their first settlement in Canaan till the days of John the Baptist. Dr. Paley's argument would prove that during this long period that institution was extinct. It proves too much, and therefore nothing at all.

But if there is no express mention of the *Sabbath* during the patriarchal age, we find in that period several allusions to the division of time into *weeks*. Unless this division of days into weeks originated, and was perpetuated, in connection with the Sabbath, how can we account for its origin? The division of time into *days*, *months*, and *years*, finds the analogy upon which it is founded in the phenomena pertaining to the heavenly bodies; but, in all nature, what is there to suggest the idea of dividing days by the number *seven*? The most natural conclusion is, that it originated in the beginning by the appointment of God in connection with the Sabbath; and as the reckoning of time by *weeks* was common during the patriarchal age, we cannot, without adopting an arbitrary mode of construction, suppose that the Sabbath was not also remembered as the *seventh* day of the week.

4. The fact that *the observance of the Sabbath was recorded as one of*

the *commandments of the Decalogue*, furnishes the most conclusive evidence of the perpetuity and universality of this obligation.

As the fourth and last commandment on the first of the two tables of stone, we find, written by the finger of God, the following words: "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh-day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it." Ex. xx. 8-11.

The proof of the point in hand, arising from the fact here unfolded, is overwhelmingly conclusive.

(1) The observance of the Sabbath is here plainly shown to be a *moral duty*. If not, why should it thus be embraced as *one* of the *Ten Commandments*, when the other *nine* are all admitted to be *moral precepts* of perpetual and universal obligation? Is not the fact that these ten precepts were engraven by "the finger of God" upon "the tables of stone," when no other portion of the Mosaic system was thus recorded, an indication, in that typical dispensation, that they were all to be viewed as of more permanent and universal obligation than the other portions of the Jewish economy? And if so, how can we suppose that *one* of these precepts was only a positive enactment, destined to pass away with the rites and ceremonies of the Levitical economy?

(2) *The terms here used in recording this commandment* show that it, *especially*, was no *new statute*, now for the first time revealed. Moses does not write, "There shall be a Sabbath-day," but, "*Remember the Sabbath-day*"—implying that he was reiterating and placing in a new and permanent form, and enforcing, under circumstances of a more awful solemnity, a precept with which that people were already familiar.

If it be said that the allusion to the previous existence of the Sabbath, here implied in the word "remember," was to the transaction in connection with the manna referred to in the sixteenth chapter of *Exodus*, we reply, that any such hypothesis is contradicted by the language of the Decalogue itself. That record connects the Sabbath, not with *the transaction in the wilderness*, but with *the origin of the institution at the creation*. The reason here given for the remembrance and observance of the Sabbath, is the same given at the creation for its original appointment—"For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the

Lord *blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it.*" Observe, it is not here said, "The Lord *now* blesseth, or, in the wilderness, blessed the Sabbath-day;" but, "The Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it"—that is, in connection with his resting, and for that reason he "blessed," *sanctified, hallowed, or set apart*, the Sabbath or seventh day to a sacred use. And as the *consecration* of the day, both in the second chapter of Genesis and the twentieth chapter of Exodus, is immediately connected with *God's resting*, as though *simultaneous*, for us, without authority, to tear them asunder, by interposing between them some thousands of years, is not to *expound*, but to *pervert* the Scriptures.

(3) We think *our Saviour's comment on the Decalogue*, with all who are disposed to submit to the decision of the great Teacher, must set this question at rest.

The question was asked our Saviour, with evident reference to the Decalogue, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus replied: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment"—that is, this comprehends the first table, and, of course, the Sabbath. Then, after having comprised the second table in the words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," he adds: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Matt. xxii. 36-40.

Now let it be admitted, which, we think, none will dispute—1. That the Ten Commandments are the law here referred to; 2. That our Saviour here intended to give an epitome of the Decalogue—admit these two positions, then the argument here furnished for the perpetuity and universality of the obligations of the Sabbath is plain and short. It runs thus: The obligation to "love God with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind," is *perpetual and universal*; but this includes *the observance of the Sabbath*—therefore the obligation to *observe the Sabbath* is *perpetual and universal*. To the same effect we may reason from our premises, thus: To "love God with all the heart," etc., is a *moral*, and not a *positive*, duty; but *the observance of the Sabbath* is included in "loving God with all the heart," etc.—therefore *the observance of the Sabbath* is a *moral*, and not a *positive*, duty. Again, the obligation of all *moral* duty is *perpetual and universal*; but *the observance of the Sabbath* is a *moral* duty—therefore *the obligation to observe the Sabbath* is *perpetual and universal*.

(4) Our Saviour and his apostles have given testimony in favor of the perpetuity and universality of the obligation of the Sabbath, by *teaching the perpetuity of the moral law*,

In his Sermon on the Mount, Christ says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Matt. v. 17, 18. Now, to suppose that any portion of the moral law, as given by Moses, is abrogated by the gospel, is not only to assume a position gratuitously without a syllable of authority, but in direct opposition to these words of the Saviour. Let the law here be taken in its widest sense, embracing both the ceremonial and moral departments, which is unquestionably the true interpretation, and how can the abrogation of the Sabbath be consistent with our Saviour's declaration? Types, shadows, and ceremonies, may pass away—yea, they did pass away—by receiving their fulfillment in Christ; but how could the Sabbath thus pass away? If we say that any one of the Ten Commandments passed away by being fulfilled in Christ, why not another? Why not the whole Decalogue? If Christ has wholly fulfilled the fourth commandment, why not all the rest? Did he not fulfill the whole moral law as really and fully as he did any portion of it? A type may be completely fulfilled by the coming of the antitype—a shadow by the revelation of the substance, a ceremony by the manifestation of "some better thing"—but a *moral* law can only be completely fulfilled by its perpetual and universal observance. Hence, as the moral law, of which the Sabbath has been shown to be a part, can never receive its complete fulfillment while a human being is left upon earth to observe it, so the obligation of the Sabbath, according to Christ's declaration, can never be annulled.

Equally explicit is the testimony of St. Paul upon this subject. He asks: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law." That the apostle here spoke of the Decalogue, or moral law, there can be no question. In continuation of his argument, he says: "I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." (See Rom. iii. 31; vii. 7.) Here the apostle, by directly quoting one of the Ten Commandments, shows conclusively that he referred to the *moral*, and not the *ceremonial*, law. Hence, as he does not "make void," but *establishes this* law, and as the Sabbath is one portion of it, it necessarily follows that the obligation to observe this precept exists under the gospel, and, if so, this obligation must be perpetual and universal.

Thus we conclude that, as the Sabbath is a *moral* duty, as it originated at the birth of creation, as it was made for *man* in general, as it was recognized in the wilderness as a previously known institution. as it

is embraced as a part of the Decalogue, or moral law, and as this moral law is recognized by Christ and his apostles as authoritative under the gospel, therefore this institution is of perpetual and universal obligation.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER VII.

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| QUESTION 1. How have theologians differed in their views concerning the Sabbath? | 9. Where is the <i>origin</i> of the Sabbath recorded? |
| 2. What is the distinction between a <i>moral</i> and a <i>positive</i> duty? | 10. What saying of Christ proves the perpetuity of the Sabbath? |
| 3. What is the first argument presented in favor of the <i>perpetuity</i> of the Sabbath? | 11. What is the third proof given of the perpetuity of the Sabbath? |
| 4. Is the Sabbath a <i>positive</i> or a <i>moral</i> duty? | 12. How is the untenableness of Dr. Paley's view of the subject shown? |
| 5. What serious objection is offered to Paley's "Moral and Political Philosophy"? | 13. How is his plea, that the Sabbath is not mentioned during the patriarchal age, met? |
| 6. What appendages to the Jewish Sabbath come under the head of <i>positive</i> duties? | 14. What is the fourth proof of the perpetuity of the Sabbath? |
| 7. That a duty may be <i>moral</i> and not <i>positive</i> , must it necessarily be <i>discoverable</i> by reason? | 15. How does Christ's comment on the Decalogue prove the perpetuity of the Sabbath? |
| 8. What is the second argument offered in favor of the perpetuity of the Sabbath? | 16. What farther proof on this subject is given by Christ and his apostles? |
| | 17. How is the proof summed up? |

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SABBATH—ITS CHANGE FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.

I. It may easily be shown that this change is reconcilable with the *law of the Sabbath*. Admitting that the institution is of perpetual and universal obligation, it necessarily follows that it cannot be changed in what is essential to its nature, except by the same divine authority by which it was originally constituted. Mere adventitious appendages or circumstances, not divinely prescribed or pertaining to the essence of the institution, may be modified or altered as experience may dictate, but all that is essential to its character must be preserved intact, or the institution is perverted. The Sabbath in its real essence, as we have already shown, is a *moral* as contradistinguished from a *positive* institute. But the question to be settled is this: What elements are comprised as essential to the Sabbath? This can only be determined by appealing to the great moral code, as formally enacted and inscribed on the tables of stone.

We cannot be made to believe, even by the revered authority of Richard Watson, that the Sabbath is founded upon a law "partly *moral* and partly *positive*;" nor can we perceive the import of the language used in the presentation of that theory, that "the institution consists of two parts—the *Sabbath*, or holy rest, and the *day* on which it is observed." The *Sabbath* is the institution in question. Then to say that the Sabbath is only a *part* of the institution, is to say that it is only a *part of itself*, which is absurd. Again, to say that a *holy rest* is one part of the institution, and a *day* or time on which it is observed is another part, is to speak unintelligibly; for how can we conceive of a *holy rest*, or *Sabbath*, without a *day* or *time* on which it took place! But if the meaning be that a *Sabbath*, or a *holy day* of rest, is *one thing*, and the *particular day* on which the rest takes place is *another thing*—if *this* be the meaning, why not so express it? If we admit the theory, that the *particular day* on which the Sabbath is observed is an essential part of the institution, then we must abandon the idea that the institu-

tion is embraced in the moral law; for *the specific day* to be observed is not there prescribed—all that is expressed is, that after *six days'* labor, the next day, which, according to that mode of reckoning, will be the *seventh*, is to be observed as the Sabbath. It is there said that "the Lord blessed (not a particular seventh day, but) the *Sabbath-day*, and hallowed it;" hence it is clear that *the particular seventh day* is not essential to the institution of the Sabbath. It is not prescribed in the statute engraven upon stone by which this duty is enjoined; therefore, to say that the Sabbath is an institution partly *positive* and partly *moral*, not only involves us in absurdity, as shown above, but excludes it from being embraced in the Decalogue, and paves the way for its abrogation.

The *particular seventh day* in question is a mere adventitious appendage, not constituting an essential element of the Sabbatic institution. This appendage is no *constituent* part of the Sabbath, but only a *positive* enactment, which may or may not have a temporary and local existence, and may or may not pass away without affecting the perpetuity or the universality of the institution as such.

Thus we see how it was that all the merely Jewish ordinances and enactments concerning their sabbaths, embracing much *minutia* and some burdensome and rigorous requirements, could pass away with the rest of their typical and ceremonial system, leaving the *Sabbath itself*, with every element essential to its nature, as embodied in the moral law, permanent and undisturbed. Thus we arrive at the conclusion, that *the particular seventh day* to be observed, not being an essential element of the institution, may be changed without affecting the integrity of the Sabbath, and in perfect conformity to the position that it is grounded not on *positive*, but *moral law*.

Again, to say that *the particular seventh day* in question is an essential element of the Sabbath, embodied in the moral law upon which it is founded, and consequently not properly susceptible of change without formal, divine precept to that effect, is *unreasonable in view of the nature of the subject*.

Some nations and communities commence their computation of days at *one hour*, and some at another; some begin at six in the evening, some at midnight. Now, if the *precise day* were essential, so would be the *precise hour* at which to begin the reckoning; otherwise, the Sabbath of one people would be half over before that of another people would commence.

Again, suppose the precise seventh day and the exact hour had both been prescribed in the moral law, even then confusion and inconsis-

ency would have been the inevitable result. All nations do not dwell in the same latitude and longitude; and from this fact alone, it would necessarily follow that different nations, according as their latitude and longitude varied, would commence their Sabbath at different times; and the entire day, held sacred by some, would be desecrated by others. Thus, according to this view, the only way to prevent the Sabbath from being profaned would have been for each nation to be furnished with a separate and distinct revelation on the law of the Sabbath, arranged, like an almanac, according to the diversity of localities. Such a one the Jews had, but it was connected not with the *moral*, but the *ceremonial* law, which, being intended for them alone, passed away with their "law of commandments contained in ordinances." But the Sabbath, as embraced in the moral law, being intended for *man*—for all men, in all ages and in all latitudes and longitudes—is encumbered and fettered by no such localizing elements. Neither the specific seventh day nor the precise hour is prescribed, because neither the one nor the other was essential; hence, agreeably to both Scripture and reason, the Sabbath may be changed from the *seventh* to the *first* day of the week in perfect consistency with the great moral law on which it is founded.

II. THIS CHANGE WAS MADE BY APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY, DIVINELY CONFERRED.

1. To establish this position, we observe, first, that *the apostles were divinely commissioned by our Lord to organize and regulate the Christian Church*. This appears from the terms of their grand commission. "Go ye therefore," said Jesus, "and teach all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Here the apostles are sent forth with a divine commission to teach the nations "all things whatsoever the Saviour had commanded them." This certainly embraced every thing necessary to the organization and regulation of the Church, and consequently included the institution of the Sabbath. But as a guarantee that they would be divinely guided and assisted in this work, our Lord promises his accompanying presence "alway, even unto the end of the world."

But to show their plenary authority yet more fully, Christ says to his apostles: "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." John xx. 21. Now as the Father had sent the Son, endued with "all power in heaven and in earth," even so does the Son send forth his apostles in the discharge of their apostolic functions, clothed with all the authority he had received from the Father—that is, the apostles, in the discharge of their high office, as Christ's inspired agents, expounded the doc-

trines of salvation, and "set in order" the affairs of the Church with the same divine authority as though Christ had performed this work in person.

2. The divine authority of the apostles appears from *the promises given them by the Saviour*.

Christ said to his apostles: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John xiv. 26. Again, Jesus says to his apostles: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." John xvi. 13.

More Scripture proof to the same effect might be presented, but the passages quoted amply show that the doings and teachings of the inspired apostles in executing their mission, as the "master-builders" in the erection and organization of the Christian Church, ought to be viewed as divinely authoritative. It only remains, therefore, to examine the evidence establishing the *fact* that

III. THE SABBATH WAS CHANGED UNDER THE APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATION FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.

1. This appears, first, from *the testimony of the New Testament*.

If the fact can be made manifest that from the time of the resurrection of Christ the apostles and the Christian Churches generally celebrated religious service regularly, not on the *Jewish Sabbath*, according to the long-established and universal custom of the Jews, but on the *first* day of the week, it will appear, beyond a reasonable doubt, that by apostolic example and direction *that day*, instead of the *seventh*, was set apart as the Christian Sabbath.

On this subject, we thus read: "Upon the *first* day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow." Acts xx. 7. In 1 Cor. xvi. 2, we read: "Upon the *first* day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." The apostle had just said that he had "given order to the Churches in Galatia" similar to the instructions here furnished the Corinthians. Now, we ask, is it not a rational inference, from these scriptures, that it was the regular custom of these Churches, while under the eye and direct supervision of the inspired apostles, to assemble *on the first day of the week* for religious worship?

In reference to the disciples at Troas, referred to in the passage quoted from The Acts, it is not said, that "the disciples came together

on the first day of the week" (as though it had incidentally occurred); but the language is, "Upon the first day of the week, *when* the disciples came together to break bread." The form of the language obviously indicates that this assembling of the disciples on "the first day of the week to break bread" was an established custom in the Church; and it seems also to have been the custom of the Churches in Galatia and Corinth, for why should the apostle have specified that their collections for the poor should all be made on *the first day of the week*, unless as matter of convenience, *that* being the day of their regularly assembling for divine service? And if that was the day on which all these Churches met for weekly worship, especially for the "breaking of bread," or the Supper of the Lord, is it not evident that they observed *the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath?*

St. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians (Gal. iv. 10), says: "Ye observe *days*, and months, and times, and years." Macknight but expresses the opinion of commentators generally, when he says: "By '*days*,' the apostle means the Jewish weekly Sabbaths." Of course he here reproves the Galatians for their superstitious adherence to these days, according to Jewish custom.

Again, the same apostle says: "Let no one judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a festival, or of a new moon, or of *sabbaths*." Col. ii. 16. Here the apostle refers also to the Jewish "commandments contained in ordinances" which Christ had taken "out of the way, and nailed to his cross." The testimony of the apostle must be understood in these passages as being pointed against the sabbaths of the Jews, so far as they were connected with the *ceremonial* and *ritual* precepts of the law; but, unless he intended to contradict himself, which is inadmissible, he had no reference to the Sabbath as set forth in the moral law, for we have already shown that he taught the perpetuity of that law; hence, according to St. Paul, while the Jewish Sabbath, so far as relates to circumstances outside of the Decalogue, is superseded under the gospel, yet that institution, as embodied in the Decalogue, is not abrogated, but *established*.

And as the Jewish restriction of the Sabbath to the *seventh* day of the week is not derived from the moral law, which is permanent and unalterable—but from outside, positive enactment, which is liable to change—it necessarily follows that, under the gospel, while the institution of the Sabbath cannot be annulled, yet it may be changed from the *seventh* to the *first* day of the week. And since St. Paul teaches that the Jewish sabbaths *are not*, while the moral law *is*, obligatory on Christians, it is clear that the Christian Church is under no obligation

to observe the *seventh day of the week* as a sabbath; but as the *first day of the week* was observed as the Christian Sabbath by the apostles and the first Christians under their sanction, it necessarily follows that, from the establishment of Christianity, the *first* and not the *seventh* day of the week has been the divinely authorized Sabbath.

St. John (Rev. i. 10) says: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's-day," etc. All commentators agree that the reference here is to the *first* day of the week, which was termed "the Lord's-day" in honor of our Lord's resurrection, which took place on that day; hence, from that period and ever afterward, beginning with the inspired apostles themselves, the *first* day of the week has been termed "the Lord's-day" by the Christian Church, and observed, instead of the seventh, as the Christian Sabbath.

2. That the apostles and first Christians observed the *first* day of the week as a Sabbath, assembling regularly on that day for the public worship of God and for the sacrament of the Lord's-supper, is not only evident from the New Testament, but *this fact is confirmed by an uninterrupted stream of Church-history, beginning in the apostolic age and extending to the present period.*

Upon this question, a few of the many available testimonies will be sufficient.

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, A.D. 101, says: "Let every one that loves Christ keep holy the *Lord's-day*—the queen of days, the resurrection-day, the highest of all days."

Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, who wrote in the second century, says: "Both custom and reason challenge from us that we should honor *the Lord's-day*, seeing on that day it was that our Lord Jesus completed his resurrection from the dead."

Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, who also lived in the second century, and who was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a companion of St. John, speaks of *the Lord's-day* as the *Christian Sabbath*. "On the Lord's-day," said he, "every one of us Christians keep the Sabbath."

Clement of Alexandria, of the same century, testifies: "A Christian, according to the command of the gospel, observes the *Lord's-day*, thereby glorifying the resurrection of the Lord."

Tertullian, of the same period, says: "The *Lord's-day* is the holy day of the Christian Church."

These testimonies abundantly establish the fact, not only that the *first day of the week* was styled "the Lord's-day," in honor of our Saviour's resurrection, but that the Christian Church, even in the apostolic age, observed it as *the Christian Sabbath*.

IV. In the next place, we observe that this change of the Sabbath from the *seventh* to the *first* day of the week under the gospel economy is founded upon adequate reasons.

1. It is admitted that the *seventh* was a day appropriate for the Jewish Sabbath, because it celebrated and kept up in lively remembrance the great work of creation. The poet has said :

"'T was great to speak the world from nought,
'T was greater to redeem."

How appropriate is it, then, that the resurrection of Christ, the crowning evidence of his Messiahship, and the concluding scene in the great drama of the work of redemption for which he was manifested in the flesh, should be celebrated as the Christian Sabbath ! Hence, from the morning on which he arose, as a memorial of that glorious event, the first day of the week has ever been hallowed by the Christian Church as "the Lord's-day," or the Sabbath. And thus, while the Christian Sabbath still commemorates the great work of creation according to the original appointment, by the change from the *seventh* to the *first* day of the week, it also commemorates the resurrection of our Lord.

2. But this day is not only memorable as the day of Christ's resurrection, but for several of his remarkable appearances afterward ; for on the same day on which he arose he appeared twice unto his disciples. On the next Lord's-day, when they were all assembled, as though for religious worship, he again appeared in their midst. It was also on the Lord's-day that the miraculous Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place ; and through the successive ages of the Church God has manifestly sanctioned the public celebration of his worship on the Lord's-day by innumerable outpourings of his gracious Spirit, in the conversion of millions of souls in the congregations of his saints. Thus, from all the considerations we have presented, we are warranted in the conclusion that the Christian Church is divinely authorized and required to observe not the *seventh*, but the *first*, day of the week, or "the Lord's-day," as the Sabbath.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER VIII.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. How can it be shown that this change of the <i>day</i> of the Sabbath is reconcilable with the Sabbath law?</p> <p>2. Is the <i>specific day</i> a part of the essence of the Sabbath?</p> <p>3. How is this position proved?</p> <p>4. What relation has the <i>specific seventh day</i> to the institution itself?</p> <p>5. What is the first position taken in reference to the apostles' authority?</p> | <p>6. What scriptures show their authority?</p> <p>7. By what promises is the divine guidance pledged?</p> <p>8. What proof of the change of the day does the New Testament furnish?</p> <p>9. What proof may be derived from Church-history?</p> <p>10. Upon what adequate reasons is the change founded?</p> |
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