

LECTURE II.

NECESSITY AND AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE REVELATION.

SECTION I.—NECESSITY OF REVELATION AND ITS EVIDENCES.

REVELATION is the communication of truth before unknown. In this general sense the works of nature may be termed a revelation. Some of the most important subjects in morals, *viz.*, those relating to the Divine existence and perfections, we have already contemplated in the light of nature. We might proceed with others in the same manner, and thus go through the whole subject of morals without consulting the Scriptures, as many philosophers have done. But we desist for two reasons:

1. Following the light of nature merely, we have already encountered serious and insurmountable obstacles; and should we proceed to still more practical inquiries, we should meet with difficulties at every step.

2. A direct revelation from God has been professedly given; and to say the least, it is presented to us under such circumstances that it has strong claims to our careful attention. No one will deny that weighty considerations may be urged in its favor. As candid inquirers for truth, then, we are bound to suspend further inquiries, until the claims of this revelation are canvassed. We need all the light we can obtain.

We do not contend that a direct revelation from God is absolutely necessary—that such a revelation is essential to any proper conception of moral truth—that without it man could know nothing of God, or of his own duty as a moral being. We have already seen that the Divine existence and principal attributes may be proved from nature, and that they are presupposed in the Bible. Nature, under which term we include not only the external works of God, but also our own reason and conscience, does make known to us much in regard to God and our duty—enough to leave men without excuse for sin, if no direct communication beyond this had come from Jehovah.

In conceding that the necessity of a direct revelation was not absolute, we detract nothing from the value of this revelation. Were it absolutely necessary, it would be a matter of debt, not of grace. But this will not be claimed.

Still, there is a necessity of revelation. This necessity arises from man's fallen condition. Man does not do as well as he can. He does not profit as he might from the light of nature, and this creates a necessity on his part for a further, though gracious, dispensation. It may be safely affirmed that such is the depravity of fallen man, he would not, without a direct revelation, have sought and found the way of life. His need, then, is as *imperative* as though it were absolute.

A direct revelation from God cannot be pronounced impossible. The works of nature are a revelation of him, and any other revelation from the same source, more immediate, explicit, and authoritative, cannot be impossible. He who created the universe, with all its inhabitants, *can* adopt any method consistent with wisdom to make known to his rational creatures his own character and requirements.

And such a revelation must be deemed *desirable*. Allowing it is not indispensable, admitting that the light of nature, if rightly used, would be sufficient for our necessities, yet a fuller disclosure would greatly facilitate inquiry and pro-

mote a practical acquaintance with the various departments of truth. Some of the reasons for expecting such a Divine communication may now be stated :

1. The importance of the subjects of morals and religion. They are not merely theoretical, but of the highest practical importance, — relating to our own moral character, relations, duties, and destiny. On such points our knowledge needs to be definite, because an error may lead to fatal consequences. Now these subjects, when viewed in the light of nature alone, are beset with very serious and painful difficulties, which, although not such as to unsettle fundamental principles, it is very desirable to have removed.

2. It is of great consequence to have light on these subjects easily accessible to all. Natural theology and ethics are more in the province of philosophical investigation. The mass of men have little opportunity or taste for abstract studies and laborious research. They need plain instruction.

3. The subject is moral, the proofs moral, and addressed to moral beings. Were this a matter of mathematical demonstration, were the evidences in nature such as to force assent and compliance, no more would be needed. But such is not the case. Hence the need of more light and motive. "But this may also be resisted or neglected." True; but those who do so will be the more guilty, and the Divine beneficence and justice the more conspicuous.

4. In these momentous concerns men feel the need of something more authoritative than the deductions of their own unassisted reason. Each assumes his own right to judge for himself, and as no one is infallible, they are constantly exposed to error. Who shall decide in a case of controversy? Evidently they need one who can speak with authority.

5. If there is a God, all created intelligences are his subjects. Now there are many points upon which the subjects of a moral government cannot be instructed by the light of nature

alone. There are other subjects, in relation to which nature affords a basis of instruction, but not so full and complete as would be desirable.

6. The moral state of the world shows the need of a direct revelation. As before remarked, men do not know as much as they might, nor do as well as they know. There is no subject in theology or morals which has not been zealously and perseveringly controverted; and that not by the ignorant only, but by the most profound thinkers. On almost every point conflicting and opposite theories have not only been proposed, but at different periods gained extensive prevalence. Nor have the characters of men been better than their theories. The history of mankind is a history of wickedness.

To place this matter in a strong light, consider what this world would have been without a verbal revelation from God. I ask not what it was *capable* of being. It might have been an unbroken Paradise, and every man might have been perfect in his generation. But what *would* the world have been? Contemplate the state of the heathen, who are without such revelation. They are in the lowest scale of moral degradation. So it has been in all ages, as universal history declares. Read the accounts furnished by travelers and missionaries, and then trace back authentic history indefinitely, and you have but one voice on the subject. All plainly shows that without this revelation darkness would have covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.

What, then, is the conclusion? Not that God was under obligation to make a revelation; but that such is the state of man, a revelation is greatly desirable, and from the known benevolence of God probable, and to be expected.

We now proceed to inquire what evidences are necessary to authenticate a revelation:

I. **MIRACLES.** Divine revelation is itself a miracle, being an immediate communication from God. Whenever any one has professed to make such communication, mankind have

always required miracles as his credentials. The revelation, being itself a miracle, does not require another miracle to confirm it to the mind of him who originally receives it. But others who have not witnessed it, demand the same evidence to satisfy their minds. They cannot receive it on mere testimony; they must be satisfied that it has been attested by miracles. It is not essential that we witness the miracle, but we must believe that miracles have been witnessed by others besides the one who communicates the revelation, and in attestation of that revelation.

Here we are met with philosophical objections against miracles. It has been asserted by Hume and others that a miracle cannot be rendered credible. This subject, therefore, demands a careful examination. Miracles have always been relied on the world over as essential and sufficient to authenticate revelation. But they are not now wrought; hence, if they cannot be rendered credible to those who have not witnessed them, we must despair of authenticating revelation in the present age. The importance of the subject, therefore, demands for it the closest scrutiny.

A miracle is an event contrary to, or transcending, the ordinary laws of nature. It differs from a prodigy, which is something out of the common course of nature, but not against nature. An event may be extraordinary or strange to us, on account of our ignorance of its cause. A miracle, on the other hand, is a palpable contravention of known laws of nature. Should we see one born blind, instantly made to see by the application of clay and spittle, we should be able, from our knowledge of nature, to pronounce the event miraculous.

Now can an alleged miracle be rendered credible by testimony alone? This Hume denied, and I think justly. "We have found by experience," said he, "that testimony is sometimes false, but never that a miracle is true." So far as our experience goes, it asserts the uniformity of nature's laws. Confidence in testimony is indeed an original principle in

the human mind, as well as is a belief in the uniformity of the laws of nature. In a conflict of the two, under supposable circumstances, the mind might be left in suspense. We might be able to account for the testimony, but it alone would not satisfy us that there had been a deviation from the established course of nature. It is, as already stated, an original principle of the human mind to believe in the uniformity of the laws of nature. There is, then, an antecedent probability against a *suspension* of any of these laws, and of course against a miracle. Now, in case of an alleged miracle, the mind would require that this antecedent probability be overcome, and a sufficient reason assigned for the miracle. This would be establishing an antecedent probability in favor of the miracle. Then the mind would be open to receive testimony to the fact, but not before.

A miracle cannot be pronounced impossible, as having no adequate cause. The existence of God being admitted, an adequate cause is furnished. God is the author of nature—its laws are but the ordinary mode of the Divine operation. To say that God never can or never does deviate from his ordinary mode of operation, is altogether assumption. Show a sufficient reason why he should deviate, and such deviation is neither impossible nor improbable.

We have already seen that mankind needed a revelation; and that the circumstances were such as to render it probable that one would be given. Miracles are the requisite external evidence to authenticate a revelation, and may be proved by testimony under such circumstances. All this does not prove either that miracles have been wrought, or a revelation given; but it opens the way for the reception of evidence in that direction.

II. INTERNAL EVIDENCE. A professed revelation, to be credible, must be reasonable. By this I do not mean that it must be wholly comprehended by us. Nature is, in many respects, mysterious; and revelation, which deals with many higher subjects, and farther removed from the sphere of

sense, might also be expected to contain mysteries. But it should not contain absurdities, nor what is of immoral tendency, or frivolous; and its essential principles must be level to the human understanding. It must be worthy of God, and of the design he had in making it. And of this, reason is to judge. Not perverted reason, any more than a vitiated taste could decide upon the quality of food. Revelation must commend itself to right reason, and an enlightened conscience. And corrupt as the world is, it is not destitute of such a standard. This test of internal evidence is of great consequence in detecting impostures; for example, Mormonism. It is the office of reason, then, in this matter, to judge of the antecedent probability, the evidence of miracles, and the internal character of the revelation.

III. EXPERIMENT. A Divine revelation will bear the test of experiment. Is a doctrine in physical science proposed? We test it by experiment. So it should be in morals and religion. A revelation from God will be confirmed by experience. If, then, there are those who have made trial of it, their personal experience will be a strong evidence. The tendency of a system, as shown from history, is an important proof, since it combines the experience of multitudes. Do you wish to determine whether the doctrine is true? Test it by your own experience. This was an argument of Christ with the Jews. "If ye will do his will, ye shall *know* of the doctrine." A revelation, when thus substantiated by Miracles, Reason, and Experience, may be expected to find confirmation from many collateral evidences; which, though not decisive of themselves, are weighty in connection with the other evidences. And when a Revelation is thus authenticated, we are bound to admit its authority unreservedly, as a direct exhibition of the will of God, and a part of his immutable law.

SECTION II. — AUTHENTICITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

SOME writers take up the evidences relating to the character of the Scriptures under various heads, as authenticity, genuineness, credibility, authority. But as substantially the same considerations have to be adduced under each head, it is better to take the whole together. In considering this subject, therefore, I shall not only treat of the authorship of the sacred writings, and the time when they were composed, but of the general question: Are the Scriptures a Divine revelation?

The Bible can occupy the place of no common book. No middle ground can be taken respecting it. Its claims are such that it must either be received as the Word of God, or rejected as the basest forgery. It professes to give a history of mankind from their origin, to reveal the deepest mysteries, to unfold the highest principles of morality and religion, and to prescribe authoritative precepts for the conduct of human life. In their special province, the Scriptures are exclusive — they recognize no other writings as of equal authority, and condemn every doctrine which conflicts with their own. Unlike other professedly sacred books, the Scriptures claim the attention, not of one nation or class only, but of all nations and all men. Its claims, then, must either be wholly acknowledged or wholly rejected.

Again, if God has made a written revelation, it is contained in the Christian Scriptures. Should their claims be rejected, there is no other that would be received by any civilized, enlightened nation on the globe. No one would think for a moment of receiving the Hindu Shasters, the writings of Confucius, the Koran of Mahomet, or the book of Mormon, as such revelation. The question is not between the Bible and some other system of religion, but between the Bible and no revealed religion. Strike out the Bible and you leave a blank. Mankind are left to the light of nature alone. All the considerations in favor of a writ-

ten revelation from God, then, are arguments for the Scriptures. We enter upon this investigation, therefore, with no antecedent probability against the Bible, but with a strong one in its favor

It has been asserted that we cannot examine this subject dispassionately, owing to the bias of education. This might be true, if the Scriptures were adapted exclusively to our peculiarities and interests. But such is not the fact. The question of receiving the Bible is no matter of state policy, nor does it appeal to any selfish interest. If it is right and best for America to adopt this religion, it is equally so for all other nations, and *vice versa*.

We begin with the New Testament. Suppose the collection of books composing this volume were now for the first time brought to light, say were found in some library of ancient books: how should we regard it? A cursory perusal would show it to be a remarkable production, and worthy of careful examination. From the language of its composition, being Hebraistic Greek, any one acquainted with geography and history would at once assign its origin among the Jews of Palestine, about eighteen centuries ago. The idiom and style would prove it to be the production of plain men in the common walks of life. We should be introduced by it to one of the most remarkable personages of whom we ever read: with a character fully, vividly drawn, and consistent throughout. We should be presented from the lips of him and his associates with a system of morals which, in simplicity, directness, purity, and excellence, surpasses all others, even those of the most renowned sages and philosophers. We should also find in it a professed revelation from God respecting our spiritual condition and destiny; describing our state of sin and wretchedness, and the way of deliverance from it; treating lucidly of the character of God, our own immortality, and the way of salvation through Christ; no part of which reason condemns; — all this claiming Divine authority, implicit

reception from all men, and asserting the establishment of its credibility through miracles. What must be our opinion of such a book? Could it be fictitious? Could this be true of a work comprising such varied and inimitable excellence, and claiming to be from God? Reason would pronounce this impossible. The New Testament cannot be a forgery. It bears none of the characteristics of a forgery, and its contents utterly preclude the assumption.

Such is the internal character of the New Testament. It is such a book as the wants of mankind demand. Were, then, this volume now first discovered, as an anonymous production, we must pronounce it credible, so far as its internal character is concerned, and should expect to find external evidence to confirm it. It is important to consider well this subject of internal evidence. Every enlightened mind rejects the book of Mormon, the Koran, the sacred books of the heathen, and all mythology, on the ground of their internal character. No degree of external evidence would entitle them to our confidence. But with regard to the Christian Scriptures the very reverse is true. I would not assert that the internal evidence alone would be sufficient to authenticate them; but it is such as to create a strong presumption in their favor.

But the New Testament has not appeared for the first time in our age; it is not an anonymous production; it comes not to us destitute of authority. It is received as a Divine book by the whole enlightened world, and has been for many ages. These facts must be accounted for. If it were received by one nation only, it might be pronounced a matter of state policy with that nation. But here are many nations, having diverse, conflicting views, feelings, and interests, yet all receiving the Christian Scriptures as Divine. Had their reception by the whole civilized world been of recent date, there would be more room to doubt, either in regard to their authenticity, or the practical operation of their doctrines. But they have stood for many ages.

They have been subjected to every test by friends and foes, the learned and the illiterate of all parties and professions. Amid all the inventions and discoveries, all the progress in art, science, and literature, revolutions and changes; while states, empires, and systems have risen and fallen, the Scriptures have remained unaffected. How can these facts be accounted for, if the Scriptures are not authentic? Those who reject their claims are bound to account for this state of things—a task which infidels have never attempted. In ordinary cases general consent is deemed sufficient. The writings of Bacon, Augustine, Tacitus, Plato, are universally ascribed to those authors respectively; and no one now thinks of questioning their genuineness. Where is the consistency of rejecting the Scriptures under circumstances equally decisive? They have been so long and so generally received by the civilized world that their supporters are not obliged on any just principles to summon again the original witnesses in their favor. We are not now bound to prove them genuine, but skeptics are bound to prove that they are not. In this controversy they have the laboring oar, and all discussion should be so conducted as to leave it in their hands.

Still, we are willing to review the historical argument, for it is perfectly conclusive. On this subject let it be noted that:

I. We have a connected chain of Christian writers, extending from our own time to the days of the Apostles. We begin with the contemporaries of the Apostles. Of these we have six, portions of whose writings are still extant. They are Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Papias. They quote largely from the New Testament, narrate the principal events there recorded, and unqualifiedly attest their truth. Following these, among numerous others, we have Justin Martyr, born about A. D. 89; Irenæus, who flourished soon after; then Clement of Alexandria, sixteen years afterwards. Then followed Ter-

tullian, and twenty-five years subsequently, Origen, which brings us to the third century. From this period onward, the Christian Scriptures were as often quoted as they are by writers at the present day. The student may see how full, minute, and satisfactory the quotations from all the above writers are, by consulting Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History, and the works of Lardner, Paley, and Horne. The writers above mentioned as attesting the Scriptures, lived in different countries remote from each other, were well informed, of unquestionable veracity, and had ample opportunity of knowing the truth of what they affirmed. Besides these references, catalogues were made of the sacred writings, apologies in defense of them were presented to the rulers, and they were defended from the attacks of enemies. No book of similar antiquity has a tithe of the testimony in its favor that the New Testament has. On this ground alone, then, where is the consistency of acknowledging authentic the works of Herodotus, Xenophon, Cicero, and Livy, and rejecting those of Luke, John, Paul, and Peter?

II. But we rest not with this chain of Christian testimony, extending from the lifetime of Christ and the Apostles to the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the civilized world, A. D. 325. We may refer to its enemies. Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny, celebrated heathen writers of the first century, expressly mention Christ, the principal incidents in his life, and the rise and diffusion of the Christian religion. Celsus, a heathen philosopher of the second century, wrote against Christianity, and in so doing refers to all the most important transactions recorded in the New Testament; and asserts that he quoted these things from the Christian Scriptures. The same remarks will apply to Porphyry in the third century, and Julian in the fourth. All these writers admitted the genuineness of our sacred books, and the general truth of their contents, even of the miracles there recorded, which, however, they ascribed to magic. Had they been able to prove those books spurious,

or their contents false, they would, of course, have done it. But if, with their ability, learning, and proximity to the events, they never called in question the genuineness or credibility of those works, how futile must be the efforts of modern skeptics in this direction.

III. Another evidence is furnished by the existence of positive institutions; *viz.*, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Christian Sabbath. These are standing memorials and evidences of the authenticity of the Scriptures of the New Testament. Their acknowledged prevalence and authority cannot be accounted for, except as given in the sacred volume.

IV. Reference may also be made to the confirmation of their truth, furnished by contemporary history, geography, inscriptions, etc. Numerous incidental allusions have been so confirmed by these antiquities as to leave no reasonable doubt in the minds of the informed and candid respecting their truth. These confirmations are detailed at length by Hug, Horne, Paley, and others.

The question here arises, May it not be admitted that the Christian Scriptures were published at the time, and by the authors to whom they are ascribed, and the truth of their contents in general be allowed without crediting their authority as a Divine revelation? Plainly not, for the following considerations:

1. These writings claim to be of Divine authority, and bear no marks of a forgery.
2. We could not, on that hypothesis, account for the existence and prevalence of Christianity.
3. The accounts of miracles which they contain are well authenticated, not only by the testimony of early Christians, but also of heathen opposers, as Celsus, Porphyry, etc. But we cannot admit the truth of the miracles without crediting the revelation as Divine.
4. Many of the prophecies they contain have received, and are receiving, an exact fulfillment.

5. Its contents. No wicked man could have forged such a production; no good man would have attempted it. It is, then, what it claims to be.

6. Its doctrines have been tested by the experience of thousands and millions. Their influence on the hearts and consciences, the lives and conduct of their votaries, their transforming, elevating tendency can have but one explanation. The Gospel is not a mere theory, or abstraction. Its practical tendency proves its Divine origin. In this regard it challenges all investigation, and proves itself as much above all systems of human device, as God is greater than man.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. The books composing this volume are of high antiquity. They are extended, in the time of their publication, over one thousand years; ending four hundred years before Christ, and about the time of Herodotus, the father of Grecian history. Still they are amply attested. The following are some of the evidences of their authenticity:

I. They have been transmitted to us through the most scrupulous fidelity of the Jews, who have always maintained their authenticity and Divine authority. And this, notwithstanding these same Scriptures charge them with gross unbelief, ingratitude, and rebellion, and rejection from being God's peculiar people.

II. The whole Jewish polity was based on the events recorded in these Scriptures. Their civil and religious history, their rites, ceremonies, and institutions, are all interwoven with the Scriptures. A book thus connected with the very life of a nation, existing conspicuously for more than fifteen hundred years, could not be a forgery. As well might Blackstone's Commentaries or the Constitution of the United States be accounted forgeries. With equal propriety might the existence of the Jews themselves be called in question.

III. Contemporaneous history confirms their authenti-

city. Manetho, Cheremon, Apollonius, Lysimachus, and other Egyptian historians, mention Moses as the leader of the Jews and the founder of their laws. Strabo, who flourished in the century before Christ, gives account of the law of Moses; and Justin, a Roman historian, devotes a chapter to the origin of the Jews. Both of these, so far as they go, are in corroboration of the Scriptures. Moses and the Jews are also mentioned more or less at length by Pliny, Tacitus, Juvenal, Longinus, Diodorus Siculus; and, indeed, as Justin Martyr observes, by most of the Greek historians, philosophers, and poets. Josephus gives a catalogue of the sacred books among the Jews, in which he enumerates the five books of Moses, thirteen of the prophets, four of hymns and moral precepts; and if, as critics maintain, Ruth is included in the book of Judges, and the Lamentations in Jeremiah, the number of books agrees with those of the Old Testament, as it is now received.

IV. We may cite the numerous ancient versions, translations, manuscripts, and catalogues of the Scriptures extant in the principal languages of the civilized world. The Septuagint, a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek, made nearly three hundred years before the Christian era, is especially important, as it was in common use in the time of Christ and the Apostles, and was generally quoted by them.

V. The prophecies contained in the Old Testament. Their fulfillment, even down to the present day, is a standing monument of their truth and Divine authority. We may also cite the miracles there recorded, the candor and faithfulness of its history and biography, as well as the striking confirmations incidentally furnished by history, geography, antiquities, monuments, inscriptions, and scientific researches. Almost every new development in these brings additional evidence in its favor. Much has been done in this way during the last half century.

VI. The testimony of Christ and the Apostles. They

quote from every part of the Old Testament, and refer to all the signal transactions there recorded. They give it their unequivocal sanction as the Word of God. To every believer in Christianity this must be decisive.

The objections to the authenticity of the Scriptures are mere cavils. No one has produced any evidence against their authenticity. All the labored efforts of infidels and skeptics have failed to excite just suspicion in reference to any portion of the Bible. Most of these objections do not relate to the proper evidences of their authenticity, but to the subject matter of their contents. Objections equally plausible might be made against any system of natural religion. They are, in fact, as unreasonable as they are irrelevant; and arise from the blindness and depravity of the heart. Those in every age, who have made the most thorough test of the validity of the sacred volume, are best satisfied that it is what it purports to be.

While, therefore, we do not deem it necessary to examine in detail the objections of infidels and skeptics, either ancient or modern; still we shall consider them—particularly those most specious—in connection with further investigations in regard to the sacred writings, in the following sections, and especially in the one on the Difficulties of Scripture. See Section IX.

SECTION III.—MIRACLES OF SCRIPTURE.

IN our previous investigations we have seen the necessity of revelation, and that miracles are essential to authenticate it. We have taken a general view of the evidences for the genuineness and authority of the Scriptures, as such revelation. But miracles and prophecy are of such importance in establishing the credibility of the sacred writings as to demand more specific attention. They are both denied by some who are professedly Christians. In this section your attention is invited to the miracles of Scripture.

The importance of this subject is seen from two considerations.

1. Miracles are the proper proof of a special Divine communication, and essential to establish its credibility.

2. The Scriptures contain numerous accounts of miracles. They form an important part of the sacred volume. We cannot reject these accounts without rejecting the Scriptures. In view of both these considerations, if miracles are not credible, the Bible is not to be received as a Divine revelation.

We cannot examine here all the accounts of miracles given in the Scriptures. We will consider those alleged to have been wrought by the founders of the two great dispensations; *viz.*, those wrought by Moses and Christ. If these are established, the question is settled.

- I. MIRACLES OF MOSES. Having proved the existence of God, it must be admitted that miracles are not impossible; that from man's need of a revelation, they were to be expected; and that no other book but the Bible has any claim to our regard as such revelation. That Moses wrought miracles, we adduce the following considerations:

1. We have the fact that Moses lived in that age, and professed to work miracles in confirmation of the Divine authority of his mission. This is attested by profane history.

2. The Scriptures assert that Moses wrought miracles. This none will deny. Hence, either the miracles were wrought, or the Scriptures are utterly unworthy of our confidence.

3. The miracles were such as could be fairly tested. Consider those wrought in Egypt. Moses' rod was changed to a serpent, and again to a rod; all the running water in Egypt became blood; the land was filled with frogs, with lice, with swarms of flies, and delivered therefrom at the word of Moses; the cattle were destroyed; the people were afflicted with boils; the crops were cut off by hail, or de-

voured by locusts; thick darkness prevailed for three days; and finally, all the first-born in Egypt were cut off in one night. These judgments came at the direction of Moses; they affected the Egyptians only, while the Israelites remained unhurt; several of them were mitigated or removed at the request of Moses, and they were all wrought in attestation of his claims as a Divine teacher.

Objectors adduce the pretended miracles of the Egyptian magicians. But these were evidently mere feats of jugglery. They extended to two or three only of the miracles which admitted of imitation, and which they could easily counterfeit to the satisfaction of the selfish king. But the jugglers were soon utterly confounded, and had to confess the finger of God in the miracles of Moses.

So in relation to the passage of the Red Sea. It cannot be resolved into a mere natural phenomenon. Those who would have us believe that the waters of a sea several miles in breadth could be heaped up by the wind, so as to afford a passage as on dry land to three millions of people, omit to mention that the waters were thus divided at the command of Moses, remained so until all the Israelites had passed, and then, at his word, instantly returned upon, and overwhelmed, their pursuers. This, too, was done in confirmation of his mission from God.

4. These miracles convinced those who witnessed them that Moses was Divinely commissioned. Every one acquainted with Jewish history knows that the Israelites were not a credulous people. They required miracles at almost every step. They longed to return to Egypt, and were constrained to follow the direction of Moses only by the most signal miracles. These miracles also convinced their oppressors, and made them release their grasp on them. When afterwards, under the impulse of selfish infatuation, they attempted to bring the people back, one blow from the Almighty destroyed their entire host.

5. The account of these miracles was immediately pub-

lished among those who witnessed them; and monuments were erected in their commemoration. The Passover and other ordinances and ceremonials of the Jews are perpetual memorials of their reality.

Now, what is there to oppose to this mass of evidence in favor of the miracles of Moses? Absolutely nothing. They were open to the world, and to them the eventful history of a conspicuous nation is to be ascribed. There is no evidence against them. If heathen historians and poets treated them contemptuously, this is no more than might be expected.

II. MIRACLES OF CHRIST. We will next consider the miracles of Christ. The Scriptures inform us that his birth was miraculous, that he healed the sick by a word, gave sight to the blind, raised the dead, cast out demons, walked upon the water, stilled the tempest, and above all, raised himself from the dead. These accounts are either true or false. If true, then unquestionably miracles were wrought. If the accounts are false, the New Testament must be rejected as a gross imposition. There is no middle ground. We credit the miracles from the following considerations:

1. They were wrought to confirm the mission and authority of Christ and the Apostles. A reason is thus assigned for them.

2. The authenticity of the accounts has been established in the clearest light, not only by the testimony of multitudes of Christians who witnessed them,¹ but also by the concession of their opponents. These miracles were such as could be fairly tested, as they were by the learned and the illiterate, rulers and people, friends, enemies, and neutrals. None in that age doubted their reality. Some, it is true, ascribed them to magic, but all now admit that they cannot thus be accounted for. By every rule of evidence, therefore, they must be pronounced valid.

3. The revelation they attest is sustained by internal evi-

¹ Some by more than *five thousand* people, as the feeding of the multitude.

dence. It is adapted to human wants. It is eminently a reasonable and practical system. It bears throughout the stamp of truth. Its doctrines have borne the test of experiment by millions in every condition of life. As a system of morals, it is vastly superior to any other.

4. Through the influence of these miracles, and by moral means alone, Christianity was established in the most enlightened nations, supplanted the popular religions that had stood for ages, obtained general prevalence, and continues to be the religion of the civilized world to this day.

Having established the validity of Scripture miracles, we will briefly examine some other alleged miracles. Passing over the fictions of Greek and Latin mythology, which were always considered fabulous, and never credited as veritable history any more than Shakespeare's tragedies, or the Waverley novels; also the responses of the heathen oracles, which are on a par with modern fortune telling; we come to those of Pythagoras, Vespasian, and Apollonius. As these obtained wide credence, they have often been cited by skeptics¹ as an offset to the miracles of Scripture. Here it should be observed that these skeptics do not quote the heathen miracles because they believe in their reality, but to excite suspicion against the Christian miracles. But spurious miracles can no more invalidate real ones, than counterfeit money proves there is no sound currency. There must be a sound currency or there could be no counterfeit. So spurious miracles, obtaining extensive credence, remove the presumption against real ones, and constitute a strong circumstance in their favor.

The miracles ascribed to Pythagoras, Vespasian, and others, fail in all the essential points in which those of Scripture are authenticated. There was no antecedent probability in their favor; no good reason why they should be wrought; they went to confirm no great practical doctrine; they were not published until centuries after they were professedly

¹ As Hume and Voltaire.

wrought; of course could be subjected to no impartial scrutiny, and can be traced only to vague reports of uncertain origin. They encountered no particular opposition; but were published to gratify princes and increase veneration for renowned heroes; when selfish interests would prompt to their reception, and they would gain a ready credence.

Similar remarks will apply to alleged Popish and Mohammedan miracles.¹ No system of doctrine was based on them, or propagated through their instrumentality. Most of them could not be tested by the senses, and those that could might easily be falsified. They were open to no impartial inspection, and were first published to those only whose selfish interests would prompt to their reception.

Now, to oppose such feats of jugglery to the miracles of Scripture, wrought to confirm a professed revelation from heaven of the highest character—wrought in open day, in the presence of multitudes of friends and enemies, subjected to the strictest tests, and which secured for that revelation general prevalence throughout the civilized world, is the height of absurdity. It serves but to reveal the extremity to which unbelievers are driven to maintain a show of consistency.

There is another subject attended with more difficulty; *viz.*, apparent miracles of Scriptures wrought for evil purposes. Of this description are the works of the Egyptian magicians in opposition to Moses, the raising of Samuel by the witch of Endor, those connected with Satan's temptation of Christ, and prophecies of those to be wrought by false Christs, false prophets, and the man of sin. Some hold that wicked men and evil spirits wrought real miracles, either by power from God or through the aid of Satan. I do not deny that wicked men and devils are free agents, and that God often suffers them to accomplish their purposes; nor do I deny that in some respects Satan has power above that of man, and exercises it. But a miracle, since it transcends the

¹ For example, the annual liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius.

laws of nature, can be ascribed to no other than the author of nature. It must be wrought either by God himself, or through supernatural power conferred by him. Now, can it be supposed that an infinitely wise and holy God would work a miracle, either directly or indirectly, for an evil purpose? If so, his kingdom is divided against itself, and the charge of the Pharisees, that Jesus cast out devils through Beelzebub, is not wholly without foundation.

It is not reasonable, therefore, to admit that miracles were ever wrought for an evil purpose. Nor do the Scriptures assert it. True, in the account of the feats of the magicians in Egypt, a superficial reading might give such impression; but a more attentive study of the matter would correct it. The passage relates merely to the *appearance*, without design of asserting the fact. Besides, the magicians were so soon overcome and confounded as to prove that they were jugglers, who, by taking advantage of the miracles wrought by Moses, were able, for a time, to impose upon the credulity of the selfish king and court. But there is no evidence that they wrought miracles. Egypt has ever been, even to this day, noted for jugglery. So Faust, in his day, and Potter, and others more recently, by the aid of ventriloquism and sleight of hand, have performed numerous feats which none of the witnesses could explain, though confessed by the performers to be wholly deceptive.

In the case of the witch of Endor, 1 Sam. 28, there is no good reason to believe that she raised Samuel. On the other hand, it is evident from her own amazement at his appearance, that God interposed in a signal manner to rebuke the presumption of the wicked king, and sent back the prophet to warn him of his approaching downfall. There is no sufficient ground for believing in the supernatural power of witches now, or at any former time. Satan himself has not miraculous power, and of course cannot confer it. God would not on such creatures, and for such purposes as they pretend to employ it.

In the temptation of Christ, Matt. 4, there is no evidence that Satan wrought a miracle. Stuart and others suppose that those temptations were all made in the way of suggestion to the *mind* of Christ, while in the wilderness, without any bodily appearance or departure from the place. But admitting all the account will bear, it necessarily means no more than that Christ accompanied the tempter where an extensive survey of the surrounding country could be taken; and hence it involves no miracle. Such figures of speech are often used in the Oriental languages.

The passages, Matt. 24: 24; 2 Thess. 2: 9, do not describe real miracles, as will appear from two remarks:

1. In the fulfillment of these prophecies, no miracles have been wrought, but the whole has been shown to be imposture.

2. The passages intimate their spuriousness. They are denominated "*lying* wonders," and the "*deceivableness* of unrighteousness." The marks by which true miracles are distinguished from all fictitious ones are too plain to be mistaken. They can no more be confounded than Christ and Satan.

A single inquiry remains. How long did miracles continue? Doubtless through the Apostolic age; possibly through one subsequent generation; although the evidence on this point is not decisive. As they were the special seal of the revelation made in the Scriptures, they were continued long enough to confirm its authority. Longer than this they were not needed. Were they common in every age they would cease to be miracles.

From Mark 16: 17, 18; James 5: 14, 15, some have argued that miracles are to be expected in all generations. This position is invalidated not only by the preceding considerations, but they prove too much for those who hold that theory. If these passages prove that miracles are wrought now, they prove that they are in the power of every believer; and not only so, but that in every case they con-

stitute the proper evidence that one is a believer. But experience contradicts this conclusion. The best Christians and ministers, as Baxter, Watts, Whitefield, Payson, Page, Randall, never pretended to be able to work miracles. Were not they believers? Yet no such *signs* followed them. It is clear, therefore, that the above passages are not general in their application, but restricted to the age in which they were written, and to the authentication of Scripture.

We are, however, referred to the fact that some good men, as Wesley, have believed that miracles were wrought through their instrumentality. But good men are liable to mistake. What they accounted miraculous may not have been so. God may, and doubtless does, sometimes in answer to prayer, bless means to the recovery of the sick, confer special favor on his people, and remarkable deliverance. But such things should not be accounted miraculous. We believe in a superintending Providence—that God upholds and governs all things, and is specially mindful of his saints; but all this neither implies a power on their part to work miracles, nor any *miraculous* interposition whatever.

Miracles are the appropriate seal of a special Divine revelation. To authenticate the Bible as that revelation they were evidently wrought. There is no sufficient ground to believe that they were ever wrought for any other purpose.

We need not notice Mormonism, since it furnishes no grounds of antecedent probability in its favor; and its internal character, as abundantly shown, is such as to stamp the system with infamy.

Nor is there anything in modern Spiritualism to invalidate, or cast suspicion on, the miracles of Scripture. Its phenomena have never been shown to be supernatural. Much of deception and wickedness is mixed up with them, which may, at most, be safely classed with the miracles spoken of in Rev. 16: 14. It is to be regretted that many well meaning people have been led away by such delusions. There is no warrant for any substitutes for, or supplements

to, the Gospel. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8: 20).

SECTION IV.—ON SCRIPTURE PROPHECY.

PROPHECY has been defined: "A knowledge and manifestation of secret things, which a man knows not from his own sagacity, nor from the relation of others, but by an extraordinary revelation of God from heaven."¹ It is a species of miracle, and on some accounts it is more serviceable than other miracles. People living far from the time and place of the prediction can witness its fulfillment, so that it becomes a standing and increasing miracle.

Prophecy cannot be pronounced impossible on *a priori* grounds. If God is omniscient, he can impart this gift, and with a sufficient motive, he would be expected to do so. A knowledge of the future is wisely withheld from the mass of men. The greatest natural sagacity and foresight are very circumscribed, and never infallible. Hence, if any man foretells events far remote, dependent on free agency, which could not have been foreseen by mere human power, and subsequent history attests the fulfillment of such prophecy, the finger of God must be acknowledged in the transaction. The avowed object of prophecy is to authenticate Scripture revelation.

Do the Scriptures, then, contain prophecies? We cannot here notice them all, but will consider three classes: I. Those relating to Christ. II. Those relating to certain ancient cities and nations. III. The prophecies of Christ and the Apostles.

I. PROPHECIES RELATING TO CHRIST. 1. "And I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3: 15). This passage and

¹ Witsius.

its connection cannot be accounted an allegory, since it has all the characteristics of a literal narrative. We might as well allegorize any other part of the Bible as this. Nor does the passage denote a natural enmity between mankind and serpents. Such an interpretation in this connection is unworthy of serious refutation. Whatever was the *instrument* employed in the temptation of the progenitors of mankind, the grand agent was unquestionably Satan. So the Scriptures represent. In numerous passages he is styled the serpent, and the wicked are denominated his children or seed. And the seed of the woman as clearly denotes Christ. The passage relates, then, to the enmity existing between the devil and his servants, and Christ and his saints, so signally evinced from that day to the present. The prediction, "thou shalt bruise his heel," has been fulfilled in the sufferings of Christ and his followers under persecution. The other part, "it shall bruise thy head," was alluded to by Paul, Rom. 16 : 20, and its final consummation is pointed out in Rev. 20 : 10.

2. Jacob's prophecy of Christ. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49 : 10). Shiloh denotes the Messiah, as nearly all commentators, both Christian and Jewish, have maintained. The Jews, before the advent of Christ, uniformly gave it this interpretation. Now for the fulfillment. History records the existence of the tribe of Judah long after all the others had become extinct, so that it gave name to the whole nation, *viz.*, Jews — the continuance of its own princes, lawgivers, and general polity, even during the seventy years' captivity in Babylon and subsequent subjection to the Romans, up to the time of Christ; — and its utter overthrow and extinction within a century afterwards. That the gathering of the people has since been to the Shiloh's standard, needs here no proof.

3. Moses' prophecy of Christ. "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy

brethren, like unto me" (Deut. 18 : 15). The Jews always understood this passage as denoting the Messiah; and so it is interpreted by Peter, Acts 3 : 22, 23, and by Stephen, Acts 7 : 37. Its fulfillment in the person of Jesus was decided. He, like Moses, was both a prophet and lawgiver; like him he was the founder of a Dispensation, and the resemblance between them may be shown in numerous striking particulars.¹

4. David's prophecies of the Messiah. Several of the Psalms relate to Christ, as is proved not only by reference to the Jewish commentators, but also by the declaration of inspired writers in the New Testament. The Messianic Psalms are the 2, 16, 45, 97, and 102. See Heb. 1; Acts 2 : 31, etc.

5. Isaiah's prophecies. The most remarkable are Isa. 9 : 6, "Unto us a child is born," etc.; 53; 61 : 1, 2. The reference of these to Christ is proved, as the above, by the Jewish commentators, and the authority of the Saviour and his Apostles. In reference to Isa. 61 : 1, 2, see Luke 4 : 16-22. Of Isa. 53, see Acts 8 : 30-35. And on the general subject, see Luke 24 : 27, 44. No believer in the New Testament needs to be told that these prophecies were fulfilled.

The above cited prophecies, and others in the Old Testament relating to Christ, taken together, furnish quite a full account of his lineage, birth, life, character, office, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and the success of his doctrine. That these prophecies were written several hundred years before the Christian era, is proved by Jewish and other contemporary history. That they were fulfilled in Christ, every reader of the New Testament can see for himself; and they have been fulfilled in no other person. And they are such as *could* not have been fulfilled by the connivance of Christ and his friends. Two points are hereby established: the Messiahship of Jesus, and the Divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures.

¹ Newton on the Prophecies, pp. 66-68.

II. PROPHECIES RELATING TO ANCIENT CITIES AND NATIONS. 1. *Nineveh*. This was the capital of the Assyrian empire, and one of the most renowned cities of antiquity. It contained about 600,000 inhabitants. In the light of its prosperity, and in the strength of that mighty empire, the prophets foretold its utter destruction. Says Zephaniah (2: 13-15): "He will stretch out his hand against the North, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly; that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his head." The book of Nahum is occupied with a detail of her wickedness and her fate. Nothing, to human appearance, could have been more improbable than the fulfillment of the prophecy at that time; but it was verified in every particular. So complete has been the overthrow of that proud city that its location cannot now be fully determined. It has vanished like a footprint on the sea-sand.

2. *Babylon*. This city was larger and more renowned than Nineveh. It was fifteen miles square, had twenty-five brazen gates on each side, and a wall three hundred and fifty feet high and eighty-seven feet thick, so that six chariots could go abreast on the top of it. In the midst of its splendor, Isaiah uttered the following prophecy (Isa. 13: 19-22): "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 be there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures: and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there." In other prophecies, this destruction is detailed with great minuteness. Cyrus first conquered this city, and threw down its wall. By successive devastations it was laid waste, until every part of the prophecy has been literally fulfilled; the city has been swept as with the besom of destruction, and no monument of its ancient glory remains. Its very ruins have perished. The prophecies and their fulfillment, relating to Tyre, Egypt, etc., are equally decisive. These facts are established by the accounts given in Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Xenophon, and the works of other historians and travelers.

3. *The Jews.* The twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy is one of the most remarkable prophecies on record. It was written when the Jews were about entering the promised land, then rich and fertile, and themselves a great and powerful nation. In it they are assured that if they rebel against God they shall incur his curse;—they shall be conquered and led captive, their land shall become desolate and barren, and they be dispersed throughout the earth; that they shall "become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations." All familiar with Jewish history know that these prophecies have been literally fulfilled down to this day. And they are still more striking when viewed in connection with the following:

III. THE PROPHECIES OF CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES. As Jesus approached Jerusalem for the last time, and looked down upon its magnificence, he wept over and lamented its fate. See Matt. 24: 37–39; Luke 19: 41, 42. Of its temple he declared: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matt. 24: 2). Moses also foretold the circumstances of its dreadful siege, in the most vivid and striking manner;—the famine which would prevail to the degree that even the nearest relatives should contend with each other for food; and the

tender and delicate woman would devour her own children (Deut. 28: 52-57). The whole had an awful accomplishment. Titus, the Roman general, about A. D. 70, besieged and utterly destroyed the city. The walls were demolished, the temple burned, the city laid waste, and *one million one hundred thousand* persons perished. The famine during the siege was shocking. Josephus relates that a woman of noble birth, being driven to desperation by hunger and the outrage of the soldiers who plundered her house, at last killed her own infant, cooked, and ate half of it, and presented the other half to the rapacious guards, when they came again and demanded food (Wars of the Jews, Book 6, chapter 3, section 4).

I will refer you in this place only to the predictions respecting the apostasy of the man of sin. Says Paul: "That day shall not come, except there come a falling-away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2: 3, 4, 7-10). See also 1 Tim. 4: 1-3. A bare rehearsal of these predictions is sufficient. That they relate to, and have an exact fulfillment in, the defection of the Romish church, and the assumptions of the Pope, and in no other way, can scarcely be doubted by any well informed and candid mind.

I have had to omit many striking prophecies, as those of Noah, Abraham, Daniel, and others. The prophecy of Daniel pointed out the first advent of Christ, and specified the year of its occurrence. Hence the general expectation of the Messiah, at the time Christ appeared.

It will be observed that the prophecies of Scripture are not a few isolated predictions; they form a complete chain from the Creation to the Christian Era. Their object, clearly, is to confirm the authority of Scripture revelation. Their center and substance is Christ. To him, they, to-

gether with the types and ceremonials of the law in general, point. Reference is, indeed, made in them, to other nations besides the Jews, because of their intimate connections. But, as a whole, their purpose, evidently, is to authenticate the Scriptures, and the scheme of Redemption therein revealed.

OBJECTIONS TO PROPHECY. 1. "The future is wisely concealed from men." True, but to confirm a Revelation, God may disclose certain events beforehand. If miracles are credible, prophecy must be. Prophecy has the force of a standing miracle.

2. "It is so obscure as to subserve no practical end." Reply. Its fulfillment at least can be understood, and if this serves to confirm revelation, surely a practical purpose is subserved.

3. Some assert that prophecy would interfere with moral agency. Facts furnish the best answer to this objection. In all the prophecies and their exact fulfillment, there is no evidence of interference with moral agency. If God can foresee a free act, he can foretell it without destroying its character.

4. Others object that the Scripture prophecies were written *after* the event. This is disproved by contemporaneous Jewish and heathen history, which establishes the antiquity of the Scriptures, and fixes the date of the books long prior to the events predicted. Some of the prophecies, as those relating to the Jews, are receiving a fulfillment in our own day. Were they written after the event? The objection shows how accurately the prophecies have been fulfilled.

5. It is asserted that the passages were not designedly prophetic, but only happy conjecture, or poetic aspiration. But could these delineate the descent, birth, life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ, with the minuteness of history, hundreds and thousands of years before the events? The same question may be put with reference to the cities and nations of antiquity, especially the Jews. Conjecture

and poetical aspiration deal in generalities; but Scripture prophecy has the minuteness of history. Again, those passages are professedly prophetic in the Old Testament, and they are claimed to be such in the New Testament, hence we cannot deny their prophetic character without rejecting the Bible as a forgery, and Christ and the Apostles as impostors.

6. Another objection is, that Jesus and his disciples procured an apparent fulfillment of the prophecies relating to themselves. Then they were the basest impostors, a charge which few infidels even have the hardihood to make. But it was impossible. They could not have succeeded had they tried. The prophecies related to events over which they had no control—events, too, of a miraculous character. Besides, who *procured* the fulfillment of the prophecies relating to Ishmael, Esau, Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre, Jerusalem, and the Jews; and who procures a fulfillment of those transpiring at this day?

7. Paine and others have made much of certain apparent discrepancies between prophecies and their fulfillment, as recorded in the Scriptures. Upon this objection I have three remarks to make.

(1) There is no evidence, aside from the Bible, that a single prophecy in it has failed.

(2) It is very improbable that the sacred writers would record a failure of their own prophecies. This is putting rather a low estimate on their common sense.

(3) There is no real contradiction in the accounts. I cannot here go into detail on this subject, but refer you to the books where this objection is refuted.¹ The case of Zedekiah is the most frequently referred to. But, so far as the evidence goes, it shows a literal fulfillment of the prophecy; and that there is no real contradiction in the accounts. So of the prophecy respecting Egypt, interpreted in a general sense. These discrepancies, instead of weakening our confidence in Scriptural prophecy, greatly confirm it, as they

¹ See Newton on the Prophecies, and similar works.

show the artlessness and honesty of the sacred writers. They stated the simple truth without being careful to provide for difficulties. Impostors would have had no such discrepancies. The matter is so left that men will be satisfied if they candidly examine it: but if any choose to cavil, and prefer darkness to light, they have their choice.

There has been much discussion respecting the *double sense* of prophecy. Some contend that many prophecies apply primarily and directly to one set of events, and secondarily to another. But I see no sufficient ground for such a principle of interpretation. Various applications and analogies may often be drawn from the same event. God frequently accomplishes a variety of ends by a single instrumentality. So it may be with prophecy. But this is different from assigning a double sense to any passage or word. If a prophecy directly relates to David, it does not to Christ; and *vice versa*; although it may be applied to the other by way of illustration. We may be in doubt as to which of two or more events a given prophecy relates; but we may be sure that it properly relates to but one, and should interpret it accordingly. Some by assigning diverse senses to the same passage, and spiritualizing and mystifying Scripture, make the Bible a book of riddles, and do it great injustice. The Scriptures are to be interpreted according to the laws of human language, adapted to the understanding of plain men.

Prophecy demands the careful attention of the Biblical student, and affords a very important and interesting field of research. It should not be studied to gratify a vain curiosity, nor should it be carelessly applied; for "no prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation"; but it should be studied for its bearing on the authority of Divine revelation. When thus studied with a candid, teachable spirit, it furnishes the most convincing proofs that the Bible is from God,—that his Word will stand; and that one jot or tittle shall not pass from it till all is fulfilled.

SECTION V.—DIFFICULTIES OF SCRIPTURE.

VARIOUS objections have been urged against the sacred volume. Before proceeding to examine these, I will make two remarks.

1. These objections are not always candidly made. Most skeptics, in their assaults upon the Scriptures, have exhibited much prejudice and bitterness. This is especially true of such writers as Thomas Paine. Many of his objections could be easily refuted by almost any scholar in a Sabbath school. Yet they are proposed with such an air of confidence, and so chime in with what a wicked heart, restless of restraint, would be glad to believe, that they have had great influence over a multitude of inexperienced and superficial thinkers. But they are entitled to very little consideration. When a man puts forth a treatise on history, science, or politics, he is expected to do it with candor; and if this is obviously wanting, his work is regarded as an ebullition of personal spleen, undeserving the attention of dispassionate inquirers. Surely, in matters of religion, if anywhere, there is need of the strictest impartiality.

2. Scarcely any of the objections relate to the proper evidences of Christianity—they leave the proofs of the authenticity of the Scriptures unaffected. Suppose, in a civil process, one of the parties, instead of impeaching the testimony of the witnesses, or rebutting the evidence with counter testimony, should resort to cavil, blackguardism, and magnifying trifling discrepancies, in order to divert attention from the real question at issue; what jury would give him a verdict on this ground? The effort would be regarded as sophistry, and the case would have to be decided by the evidence.

Now, such is very much the position of Scripture opponents. Whether the Bible is assailed by the gross abuse of Paine and Voltaire, the subtlety of Hume, or the insidious thrusts of Gibbon, the general character of the assault is the

same. It is not, then, that these objections are *worthy* of notice, that any attention is bestowed upon them at the present day. But however unfounded and irrelevant, they are grasped by many who either know not, or care not, to practice a just discrimination. They cannot, therefore, be wholly passed over in silence, lest some should deem them unanswerable. Again, there are real difficulties in Scripture—acknowledged and felt as such by candid and able critics.

Some have argued that a *revelation* should contain no mysteries or difficulties. To this it may be replied :

1. There are confessedly deep mysteries and difficulties in nature; and revelation coming from the God of nature, might also be expected to contain difficulties.

2. Revelation is not purposely obscure or difficult. The difficulty grows out of the subject-matter, and our feeble capacities. While in the condition of children, we can know but in part. Revelation is as plain as God could consistently make it. It renders the subject of Natural Theology much clearer; and those peculiar to its own province it unfolds sufficiently for all practical purposes. Its difficulties serve as a useful exercise to our energies and our faith.

There will not be time or necessity for examining the difficulties of Scripture minutely. For this I refer you to commentaries. My remarks must be general.

I. Numerous discrepancies in names, dates, numbers, and places have been pointed out. Upon these it may be observed :

1. They affect no essential truth.

2. They show that there was no collusion between the sacred writers. Such discrepancies appear in all truthful plural testimony, and strengthen, rather than weaken, its force.

3. The style of the Scriptures generally is concise; they were written in ages and countries remote from our own, and under the influence of usages with which we have but an imperfect acquaintance. Increasing light has removed

many of these difficulties, and may yet in time remove them all.

4. Some of these discrepancies have doubtless arisen from the error of copyists. Mistakes in numbers, names, and dates are most liable to be made in this way.

5. Different writers, or the same writer at different times, may have viewed the same subject in diverse aspects. For example, in the case of the blind men restored to sight by Christ (Matt. 20: 29-34; Mark 10: 46-52), one evangelist might mention both, and another, only the one who attracted most attention. Such diversity of statement increases the interest of the book, and the confidence of the candid in its veracity.¹

II. Another difficulty relates to the copiousness of detail in some parts of the Bible, and the extreme conciseness of other parts. Now, as an objection, this comes with an ill grace. Who knows best what should be copious and what concise in God's Word? Let the objector explain why so large a part of man's brief probation is occupied with unconscious infancy, the baubles of childhood, and the decrepitude of old age, or why so large a portion of the earth's surface is covered with barren deserts, sterile mountains, and eternal snow? If he admits that nature, with all its difficulties, is from God, why may not revelation, with less difficulties, be also?

With regard to the length of the details in the Pentateuch of rites and ceremonies, it is to be observed that these ceremonies constituted an essential part of a dispensation introductory to the one under which we live, but widely different from it. The world was then in its infancy, a people were selected to be kept distinct from other nations for many ages, and to introduce the Messiah and the Gospel. These rites and ceremonies subserved those purposes. If they were thus important, the record of them must be also. It serves to illustrate many passages in the Gospel, which

¹ See "Gausson on the Bible."

without it would be obscure. Besides, it exhibits the dealings of God for many ages, and under a great variety of circumstances, with the most remarkable nation that ever existed. These and similar considerations will easily reconcile any candid reader to the most tedious details of the sacred narrative.

The conciseness of other portions is as readily explained. Take, for instance, the accounts of the creation and fall of man, the future state, and the conditions of salvation. The Scriptures contain all that is essential on these topics; they wisely do not gratify, but repress, all vain curiosity on these momentous subjects; and unfold them in the most sublime, forcible, and practical manner. How in this respect are the Scriptures elevated above heathen Mythology, the Koran, and speculative philosophy.

III. Other accounts are said to be unworthy of God. One of these relates to the partaking of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3). On this I observe, if God is the governor of the universe, he must require obedience of his subjects; and I see not why he might not ordain a simple test of that obedience, as well as one that should be more imposing. Simplicity is an element of true greatness. In partaking of the forbidden fruit, man rose in rebellion against his Maker, as much as though he had made direct war on him; hence the disastrous consequences which followed.

Again, it is said the various manifestations of God to men, his communications to them, and especially his incarnation, are unworthy of him. The objection is, that as he is the Lord of countless worlds, he would not take such notice of one in comparison with the whole so insignificant. This is overlooking the fact that God is omniscient, omnipotent, infinite. If he notices the sparrow's fall, and numbers the hairs of our heads, which philosophy, as well as the Bible, concedes, will he not concern himself for the welfare of millions on millions of immortal beings bearing his own moral image? Who can say also what influence the effects of sin

here and the plan of redemption *may* not have exerted on other parts of the universe?¹ Were the dealings of God with men recorded in Scripture confined wholly to our species, they could not, on any just principles, be pronounced unworthy of him. And when we consider the bearing which they *may* have on other worlds, all occasion of skepticism on this point disappears.

IV. There are also scientific difficulties. One of these is the mention of day and night before the creation of the sun (Gen. 1: 3, 14-18). Much depends here on the interpretation of the passage. Again, little is known respecting the cause of light. If, as many critics believe, the account in Genesis does not relate to an absolute creation of the sun and stars at that time, but only to their then being brought to enlighten the earth, which was gradually prepared to receive their rays, every difficulty vanishes. At most, our ignorance should not be made the ground of charging absurdity upon the sacred writers. Again, it is said that the Scriptural representation conflicts with modern astronomy. It does so no more than popular language generally, even of philosophers. The Bible is written in popular style. The writers used the language which the people then used; any other mode of address would have been unintelligible. The popular style is still adapted to the visible appearance. The language of Scripture, rightly interpreted, does not conflict with the principles of astronomy; on the other hand, the Bible contains intimations of the great truths of that science.

Again, it is said that geology proves the world to have a much greater antiquity than the Bible assigns to it. To this it may be replied, that the science of geology is yet in its infancy, and geologists themselves are not agreed upon some of its fundamental principles. It would surely be great folly to distrust the Scriptures, because tyros in some science con-

¹ Dick's "Philosophy of a Future State." His remarks on this topic, even if regarded as mere conjecture, are entitled to much weight.

jecture that they are opposed to their system. But allowing all that geologists claim for their science, there is not evidence sufficient to prove that the Bible contradicts its principles. Many of the ablest Biblical critics believe that the account of the creation in Gen. 1 means no more than that God was the author of the material universe, and that at the time there specified in the six days, he *arranged* the world in its present form from pre-existing matter, and prepared it for the abode of its present orders of being.¹ Taking this view, there is no necessity of supposing that each day of creation was a thousand years, nor that petrifications and other mineral formations were created as they now appear. The Scriptural account is then consistent with scientific principles so far as developed. Once it was alleged that certain chronologies and mathematical calculations in the East disproved the Bible.² But further researches show that they tend to confirm it. So, doubtless, will it be with geology.

Some have objected to certain events as impossible; such as the sun standing still at the command of Joshua (Josh. 10: 12, 13). To this it is sufficient to reply, that they are claimed to be miraculous. If miracles are admitted at all, these cannot be pronounced absurd. He who constituted the laws of nature, can suspend or change them. Besides, it is not necessary to suppose that the law of gravitation was suspended in the instance mentioned, or anything more than an *appearance* of the sun's standing still; since this might answer all the purposes of the miracle.

V. Portions of the Scriptures are charged with having

¹ Hitchcock's Geology, pp. 350, 351. Some regard the six days of creation in the Mosaic account as not literal days of twenty-four hours, but periods of indefinite length. Dr. Knapp considers the Mosaic account as a kind of *pictorial description*. Theol., p. 178. With this agree substantially the views of Hugh Miller. It is enough to know that in several ways the representations of Scripture on this subject and the facts of science may be reconciled.

² As those of China, India, and Egypt. Knapp's Theol., p. 175. Later investigations have proved them wholly unfounded, and even "monstrous."

an immoral tendency. This objection is made against but a small part of the sacred writings. The Bible, as a whole, has been pronounced an excellent book of morals by many who reject its claims as a Divine revelation. One portion is objected to as offensive to delicacy. On this point we should consider that its language has the directness and simplicity characteristic of the ancient Oriental idiom, and indeed, of the language of plain people generally. What are called the refinements of cultivated society have induced much *false* delicacy, founded often on depravity. "To the pure all things are pure, but to the defiled is nothing pure." Those who are too delicate to have efforts made for the suppression of vice, will, of course, object to the plainness with which the Bible deals with human wickedness. The Scriptures give a faithful and impartial history of men, both of the righteous and the wicked; thus showing the native perverseness of the heart, and the necessity of a gracious provision. All this is obviously needed. No passage can be pointed out whose *design* is bad, or whose tendency is really vicious. Men may abuse almost anything. The sins of good men are recorded, but not approbated.

Again, it is objected that God allowed practices in the Jews now acknowledged wrong; for example, exterminating wars, retaliation, polygamy, and divorce. It is true that the Jewish dispensation differed widely from the Gospel, as the state of mankind required. God deals with men according to their circumstances and condition. Persons in the different stages of life require varied treatment. So does the world, for it has had its infancy and growth. In the first periods of history, God directly administered the government. The government of the Jews was a theocracy. Now it is admitted that he authorized them to wage exterminating wars against their enemies, and to reduce them to servitude. But this was done to punish the wickedness of these nations, as is expressly declared. "Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go

to possess their land; but for the wickedness of those nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee" (Deut. 9: 5). The abominable wickedness of the nations which the Israelites dispossessed may be learned by reference to Lev. 18, and other passages. It was fit that such nations should be signally punished, and their fate made an example to the world. God can employ such agents in the accomplishment of his purposes as he sees proper. Sometimes he swallows up a city with all its inhabitants—men, women, and helpless infants—by an earthquake; sometimes he sweeps it with tempest, or sends the destroying pestilence. If he is not charged with injustice or cruelty in such instances, why should he be when producing like effects through human instrumentality? That course of procedure did not harden the Jews; it affords no just pretense for men unauthorized to take the sword of vengeance. It was a special case, in which God exercised a sovereign right.

The *imprecations* of holy men upon the wicked (Psa. 35: 6; Lam. 3: 64–66) were at most no more than prayers that, under aggravated circumstances, justice might be done, not to gratify public resentment, but for an entirely benevolent end. If it is right for the guilty to be punished, it cannot be wrong to pray for it. When God is said to harden men's hearts (Rom. 9: 18), no more is meant than to denote the *effect* which a perverse treatment of his gracious means has on them; so that what he designs for a savor of life unto life, becomes to them, through their willful obstinacy, a savor of death unto death. In other instances, such as sending forth false prophets and lying spirits, no more is denoted than a permission or sufferance, without special interfering on his part.

In the preceding discussion, I have not attempted to notice all the difficulties, but only the leading ones. If these admit of a satisfactory explanation, the others will not be insisted on. The more this subject is investigated in a candid spirit,

the more will the excellence of the sacred volume appear, and the more insignificant or ill founded the objections against it.

But, it may be asked, why are there any difficulties in the Scriptures? In reply, we ask, why are there difficulties in nature, why does sin exist, why do men imbibe unwarrantable prejudices, and turn blessings into curses?

In addition to all other considerations in regard to these difficulties, it may be observed that they promote research; they afford an interesting and important field in which to task the mental energies. Nothing valuable is acquired without labor; and generally the value of an acquisition is in proportion to the toil requisite for its attainment. We are to search the Scriptures as for hid treasures—we must strive, if we would enter in at the straight gate.

The difficulties of Scripture furnish also a moral test. The revelation of God does not come in such a way as to force our reception. If studied with a candid, teachable spirit, it will be a lamp to our feet, and a guide to our paths; but if treated with captiousness, it is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. It is such that persons of the humblest capacities can comprehend all its essential truths. At the same time its resources are sufficient to task the loftiest intellect. It is eminently suited to the wants of man, and able to satisfy the demands of all honest inquirers. But if any are too wise to need its teachings, or too stupid to explore its treasures, or too vicious to practice its requirements, they can frame excuses enough for neglecting it. Thus men are left to their own choice, to make it to themselves a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. Such a revelation only, could God be expected to give to his moral and accountable creatures. If, upon a fair investigation of its claims, we are rationally convinced that the Bible is the Word of God, we are bound to make it the standard in matters of religion. If it will not abide the test of sound reason, it is of course a nullity. It has been subjected to

every conceivable test for hundreds and thousands of years; and the suffrage of the wise and good in every age attests that it bears throughout the impress of Divinity.

SECTION VI.—INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

THE authenticity of the Scriptures has been already proved. We have seen that the books of the Old and New Testaments are what they profess to be; *viz.*, the Word of God—a Divine revelation. The truth of their contents being thus established, it would seem at first view that further inquiries respecting their claims are unnecessary; and that we might proceed at once to an examination of their doctrines. But another point requires our attention previously; *viz.*, the inspiration of the sacred volume. We might admit that the Bible is a genuine and authentic production, as we allow in regard to Goldsmith's histories, or Kent's Commentaries; we might also acknowledge its credibility and authority as a Divine revelation; without holding the truth respecting its inspiration. But in this case the Bible would be far from occupying its proper place in our esteem.

On this subject three general views have been held by those who admit the credibility of the Scriptures.

1. Some have placed them on a level with other authentic books, and rejected the claim to their inspiration altogether. We may mention as examples, Priestly, the Rationalists of Germany, and many Unitarians.

2. Others hold that portions of the Scriptures, as the prophecies and special revelations in doctrine, were inspired; but that the historical portions, and all which they suppose might have been written without special Divine aid, are uninspired.

3. The remaining view, which has been generally adopted by the Church, is that the whole of the Bible is inspired—that God so superintended its original publication, both in the *matter* and *manner*, as to secure it from error, as much as

though every word of it had been written by his own finger.

By the inspiration of the Scriptures is not meant, that the Divine agency in their production was exclusive of human agency, nor that the writers while under the influence of the inspiration with which they wrote, were not moral agents. The writers to whom these books are ascribed were their real authors; wrote in their own style, and consequently with the variety which characterizes other writers. A revelation of God to man must, of course, be in human language; variety in its idiom and style would be suitable to its varied subject matter, to the wants of various classes of readers, and interesting to all. An inspired man would, of course, write in his own language: if an Englishman, he would write English; if a Moses, Isaiah, John, or Paul, he would write in his own style. Yet God could so superintend their work as to secure it from error. The *mode* of this superintendence we are not obliged to explain. It is sufficient that we have evidence of the *fact*.

Nor do we mean that all the matter of the Scriptures is of equal importance, or even true. Some of it is the language of wicked men and devils. There were reasons for recording their words and conduct on various occasions; and the record must be accurate. Neither is it claimed that the sacred writers were at all times infallible. The prophets and Apostles were sometimes charged with sin; but when commissioned of God to compose the Scriptures, and while thus employed, they were infallibly directed in their labor, so that this work of the Lord is perfect.

The *proof* of inspiration is derived from the sacred writers themselves. There are collateral evidences of great weight; still we rely chiefly on the statements made by these writers.

IN RESPECT TO THE INSPIRATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. Says the Apostle Peter: "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 2: 21). Says the Apostle Paul: "All Scripture is given by inspira-

tion of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17). These passages embrace the whole subject. By the former we have inspiration defined—that "holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This relates as well to their writings as to their oral communications, as appears from the context. In the latter passage inspiration is predicated of "all Scripture." Some have attempted to explain away the force of the latter passage, but without avail. In whatever way it is construed on critical principles, the sentiment is the same, either directly or by implication, that the Scriptures as a whole are inspired. No inference can be justly derived from the passage that part of the Scriptures is uninspired, but the contrary.

We may also notice the manner in which Christ and the Apostles uniformly refer to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. They designate them "the Word of God," and always cite them as of unquestionable authority. They never raise a doubt respecting any sentiment they authorize, but always treat them as containing throughout the teaching of the Holy Ghost. To those who regard the authority of Christ and the Apostles as decisive, the question respecting the inspiration of the Old Testament, then, is settled.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT is no less clearly established. This would be expected, from its relation to a more complete and final dispensation. The gift of plenary inspiration Christ promised to his disciples: "But when they shall lead you and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost" (Mark 13: 11). Now, it cannot be supposed that they would be infallibly directed in their communications before the magistrates, and left to themselves in writing the

Scriptures. Still, they acted as moral agents in the free use of their own faculties in both instances.

Said Christ to his disciples, when about taking leave of them: "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 14: 26). "When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16: 13). No one will question but these promises were fulfilled.

The Apostles expressly claimed to be inspired. Says Paul: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1: 11, 12). "God hath revealed them [spiritual things] unto us by his Spirit. . . . Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, *not in the words which* man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1 Cor. 2: 10, 12, 13). Peter classes the writings of Paul with the other Scriptures (2 Peter 3: 16). A similar classification is frequently made: "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2: 20). "That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour" (2 Peter 3: 2). Such quotations might be multiplied indefinitely. If any credit is to be given to the veracity of the sacred writers, the question is settled.

OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE. 1. Plenary inspiration has been pronounced *unnecessary*. Much of the Old Testament is doubtless a compilation. The Chronicles are supposed to be taken mainly from the national records; part of the Proverbs from maxims previously in use; and other portions of a narrative character, it is said, might have been

written by almost any one. On this principle we should need a new revelation to inform us what part of Scripture is inspired, and what uninspired. The historical portions of the Old Testament are of great importance, not only in themselves, but from their connection with the Gospel. Now, whether compiled or not, to possess authority as a part of the Scriptures, designed for the use of mankind, they must have been brought to their present form and place under the special direction of the Holy Spirit. The whole work would be marred, if it did not bear throughout the impress of Jehovah.

Again, it is said that the Spirit's agency extended no farther than to the suggestion of the *thoughts*, and that the writers were left to themselves in expressing them. This cannot be admitted. The sacred writers were not infallible. Now if the thoughts only were suggested, and they were left to their own unaided powers in clothing them with language, they would be liable to make many mistakes. We should then be at liberty to criticise their work—point out an ill-chosen epithet here, a faulty sentence there; and make alterations at pleasure. Controversy would arise, and confidence in the books themselves would soon be lost. While we admit that the sacred writers, in the free use of their faculties, wrote each in his characteristic style; we must still maintain that they were preserved from all error, of language even, so that their productions in the inspired volume are to be regarded, as they claim to be, THE WORD OF GOD.

2. Another objection relates to the difficulties of Scripture. There are passages which the wisest men do not profess fully to comprehend. But these difficulties arise more from the nature of the subject, and the feebleness of the human faculties, than from the manner of the communication. This is as plain as it could wisely be made. Who would regard it as an improvement, if every subject in revelation were level to the capacity of a child? There are mysteries innumerable in nature. No marvel, then, that

there are things in the dispensation of grace which angels desire to look into ; which the prophets sought earnestly and in vain to explore, even in their own communications.

3. The imperfections and sins of some of the sacred writers have been alleged against a plenary inspiration.

REPLY. It is not claimed that these writers were infallible ; but that when employed of God to communicate his Word, they would be preserved from error. The fact in regard to the matter revealed, without reference to the medium of communication, is, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The fact that a man was inspired at one time is not inconsistent with the fact of his being in error at another time.

4. We are told that the sacred writers sometimes expressly disclaimed inspiration in regard to a given point. Were this conceded, it would prove no more than special exceptions to a general rule. But there is not sufficient ground for making such exception. The chief passages of this kind are in the writings of Paul, as 1 Cor. 7 : 6, 12, in respect to marriage : "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. . . . To the rest speak I, not the Lord." Also verses 25, 40 : "Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord, yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. But she is happier if she so abide after my judgment ; and I think also that I have the Spirit of God." Here the Apostle might be inspired to give *his advice*, rather than a positive command of God. He needed Divine direction in giving advice, as well as commands. "That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly in this confidence of boasting" (2 Cor. 11 : 17). This denotes no more than that the Apostle was under the necessity, in his circumstances, of pursuing a course in some respects different from what Christ pursued ; and which, in certain aspects, might be regarded as foolish.

5. It is alleged that the New Testament writers misapplied passages quoted from the Old Testament. For exam-

ple, Hos. 11: 1¹ quoted in Matt. 2: 15, and Jer. 31: 15² quoted in Matt. 2: 17, 18. This charge, if valid, would not merely prove the writers in question uninspired, but impeach their integrity. But the difficulty is solved by understanding that the phrase *iva πληρωθῇ* does not denote the accomplishment of a prediction, but a comparison of similar events. It was simply an *illustration*. This will apply to one class of passages.

The objection, as it lies against another class, such as prophecies relating to Christ in the Old Testament, must be met in another way. Here is a question of fact. Some assert that there are no prophecies relating to Christ in the Old Testament. The Apostles and Christ himself assert that there are, and quote them. Which are we to credit, the authors of the New Testament, or these objectors? Admitting that some of these passages, in their connection, appear to have a different reference; is this sufficient to set aside the interpretation of them given by Christ and the Apostles? We must, of course, either receive their explanation, or reject them from our confidence as expounders of the truth; and as spiritual guides.

The New Testament writers did not always make their quotations verbatim. They sometimes followed the Hebrew, sometimes the Septuagint, at other times gave the sentiment nearly in their own language, and at others still, made only an allusion to the passage. But this is not an objection of any force against their inspiration, since it is conformable to the usage of all writers; and no reason can be assigned why they should not follow it. It greatly enhances the value of their productions.

6. Another objection is, that some things they wrote are of little consequence, and should not therefore be ascribed to inspiration. This objection suggests a very unsafe rule of procedure. All the parts of any system, natural or revealed,

¹ "And called my son out of Egypt." ² "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children," etc.

cannot possess intrinsically equal importance; yet all the parts may be essential. We do not disregard the common incidents of life, because in themselves they may be esteemed trivial. On the contrary they often have most important bearings. Who, then, is prepared to draw the line, and mark off those passages in the Bible which are of too little consequence to have needed the supervision of Jehovah? On this subject Wilson, in his "Evidences of Christianity,"¹ has the following remarks: "The slightest details, and the most trifling directions, have practical uses connected with them. Some division of the Church, in some age, has derived benefit from them. The genealogies are clearly of this sort. The salutations also. Even the counsel given to Timothy, to drink no longer water, but to use a little wine for his stomach's sake and often infirmities, has some relation to the friendship of the Apostle for Timothy, to the sympathy of Christians, and the duty of preserving the health of young and laborious ministers. In like manner, the direction to bring the cloak left at Troas, etc., has a connection with that prudence in managing our affairs, and that mutual serviceableness, which are no inconsiderable branches of Christian charity: while they both show that the Apostles wrought no miracles for their personal ease or convenience."

7. Discrepancies. None of these have been shown to be real contradictions. In plural testimony, variations in unessential particulars rather strengthen than weaken the evidence. It shows there has not been collusion. The sacred writers exhibit throughout a disposition to state the simple truth, and there is a substantial agreement, wherever they relate the same events. Varieties in detail add interest to the accounts; and the candor with which facts, unfavorable as well as favorable to themselves, are given, is a high commendation of their work. If these variations are not inconsistent with the credibility of the Scriptures, they are not with their inspiration.

¹ Lecture XIII. See also Gaussen.

There is another point, not strictly pertaining to this subject, which may yet be noticed here. I refer to the *preservation* of the Scriptures, and the agreement in the numerous translations and versions extant. The care of the Jews over the Old Testament Scriptures has already been mentioned. The Maronites were employed in copying the Scriptures, and their care and reverence for them are very striking. They counted each book, chapter, verse, word, and letter even. They could tell how many times each letter occurs ; as that *aleph* is found in the Bible 42,377 times, *beth*, 38,218 times, etc. They could tell the middle letter of the Pentateuch, and of each book comprising it. They would admit of no erasure in their manuscripts, they would suffer no letter to be misplaced, and if the slightest mistake was made in copying, they would reject the skin or papyrus on which the mistake was made.

Says Dr. Gaussen : " Do we ask for a standard for the Old Testament ? The famous Indian manuscript, recently deposited in the library of Cambridge [Eng.], may furnish an example. It is now about thirty-three years since the pious and learned Claudius Buchanan, in visiting the western peninsula of India, saw in the hands of the black Jews of Malabar (believed to be the remnants of the tribes scattered at Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion) an immense scroll, composed of thirty-seven skins dyed red ; forty-eight feet long, twenty-two inches wide, and which, in its perfect condition, must have been ninety English feet long. The Holy Scriptures had been copied on it by different hands. There were left a hundred and seventeen columns of beautiful writing ; and nothing was wanting but Leviticus and a part of Deuteronomy. Buchanan procured this ancient and precious monument, which had been used in the worship of the synagogue, and he has recently deposited it in the Cambridge library. There are features which give satisfactory evidence that it was not a copy of a copy brought there by European Jews. Now Mr. Yeates has recently examined it with great

attention, and has taken the pains to compare it, word for word, letter for letter, with our Hebrew edition of Van der Hooght. He has published the result of these researches. And what has he found? Even this: that there do not exist between the text of India and that of the West, more than forty petty differences, of which not one is sufficiently serious to make the slightest change in the meaning and in the interpretation of our ancient text." Theopneusty, pp. 91, 92.

Almost incredible labor has been bestowed in comparing the ancient versions, translations, commentaries, and manuscripts, to ascertain the variations, and the true text. Houbigant's investigations on this subject occupy four folios; Michaelis spent thirty years upon the same work. Kennicott's great critical Bible was composed from the collection of 581 Hebrew manuscripts. Rossi's collation comprises 680 manuscripts.

The labor expended on the New Testament has been scarcely less in magnitude. The investigations of Mill, Bengel, Wetstein, and Griesbach extended to 335 manuscripts of the Gospels alone. The work of Sholz comprises 674 manuscripts of the Gospels, 200 of the Acts, 256 of Paul's epistles, and 93 of the Apocalypse. The same result has attended all these researches. It is true that the variations are numerous, but they are unessential. In reference to the labors of the individuals above named, a distinguished writer¹ observes: "They have discovered nothing, not even a solitary reading, which could cast doubt upon any passage before considered certain. All the variations, almost without exception, leave untouched the essential thoughts of each phrase, and affect only thoughts of secondary importance, such as the insertion or omission of an article or conjunction, the position of an adjective before or after a substantive, the greater or less exactness of a grammatical construction."

Such are some of the facts in the history of the Bible. It is impossible to tell how many thousand times the Old

¹ Gaussen.

Testament has been copied within thirty-three hundred years, or the New Testament within eighteen hundred. The Bible has passed through the Greek, Latin, Salidic, Ethiopic, Arabic, Slavonic, Persian, Coptic, Syriac, Gothic, and Indian languages; as well as almost every modern language on the globe. It has come down to us through all the catastrophies of the Jews; the persecutions of Christianity by the heathen; the ignorance and corruption of the nominal Church; the animosities of sects; the convulsions of states and empires. It survives them all unscathed, unadulterated. Not that we claim for any of the translations the inspiration that pertains to the original; but its preservation and transmission, not only in the original, but also in so many translations and versions, agreeing in every important particular, evince the care of our Heavenly Father for his own Word.